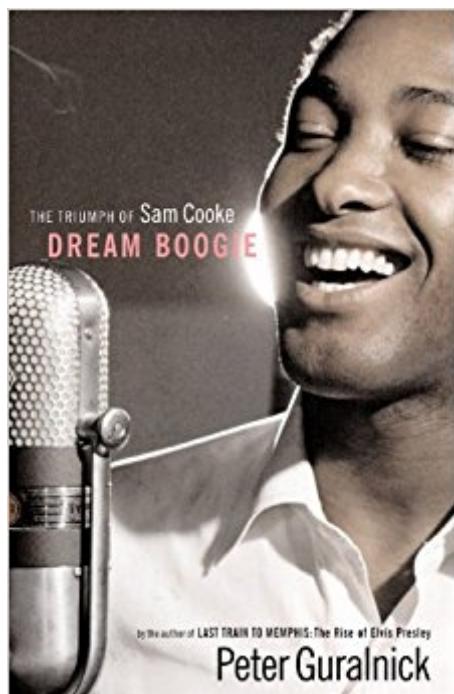


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Dream Boogie: The Triumph Of Sam Cooke



Synopsis

One of the most influential singers and songwriters of all time, Sam Cooke was among the first to blend gospel music and secular themes--the early foundation of soul music. He was the opposite of Elvis: a black performer who appealed to white audiences, who wrote his own songs, who controlled his own business destiny. No biography has previously been written that fully captures Sam Cooke's accomplishments, the importance of his contribution to American music, the drama that accompanied his rise in the early days of the civil rights movement, and the mystery that surrounds his death. Bestselling author Peter Guralnick tells this moving and significant story, from Cooke's childhood as a choirboy to an adulthood when he was anything but. With appearances by Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, James Brown, Harry Belafonte, Aretha Franklin, Fidel Castro, The Beatles, Sonny and Cher, Bob Dylan, and other central figures of this explosive era, DREAM BOOGIE is a compelling depiction of one man striving to achieve his vision despite all obstacles--and an epic portrait of America during the turbulent and hopeful 1950s and 1960s. The triumph of the book is the vividness with which Peter Guralnick conveys the astonishing richness of the black America of this era--the drama, force, and feeling of the story.

Book Information

Hardcover: 768 pages

Publisher: Little, Brown and Company; First Edition edition (October 18, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0316377945

ISBN-13: 978-0316377942

Product Dimensions: 6.4 x 1.6 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 61 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #358,921 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #86 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Soul #103 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Biographies > Rhythm & Blues #516 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Culinary

Customer Reviews

Starred Review. There's no real substitute for the sound of Sam Cooke's music, but the detailed descriptions of his recordings throughout this masterful biography are the next best thing to wearing headphones while you read. Guralnick's first book after a two-volume bio of Elvis honors Cooke's

(1931-1964) musical genius, especially his ability to grasp the changing music scene of the late 1950s and early '60s. For those who only know the singer through his pop hits—"You Send Me

Until Sam Cooke was shot dead in a Los Angeles motel, in 1964, at the age of thirty-three, his life had been an ascending series of crossover moves: he conquered the postwar gospel-music scene, scored bigger hits by moving into secular rhythm and blues, and then, after signing with R.C.A., in 1960, proceeded to go pop, and released a string of smooth, catchy singles that placed him on the cusp of mainstream superstar status. Guralnick, as in his biography of Elvis Presley, displays a feel for the culture that gave rise to the musician, and his account is a revelatory portrait of the rough-and-tumble yet familial world of black show business before and during the civil-rights era. In darker corners lurk the antecedents of today's gangster-rap subculture—racketeers who funded black record labels and tour packages, and performers like Johnny (Guitar) Watson, who made more as a pimp than he did singing. Copyright © 2006 The New Yorker

I'm a big fan of Sam Cooke (you'd have to be to even pick up all 650 pages of *Dream Boogie*) and tend to think of "Bring It on Home To Me" and "A Change Is Gonna Come" as two of the most beautiful songs ever written. I was disappointed in an *Entertainment Weekly* review I'd read of the book that called the book a little plodding and concluded that Cooke didn't deserve the type of meticulous attention that Peter Guralnick had brought to Elvis Presley over his two heralded biographies of Presley. Well, I still don't much agree with that review, but after finally reaching the end after picking up and putting down the book for about 10 months, I at least can appreciate where the reviewer was coming from. Not only is *Dream Boogie* meticulous, down to the week and month, of every trip of Sam's career - from gospel singer in the Highway QC's to the Soul Stirrers, to the beginning and end of his career - it gets downright encyclopedic. There are moments in the book detailing particular contracts and formations of certain partnerships that would test the patience of anyone but the most ardent followers of the industry. For me, if the passages detailing Cooke's business life left me with anything important, it's to underscore the core tenants of Cooke's personality, for which Guralnick's approach becomes revelatory: Sam's ability to see trends as they were arising, his studied approach to the people around him, his warmth with a hint of a dagger underneath, his command of respect, and above all, his magnetism that drew everyone to him. For the first ten years of *Dream Boogie*, that magnetism is all you read about, really - the trail of Sam's conquests on the road, the women who swooned and screamed at his concerts, the mesmeric glow of Sam as performer. Yet something brilliant happens to the book as it enters the heyday of Sixties

tumult: the seeds of Sam's personality start to become time bombs interacting with the world around him. It's fascinating to see Sam dancing around in the corner of the story of Muhammed Ali and Malcolm X, and I had had no idea of their connection before (I wasn't alive in the 60s). As personal tragedy strikes and Sam's marriage unravels we see, sort of, Sam begin to unravel, too. What makes Guralnick such a great writer is that what we don't really get is a true indication of what Sam thought, we got what people observed, and how their observations changed over the years - because the biggest mystery at the heart of Sam's great magnetism was always wondering what he was thinking. Sam's death, which I confess I knew little about prior to reading this book, is mysterious in a way, and also a culmination of the demons in his life, even without knowing the full truth about it. In the end, it took me a long time to get there, but Dream Boogie took a figure I was fascinated by and pointed a camera at him in a way that got me to watch both him and the world around him with a thoroughness and clarity I'd never experienced before.

OK but a bit tedious. Really more detail than I wanted.

The author did an outstanding job in detailing the gospel roots, the challenge of cross-over recording and performing. and the later social activism of Sam Cooke. I don't personally like the current trend in book publishing of scattering pictures throughout the book instead of having them in a single, easily accessible, location for reference, or, conversely, of putting all footnotes in the back of the book without even noting them in the text, but that's a very minor criticism and I loved the Discography at the end and have ordered a couple of gospel and pop CD's for traveling! A great read for anyone who loves the music and wants to know more about the entertainer, businessman and loyal friend that was Sam Cooke.

Very fact-based, not much narrative or story telling, more like a Wikipedia article that focuses too much on unimportant moments or details of Sam Cooke's life. The majority of quotes seem to come from the same sibling too, so pretty one-sided.

To me, Sam Cooke music was always light weight and so I always considered him a lightweight as I am not a huge fan of pop music. In Peter Guralnick's detailed, insightful book, Cooke is revealed to be so much more. Sam's gospel and family roots in Chicago are explained with entertaining tidbits which include his friends and colleagues such as Lou Rawls, Bobby Womack and Johnnie Taylor. Cooke was a trailblazer in the music industry: Like Ray Charles, he transformed gospel to

pop music. He wrote the bulk of his own material—which to me is the mark of a total recording artist, transcending singing. Lastly, Cooke was one of the first artists who took total control of the business end of his career and cut out a lot of the middlemen who profit off the talent of others. The book does everything a biography is supposed to do and more. It carefully researches the details of Sam Cooke's life and shocking and controversial death. It also offers insight into Sam's motivations, artistry and tragic flaws.

IT'S REAL

Guralnick's penchant for intricate detail makes for a long but thoroughly enjoyable read.

The book is interesting and reads well. If you're a Sam Cooke fan this read will give you a good depiction of his life.

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