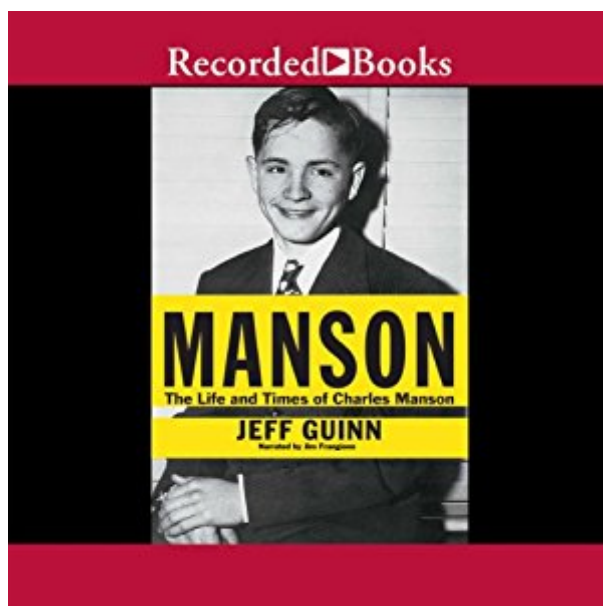


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Manson: The Life And Times Of Charles Manson



Synopsis

Award-winning journalist Jeff Guinn's highly acclaimed Manson has won rave reviews and is a top-pick on must-read lists everywhere. This superb biography answers lingering questions about the Manson Family murders, while delivering stunning revelations about the life of America's most notorious psychopath.

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Customer Reviews

I am not sure why Charles Manson holds such fascination for people even after more than 30 years of his evil deeds but he does. Part of that fascination no doubt lies in the intersection of a cult like, manipulative psychopath like Manson, with the "family" of wayward 60's children who followed him seemingly blindly, intertwined with superstars like Dennis Wilson of the Beach Boys, Terry Melcher, the son of Doris Day and music producer, and the 60's counterculture of sex, drugs and rock and roll, then throw in some despicable, diabolical murders of celebrities. Jeff Guinn's most recent biography of Charles Manson really does a masterful job of not only unspooling the tragic life and acts of Manson, putting the entire episode of his deeds and media frenzy of a trial in the context of the 1960's - particularly the freewheeling counterculture of San Francisco and Haight Ashbury where Manson finally made some inroads in beguiling the gullible and maybe somewhat psychopathic young people who followed him. A few things that stand out in this biography is that while Manson had a terrible childhood with a mother who didn't want and probably didn't love him the apple didn't fall far from the tree. She herself ended up in the state penitential for an

unbelievably idiotic crime and clearly was a narcissist in her own right. Whether Manson inherited this or developed it on his own, it's rather clear the gene pool he comes from would be more apt to be called as cesspool and it manifests itself in him. I don't know if people are truly born evil but it's also clear Manson was pretty much evil from childhood with all the examples Guinn provides of his misdeeds and behavior. As a result Manson spent most of his formative years in institutions. In fact, by now he has spent most of his entire life in prison. After providing some new insights into Manson's early life Guinn shows how Manson learned in prison how to manipulate and persuade. Being a smaller person he had to scare people or act crazy to avoid more serious confrontation and he learned to manipulate and persuade as well. No doubt, despite his craziness, Manson exhibits a certain level of aptitude in luring followers. Guinn shows how Manson honed his craft and finally started gaining traction with the off casts and drug addled youth in Haight Ashbury, mostly gullible young women. Not all of them were necessarily attractive but once he had his cache of freewheeling young women and a few men who he controlled as well, he created a "family" and isolated them for maximum control. Most interested in this work will know most of the story from this point. Manson desperately wanted to be a published musician and courted the Beach Boy's Dennis Wilson and pursued Terry Melcher to produce his music. Add to that the crazy scheme of Helter Skelter, or a revolution of blacks against whites that would lead to destruction and Manson and his family rising from their hideout in the dessert to rule. I suspect Manson didn't truly believe this but used it to explain to the drug addled family his actions and give them a narrative to believe in and follow. The crazy murders of Sharon Tate and her friends, along with other murders to hide these, culminated in one of the most storied trials in American history. Many believe, as Guinn points out, his true target was likely Terry Melcher who spurned Manson and actually owned the house where the murders took place and was renting it to Roman Polanski (who was out of town) and Sharon Tate. Manson had even been to the house before and knew its layout. Guinn also points out other murders Manson and his cohorts likely were involved in as well. Guinn also does an excellent job of detailing the trial and giving some insight into the fates of most of the main "characters" that were part of the family and those involved in bringing them to justice. He wraps everything up and provides a well-rounded look at not just the life of Manson, but entire cache of his deeds in the larger environment around him. A well done and highly recommended work for those interested.

excellent account of how charles manson's past and the times he lived in shaped him and his bunch of followers into--- well, words cant quite convey-- the killers they were. After reading you 100% understand how seemingly unconnected influences, personailities, and societal forces can make

one hell of a toxic brew. Please- spend the \$5 and at least get a cheap used paperback copy to explore this horrific time in our past in a book that educates. well worth it !

I recently saw Jeff Guinn the author of Manson speak at a bookstore on the C-Span network. The author was so fascinating as he discussed the life of Charles Manson (born in Cincinnati in 1934) that I had to order his book from ! I am no stranger to Guinn's fine works on the underbelly of American society. His previous bestsellers on Bonnie and Clyde and the Gunfight at the OK Corral were two of the Texan's best works. Manson is even better! Charles Manson was born to a mother who spent time in West Virginia prison for a botched robbery. He was raised by his grandmother, mother and various relatives in a fairly stable environment. Manson was trained to believe in God; his maternal grandmother Nancy Maddox and mom Kathleen made sure of that! Manson was always a bad seed. Charlie spent much of his youth in various detention centers and reform schools. Manson wed at twenty but the marriage only lasted two short years. Most of his adult life was spent in prisons. Manson drifted to San Francisco in the hippie 60's where he attracted young followers as a guru of lots of drugs, sex, music and rock and roll. Manson worshipped the Beatles and the Bible. Manson believed the Beatles song "Helter-Skelter" was a wakeup call to the racial war. Manson hated African-Americans. He was basically illiterate though he could wave a magic wand as a charismatic dictator over gullible followers. He had a low opinion of women viewing them as subordinate to males. Women existed for sex and service to him! Manson relocated to Los Angeles where he dreamed of singing a hit record. Charlie became friendly with Dennis Wilson of the Beach Boys and Terry Melcher the record producer son of actress Doris Day. Manson moved to the Spahn Ranch near LA and later the Barker Ranch in desolate Death Valley. There he indulged in sex with various women, stole cars, dealt drugs and murdered a ranch hand named Shorty Shea. Manson sired one child by cult follower Mary Brunner a plain former librarian. On the night of August 9, 1969 followers of Manson's repulsive family brutally murdered Sharon Tate, Jay Sebring, Abigail Folger and Voytek Frykowski in the mansion on Cielo Drive. The mansion was the residence of Tate and her husband Roman Polanski the famous Polish film director who was in Europe at the time of the brutal slaughter. That night they also murdered Steve Parent a young high school student who was visiting the estate's caretaker William Garretson (he was arrested for the gruesome murders but was eventually released when jailhouse snitches heard Susan Atkins brag about her part in the murders.) In the next few days they would also murder Leon and Rosemary LaBianca on Waverly Drive in Los Angeles. Tex Watson a Manson disciple led the murderous family members in the home invasions which led to murder. The case won worldwide fame as prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi

wrote *Helter-Skelter* the bestselling true crime book in history. The book made Manson and his family instant celebrities. Manson and his followers were all sentenced to die in California's gas chamber but the death penalty was later banned in the Golden State. Manson continues to serve his life sentence. Manson sought fame and fortune at all cost dreaming of a career in music. He is a repulsive character with charisma who charmed and murdered his way to notoriety and a place in the hall of criminal shame. Guinn puts the Manson story in the context of the turbulent 1960's. Manson's milieu was in the hippie culture of California in the era of Vietnam and race rioting. Guinn makes clear that 1968 with the assassinations of Bobby Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr. and racial violence was one of the worst years in American history. Guinn has done his homework producing a chilling account of a horrible man. Excellent and well deserving of your time.

So good is Jeff Guinn's review of the life of Charles Manson that you may feel ill or unclean after reading it. It is obvious from the very first chapter that societal issue aside, Manson was (to use the famous line from the song), "Born To Be Bad". While born into a family with low economic standards and criminal behavior, Charlie was trouble from the start, scarring (as opposed to scaring) everyone he met. So his evolution into a cult leader with murderous overtones would surprise no one. Guinn spares no verbal expense at pointing out the excesses in the prison system, "The Summer Of Love", and Hollywood "royalty" that enabled Manson to flourish. The 5'4" monster had some brains, despite his lack of formal education. He points out that quite a few people -liked- his criminal record, and that all of the warning signs were in place for tragedy -months- before "The Family" made its murderous moves. Yet nothing was done to stop the diminutive demon. Close examinations of the crimes, and further adventures, of the Manson group are provided for the reader, to great effect. Jeff Guinn has succeeded in capturing the essence of the criminal in this tome. But you may want to take a shower after you put the book down.

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