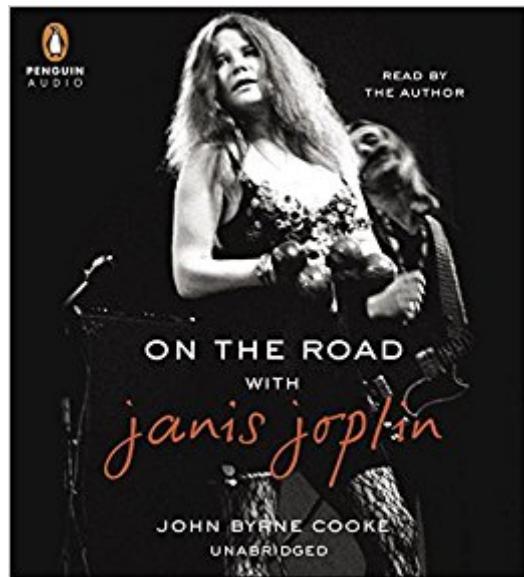


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# On The Road With Janis Joplin



## Synopsis

As a road manager and filmmaker, he helped run the Janis Joplin show— and record it for posterity. Now he reveals the never-before-told story of his years with the young woman from Port Arthur who would become the first female rock and roll superstar—and depart the stage too soon. In 1967, as the new sound of rock and roll was taking over popular music, John Byrne Cooke was at the center of it all. As a member of D.A. Pennebaker's film crew, he witnessed the astonishing breakout performances of Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix at the Monterey Pop Festival that June. Less than six months later, he was on a plane to San Francisco, taking a job as road manager for Janis and her band, Big Brother and the Holding Company. From then on, Cooke was Joplin's road manager amid a rotating cast of musicians and personnel, a constant presence behind the scenes as the woman called Pearl took the world by storm. Cooke was there when Janis made the difficult decision to leave Big Brother and form a new band. He was with her when the Kozmic Blues Band toured Europe in the spring of 1969, when they performed at Woodstock in August, and when Janis and Full Tilt Boogie took their famous Festival Express train trip across Canada. He accompanied Janis to her friend and mentor Ken Threadgill's 70th birthday party, and was at her side when she attended her tenth high school reunion in Port Arthur, Texas. This intimate memoir spans the years he spent with Janis, from her legendary rise to her tragic last days. Cooke tells the whole incredible story as only someone who lived it could.

## Book Information

Audio CD: 11 pages

Publisher: Penguin Audio; Unabridged edition (October 28, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1611763339

ISBN-13: 978-1611763331

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 1.4 x 5.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 111 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #759,634 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #162 in Books > Books on CD > Music #484 in Books > Books on CD > Biographies & Memoirs #1862 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Biographies > Rock

## Customer Reviews

“The story of the woman who skyrocketed to fame as the first female rock superstar and left it at a tragically young age” •from someone who had a front-row seat. •New York Post “The best book about Janis Joplin.” •Sam Andrews, *Big Brother and the Holding Company* “[Cooke] is a gifted writer, letting Joplin’s vivaciousness and intensity shine throughout the work.” •Library Journal “Janis Joplin was absolutely a barnstormer and a complete groundbreaker. She wasn’t just a great woman in rock •at the time she was the woman in rock. Janis really created this whole world of possibility for women in music: Without Janis Joplin, there would be no Melissa Etheridge. Without Janis, there would be no Chrissie Hynde, no Gwen Stefani. There would be no one.” •Rosanne Cash “[Janis Joplin] perfectly expressed the feelings and yearnings of the girls of the electric generation •to be all woman, yet equal with men; to be free, yet a slave to real love; to [reject] every outdated convention, and yet get back to the basics of life.” •Lillian Roxon, rock critic “[Joplin belonged to that select group of pop figures who mattered as much for themselves as for their music. Among American rock performers, she was second only to Bob Dylan in importance as a creator-recorder-embodiment of her generation’s mythology.]” •Ellen Wills, rock journalist --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

John Byrne Cooke was Janis Joplin’s road manager from 1967 until her death. He is an award-winning author of four previous books, a performing musician with decades of experience, and an innovative filmmaker. He has written book reviews for the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* Book World, and the *Los Angeles Times*. He lives in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

It has been over forty years since Janis Joplin passed and, fitting for the impact she made with music as well as a generation, many books, articles and tributes have been dedicated in her honor. David Dalton’s book came closest to understanding this highly talented yet complex individual, an empathy I found lacking in Myra Friedman’s study that seemed to be more of a maternal reprimand than anything else. But John Byrne Cooke, to his credit, gave his experiences and interactions with Ms Joplin time. Time to heal, to reflect and review the years that he acted as a road manager and friend to a woman who would eventually become a legend, especially to a generation that was born long after her passing. I thanked Mr Cooke for providing me with the closure I needed by providing facts, observations and evaluations of this highly complex artist that were both objective and subjective yet had one commonality: his love for Ms Joplin as a talent and as a friend. I still feel her

loss but Mr Cooke's tribute makes me celebrate the passion and life force Ms Joplin so unselfishly shared with us. She is very much alive on the radio waves, on the compact discs and vinyls in our music collections, on the all too brief YouTube videos and in the best biography ever written about Janis, *ON THE ROAD WITH JANIS JOPLIN*. Again, I thank you, Mr Cooke.

Janis and I came of age in the 60s. I hitchhiked up or down the coast to see her play in Golden Gate Park, at the Fillmore and at Winterland. I jumped the fence to get into the Monterey Fairgrounds and stayed there all 3 days of Monterey Pop. I loved her spirit and thought I understood her sensitivity at having grown up in a place where she was the misfit, since I am as well. What I didn't know was how smart she was, and I never fully understood how well she was doing when she died of a heroin overdose. WTF? How can a person be doing well artistically and emotionally, be in love and engaged to be married, and yet die of an overdose? This book explains. Cooke also is a revelation into other fond states of mind, such as Big Sur, the Big Sur Folk Festival, many more musical directions, and he opens the book with a finely detailed description of D. A. Pennebaker's filming of Monterey Pop, which I'm in. Just me, having slept under a tree outside the steer barn where Jimi Hendrix (unknown to any of us who watched him play all by himself the evening before; he blew the audience away the next night), brushing my hair and glancing at the camera with a bit of attitude, because the shooter spent a long time setting up, which is what awakened me. Cooke was a shooter for Pennebaker at Monterey Pop and who knows? Maybe he was the one who woke me up. He certainly is the one who opened my eyes to the rest of Janis, and the book is a delightful journey. Surprisingly, it gets better, and happier, the closer it gets to the end, which is devastating. Cooke repaired to friends' at Big Sur after Janis' death and stayed a month. I would grow up, live many lives with my own businesses before starting and running the Monterey Bay's first and only conservation-based whale watching company, Sanctuary Cruises. As with Janis, I was captain of a wondrous, sometimes heartbreaking, often breathtaking experience, and I took a lot of people for the experience of their life. How I wish she had lived on to see what else was down the road for her. John Cooke did her proud.

I've read other books by or about rock personalities, including Janis Joplin, but John Cooke's stands out as one of the best I've read. The behind the scenes looks at Monterey Pop and Woodstock were particularly fascinating. I was a freshman in college when Janis died and I remember hearing about her. Such a shame, it would have been fascinating to see the direction that her career could have taken.

So much honesty and truth here. I was at a lot of her shows (the first time she played with Big Brother in San Francisco) and all over the Haight to Santa Cruz (spent the night in the bunk next to hers at The Barn) and Big Sur from 1966-67. Since my daughters and SIL are hard traveling musicians today, John Byrne Cooke's perspective as road manager was also very interesting. I bought this for my musician daughter. The beginning of the book was a fun visit to my past as well.... 1090 Page, the Avalon, the Fillmore... I love Janis. I totally understand her thinking, but too bad it ended like it did. The late 60s were pretty horrid, just as the early 60s Haight were great. I moved to France in 1970 to escape.

Every other biography I've read about Janis Joplin has focused too much on her drug use and sex life. John Cooke focuses on her music. Loved reading about the development of her career against the backdrop of current events--especially since I lived through the days of peace and love.

I have read most books about Janis Joplin since she died in 1970. This is really the first that shows Janis as an intelligent and powerful woman. Not a poor lost soul given over to use and abuse by others. I bought into the idea that Janis was a lost little girl for so long I can't believe it. I am not through with the book (about 1/3 of the way through) but to see someone who is vibrant like she is on the road is just another side of Janis I never would have suspected from the other books I have read. I can not recommend it too much. That's how much I like it. (Oh... check out the reverse side of the cover for the cloth edition of the book. Talk about Easter Egg!)

A must read for any fan of Janis. The author was a business partner, but more importantly a compassionate friend walking the fine line between the two. I finished the book in three sittings. My one very minor criticism might be the use of some words that I had to go and fetch my Webster's Dictionary to define. I'm college educated and reasonably intelligent, but some of the words were beyond my scope of vocabulary. It was kind of distracting for me to have to pause and decipher some of the text, but a minimal distraction at best. The book is insightful and thoughtful and you'll be transported back to the psychedelic 60's as you flip each page. I was entranced, and even welled up the last couple of chapters.

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