



# The Frood: The Authorised and Very Official History of Douglas Adams & The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

*Jem Roberts*

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As a wise ape once observed, space is *big* - vastly, hugely, mind-bogglingly so. However, if you look too closely at space, it becomes nothing but lumps of rock and sundry gases. Sometimes it's necessary to take a step back, and let a few billion years go by, before any of the true wonder and scope of the cosmos becomes apparent.

Similarly, the late 20th century author, humorist and thinker Douglas Adams was *big* - vastly, hugely and thoroughly mind-bogglingly so, both in physical terms, and as a writer who has touched millions of readers, firing up millions of cerebellums all over planet Earth, for over 35 years - and for nearly half of that time, he hasn't even been alive.

It would be ridiculous to pretend that Douglas Adams's life and work has gone unexamined since his dismayingly early death at 49 but throughout the decade since the last book to tackle the subject, the universes Adams created have continued to develop, to beguile and expand minds, and will undoubtedly do so for generations to come.

An all-new approach to the most celebrated creation of Douglas Adams is therefore most welcome, and *The Frood* tells the story of Adams's explosive but agonizingly constructed fictional universe, from his initial inspirations to the posthumous sequel(s) and adaptations, bringing together a thousand tales of life as part of the British Comedy movements of the late 70s and 80s along the way. With the benefit of hindsight and much time passed, friends and colleagues have been interviewed for a fresh take on the man and his works.

## **The Frood: The Authorised and Very Official History of Douglas Adams & The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Details**

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## **From Reader Review The Frood: The Authorised and Very Official History of Douglas Adams & The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy for online ebook**

### **Stuart says**

A very splendid and worthwhile read, overall. It did perhaps try a little too hard to emulate Adams, but "After a while the style settles down a bit and it begins to tell you things you really need to know", and quite a lot of them. The unpublished material was a real highlight, of course, but the whole book was a treasure trove. The tone was admiring but not fawning at all, which made it a satisfying read. It even managed to change my overall opinion of the movie, as well as making me wish I'd taken better care of my original Guide towel.

I wholeheartedly recommend this book to any fans, whether 30+ year hardcore nuts like me, or casual readers/listeners. It is, at the very least, mostly harmless.

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### **Neil Blumfield says**

A comprehensive chronological history of Douglas Adams struggle to become a comedy writer (and performer), through the success of Hitchhiker's and subsequent struggle with the success and demands of being a phenomenally successful writer (but not performer).

From artistic hubris, thwarted ambitions and realised dreams.

A great insight, well written and many nuggets of unpublished DNA work. Also a very useful reference to the entire works of Douglas Adams both small and large.

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### **Jim Mowatt says**

A surprisingly good book.

I've studiously avoided reading biographies of Douglas Adams so far.

I've often feared that we might stray over into the dissecting of comedy problem. It's a bit like dissecting a frog. It might be an interesting exercise to do but at the end of it all you have are bits of frog.

This book was a lot of fun. I bought it looking forward to the unpublished bits of Douglas' writing that Jem had promised us. These were fun but such a lot of short unconnected pieces that felt a little strange to read one after the other. I was just beginning to enjoy the creation and then it would end for the whole process to begin again with another piece.

The biography of Douglas, however, was very entertaining indeed with Jem managing to portray a real joy and delight in the works of DNA. It gave a very clear picture of Douglas' fervent amble to fame and fortune in the world of BBC light entertainment.

Most enjoyable.

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### **Thiago d'Evécque says**

Uma leitura dupal pra quem quiser conhecer mais sobre a vida do mingo e sobre a história da criação do

Mochileiro, desde as primeiras e mais leves influências até as obras com a marca lançadas após sua morte.

É uma bela homenagem a Adams sem puxa-saquismo. O autor mostra os vários defeitos e deslizes que o mingo já cometeu -- era uma pessoa difícil de se trabalhar porque queria tudo do seu jeito e não dava instruções claras em quê, exatamente, consistia o seu jeito (ele teve grande parcela de culpa no fracasso da primeira peça de teatro do Mochileiro); ambicioso a ponto de ser egoísta, tomava decisões apenas por dinheiro e até abandonou os amigos, jogando John Lloyd pra escanteio na escrita do Guia (e fazendo isso por uma carta, sendo que Lloyd trabalhava em um escritório ao lado); quando se concentrava (ou forçavam-no), passava por períodos de intensa concentração, mas frequentemente procrastinava em excesso, ignorando contratos, afundando campanhas de marketing e enfurecendo os envolvidos; e por aí vai.

Esse lado humano de Adams foi um dos pontos altos pra mim. Acompanhamos o suplício que foi escrever Mochileiro e que, apesar de sua genialidade, houve muito esforço, suor e lágrimas, literalmente, para completar a saga. Os problemas de sua vida pessoal e seu estado de espírito mudavam drasticamente a escrita do mingo, e isso pode ser visto nos dois últimos volumes do Guia. Apesar da ficção científica com comédia ter sido considerada ultrapassada e sem mercado, Adams seguiu acreditando até finalmente explodir nas livrarias.

Foi uma delícia ver não só os primeiros textos de Adams para o Guia, mas tudo que o inspirou e como ele usava essas inspirações. De quebra, a história de outras criações e criaturas se convergem com a de Adams: John Cleese e os Python, Blackadder e A Bit of Fry & Laurie (duas das minhas séries favoritas), Wodehouse, etc.

Recomendo para quem tem qualquer tipo de interesse no autor e sua principal obra, além de todas as coisas Adams. E também para aqueles que sabem onde guardam a toalha.

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### **Tim Worthington says**

From Week Ending to That Thing About 'Hyperlinks', a meticulously researched and wittily told guide to the life and times and e-enthusiasms of the man some would call the greatest ever user of the English Language. He would have found a more imaginative way of phrasing it than that, though.

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### **Mark says**

*“Hey, you sass that hoopy Ford Prefect? There’s a frood who really knows where his towel is.”*

(*Sass*: know, be aware of, meet, have sex with; *hoopy*: really together guy; *frood*: really amazingly together guy.)

*Douglas Adams, The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy.*

As I type this, and after reading The Frood, there is a realisation that there has been a major passage of time since I first encountered The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy. The publication of this biography, fully authorised by the Adams’ estate and Douglas’ family, is a fully formed thing of loveliness, released to indicate that it is 35 years ago Hitchhiker appeared as a BBC Radio 4 series, and then as a book. In 2014 it is known globally and still going strong, despite Douglas’s death at the criminally short age of 49 in 2001. Fans include scientist Richard Dawkins, actor and raconteur Stephen Fry, David Gilmour of Pink Floyd, and

various members of Monty Python, amongst many others.

This book puts the complex events of Douglas' writing career into a chronological perspective. In five sections it tells of Douglas's background, his family, his academic path and his early work in comedy before, almost by accident, working for the BBC and then creating Hitchhiker. It then deals with the now-legendary difficulties that Douglas experienced creating the series, and when the radio series became an international success.\* Throughout all of this, *The Frood* also tells of his friendships, mainly with the New Wave of British comedians in the 1980s – John Lloyd, Stephen Fry, Ben Elton, Peter Cook, the Monty Python group, and then with scientists, conservationists, computer companies and fellow scriptwriters.

His success on Hitchhiker led to other things – work on Doctor Who scripts, a friendship with Pink Floyd and travel around the world with Stephen Fry to see nearly extinct animals for a book and TV series, *Last Chance to See*. Despite all of this, *The Frood* shows that his family kept Douglas grounded, it seems, both his sister Susan and his wife Jane, not to mention his daughter Polly (now at university).

For fans of Hitchhiker and the Dirk Gently series, there's a lot of reminiscing here that will keep them amused, with anecdotes and bon mots a-plenty. The book includes material based on many new interviews with friends and colleagues to fill in some of the gaps that fans will no doubt be wanting to read.

And, perhaps most importantly, the book's appendices have previously unpublished material from Douglas's archive in Cambridge, including removed extracts from Hitchhiker, short stories and notes. The Introduction here is something Douglas wrote as self-parody circa 1985 based on his use of an automatic author-interview writing machine. It is rather typical of the man.

As biographies go, it must be said that there have been a few since Douglas' death. The author himself has pointed out that the biographies by Neil Gaiman, Nick Webb and MJ Simpson were reference points to start with, not to further mention the website fanclub ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha, still going strong. *The Frood* is one of the most detailed and interesting accounts, and Jem's Acknowledgements towards the back of the book show how much work and care has gone into this biography.

Whilst it could so easily have veered off into hagiography, *The Frood* shows, perhaps more than ever before, the man's interests, drives and insecurities in an entertainingly affectionate manner. I enjoyed reading it a lot, even if only to realise at the end how much Douglas would have loved to be here in 2014.

\*There is a now-apocryphal story, told again in this book, of Douglas being locked in a room with a typewriter by his editor, with no telephone or other means of communication, until he had sat down and written 'something'. Pages were passed to the editor under the bottom of the locked door!

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## **Fernanda says**

A Espetacular e Incrível Vida de Douglas Adams e do Guia do Mochileiro das Galáx

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## **Elliot says**

Very thorough biography put together excellently. Full of good stuff, with script/novel excerpts and patches of discarded material, as well as a whole heap of stuff that tracks early sketches that were reused and hammered into shape for various parts of HG2TG.

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### **Walker Dantas says**

Uma biografia de fôlego

Este livro é um dos que mais demorei para ler, e confesso que ainda estou um pouco mais da metade (59%) mas nem por isso me sinto desmotivado para dar a ele cinco estrelas. Explico: Douglas Adams está inteiro aqui. Suas fraquezas, suas inseguranças, suas loucuras. Temos um contexto completo do que era a Inglaterra durante sua vida; acabamos entendendo como ele deu duro a vida toda para se tornar um escritor de sucesso, e, principalmente, um comediante bem sucedido - e que ela sabia muito bem onde queria estar, por isso que a idade prematura de sua morte não significa nada: ele viveu intensamente e compensou no que muitos aos oitenta ainda teriam de fazer. Passei a respeitar muito mais a figura do Mingo depois dessa: ele fez tanto com tão pouco, e nunca pareceu arrependido de nada.

Editar

Excluir

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### **Gabriela Colicigno says**

Demorei tempo demais para terminar esse livro, mas convenhamos que biografias não são uma leitura fluida e fácil. Apesar de cheio de humor, histórias divertidas e curiosas, além de muita informação sobre o criador de uma das séries de livros mais divertidas de ficção científica, me senti um pouco perdida com a quantidade de nomes de pessoas e programas de televisão que o autor traz, mas faz parte. No geral, a leitura foi boa, e marquei dezenas de passagens do livro! Adorei saber mais sobre Douglas Adams e confesso que chorei sim no fim da história. A edição da Editora Aleph está muito bonita e a tradução também está boa. Recomendo para os fãs do Guia, porque foi muito legal entender de onde vinha tanta criatividade e como Douglas influenciou tanta gente. E não esqueça sua toalha!

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### **Beau says**

The Frood is comprehensive, really comprehensive. You might think Salmon of Doubt was comprehensive, but that's just peanuts to the Frood.

At times, this book is almost excessive in detail -- for instance, the "peanuts to space" bit didn't originate with Hitchhikers Guide, far from it. But for Hitchhikers fans, there's tons of interesting details about Douglas Adams' life, the creation of his famous works and a fair number of outtakes and alternate versions of familiar stories. Many of them would have needed a bit more polish before publication, such as the back story of the Dentrassi, but others of them are as good as anything Adams wrote.

A bit of a commitment, but a must read for serious fans of Adams or the Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy.

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## Rodney says

More entertaining, in some ways, than the latter range of Adams' own books, and instructive in its gentle criticism.

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## Sara says

I've been a major fan of Douglas Adams since 1980 or 1981 thanks to the older brother of my boyfriend at the time who introduced us to this totally radical and cool book. My iPhone case says "Don't Panic!" It was great to read about Adams's background and how the various versions came to be. I think you have to be British to recognize many of the names that are dropped, but no matter. This is a worthy and entertaining biography.

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## Zoe Obstkuchen says

This book took me a stupidly long time to finish. I was expecting to love it but actually, every page was a struggle to get through. I can't even tell you why I struggled was it with the author's writing style, which initially apes the great DNA himself but then slides into their own? Or maybe it was just that away from the books of his that I loved Douglas Adams wasn't the person I had thought he was? It is packed full of details that usually thrill fans of biographies but somehow this left me cold.

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## Angela Oliver says

A chunky and comprehensive biography of the life and afterlife of Douglas Noel Adams, a man with remarkable imagination and considerable wit, to match his tall and somewhat awkward frame. His story begins with his birth in 1952 but does not conclude with his untimely death in 2001. It covers his struggles to make his mark in the British comedy scene, rubbing shoulders with the likes of Clive Anderson, Rhys Jones, Stephen Fry and attempting to follow in the footsteps of John Cleese and the Monty Python crew. It covers his script-writing skills - for low-budget, almost forgotten science fiction skits, as well as Monty Python and eludes to the episodes he wrote for Doctor Who. We learn about the conception of his most notable work: The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy and the trials and tribulations about writing for radio.

The writer, Jem Robert's, passion for his subject shines clearly through the text. Adams is portrayed as a somewhat determined, and dedicated young man with a certain level of hopeful optimism and general naivety, as well as a hearty dose of comic wit and timing. It is interspersed with extracts from scripted works, short gags from the Adams's archives and the occasional anecdote.

With his sudden, unexpected death at the age of a mere 49, the story of Douglas Adams may have finished, but his legacy continues with his daughter taking the helm and asking the ultimate question: What would Douglas have wanted? This period covers the movie, the Dirk Gently television series, the release of the incomplete "Salmon of Doubt", Eoin Colfer's rather forgotten "And another thing," along with a reboot of the radio show.

This is a hefty tome, a tribute to a fine fellow that lived too short a time and wrote far less than he could

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have. The writing is somewhat dry at times, and is best enjoyed in short chunks rather than as an epic read. There is just a part of me that wishes Adams had lived to write his autobiography, because there are so many unanswered questions lurking between the lines.

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