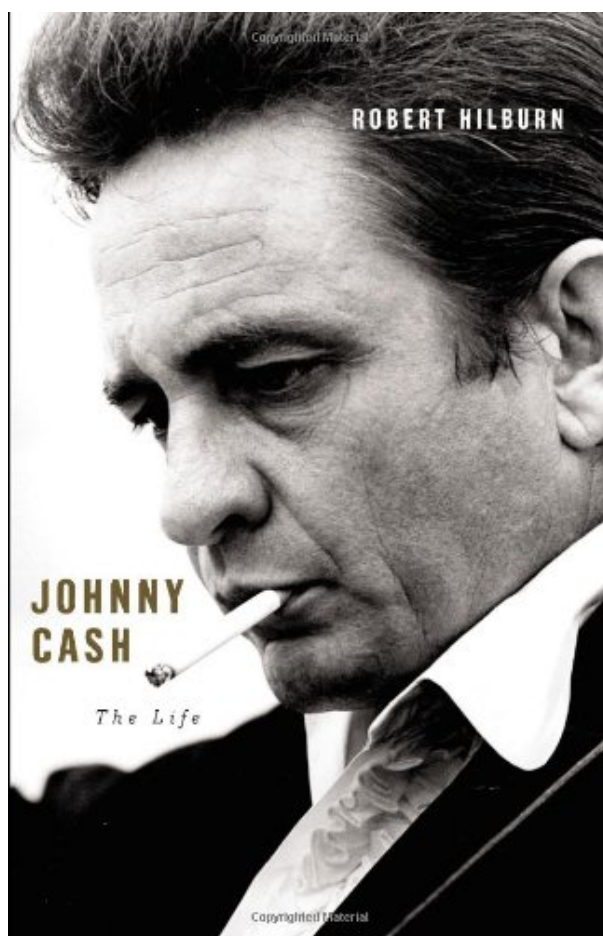
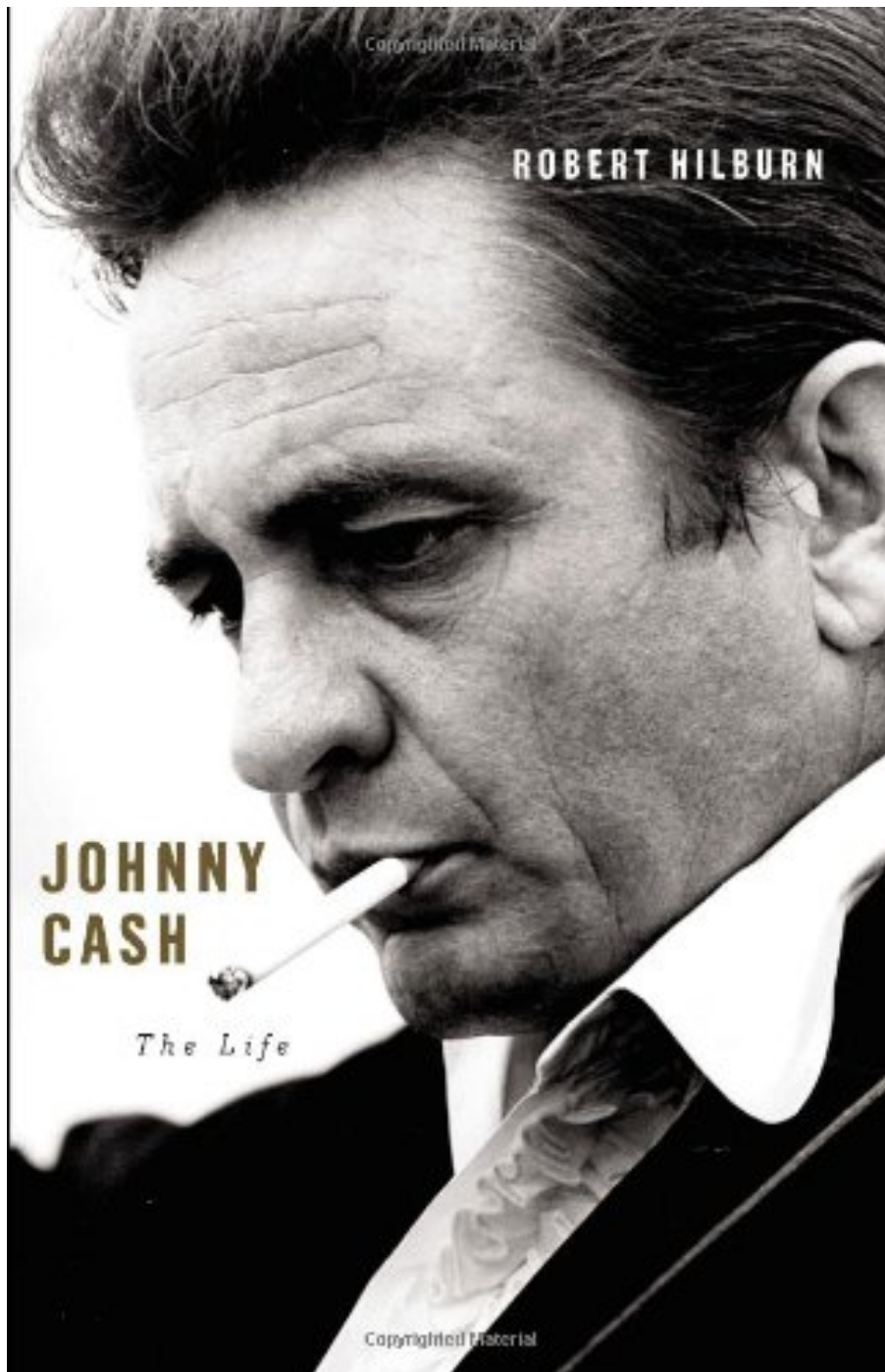


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In this, the definitive biography of an American legend, Robert Hilburn conveys the unvarnished truth about a musical superstar. Johnny Cash's extraordinary career stretched from his days at Sun Records with Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis to the remarkable creative last hurrah, at age 69, that resulted in the brave, moving "Hurt" video.

As music critic for the Los Angeles Times, Hilburn knew Cash throughout his life: he was the only music journalist at the legendary Folsom Prison concert in 1968, and he interviewed both Cash and his wife June Carter just months before their deaths. Drawing upon a trove of never-before-seen material from the singer's inner circle, Hilburn creates an utterly compelling, deeply human portrait of a towering figure in country music, a seminal influence in rock, and an icon of American popular culture. Hilburn's reporting shows the astonishing highs and deep lows that marked the journey of a man of great faith and humbling addiction who throughout his life strove to use his music to lift people's spirits.

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- Dimensions: 9.50" h x 1.50" w x 6.25" l, 2.19 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 688 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

47 of 49 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent Book - Couldn't Put It Down!

By James A. Meyer

I've read Robert Hilburn for more than 35 years, and have always found his writing to be accurate, fair, and passionate. While I've never been a big fan of country music, I've come to appreciate Johnny Cash more and more over the years - especially his American Recordings albums with Rick Rubin.

I learned so much about the origins of Sun Records, Cash's passion for underdogs, his battle with addictions, his need for affirmation, and his physical ailments at the end of his life. As a Christian, I was interested to see how Hilburn handled Cash's faith, which was quickly glossed over in the film Walk the Line. In my

view, Hilburn bent over backwards to represent Cash's faith and love for gospel songs in a way that would have pleased Cash no end. I didn't sense one syllable of ridicule for Cash's beliefs.

Hilburn's extensive interviews with Cash's family members, friends, and females were enlightening and contributed toward a well-rounded portrait of the man. Their commentaries on key events in Cash's life added emotion and insight to his sometimes erratic behavior.

But what I appreciated most about this book is that Hilburn continually focused on Cash's music, quoting Cash's lyrics at key junctures and letting Cash explain why he wrote and played certain songs. Cash was always at his best when he was authentic, which is why I love the American Recordings albums so much ... usually just the man and his guitar. Since there are hundreds of Johnny Cash albums available on CD - many of them compilations - Hilburn's recommended purchases at the end of the book will save readers much time as they seek to delve into his music.

I appreciated Hilburn's previous book *Cornflakes with John Lennon* and love this book as well. Because Hilburn respects both his subject and his audience, this book deserves a wide readership. I tried, but couldn't put it down ... and most likely, I'll pick it up again soon. Like its subject, this book is a winner.

72 of 80 people found the following review helpful.

"THERE WILL NEVER BE ANOTHER MAN IN BLACK." MERLE HAGGARD.

By Stuart Jefferson

"He is what the land and the country are all about, the heart and soul of it personified...". Bob Dylan.

"It's called country music and western music, but the truth is it's American music. It speaks in story about America in a way that speaks to all of us, north, east, west, and south." Richard Nixon at a White House concert.

With the holiday gift giving season fast approaching, there's no surfeit of books on musical artists. Books on Charlie Parker, The Beatles, Duke Ellington, Robert Plant, Jimi Hendrix, and no doubt others will be on the bookshelves. But certainly one of the best is Robert Hilburn's book on Johnny Cash.

Hilburn began this book in 2009 when Cash's manager told him "only about twenty percent" of Cash's life had been told. While previous books on Cash put his life and music in some kind of perspective, Hilburn takes a slightly different approach. He reveals not just Cash's life in and out of music, but why Cash matters. This book is a penetrating look at the man behind the "Man in Black" myth. And Hilburn never lets the myth get in the way of the facts. He has known, interviewed, and simply talked with Cash during his long (50 years) music career. Using interviews from both the past and present Hilburn has gone deeper into Cash's life, and has shone a light on both the real Johnny Cash and his music.

The book is broken into five parts, each dealing chronologically with a specific period and events from that period of Cash's life. Events like Memphis and Sam Phillips, Columbia Records, the tune "Big River" and pills, June Carter, drugs and Carnegie Hall, Folsom Prison and marrying June, losing the muse, Rick Rubin, and the final days are just a few of the many headings of events in the five parts chronicled in this book. There's 16 pages of b&w photographs from throughout Cash's life, including an early photo of Cash in his Air Force uniform playing a fiddle. And another photo from 1980, of Cash and his wife facing away from the camera--her arm around Cash's waste--his hand squeezing her buttock. Also included are 5 pages of a "Guide To Recordings And DVDs", 16 pages of Source Notes, and an Index.

The book begins early in Cash's life in Dyess, Arkansas and his rural 1930's upbringing. From there Hilburn,

in a no nonsense, straightforward writing style, constructs Cash's life not only as a musician, but as a man with human failings, wracked with guilt. But also here is Cash "the practical joker", the man who wanted to buy his parents "...a nice place so they could have modern utilities...", the man with pressures in his personal life (which in one instance led to Cash's love song "I Walk The Line"), and the man who abused narcotics (and the price he paid for that). But Hilburn also notes Cash's other "addictions"--reading scripture everyday, his devotion to music, and a man who cared about his fans (Cash, learning of fans who had traveled far to see his concerts, would pay their room and board). As Marshall Grant said of Cash--"He'd give you the shirt off his back, and if he was straight, everything else he had in his possession."

Hilburn also notes Cash's guilt at not being a better father and husband. Roseanne Cash was very helpful, giving Hilburn a better look at her father--even to the detriment of Cash and the family. Cash was in a never ending circle of "wicked behavior" and then deep repentance. Cash wanted to redeem himself so others might feel they too could be redeemed. But there was also the father who named his daughter after pet names for his wife's breasts--"Rose" and "Anne". The author also weaves the Carter family into the picture and the their effect on Cash both musically and personally. He also reveals that June Carter had failings of her own to deal with.

In tandem with a detailed look at Cash the man, Hilburn has also delved extensively into the music side of Cash--using the same straightforward clear prose. For me the book is at its best when Hilburn goes into detail about the business side of Cash's life. He essentially begins with Cash going to Memphis and hooking up with Sun Records, and continues with his early recordings and hits, leaving Sun and signing with Columbia Records, Cash admitting that some of his albums weren't very good, recording gospel albums which took the pressure off Cash to write more secular songs (and hopefully hits), the many concerts he gave (including of course the Folsom Prison concert which Hilburn attended), being dropped by Columbia and not doing well on the Mercury label, worrying that his music would be forgotten, the fact that the 70's and 80's were not a good time for Cash, that Cash wrote approximately 1,000 songs, and his meeting Rick Rubin at a time when Cash felt his career over.

The book begins to wind down with Cash returning home because of his worsening Parkinson's Disease, and the passing of June Carter--as Rick Rubin said at the time--"I didn't know if he was going to make it past this." But not before Cash recorded a large cache of songs with Rubin as producer/facilitator, including "The Man Comes Around", and "Hurt". Hilburn gives the reader enough details that help put Cash's music in a much clearer light--from both Cash's and his fans perspectives. Nothing seems romanticized--everything rings sure and true, interesting, and informative. Having such attention to detail brings both parts of Cash's life into a sharper focus than in previous books.

While some previous books have done a good/adequate job with Cash's life story, none have really put everything in such clear terms--his life outside of music, and the music itself. Its Hilburn's leaving aside the myth, his attention to detail and his unflinching way of laying everything out--good and bad--that makes this book the one to read if you're interested in a look beyond the "Man in Black."

"His most enduring legacy is that his message continues to spread." John Cash, son of Johnny Cash.

33 of 37 people found the following review helpful.

The Man in Black

By H. P.

Biographers of musicians tend to face the same basic problem: outside of their music and antics, musicians tend to be as boring as anyone else (and for many the music isn't of much interest). Johnny Cash was different. He was an intelligent man, devouring books on history and religion. He was an iconoclast, when

musicians' views are more often as predictable and conformist as they are simplistic. He had a deep abiding love for and commitment to gospel music, despite resistance from the music industry and a spotty record of church attendance. He did, like so many musicians, have serious drug problems, but Hilburn doesn't make that the focus of his biography. Rather, he keeps the focus exactly where it should be--on the music. It's a testament to the strength of Cash's songwriting that Hilburn can include so much of so many songs. They work as well as poetry as they do as songs, even the ones I wasn't yet familiar with.

Cash was a titan of music. What other musician could you write a 700 page biography on that would feel shallow in parts. Cash's career spanned across so many decades (from the 50s on) and trends in music (rockabilly to folk to outlaw country) and he interacted with so many other great musicians (from Elvis to Bob Dylan to Kris Kristofferson) and public figures (Nixon and Billy Graham) that inevitably something will leave you wanting more. Hilburn hits the most important points well, though, from the prison shows to Cash's passion for the downtrodden to his drug addiction (at too great length, that, but that's Cash's fault) to his triumphant final act with Rick Rubin. The book is packed with vignettes, like Cash being one of only three musicians to write Steve Earle a note while he was in jail for cocaine and weapons possession. Hilburn writes it all well and with a deep knowledge of the music (if with = a hint of snobbishness).

Disclosure: I received a complimentary e-copy of Johnny Cash: A Life via NetGalley.

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# JOHNNY CASH: THE LIFE (ALA NOTABLE BOOKS FOR ADULTS) BY ROBERT HILBURN PDF

Be the first that are reading this **Johnny Cash: The Life (Ala Notable Books For Adults) By Robert Hilburn** Based upon some reasons, reviewing this book will certainly offer more benefits. Also you need to review it detailed, web page by web page, you can complete it whenever as well as any place you have time. Again, this on-line publication Johnny Cash: The Life (Ala Notable Books For Adults) By Robert Hilburn will certainly give you simple of checking out time and activity. It additionally offers the experience that is inexpensive to get to and acquire considerably for better life.

## Amazon.com Review

The Big Fall Books Preview 2013: To adequately describe Johnny Cash: The Life, it helps to begin with the author. For more than thirty years, Robert Hilburn worked as a music critic at the Los Angeles Times, rubbing shoulders with the greats of the industry--Dylan, Lennon, Joplin, Springsteen, U2, and many others. But this tenderhearted, penetrating biography stands as an argument that he knew Johnny Cash best. Cash was an unlikely artist, born in debt-poor Arkansas to cotton farmers. He began working (and singing) in the fields at the age of five; and from there, Hilburn--who counted Cash as a friend and was the only music journalist at the famous Folsom Prison concert--draws from his extensive personal interviews with the singer, as well as new material from Cash's inner circle, to create a biography that is both compassionate and clear-eyed. As he details the stunning rises and tortuous stumbles of The Man in Black, Hilburn conveys an intimate, consuming, human portrait of the drama, the art, and the purpose that made the man a legend. -- Chris Schlupe

## From Booklist

The bare bones of Cash's story are widely known: the singer-songwriter's childhood years as a farmer's son longing to make music, his early hits, his descent into substance abuse, his tumultuous personal and professional life. Here, Hilburn, who covered music for the Los Angeles Times for more than 30 years, puts some meat on those bones. Did you know, for example, that when Cash moved to Memphis, he hadn't heard of producer Sam Phillips, or Sun Records? And did you know that the lyrics of Cash's early hit, Folsom Prison Blues, were lifted, not quite word-for-word, from Gordon Jenkins' Crescent City Blues? The book is based on previously published material and on the author's interviews, over the years, with numerous sources, including Cash and his family; Phillips; musicians such as Kris Kristofferson, Merle Haggard, Bob Dylan, and Tom Petty; and many of Cash's friends and colleagues (each chapter is thoroughly sourced). It's always tricky to call a biography definitive, but this one must surely come close. --David Pitt

## Review

Named one of the Best Nonfiction Books of 2013 by Publishers Weekly

Named one of NPR's Great Reads of 2013

"A thorough and thoughtful portrait of the Man in Black and a deep appreciation of his artistry... Hilburn writes most powerfully about Cash's trajectory as an artist... His writing is as authoritative as it's engaging when he's discussing the singer-songwriter's music." -- Michiko Kakutani, New York Times

"An excellent biography.... A story that's both larger and more fascinating than the legend.... Hilburn has

created the definitive narrative of this 'symbol of American honor, compassion and struggle.' It's a biography worthy of its subject." -- USA Today

"The result of Hilburn's wrestling with his subject's life and with his own moral compass is perhaps the richest biography of a musician I have ever read, and one of the best biographies I have read, period.... Hilburn knows how to organize a life in print skillfully.... Hilburn is a first-rate stylist. His sentences often sing." -- Atlanta Journal Constitution

Named one of this fall's hottest biographies by Kirkus

"Veteran music writer Hilburn...masterfully separates fiction from fact in an exhaustive, but never exhausting, biography of the legendary musician...The personal knowledge aided by extensive archival research and always compelling, accessible writing makes this an instant-classic music biography with something to offer all generations of listeners." -- Kirkus (starred review)

"Drawing on his own interviews and personal experience with Cash, former L.A. Times music critic Hilburn exhaustively chronicles, almost year by year, Cash's rise to fame from his childhood in Dyess, Ark., through his stint in the military, the peak of his success in the 1970s with the Johnny Cash Show, and on to his slow decline in health in the 1990s.... Hilburn is a spellbinding storyteller." -- Publishers Weekly (starred review)

"A comprehensive and thoughtful biography, cognizant always of how hard it is for heroes to make it in America...Hilburn does an artful, enviable job of reconciling all the facets [of Cash]...[and] writes with a remarkably steady hand...JOHNNY CASH is measured and mindful, allowing of all the paradoxical bits that constitute a human life." -- Los Angeles Times

"Hilburn's 'Johnny Cash: The Life' is the big biography Cash's fans have been waiting for since the singer's death in 2003 and Hilburn doesn't let them down." -- Jeff Baker, The Oregonian

"The ultimate Johnny Cash bio.... Rock writer great Robert Hilburn goes deep...." -- Rolling Stone

"Do we really need another Johnny Cash book?' Yes, we really do, as it turns out, because Johnny Cash is so very good.... Hilburn's work is far and away the most insightful, entertaining, comprehensive, and well-told Cash biography to date." -- Slate

"Arguably the ultimate biography of The Man in Black." -- The San Antonio Current

"A riveting new biography of the Man in Black.... From Cash's birth in Kingsland, Arkansas, to his triumphant last decade, Hilburn covers it all through seven hundred pages of intimate and startling detail. It's the Man in Black in full." -- William Welch, Garden & Gun

"I listened to that stark unrelenting country as a kid. He was a hero of mine. I met him, finally, in a john at the Waldorf Astoria. He was taking a pee, and I broke out into 'Loading Coal.' We both zipped up and sung the final chorus together. One of my most cherished moments. You don't get much closer than that. Hilburn has written a brilliant story of an even more brilliant songwriter, warts and all." -- Keith Richards

"A definitive new biography of an American original.... How do you write an interesting biography of such a beloved figure? First, hire Robert Hilburn. He is a prodigious researcher, but he keeps a steady hand on the tiller, and never allows his research to swamp his narrative." -- The Economist

"More thorough, compelling and honest than even [Cash's] own two autobiographies." -- Minneapolis Star Tribune

"The perfect Cash biography, as simple, fast and lean as 'Folsom Prison Blues'... Such a monumental figure deserves no less than this caring treatment of his sin-stained greatness." -- People

"Johnny Cash was a man both extraordinary and ordinary. Every man could relate to him, no man could be him, and only one man could get inside his head like Robert Hilburn." -- Bono

"It's always tricky to call a biography "definitive," but this one must surely come close." -- Booklist

"Hilburn got as close to the Cash inner circle as any journalist could...The most authoritative and revealing portrait to date." -- Wall Street Journal

"Robert Hilburn displays a deeply felt affinity with his subject, illuminating Johnny Cash as the moral compass of country music." -- Patti Smith

"Hilburn writes in a clear, straightforward style... and fills in the outlines of Cash's life with meticulous detail... Cash is well-served by a biographer who finds a balanced approach to an often unbalanced life." -- Columbus Dispatch

"It's a rare gift to be given the opportunity to step far back from the confusing miasma of one's own childhood to see the entire soaring arc of a parent's life, and to be able to look clear-eyed at the puzzle of his character and the kaleidoscope of pain and beauty. This is the breathtaking gift Robert Hilburn has given me in a definitive biography of my father that is excruciatingly honest, rigorously researched, and has the depth and integrity that his subject demands. I had to take many breaks while reading this book to assimilate all the stories I knew, but had never put in a narrative context, being claustrophobically close to not only the events themselves but the resonance of those events. I felt dizzy from the sense of time travel and from the odd notion that Hilburn's masterful organization of the paradoxes and the fullness of who Johnny Cash was--and is--satisfies not only my father's family and fans, but himself as well. To those who fiercely cling to a one-dimensional view of my father to satisfy their own ideals--dark or light, saint or sinner, right or left--I challenge them to read this book and begin to understand a far, far more interesting and complex man: a truly great, visionary artist, a deeply flawed human being capable of experiencing inconceivable amounts of both love and pain, and a huge spirit who now belongs to the ages." -- Rosanne Cash

"Johnny Cash will be the definitive bio of the tortured, truculent but often generous singer.... Hilburn penetrates the heart of Cash's artistry.... The behind-the-scenes stories Hilburn unearths from those early days are engrossing for anyone interested in American roots music." -- Kirkus Reviews

"Johnny Cash and Robert Hilburn are two of the true blessings of my life. Both the best at what they do and each a gifted artist. It's a killer combination." -- Kris Kristofferson

"Assiduously researched and entertaining.... Hilburn rightly believes his subject's life is so extraordinary that there's no need for fanciful embellishment from anyone, including Cash himself." -- Entertainment Weekly

"The definitive work about Cash, a rich, engaging look at a very complicated man that is, by far, the best book ever about him and one of the best biographies, music or otherwise, that I've read.... It's a depiction of its subject that's as honest, revealing and resonant as The Man in Black himself." -- Lincoln Journal Star

"A deeply personal, multi-faceted portrait." -- Parade

"Between his love of music, his experience as one of the nation's leading music critics, and his long personal friendship with the subject, there is no one on earth more qualified to write this definitive book on the roller-coaster life of Johnny Cash than Robert Hilburn. Between the amount of research and the degree of detail he's put into this book, even Johnny would have learned something about himself if he were here to read it. Highly recommended!" -- Rick Rubin

"A definitive biography.... He tells, in great and sometimes harrowing detail, how Cash's professional advancement and personal decline blossomed simultaneously." -- The Washington Post

"A meticulous biography.... Hilburn gives a frank account of the singer's life...." -- The New Yorker

"Brilliant.... There are already over 50 titles written about or by Cash, yet Hilburn's work is a standout." -- Maclean's

"A thorough, compassionate and knowledgeable biography of an artist I knew well and admired tremendously... [Hilburn] pulls you into his story." -- Clive Davis

"The Man in Black's many fans will find this huge, sympathetic yet critical study of his serial rises, falls, betrayals and redemptions definitive." -- The Globe and Mail

"Full of information that will at once delight, depress, stimulate and surprise Cash's fans, Hilburn's admirable biography also evokes an image of the 'Man in Black,' staring ahead, somberly and slyly, and daring you to 'Figure me out, son.'" -- Tulsa World

"A library's worth of existing Johnny Cash volumes has finally gained a bio that depicts him as a fully-rounded human being.... No matter how many Johnny Cash books you've read, Robert Hilburn's Johnny Cash: The Life will be a different animal." -- CMT News

"While many others have tried to tell this story, including Cash himself with a couple of worthy autobiographies, Hilburn adds fresh and revealing details.... Quite simply, it's a monumental biography of a monumental American artist." -- Toronto Sun

"Hilburn humanizes the larger-than-life Man in Black in this evocative and surprising biography." -- Los Angeles Magazine

"Johnny Cash covers Cash's monumental highs and bottomless lows in unprecedented detail...The book is stuffed with warts-and-all revelations that might surprise you." -- Rolling Stone

"Hilburn's writing is simple, ego-free and casually magisterial. There's no bombast to it; he lets Cash and company supply all the pyrotechnics." -- The Washington Post

"Told with clear-eyed, riveting detail." -- San Antonio Express-News

"No doubt this long-awaited tome will go down as the definitive bio of the Man in Black - an epic befitting its subject." -- Vintage Guitar Magazine

"Excellent."?Andrew Martin, The New York Review of Books

"Hilburn writes passionately and respectfully....What Hilburn also does perfectly is present enough of Cash for you to love, hate and love him over and over again." -- Edge Media

"Undoubtedly a must-read for the completist, deep Cash fan." -- The Detroit News

"This is a very big and significant American life and this is a very big and thorough book about that life by a writer steeped enough in it to present a definitive version of the facts for years to come." -- The Buffalo News

"Hilburn's experience as a journalist and music critic yields a detailed, readable account, avoiding the overly stylized prose that sometimes undermines music biographies. His solid critical instincts offer insight.... Hilburn offers a straightforward sobering look at Cash's dramatic physical decline...." -- Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

"The definitive biography.... Hilburn is frank without indulging voyeurism... [and] manages the delicate balance of opportunity that a posthumous work provides.... Hilburn unflinchingly and humanely follows the long, rocky road to its end."?Kevin Lynch, No Depression Americana and Roots Music

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