



White Line Fever: The Autobiography

Lemmy Kilmister , Janiss Garza

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Medically speaking, Lemmy should be dead.

After years of notorious excess, his blood would kill another human being. This is the story of the heaviest drinking, most oversexed speed freak in the music business.

Ian Fraser Kilmister was born on Christmas Eve, 1945. Learning from an early age that chicks really do appreciate a guy with a guitar, and inspired by the music of Elvis and Buddy Holly, Lemmy quickly outgrew his local bands in Wales, choosing instead to head to Manchester to experience everything he could get his hands on. And he never looked back.

Lemmy tripped through his early career with the Rocking Vicars, backstage touring with Jimi Hendrix, as a member of Opal Butterflies and Hawkwind. In 1975, he went on to create speed metal and form the legendary band Motorhead.

During their twenty-seven-year history, Motorhead has released 21 albums, been nominated for a Grammy, and conquered the rock world with such songs as "Ace of Spades," "Bomber," and "Overkill." Throughout the creation of this impressive discography, the Motorhead lineup has seen many changes, but Lemmy has always been firmly at the helm.

White Line Fever, a headbanging tour of the excesses of a man being true to his music and his pleasures, offers a sometimes hilarious, often outrageous, but always highly entertaining ride with the frontman of the loudest rock band in the world.

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From Reader Review White Line Fever: The Autobiography for online ebook

Ryan Werner says

A fun, quick read for anyone interested in the music of Hawkwind or Motorhead, White Line Fever is Lemmy Kilmister being as honest and goofy as one would think.

Lemmy hates the longbox packaging of CDs from the early 90s. He brings it up three times over the course of his 2002 autobiography White Line Fever (Citadel, 0806525908), and while he's not as scatterbrained and God-sized as David Lee Roth (Crazy From the Heat) or as into faux-debauchery as Motley Crue (The Dirt), it's these repeated complaints that remind the reader why Lemmy made it in the first place: he's just a nerd.

Oldies but Goodies

The fact that drugs will never kill him helps, but the nerd thing just seals it. His ramblings about the Liverpool scene in the 50s and 60s are a carbon copy of any record store dude's experience of living through Seattle in the early 90s, the Sunset Strip in the late 80s, or Washington DC in the early 80s.

However, unlike the parade of delusion the numerous former grunge or metal or hardcore scenesters march in, Lemmy isn't stuck in that era. He shows an obvious affinity for his roots, but he stays the same throughout his entire life. While a static personality might not be the best attribute in a person, Lemmy comes off as charming, a true rock and roll soul in a world full of irony and posing.

A Great Read, but Only for the Initiated

Picking this up as a fan of Hawkwind or Motorhead – or rock biographies in general – is a fantastic idea. The tone is laid back, the text is huge, and the details are there. That said, there may not have much appeal to those who don't follow Lemmy and his projects (as opposed to a book like Motley Crue's autobiography The Dirt, which is dumb and ridiculous enough to warrant a read by anyone).

Sure, there are lots of pills, lots of girls, and lots of pranks, but nothing is so over the top that a person will read it and immediately recommend it to her buddy who enjoyably listens to Top 40 radio and has no interest in music. This is certainly geek-food.

For the initiated, this story is stripped down and forward moving, occasionally senseless and always honest. The tone is pub-talk, as if Lemmy's buying the reader shots and letting loose a gem of a story.

Lemmy leads a life filled with women, songs, and stories, and he treats them all the same. If there is one thing we learn about Lemmy from his book, it's that he like it fast and loose. And, of course, that he hates the longbox.

Mike says

Lemmy is smarter than you'd expect, and pretty funny at times. He doesn't exactly paint himself in the most positive light but he's also self-confident and unapologetic. He's also brutally honest about other musicians,

and his own struggles with drugs and alcohol. I was surprised by how open he was about his use of speed. Lemmy pretty much did it all in his career and somehow lived to tell the tale.

{updating this since his death was just announced}

I heard an interview with him a bit earlier in 2015 and he sounded rather frail, his voice scratchy, but he still had the same 'fuck the world' attitude you see in the book and I have to think that, now that he's gone, we can say he was happy.

Rubén Horcajada says

Buff!

Increíble.

Ya sabíamos que Lemmy era un personajazo. Pues por si te quedaba alguna duda, sólo tienes que leer esta autobiografía.

Su humor, muy inglés, puntiagudo, sarcástico y muy muy directo hace que la lectura sea pura diversión. No defrauda ni un ápice.

Aclarar que esta biografía se publicó en 2002, por lo que si puedes hazte con la edición que salió en 2015 tras su muerte, que viene completada con un capítulo final que relata esos años. Merece la pena.

Benjamin Kahn says

An amusing read. I later read that Lemmy thought the book wasn't very good, didn't have much to do with him, and was a bit of a whitewash. That's probably good because I've read other Motorhead books with extensive quotes from Lemmy and a little Lemmy goes a long way. Kudos to his ghost writer - he did a hell of a job.

East Bay J says

Lemmy rules. This book is incredible. I devoured it. Read it in no time because it's interesting as hell. It's well told. I wish it were twice as long. Lemmy's story in Lemmy's words is brilliant. It's true folklore, history being passed down by oral tradition.

The man has a knack for story telling and he has some fine stories to tell. Of course there are tales of drugs, girls, clubs, promoters, constabulary officials, recording engineers, record labels, defections, new recruits, crashes, burns and miraculous recoveries. Of COURSE this book is FULL of that. That's the story of Motorhead. What makes it grand is the way Lemmy dishes it out. You love it. You eat it up. You can't get enough.

I'm always a big fan of yarns about the formative days of bands I like. I do wish the book were twice as long and most of that was about The Sundowners/DeeJays, Sapphires, Rainmakers, Motown Sect, Reverend Black & The Rocking Vicars and Hawkwind. Not to mention his days as a Hendrix Experience roadie. It's safe to say there's a book in there alone. Take note, Mr. Kilmister.

I've had the opportunity to see Motorhead live only very few times. Lemmy is an astounding, intense, earthy performer. His rapport with the audience is visceral and often personal. He has certainly transcended what many consider to be his genre (hard rock/heavy metal) and has become something akin to a mythical figure. Of course he's a regular guy but what he's done and seen in his time to date sets him apart from the average joe, even the average famous musician joe.

The striking thing is that, as Lemmy tells his stories, he seems to speak highly or at least civilly even of those who have done him wrong. He is gracious with his associates, professional in his dealings and true to himself to a fault. As much as he is a legend and a killer vocalist, singular songwriter, identifiable bassist and all around head case, he is also a good human being. Cheers to Lemmy.

Chris King says

This is the most half-assed autobiography I've ever read. You get as much out of it as you would sitting around drinking with the guy. And it's written just about that coherently. Avoid.

Neil Kernohan says

I galloped through this cracking yarn in a couple of sittings. It's written in a fast paced conversational style, almost as if Lemmy is sitting right beside you telling his stories over a glass of Jack Daniels and coke. As rock biographies go it's fairly unbeatable for dry humour, razor sharp wit and astute observations about the music business.

Lemmy begins his tale with an observation about the Christian faith of his parents, one of whom was a preacher who deserted the family when he was just a kid. As the Lemster puts it "I mean you teach people that the Messiah was the offspring of a vagabond's wife (who is a virgin) and a ghost. And this is a basis for a worldwide religion? I'm not so sure. I figured if Joseph believed that one he deserved to live in stables". And so, after Lemmy states his position clearly on life's big question, he then describes in lurid detail how he pursued a different, if somewhat less wholesome, existence coupling with girl guides in Anglesey as a teenager, discovering Elvis and rock'n'roll and playing guitar in various local R&B outfits during the 60s. Along the way he drank like a fish and took lots of drugs, including LSD between 1967 until the mid 70s, and has been on amphetamine sulphate ever since. He also sowed his oats with any willing female who happened to be hanging around back stage.

Most of the book is inevitably devoted to his musical career in early Hawkwind, from which he was sacked in 1975 after being falsely accused by the Canadian border police of trafficking cocaine (when it was actually his personal speed stash) and then Motorhead, the loudest and meanest band in the history of heavy duty rock'n'roll. There are some interesting tales of Lemmy and his pals living a fairly bleak existence in London's bedsit underbelly before Motorhead finally got a break and found their niche right in the middle of the punk rock phenomenon. Lemmy's sharp ear for musical trends and lyrical talent for catchy heavy metal rock'n'roll songs then took the band to chart success within a few years.

As Dave Grohl put it when he reviewed the book "Lemmy is the last man standing and no one comes close".

Ben says

Very much an oral history, sort of like several nights in a pub listening to the rantings of one of the more entertaining characters you've ever met, who you're also not going to interrupt. Very, very funny, not surprising if you've ever read or heard an interview with Lemmy, and packed with interesting tidbits about life in the fast lane of the twilight zone.

He's opinionated as hell but impressively even-handed in assessments of fellow musicians and other deranged individuals he has encountered. I still can't quite fathom the levels of ingestion of speed and psychedelics in his binge years/decades, but I guess there will always be wonders of nature that prove the exception to the rule.

Cristina Frîncu says

Cinci stelu?e pentru c? a schimbat ceva în mine. Fie ?i numai faptul c? mi-am propus s? m? întreb mereu, înaintea unei alegeri dificile, "ce-ar face Lemmy în locul meu?"

Jessica T. says

R.I.P. Lemmy.

Gabriela says

Of course, when you die, you become more brilliant by about fifty-eight per cent. You sell more records and you become absolutely wonderful – ‘Man, what a pity we didn’t buy any of his records while he was alive, but still . . .’ I’m sure that’s where I’m going – ‘How about Motörhead? What a brilliant band. If only we’d seen them . . .’

I am happy to say I did see them live and it was absolutely amazing. I have seen quite a few bands in my life and Motörhead is one of the best (actually only Marky Ramone's Blitzkrieg was a better gig - that one was just mindblowing). Lemmy brings back other memories too: once my friend and I were really drunk and we were watching Youtube videos yelling as hard as possible how ugly Lemmy is and how we would still like to screw him. It was around midnight and we were so drunk and irritating that my friend's boyfriend decided to just leave.

I was sad when I'd heard about Lemmy's death, but reading his autobiography made me realize he is one to be celebrated and not mourned. He was just full of life like that. He wanted people to enjoy and have fun, no matter what. This is pretty much the reason I gave this book five stars: it made me happy. At the moment I am going through some rough emotional times and Lemmy just made me happy. As simple as that. I laughed

out loud quite a few times and I constantly had the feeling I just went out for a beer and there it was Lemmy at the bar, drunk and in the mood to talk. So he started telling me his life story.

It didn't start all that nice, though. After the prologue I felt I might actually hate the guy. He started with the story of his flight to New York in 1991 (when they got a Grammy nomination) and apparently he had a pint of Jack Daniels in his pocket, which he tried to enjoy while they were getting ready for take-off. The flight attendant asked him to hand it over, he refused, she threatened to put him off the plane and she actually did it. And there is Lemmy, bitching about all those other passengers being late and/or maybe missing connections because of the stewardess. That isn't true at all, if that happened it was because of Lemmy and his teenage attitude. I mean I get rebellion against rules and stuff, I really do, but it sucks when it affects other people.

Of course, that isn't all. I mean Lemmy is also an irresponsible prick for allowing his kid to grow up without a father. He should have known better. After all, his father left him and his mum too. He is also quite arrogant and I am convinced Wurzel & Co. didn't stop working with him just because THEY went crazy. The truth, as always, lies somewhere in the middle. And what is with all that apparent interest in star signs? How about that time when he saw a UFO?

On the other hand, Lemmy is really cool. He is honest and he admits his shortcomings. He is also fun and, when he wants to, quite polite. He actually appreciates politeness:

Good manners cost nothing, and most people in America, England and in many parts of Europe are mainly arrogant, brutal, stupid assholes who don't give a fuck about anybody. They push you to one side and elbow you out of the way.

What I like best about this book, beside its humour and its oral style, is that it doesn't depict a stupid, alcoholic, crackhead, vindictive rock star. No, Lemmy was much more than that. Sure, he loved drinking, fucking and taking drugs (his favourite was speed and he hated heroine), but he was actually a very smart, observing man. His descriptions of the places he's been to are spot on. Here's what he said about post-communist Russia:

But obviously nothing has really changed since the tsars' days – the guys at the top do anything they want and everybody else pays for it. It's always been that way in Russia. Fucking Lenin, for all his blather, changed nothing for the peasant.

.
Or another one I really like:

I always find that when you play in these depressed, so-called Third World countries, the people are much more trusting and kind. They're more enthusiastic about everything. Considering that, what has civilization done for us? Blunted our sensibilities and made us less open and tolerant. Civilization is apparently a curse – God bless the open market!

.
He was also very political, which shows he knew there is a world outside his van and there's something more beyond his next drink:

I suppose I should have my say about the terrorist attacks. I don't suppose it'll be a popular point of view, but they need to be put into some sort of perspective. They were a horrible tragedy, but also what happened in New York and Washington is the same thing that England and America did to Berlin every day for three years during World War II – and Germany did the same thing to England. And it happened in every other city in Germany and lots of cities in France and Poland, too. But most Americans don't think about that. They think everything starts and finishes with America. It is the first time this has ever happened to America, so you would expect them to overreact a bit. So let's not panic too much – it can be got over. Anything can be got over.

Lemmy had opinions too. About racism, feminism, drug war, nazism, political correctness.

I don't understand people who believe that if you ignore something, it'll go away. That's completely wrong – if it's ignored, it gathers strength. Europe ignored Hitler for twenty years. We could have beaten him in 1936: the French army could have chased him out of the Rhineland and he would have been done. His people would have been toppled from power. But the French ran away – again – and let him in. As a result, he slaughtered a quarter of the world! And he was a non-smoker, non-drinker, vegetarian, smart suit, short hair, well turned-out. Would have been served in any restaurant in America, unlike Jesse Owens, the hero of the 1936 Olympics.

Jesse Owens came home, covered in glory and eight medals after showing Hitler the benefits of democracy and a multi-racial society, and they wouldn't serve him dinner in a restaurant in his own town. What the fuck is that? That kind of double standard is what really pisses me off. Do you know that there are still clubs in England and America where Jews aren't allowed? This is a country of denial. Look at the model airplane industry – they won't put a swastika on the model of a Messerschmitt 109, and that was the national insignia of Germany at the time. So does that mean that in the future, there will be no white stars on the side of a fucking Mustang kit because somebody in the planning room believes it's a symbol of American imperialism? Are any Jews less dead because they won't allow a swastika on a plastic model airplane? No! And let's not even get into what so-called Americans did to the real Americans – the Indians. As you can probably tell, I've had my share of arguments over all this. Apparently people don't like the truth, but I do like it; I like it because it upsets a lot of people. If you show them enough times that their arguments are bullshit, then maybe just once, one of them will say, 'Oh! Wait a minute – I was wrong.' I live for that happening. Rare, I assure you.

[...] I think these anti-drug gigs are a joke. They're generally set up by people who are smashed out of their minds, which already defeats the object. And what do you do with the money you get from an anti-heroin gig, anyway? Not buy drugs with it?! They just set up clean-up centres or rehabs that really don't work. No drug taker worth his fucking name is ever going to listen to the people who are in charge at those places because they run them like youth clubs, which is the very reason you started taking the stuff in the first place, as a mark against your parents' generation. You don't want to be herded somewhere and told you're a bad boy. That isn't the way to do it: you lock 'em in a fuckin' room until they're clean and then let 'em out and see if they stay clean. That's all you can do. And actually, it's not even much use doing that, because a smack addict has to want to be clean. They've got to come to you. You don't do things like

offer them rehab instead of jail, either – obviously, who’s going to choose jail, for fuck’s sake? They go to rehab to get the heat off ’em and maybe get rid of the annoying girlfriend. Then they get clean and it’s cheaper for them for a couple of months afterwards ’cause they only have to take a fraction of what they were doing before. From my vantage point, the whole ‘Drug War’ is a fucking mess.

Despite his totally unhealthy lifestyle, Lemmy had a very healthy approach to life:

You can’t run around panicking and giving up; you’ve got to have the strength of your convictions; you’ve got to know that somebody out there is going to recognize you as worthwhile and that you’ll still be in the picture. If you look like you’re beaten, then who’s going to come forward?

I suppose Lemmy died the way he lived: fast and intense. He really liked it fast and one can see that just by listening to Motörhead. He lived for music and especially for the road. He's on another road now and he's probably raising the same hell there. He might not have liked where this world is heading anyway, judging by how he ended his book:

[...] it seems that our brave new world is becoming less tolerant, spiritual and educated than it ever was when I was young; of course we are all susceptible to the ‘good old days’ syndrome, but this is not an example of it . . . Inherited hatred (i.e. hatred your parents schooled you in) is not only stupid, it is destructive – why make your only driving force hate? Seems really fucking dumb to me

Really dumb indeed.

Brian Carlin says

More PVC than PC. More leather than lather. Reassuringly sexist throughout in a blokey , cursey chummy way.

James Specht says

I've read a whole bunch of trashy rock star autobiographies, and this one stands above the rest. While you do get liberal doses of drugs, fucking, and other rock antics, what separates this one from the pack is Lemmy genuinely seems like a good guy. Sure, he's a bad ass and he can out drink/snort anyone, but he doesn't act like he needs to prove it to you. Also, he forgoes a lot of the trash talk a lot of these books have. Lemmy doesn't need to put others down to make himself look good. Even when he talks shit about working with other bands he is quick to point out their good points too. The book is a whole lot of fun and I recommend it

to people who don't even dig his music. It reads just like someone's cool uncle telling crazy stories over a few pints.

Godzilla says

I was left slightly disappointed by this autobiography - I expected more tales of on the road experiences than Lemmy recounts in this book.

A recurring theme was the fact that no-one is able to maintain the pace for Motorhead, which I can believe, but gets a bit dull after several repetitions.

There are some interesting insights, particularly in the way that Motorhead record, and the tribulations of record contracts and labels doing the dirty on them.

I guess I expected more salaciousness than the book delivered, and the book is couched in terms of half apologising and half criticising: not something I expected from Lemmy, I'd rather that he'd let rip and told it how he really saw it.

Nosmo says

Summary: "So I meet this geezer, not a sissy like they are nowadays, and we do a bunch of speed together while I'm shagging his bird (but back to rock and roll eh?). The longbox CD trend was a bad idea. Here are my thoughts on 9/11."

I love Lemmy, I love Motorhead and I love music autobiographies, but this reads like a compilation of Penthouse letters sent to Kerrang! magazine.
