



Lemmy: The Definitive Biography

Mick Wall

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In 'The Ace of Spades', Motörhead's most famous song, Lemmy, the born-to-lose, live-to-win frontman of the band sang, 'I don't want to live forever'. Yet as he told his friend of 35 years, former PR and biographer Mick Wall, 'Actually, I want to go the day before forever. To avoid the rush...'. This is his strange but true story.

Brutally frank, painfully funny, wincingly sad, and always beautifully told, LEMMY: THE DEFINITIVE BIOGRAPHY is the story of the only rock'n'roller never to sell his soul for silver and gold, while keeping the devil, as he put it, 'very close to my side'. From school days growing up in North Wales, to first finding fame in the mid-60s with the Rockin' Vicars ('We were very big up north, I had a Zephyr 6'); from being Jimi Hendrix's personal roadie ('I would score acid for him'), to leading Hawkwind to the top of the charts in 1972 with 'Silver Machine' ('I was fired for taking the wrong drugs'); from forming Motörhead ('I wanted to call the band Bastard but my manager wouldn't let me'), whose iconoclastic album NO SLEEP 'TIL HAMMERSMITH entered the UK charts at No. 1 - and its title into the lexicon of hip-speak.

Based on Mick's original interviews with Lemmy conducted over numerous years, along with the insights of those who knew him best - former band mates, friends, managers, fellow artists and record business insiders - this is an unputdownable story of one of Britain's greatest characters. As Lemmy once said of Wall, 'Mick Wall is one of the few rock writers in the world who can actually write and seems to know anything about rock music. I can and do talk to him for hours - poor bastard.'

With the hard part of his journey now over, Lemmy is set to become a legend. LEMMY: THE DEFINITIVE BIOGRAPHY explains exactly how that came to be.

Lemmy: The Definitive Biography Details

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Skull says

Fucking excellent, much more honest and all encompassing than the previous White Line Fever. It talks about the Lemmy I knew, Warts and all!

Andrew Clarey says

Always a fan of metal biographies, so this one was a no brainer to pick up. Lots of insight and a variety of musical references for me to look into. A great tale about a rock and roll legend.

Stephen Hines says

This was an almost perfect biography. I learned a lot of new information about Sir Lemmy. The only part I didn't care for was the author kept insisting that the longest running lineup of Motorhead was, essentially, a has-been outfit. What crap! They put out some phenomenal records!

David Cavaco says

Decent biography by music writer Mick Wall and friend of Lemmy. Lemmy is the quintessential rocker that despite the hedonistic lifestyle was a talented songwriter and an intelligent individual. The book shines a bit more when revealing Lemmy's personal life, especially at the end when he left us for that great gig in the sky.

Florin Pitea says

O biografie a basistului și vocalistului formației Motörhead, Ian "Lemmy" Kilmister. (Detalii la ?es?torul.) <http://tesatorul.blogspot.ro/2017/11/...>

Alexander Jørgensen says

Great reading about the early era of Lemmy, both in Hawkwind and Motörhead.

Ianzam says

Lemmy is one of the best, coolest cats to have graced this planet. And this book is really good, I intended to just buy Lemmy's autobiography (also great), but I could not put this book down. I do disagree with Mick on some matters of taste (Killed by Death is a very cool video!), and I love Motorhead's later stuff. But he did a great job here, and it has plenty of great quotes right from Lemmy himself, and his great bandmates and friends. Well worth a read.

Pogo Dragon says

I loved this book. I don't think there's anything groundbreaking in it. It's clearly written from a place of love and admiration. But I loved it. It's funny, it's sad, it clearly evokes the eras it's written about. And I cried at the end.

I've been a fan of Lemmy for years - even named one of my cats after him (hey, he had black hair and an independent attitude, it was obvious), this book just reminded me of what a giant we lost when he died.

Geoff says

This is definitely the best overall account of Lemmy's life or so it seems. Bought as a Christmas present for myself this year it is the third Biographical work of Motorhead/Lemmy I have read to date and as mentioned the best read to date.

Mick Wall tells a well crafted tale of Lemmy's beginnings to hitting it big with the Rocking Vicars, being a Roadie for Hendrix then getting in with Hawkwind and finally starting Motorhead. While I really enjoyed the book Lemmy - White Line Fever, it was told by Lemmy himself so it was more a perspective of his life in his own words. This being one from many sources you get more information about different areas and perspective from band members like Eddy Clarke and former manager Doug Smith. You also hear a bit more about the drug habits which is an essential subject when wanting to learn more about Motorhead.

I definitely recommend this book to anyone wanting to learn more about the ultimate Rock & Roll band Motorhead. 5 plus stars.

Bart says

I liked this as much as White Line Fever. There's a fair amount of crossover but that's ok. Read white line fever first then this.

The section about Lemmy as his health deteriorated wasn't in the autobiography.

Benjamin Kahn says

I would give the first half of this book four stars, up until about Pete Gill leaving the band. Maybe even when Lemmy fires Doug Smith for the second time and moves to LA. The rest of the book would rate about two. I give Wall full marks for not turning out a book of blind hero worship, of showing the young Lemmy as he was, without trying to protect his cool aura, and for letting some of the former members and associates- Fast

Eddie, Brian Robertson, Pete Gill, Doug Smith - a chance to give their sides of the story. It makes for an interesting read and humanizes the man.

The problem comes with Lemmy's move to Los Angeles. Once he's ensconced in LA, with the lineup that would stay consistent for the rest of his life (with the exception of Wurzel who would play with the band until 1995's *Sacrifice*), the story gets boring. No major conflict or upheaval, just a lot of Lemmy quotes and quotes from other's praising Lemmy. It's boring.

I can't entirely blame Wall for this because there's just not a lot to report, although he does spend about 40 pages dealing with Lemmy's failing health and then eulogies from others talking about what a great guy he was. That's on Wall. The blow-by-blow of each new health diagnosis, doctor's advice taken or ignored, cancelled shows or tours, wears a little. And we've just read a whole book on the man - do we need to know what other celebrities thought of him?

My main complaint is with the Lemmy quotes. I have had this with several other biographies that I've read about him. The more I hear from him, the less I like him. Biographers always include at least one person commenting on how intelligent Lemmy is. Wall also had almost everyone he dealt with time about what a great guy he was, even if their relationship ended acrimoniously. But reading his quotes, I just think it's the same crap over and over.

His comments about religion or war don't display any great insights, his view of the music industry and Motorhead's place in it are full of the usual carping against the business or whining about how authentic they always stayed and that's why they never got any bigger - because they wouldn't compromise. It's a broken record, and he doesn't sound any different from thousands of other rock stars. I don't see any great insight from his years playing rock and roll. What you're left with is an aging musician, putting out the same album over and over again (and I finally stopped listening to Motorhead around *Hammered* because there had ceased to be anything that distinguished it from the ones that had come before, and whenever I checked in, after), playing lots of shows, and spending the rest of his time at a bar playing some kind of slot machine. Lemmy ceases to be cool - he's just kind of sad. And having Lars Ulrich or Slash or Ozzy saying it's not so doesn't make it any less true.

So four stars for the first two-thirds of the book, and then you can stop reading because the rest is silence.

Frederik Winant says

Als die-hard fan van Motorhead en Lemmy vind ik dit een uitstekend boek. Je krijgt een volledig overzicht in het leven van een onsterfelijk icoon, hoe hij altijd zijn fans wou tevreden stemmen en dit boven zijn eigen gezondheid stelde. Zeker een aanrader voor fans die meer te weten willen komen over Lemmy en Motorhead.

Ik heb het privilege gehad om Lemmy 2 keer live te zien, de beschrijving in dit boek kan niet accurater zijn dan hoe hij was als persoon, ruig maar ook een tedere kant.

In dit boek vindt je meerdere levenswijsheden terug die prachtig verwoord zijn door een man met ervaring, doorheen het boek heb je momenten dat je je een krik lacht en dan weer momenten waarbij je met moeite je tranen kan bedwingen.

Nogmaals, dit is een fantastisch boek en een absolute aanrader!

Christopher says

**1/4: disappointingly ramshackle and very biased. Not much in here that wasn't already known outside of some quotes from Robbo and Doug Smith.

Kriegslok says

I'm not a great one for musician biographies. Often the music stands alone for me and knowing more about the person behind it could cloud the listening experience (which may not be a bad thing always but one I generally avoid). However, Lemmy the man sort of came to be bigger than and more than Motorhead (a band I've long enjoyed) and so I decided to give this book a go. Mick Wall does a reasonable enough job of telling Lemmy's story. Personally I found the beginning covering his childhood/teen/Hawkwind years and the end covering Lemmy's philosophical musings and with the benefit of all that had passed being used to summarise a life that certainly stood out. Inevitably there is a lot of stuff about fallings out, splits, and the personal abuse that is/was part of the scene. The book is a good contribution to an era now gone and which on reflection looks a lot weirder (to me anyway) than it seemed at the time. In a world full of posers and conmen though Lemmy was neither as Wall quotes Lemmy "All I wanted to do was play music that I love and that other people want. And that was it. And still is". In conclusion Wall includes further classic Lemmy "People talk about saving the environment, they mean what it takes to keep us alive. The planet will invent something else when we go. The planet don't give a shit." ... "We don't mean shit. The human race is a blight on the face of the earth, if you ask me. We are a disease. We deserve to die". Anyone interested in Motorhead should get something extra out of this book even if it means ploughing through the bits about record labels, arguments and splits!

Sarah Tipper says

The great thing about Lemmy is that he told some tall stories and so there is undoubtedly some pockets of fiction in this non-fiction biography. I remember reading in an interview with Lemmy that he went to see a Harley Street doctor and was told not to give up drinking and drug taking by this medical expert because it'd kill him. Since I read this as a teenager I've had this tale recounted to me many, many times in pubs and at gigs. It might be shaggy dog stuff but it added to the myth of Lemmy. I am happy to mythologize Lemmy but very sad to miss Lemmy.

So, The Definitive Autobiography. Definitive, eh? With authority and conclusively? Actually yes, that's how it reads. Wall spoke to Lemmy himself repeatedly and to a lot of those close to Lemmy. Sometimes the things you say in response to a question from a trusted friend are not things you've ever directly thought about yourself and so Wall's information from those close to Lemmy is often enlightening.

Mick Wall covers the areas less well covered in other Lemmy tomes (he's clearly very familiar with White Line Fever by Lemmy and Janiss Garza). Wall covers the Hawkwind years and Motorhead's career in detail but he avoids the trap of long dull lists of tour dates and technical information that some rock and metal biographies fall into. Quotes from Lemmy are sprinkled throughout which makes you feel he's still around, dispensing his wisdom.

My favourite parts of the book are;
Lemmy calling Eddie Clarke "Fancy Bollocks".

Lemmy complimenting Colleen Nolan on her tits in a totally non-sleazy way.

Lemmy claiming Motörhead had the power to make lawns die (neatly skewering and satirizing suburban preoccupations in one sentence).

Lemmy quoted as saying “I live my life as decent as I can, you know, I never made...I hardly ever made a promise I didn’t keep”.

My least favourite part of the book was;

I cried on page 288. Yeah, I knew he was going to die but Lemmy is woven into a lot of metal fans lives, including mine. I last saw him live in 2014 at Wacken Open Air. Now I like to think of Lemmy as being in the big backstage area in the sky.

In summary, Wall’s book is a splendid read that captures Lemmy’s unique philosophy of life. You’ll be able to ask yourself after reading “What would Lemmy do?” and be able to answer yourself. The answer is probably stay determined, stick to your guns, have a drink and don’t let the bastards grind you down. Thank you, Mick Wall for a chunky book of warm Lemmy tales.
