



Belle and Sebastian: Just a Modern Rock Story

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In the eight years since their first release, *Belle and Sebastian* have grown from a secretive cult concern into one of the most beloved and revered pop'n'roll bands in the world. Intelligent and sensitive, witty and original, beautiful and bold, their music inspires the kind of devotion not seen since the The Smiths. Their continuing desire to push the boundaries of their vision has resulted in some of the most essential and idiosyncratic records of recent times.

In this, the first biography of Belle and Sebastian, Paul Whitelaw traces their unpredictable personal and creative curve. With all original interviews and personal photos from the band *Belle and Sebastian: Just A Modern Rock Story* is the definitive account of the clandestine world and continuing rise of the unique and fascinating musical phenomenon that is *Belle and Sebastian*.

Belle and Sebastian: Just a Modern Rock Story Details

Date : Published August 1st 2005 by St. Martin's Griffin

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Author : Paul Whitelaw

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From Reader Review Belle and Sebastian: Just a Modern Rock Story for online ebook

Jeff Raymond says

A surprisingly interesting rock bio about one of the admittedly wimpiest bands I love. Sometimes these sort of things are...not good, but this one was fun and interesting. It was good!

Nathan says

At first, I found it difficult to get into this book, as it spent a great deal introducing the characters. I already knew the characters, but I just wanted to get into the story of it all. Once that took off, I was stuck, and I didn't want to put the entire thing down. It's like a bedroom story, to be shared only by those who spent their days wondering about in the world of Belle and Sebastian. It was a great visit.

Christopher says

Paul Whitelaw's BELLE AND SEBASTIAN: Just a Modern Rock Story is a biography of the Scottish pop band who have eluded major commercial success, but built a rock-solid cult following since 1996. The book was published in 2005, not long after the release of their album DEAR CATASTROPHE WAITRESS. Whitelaw interviewed almost every members of the band past and former, and dedicates much space to the polemics that saw the departure of early members Stuart David and Isobel Campbell.

I expected this book to be entertaining and informative, but it varied between dull and frustrating. Whitelaw pursues a cutesy writing style that tries to embed as many Belle and Sebastian lyrics into his prose as possible. The author seems to have realized that his treatment of the band is often too fauning and uncritical, but instead of toning it down, he tries to balance it with peculiar critical assertions (such as trashing most of THE BOY WITH THE ARAB STRAP album). There are a lot of facts here that I didn't know before, but they didn't bring me to a greater appreciation of Belle and Sebastian's songs. I'm of an academic bent, and generally reading commentary on musicians helps me get more out of the music. With Belle and Sebastian, their lovely music seems to exist wholly separate from the soap opera life that the band members lived over these years.

All in all, I can't recommend this book, and fans who go on with Whitelaw's book nonetheless for the sake of its abundant trivia are taking a chance.

Davidhinkel says

very cool band biography. both member sections and release sections. essential for any b&s fan.

Anna says

awful. favorite band, but this book was awful.

Steven Coombs says

Belle and Sebastian make me feel young and innocent. This book is written to evoke the same feeling. If you are a fan I would suggest their DVD "Fans Only"

Rachel Ann Brickner says

I'm an ardent B&S fan and to be honest, I was a little disappointed with this book. I was grateful for the information Whitelaw gave, but his tone felt facetious to me and I was annoyed by how much he focused on the relationship between Stuart and Isobel. I definitely think it's a worthwhile read if you're a fan of the band, but I wouldn't read it based on literary merit. Maybe I'm being too critical considering I read it a few years ago. I guess I'll just have to read it again to see if my thoughts have changed!

James says

I liked Belle and Sebastian more before I knew anything about them.

Mark Leta says

It was a bit of a slog to get through, which surprised me being a bigger B & S fan. Some interesting bits about the nature of Stuart and Bel's relationship but hearing the full story here was in total somewhat boring. The band origin stuff to is intriguing but nothing that hasn't been covered in liner notes and an adoring music press a hundred times.

While the author offered some critique of their music and efforts, most of what we get comes off as fan-boy fawning. Back stories of songs and albums too disappoint, with very little approaching fly-on-the-wall tell-all tales.

Repetition sets in and the book really drags from Stuart David's departure through to when Isobel leaves the band. Maybe with a band as precious as B & S, we want there to be a great story soup to nuts, and when the reality is that there isn't we can't help being disappointed.

Would recommend the making of If You're Feeling Sinister... documentary on Netflix over time spent reading this.

Meagan says

Decent enough biography of my favorite band.

El says

Glasgow writer Paul Whitelaw offers the first Belle & Sebastian biography with his 2005 book. As a first band biography it is complete in discussing the band - both as individual band members as well as the band as a whole. Whitelaw interviewed most of the members of B&S and had access to some of Stuart Murdoch's correspondence. The problem with a lot of music biographies is that they are generally written by some of the biggest fans. On one hand this allows them access to a lot of the inner workings of the members' thoughts; on the other hand, as in the case here with Whitelaw, the author is completely biased and clearly chooses his favorites. Often Whitelaw managed to also be such an incredible ass-kisser that it made me "wince" (a favorite word of his throughout the text).

The relationship between Stuart Murdoch and Isobel Campbell is one that fans of B&S have been intrigued by since the beginning. As Whitelaw points out, both Stuart and Isobel were just as confused by the relationship as well. Whitelaw spend a considerable amount of time discussing their relationship, to the point of distraction. He habitually jumped around in his chronology, making the reading confusing when at times it felt like he repeated a lot of the same information. Whitelaw's fascination with "the curious boy", Stuart Murdoch, was possibly the most frustrating part to read - particularly when it came to knocking Isobel Campbell down a few stairs in the process. As an innocent bystander as myself I can say that I feel both Stuart and Isobel were both whiny and probably deserved each other; but Stuart's take on the relationship (as is typical in most band relationships) is a little harsher than is perhaps necessary.

And for any fan of B&S how important is the relationship really in comparison to the music? Isobel went on to make incredible solo music and to work with the legendary (in some circles) Mark Lanegan. Her music is of a different nature, most of which is actually quite great. It often felt that Whitelaw was personally offended when Isobel left the band for greener pastures. I would have much preferred he removed his nose from Murdoch's butt and shown a little less judgment about the other members of the band, other fans, etc. As far as journalistic writing goes, unbiass is still best.

Not the worst bio I've read, but certainly not the best. It could have been much better and everyone could have been shown in a less reverential and more honest light, despite Whitelaw's clear attempts at trying to portray it all so candidly.

Rory says

i read this book for one reason: to gather more proof that the belle and sebastian's lead singer is, indeed, straight and will, therefore, one day probably want to make out with me.

Robert says

At the moment, the best Belle and Sebastian memoir out there.

Michelle says

Fan writer. I only liked it when the writer wrote a little romantically about the brief relationship between Isobell and Stuart.

Rosie Ellen says

Well... It kinda sucked. I was really into it at the start but the more I 'learnt' (it's all pretty biased accounts of what happened so how much truth there is in it, I'm not 100%) about them, the more it kind of made me think, these guys are dicks. And I love Belle & Sebastian! I don't want to hate them or think they're stuck up, mean bastards. So yeah, this book really wasn't what I was hoping it would be. Isobel comes off super badly in it, he writes her like she's this absolute bratty child - which maybe she was - but it seems like an massive oversimplification of what probably happened. It was interresting to read about what the songs are about and how the recording processes went and stuff, but they really don't come across very well in it. Second half of the book is much much worse than the first.
