



## Baby Pictures: My Year on the Road with Baby Lester and the Buggybumpers

**B. John Burns**

BookBaby (Aug 19, 2022)

Hardcover \$37.95 (372pp)

978-1-66784-189-2

*Recalling a 1970s cross-country tour and written with dry wit, Baby Pictures is a compelling memoir about a musician's coming-of-age.*

Musician B. John Burns's memoir *Baby Pictures* covers the year he spent on the road with a new band, Baby Lester and the Buggybumpers.

By his senior year of high school, Burns was certain that he wanted to be a musician. Convinced that he was going to be an instant songwriting sensation, he dropped out of college after his freshman year. After spending three months on the road in an attempt to fulfill his dream, he determined that his skills were too underdeveloped. He took a full-time job and began playing with a local band. Then Burns received a call from Lester Black, the front man for a cover-comedy band, Baby Lester and the Buggybumpers. He agreed to join them for a nine-month tour across the US in 1977. The band ended up disbanding in August of that year.

The anecdotal chapters follow stops along the tour. They include two near-death experiences for Burns: breaking his back in a skydiving accident and getting stuck in a blizzard in South Dakota. He visited an acquaintance's acquaintance on Christmas, resulting in hilarity. But while such moments are engaging, the book also includes off-putting memories, as of Burns harassing a waitress and feeling regret over not pursuing someone who had a boyfriend.

Burns's fellow members are described in detail, with large swaths of dialogue complementing such descriptions. Their behavior is conveyed in a way that, even before their internal struggles became clear to him, is personable and empathetic. Even the band's struggles are foreshadowed through its members' foibles. The book concludes in the aftermath of their breakup, following Burns's subsequent attempts to make it as a professional songwriter, his return to college, and his career as a criminal defense lawyer. It also revisits his bandmates, and those whose paths they crossed, for a retrospective reflection.

But the narration is uneven throughout, sometimes capturing Burns's twenty-one-year-old perspective, and at other times reframing incidents from a more mature perspective. Often, the duality is used to play up extreme emotions, including Burns's embarrassments and amusements. The book emphasizes his past naïveté, which is made to service easy punch lines.

Recalling a 1970s cross-country tour, *Baby Pictures* is a compelling musician's memoir with underlying themes of change and love.

CAROLINA CIUCCI (July 22, 2022)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*