



A House In Bali [Illustrated Edition]

Colin McPhee

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Includes 39 photographs taken by the author during his time in Bali.

A young American composer, quite by accident, heard some gramophone records of Balinese gamelan music that were to change his life completely. Such was his fascination that he 'wanted to hear every gamelan in the countryside'. This book is an account of his stay in Bali just before the Pacific War. A House in Bali merits republication because of its sympathetic and often amusing account of the author's involvement in Balinese society. While the author's musical interests take up a considerable part of the narrative, music was itself such an integral part of Balinese life that the reader gets an overall impression of life on the island. Much has been written on the art of Bali and by artists but this is the only narrative by a musician and stands in its own right as a worthwhile period piece.

A House In Bali [Illustrated Edition] Details

Date : Published November 6th 2015 by Tannenberg Publishing (first published 1946)

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Author : Colin McPhee

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Richard says

Much more accessible than his big academic book on Balinese music, this is an intimate memoir of his years in Bali back when it seemed much more exotic and far away. A wonderful classic of travel literature. And a portrait of the island at a time when it was much more unspoiled by icky western influences.

Gordon Mackenzie says

I read this book while commuting on the local BART train...I am instantly transported away to a lost in time colonial Bali of the early 1930's with the sounds of the gamelan and imagery of the legong dancers.

It makes me pine for a chance to visit Bali now.

Magpie says

Saffron 2017

Katie says

Interesting if you are into music and foreign cultures. Through his fascination with music, the author reveals a lot about life in Bali in the 1930s. I enjoyed especially since I'll be visiting Bali ,again, for the second time, in a month or so. It really is a unique and beautiful place, and many of the things that made it special nearly a century ago remain today (albeit a bit modernized).

Frank says

Life in Bali when Kuta and Ubud were a tiny villages and Den Pasar was a small town.

The author never mentions in the book that he was married at the time at that his then-wife bankrolled his grand lifestyle--paying for homes, gamelans, festivals, etc.

Debbie Keen says

I got this for my trip to Indonesia and read it a bit while in Bali. I tried to finish it once I returned home but found it weighed down with details about music and locals that just did not keep my interest. It was a good

pick for anyone traveling to Bali as it describes the island as it once was long ago.

Stephen Castley says

This is a great portrait of Bali in the early 20th century. I've read it before but a second reading reminded me of a Bali past and all the changes that have taken place. It also reminded me of the resilience of the Balinese culture. It is worth a read if you love Bali.

Philip Guy says

A wonderful insight into how Bali was in the 1930s. I have visited Bali several times and often wondered about the culture and the people. Sometimes it is difficult to follow as the author meets and works with a lot of people who's names are difficult to recall as they come and go in the story. The colonial white mans privilege and power is also very evident although sometimes it is used for the good as in buying instruments and facilitating lessons etc but the power imbalance between the rich westerner and the poor farmer or cook is all to evident. Colin McPhee used his skills to record the history of traditional Gamelan music and through this we see his love and appreciation of the culture and the people. I found it amazing that his wife who must have been a huge presence during this time has been made to disappear.

Elisa Stargirl says

Inspiegabile come una lettura attenta, dovuta al fatto di aver tenuto come ultimo libro delle vacanze estive nella megavaligia dei libri un malloppo che parla di un etnomusicologo occidentale innamorato dell'isola di Bali, dovuta al fatto di non avere null'altro da fare se non leggere sotto il sole di Bali, dovuta al fatto che forse pure io ci ho trovato un po' di magia in quell'isola, mi abbiano fatto amare un libro che in realtà è un trattato di musicologia. Un po' di storia e geografia dell'isola, un po' di sociologia della comunità balinese e il resto è una grande descrizione degli strumenti tipici e sconosciuti dell'isola.
Bello.

Melina Watts says

The author is a composer. At a party, he hears a recording of the gamelan in the 1920s in NYC and is so smitten that, after borrowing the record for a weekend, he returns the album and then immediately boards a ship to move to Bali to learn the music.

From the moment he describes an Indonesian variation on a slushy as "one of the hilariously colored ices of the tropics" i was helplessly in love with his narrative.

For a long time this was out of print and the father of my first child earned huge points by finding an out of print copy for me early on in our relationship. Now "A House in Bali" is available again and I'm sure this book is in the running for books I have given the most copies of as gifts. McPhee makes Bali sound like the kind of dream world that you wish real life could be like ... only ... it is real life, for him. We should all be so

lucky to have one human being see us with the love and care and accuracy and devotion that he regards this island; as a writer I hope that I am as faithful to my own chosen corner of the world.

Rick Gross says

A snapshot in time of the author living for several years on Bali at two different times in the 1930s. His observations of living on Bali and the people he encountered is beautifully written. His wife was with him during this trips, but he makes absolutely no mention of her. In my mind that makes his story less than complete.

Edward Irons says

Enchanting look at a bygone Bali. McPhee was clearly in love with the place, and focused on the images and memories of that love.

Charisse says

Lyrical prose, work of genius. Composer Colin McPhee, enchanted by Bali, writes about the decade he spent studying its music and culture, and enjoying the exotic beauty of the island. A must-read.

Sam says

I liked A House in Bali so well that I feel aimless having finished it. It's exactly what I wanted from a book: entertainment, an easy read, and something to address my interest in Balinese music. McPhee's descriptive talent is very satisfying. Will recommend it to members of my local gamelan club.

Nicholas Driscoll says

While certainly interesting to learn about the music and culture of a bygone Bali, and there are a number of memorable bits and fascinating morsels, I found the narrative less than captivating. For me personally at least, it was really meandering. I had trouble keeping the characters straight. I wasn't sure what the purpose of the book was. Plus the book seems scanned into text, with some weird errors and random italics.

Sometimes fascinating, but I got tired of it unfortunately.
