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Heaven And Hell: My Life In The Eagles (1974-2001)



Synopsis

The Eagles are the bestselling, and arguably the tightest-lipped, American group ever. Now band member and guitarist Don Felder finally breaks the Eagles's years of public silence to take fans behind the scenes. He shares every part of the band's wild ride, from the pressure-packed recording studios and trashed hotel rooms to the tension-filled courtrooms, and from the joy of writing powerful new songs to the magic of performing in huge arenas packed with roaring fans.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

* "An entertaining tell-all."--Boston Globe

When guitarist Don "Fingers" Felder was invited to join the already platinum-selling Eagles in 1974, he had no idea what sort of rock-and-roll heaven and show-business hell he was about to enter; -or how hard it would become to tell one from the other. For the next twenty-seven years, Felder found himself deeply involved in a musical career that was musically thrilling, emotionally exhausting, and surprisingly dangerous. In *Heaven and Hell*, Felder shares this remarkable journey with a firsthand look at his tempestuous years with the Eagles. Even as he, Don Henley, Glenn Frey, Randy Meisner, Bernie Leadon, and, later, Joe Walsh and Timothy B. Schmit became America's most popular and successful rock band, selling tens of millions of records, Felder reveals that greed, jealousy, and creative differences constantly threatened to tear the Eagles apart. From one sold-out arena to the next, some members of the Eagles blazed a trail of sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll that became as legendary as their music. Felder explains how the famous E3

(third encore) parties, which began as spontaneous, raucous backstage binges, evolved into highly organized orgies, with roadies recruiting gorgeous women from the audience to be chauffeured to lavish hotel suites, where nothing was off limits. Even further behind the scenes, he reveals the grim test of wills between Leadon, Felder's friend since his impoverished boyhood in Gainesville, Florida, and the duo of Frey and Henley. Despite Felder's attempts to mediate this conflict, it would not be resolved until a tense meeting that very nearly came to blows, which ended when Leadon stormed out of the room, never to return to the band. Felder also offers a rare glimpse into the creative melting pot that produced such great Eagles hits as "Life in the Fast Lane," "Hotel California," "Victim of Love," and many others. The writing of these songs often involved the entire band, as well as non-band members, such as well-known Eagles collaborator J. D. Souther, Bob Seger, and others. Frequently beginning as a simple guitar lick or a vague idea, these songs took shape through a fascinating process of free association and collaboration, yet, says Felder, even these exciting moments led to friction and bickering. Filled with hilarious true stories of rock stars on the road, including Felder's first meeting with Keith Richards, who was passed out on a bathroom floor at the time, and Joe Walsh's genius for practical jokes, *Heaven and Hell* is the book Eagles fans have been waiting for.

I almost gave this book a 3-star review, but decided on four, since in the end, I did enjoy the book. It's very well written, and I found the story of early career very interesting. The reason I almost gave it only three stars was for the section of the book dealing with his firing from the Eagles (which in my humble opinion, was the stupidest thing they did, with the possible exception of their collective drug abuse). The reason I upped my rating, besides what I said above, is that I think this was more due to the Publisher more or less "chickening out" that it was that Don himself deliberating left something out of the book. Let me explain. When I read this book, I found this section to be sadly lacking in details of what went on with his firing from Eagles, as far as who, what, where and why. I had heard several times, that the UK edition, for example, was far more detailed in this area, and that the US Publisher was apparently leery of being sued, so they severely edited this portion of the book, apparently against Don's wishes. I haven't been able to completely verify this, but that's what I heard and read in many places, including a few professional reviews of this book. At any rate, this part of the book was very "thin" if you will. I keep expecting to get to more details, but then the book was over, and I was left wondering about this part of his story. It just seemed to me that it left out a lot of the story and many details where either sketchy or completely absent. This left me, as a reader, dangling, and wondering exactly what went on here, but it never got resolved for me. If, in fact,

the Publisher did get cold feet, and deliberately edited this out, they did us readers a great disservice by doing so. That was really the whole reason we bought this book in the first place, was it not? Other than that, the rest of the book is fabulous and was a good read. One way I can tell how much I like or dislike a book, is by how fast I read it. I finished this book in only about 5 or 6 days, and that is reading only in the car while driving to and from work (while my wife drove!), and about 1/2 hour each day over lunch. If you didn't buy this book when it first came out, and you are any kind of Eagles fan, I do highly recommend it. I would suggest though, that if you can, you give a shot at finding the UK version if you can.

I thought this was really good. I really wanted to get Don's perspective on things after watching the Eagles documentary and I wasn't disappointed. I really like that he spent quite a bit of time on his early years before the Eagles (didn't really expect that). I think he was very candid even on his own failings and mistakes, but I do realize this is his perspective. I'm giving it 4 stars because the writing seems a bit awkward to me and doesn't flow very well at times, it seems to go from topic to topic between paragraphs, it reads a bit strange at times. I was very interested in the material and from that perspective it was well worth the read.

I was prepared to dislike this book, for a number of reasons. The Kindle edition is expensive, poorly formatted, and contains too many typos. Felder drops names throughout, and gives a litany of petty complaints against Glenn Frey, mostly, but also Don Henley. Most of the juicy information is also available in the Showtime documentary, where Henley and Frey give convincing demonstrations of their lack of manners, and ethics. Nothing new. And the fact that Felder was fired when he asked to look at the books, not mentioned in the documentary, was in the Howard Stern interview, and no more detail is offered in this book. There's something radioactive in those ledgers, and Felder only vaguely hints at it. That takes care of the negative. In spite of everything, I came away feeling like reading it was definitely worth my time. His early life is a chronicle of opportunities lost, because of his unwillingness to move to where the action was. Then, when he finally gets asked to join the Eagles, he jumps on the offer, because of its possibilities. But in doing so, he leaves the company of Graham Nash, with whom he had a warm friendship. Who's to say that he would not have also had a good career with Nash, or whoever else would have eventually crossed his path. Instead, he joins the group, over the warnings of his friend Bernie Leadon, who recruited him in the first place. So begins a long-term abusive relationship, in which the participants stay only because it's lucrative. Here is where the unhappiness of the situation comes through in

Felder's book, far better than any other account. In retrospect, I sense that Frey himself was the most miserable of the bunch, and was probably responsible for most of the problems, but was also trapped in the band against his will, simply because it was lucrative. I wonder how much Irving Azoff had to do with the growing poisonous atmosphere, but I didn't learn anything here. They all hit rock bottom, aided in no small part by rampant drug use and promiscuity. You really come away thinking that Leadon was the happiest of the bunch, because he was first to quit, and they all should have done the same long before they did. In this sense, it was a morality tale, and a lesson in prosperity versus happiness. You won't find happiness in a situation that makes you rich, if you have to work closely with people you would never otherwise choose to be close to. You see in Felder's story the shallowness of most friendships built in that environment. I came away grateful that I am in my own shoes, and not in those of one of the Eagles, regardless of their fame and fortune.

It's an interesting read, if you are fascinated with the band and the personalities in and around it, like me. It took me right into the reality of that fantasy rock-star life I always thought I wanted. Don ("Fingers") Felder is obviously a player, not a writer, but his book includes so much detail I had to skip parts to avoid being overwhelmed by minutia. Where that detail applied to the group or the music though, I was grateful for it. All in all, recommended.

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