



Searching for the Sound: My Life with the Grateful Dead

By Phil Lesh

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In this ruthlessly honest bestseller, the bass player for the greatest improvisational band in American history tells the full, true story of his life, Jerry Garcia, and the Grateful Dead. of photos.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Right in time for the Grateful Dead's 40th anniversary, eccentric bass player extraordinaire Phil Lesh has delivered fans a most welcome gift: his autobiography. There are many books out there about the Dead told from the perspective of roadies, journalists, third party observers, and fans. However, with the exceptions of Jerry Garcia's ramblings in *Garcia: A Signpost to New Space* and *Conversations With the Dead*, Lesh's *Searching for the Sound* is the first time a founding member of America's favorite band tells their own story of what it was like inside the Grateful Dead. And what a wonderful, strange tale it is.

Phil Lesh, considered the most academic of the group due to his avant-garde classical composition training, literate mind, and passion for the arts, decided to write his story himself. Written without the crutch of a ghostwriter, *Searching for the Sound* might be considered disjointed in places, but overall it comes across as conversational, intimate, informative, and candid (particularly regarding topics of drug use and death). If you are familiar with the band and their extended family, their history, the sixties' musical milestones and influences and all the band's famous tales (the Garcia/ Lesh "silent" confrontation, being busted on Bourbon Street, the Wall of Sound), you may be a little disgruntled there is not much new here in the way of content. However, what is "new" and totally satisfying is Phil's warm, optimistic perspective on the many events that helped shape his life. As described by Lesh, his life's journey, much like the Dead's music, is "a [series] of recurring themes, transpositions, repetitions, unexpected developments, all converging to define *form* that is not necessarily apparent until it's ending has come and gone." For the many fans who enjoyed the fruits of his life pursuit of sonic explorations, *Searching for the Sound* is a welcome addition to their Dead library. --
Rob Bracco

From Publishers Weekly

Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh has written the memoir one might have expected: energetic and flawed, but sure to be loved by fans. Lesh joined the band's original members—Jerry Garcia, Bob Weir, Bill Kreutzman and "Pigpen" Ron McKernan—in 1965 and helped morph the legendary outfit from its beginnings as a jug band to the unique, psychedelic improvisational jam band that spawned arguably the most loyal, iconic audience in popular music history: the Deadheads. What a long, strange trip it was. For 30-plus years, from being the house band for Ken Kesey's acid tests to stadium tours in the 1980s and '90s, the band pioneered a new paradigm for musicians, operating as an extended, albeit dysfunctional, family. Along the way, three keyboardists died, two managers robbed the band, bad deals were signed, massive debt was accrued and drug and alcohol problems flared. In 1995, the trip finally ended (or did it?), when Garcia died. Lesh infuses his prose with his wacky personality, which is endearing, but also maddening, especially when he's rendering acid trips or discussing music. Indeed, many fans who twirled ecstatically at Dead shows will struggle to follow Lesh's extended explanations of the band's compositions. Also, the second half of the band's life gets short shrift. Nevertheless, Deadheads will surely celebrate Lesh's honest, intimate remembrances. (Apr.)

From [Booklist](#)

Lesh, founding member of the Grateful Dead and bass-guitar visionary, adds his biography and his take on Dead history to the burgeoning literature about the band that is famous for its devoted fans, for keeping the spirit of the psychedelic sixties alive, and for rarely recording a commercial hit. After covering his childhood at a blistering pace (by page 12, he has flunked his army induction physical), Lesh turns his attention to matters musical, including meeting original Dead keyboardist Ron "Pigpen" McKernan, who seemed "greasy" but performed a "raucous blues stomp," and then encountering the rest of the Dead gang, not to

mention psychedelicized novelist Ken Kesey and sundry other sixties notables. He rehashes some notorious incidents in the band's annals, such as when in 1970 at the infamous Altamont free concert, the Dead refused to take the stage because they were scared; the atmosphere there was so unsettling, Lesh says, that he decided "not to take any acid that day"--given how things turned out (a tripping spectator was murdered by the Hell's Angels "security guards"), fortunate forbearance on his part. Lesh also recounts the subsequent comings and goings of band members, the death of Jerry Garcia, and life as a more mature presence on the rock landscape. Very few bands stay together as long as the Dead has, and fewer still attract new fans. A literate piece of rock history by a genuinely historic figure in rock music. *Mike Tribby*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Woodrow Harker:

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