

Lennon Revealed

Larry Kane

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“Was John Lennon a mean bastard? A foolish prankster? A musical tyrant?” These are a few of the provocative questions that the author asks and answers in this personal account of arguably the most famous, and certainly the most notorious, Beatle. When Kane was a twenty-one-year-old radio news director, he became the only American reporter to accompany the Beatles on their entire North America concert tours in 1964 and 1965. His engaging account of these tours is told in his previous book, *Ticket to Ride: Inside the Beatles' 1964 Tour that Changed the World*.

Kane was originally put off by Lennon's antiwar pronouncements in 1964 but came to believe that he was right about Vietnam. Lennon was a truth seeker from whom Kane learned that “bullshit and superficiality are a terrible waste of time.” Much attention is given to the four people whom Lennon loved: Stuart Sutcliffe, a childhood friend who became the “fifth Beatle”; Cynthia, his first wife; Yoko Ono, his wife and creative partner; and, May Pang, a lover Lennon took with encouragement from Ono. Kane describes his subject's strengths and flaws: Lennon's long-term struggle with drugs is not glossed over, and Sutcliffe's early death from a cerebral hemorrhage may have resulted from a beating he received from Lennon.

The author tempers his portrayal of the controversial Lennon by also depicting the good family man who was determined that his children would receive the parental love he was denied, and the civic humanitarian who raised large sums of money to buy bulletproof vests for the New York City police.

The most intriguing stories describe Richard Nixon's attempt to have Lennon deported on an old charge of marijuana use, because of his political radicalism. Nixon unleashed the FBI on him and the Lennon who emerged triumphantly from this three-year legal battle in 1975 had matured as a credible spokesman for his generation.

Lennon's complex, often sad, and all-too-short life has inspired Kane to write this book, which is darker than the romp-filled *Ticket to Ride*. A DVD of the author's 1968 interview with Lennon and Paul McCartney accompanies the book. Also included are many personal anecdotes from Lennon's family members, radio personalities, friends, and fans. Remarks from young people of today attest to Lennon's enduring musical legacy. However, the reader might have preferred more detail from the author and fewer of these secondary accounts.

Overall, Kane offers a captivating memoir of Lennon—the man and the icon—and concludes that “few chroniclers have given Lennon credit for loving more than hating and ultimately for leaving his world and ours a better place.”

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