

Abe Lincoln On Acid

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Honest Abe has been revived and sent on a psychedelic trip in this entertaining work of alternate history.

After a long coma curtailed Lincoln's stint with the Dillinger gang in *Abe Lincoln: Public Enemy No. 1*, Brian Anthony and Bill Walker have revived the sixteenth president once again with this entertaining follow-up, *Abe Lincoln on Acid*. A blend of wit, action, and spot-on characterizations, this reprise finds Abe immersed in the history, politics, and pop culture of the psychedelic 1960s.

"Cursed with eternal life" by the voodoo-enhanced bullet intended to kill him, Abe has been under house arrest in his hometown of Springfield, Illinois...until the Kennedy assassination awakens him for a second look at the twentieth century. For four years, Abe longs for freedom while bonding with his doctor, the FBI agents assigned to him, and his African American cook. He reads, listens to music, and watches the Three Stooges, *The Twilight Zone*, and Cronkite's news broadcasts.

The zany but tightly woven plot turns to action when Abe discovers that the working copy of his memoirs has been confiscated by his old nemesis, J. Edgar Hoover. Abe poses as a Lincoln impersonator at the nearby Lincoln Home, now a museum, and escapes on a school bus, with the FBI on his tail. He hitchhikes to San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district and befriends a few young people in Golden Gate Park. He accompanies them to a Jefferson Airplane concert, where he inadvertently drinks from a bottle of wine laced with Purple Haze. Abe's acid trip is illuminating and sets him, and the plot, in motion once again, just ahead of pursuing federal agents.

Its supernatural premise aside, the novel is well researched. The decade of racial unrest, protests, drug use, and generational conflict is accurately portrayed. Abe's hippie friends discuss a recent protest of Dow Chemical's manufacture of napalm for use in Vietnam, and Hoover's dedicated real-life secretary, Helen Gandy, is included as another fine example of the novel's attention to detail. Caricatures of personalities are effectively detailed, and they ring true. Abe is as he was—wise, whimsical, and compassionate; Hoover is domineering and ruthless—"one of Satan's imps," cracks Abe; Lyndon Johnson pours himself a belt of Cutty Sark and puts his big feet up on the Oval Office desk. Martin Luther King Jr. is here, too, as an eloquent yet approachable man of the cloth and a spokesman for his people.

Abe Lincoln on Acid is a work for everyone, including alternate history buffs and Lincolnophiles who, at first glance, may not find it to be serious enough. Beyond its playful cover depiction of Lincoln with long hair, a sweatband, and rose-tinted sunglasses will be found an homage to a national treasure.

JOE TAYLOR (May 17, 2016)

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