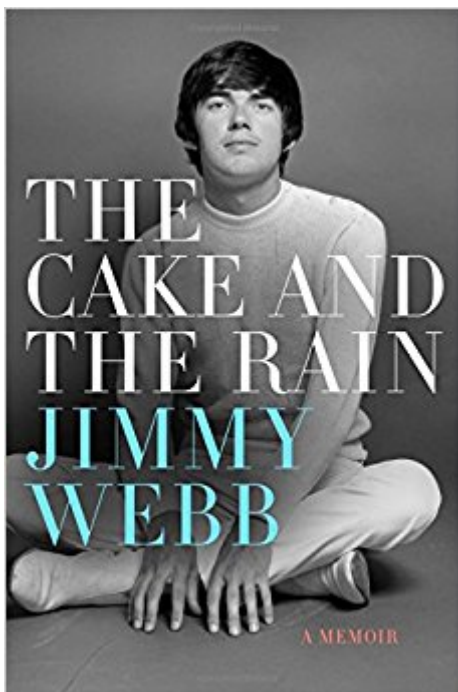


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# The Cake And The Rain: A Memoir



## Synopsis

"Novelistic, perfectly plotted and quite possibly the best pop-star autobiography yet written." - The Wall Street Journal

Jimmy Webb's words have been sung to his music by a rich and deep roster of pop artists, including Glen Campbell, Art Garfunkel, Frank Sinatra, Donna Summer and Linda Ronstadt. He's the only artist ever to win Grammy Awards for music, lyrics, and orchestration, and his chart-topping career has, so far, lasted fifty years, most recently with a Kanye West rap hit and a new classical nocturne. Now, in his first memoir, Webb delivers a snapshot of his life from 1955 to 1970, from simple and serene Oklahoma to fast and fantastical Los Angeles, from the crucible of his family to the top of his longed-for profession. Webb was a preacher's son whose father climbed off a tractor to receive his epiphany, and Jimmy, barely out of his teen age years, sank down into the driver's seat of a Cobra to speed to Las Vegas to meet with Elvis. Classics such as "Up, Up and Away", "By the Time I Get to Phoenix", "Wichita Lineman", "Galveston", "The Worst that Could Happen", "All I Know", and "MacArthur Park" were all recorded by some of the most important voices in pop before Webb's twenty-fifth birthday: he thought it was easy. The sixties were a supernova, and Webb was at their center, whipsawed from the proverbial humble beginnings into a moneyed and manic international world of beautiful women, drugs, cars and planes. That stew almost took him down but Webb survived, his passion for music and work among his lifelines. *The Cake and The Rain* is a surprising and unusual book: Webb's talent as a writer and storyteller is here on every page. His book is rich with a sense of time and place, and with the voices of characters, vanished and living, famous and not, but all intimately involved with him in his youth, when life seemed nothing more than a party and Webb the eternal guest of honor.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The Cake and the Rain is novelistic, perfectly plotted and quite possibly the best pop-star autobiography yet written. No one writes songs like Jimmy Webb does, and no musician ever wrote a biography like this. The Cake and the Rain is a dream of sin and redemption, told with contrapuntal rigor. And, yes, Mr. Webb explains the lyrics of "MacArthur Park" too." - The Wall Street Journal "I am devouring Jimmy Webb's autobiography right now. Tunesmith took me inside Jimmy's music (one of my favorite of my 1250 books). The Cake and the Rain takes me inside his life. There's the 60's I know so well. There's the extraordinary, gifted, friend of mine Jimmy Webb." - Art Garfunkel "During the late Sixties and early Seventies, Jimmy Webb was arguably the most successful mainstream songwriter alive, churning out sweeping, richly orchestrated hits for Glen Campbell, Barbra Streisand and Frank Sinatra, among others. Webb's new memoir, The Cake and the Rain, follows his rise from Oklahoma preacher's son to L.A. pop aristocrat. At the heart is his struggle to carve out his own identity as he lived a double life as a Middle American fixture with countercultural artistic ambitions. "Rolling Stone" "Jimmy Webb has been famous for his words for more than 50 years as the Grammy-winning songwriter behind classics such as "By the Time I Get to Phoenix" and "MacArthur Park." But when it came time to begin writing his memoir, The Cake and the Rain Webb says he discovered a freedom of expression that he hadn't felt before - one that comes outside the constraints of a three-minute pop song. "Newsday" "Songwriter Jimmy Webb hits the high notes in The Cake and the Rain." "Vanity Fair" "For those who want a good and at times incredible story of muses, merriment, melancholy, melodrama, along with touches of ordinary life and multiple near-death experiences, this is your book | Fans who have attended his concerts through the years know full well that Jimmy Webb always has some fascinating tales that stand on their own, without the aid of some of the greatest melodies the human ear has been fortunate to catch. Here he gets to fill in the details of interactions with Elvis, Sinatra, the Beatles (and their individual members), Joni Mitchell, Richard Harris, a totally out-of-control Harry Nilsson, and even the Devil himself. "Elmore

Magazine

“Amazing! One of the best music memoirs I’ve ever read - I guess I shouldn’t be surprised.” - Will Friedwald, author of *Sinatra! The Song is You*

“The *Cake and the Rain* has an almost cinematic quality, thanks to Webb’s evocative writing, and the book’s structure, which juxtaposes tales of Webb’s adventures in the music business with stories of his family.” - James Watts, Jr., *Tulsa World*

“Part memoir, part confessional, part musical history, and part cultural studies, *The Cake and the Rain* chronicles Webb’s fantastical (and at times tortuous) path through the music world of the late 1960s and early 1970s. It’s a must-read for music lovers everywhere.” - Mark Mussari

“Webb writes in a comfortable, conversational way, as though he’s telling a few close friends some stories from his fascinating life, and the book makes a great way for a music fan to pass a few hours.”

Booklist

“An insider’s view of the star-maker machinery and a treat for Webb’s many fans.”

Kirkus

JIMMY WEBB, *America’s Songwriter*, is the author of the musician’s “bible”, *TUNESMITH: INSIDE THE ART OF SONGWRITING*. Webb’s songs with their complex chord structure have been recorded or performed by artists from Frank Sinatra to Carly Simon, to R.E.M. He tours extensively performing his own works and stories in the United States and around the world. He was the youngest man ever inducted into the Songwriters’ Hall of Fame and was named by *Rolling Stone Magazine* as one of the top fifty songwriters of all time. A father of six and grandfather of one, Webb lives with his wife, Laura Savini, in New York.

I must start by saying I worship Jimmy Webb, as a songwriter and as a singer. I have every LP and CD he has recorded. I have all his early work with everyone he won a Grammy with or made famous. I was thrilled when this book was released and I felt the title would tell so much. Unfortunately, it is waterlogged. I was really hoping this would be a story of the music industry, as it revolved around him, in the late 60s. The development of songs, the orchestrations, the people, his process, yada-yada-yada. You get the idea. Instead, what one has is a book that is beautifully told, as is a Webb song, I mean the poetry on the pages are magnificent, but leaves you with nothing--that cake in the rain would have tasted better. The book swings between his family in Oklahoma and his life in LA mostly in 1969. I will admit he does weave them very very well..but that is it. This book is nothing, and I mean nothing more than Jimmy name dropping. Every person he

has every met, every worked with or just saw in Hollywood he goes into detail about them. Not, and this is key, not as it relates to his music or career, but just how mesmerized he was in meeting them or them knowing who he was. It is Jimmy writing of his own self importance, it is sickeningly egotistical and righteous. If you are expecting anything, and I mean anything having to do with his music or his songs during his start in the 60s--forget, it, it's not there, it is not even discussed. Oh, and forget about the age old question being answered about that cake...it isn't even baked in this book.

I love this new book. Jimmy Webb is a master wordsmith as well as tunesmith. I found his book about songwriting to be ponderously above my head to a great extent, yet this autobiography is very easy-to-follow, and the gifted songwriter's prose is direct and poetic. He tells his story up to the early 1970s, and we will have to wait for the rest, I gather. I think that he is a candid and truthful person, and so his story reads as very honest. One final note: I have always appreciated that his lyrics (with a few exceptions) are clear--not opaque or obscure. His prose in this book is the same. I thought it interesting, too, that he is a great Joni Mitchell fan. Webb's and Mitchell's lyrics share the same direct honesty.

This was an enjoyable read, but not at all what I expected. Maybe because he already wrote a book on songwriting, he didn't feel like he had to go into any detail about writing at all, but I was disappointed by that. The book's major goal seems to be to dispel the image that he was a square who only wrote hits for Adult Contemporary Radio. His dream of being a rock star/singer-songwriter was never realized, simply because he just was not a good singer. However he certainly lived the cliched rock star life. Drugs, booze, sex, drug overdoses. That's all in there. He also name drops quite a bit. There are plenty of stories about rock stars and rock star parties, hanging with the Beatles, hanging with Harry Nilson, hanging with Sinatra and Elvis. There is a love story in there too, but he was in love with a married woman, so you get this sense that he was sabotaging any chance of a true relationship. He writes a lot about cars, he had a very expensive collection. He also owned his own private plane. This is one of many contradictions in the book. At one point he writes that he felt guilty about his wealth and success and that he tried to live humbly and dress down. At the same time he is throwing naked cocaine parties at his mansion and flaunting his car collection and private jet. There are a few errors in the book that bothered me quite a bit. He makes a habit of identifying the songwriter of every song mentioned in the book. I was glad he did this and it showed an admiration for his peers. However he mentions the 5th Dimension smash

single Age of Aquarius/ Let The Sunshine In, but mistakenly attributes the song to Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice when it was written for the musical Hair by Galt MacDermot, Gerome Ragni, & James Rado. A songwriter should know this. Hell I knew it. One of my favorite songs ever is Wichita Lineman. He barely mentions this other than he wrote it in 4 hours at the request of Glenn Campbell. He had nothing to do with the production of the song, but he loved how it turned out. Of the great guitar solo by Campbell, he writes that Glenn tuned his bass note down an octave to get that sound. Good story but completely untrue. Glenn Campbell himself, tells this story and revealed that it was played not on a guitar, but a 5 string bass guitar. For a guy who loves music so much and seems to have a wealth of knowledge about music production, these mistakes just annoyed me. I will say there are some good stories about the Beatles in here and they don't come across very well, except for George of course. Webb wrote some of my favorite songs of all time; Didn't We (Sinatra), Up, Up, and Away (5th Dimension), By The Time I get to Phoenix, Wichita Lineman, Galveston ( Glenn Campbell ) but very little is learned about how he wrote these songs. It's almost like it was just something he did between parties and having affairs. Now to be fair this book is really about a small window of his life, from 1964 -1973, and everybody partied and did coke back then. But then didn't we already know that. Didn't we?

I read Sting's autobiography some years ago and he could weave a good story about some of his adventures in his life. They were all very well told. But you have to wonder, why all the drugs? They didn't make Jimmy a better song writer. He could only write when he had something to say! He admired Joni Collins for her notebooks which kept phrases and turned words on a sheet of paper so she could keep refining those words into a song. Jimmy didn't work this way. Life was all in his head. All much, too much as he almost killed himself with Harry in the glider and then later when he overdosed. I liked him better when he was chasing Rosemarie. Too bad they didn't get together. He always seemed to be looking for something.

A little bit hard to follow on a timeline with the way it is written, but still very enjoyable. I was kind of stunned with all of the drug use and affairs with married women.

This is, the adult version of "Fast Times at Ridgemont High". The ups and downs of Steamy love affairs, music, fast cars/planes, Yachts', world travel and of course Champagne and drugs. Probably similar to being one of the Hollywood elite in the day, like Earl Flynn or Ava Gardner ( could name dozens). Running with the elite at full throttle, and living to tell about it.

An Amazing Saga of Jimmy Webb's Life . . . . .

Great book.

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