



Rose West: The Making of a Monster

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Hard to believe it looking at her now, but Rose West was an exceptionally beautiful little girl, with a Maltese mother and English father. Strangers would stop and stare at her in the street and she could entrance people from a very early age. But looking back at photos of Rose as a child, you struggle to accept that she grew up to one of the country's most notorious female criminals.

In ROSE, Jane Carter Woodrow goes right back to the start in her life to try and piece together what happened to turn Rose West into the violent monster she became. Jane has gained unprecedented access to the family and has revealed a fascinating story of how there was always something 'not quite right' about Rose...

And perhaps that's not too surprising... Rose's childhood reads like one of the most grim misery memoirs. Her father was a violent schizophrenic and her mother received electric shock therapy for severe clinical depression, the whole way through her pregnancy with Rose. Jane has uncovered a horrific hidden story of a twisted family and how her upbringing made her a perfect partner for Fred West when they met when Rose had just turned 16. She was to kill for the first time a few months later.

This is a gripping, unputdownable read that sheds light for the first time on the story behind what turned Rose West into one of the country's most vicious and deadly serial killers.

Rose West: The Making of a Monster Details

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From Reader Review Rose West: The Making of a Monster for online ebook

Ella Belakovska says

I should probably stop myself as I have read too many books about Rose West already, however, it is of note that so many of them were used as research in the writing of this book. Initially, this book offers a deeper insight into Rose's history than the majority of other texts in that it goes further back into her family tree. The detail given about not only her parents' childhoods, but both sets of grandparents' lives does go some way to shedding light onto her upbringing. The social and psychological legacies from previous generations really do highlight the 'nurture' aspect of the nature vs nurture argument.

There is also sufficient information on Fred West himself, prior to meeting Rose, which also helps to show how their relationship was such a toxic combination. The backgrounds of the victims are not given in much detail, although the terrible sexual crimes and murders are relatively graphic in places. Furthermore, while a great deal of information has been written about Anna-Marie (Fred's daughter to his first wife) and, to a lesser degree, about Stephen and Mae (Fred and Rose's older children) there is precious little attention given to the child whose disappearance led to the ultimate capture of the killers - Heather, Fred and Rose's firstborn.

As previously mentioned, the author has relied on the works of other writers to compile this book, including the autobiography of Anna-Marie, and Stephen and Mae's collaborative effort, which would explain why their stories are more prominent. Although the title clearly states that this book is about the MAKING of Rose's character, rather than being specifically about her actions later in life, I did feel robbed of Heather's story. Further insights into the events leading up to Heather's death, and the stories of the other children, would have fleshed out Rose the adult; instead, the latter part of the book seems to be cataloguing the murders and a handful of events around Fred and Rose's marriage. The whole of the eighties rush by and Heather's death feels a little like an epilogue, rather than being central to the final outcome.

Content aside, I found the writing to be a little teenage: there were a lot of ellipses, often laughable conjecture, e.g. 'Fred probably said something like "I'll find you a home fit for a Princess"' and the amount of 'or so he thought'/'or so it seemed' really jarred after a while. There were also several hints at the secrets that were to unfold later in the book, which read like a soap opera script and didn't always deliver satisfactorily on the promise. Additionally, there was too much unnecessary repetition, e.g. we are told twice that Fred had decided he wanted to live in Gloucester after having visited the city to purchase his first suit at the age of fifteen!

Overall, this is worth a look if you are interested in the psychosocial backgrounds of serial killers but be prepared for the slightly sensationalist writing style.

Tom says

A well researched book on the horrific actions of the partner of Fred West. This doesn't make easy reading, as it shouldn't. The author has done a good job in trying to detail the psychological factors in determining why Rose West became what she did.

She also briefly details what has become of her and her children post trial.

Rebecca Porter says

An excellent and necessary book about who myself and many others believe was the real driving force behind the Cromwell Street murders. Really, Rose was always destined to become a monster. Her childhood was a mess of incest, mental illness and physical and psychological abuse and when she went on to meet and marry Fred, all of this was compounded. His background was similar in some ways and together they became partners in perversity, torture and murder. Still, this book highlights what has always needed to be said in print - Fred liked the violent sex but it was Rose who had a fetish for torturing and killing young women. Survivors of these two have stated over and over that it was she who dominated the abuse sessions and that Fred was almost meek in her presence, not wanting her to get too mad. This book backs up everything I've always believed about them and it does it very well, with great research and much detail. Highly recommended to anyone interested in the case.

Cleo Bannister says

This is a fascinating book which doesn't concentrate so much on the horrendous crimes committed by Rose West but seeks to understand quite why this young woman became a killer. The first of the murders she was convicted of occurred when Rose was just 17 years old!

Jane Carter Woodrow follows Rose's life chronologically, starting with her birth following her mother's electric current therapy throughout her pregnancy with Rose. Using the accounts of the neighbours, relations and the few friends I think this book benefits with the time gap since Rose's conviction, giving a more balanced view of events. This isn't a book that in anyway seeks to condone the rapes and murders, after all, as the author points out, many people have a tough start to life but don't go onto be killers. It does however try to explain how Rose's psychological make-up and the warped view of what relationships consist of caused this particular woman to sink to a level of depravity almost unheard of.

For anyone who wishes to understand more about the most notorious of female serial killers, you can't go wrong with this book.

Mandymoo says

I wanted to find a book on Rose West after watching the TV programme on Fred and Rose West. I was given this as a gift and I was not disappointed, it gave a deep insight into the life of Rose West explaining why someone may be driven to behave in this way.

Nicola says

Oh, the siren's call of the True Crime shelf at the library. Why can I not pass it by without picking up some horrifying tome?

I've read quite a few horrifying True Crime books in my time, but *Rose West: The Making of a Monster* might be the most horrifying of all. When it comes to some serial killers, their murderous rampages seem all the more inexplicable for the murderer's unremarkable upbringing. 'How could someone so normal do something so terrible?' etc. However, in the case of Rose West (and, indeed, Fred West), it's a case of simple arithmetic:

Family history of mental illness + extensive abuse + lack of intervention = Heather under the patio

Yikes.

The Molotov cocktail of Rose's life makes this book undeniably gripping. I read it in two sittings and forgot to eat dinner while I was reading.

However, despite being recently published, it doesn't quite add anything new to the story. There are vague attempts to frame it in terms of recent cases like Baby P, but what little analysis there is seems rather tepid. The 'updates' on the case are interesting (Ann Marie West clearly deserves some kind of medal for surviving systematic abuse while growing up and yet still visiting her stepmother in prison), but they're all lifted from tabloid stories, so take 'em with a pinch of salt.

The pedestrian style of writing also detracts from the book. Too many ellipses; too much "little did she know that that beautiful baby would become a murder victim" heavyhandedness. It takes a surprising amount of skill to structure a True Crime book and Jane Carter Woodrow doesn't quite have it.

However, pedestrian writing and tepid analysis aside, this book is a testament to the fact that there's still something queasily compelling about the Wests, even twenty years after the story of their murders broke.

Janet Moss says

Fascinating and horrific all at the same time. Couldn't put this one down. The odds of pairing two serial killers in a marriage must be astronomical. Truly evil personified, both Rose and husband Fred leave you sickened and amazed that two monsters such as they could have killed so many. If that isn't enough, they even murder their own flesh and blood in such a twisted fashion. Their years of torture and murder have affected countless generations and yet Rose lives comfortably in a jail in England happily knitting her grandchildren sweaters!! This story will stay with me for a long time - highly recommend this book for true crime lovers.

Ruth Turner says

An easy read, but a little too much conjecture. The "probably this, possibly that, and so it seems" became a little tiresome. It was also repetitive at times. I only needed to be told once that Rose's family called her Rosie instead of Rosemary.

Apart from that, it was a fascinating look at both Fred & Rose's early years, their parents and grandparents, and both families history of abuse.

The Epilogue - The Aftermath - was interesting. We find out what effect Fred and Rose's crimes have had on their families. As if the abuse they suffered wasn't enough!

Disturbing, but worth reading.

Gerry says

Horrific, frightening, almost unbelievable but meticulously researched and somehow compulsively readable is Jane Carter Woodrow's 'Rose West', which is an in-depth portrait of Britain's most infamous sexual predator and serial killer.

The author begins with Rose West's childhood, and what a childhood that was! Beating and sexual abuse (by her parents) abounded and it is perhaps little wonder how she turned out. Even so her future behaviour is, of course, inexcusable.

Once she met Fred West, her fate seemed to be sealed and the pair embarked on a killing spree to rival very few others. The author has all the detail, and horrific though it is it is difficult to put the book down, even though the ending is known.

And that ending comes with the couple being imprisoned, Fred West takes his own life while Rose West continues, mainly in denial, in her prison cell. No wonder the cover of the book carries the line 'The Making of a Monster', Rose West's arrival on this earth certainly brought a monster to roam the Gloucestershire countryside.

Marcos Ortega says

Saturn rising

Rose and Fred West are two notorious serial killers; this book opens up on Rose West's early life and the amount of abuse that she had to suffer from a dysfunctional and mentally ill father. This does not justify her or Fred's actions. Nothing about the characters in this book is normal; they are monsters that defy logic and dumbfound scientist and criminologist alike. This is a book about failure: failure of British institutions that let these human beings (Rose, Fred and their children) slip through the cracks and the contradiction of liberal criminal justice. But, perhaps, individuals of the stature of these two are too much for a system to handle. Reader be warned: some of the described scenes in this book are quite graphic and can be disturbing.

Danie Tanaka says

This was an exceptionally good book. When you like True Crime, as I do--you always wonder what makes the person that commits such terrible acts tick. This book comes as close as you could get to ever answering that in this case since last I heard she still denies knowledge and responsibility of her crimes. Had she not showed her true modus operandi to other rape victims she might well have been believed by the police and the world. But she did leave her mark in the scars of living victims and turned on her husband (usually the most psychopathic of a duo when they are caught will turn on the other).....most telling of all was she was never afraid of her murderous husband murdering her.

So while she may have been guided into murder by other hands, she out grew those hands and eclipsed them in all manners of cruelty. She truly was the Frankenstein her father and husband had created. But her sexual sadism was second nature to her. As was the will to survive at all costs.

This book tells a sick, twisted story of the most gross abuses human kind visits on its equals and worse its own offspring. You always hear an awful true crime story but wonder how that person got to where they could do this.

This book tells us how Rose West was brought into this world and learned to survive in it with a father that beat his perpetually pregnant wife and children mercilessly. Rose learned young sexual favors with her own father could avoid the most brutal beatings. For Rose who was hardly allowed to associate with other children this is what normal family life was for all. And it was her foundation when she met a man as sexually deviant later in life!

Incredible book. In the US we haven't ever had too much press on this case but I had seen shows and read short summaries on the horrors at 25 Cromwell Street.

The most fascinating and intriguing part of the book is how the author researched Rose's background. She said something to the effect that the best way to avoid another Rose, is to understand what caused Rose to come about and not allow that to happen again. And at the end of the day, abuse--EXTREME PHYSICAL, SEXUAL, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE.

So we need to do our best as societies to protect our most precious commodity, our young--from such horrors to prevent as many traceable Rose and Fred West 's as possible.

Sarah Bennett says

insight into the mind of one of the uks most prolific serial murderers. was certainly an eye opener and now understand why she was like that after a life of abuse from a very young age.poor poor victims

Jules says

This book is not one of my usual choices as I normally don't like and don't read crime-related material at all. That said, there is lot of psychological profiling and criminal analysis inherent in this book as it tries to 'explain' the criminality and backgrounds of the Wests – both Fred and notably the titular Rose – who

became notorious in the 1990s and beyond for a spree of crimes in and around the Gloucester, England area including several that occurred at their home in the infamous Cromwell Street.

This book offers a fair account of the troubled childhood of both the Wests and traumatically it touches on their hideous and sequential crimes against women. Critically, I can understand how any account of these crimes can be interpreted as being sensationalist however it's also clear that Carter Woodrow pushes the nature/nature argument and, after learning about the distorted backgrounds of both of these murderers, it is hardly surprising that their sense of reality and moral values clashed with what society generally accepts as the norm.

Sadly yet factually, Carter Woodrow highlights yet more products of the dark side of a failing society where a questionable family history, spirals of emotional and physical abuse and a lack of agency intervention (despite the numerous wake-up calls blatantly ignored) resulted in an unimaginable and literally horrific situation after decades of successive abuse. The author makes valid crime comparisons to other cases and finds similarities across crimes from the Wests to those of the Yorkshire Ripper and the Moors Murderers.

This book will be of interest to those who have an interest in true crime and to those who seek the whole story and the psychology that lies beyond over-sensationalised front page headlines.

Kikki says

Book is full of extrapolations and pre-empt. Not surprisingly so, since Fred is dead and Rose is in utter denial of her atrocities. A fair bit of reasonable guesswork to put together what makes the delusional psyche of the oldball couple.

Lorna says

4.5 stars. A fascinating psychooogical study into one of the most infamous female serial killers of modern times. It offers no excuses, but going back to Rose's childhood it reveals a disturbing and warped upbringing filled with violence and sexual abuse.

Not only that but she had a schizophrenc father and her mother was undergoing electric shock therapy for depression virtually up until Rose's birth. There's no research into the effects of ETC on featuses so we have no idea iif it effected the developing Rose but the likelihood is that anything the mother would have experienced would have effected the child.

What is difficult to get your head around is that Rose just happened to meet Fred. A man 12 years her senior whose childhood mirrored her own. That these two people just happened to find one another is mind boggling. If these two people had not met it's likely that these 12 murders would never have happened.

Rose is still alive, serving ten life sentences for the murders that she was found guilty of. The book, which was written earlier this year reveals that she is good friends with baby Peter's mother. I'm just glad that these people are safely locked away

Jack Hussey says

End the book having a strange sympathy for Rose. Although clearly abhorrent, you can't help but feel that she never really had a chance in life.

The ending of the book opens an interesting question on the role of experience (nurture) in relation to what is in ones character and how much they are tied. Rose's siblings and her own children went through much the same trauma as she did, but did not go on to do the same.

The author presents a complete picture of those involved, although at times relies a little heavily upon conjecture to make her point.

Theresa Turner says

I found this book to be quite an interesting read,a biography about the life and crimes of Rose West. I took my time reading the book and not because i found the book to be badly written but rather some passages of the book to be gruesome in detail,sometimes just reading one chapter a night was enough,An exceptional book by a very talented author... I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in the Frederick and Rose West, murder case.

Rachel McNab says

By the time Rose West was my age, twenty one going on twenty two, she'd killed several times. Much worse was yet to come - but was she destined to become a killer or could she have been saved? This is an easy true crime book to read. The descriptions aren't graphic and there is nothing overly scientific to understand, meaning anyone could get to grips with it. Personally I prefer true crime books that are significantly more in-depth, focus on the psychology of the killer(s), the forensics and the crimes themselves, though this is a good read for anyone.

Rob Twinem says

Absorbing and sickening in equal amounts this biography and evaluation of the life of notorious killer Rose West is essential reading for anyone interested into the thinking and deranged mind of serial killers. The early years of Fred and Rose is a harrowing tale of constant physical and sexual abuse in a world where there were few if any boundaries. What goes around comes around is the central theme and children will often imitate the teachings of parents whether that be good or bad. If the young are witness to and the object of incest, beatings, and even murder it is not surprising that they may choose to adopt this way of life as some code of practice. However no amount of bad upbringing can excuse the crimes committed by Fred West and Rose Letts. Crimes that spanned a period of some 25 years and never once did anyone suspect what this lovely chatty couple at 25 Cromwell Street were involved in behind closed doors. It was only after a flippant remark made by the younger West children when in care..."their father had joked that he'd put them under the patio like their big sister"...that social workers and finally the police in the guise of DC Hazel Savage demanded entry to Cromwell Street where the lives, deaths and torture of so many innocents was soon to be

discovered under the patio.

This was never an easy read and yet once started I found it impossible not to finish so fascinated and shocked was I by the content, simply astounded by the evil that man or woman can perform and see as normal or accepted. The whole experience is best summed up in a quote from the early chapters...."I think the human race is pretty rotten. The more I see of it, the more rotten it becomes."...

Kaycee ♥? says

I've been fascinated with true crimes... again lately. Well, I knew bit and pieces about Fred and Rose West since I've read them from the True Crime Library years ago and seen a documentary about them on youtube. So, I decided to read it. Surprisingly, I couldn't put this book down. I devoured it from beginning to end and finished it in record time.

This book quite give the readers a thorough detailed account of the life of Rose West and Fred West. Ms. Woodrow did a great job in giving the readers an insight regarding their dysfunctional family history, appalling childhoods, their stormy relationship with their parents, the environment they grew up in... you really get to know them. The author also gave details in what they did to their victims; how they raped, murdered, dismembered, and buried dozens of innocent women who fell into their evil clutches including their teenage daughter, Heather.

It saddened and sickened me how these two people could do all those things especially to their own children. My heart broke for the West children. They were physically, emotionally, and sexually abused by the two people who should have loved and protected them. That's why I really admired Det. Constable Hazel Savage, because without her strong dedication and involvement, the bodies never have been found and Fred and Rose might not stop murdering innocent women. But even before the trial began, Fred took his own life and Rose still claiming innocence.

Ms. Woodrow has done a sterling work here in a highly readable and engrossing book; full of interesting details and facts. Highly recommend for a true-crime fans like me.
