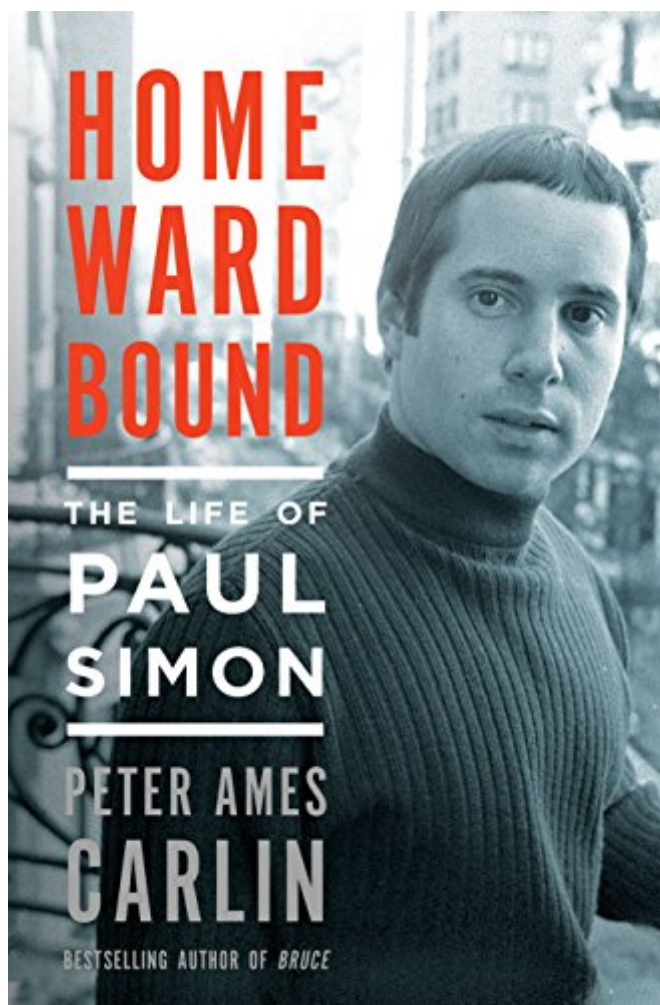


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Homeward Bound: The Life Of Paul Simon



Synopsis

A revelatory account of the life of beloved American music icon, Paul Simon, by the bestselling rock biographer Peter Ames Carlin. To have been alive during the last sixty years is to have lived with the music of Paul Simon. The boy from Queens scored his first hit record in 1957, just months after Elvis Presley ignited the rock era. As the songwriting half of Simon & Garfunkel, his work helped define the youth movement of the '60s. On his own in the '70s, Simon made radio-dominating hits. He kicked off the '80s by reuniting with Garfunkel to perform for half a million New Yorkers in Central Park. Five years later, Simon's album "Graceland" sold millions and spurred an international political controversy. And it doesn't stop there. The grandchild of Jewish emigrants from Galicia in the Austro-Hungarian empire, the 75-year-old singer-songwriter has not only sold more than 100 million records, won 15 Grammy awards and been installed into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame twice, but has also animated the meaning and flexibility of personal and cultural identity in a rapidly shrinking world. Simon has also lived one of the most vibrant lives of modern times; a story replete with tales of Carrie Fisher, Leonard Bernstein, Bob Dylan, Woody Allen, Shelley Duvall, Nelson Mandela, drugs, depression, marriage, divorce, and more. A life story with the scope and power of an epic novel, Carlin's *Homeward Bound* is the first major biography of one of the most influential popular artists in American history.

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Customer Reviews

I liked the book. No doubt a lot of research was done by the author and there is a ton of Paul Simon trivia that I didn't know before reading the book. The author writes a "down the middle" type of book. He's not really an adoring fan, and he's not a hater either. This book exposes a lot of warts. When it comes to disgruntled collaborators and questionable deals throughout the years, he airs it out. What you see in the pages of "Homeward Bound" is a very talented musician that has his share of quirks and insecurities. Paul Simon is after all human. I think the book is better for not ignoring the controversial topics, and there are quite a few of them. What struck me is the relationship between Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel. They have been friends and enemies over the years, but still, the songs they did together have left a mark decades later. They were beyond great in their heyday! As a solo artist Paul Simon has been a pioneer incorporating various cultural music into his albums. Paul Simon's childhood was interesting also. What I like the most about the book is the background on the songs. The origination and circumstances make for interesting reading. It's an interesting book and worth reading.

Carlin isn't nominating Simon for sainthood -- the man's flaws and damn-the-torpedoes ambition come through loud and clear. But when it comes to Simon's talent and groundbreaking innovation, Carlin waxes lyrical. I came away with a better appreciation for just how iconoclastic a musician Simon has been and still is -- even if his kind of "boxer" mentality means never giving an inch. It seems a toss-up as to who did more to sabotage the Simon & Garfunkel duo -- Simon or Garfunkel -- since either one of them could be noxiously self-serving and unforgiving. Still, even though Simon didn't cooperate and probably hates the book, it seems an honest and punctiliously researched appraisal of a genius who at times seemed to doubt himself only because his genius came too easy for his own comfort.

Growing up in a small town in the Midwest, I never saw music concerts. That's why seeing Simon and Garfunkel's concert in Central Park on HBO was a revelation for

me. I was 12 at the time. By the time I was 14 I had purchased all the five original Simon and Garfunkel records and played them continuously (along with the Central Park concert album). I also got into Paul Simon's solo work, with Graceland being one of the key albums when I went off to college. Over the years, I've continued to be a fan of Simon. Though readers of my reviews will know that I rarely read biographies, I've found myself reading more of them lately. Perhaps it's a midlife biography crisis of some sort, but I've enjoyed learning more about some of my artistic heroes. I knew something of Simon's relationships with Carrie Fisher and Edie Brickell (of whom I am also a fan), his appearances on SNL but it was nice to have a book that pulls the various strands together that I've picked up over the years. The story Mr. Carlin tells is fairly straightforward. He begins at the beginning and takes us to the present day without too many detours or analysis. I particularly enjoyed reading about his Queens youth and his early relationship with Art. The intensity of their work towards musical success even at such a young age is emblematic of what would follow. Of course, there is always the dictum that you don't want to meet your heroes and this book, though not particularly critical, does not cover Simon's flaws. It is difficult to pronounce his ruthlessness for success a flaw; however, there is also a trend of deception in his dealings with people that is hard to ignore. And yet, tendencies towards ruthlessness and deception as well as selfishness in personal relationships are often part of what it takes to be a great success. Fortunately, I've always been able to separate my feelings about a person from my appreciation of his/her art. Regardless of the steel that it took to write and record many of his songs, there is no doubt that the majority of them are brilliant. His work has become part of the American songbook and it is interesting to see how it came about. Mr. Carlin does a nice job in telling Simon's story.

Paul never seems like a happy guy. His music was his genius and his friends seemed to get in his way. Art was his ticket to fame and then he cast him aside. Kathy was his first love and then he ran away, back to the States to record more music. Carrie was his wife but they never got along and then drugs got in the way as they always do with musicians and their lovers. The sex is good for awhile then the rest of life gets in the way. Even his next wife Edie gets in the way with a fight that ends up in the NY Times. Yes, his life was always a changin'. Paul can surely live with himself because music was his life and we will be playing it long after he is gone.

Peter Ames Carlin is able to accomplish a few profound things in all his music biographies and he certainly does in *Homeward Bound* -- which I found fun and revealing. First, his research is both independent and original. He talks to the people who were there, he reads contemporary news, and he examines the musical structures and themes that make an artist like Simon so successful. Second, Carlin places his subjects in their times. You walk away from *Homeward Bound* with a much greater understanding of the musical and cultural trends through which Simon matured and which he shaped and which shaped him. And third (but not last), Carlin explores the personal influences (relationships; family; business) that shaped Simon and in many cases expressed themselves in his songs. All of this in what I found highly readable. And my ultimate test, I know that for many cocktail parties to come, I'll be pulling out countless stories from *Homeward Bound* and relating the many anecdotes I found there.

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