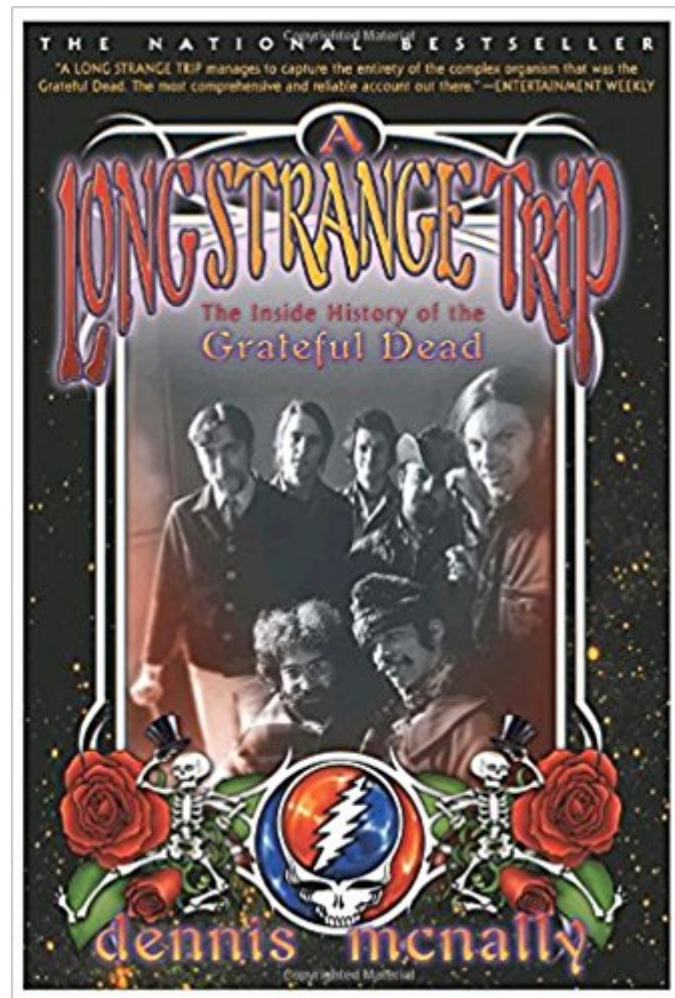




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# A Long Strange Trip: The Inside History Of The Grateful Dead



## Synopsis

The complete history of one of the most long-lived and legendary bands in rock history, written by its official historian and publicist – a must-have chronicle for all Dead Heads, and for students of rock and the 1960s counterculture. From 1965 to 1995, the Grateful Dead flourished as one of the most beloved, unusual, and accomplished musical entities to ever grace American culture. The creative synchronicity among Jerry Garcia, Bob Weir, Phil Lesh, Bill Kreutzmann, Mickey Hart, and Ron “Pigpen” McKernan exploded out of the artistic ferment of the early sixties roots and folk scene, providing the soundtrack for the Dionysian revels of the counterculture. To those in the know, the Dead was an ongoing tour de force: a band whose constant commitment to exploring new realms lay at the center of a thirty-year journey through an ever-shifting array of musical, cultural, and mental landscapes. Dennis McNally, the band’s historian and publicist for more than twenty years, takes readers back through the Dead’s history in *A Long Strange Trip*. In a kaleidoscopic narrative, McNally not only chronicles their experiences in a fascinatingly detailed fashion, but veers off into side trips on the band’s intricate stage setup, the magic of the Grateful Dead concert experience, or metaphysical musings excerpted from a conversation among band members. He brings to vivid life the Dead’s early days in late-sixties San Francisco – an era of astounding creativity and change that reverberates to this day. Here we see the group at its most raw and powerful, playing as the house band at Ken Kesey’s acid tests, mingling with such legendary psychonauts as Neal Cassady and Owsley “Bear” Stanley, and performing the alchemical experiments, both live and in the studio, that produced some of their most searing and evocative music. But McNally carries the Dead’s saga through the seventies and into the more recent years of constant touring and incessant musical exploration, which have cemented a unique bond between performers and audience, and created the business enterprise that is much more a family than a corporation. Written with the same zeal and spirit that the Grateful Dead brought to its music for more than thirty years, the book takes readers on a personal tour through the band’s inner circle, highlighting its frenetic and very human faces. *A Long Strange Trip* is not only a wide-ranging cultural history, it is a definitive musical biography.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Grateful Dead forever changed popular music by ushering in the psychedelic sound of the 1960s as they valiantly toured almost nonstop for three decades and consumed loads of illegal substances. Yet the most fascinating, and revealing, thing about the Dead is their fans the Deadheads: tie-dyed, drugged up and devoted in a way that makes Beatlemania look rational. What did the Dead have that fellow San Francisco bands Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver Messenger Service and Moby Grape lacked? As author McNally (*Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation, and America*) explains in this entertaining and well-written book, the Dead built up their loyal following by treating fans as equals, as "companions in an odyssey." After improvisation, writes McNally, "the single largest element in the Dead's weltanschauung was their pursuit of group mind under the influence of LSD...." As the Dead's publicist for more than 20 years, McNally packs this 600-pager full of intimate details otherwise unavailable, such as the time the group's janitor vetoed a suggestion from multimillion-dollar promoter Bill Graham as too "commercial." On the other hand, McNally clearly dodges the more unflattering and controversial aspects of the musicians' lives offstage; indeed, every living member of the original lineup provides glowing endorsements on the book's back cover. But perhaps McNally thinks the Dead's underside has been done to death; in any case, with a little prettifying he still manages to pen the most exhaustively researched book on the band to date. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

McNally has been the Grateful Dead's official historian since 1980. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I've read nearly a dozen biographies of the Grateful Dead, but this book is truly a history of the Dead. I learned more from it than all the others combined. The historical information regarding the band member's childhoods contained details I had never heard before. Likewise with the early history of the band. Two aspects really stick out. First, he provides details regarding practically every song they wrote, which I found fascinating. Second is the details regarding all the musicians and collaborations they were involved with. I had to buy at least 10 CDs because they were described in the book- Miles Davis opened for them and played Bitches Brew, which blew Lesh away, so I bought it. Garcia, Hart and others collaborated with David Crosby, Graham Nash, Paul Kantner and others on albums recorded at Wally Heider's studio just because they were all hanging out there, so I bought them all. Same with the Grateful Dead's recording co. (I knew about those but had to buy a few I previously had on vinyl). The book is long, but it's worth sticking with. It answered some questions I had puzzled over for years. I always thought it was odd that Bobby's guitar didn't present well in concert. Find out why on the bottom of p.549. If you're a real Dead Head, he is sure to mention shows or events you are personally familiar with. I found that incredibly cool. Another cool thing is that if you have a good collection of their music (Dick's Picks was very helpful), you can listen to albums and shows he specifically references and gain a much deeper understanding of what was going on with the band, and the world, at that exact time. One reviewer thought he went a little easy on the drug issues, but I disagree. However, if you want more sex and drugs with your rock and roll, read Steve Parish's *Home Before Daylight*. Between that and this book, you'll know about as much as you can about my favorite band, the Grateful Dead.

This is a great thorough history of The Grateful Dead. I enjoyed reading the book and got more in depth information on many of the stories of the band written about in other books. Starting from the beginning the book goes through the years with the band. A long strange trip indeed. I have read many books about the Dead and Jerry Garcia, this was one of the good ones. Lots of details and insight into the grooviest band on the planet! Such a long long time to be gone and a short time to be there.

Dennis McNally's "A Long Strange Trip: The Inside History of the Grateful Dead" provides a valuable context for Dead Heads to better understand the phenomenon that provided much of the soundtrack for an entire generation of Americans. McNally is a superb writer, and his prose has a wonderful lyric flow. There is an almost Homeric quality to the volume: Alternating triumphs and defeats, with the uber-talented Jerry Garcia as the Ulysses of this epic work. At the end, it's clear

that the Dead, whose music so pleased the public, came at huge personal prices not only for Garcia but the entire band and retinue. McNally, former publicist for Dead, pulled no punches, and is to be commended for his candor. For fans of the Dead whose knowledge of the rock and roll band consists of fragments garnered from newspaper and magazine articles, "A Long Strange Trip" provides a valuable narrative whole. And, finally, the book is a great read.

Well written. Great to catch up on everything I missed.

I enjoyed this book. I learned about the Dead, and the general environment that their characters, culture, and music developed in. The majority of the book chronicles the early years of the Dead, with less and less time being spent documenting the later years. At first, I was disappointed that not enough time was devoted to developing the 'characters'. Relatively few quotes are attributed directly to band members, and there is not much characterization of the band members in general. Towards the end of the book, more of this happens, and I realize why it was good that the majority of this book didn't concentrate on this. Its petty, and one-dimensional, and (most importantly) doesn't have a lot to do with 'The Grateful Dead' and their music. I believe there are many more books which do more of the gossip thing, but this book is intentionally not about that. It carefully develops and follows the Dead, their music, and their cultural and musical upbringing. McNally does a great job of putting just the right amount of generic historical information within the story to give it some context and relevance. The only thing I didn't understand, and wish he would have developed further are some internal conflicts within the band early on. He spends a good amount of time explaining that Jerry and Phil were pretty set on 'firing' Pigpen and Weir. He never really explains why, except for a brief mention of Weir's general spaciness, and uninspired guitar playing. Pigpen was co-frontman in the early days, and for good reason. He was a great performer, and gave a side to the dead that was never replaced. McNally mentions they wanted a better keyboardist, but personally I loved Pig's minimalist approach, and organ sound. (Much better than Vince Welnick, who I believe ruined the sound of the Dead with his unchecked synthesizer 'percussion' banging away through all parts of every song) Also, I was shocked when very little description was given to how Pig's death affected the band, aside from the fact that they held a huge party in his honor. Alternately, McNally describes Brent's death as a huge blow to the band and the individual bandmembers. If there was no great feeling of solidarity during the early days with Pig, why doesn't McNally say so? And if there was, why so little description of it? The abundance of recordings from these days shows that there had to be some serious commitment to the idea of The Grateful Dead, at least musically. One more

complaint I have is the lack of development of the 'management' side of the family. There were a number of sound people, management and organizing elements to the Grateful Dead family, which McNally spends a good amount of time describing. Their involvement in the development and events of the band is unquestionable; but McNally just keeps throwing their names around when we really have no image of who these characters are. Bill Graham is the exception to this, as at least his name is familiar to most Deadheads, and his character is well developed in the book. But, Rock Scully, and some others are often mentioned, but I never get a good image of what type of people they are, and why the Dead really had them around? What did they really do? I found myself mixing them up most of the time. Otherwise, the pace of the book was perfect, especially for a relatively big book. I enjoyed every minute of it, and would recommend it to anyone who wants to know where this beautiful music and culture came from!

I highly recommend this book to all Dead Heads and anyone with an interest in rock n roll history. It's extremely well researched, with amazing details of the story throughout the book. I couldn't put this down.

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