



## Homeward Bound: The Life of Paul Simon

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**Homeward Bound: The Life of Paul Simon** Peter Ames Carlin

**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 immigrants from Hungary, the nearly 75-year-old singer-songwriter has not only sold more than 100 million records, won 15 Grammy awards and been installed into the Rock 'n' 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, the Grateful Dead, drugs, depression, marriage, divorce, and more. A life story with the scope and power of an epic novel, Carlin's unnamed *Paul Simon* book is the first major biography of one of the most influential popular artists in American history.

## Homeward Bound: The Life of Paul Simon Details

Date : Published October 11th 2016 by Henry Holt and Co.

ISBN : 9781627790345

Author : Peter Ames Carlin

Format : Hardcover 432 pages

Genre : Music, Biography, Nonfiction, Culture, Pop Culture

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## **From Reader Review Homeward Bound: The Life of Paul Simon for online ebook**

### **Alice says**

A biography that takes us all the way up to the most recent album. Stranger to Stranger, although of course I hope there is plenty more story still to come. The impression I came away with was of a strange, often difficult and sometimes troubled man who has, late in life, made peace with his past and present. Trying to place the song lyric picked for most of the chapter titles is a fun game, too.

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### **Johana says**

The merit of the book is what seems to be an elucidating analysis of the picture of apartheid, even though the politics apparently did not concern the Artist. Also the author apparently watched the incident during "Johnny Ace|", in Central Park, on Youtube. Author has witty captioning on the video. I've seen all the same pictures on Google images too, those that the author cites as his primary sources for the last chapter.

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### **Beth Sanders says**

To say I'm a lifelong Simon & Garfunkel fan is a gross understatement; they are and have been my favorites for the past 40-something years. Anyone who knows me associates them with me; I'm that kind of fan.

There weren't many surprises in this book as I've read anything I could find on these two. I did enjoy the detail about their early lives in Forest Hills, Queens.

I'd love to have read more about the Concert in Central Park. For me there was too much history and political detail surrounding the Graceland albums and Paul's work with the African musicians. I felt that this was filler, added to compensate for the fact that Paul didn't authorize or contribute in any way.

Overall, interesting in some spots, but, meh.

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### **Murray says**

In my lifetime, there has always been Paul Simon. I can remember listening to Simon & Garfunkel while in elementary school. To this day, S&G and solo Simon are still heavy on my playlist.

The rise and fall of S&G is rock and roll mythology, a group that, like the Beatles, had it all and then let it slip away. Carlin does an excellent job documenting both the rise and the fall and includes many details about their early careers that I was not aware of.

As in his previous biography about Bruce Springsteen, Carlin presents Simon as a man that is driven by both music and demons. While Simon has his flaws and is surrounded by controversy, he comes across as someone who is very dedicated to his craft and his gift. He definitely bulldozes some business associates and creative collaborators along the way but, as rock stars go, he's more likable than most. Carlin also succeeds in both describing the creative process and the ensuing results of many, many songs.

This is a must read for any true Paul Simon fan. At 375 pages, I was still hungry for more by the time I finished.

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### **Mandy says**

Overwritten and just too long, this is only partially successful as a biography. It feels more like a personal account than a definitive account of Paul Simon himself, and as an unauthorized biography certainly doesn't feel authoritative. For music buffs there's a lot here – Carlin goes into the songs in great depth – but I would have preferred more about the man than the minutiae of the music. I ended up skipping quite a bit. It's simply not objective enough and feels more like the gushings of a fan rather than a considered portrait. Informative, and obviously painstakingly researched, it's an exhaustive but unfortunately also rather an exhausting biography with rather too much speculation. Paul Simon deserves better.

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### **Erin says**

Carlin has some really great turn-of-phrase, but there is a LOT of conjecture and assumption in this book. Still, there are wonderful moments where songs are unpacked, instruments are described, and the creative process is depicted with a nice sense of awe.

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### **Julie says**

Homeward Bound: The Life of Paul Simon by Peter Ames Carlin is a 2016 Henry Holt and Co. Publication.

I read Peter Ames Carlin's book about the life of Brian Wilson and found it was solid enough for a rock biography. So, when I saw this book on LibraryThing's early review program, I requested it.

Sadly, this book is really disappointing. It has been my experience that rock bios, (not autobiographical), can go one of several ways- They can be stuffed with minutia, detailing every single album or song, or recording, who played what instruments, sang backup and so on, without giving the reader much insight into the artist's personal life - or- the personal aspects and whining and drama is the main focus and the music is not examined too closely , -or- the author really does their homework and combines musical highlights in with the artist's life story.

I have listened to, and very much enjoyed, the work of Simon & Garfunkel as well as most of Paul's solo material for most of my life. Yet, Paul Simon remained an enigma for me. Oh, sure, I knew there had been epic squabbles between Paul and Art, and of course I was aware that Paul had been married to Carrie Fisher and is now married to Edie Brickell.

Other than that, I really didn't know much about Paul's temperament, or how he and Art got together musically, or how they ended up going in separate directions. This book has answered a few of those basic questions, but by the end of the book, I didn't feel as though I ever really got a feel for whom Paul really was in private life, as the insights were far and few between.

There are very few quotes from Paul or Art, and the ones that do pop up here or there are most likely gleaned from other sources, articles, interview etc.

The book edition I received is text only, without the obligatory photos, most of these books toss in. However, this is a nice trade size book, with high quality printing and binding.

While this is a thick book, with lots of information, it's not the sort of reading that held my attention. It was rather dull, except in certain spots, and I admit to zoning out quite a few times. It took me a long time to read through this book, and I often found myself thinking of it as 'homework', because if I win a book, I feel obligated to read and review it.

So, when I say this bio is anemic, I'm referring to the absence of a personal presence, and the portrait of this artist, is far from flattering, in my opinion.

I'm not insinuating the author did not do a fair amount of research, because I think he did put some energy into the book, but I'm wondering if he was deliberately coloring inside the lines by glossing over a lot of the personal junk.

Either way, despite its bulk the book doesn't have a lot soul, or depth, didn't encourage me to add Simon's music to one of my playlists or hunger for more information on the artist. In fact, it left feeling rather apathetic towards Simon and as though, in good conscience, I could not recommend this book, even to the most diehard fan.

1.5 stars

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## **Paul Gleason says**

A couple years back, Peter Ames Carlin, who is quickly becoming the best rock and roll biographer of his generation, had a wide-ranging and enlightening conversation with me about Bruce, his superb 2012 biography of Bruce Springsteen. Carlin gave me an intimate view into the time that he spent with Springsteen while he was writing Bruce: how the two of them visited Springsteen's favorite Jersey pizza joint, how Springsteen was candid and open about his battle with depression, and how Springsteen, via cellphone, made sure that a lost Carlin found his way back to the highway so that he could get back safely to his hotel.

In my interview with Carlin – and in Bruce – Springsteen lives up to everything his image entails: a nice, humble, honest, and extremely gifted human being. The interview, moreover, supported everything that I ever felt about Springsteen as a man and a musician: the man and his message were one and the same.

Carlin's latest biography – his first since Bruce – is *Homeward Bound: The Life of Paul Simon* (Henry Holt), and it presents him with a difficult task, one that's much more difficult than his Springsteen book or his other

two previous biographies of Brian Wilson and Paul McCartney (I mean, it's difficult to dislike Wilson, a graceful man who has overcome many mental health issues to give the world some of its most memorable music, and McCartney, who was a Beatle). What makes *Homeward Bound* a more challenging book to write and, ultimately, Carlin's greatest achievement is that Simon, unlike Springsteen, Wilson, and McCartney, appears in his pages as a man whose complexities derive from character traits that make him distinctly unlikeable.

This isn't to say that Carlin spends almost 400 pages attacking the writer of some of popular music's greatest songs. Quite the opposite: Carlin has nothing but praise for most of Simon's work, with and without his on-again-off-again partner, Art Garfunkel. He considers Simon & Garfunkel's 1970 masterpiece, *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, one of the best and most important albums ever made and extols such Simon solo efforts as *Paul Simon* (1972), *There Goes Rhymin' Simon* (1973), and *The Rhythm of the Saints* (1990). Carlin even highlights the much-maligned *Songs of the Capeman* (1997) as being one of Simon's best.

But what's truly extraordinary about *Homeward Bound* is the way in which Carlin traces Simon's creative process. In other words, Carlin provides extraordinary insight into the way in which Simon, always with the help of excellent collaborators, made these and what seems like each and every one of his other fine songs and albums.

It's Carlin's deep engagement with Simon's sometimes troubling relationship with his collaborators that makes *Homeward Bound* such a revelatory book and his best biography to date.

Carlin fearlessly probes Simon's creative process and, in my reading at least, presents an artist whose work derives from a deep need to control every aspect of the creative process and, unfortunately in some cases, take credit where it should have gone to his collaborators. You'll have to read *Homeward Bound* to learn about how this need for control and accompanying need for credit, in many ways, defines Simon's career from his days with Garfunkel to 1986's *Graceland* album and beyond. For now, I'll just point you to such albums and songs as 1966's "Scarborough Fair/Canticle," *Graceland*, and 1983's *Hearts and Bones*.

But what's most interesting and memorable about *Homeward Bound* is the way in which Carlin interweaves Simon's lifelong battle with depression into his discussion of Simon's creative process. More, Carlin's Simon is a very depressed man – a man who, now in his seventies, never managed to find himself. The music, therefore, in many cases seems to be an attempt to exert control over something, to manage a personality that tends to sway toward darkness and, sometimes even, paranoia.

Carlin succeeds in doing something almost unprecedented in rock and roll biographies. He puts the reader in an uncomfortable position. The reader knows about Simon's depression and the truly awful decisions he makes to feed his own ego. But he/she also knows that Simon is a chronically depressed guy who might not always be in control of his awful decisions – that these decisions may make him, unlike Wilson, McCartney, and Springsteen, distinctly unlikeable.

We all want to see ourselves in our rock heroes. We want their songs to be an authentic and pure revelation of their inner lives, political beliefs, and deepest feelings. We want their songs to be just as earnest and clear as our own feelings about our own lives.

Carlin's *Homeward Bound* is brilliant because it challenges this Romantic notion of the rock musician as hero. It's also essential reading for any music fan who's interested in what led to the creation of some of rock's most essential songs and albums.

This review appears in Stereo Embers Magazine.

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### **Andy Miller says**

In some ways this biography of Paul Simon was great, it was thorough on all parts of his life from his initial meeting and first estrangement with Art Garfunkle to college while their musical careers were on hold, to the heady days of early success, the big break up, his solo career to the present day. It is also well researched, the biographer, Peter Carlin, has studied all the songs, interviewed sources from years ago, read the reviews and gave balanced accounts of the controversies such as Graceland and apartheid, his pirating or depending on your viewpoint, the advocacy of different cultural music. Carlin shows Simon at his generous best and his petty worst.

Still, the biography left me somewhat flat. Carlin never makes Simon come alive, the book comes off somewhat as a rote description of the different events of his life without the reader getting to know him. So read this for the history and the discussions of music and culture but not for a lively adventure through the exciting times of his lives

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### **Koeoaddi says**

Abandoned in favor of a Bookends relisten, which was time far better spent. Probably not the book's fault, but by now I should know better. I've read a bunch of biographies of my musical heroes and they are never even fractionally as compelling as the music. This one included.

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### **Lidja says**

Not my usual fare, but thought I'd give it a shot after I read the Kirkus Review. Found it to be a good late-night sleep-inducer. There are some interesting recounts of how frustrating it is to work with Simon, but that isn't very surprising to learn about an artist. Some good background and context for Simon's catalog, but I'm really not that interested in his music to care about the minutiae some fans may crave. Well-researched, but just not my cup of tea.

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### **Barry Hammond says**

A mass of contradictions: a shy internal boy who was also an athlete, a travelling folkie who was also the president of his fraternity, a loner who was one half of a notoriously feuding duo, a generous family man who could cut people dead if he didn't like something they said to him, a depressive and rebellious artist who also had the business sense of an old-time music mogul - all these tendencies were present in the remarkable person who has had a legendary and lengthy career as a singer/songwriter unlike anyone else in his generation.

Peter Ames Carlin, who has also written biographies of Lenny Bruce and Bruce Springsteen, brings an admiring but also penetrating and cynical eye as he examines the life story of this complicated subject. It's an informative book but also a perplexing one as elusive and confusing as it's central character. I suspect critics

and biographers will be examining this life for decades to come, trying to define what made this man tick but I doubt they'll get much closer to the core than Carlin does. For a life lived in the glare of publicity it seems as mysterious and unknowable as one from a different time. A complex book for a complex subject but the reader comes away as informed as it's probably possible to be. An interesting read for sure. - BH.

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### **Malcolm Frawley says**

I have loved Paul Simon's music since I first heard Simon & Garfunkel in about 1967. I know this might be regarded as sacrilege by some but I much preferred Simon's song-writing to Bob Dylan's. And his singing? That goes without even saying. Strangely, Graceland - Simon's most successful solo album - is my least favourite of all his works. I much prefer Hearts & Bones, which did no business at all. This is a terrific biog of a complex personality & it explores the man in as much depth as the music. Simon was capable of extreme, & sometimes anonymous, generosity along with mind-numbing petulance & cruelty. Although he didn't credit guitarist Martin Carthy the arrangement of Scarborough Fair that he 'borrowed' for the album Parsley, Sage, Rosemary & Thyme, he did the right thing by directing royalties to him. It wasn't until they re-connected many years later, after Carthy had seethed for so long about being ripped off, that both became aware that Cathy's manager had never forwarded those royalties on. Simon could also drop a protegee on the spot if she reminded him that the music that she had exposed him to & that he had just used to make Graceland had been intended for her own debut album. He always paid his session musicians way above union scale but took his musical The Capeman to Broadway believing he knew more about theatre, directing & everything else about staging a major musical better than experts who had been doing it most of their lives. And his on again off again relationship with Art Garfunkel is at times impossible to fathom. At the heart of the book is his songs & I certainly believe that my life has been enriched by his words & music. Highly recommended for baby boomer music fans.

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### **Steve Peifer says**

When you don't have access to the stars, the band members or the wives, there really isn't much point, is there?

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### **Shaon Castleberry says**

Not a book for those looking for an in depth work. Book starts out as almost a fan gush and goes downhill from there. I finally skipped to the end and it still seemed flat - more of an "exhale" that the manuscript was done. Just for curiosity's sake I back tracked to the Jazz Fest concert with Artie. Oddly enough, although listed the songs and how Artie sounded, the fact that those of us in attendance that day picked Artie right up and joined in singing with him. I can honestly say that we in the crowd probably did not hit the high notes either, but a good time was had by all. Since we in the crowd could not possibly hear how the stage sounded, I just wonder how anyone could pick out any particular voice. It is easy enough to check how the crowd got behind Artie and I do not think I have ever seen that happen at any other shows I have attended over the years. That only leaves me to wonder how much else the author missed while trying to sound authoritative.

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