



Hotel California: The True-Life Adventures of Crosby, Stills, Nash, Young, Mitchell, Taylor, Browne, Ronstadt, Geffen, the Eagles, and Their Many Friends

By Barney Hoskyns

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—**Anthony DeCurtis, Contributing Editor, *Rolling Stone***

From enduring musical achievements to drug-fueled chaos and bed-hopping antics, the L.A. pop music scene in the sixties and seventies was like no other, and journalist Barney Hoskyns re-creates all the excitement and mayhem. *Hotel California* brings to life the genesis of Crosby, Stills, and Nash at Joni Mitchell's house; the Eagles' backstage fistfights after the success of "'Hotel California'"; the drama of David Geffen and the other money men who transformed the L.A. music scene; and more.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

As musical scenes go, it would be hard to come up with a less dramatic one than that of the singer/songwriters who dominated Southern California from the mid-1960s through the mid-'70s. Nevertheless, British music journalist Hoskyns gamely tries to make the "denim navel-gazers and cheesecloth millionaires of the Los Angeles canyons" exciting in his no-nonsense account of those musicians' rise and fall. Jumping right in with little introduction, Hoskyns relays the particulars of the burgeoning scene that drew sensitive musicians west from Greenwich Village, limning the differences between those who lived in Topanga and Laurel Canyons and detailing the explosive shocks to their insular world (like the Monterey Pop festival and the Manson murders), all leading up to the cash-register mentality that formed the Eagles. The cast is robust-ranging from the intense Joni Mitchell and mercenary David Geffen to neo-beatnik Tom Waits-but not deeply examined. Hoskyns has a better ear for the music, letting his record-critic side take over with adjective-riddled prose. Still, Hoskyns's account shows how the "back-porch folkies" of the scene's early days eventually morphed into "Lear-jet superstars."

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Review

* In *"Hotel California,"* Barney Hoskyns uses variations on a telling phrase - *"wise (or weary) be-yond their years"* - to explain why the compositions of the Los Angeles-based singer-songwriters of the early to mid-1970s have proved so enduring.

Joni Mitchell; Neil Young; Jackson Browne; James Taylor; *"Tapestry"*-era Carole King; Crosby, Stills and Nash their songs really did seem special then and, to a surprising degree, remain so now.

Influenced by the way Bob Dylan's success in the 1960s gave young songwriters permission to say anything they wanted in their lyrics, and created an audience that eagerly awaited such daring writing, they moved toward the intimately confessional. They were uncommonly good at it, often ruefully melancholy, and they scored million-selling hits.

Hoskyns looks at the time and place that spawned the singer-songwriters and their friends and lovers - the counterculture-friendly, surprisingly rustic and (at the time) affordable hillside canyons separating Los Angeles' busy basin and oceanfront communities from its equally busy suburban Valley. Laurel Canyon, especially, but also Topanga Canyon and some others. Some of the book's subjects were born in Southern California and some came from elsewhere; some started writing in California and some brought their established careers with them.

"It was very different from the Tin Pan Alley tradition, where guys would sit down and try to write a hit song and turn out these teen-romance songs about other people," Henry Diltz, a photographer friend of the singer-songwriters, is quoted as saying.

The results - Mitchell's *"Ladies of the Canyon"* and *"Both Sides Now,"* Young's *"Old Man"* and *"Heart of Gold,"* Browne's *"For a Dancer,"* Taylor's *"Fire and Rain,"* King's *"It's Too Late"* and many more - constitute a golden era of American songwriting.

It's one that might not come again in terms of quality and cultural impact. And the possibility that it was a peak seems to be dawning on their core audience of aging boomers, as well as publishers. Hoskyns' book follows by just a few weeks another on the same subject, Michael Walker's *"Laurel Canyon."*

This takes its title from a song by one of the biggest acts to emerge from the milieu, the Eagles, who covered material from the singer-songwriters in addition to composing their own. They are not the best examples of

the scene's artistry but certainly of its commercial success. Hoskyns uses the term "rocklite" to describe their sound.

A British journalist and critic whose previous books about American music include the superb "Strange Days, Weird Scenes, and the Sound of Los Angeles" and "Across the Great Divide: The Band and America," Hoskyns is knowledgeable about his subject. He loves delving behind the hits and the superstars to see who else was making valuable music in L.A. during the period.

In doing so, he points out that the canyon's "organic" singer-songwriters weren't the only thing happening in L.A., nor was their approach unchallenged by others. As a result, "Hotel California" has some lively and intriguing ideas about the shortcomings of confessional songwriting - a preoccupation with self-reflection - that gives the book intellectual weight.

An L.A. singer-songwriter who was a contemporary of the others - Randy Newman - has proven long-lasting precisely because he wasn't confessional, Hoskyns observes. "Using third-person characters - or singing in character - Randy's songs were suffused by irony, often stunningly funny." He also has praise for the satirically political work of Frank Zappa, and for the exploration of "the darker side of the California dream" pursued by Tim Buckley and Tom Waits.

For that matter, Neil Young had as much of a dark side as an idealistic one, Hoskyns points out - he once recommended that his record label sign an aspiring songwriter named Charles Manson (before the Tate-LaBianca murders).

In their personal lives, the canyon singer-songwriters pract

From the Inside Flap

This book is a remarkable insider's look at one of the most dramatic, creative, and revolutionary settings in American popular culture: the Los Angeles popular music scene from the late 1960s through the late 1970s.

After the world fell in love with the steady stream of hit records from the Beach Boys, the Byrds, the Mamas and the Papas, and Buffalo Springfield in the mid-1960s, the music industry's center of gravity shifted from New York to L.A.'s Laurel Canyon, a bucolic haven for artists and pop-music prodigies minutes from the buzz of the Sunset Strip. *Hotel California* takes you on an intimate tour of this scene as you read a treasure trove of original material about the musical and personal doings of sixties and seventies singer-songwriters, superstars, and producers. Through insights provided by extraordinarily candid firsthand interviews, author Barney Hoskyns has conducted over more than three decades, *Hotel California* reveals key moments in the creative and professional lives of—as well as many of the less professional adventures of—these legends.

Hoskyns delivers fascinating new details about how Joni Mitchell created her otherworldly masterpieces while romancing David Crosby, Stephen Stills, Graham Nash, Jackson Browne, James Taylor, and others. You'll read things you've never read before about Glenn Frey's narcissism, Linda Ronstadt's intellect, Don Henley's troubled conscience, and more. You'll discover how mega-mogul David Geffen lured handsome young musicians to sign with his new record label and how the Eagles became the biggest band in America. You'll learn about Mama Cass Elliot's perpetual open house and her penchant for trading drugs for sex with good-looking young men and about the major substance abuse problems that plagued the Eagles, David Crosby, and others—problems that eventually took the lives of such major talents as Jim Morrison and Gram Parsons.

Hotel California is a narrative of rise and fall—from the hootenanny love-in innocence of talented, fresh-eyed young women and men with acoustic guitars to the coked-out superstardom of mid-70s stadium rock. It tells an epic tale of songs and sunshine; sex, drugs, and denim; genius and greed. Packed with both fascinating anecdotes and sharp insights into the lives and careers of its larger-than-life subjects, this book captures a legendary era of musical discovery, the amazing results of successful creative collaboration, and the much darker side of fame, wealth, and unbridled ambition. You won't be able to put it down.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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