

## Sunday After The Last

### Book Collecting

I've got today at the Bookplate all figured out, I'm going to write about my personal book collection. I'm also going to play the music I used to play when I started behind the counter 12 months ago.

When I started I had all the enthusiasm of a novice. For the first six months I tidied up avidly, starting with the Art section. Then I moved into Australiana, and on and on, tidying everything in the shop. I pulled every book of the shelf, dusted it, and replaced it in alphabetical order. I wondered – at first – why bookdealers were so indifferent to keeping everything in order. Then the futility of tidying the children's section burst my bubble, it was back to chaos within the week.

I also played lots of ukulele music that drew comments from customers. The *Captain Matchbox Whoopee Band* and the *National Junk Band* to me seems the perfect bookshop music – silly enough to keep people happy, smart enough to keep them guessing. Plus they always asked 'What are you playing?' Er – George Formby, Roy Smeck, Slim Gaillard, Bill Wolfgramm & His Islanders...I could have sold these CDs but a bookshop's licence doesn't permit the sales of second hand CDs.

Check this out. *Living Room*, by Paris Combo is what I play to people when I want the shop to appear slick. I once played Nick Cave's *Birthday Party* and I could see the customers becoming increasingly miserable. My best shot with Nick Cave is his readings, in fact all readings-on-CD sound better in a bookshop than anywhere else – it is perhaps the perfect environment – *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg, *Jack Kerouac Reads On The Road* and even *The Man From Snowy River* by Leonard Teale, sound good in a bookshop – I reckon.

As I drive to the shop I see Ormsby on the road and give him a wave. He waves back. I see him often. He seems to 'walk'. He is a walking man. Today I am expecting Lisa to call in with two bags of books, plus I expect Luke and my father who will sing Gilbert and Sullivan songs, tell me about his school St Walter St John and why he disbelieves evolution. Grant has gone to Queensland, Colin Campbell – who is prepared to pay \$100 for a book of Mick Joffré cartoons – calls in every month, Paul

Duncan is just as intermittent. The lady with a woollen hat who ransacks the \$2.50 bins and argues with Luke will maybe call in, and possibly the guy who calls me 'Bro' who has 5000 esoteric books, lectures to Sufis and sounds wise. Otherwise everything is going to be a surprise. I plan to spend my quiet time writing about my personal library.

And so the day begins with a phone call from my father, checking I'm in the shop. Now that I am, he calls around on his old person's scooter, ironically branded 'Challenger'. He tells me that he got here in four minutes and 45 seconds then he hands me a photograph of me aged 16 in school uniform and shows me a letter that he wrote when he was serving in the 8<sup>th</sup> Army. It 'proves' the German prisoners held by the British Army were treated decently, a point he is anxious to make. Then he leaves, and a customer pays \$10 for *Joan Hammond, A Voice & A Life*, from the Opera section. I've never heard of Joan Hammond.

Chris has me left a note requesting that I tidy the Sci-Fi and Crime sections, and I think I should, because I didn't do any tidying last Sunday. I'll start by putting away the 'new arrivals' on the counter, which includes Robert Hughes, *A Jerk On One End* (\$10), Mark Haddon *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (hard back, \$15), and another Harry Potter, a big thick one, optimistically priced \$14. There are seven people in the shop. No, it's now down to five. Then two quick sales, \$42 of school texts and two Sci-Fi for \$18. Life would be great if it continued like this all day. Then a woman called Susan wants Mary Moody's *Last Tango In Toulouse* which I can't find, although I'd swear we've got it somewhere. I frustrate her because I remember it well, and ransack the place only to come up with nothing. So I tell her about the time I met Patrick White.

Now that she's gone, I think I'll sit here and write.

After 40 years of collecting books, I'm not actually sure what it is that I collect, because the concept of the 'perfect' library is changeable. I've only just found out about *Carnets 1935-1945* by Albert Camus, which I never knew it was in print. So I'm always learning. And after learning comes wanting.

For the purposes of collecting, I define a good book under one of three categories. The subject, the author, and then some special characteristic. For example: (1) subject – any book on Bob Dylan, Vincent van Gogh, and especially Tiny Tim would capture my interest. (2) Author – whereas I'd never buy his biography, I bought *Memories* by Tennessee Williams

because I buy books by 'name' people – Michelangelo's *Sonnets*, Vincent van Gogh's *Letters*, Ethel Turner's *Diary*, Leonardo da Vinci's *Notebook & Drawings*, etc. And (3) I buy things that are interesting – like - maybe signed. For example, I have an autographed copy of a book written by Vestor Presley. An awful book, but he is Elvis's uncle and the book is indeed signed.

Three-quarters of my books (3000) are in storage, that's how unnecessary they are. I never miss them. I had so many books that I had to weave my way through stacks in the study. Robbie has lots of books too.

A young woman approaches the counter wanting sporting biographies. What sort of sport? Boxing – Mike Tyson, football – John Eales, cricket – Shane Warne? Finally she reckons Ian Thorpe is 'a good one', but she doesn't buy it.

Let me describe to you my personal library at home. Closest to my desk I have three shelves. One is Tiny Tim, the other Martin Sharp and the third is Luna Park – which interests me as an important part of the Martin Sharp story. Police reports about the fire, press clippings, statements relating to the Ghost Train Fire, take up a whole shelf within handy reach.

Above these, on the high shelf are seven volumes of myths and legends published in 1913 by the Gresham Publishing Company, London. *Teutonic Myths & Legends*, *Celtic Myths & Legends*, *Egyptian Myths & Legends*, *Indian Myths & Legends*, *Classic Myths & Legends* and *The Age of Chivalry*. They were in the house when I was growing up. Beside them is another childhood volume, *Aesop's Fables* retold by Blanche Winder, with 48 colour plates by Harry Rountree. And next to that Greek Myths Vols 1-2 by Robert Graves, a lovely hardback edition, of small value, because Folio used it as their free giveaway to new subscribers, but it's great! We have it in the shop casebound for \$50. A woman is interested in it. Although I insist that Robert Graves is a rare genius, she purchases three text books for her daughter instead.

The next closest shelf to my desk is the antiquarian books, which are a problem because they have nothing to do with anything else in the library. Antiquarian books are a different headspace. Antiquarian books are dead stuff – you don't read them, you touch them warily, they are not real. There is no way you can normalise them or treat them with disrespect – I have tried. You simply don't *want* to read them, because they are not your first preference in sourcing reliable information on the subject. I have – for example – Oliver Cromwell's first biography, 1787. Apart from its

fragility, you don't want to read it because the first sentence reads like this, '*The origin of the protectorate house of Cromwell, has been involved in some obscurity, owing to many causes, but to none more than the diffusive, vague, and contradictory relations different authors have given of it*' which as far as lead sentences go isn't a patch on 'Call me Ishmael'. Nor 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times'!

I look around and spot a paperback George Harrison biography called *Here Comes The Sun*, which I immediately put in the window. I bet I sell it, before the day is out. Then a young woman buys three texts and complains about the price of new school books, which are slightly altered by the Board of Studies from year-to-year to keep parents spending big. 'My biology text cost me \$90,' she moans. I tell her that most publishing in Australia is struggling – but not text books. 'They've got a monopoly,' I add, 'And I thought monopolies were illegal'. After she leaves I stop writing and tidy some books, though you'd never know it. Then I write some more about my personal collection.

Around the corner from my desk at home are the biographies which comprises 216 books, from Gary Ablett to Frank Zappa, and it's a pretty good summary of most of the people whose lives have interested me – Marcel Duchamp, John Harvey Kellogg, Rasputin, Bobby Fischer...

Beside that I condensed my novel collection into three shelves only, a task made simpler because paperbacks did not qualify. They are all hardback. This is followed by one shelf comprising 23 John Lennon-related books, and a shelf about the Beatles – lyrics, pics, bios, artworks.

Then, following around the walls, there is a selection of slightly more than 100 religious books representing all facets of western religion above a shelf of around 70 autographed books that are all interesting in their own right – including bought autographs, like *The Dawn Is At Hand* inscribed, 'Best wishes, Kath Walker Oct 1966', Sir Edmund Hillary *A View From The Summit*, and *Inside Out* by Robert Adamson who wrote, 'To Lowell - remember pulling in the hauling net: the whiting, the mullet, the life of the lake – the stars above – we had it all in Cuttagee Lake. Sweet memories, Love Bob'. I've also got a collection of 60 poetry books.

The next section is a tidy library of books about games in general with a decent section on Chess. Books by Alekhine, Capablanca, Tarash and Fischer. I think 25 books like that has got Chess properly covered. I don't need any more.

Then I've got a shelf of 15 diaries – from William Bligh to Dorothy Wordsworth. The only thing they've got in common is they are 'diaries', some are nice editions, others are \$2 paperbacks. But the next 200 books are all specific histories – histories of anything, Israel, reading, Australian painters, Catholicism, smoking, paper, the alphabet, playing cards, cartoons, *The Ukulele – A Visual History* by Jim Beloff (paperback \$50 – Jackson's Rare Guitars) - whatever.

Then there's a tiny library of seven Tintin books decorated with a figurine. After this, the Dylan shelf which comprises 40 books. There are 15 Vincent books on the next shelf – his letters (of course), drawings and several books of artworks. Being a short shelf, that leaves space for a Lone Ranger figurine, then three books by Nick Cave, all autographed – his novel *And The Ass Met The Angel*, plus *King Ink 1* and *King Ink 2*.

The last shelf is a big shelf, suitable for outsized books, and it comprises a hotchpotch of 60s memories, sheet music and 'how to play the guitar' books, as well as other related subjects like 'How To Play The Ukulele'. So that's my library at home, and I could keep writing about it *ad nauseum* as there haven't been any customers to interrupt my thoughts, but Chris wants Sci-Fi tidied before the day is out.

I am not going to enjoy tidying Sci-Fi because the books don't fit onto the shelves and therefore require some restructuring. I am about to play *The Self Righteous Brothers* but I wonder if the polite lady-customer would like it. So I wait until she spends \$17 on 'faction' (historical fiction) before I feel I can relax. I can't get the CD player to work.

A customer smiles at me. I say, 'Sing out if I can help?' 'No,' he answers, shaking his head and speaking in a German accent, 'It's impossible – too many books'. Oh well, back to Sci-Fi for me. Mr Too-Many-Books leaves without a purchase. There will be no Grant today. Maybe Lisa, maybe Luke, maybe Paul and certainly Zoë.

Sci-Fi: we have 23 Raymond E Feist books, plus the ones he wrote with Janny Wurts. I don't know anything about him, but between him and David Eddings I've got to pull out all of E-F to make more room. For me to tolerate Feist I will need customer enthusiasm to match his excessive shelf space.

There have been no customers for the last half hour, so I go to the Tonyon Asian Supermarket and buy an Iced Tea. Then back to Feist, Eddings and

now another problem – just as I'd figured out E-F there's Kate Elliott's *Child of Flame*, an 850 page book, two inches thick, which won't fit no-how. Out comes E-F all over again. And here's another problem – we have 86 Star Trek books on the shelf – they never sell – and I find another 35 unshelved. How am I going to fit in that lot? I need some good news.

The good news is Chris bought *The Hobbit* in hardback and everyone wants *The Hobbit* (\$14) – not *Lord of the Rings* – because everyone who wants *Lord of the Rings* has already got it. But *The Hobbit* – I'd put it in the window right now if I wasn't so lazy!

F – everything is F today – I've just found Alan Dean Foster, Maggie Furey and Richard Ford. There's a nice little space in J for three books, but instead I've got to cram in more Fs. Then a customer who hears me complaining about Feist hands me another one wrongly shelved in General Fiction. It's called *The Magician* (\$10). There's noise outside the shop, a P-plate driver is yelling about something. Then there's a siren, I have no idea why.

My father suddenly bursts into song, *When I was a lad I served a term, from office boy to an attorney's firm...* after which we discuss sting rays (Steve Irwin), Strauss, Chess and fasting – because of a book on the counter about the special ceremonies of Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and the Sikh faith. My father and I argue about whether or not sting rays inject venom – having caught fresh water rays, I reckon they don't. He reckons they do.

At least two hours have passed since anybody has bought anything, however the husband and wife who have overheard my father's conversation are gathering books. They join in, agreeing with my father that a stingray injects venom. Then I find a Ross Campbell book and I tell my father that this is Little Nell's and Cressida Campbell's father, though he doesn't know anything about *The Rocky Horror Show* nor contemporary Sydney artists.

He offers to mind the shop if I need to call on Abdul to get something to eat. I tell him I'm not eating today, which – combined with the book on the counter - is actually how we got onto the subject of fasting. Meanwhile, I am most interested in this couple who are amassing a healthy stack, which will pull up the day's takings, I'm counting on them to rescue this quiet afternoon.

Another of my regulars comes in. He ties his dog up out the front and always hangs out in Romance, a stocky guy who seldom buys anything. I always greet him, and that's about all that ever happens. Today is the same. Then someone wants *On The Road* but I know Chris sold out last one on Friday (paperback \$9). Jack Kerouac's name keeps coming up.

Everyone thinks of me as a 'Beat writers' kinda guy, and there is some truth in that. They expect me to be a completist, which I'm not because I find the Beats patchy writers. Although I have many of their works, I prize the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary editions of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* and Jack Kerouac's *On The Road* – 1996 and 1997 respectively, both hardbacks. I think these works are the pinnacle of their achievements as a group. However, the collection doesn't end there, I have Lawrence Ferlinghetti's and Allen Ginsberg's autographs, and various biographies. The latest treasured edition is *City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology* edited by Lawrence Ferlinghetti – signed – and purchased for me at City Lights Books by Michael Wilkinson, for which I owe him.

Michael has an unusual book-buying habit. He never keeps books. He buys really attractive books (invariably from the *Hill of Content* bookshop in Collins Street, Melbourne) and after he's read them he mails them to various friends. I am on his favoured list.

The first book Michael sent me was *Oscar Wilde* by Richard Ellman, in 1991, a paperback biography, and over the years he just keeps sending them. Here are five of the best books he has sent me:

- *Moses, A Life* by Jonathon Kirsch,
- *Dreams of Exile, Robert Louis Stevenson, A Biography* by Ian Bell,
- *On Writing* by Stephen King,
- *Martin Luther* by Richard Marius, and,
- *King David* by Steven L McKenzie.

We went to City Lights Books in San Francisco together in 2002. He was there when I bought the hardback *Howl*.

As I said, I am not a Beat writers completist. I am more likely to chase down difficult-to-obtain editions of Robert Louis Stevenson and Jack London, both of whom I loved from my childhood. Also books by/about Bob Dylan, John Lennon, Leonard Cohen, Nick Cave and Randy Newman. I have no idea why I have a 1971 hardback edition of Bob Dylan's *Tarantula* – a book nobody in the world has ever read.

I admire lots of people, but there are only two with whom I would ever wish to trade lives. One is Lawrence Ferlinghetti because he made it as a publisher, a poet and a successful bookshop owner. The other is Marcel Duchamp, because he made it as an artist, then devoted his life to playing Chess. Strangely therefore, Ferlinghetti is one of my favourite writers, although I seldom read him. I check the clock, it's time to stop writing and get back to Sci-Fi.

After Sci-Fi Chris asked me to tidy Crime, which is opposite Biography. So Biography captures my attention for a while, though my 15 minutes quick-tidy can't make any impact. What Biography needs is three hours.

Here are three biographies that I like very much, that will surprise friends:

- *No Man Knows My History, The Life of Joseph Smith* by Fawn M Brodie,
- *The Enid Blyton Story* by Bob Mullan,
- *The Confessions of William James Chidley* edited by S McInerney.

Here are three biographies that I like very much that probably won't surprise you at all if you know me:

- *Christopher Brennan* by Axel Clarke,
- *Pemulwuy, the Rainbow Warrior* by Eric Willmot, and,
- *Bobby Fischer, Profile of a Prodigy* by Frank Brady.

I consider Bobby Fischer to be one of the top four living Americans – the others being Bob Dylan, Randy Newman and Woody Allen. Add to that a fifth Robert Crumb (who lives in France).

Here are five great biographies you're sure to enjoy:

- *Woody Guthrie, A Life* by Joe Klein,
- *The MAD world of William M Gaines* by Frank Jacobs,
- *Ginsberg, A Biography* by Barry Miles,
- *Duchamp, A Biography* by Barry Tomkins, and,
- *Ned Kelly, A Life* by Ian Jones.

I also like books that 'feel' good. I have two editions of Ern Malley's poems, the first is a 1961 edition, Lansdowne Press Melbourne, possibly semi-valuable. A bookdealer would certainly value it five times more than my 1988 Allen & Unwin cloth-bound edition with a Sidney Nolan cover. I dare not handle the 1961 edition, it is too fragile. And I ask myself, what is the worth of such a volume? Its book value might be \$100 but its value to a reader is quite dubious. Not only that, but the more recent edition has additional commentary. And so, on the rare occasion that I read Ern Malley, it is the Allen & Unwin edition that attracts me.

I probably have 30 or so case-bound books in my library, half of which are Folio editions, but casing is like a chastity belt. I love Vincent Van Gogh's *Complete Letters Vols 1-3* (Thames & Hudson) but it is such an effort to pull a volume from the casing that I find myself referencing the \$15 Penguin abridged paperback because it's quicker. The line of least resistance always wins.

Strangely, some of those old chestnuts from the New Age section still sell. I've just sold Deepak Chopra and Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*. As I take his money I tell this young guy that according to today's papers Chopra has just re-written the *Kama Sutra*. You know? The Indian sex manual...oh, never mind.

Customers are happening again - 'Do you have any books by Nicholas Montserrat?' 'Yes,' I reply, 'We do,' but though I look in Ships, Military and General Fiction I can't locate any.

After this the couple that opinionated on sting rays comes to the counter with 10 books. Ah, money at last! Regrettably they produce two credit notices – one for \$30, the other for \$60. So that's \$90 worth of books not adding to the total with Chris's signature verifying it. Having tidied Sci-Fi, I have nothing else to do – in this empty shop – except tidy Crime. That's Lynda La Plante, Elmore Leonard, Lawrence Sanders, Ruth Rendell, David Baldacci and stuff like that. Again, there's no breathing space on the shelves, so it's a matter of squeezing everything in and getting it off the floor. I barely get started when Karen calls in.

Karen is my daughter Zoë's ex-boyfriend's Mum, and we 'miss' Karen after she broke up with her son Brett. Strange, I was thinking about her this morning, thinking 'How would I spell her name if she called in?' It's spelt Karen, but pronounced Kaaren, as she is from South Africa. I make her a coffee and we chat about friends like Allan, Clayton, Martin, and her Dave – who comes around to pick her up after swimming in the Hornsby Pool. Of course Dave and I talk about music – and somehow Joni Mitchell gets into the conversation. Dave and I agree that we like her painting as well as the album cover where she posed nude facing the ocean.

Van Cremer is a train driver who left his credit card in the shop yesterday. Chris left me a note about it. He comes in with his daughter to pick it up and he tells me that he is a train driver. But he is much more than a train driver – like many bookshop customers he has an enormous range of

interests, for example, British motor bikes. I know very little about them, so I try to wing it by mentioning BSA Bantams, 350cc BSAs, Triumphs and any other names I've heard in passing conversation. The BSA Bantam – he says – was made from 1948-1963. It has a 125cc, 4 bhp single-cylinder engine, three gears, foot operated, top speed 45 mph, telescopic front suspension, rigid or plunger rear suspension. 'Now the Triumph...'

He has met Kylie Tenant and Jim Cairns. His wife is a graphic artist and they were commissioned to write a book about Australia Post. 'We might have it,' I tell him, but the book I show him is too recent. His was written 25 years ago. 'So he's a writer too...'. Man, this guy is fun, and full of anecdotes. He asks which famous people I've met, and I say, 'Er...Jim Cairns...' who used to sell his books at the Prahan Markets when we lived in Melbourne. In fact, while working for Information Australia, Robbie and I went to his place at Narre Warren where I interviewed him. He wore a holey woollen jumper and was absolutely charming to Robbie but he seemed condescending to me on subjects like feminism and ecology.

'Hello Luke!'

Luke walks in and announces that he is planning to do an MA in philosophy next year, to add to his collection of degrees.

Luke has read Jim Cairns' *Towards a New Society* and reckons it's a great book. I tell him and Van that I reckon it's condescending because he approaches readers as if we've never thought women might be equal. Luke disagrees and says there's heaps of stuff in the book we mightn't know – for example, early religion venerated the female spirit until the Arabian culture discovered it was male sperm – not self-generating women – that produced babies. And this changed the map, as far as masculism and religion was concerned.

Then my father shows up for the third time today and tells us it took him four-and-a half minutes to ride his golden Challenger from Azalea Court to the Bookplate. Then my father tells Van that his mother was Cornish which is the same Celtic nationality as Cremer, which is Breton. I leave them to it and ask Luke about the book he is carrying in his hand, which is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in Penguin Classics, which Luke is finding tedious. It's an Arthurian tale, which brings us all back to Cornwall, Tintagel and Truro. Van Cremer has lots to say.

One of my semi-regulars is an Asian girl – about 15 years old – who has two disconcerting habits, the first being that she touches her crotch constantly, the second being that her conversation is nothing more than a string of questions. Just as Luke is explaining something about Sir Gawain and Middle English literature she busts in with a question to me, ‘Why have you got the door open when you’re closed?’ Well, the reason is that I never remember to turn the ‘closed’ sign to ‘open’ when I open up in the morning.

‘Why have you got two books in the window that are the same?’ Well, I didn’t know that. Apparently we have two Ian Thorpe bios.

‘Why are there books on the floor?’ she says, touching her crotch one more time because that’s what she does, like some people stroke their chin.

Chris said she often calls in and unless you’re careful you can get into a never ending question cycle with her. He says the best thing to do is to ask *her* questions, which I do. ‘How are you today?’ I ask.

She is lost for words. ‘What have you been doing?’ and she looks nervous, but fights back. ‘Why are you talking to these men?’

I don’t answer and ask, ‘Why are you carrying a small bag?’ That’s it. Out she goes, but not before I ask her if she would kindly turn the sign from closed to open on her way out, even though it is nearly closing time.

When she goes, so does everybody else except Luke. The woman who wanted a book about perspective walks out without buying, the mother who wanted Peter Strzelecki’s poems buys it. Then I make a coffee for Luke and ask whether he has children – which he doesn’t. But he’s been married to a woman who was worth lots of money. When they broke up, he never hit-her-up for half her estate. He now lives in a one-bedroom flat close to Central Station ‘behind the Golf Shop, which is no longer there’ on which he has a mortgage. He lives within his means and buys a \$20 hardback of Coleridge poems for which I charge him \$15.

His friends felt he should have hit up his ex-wife for half her substantial estate, which he didn’t, because – he told me – ‘I never married her for her money’. However, they did have some sort of arrangement where she wanted him to buy her an appliance and he wanted her to buy him a saucepan. When they broke up, he didn’t get the saucepan, which somehow bugged him. Then they got back together again, and when the

final breakup came, she did indeed buy him a saucepan. ‘You only married her for her saucepan,’ I say, and then Zoë walks in. ‘Lowell’s daughter!’ Luke exclaims.

While I switch off the lights in General Fiction I leave them to chat about music – Edith Piaf is one name I hear Luke mention. Strangely, it doesn’t register with Zoë and I’m in trouble now, with Luke accusing me of neglecting her education. ‘Ah, you know Piaf, Zoë,’ I reply, bursting into song.

*Je vous connais, Milord  
Vous ne m'avez jamais vue  
Je ne suis qu'une fille du port  
Une ombre de la rue...♪*

And then we shut up shop, the George Harrison bio didn’t sell, it wasn’t even looked at. I phone Robbie after which I have dinner with Zoë at the Hornsby RSL Club.

Then I come home, read everything back I have written and add this final bit:

Finally – to wrap up my thoughts about collecting - I admit a need to own certain ‘summary’ books of authors that I like. Therefore in addition to the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition of *Le Petit Prince (The Little Prince)* by Antoine De Saint-Exupéry, I also own *Saint Exupéry, Art, Writings and Musings*. In addition to the complete 7-volumes of Tintin, I have *Tintin, The Complete Companion* by Michael Farr. And *Who Was That Masked Man? The Story of the Lone Ranger* by David Rothel. I need these to flesh out my heroes’ lives. The only reason I cannot say the same for *Obelisk and Asterisk* is that the comics by Goscinny and Uderzo are not readily available in hardback A5 format.

As I look at my remaining collection, I am surprised how many books I could pare back even more, and they are all lovely books – lovely, but bought cheap at remainder and discount book shops. Those full colour half-assed \$5-\$10 art books and momentarily attractive non-definitive summaries of musician’s lives that seem so cheap at the time are in fact a waste of one’s small change. They die at the point of purchase. There is a reason why they are remaindered.

Better to spend \$60-\$100 on a book you really want.

Better to put real dollars into it, because with books – like everything else – you get what you pay for, and for that kind of money you probably buy yourself a book for life.