



Alexander McQueen: Blood Beneath the Skin

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The first definitive biography of the iconic, notoriously private British fashion designer Alexander McQueen explores the connections between his dark work and even darker life.

When forty-year-old Alexander McQueen committed suicide in February 2010, a shocked world mourned the loss. McQueen had risen from humble beginnings as the son of an East London taxi driver to scale the heights of fame, fortune, and glamour. He designed clothes for the world's most beautiful women and royalty, most famously the Duchess of Cambridge, who wore a McQueen dress on her wedding day. He created a multimillion-dollar luxury brand that became a favorite with celebrities including Kate Moss and Naomi Campbell.

But behind the confident facade and bad-boy image, lay a sensitive soul who struggled to survive in the ruthless world of fashion. As the pressures of work intensified, McQueen became increasingly dependent on the drugs that contributed to his tragic end. Meanwhile, in his private life, his failure to find lasting love in a string of boyfriends only added to his despair. And then there were the dark secrets that haunted his sleep.

A modern-day fairy tale infused with the darkness of a Greek tragedy, 'Alexander McQueen' tells the complete sensational story, and includes never-before-seen photos. Those closest to the designer, his family, friends, and lovers have spoken for the first time about the man they knew, a fragmented individual, a lost boy who battled to gain entry into a world that ultimately destroyed him.

'There's blood beneath every layer of skin', McQueen once said. Andrew Wilson's biography, filled with groundbreaking material, dispels myths, corrects inaccuracies, and offers new insights into McQueen's private life and the source of his creative genius.

Alexander McQueen: Blood Beneath the Skin Details

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From Reader Review Alexander McQueen: Blood Beneath the Skin for online ebook

Eva Asker says

I loved this book and the way it describes his complex life and genius and at the same time his darker side, which in the end ate him up as well as the industry itself. And when the end nears, you just want it to stop, because it is so sad and at the same time inevitable and although I knew it was coming, I cried.

The fashion industry is a cruel place with almost impossible demands if you're on the top of it and fame is a hard thing to handle and Alexander McQueen didn't come from the usual social background or had the image people expect, which I think is very well described here and he was cruelly critiqued for it. You are never better than your latest show.

When I read this book I took myself time to watch every fashion show of his available online and that really heightened my experience of this book and his life and work, even though I had seen most of it before. If you do that, who he was and his work becomes much more understandable.

Anneleen says

"Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind."

"There's blood beneath every layer of skin."

"I am a romantic schizophrenic."

"I want to be the purveyor of a certain silhouette or a way of cutting, so that when I'm dead and gone people will know that the twenty-first century was started by Alexander McQueen."

Fasterpussycat Moore says

It was a good bio but needed more meat. With so many people who knew him still alive, this book should have been packed with stories. McQueen was a story to tell if ever there was one.

Wendi Manning says

I'm not the target audience for this book. As I write this, I'm wearing an oversized Minion t shirt and a pair of pj bottoms. I know and care nothing for the fashion world. I've heard the names, of course, but to me, that world might as well not exist.

With that said, I loved this book! I had to look up a few basic fashion terms early in, but after that, I was fine, and if you're a fashion fan, you probably won't need to.

What a complicated, determined man. What a beautifully sad story. What a fully lived, unfulfilled life. This was one of those biographies that I dreaded getting to the end of, knowing what was coming, and not wanting it to. This book gave me everything I love in a novel and I was astonished that this was nonfiction. A lot of parts made me angry. How many men did he pass HIV to? How could so many people know how suicidal he was and do nothing? Why did the people in his life who loved him and not "Alexander McQueen, Brilliant Designer", let him get away with the spoiled brat behavior for years? His obsession with death and darkness framed everything he did, but didn't seem to fill his soul until his last few years, when things seemed to get beyond his control.

This book was filled with information, but I wanted more. Why did he decide to rekindle his friendship with Kate Moss? Was the McQ line unimportant to him and that's why he wouldn't show up at the office? What was he doing about his HIV status? That was really glossed over in the book, and that seemed weird. I can't imagine that that specter not showing up in his work, and in his life. The beauty of his work and the ugliness of his dark side were showcased well here, but, what keeps it from getting the fifth star is that there were too many interviews and not enough solid facts. How could someone as addicted and out of control as he was negotiate a brilliant deal with Gucci? Was there any other way to present how he worked besides repeated interviews about how he "picked up a scissors and did a perfect cut, right there on the spot?" There was very little detail about how a theme became an idea became an outfit. It was just "The theme was X and the stage looked like this and the models looked like this." Not helpful. The details of his will seemed odd when you consider that he was upset that Isabella didn't leave her McQueens to him, the fact that he left his family no mementos doesn't seem like something he would do.

There was a lot to take in here, and I'm still thinking about it hours later, but I will definitely be rereading this one a few more times.

Thanks to NetGalley for the ARC of a great book!

John Vale says

An OK biography of a creative master. Some very interesting sections and insight into the mind of McQueen, but often I felt lost with the introduction of a new person in every other paragraph, only for them never to appear again. There was also alot about each of McQueen's shows, which were often interesting to read about, but were not always relevant considering this was a biography of the man and not a retrospective of his work. I'd recommend it if you're interested in McQueen, I just felt it could have delved a little deeper.

Ana Serban says

"Give me time and I'll give you a revolution."

So bad this amazing creature did not had enough time, his work was the start of the fire- one that burnt social misconceptions and fashion statuses. A book that takes down the seams of his life, back to the original pattern pieces, deconstructed days and sleepless nights.

I highly recommend to read it with some sort of device by your side, most of the shows are up online and partner with the chapters to paint the chiaroscuro of the terrible child of fashion.

Sue Smart says

Well researched and very interesting about early life for McQueen until his appointment at Givenchy. The author struggles to piece together McQueen's life once he becomes famous and the book becomes a little monotonous for the last couple chapters.

Valerie says

Heartbreaking, beautiful, and wonderful. Rare is it that a book can make me tear up, but this one certainly did. Even if fashion is not necessarily your "thing" this book is incredibly insightful and yet another reminder that the mental health system is broken, not just in America, but everywhere. And more importantly, the different stigmas and assumptions that are placed on people who suffer from mental health issues are inhumane. My interpretation of the story is that like with other creative geniuses, mental health issues are excused, ignored, or belittled because the creations of those who suffer are more important continues to infuriate me.

Gee, this is the longest book review I've ever done. Rant done.

jennifer says

Way too much Detmar Blow.

Mandy says

More like 3.5 stars.

I am not a follower of fashion or fashion designers.

But I have read various articles about Alexander McQueen, mainly after his death, and that intrigued me enough to pick this up through my library.

There is an awful lot of information contained in this book. So much so that after a while certain paragraphs, and even chapters, started to meld together and the book became very repetitive for me.

I did enjoy some of it, but saying it was written with the cooperation of his family, there was so much from everyone else that the family were sometimes lost in the page.

I was shocked by some of McQueen's behaviour and repulsed by a lot of what he did, but he comes across as very much a tormented genius, who never seemed to be at peace with himself at all.

There were too many people mentioned in this book too, it was like different ones every chapter, with some repeating themselves from time to time. I would have preferred less friends, more family I think.

The descriptions of the fashion shows and presentations were too detailed for me too, I mean just way too much sometimes.

At the end of it, I felt like I didn't learn much more about the man after reading this biography than I already knew.

Ginger says

amazing man and such a life cut so short - we all have demons, some just can't be ignored. Love you Lee

Debra Komar says

Fascinating subject, so-so biography. Alexander McQueen was one of the great designers and his life is dramatic and strange. Wilson has done his homework; unfortunately, he put every single bit of it into this book. The endless quotes kill any sense of narrative or story line. The result is a choppy, sometimes boring collection of factoids that are presented in chronological order. What we learn (repeatedly over the 315 pages) is that McQueen was shy, difficult, funny and anti-social. The photos included tend to be more personal than professional, a choice that may work for some. I would have preferred to see his clothes, rather than his boyfriends.

Kristine says

Alexander McQueen: Blood Beneath the Skin by Andrew Wilson is a free NetGalley ebook that I read during late August - usually when I was at stats class. Thank goodness for the end of that (the class, not the book).

Lee's life is set up in a series of eyewitness-accounted moments, which comes off a little bit disjointed and somewhat posh (given the literary voice of the eyewitness being interviewed), yet a reader is able to pick up on a tiny facet of his personality and design mentality. Before you read this book, it helps a teeny bit if you're already acclimated to fashion, but also if you're familiar with European geography and idiosyncrasies.

Nico Convidado says

Favourite passages:

“McQueen defied the expectations of his birth, only to be hunted down by personal demons”. The Times

"In her contemplations Helena from Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream believes that love has the power to transform something ugly into something beautiful, because love is propelled by subjective perceptions of the individual, not by objective assessments of appearance. This belief was not only shared by McQueen but also critical to his creativity."

The McQueens were born into the working classes and their father believed that any aspiration above and beyond that would not only lead to personal unhappiness, but would also serve as a betrayal of their roots too.

Cherubic-looking child.

Lee knew that he was not like other boys from an early age, but the exact nature and source of this difference were still unclear to him. His mother picked up the fact that her youngest son was a strange mix of surface toughness and unusual vulnerabilities and did everything she could to protect him. "He was this little fat boy from the East End with bad teeth who didn't have much to offer, but he had this one special thing, this talent, and Joyce believed in him," said Alice Smith. "He told me once that she had said to him, "Whatever you want to do, do it." He was adored; they had a special relationship, it was a mutual adoration.

Escape was uppermost in Lee's mind. By the time he left school in June 1985, with one o level a grade B in art, "I had to draw a stupid bowl of fruit,' he said later he had made up his mind to try and do something with his life. His resources were limited, he knew that, but he reasoned it was worth a try. It's not heard of to be a fine artist in an east London family,' he said. "But I always had the mentality that I only had one life and I was going to do what I wanted to.

"If you were a misfit and you hadn't fitted in anywhere, then art school was the place where you could feel at home" Professor Louise Wilson

Lee loved it when Mira cut his hair, which was incredibly fine, but he could not sit still for long. Once he asked her to cut a tramline into his hair in the form of a heart monitor that had flatlined, a symbol that he incorporated into his shows and an image that haunted him until his death.

Pg 168 suicide by brick

Pg 257 "They will smarten his collar, straighten his tie and make his accessories conquer the world"

"It's not about you you know - it's all about ME!"

"I will veto this idea"

Paula Dennan says

Alexander McQueen: Blood Beneath the Skin* is well written and comprehensive, with McQueen's family and friends talking in depth, publicly, about Lee for the first time it would be difficult not to be.

McQueen is my favourite fashion designer, so it was interesting to see the juxtaposition between Lee's private life and his more public persona as Alexander McQueen. Andrew Wilson delves into how Lee's experiences and the secrets he kept manifested themselves in his designs.

This book will appeal to people who are interested in the fashion industry, in general, as well as McQueen fans.

The last chapter and the epilogue reduced me to tears with the level of detail they shared about the McQueen's final hours and how he ultimately ended his life.

I knew the method of death he chose and I know this is a biography, one that is marketed as “the first definitive biography” of the designer, but I still wasn’t expecting the scenes that were described. They played on my mind for days afterwards and a part of me still hasn’t recovered from reading them.

*I received an eARC, from the publisher, via Netgalley
