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Heads: A Biography Of Psychedelic America



Synopsis

Heads: A Biography of Psychedelic America uncovers a hidden history of the biggest psychedelic distribution and belief system the world has ever known. Through a collection of fast-paced interlocking narratives, it animates the tale of an alternate America and its wide-eyed citizens: the LSD-slinging graffiti writers of Central Park, the Dead-loving AI scientists of Stanford, utopian Whole Earth homesteaders, black market chemists, government-wanted Anonymous hackers, rogue explorers, East Village bluegrass pickers, spiritual seekers, Internet pioneers, entrepreneurs, pranksters, pioneering DJs, and a nation of Deadheads. WFMU DJ and veteran music writer Jesse Jarnow draws on extensive new firsthand accounts from many never-before-interviewed subjects and a wealth of deep archival research to create a comic-book-colored and panoramic American landscape, taking readers for a guided tour of the hippie highway filled with lit-up explorers, peak trips, big busts, and scenic vistas, from Vermont to the Pacific Northwest, from the old world head capitals of San Francisco and New York to the geodesic dome-dotted valleys of Colorado and New Mexico. And with the psychedelic research moving into the mainstream for the first time in decades, *Heads* also recounts the story of the quiet entheogenic revolution that for years has been brewing resiliently in the Dead's Technicolor shadow. Featuring over four dozen images, many never before seen—including pop artist Keith Haring's first publicly sold work—*Heads* weaves on of the 20th and 21st centuries' most misunderstood subcultures into the fabric of the nation's history. Written for anyone who wondered what happened to the heads after the Acid Tests, through the '70s, during the Drug War, and on to the psychedelic present, *Heads* collects the essential history of how LSD, Deadheads, tie-dye, and the occasional bad trip have become familiar features of the American experience.

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Customer Reviews

"Something out there churns again, a power that's hard to place, sometimes overlapping with the new explorers, but just as often not." "The Dead and their hordes require vast tracts of space to fully unfurl their carpet across the landscape and take their substances and dance and congregate." "The question is, can we do it and stay high?" Jerry Garcia. For those interested in the psychedelic subculture in America this book pretty much lays it all out in an easy to read and understand style. If you grew up in that era (roughly beginning in the late '60s) no doubt you're familiar with that scene. And the author has put together a number of narratives that put much of that whole scene (from East Coast to West Coast) in perspective if you weren't "tuned in". Some narratives are related, others not. But everything is tied together with the band the Grateful Dead who pop up throughout much of this book. Saying that, is this a book about The Dead? Not really but kind of. "The ins and outs of stonerdom act as a subtle and ongoing counterpoint that sometimes intersects directly with the psychedelic narrative." If you're a fan of the band (like me beginning in 1967) the book is even more interesting and informative. The Dead is there from just about the beginning up through the end of the book, so important are they to the story--not only the band itself but the people who came together around them and made up a large part of that entire scene--artists, musicians, writers, poets, academics, heads, and anyone else loosely tied to that whole scene that was growing and spreading across America.

Being a child of the 60s, and having done my fair share of LSD, both when it was brilliant and legal, illegal and fun, then heading off to Viet Nam as a Nurse where I discovered truly wonderful weed, and returning to a slow-mo world laced with delicious Quaaludes, Tuinals, Seconals, and my favorite standby Valium, I would certainly consider myself to have been a Head during those hazy years, and yes, I would still consider myself a Head to this day. "Heads" considers a time when the magic of music defined who we were, when my generation's ideas and ideals stood in stark juxtaposition to those of our parents and the almighty establishment, when we believed with idealistic notions that through sheer will, we could effect a life altering change, not just for ourselves, but for the planet and all mankind. "Heads" manages to part the curtains and to allow those of you who missed those heady days to see beyond the blue haze of social activism, inward

searching, fanatic band adulation, and those who just wanted to step off the map. *Heads* will show you that even in our imagined anti-establishment manifestos, we had our secret handshakes, a secret language, knowing nods, and more weirdness than one should ever consider letting out of the jar. If *Heads* manages to do anything joyously and correctly, it's that Jesse Jarnow manages to connect the fast paced banter and dovetailing required to fully comprehend all that was going down ... both on the east coast, the west coast, and little unimagined places all across America. The book is both about evolution and de-evolution, about structure and de-structure, and about an almost incomprehensible substance called essence.

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