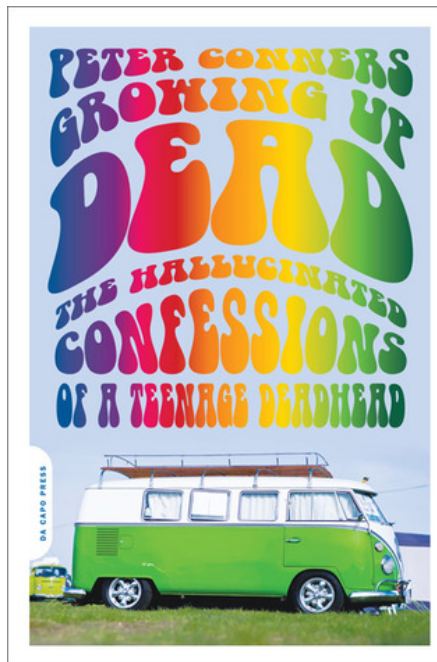




Growing Up Dead: The Hallucinated Confessions of a Teenage Deadhead

Peter Conners

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Told against the backdrop of the American landscape of the late '80s to the mid-'90s, *Growing Up Dead* is the story of Peter Conners's journey from straight-laced suburban kid to touring Deadhead. Peter discovered the Grateful Dead in 1985, at the age of 15, through friends who exchanged bootleg tapes of live Grateful Dead concerts. A teenager living in the suburbs of Rochester, New York, he became exposed to an entirely new way of life, and friends who were enjoying more freedom and less parental guidance. At the age of 16, he attended his first Grateful Dead concert on June 30, 1987 - he was hooked. Between 1987 and 1995, Conners would attend Dead 'shows' all over the United States. He traveled with a makeshift 'family' of other Deadheads in a Volkswagen camper, selling drugs and whatever else would provide gas money to the next concert. His hair was a wild, unkempt bush and baths were infrequent. In short, he had progressed from suburban kid, to Grateful Dead fan, to full-blown Deadhead. Chronicling this progression, which culminates with the 1995 death of Jerry Garcia, Conners reveals the truth behind Deadhead culture and history. The result is a riveting insight into the obsessive fandom that made The Grateful Dead the most successful touring band of all time, as well as a cultural phenomenon.

Growing Up Dead: The Hallucinated Confessions of a Teenage Deadhead Details

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Lee says

From the cover and title this seems like it would be terrible times ten. But not at all. It's about as good as a memoir about being a kind crunchy tour-head brother could be. It's flowing, insightful, self-aware, nicely structured, not at all hippy dippy and sunshine daydream/idiotic. Last summer, I loved the author's book about the famous 5/8/77 show at Cornell's Barton Hall and so thought I'd give this a try. Loved just about every bit of it -- it fully evokes the experience of going to shows in the late '80s as a white suburban teen searching for the sound (I'm two years younger than the author). Loved some of the details I'd forgotten, particularly the Rainbow Family and the calls of "Six Up!" when cops were near -- immediately upon reading and remembering it I was teleported to parking lots outside Dead and JGB shows at JFK, RFK, Giants Stadium, Rich Stadium, Shoreline, Cal Expo, Buckeye Lake, The Spectrum, Richfield Coliseum, Buffalo Memorial Auditorium, and a hockey rink (Community War Memorial Auditorium) in the author's hometown of Rochester (a fall '93 JGB show, still one of the top concerts of my life). Loved that he's open about how he supported himself on tour. Loved the bit about transitioning away from the band as the scene went downhill and other bands emerged (I saw Phish a lot in small venues in the early '90s too) -- and loved the last chapter, seeing a Dead cover band as a middle-aged adult and recognizing how the music is now free among the people. Although some of the parts about his high school experience (the trestle) I wasn't into as much (4.5 stars rounded up), this is highly recommended summer-reading if you've got a notion (loved the subtle integration of lyrics throughout too). If you're not a fan of the band, I can't imagine you'd read this unless you were into cult memoirs or late-20th century American nondenominational religious experiences or psychedelics or deep into memoirs by fans of bands (do others even exist?). Reading about The Dead has become my light beach-reading -- so easy and enjoyable and evocative of lost time. I'll probably read the Garcia bio this summer.

Rachelle Armstrong says

Let me start off by saying that I am not a fan of the Grateful Dead. Its not that I don't like them, I just haven't really ever listened to them enough to give them a chance.

So why read this book? I took a class in college called "Music History and Culture," and it was the most enthralling class of my life. Originally, I took the class as a way to obtain my history credit without having to re-listen to the same stuff I ignored in high school. What I got though, was transported back in time through the music of the 1920s to the 1990s. The way musicians influenced eachother and their affect on our society astonished me. Especially during the times when bands like the Grateful Dead and Pink Floyd were at their peak, because their music was more "real" to listeners.

This class was why I picked up this book. Not just for the pretty rainbow design on the cover, but for a chance to step back into Fred Forney's classroom and learn a bit more about the beatnik era and the lifestyle that my professor himself had lived.

Peter Connors did a wonderful job pulling me into the lifestyle of a Deadhead. He gives you a first class ticket to a ride on the Grateful Dead bus. By setting alot of his experiences in first person, it really made me feel a part of the experience.

The only thing I didn't like about the book is that he tended to jump time alot and I got confused on dates and
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what was going on with their lives. Other than that, this book is fantastic and I recommend it to anyone interested in music or that time period at all. Its a great part of music history and ties in the U.S. events going on as well.

"You're either on the bus, or you're off the bus."

Gina says

I enjoyed this book, but I imagine I am slightly biased, based on the subject matter. I think someone who has not experienced this lifestyle would still enjoy it, but not exactly "get it" the way a Deadhead does. The author expressed much of what many deadheads experienced but couldn't quite put into words. It's an honest, open glimpse into the lifestyle during the 80's and 90's, and definitely left me feeling nostalgic.

Michael says

I really didn't think much of this book, I basically got this book as I was waiting for another book to come into the library. My expectation was a quick read, nothing too serious. To my surprise this book captured feelings I haven't experienced in almost 20 years. The author totally captured the "Dead" scene I was part of along the East Coast in the late 80's/early 90's. I have never been able to articulate, to strangers, the energy, vibe, buzz when the "Dead" came to town. If you weren't there, you'd never understand. This book comes as close as possible to describing that "energy".

Maybe my kids, when they are older, will read it and perhaps understand my sly smile when I talk about the good old days of the "Grateful Dead".

Quick and fun book to read.

Tina says

LOVE this book. It's a must read for all Deadheads.

Rachel says

I love this book, I am a very big fan of the Dead and reading this made me feel as if I were there. I would definitely recommend this book to any fellow Dead fans!

Jessica Bilodeaux says

I really don't know where to start with this. I felt like I stepped into a time machine and entered my life in 1995. I felt everything this author described- I experienced it, I danced to it, I lived it. This book is so close to my heart and more than relates to what I was able to have the glorious experience of all those years ago

for those special years. The memories came flying and floating back. I thank the author for doing this for me. I did not want this book to end. It was also great fun that the author grew up in and described my hometown throughout the book.

Natasha says

So fun to read as a Deadhead. He did a great job of capturing the anticipation of the show, the roller coaster ride of a show, and the post-show comedown. As a an older Deadhead than him, I did think it was humorous to hear him speak as an expert on the scene. We all thought we were the quintessential Deadheads, which is a testament to how included and a part of something we all felt.

And I still miss Jerry.

Not sure any non-Deadheads would relate though...

Laurie says

I grew up in upstate NY and recollect many of the venues and towns in this book. I recollect a friend's sister who followed the Dead & had a glimmer of how important the music & scene was was to certain people I met in college. Although those weren't choices I would make in life, reading this and looking back through the lens of Peter's experience was cool & bittersweet.

Avery Stempel says

Holy shit. That last page was probably the most beautifully poignant portion of a book I have ever read. "You have been to them all in your ears." "The music is back where it belongs. The music is with us." God damn. Beautiful. What a wrap up. Perfect. If you like live music, if you like the Grateful Dead, if you like tripping your nuts off and dancing through the morning dew, read this book. It puts you there. Twirls you around. Sets you off through the crowd of strangers all feeling the same way. Read it.

Coquille Fleur says

You know a book is going to be good when it's been stolen from your public library already. Probably better that I went out and bought this anyway. Growing up Dead didn't disappoint. The only reason I gave it 4 stars is that I'm picky about memoirs and I feel like Connors could have pulled us a little deeper into the scene on a narrative level. The use of 2nd person in the more personal passages is one reason I felt this way. That said, this book absolutely tells the truth about life on Dead Tour in the late 80's early 90's and hit on all the points I wanted it to as a girl that dropped out of college after 3 weeks on the flip of a coin to go on Dead Tour in 1990. My favorite part of this story is when he first starts hearing the songs speaking to him and finds the magic in dancing at the shows. That was really what it was all about. I probably hung out with this dude at some point on the golden road, danced next to him, or bought a grilled cheese sandwich from him after the show. Connors shows the East Coast tour kid prospective quite well and it's fascinating how he ended up back in his hometown as an adult. My story ends up completely opposite in that way, yet I could relate to his experience all the way from hanging out on a trestle in high school to jumping on the circus train of tour and life after Jerry. This is a great book for all of us who are still jonesin' for Jerry.

Hollie Rose says

Connors truly nails this Memoir. It's really hard to get the experience of being a Deadhead down eloquently, interestingly, appropriately, and honestly. He did it.

Andy says

I think this book is good for people who wonder what makes Deadheads tick. The read is quick and easy and captures the tale end of living dead period, and ends in the early 90's with PCU era. However, I think Peter Connors is a little full of himself, and sometimes comes off rather pretentious.

Mane Cordero says

Growing Up Dead: The Hallucinated Confessions of a Teenage deadhead is an autobiography about Peter Connors. As obvious from the title the book focuses on his youth years. He is a 16 years old sub cultured hippie other wise known as a "deadhead" living in the 80's and 90's. Throughout his book he recalls following a band called "The Grateful Dead" on tour across America, a band he is forever grateful to. Following this band has brought him some of the gratest moments of his life listening to a band he loves, hanging out with friends he considers family, living life on the road as a deadhead, and not to mention doing this all while doped up on psychedelics of sorts. Despite this, he eventually realizes that the dead scene is fading and he has to move on with his life into adulthood. I consider this book mildly entertaining, but still enough to keep me reading all the way through. The thing that caught my attention was the psychedelic display on the cover which, often means drugs are used and discussed throughout the book. Aside from the drug use another reason that kept me somewhat interested was his lifestyle because he revolved his life around only things that he liked and charished in this world. Such as, the music, friends, family, and the freedom of always being on the road...

Jeff Fabrizio says

A very insightful look on the goings-on during the latter part of the Grateful Dead's touring days from a road warrior who is just a couple of years older than I am. I enjoyed reading about his travels, and wondered what it would have been like to have followed the band in those days. Though the author and I are from the same geographical area of the country, the experiences he went through were quite different than my own, since I wasn't "on the bus" at the time, having only traded a couple of tapes and listened to commercial releases until I left for Alaska in the early 1990s. By the time I had returned, Jerry was gone and so were my hopes of seeing the band. But, this offered a nice glance into what could have been. Well done, Mr. Connors. A good read.
