

## The Upsetter Blog

**Brett Marie**

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In Brett Marie's novel *The Upsetter Blog*, Henry, a past-his-prime writer, sets out to chronicle the first tour of a talented but inexperienced band and its mercurial singer.

Henry takes the assignment at the urging of his godson, who is starting a magazine and funding the tour for Jack Hackett and the Flak Jackets. Jack ranges from evasive in interviews to actively aggressive on stage, picking fights with the audience or getting too drunk to function. The one person who can calm him is his girlfriend, who joins them during the tour. Henry develops a crush on her, which gradually develops into a sometimes-paternal friendship.

Much of the book takes the form of Henry's extended blog entries from the tour, allowing it to tell both his story and the band's. Through the process of writing about the band's adventures and sometimes poor choices, Henry winds up reflecting on the choices of his own youth.

Jack's is a familiar self-destruction tale; in this book, it's the secondary characters who stand out the most. These include a religious rock star, Caleb; Joe, who's quiet but thoughtful; and Tim, a music lover who geeks out over staying in the same hotel where Gram Parsons did in his final days, and feels real hurt over the passing of Johnny Cash.

Brett Marie is the pen name of musician Mat Treiber, whose musical background comes through in the rendering of the band's low-budget tour. From the small venues of inattentive crowds to the long stretches of road trips and hotel stays, the book's details are realistic and familiar. Like Henry, *The Upsetter Blog* captures the romance of the uphill struggle of a band that's trying to make it, showing the many pitfalls along the way.

JEFF FLEISCHER (September / October 2021)

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