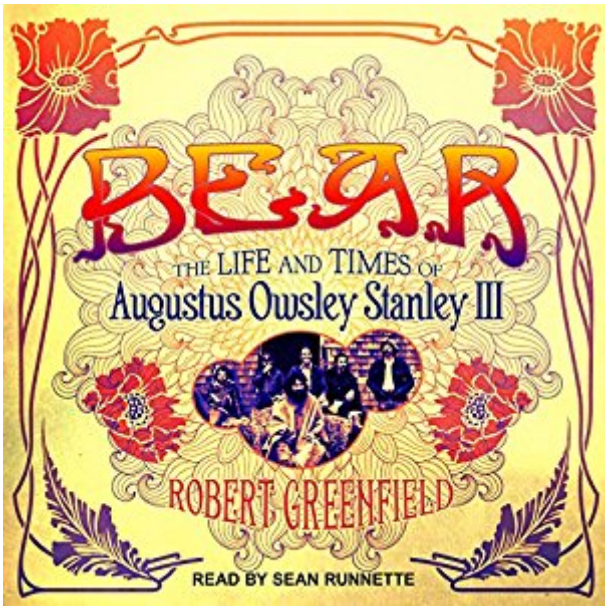
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Bear: The Life And Times Of Augustus Owsley Stanley III



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Synopsis

The creator of the dancing bear logo and designer of the Wall of Sound for the Grateful Dead, Augustus Owsley Stanley III, better known by his nickname, Bear, was one of the most iconic figures in the cultural revolution that changed both America and the world during the 1960s. Owsley's high octane rocket fuel enabled Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters to put on the Acid Tests. It also powered much of what happened on stage at Monterey Pop. Owsley turned on Pete Townshend of The Who and Jimi Hendrix. The shipment of LSD that Owsley sent John Lennon resulted in The Beatles' Magical Mystery Tour album and film. Convinced that the Grateful Dead were destined to become the world's greatest rock 'n' roll band, Owsley provided the money that kept them going during their early days. As their longtime soundman, he then faithfully recorded many of the Dead's greatest live performances and designed the massive space age system that came to be known as the Wall of Sound. Award-winning author and biographer Robert Greenfield's definitive biography of this Grateful Dead legend masterfully takes us through Owsley's incredible life and times.

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Customer Reviews

In 1985, when I became initiated into my new life as a latter generation DeadheadÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s called ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“getting on the bus,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• referencing a lyric from the DeadÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s psychedelic classic ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“ThatÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s It for The Other OneÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •I had

certainly heard of Augustus Owsley Stanley III. As an aficionado of the 1960s social revolution I had missed by virtue of being born in the midst of it, my knowledge of important figures of the day included the most famous purveyor of LSD, the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“high octane rocket fuelÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• that helped usher in what many felt was the beginning of a new age.Even back in 1967's legendary Summer of Love, Owsley, a street chemist nicknamed ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Bear,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• had already acquired a reputation for brilliance and mystery. Credited with manufacturing millions of doses of a drug capable of transforming an individualÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s worldview as well as that of society itself, Owsley cut a figure of enigmatic renown, in particular because so little seemed known about the man behind the legend. The new biography Bear by journalist and author Robert Greenfield (Dark Star: An Oral History of Jerry Garcia, Timothy Leary: A Biography) seeks to fill in many of those missing details.From an interesting and somewhat unsettled childhood as grandson of a progressive (for the time) U. S. Senator from Kentucky, and son of a troubled father forever laboring in the shadow of his more accomplished patriarch, Owsley would become far more notable, and notorious, than either could have dreamed. An autodidact with a brilliant, computer-like mindÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •an epigraph from Garcia that opens the book reads ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“ThereÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s nothing wrong with Bear that the loss of a few billion brain cells wouldnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t cureÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •Owsley acquired a deserved, if overbearing, reputation for being the smartest person in any given room.But Bear knew a great deal about more than chemistry: his contributions to live audio reinforcement would make the Grateful Dead famous not only for their lengthy musical improvisations, but for the clarity and power of their sound system. In an era when Beatles performances came piped through baseball stadium PA horns, BearÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s commitment to devising new and elaborate methods of amplifying the output of onstage instruments would alter the way music lovers enjoy live rock concerts.An inveterate womanizer and irascible, intractable egoist, in time Bear would not only wear out his welcome with the band for whom he provided early financial as well as lysergic support, but beginning in 1970 also served a two-year prison stretch. During this incarceration, he learned the fine arts of metallurgy and jewelry making, which would sustain him financially throughout the rest of his life in place of his former chemical endeavors. (Cultivating cannabis would also serve as a vocation, though Bear himself expressed disinterest about using this particular plant for its psychoactive properties.)Ever the iconoclast, after suffering a series of recurring dreams about environmental disaster in the Northern hemisphere of the Earth, in the early 1980s Bear attempted to persuade the members of the extended Dead family to immigrate to Australia. While finding no

takers, Owsley himself made the move, living out the rest of his years in converted shipping containers in a barren and secluded part of that vast continent. While he returned to America to attend Dead shows (I met and spoke with him at a couple), Australia would become his final home.As health problems began to plague him, the once indomitable Bear began to show signs of frailty and fragility, particularly after a bout with radiation to treat an instance of cancer in his neck, a disease he attributed to breathing second-hand cigarette smoke during his years working in rock & roll sound reinforcement. This illness on top of open heart surgery a few years earlier left this iconic counterculture figure a skeletal version of his former hearty self, though to the end he hosted his own version of Down Under acid tests, as well as lived to see, and criticize, the release of over a dozen of his audio recordings.While Greenfield includes a thorough bibliography, end notes, and discography, for such a towering, world-famous figureÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •his name, which became synonymous with LSD itself, enjoys a listing in various dictionariesÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •this biography ends up feeling somewhat thin and anecdotal. Intended more, perhaps, for the general public than scholars of the Grateful Dead experience for whom much of this material will read as duly familiar, Bear still provides a solid, humanizing overview of a cultural enigma who just may have changed the world more than few other twentieth-century figures outside of politics or medicine. Augustus Owsley Stanley may have finally been brought to a prosaic end in a roadside traffic accident, but his spirit, intellect, and contributions to sound reinforcement will most assuredly live on.

I read my LSD family by Rhoney Gissen before reading this. Alot of crossover info but it was still very informative. Great read, both on them. Owsley was a character and a half. Iconic symbol of the beats and the reason the Grateful Dead became who they were.

this biography offers some interesting insight into Bear’s background and how his mind worked. A nice read, not only for "dead heads" but anyone interested in the cultural goings on in the 60’s

fascinating account of a legend in the Sixties culture and Grateful Dead. Arrogant, self-centered but someone who could back it up and walk away from any situation and be just fine. Well written and fast paced without the belt and suspenders of some biographies.

This in-depth exploration of Owsley’s life has been long awaited by those who believe he was a counterculture icon of the highest degree. There was no one like him and it makes perfect sense to delve into and honor his past. He had gaping flaws, as most people already know, but who else

changed so much for so many? Gaps in previous knowledge are filled here, and it adds up to a very satisfying read. A one-of-a-kind man receives his due. Now go and support the efforts to preserve his "sonic journals"!!

Another hero of the 60’s. I love this book, I knew some of the story, although, now I know the truth. Here is a man who left his mark on a generation.

A fast and fascinating read about one of the most chameleonlike characters of the 1960s counter culture. Pretty amazing to read about the scientific advancements he made in sound recording and stagecraft as road manager for the Grateful Dead!

wonderful book about one of recent historie’s most unique characters. Read it in like 2 days. I would recommend to anyone as an entertaining read.

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