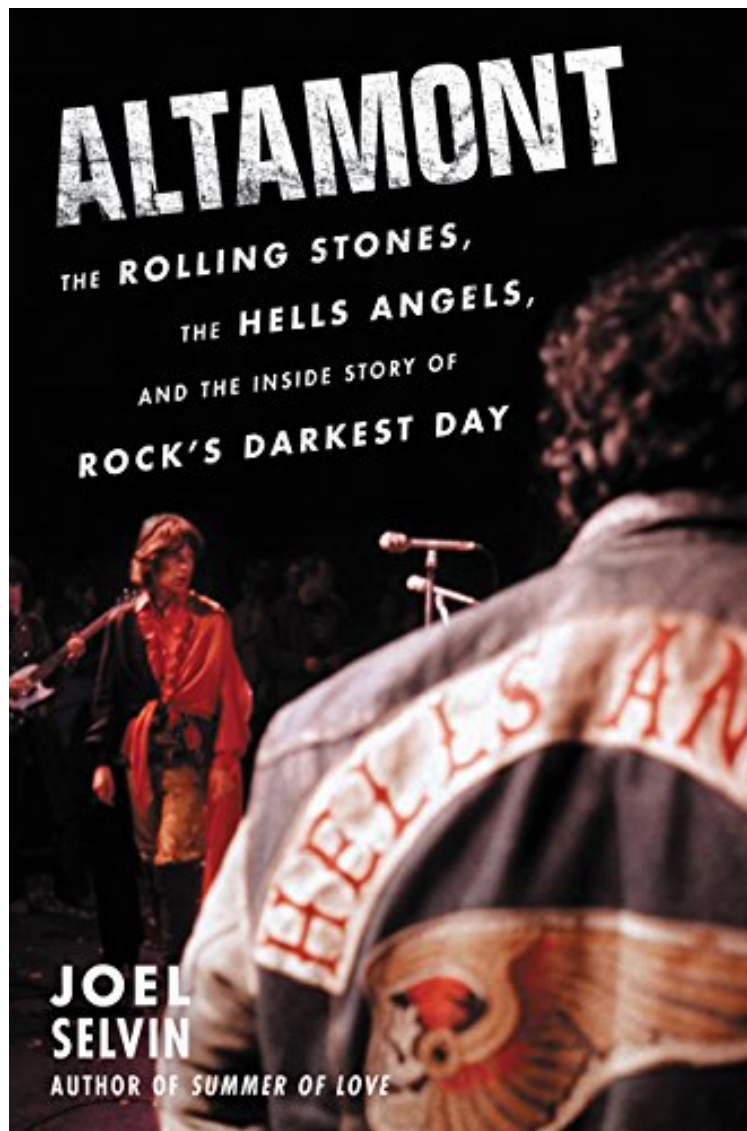


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Altamont: The Rolling Stones, the Hells Angels, and the Inside Story of Rock's Darkest Day

Joel Selvin

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Joel Selvin : Altamont: The Rolling Stones, the Hells Angels, and the Inside Story of Rock's Darkest Day before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Altamont: The Rolling Stones, the Hells Angels, and the Inside Story of Rock's Darkest Day:

75 of 76 people found the following review helpful. Almost 50 Years Later, We Finally Get the Full Story By DACHokieI first saw Gimme Shelter in 1982, when I was in high school; the mesmerizing and haunting documentary intrigued me because it clearly left many questions unanswered. The past 30+ years, I have desperately and fruitlessly searched for the missing pieces of the Altamont puzzle (even meeting a supposed Altamont attendee at a 2005 Stones concert didnt help). Thankfully, Joel Selvin decided to fill in the blanks with his book ALTAMONT. I have never been so excited anticipating the release of a book and Selvin certainly delivered the goods. Contrary to the sunny, optimistic hope delivered by the Woodstock Festival four months earlier, the Altamont Festival (Woodstock West) was dark, scary and dangerous. Simply viewing the films that document both events is all thats needed to understand the stark contrast. While the peaceful glory of Woodstock deservedly gets an abundance of attention (because it was a miracle that will never be replicated), Altamont seems to be steeped in mystery, darkness and misperception. A concert with 300,000 attendees that involved the planets hottest band, the Hells Angels, infinite drugs/alcohol and no cops is memorable because a film of it happens to capture a killing. Unfortunately, the film isnt enough to give viewers answers to all the how and why questions it generates. The Stones dont talk about it, most are afraid to ask the Hells Angels about it and the Grateful Dead have sheepishly avoided any connection to it at all. Selvin meticulously puts the Altamont puzzle together in its entirety. He not only finds the missing pieces, he provides context to what we see (and dont see) in the film, clarifies misperceptions/myths and for the first time in almost 50 years, he has provided an all-encompassing account of the event. ALTAMONT is THE go-to resource that finally solves the Altamont mystery. What makes ALTAMONT so interesting is that Selvin attacks the subject matter with the tenacity of an otter cracking the shell of a clam. His meticulous and far-reaching research yield a gold mine of results that address and clarify much of the murkiness surrounding the formulation of the concert, how the Hells Angels really became such an integral part of the event and who ultimately bears the burden(s) of responsibility for the disaster that ensued. The most profound clarification centers on the financial situation of the Rolling Stones, who were more-or-less broke in 1969. When the band was called-out for exorbitant ticket prices on its 1969 US tour (a planned money-grabber) it countered with the generous offering of a free concert. The less altruistic reality was that the free concert would ultimately deliver a handsome payout to the band when the eventual film of the tour (culminating in the free concert) was released (prior to the release of the much-anticipated Woodstock movie). It was this ultimate greed and ego (the Stones wanted their own Woodstock moment) that lead to a series of rash and ill-informed decisions that would ultimately lead to rocks darkest day. While numerous other factors come into play (the Deads suggestion to use the Hells Angels, the lackadaisical approach to the last-minute site choice and the myriad of self-serving individuals that inserted themselves for financial gain), in the end, Selvin paints a clear picture that the Stones apparent naivet was part of the plan they could simultaneously walk away from failure and ensure they were paid handsomely in the end (as they assumed all control of the big money maker the eventual movie). While the storyline of the organization, planning and production of the concert is interesting enough, if youve seen Gimme Shelter, you know that there is a litany of more-intriguing individual tales to be told and Selvin doesnt disappoint. In addition to clarifying moments/scenes/individuals depicted in the movie (I never knew the meerschaum pipe smoking sweater-wearer was Timothy Leary or the creepy scene of concert-goers exiting into the darkness at the end was footage from George Lucas filming from a hill far, far away). With Selvins chronological account of events, we realize that not only was the movie heavily edited and misleading, but so were the press accounts. The concert was deemed deadly, but aside from the stabbing, the lethal drugs and alcohol played a bigger role in human suffering than violence doled out by the Hells Angels. After reading ALTAMONT, readers get a clearer picture of the Angels role in the concert and the violence captured on film. Yes, there were moments where Angels were problematic, but much of their activity centered on people damaging their bikes or prospective members eager to prove their worth for active members. Selvin certainly doesnt excuse the problems they caused, but fairly puts things in perspective and explains that most did what they were asked to do. These detailed vignettes give readers a view of concert events from ground zero we feel the stress, the chaos and certainly the fear. Even though we know what eventually happens, it is evident that the outcome could have and should have been much worse. ALTAMONT doesnt simply end with the concert close Selvin follows up on individuals and the repercussions faced by the major players, including Meredith Hunters girlfriend and family, as well as the man who killed Hunter. I found his post-concert research sufficiently answering all questions that lingered (at least in my mind) and I felt this is where the book really delivered. Unlike Woodstock, the media had no real interest in Altamont (save Rolling Stone), but the event remained a cloying issue that affected many of those involved, well into their futures. Only the Rolling Stones escaped relatively unscathed and we come to understand that that was exactly how it was planned they set it up so everyone else would deal with the aftermath (good or bad). Selvin closes with a spot-on analysis of what it all meant and why it matters. I feel his final words satisfactorily closes the case on Altamont by giving us the full story and leaving no questions unanswered. After reading ALTAMONT, my 30+ year craving for answers and details has finally been satisfied. While many rock n roll books seem to embellish and glorify events/people as a means to shock and impress readers with salacious details and stories of depravity. For Altamont the simple facts are bad enough. Thank you, Joel Selvin, for shining such a bright light on this misunderstood event.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. nice but unnecessary By David Bissonettei've

indeed been waiting for more details on this famous event. quite frankly tho, simply watch the brilliant "gimme shelter" film, there is utterly no need for this book. it's like the movie, in words. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great HistoryBy Victor Preacher Shurtz Lets start with a little history. Mick Jagger had a vision and in that vision two prominent figures stand out as the manipulators of the entire fiasco. With that being said, this book tells the true, as far as most can remember, tale of the role Mick Jagger, Sonny Barger, the connected moves and shaker and the lack of communication between the movers and shakers, played in the culmination of a free concert at a B-class raceway in Northern California; The Stones handled the music, the Angles handled the security for a 3ft tall stage. This book tells the tale in three parts: Chapter 1, Pipe Dreams; Chapter 10, Friday; Chapter 20, The Day After. It tells the story of a group vying for a place in history. The Rolling Stones and The Hells Angels have both given us all we could ask for. If youre a baby boomer or earlier you will remember the time when acid was free. Great Read; Great History

In this breathtaking cultural history filled with exclusive, never-before-revealed details, celebrated rock journalist Joel Selvin tells the definitive story of the Rolling Stones infamous Altamont concert, the disastrous historic event that marked the end of the idealistic 1960s. In the annals of rock history, the Altamont Speedway Free Festival on December 6, 1969, has long been seen as the distorted twin of Woodstock the day that shattered the Sixties promise of peace and love when a concertgoer was killed by a member of the Hells Angels, the notorious biker club acting as security. While most people know of the events from the film Gimme Shelter, the whole story has remained buried in varied accounts, rumor, and myth until now. Altamont explores rocks darkest day, a fiasco that began well before the climactic death of Meredith Hunter and continued beyond that infamous December night. Joel Selvin probes every aspect of the show from the Stones hastily planned tour preceding the concert to the bad acid that swept through the audience to other deaths that also occurred that evening to capture the full scope of the tragedy and its aftermath. He also provides an in-depth look at the Grateful Deads role in the events leading to Altamont, examining the bands behind-the-scenes presence in both arranging the show and hiring the Hells Angels as security. The product of twenty years of exhaustive research and dozens of interviews with many key players, including medical staff, Hells Angels members, the stage crew, and the musicians who were there, and featuring sixteen pages of color photos, Altamont is the ultimate account of the final event in rocks formative and most turbulent decade.

Joel Selvins book...is a deeply researched, minutely detailed, account of the event as it unfolds, occurs and concludes; and as a result comes to conclusions much greater than historical myth or a documentary film can portray...This book is definitely worth a read, and it is extremely well researched. (-- AllMusicBooks.com) Meticulous research, evocative detail, and a brave conclusion exactly what a history book should be. (-- Lee Child, author of the #1 New York Times bestselling Jack Reacher series) Boy did I live in a bubble or something. I had no idea the extent of bruising under the melting rainbow. Selvin is revealing our tricky gestation in the weird womb of sixties rock. Frightening. (Grace Slick, member of Jefferson Airplane) An incisive account of the most infamous concert debacle in rock history...This book provides context and perspective, showing the sea change in rock that was taking place as the Rolling Stones attempted to reassert themselves amid the increasing dominance of San Francisco psychedelia and the spirit of Woodstock...Compelling. (-- Kirkus s (starred review)) [A] methodical history. . . Selvins presentation of Altamont busts the myth of innocence lost; in fact, Altamont just made the reality harder to ignore. (-- Publishers Weekly) It was worse than you think. A lot worse [A]n account that moves at movie pace, Selvin cuts through woolly cop-out rhetoric, offering clarity and detail Altamont was a tragedy in the classical sense—a disaster born of hubris and folly—and Selvin nails every last shred of both. (MOJO Magazine) A fascinating account of the festival and its repercussions, this is also a cultural historical portrait of the West Coast rock scene, a history of the bands involved, and of the counterculture itself. Will be of interest to rock and pop culture fans. (-- Library Journal) From the Back Cover The definitive story of the Rolling Stones infamous Altamont concert and the murder that brought the sixties rock revolution to a shocking conclusion. For decades, the Rolling Stones free concert at Altamont Speedway on December 6, 1969, has been seen as the distorted twin of Woodstock the day that shattered the sixties promise of peace and love when a concertgoer was killed by a member of the Hells Angels, the notorious biker club that was acting as security that day. While the popular narrative of the concert has long been the Rolling Stones documentary Gimme Shelter, the full story has remained buried in differing accounts, distorted rumors, and wild myths until now. Altamont explores rocks darkest day, a fiasco that began well before the climactic death of Meredith Hunter and continued long after that infamous December night. Celebrated rock journalist Joel Selvin probes every aspect of the show from the excess of the Stones hastily planned tour preceding the festival to previously unreported deaths that occurred after the Rolling Stones left the stage that night to capture the full scope of the tragedy and its aftermath. Along the way, Selvin uncovers the many forces working against the show from its inception, including the neglectful planning of Altamonts location, the bad acid that swept through the crowd, and the disastrous inclusion of the Hells Angels, who had long been a fixture of the Bay Area rock scene. Moving beyond easy explanations, Selvin also delves into the powerful musical and cultural forces that left Altamont poised for calamity even before the first performer took the stage. Breaking down the two

bands at the center of it all the Rolling Stones and the Grateful Dead Selvin recounts the largely forgotten but crucial role that the Grateful Dead played in orchestrating the concert, offering a fresh look at how, in an era remembered for musical idealism, English and American rock worlds collided with devastating consequences. And while their fateful roles in Altamont brought this unlikely pair of bands together, it ultimately sent them down permanently divergent paths that would define each group's future. The product of thirty years of research and over a hundred interviews with many key players, including the musicians themselves, medical staff, Hells Angels members, and the stage crew, and featuring sixteen pages of color photographs, *Altamont* is an exhaustive account of the final event in rock's formative and most turbulent decade.

About the Author Joel Selvin is an award-winning journalist who has covered pop music for the *San Francisco Chronicle* since 1970. Selvin is the author of the bestselling *Summer of Love* and coauthor, with Sammy Hagar, of the number-one *New York Times* bestseller, *Red*. He has written twelve other books about pop music.