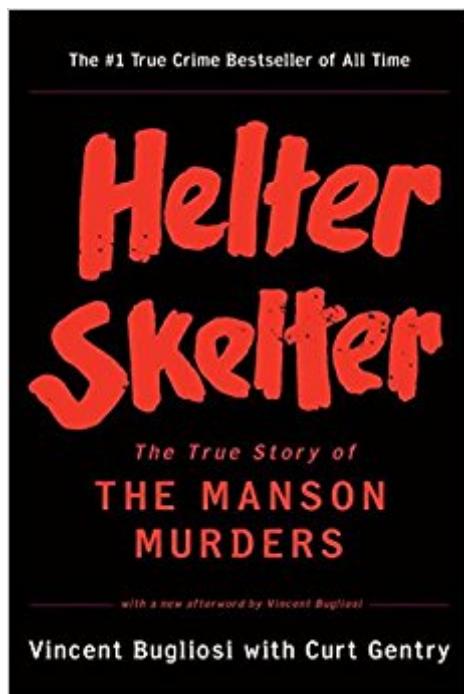


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# Helter Skelter: The True Story Of The Manson Murders



## Synopsis

The #1 True Crime Bestseller of All Time—7 Million Copies Sold In the summer of 1969, in Los Angeles, a series of brutal, seemingly random murders captured headlines across America. A famous actress (and her unborn child), an heiress to a coffee fortune, a supermarket owner and his wife were among the seven victims. A thin trail of circumstances eventually tied the Tate-LeBianca murders to Charles Manson, a would-be pop singer of small talent living in the desert with his "family" of devoted young women and men. What was his hold over them? And what was the motivation behind such savagery? In the public imagination, over time, the case assumed the proportions of myth. The murders marked the end of the sixties and became an immediate symbol of the dark underside of that era. Vincent Bugliosi was the prosecuting attorney in the Manson trial, and this book is his enthralling account of how he built his case from what a defense attorney dismissed as only "two fingerprints and Vince Bugliosi." The meticulous detective work with which the story begins, the prosecutor's view of a complex murder trial, the reconstruction of the philosophy Manson inculcated in his fervent followers... these elements make for a true crime classic. *Helter Skelter* is not merely a spellbinding murder case and courtroom drama but also, in the words of *The New Republic*, a "social document of rare importance." 50 pages of black-and-white photographs

## Book Information

Paperback: 689 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company; Reprint edition (December 17, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0393322238

ISBN-13: 978-0393322231

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 1.4 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.1 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 745 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #5,626 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #17 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > True Crime > Serial Killers #29 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > True Crime > Murder & Mayhem #44 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Criminology

## Customer Reviews

“One of the best crime stories ever written.” - Chicago Sun-Times  
“[A] social document of rare importance.” - The New Republic

Vincent Bugliosi (1934–2015), was the prosecutor of Charles Manson and author of *Helter Skelter*, *Outrage*, and other #1 bestselling books. Curt Gentry (1931-2014), an Edgar winner, was the author of *J. Edgar Hoover: The Man and the Secrets*, *Frame-Up: The Incredible Case of Tom Mooney and Warren Billings*, and co-author of *Helter Skelter* with Vincent Bugliosi.

This account is not quite as engrossing as some of Bugliosi's other books, such as "And the Sea Will Tell." It still rates five stars, but it takes a little more effort to get through, in part because there are so many names a reader has to keep straight. There were so many victims, perpetrators, witnesses, and investigators. Bugliosi does provide a Name Key at the front of the book, giving thumbnail sketches of the "cast of characters." It's helpful to refer to this Key often. The other reason this book isn't quite as informative as Bugliosi's other true crime accounts is that he doesn't provide as many legal insights as he did in his other works. There is a lot of insider information about the legal maneuvering involved in bringing Manson and three female co-defendants to trial. But Bugliosi doesn't delve sufficiently into such points as why Manson was deemed to be the most guilty of all the perpetrators, even though Manson himself didn't personally commit any of the Tate/LaBianca murders. It's not that Manson shouldn't have been held ultimately responsible. But I'd like to have read more about the legal theory backing such an assignment of guilt. Bugliosi does devote a few paragraphs to the topic, mentioning the care he took as prosecutor to emphasize the rules of conspiracy to the jurors. He didn't want any juror holding out to exonerate Manson just because Manson didn't physically stab or shoot any of the victims. However, I'd like to have read an in-depth discussion of this point because it touches on so much of the high crimes that have characterized the last 100 hundred years - from the crimes adjudicated at the Nuremberg Trials to several of the more sensational matricides and patricides committed by teens recently. In several of the latter cases, the juvenile partner who did the actual killing was deemed to be much more responsible than the instigating youngster who merely provided access to the house and who stood by while the slaughter occurred. In view of the conspiracy rules applied in the Manson case, why would this be so? This book nonetheless provides a valuable demonstration of the often tragic consequences of carelessness. The blurb on the back cover cites the "meticulous detective work" involved. This would lead you to believe that members of the various police departments really exerted themselves gathering evidence. However, that's not true. The detective work referred to is probably that done by Bugliosi himself and his staff. Bugliosi stepped outside his role as prosecutor to become chief homicide investigator as well - a real Perry Mason generalist. He showed exemplary determination

in his efforts to leave no stone unturned - literally - in order to locate evidence and testimony. Meanwhile, many members of the different police and sheriffs' offices were notable for their failure to follow through with leads, and for their failure to communicate with each other. Inter-departmental competition and just plain indifference was often to blame. It becomes apparent that if various individuals, from Manson's parole officers, to a whole hierarchy of officers and investigators had earnestly and intelligently done their jobs, at least some of the murders could have been averted. So this book provides a lesson in how things in law enforcement could be improved, but probably haven't been since this book was first published in 1974. Bugliosi goes beyond exploring "just the facts, ma'am." He devotes pages to an explanation of Manson's motivating philosophy, a roiling stew of such disparate ingredients as songs from The Beatles' "White Album" and quotes from the Book of Revelation. Bugliosi further spends the better part of a chapter examining how Manson could have gained such a devoted following. He covers some of the elements that make any successful cult leader, but then is left with some X-factor that he believed Manson must have possessed in order to have had such influence. Sometimes the reader might feel that Bugliosi goes too far in admiration of Manson, characterizing him as having such qualities as "Intelligence...searing insights... mental deftness." There are also several extensive sections of photographs (albeit rather grainy ones) reproduced here. Some have key elements whitened out to avoid personalizing the gore too much. Finally, there's an "Afterward" in this edition that updates (as of 1994) readers on the lives of both the guilty and the innocent involved in this shocking saga.

Incredibly detailed. Often cited among the all-time best reads of the "True Crime" genre, "Helter Skelter" is the definitive story on the Tate-LaBianca murders of 1969. Authored by Vincent Bugliosi, who was able to successfully prosecute Charles Manson and three other members of his "Family" for the killings, he is able to piece together for the reader the background story of what led up to a tragic episode in American pop culture -- one which signaled the end of the free-wheeling era of the 1960's. Over 600+ pages, Bugliosi lays out the case against Manson and his gang, who acted seemingly at random in their homicidal spree over an August weekend in Los Angeles. Bugliosi is meticulous in detailing the facts. He was a lawyer by trade, and while he became a successful author following the success of *Helter Skelter*, his prose does tend to be on the dry side. The book can drag in parts just because there are so many characters involved -- both at the heart of the story and on the periphery -- that at times, it's hard to keep all the names straight. Despite those shortcomings, this is still the go-to book on the subject of Manson if the subject fancies you. Before reading this text, I was quite familiar with the mythical status of Manson and the fact that one of the

victims of these killings was actress Sharon Tate. But aside from that, I really didn't know much more. I assure you that this book will provide you with all the knowledge you wanted to know on the topic -- and then some.

This was probably THE most fascinating non-fiction book written about Charles Manson's and his minion's reign of terror. I bought my first copy the year after the book was first released and by now, it's worn out to the point of pages falling out. I haven't read my new copy yet but I will. It's not particularly one I want to subject myself to again, but it is hard to put down once you'd started it. The mastermind behind the crimes is certifiably crazy and it's a pity the state of California forces tax payers to keep him alive and locked up in a high security cell. He's in no way, shape or form, suffering or paying for what he had done to all of those people. Vincent Bugliosi was one of (if not the BEST of) the prosecuting attorneys and his slant on the man behind the plans will give you nightmares long after you've read it. Having the book written by him is the perfect choice of authors.

Well written and thought out account of the Tate-LaBianca murders. At times, Bugliosi goes into too much detail for me but, as he was the chief prosecutor in the case, he had access to mounds of information. It is an accomplishment not only to have condensed this info down to just under 700 pages, but to make sense out of all the insane wackiness and pure evil of the case. I highly recommend this book if you have any interest in the case and I recommend *Restless Souls* for a more personal slant on Sharon Tate herself. Helped me put to bed some of my childhood fears that I still so vividly remember after all these years.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I was not well educated on the Manson murders before reading this account. I can now see why they are so frequently referenced. Mr. Bugliosi did a fine job of communicating the horror and depravity of these crimes. I highly recommend this book.

If you never read it before it's a 4 easy ... It was a re-read for me. Almost a procedural, but a fair amount of stuff that never makes it to any of the video re-hashes. It'll also make you wonder just how the hell they all got life sentences for it, even though they did it. In today's wimpy judicial climate the ACLU would have had them walking ...

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