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Whether navigating the backroads of Louisiana or Thuringia, exploring the snowy Quebec woods, or performing onstage at Rush concerts, Neil Peart has stories to tell. His first volume in this series, *Far and Away*, combined words and images to form an intimate, insightful narrative that won many readers.

Now *Far and Near* brings together reflections from another three years of an artist's life as he celebrates seasons, landscapes, and characters, travels roads and trails, receives honors, climbs mountains, composes and performs music. With passionate insight, wry humor, and an adventurous spirit, once again Peart offers a collection of open letters that take readers on the road, behind the scenes, and into the inner workings of an ever-inquisitive mind.

These popular stories, originally posted on Peart's website, are now collected and contextualized with a new introduction and conclusion in this beautifully designed collector's volume.

Far and Near: On Days Like These Details

Date : Published October 14th 2014 by ECW Press (first published October 1st 2014)

ISBN : 9781770412576

Author : Neil Peart

Format : Hardcover 383 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Music, Biography, Travel

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From Reader Review Far and Near: On Days Like These for online ebook

Melissa says

I received a review copy of this book from the publisher, ECW Press. For this and more reviews please visit my website: www.thebookbindersdaughter.com

In the intro to his work, Neil Peart makes it a point to discuss the art of writing and the special attention he gives to his craft. Although the writings which are contained in this book first appeared as a series of pieces on his blog, Neil puts quite a bit of effort in perfecting this collection for his audience. He sites the Roman poet Ovid: “If the art is concealed, it succeeds.” The passage to which Neil refers is actually from Ovid’s story about the artist Pygmalion from his epic poem *The Metmorphoses*.

Pygmalion cannot find the perfect woman, who is chaste and wholesome and faithful and matches his ideal of what a perfect woman should be. So as an artist and sculptor he decides to make his own “woman.” As he is working with the ivory, the figure of a woman he sculpts is so flawless that one would think she is alive. The brilliance of Pygmalion’s art hides the fact that his sculpture is indeed art and not actually alive.

Like Pygmalion, Neil strives to perfect his art, whether it be drumming or writing, so that all the listener or reader sees is the seamless, finished product. *Far and Near* is first and foremost a travelogue of Neil Peart’s trips on his motorcycle from venue to venue while he is on tour with his band. His narratives take place over a three year period of time, on the second leg of the band’s “Time Machine Tour” and on all three legs of the band’s “Clockwork Angel’s Tour.” When the book opens, Neil is on the road in April with his longtime friend and riding partner, Michael. I have lived on the east coast of the United States all my life but Neil’s detailed description of springtime in this part of the country, as different flowers are resurrected and animals start to peak out of their winter hibernation, makes me appreciate it all the more. The vivid depictions of every place he travels, whether it be in the extreme heat of the desert or perilous roads of the British countryside or the brutal cold of a Canadian winter, makes one want to visit and experience these places for oneself. Isn’t this the true mark of a successful travel memoir?

Far and Near is so much more than a travelogue. It is also a book of wonderful photography, a brief history of many small towns in North America and Europe and a history of the flora and fauna of those places as well. The book further serves as a personal memoir of the author as he reminisces about previous experience at each place he visits. Not only are pictures of the various touring destinations included in the book, but there are also descriptions of the photographic techniques that are employed for different situations.

A point is made to capture many of the small towns where these “shunpikers” (those who purposely avoid the most direct roads from one point to another) ride and oftentimes an interesting history is provided about these out-of-the-way places. As a classicist, I was particularly impressed that Neil gives a bit of the history of Roman occupation of Britain as he is riding around the English countryside.

Finally, the book captures the life of a musician both on the road and off. The band’s triumphant introduction into the Rock-And-Roll Hall of Fame is related at length in one of the entries. Neil would not be “on the road” going from place to place, after all, if it were not for his job with a touring rock band. Although this is certainly not the sole focus of the book, the reader is led to understand what the emotional and physical effects of constant touring and months on the road can cause. The stories about his young daughter, Olivia, who doesn’t quite understand that “Daddy is at work” are particularly touching. It is also entertaining to read

about the many other crew members that all contribute to making a successful show possible; from the drum technician, to Neil's riding partners, to the bus driver, to the crew members who entertain the band by dressing up in a chicken suit, it truly takes a small village to put on a show every night. The sum of all these moving parts means that, once again, the art conceals the art.

Far and Near appeals to a very broad audience of readers; if you enjoy travel writing, memoirs, photography, or the music of Rush you will want to read this book. In the end, the gods grant Pygmalion his wish and they make his statue become a live woman. Neil Peart, through his book, makes the art of traveling, writing, playing music and his quest to live his life to the fullest come fully alive to his readers.

C.a. Anderson says

One of the greatest drummers alive writes another great book. The book is filled with stories from Rush tours but also a guide to places you need to visit in the United States. He is a one man guide to national parks.

Jeffrey Falk says

This particular travelogue/memoir/photo essay anthology of Peart's is not his best. It is more discursive than usual, and his sentences, digressions, and parentheticals can be prolix. However, it is often entertaining and informative. (I learned why his bandmates started calling him "The Professor", for instance. The answer would surprise most.) And, like his other tomes, it can educate any reader with its historical detail and sesquipedalian vocabulary.

Mike Eckhardt says

I enjoyed this much more than Roadshow and love the author's drive to explore the National Park System as often as possible.

Jim McKillop says

Same review as Far and Away. I raced through this book. As a fan, I really enjoyed the aspects of the book that relate to the tour. But the descriptive and personal nature of his writing is very engaging.

If you liked Ghost Rider, you may find this one a little less personal - concentrating more on the travelling and less on his personal life. Still wholeheartedly recommended.

pianogal says

I liked this one. Peart finds such a good combination of travel and music and life in a band. Also - he has a

very understanding wife to let him run amok like he does.

Budd Bailey says

After 40 years as a member of the rock group Rush, Neil Peart is starting to become known as more than just a drummer. He's an author too. Five books will do that.

Peart has written a few books about his travels over the years. He's back with a new one, "Far and Near" which is a worthy entry to his collection.

The tours that come with being in a major rock band can lose their glamor pretty quickly. The arenas, planes and hotels must start to look alike after a while. Make the circuit a few times, and as Jackson Browne once famously sang, and the only time that seems too short is the time that you get to play.

Peart has the means and energy to avoid that problem. He carries a motorcycle with him with the rest of the equipment. The band usually plays every other day or every third day. After a show, Peart sleeps on a bus, gets up the next morning, hops on his cycle (and is joined by a friend or two), and goes exploring. He'll find a place to stay, and then drive to the next venue. It sounds like a great way to see the world, as long as it doesn't rain.

In the last couple of tours, Peart wrote monthly essays about his trips and posted them on a website. Then they were converted into books. Note: If you've already read the essays on-line, there's no need to do it again.

Still, Peart is very curious about the lands he visits, taking careful notes and presenting thoughtful offerings about them. He avoids the Interstates when possible, loves national parks, and might cover a few hundred miles per day. I've been to a few of the places mentioned, and he's right on target with his descriptions. He also has created curiosity in me in others.

The essays also include some other areas, sometimes in the form of tangents. Peart is that rare drummer who writes the words to the band's songs. There are stories about lyrics that will be interesting to Rush's many fans. Also covered is life on the road - communicating with family and friends, dealing with life's issues, etc.

At this point, Peart has developed a reliable literary "voice" that's gotten a bit smoother over the years. After reading the other books, return to his work is like catching up with an old friend - even if the thought of befriending thousands of people on the road might be downright scary to Peart, who rarely identifies himself to others on these trips.

"Far and Near" might not work for every taste, but you don't have to be a Rush fan to like these essays. All's that needed is a sense of appreciation of an open road.

Keith says

I've said it before and I'll say it again. Neil Peart is a master of story-telling. I highly recommend this book, especially if you are a motorcyclist.

David Lancaster says

A collection of Neil's writings from his website. Dated from February 2011 to April 2014. I had already read each 'blog', if you will, but purchased the book anyway. Must support one of my favorite authors! Great collection of 3 years of his life. Travel tales from all over the world, by himself, and with his band Rush.

Tuck says

neil peart is turning into a fairly good writer, of short essays or travelogues mostly. his cri de couer (sp?) was from 1996 The Masked Rider: Cycling in West Africa where after terribel terrible family tragedy he basically tried to kill himself, by riding a bicycle north to south, down the west coast of africa. he was unsuccessful in dying, but wrote a pretty impelling story.

now he's been writing full time, mostly about riding motorcycles during world tours with band rush, in which he drums, but also on most all his off times too, he is riding and writing.

this book collects occasonals and specific articles (like for instructional video/documentary "anatomy of a drum solo") from 2011 to 2014. he goes all over, western usa, tine little roads in uk eastern germany, acadia, and also tries to visit as many usa national parks as possible. so this is his musings on art, music, culture, nature, friends and family, fans, motorcycles (ad naseum sp?), weather, sadness, joy, food and booze, drumming, making money,

he gets a bit pompos at times, and very rarely glances at race, class, violence, pollution, but a pleasant writer with lots of pleasant stories.

Mark says

Peart's writing and musings and observations and photos are a veritable potpourri of richness, textures and multiple-layers. He does an interesting job of calling some of those layers out in one of the chapters when he refers to two of the "personalities" that he finds himself playing out, "Bubba" and "The Professor."

I enjoyed the reflections, descriptions of the many friendships Peart has with so many people as well as the interesting tidbits of back-stories to some of the lyrics he has written over the years. It felt very much like I was sitting nearby and listening to him share stories of his hikes, his snow-shoe expeditions, his motorcycle adventures, his other main and off-road explorations, his perspective at a concert from behind the drum kit, and his life-long love with both music and with the written word (including those letters hand-written to friends, colleagues and loved ones) -- As I have with all of his other books, I will gladly join Peart on these travels and musings, finding myself becoming as introspective and "not looking back, but I want to look around me now" (if I'm allowed to call up one of his many beautiful lyrics to help describe the essence of falling into his a book like this.

This was a book that I enjoyed, quite slowly, over a long period of time, sipping at the way that one sips at a very fine scotch (such as, I'm sure Peart would agree, The Macallan). The beautiful hardcover sat at my bedside to be read through at the end of the day, and, when not at home, I read the eBook version on a large android tablet using the Kobo app.

Freda Mans-Labianca says

Epic!

I was a fan of Neil Peart already. Love Rush, love him most. Now I admire and respect him even more after reading one of his books. His experiences, hobbies, just the way he lives his life is exciting and full of adventure. I was in awe of all the riding he has done all over the world. Plus some of the side hobbies like climbing mountains, or driving a Viper down Route 66, had me absorbing it all in. What a life!

Not only is he a great drummer, a legend, an idol, but he is someone to be inspired by, and in awe of. I tell ya, I can't wait to read some more of his books, he is so fascinating!

I loved the many times I saw my hometown mentioned in the book on his travels too. Usually in reference to a tour Rush was on, but still a mention.

Lots of people, fans or not, will enjoy reading this book. Yeah he is a rock drummer, but this book shows clearly he is so much more than that too.

Joanne says

Neil Peart provides beautiful, poetic descriptions of his travels through Canada and the U.S. It made me feel so appreciative of the beauty of the landscape, most of which I will never get to see. I've added some of these places to my bucket list, though. This book is mostly written for fans of the band Rush, but others who enjoy armchair travelling will enjoy it also. I loved the book, but it took me a long time to read it. Since the band announced their retirement after their R40 tour ended in 2015, I found it hard to finish the book. This was only because, as an avid Rush fan, it made me sad to think that I might not get the chance to see them in concert again. However, I recently picked it up again and finished it. It was definitely worth the read.

Paul Franco says

I'm pretty sure that even if I wasn't a Rush fan I would enjoy reading his books, be they fiction or travel, or even journals, as this is. What's most interesting to me is that, even though I've already read all of these stories off his website—albeit with months in between each one—perusing them now, as chapters of a greater piece, made for a completely different experience. I'm reminded of something he said in one of his interviews, pertaining to music but also valid here: "What I want the listener (reader) to take away is that care has been taken here." When I post a blog about one of my many trips I prefer to let it live as a stream of consciousness, straight from my memory to the page or computer screen. Not so with him; it is obvious care has been taken here. I'm particularly enamored for his reason for journaling, as he writes in the outro (which was never posted on his website): "When reviewing the stories to prepare this book, many times I came across a passage of description, action, or conversation, and thought, 'I would have never remembered that.' Sobering to reflect that if a time and place do not exist in memory or in art, they might as well have never happened." Exactly.

4.5/5

Sean Gibson says

Reviewed for Kirkus: <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-re...>
