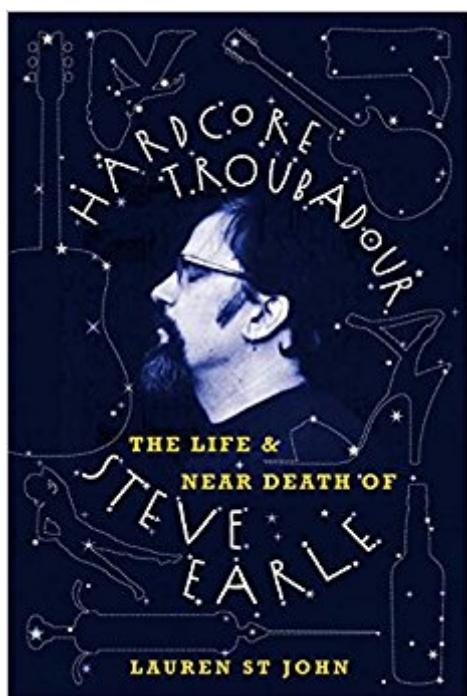


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Hardcore Troubadour: The Life And Near Death Of Steve Earle



Synopsis

If Steve Earle weren't a living, breathing person, he'd be a character in a blues song -- a raucous ballad about a gifted rebel who drank too much, lost most of his women in a blizzard of crack and cocaine addiction, and always came out on the wrong side of the law. Somewhere in the midst of all this, he also managed to weld rock to country, the Beatles to Springsteen, and bluegrass to punk, establishing himself among the most thoroughly original and politically astute musicians of his generation. Granted unrestricted access to Steve and his family and friends, Lauren St John has given us a sometimes shocking, often moving, and completely unvarnished biography of one of America's most talismanic sons.

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Customer Reviews

This biography of country rocker Earle begins with him skipping a 1992 meeting with record execs to sign a potentially career-reviving, multimillion-dollar record contract. Instead, he sold his airplane ticket for \$100 and went to score crack in the slums of Nashville, beginning what Earle calls his four-year "vacation in the ghetto." It's a brilliant opening hook, and St. John (*Walkin' After Midnight*) never lets the reader go, breezily guiding through Earle's wild childhood (he dropped out of school after the eighth grade and was living on his own by 16), his five tumultuous marriages, his many run-ins with the law, his restless wanderings through the American South and Mexico-and a quarter-century of addiction to booze, cocaine and heroin that finally ended after some jail time in the mid-1990s. By talking to many of Earle's closest friends, family and former wives, St. John manages to demythologize a man whose life often threatens to overshadow his music

(unfortunately, however, she herself doesn't spend much time on Earle's actual recordings). She interprets Earle's death wish simply as an attempt to break away from his middle-class upbringing. Like his literary heroes Hemingway and Kerouac, he courts disaster to fuel his writing. As St. John writes, "It was no accident that his life was a series of belief-beggarling dramas; quite often he was the cause of them. Consciously or unconsciously, he cultivated his own legend." Springsteen may have been the "consummate chronicler of welfare-line blues," she writes, "but Steve had lived the life." Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Acclaimed singer/songwriter Earle granted St. John, a frequent contributor to the London Sunday Times, unrestricted access to write this unfliching portrait. Drawing on interviews with Earle as well as his friends and family (including six ex-wives), she traces the songwriter's life in gritty detail, from his childhood in rural Texas through his addictions, arrests, and breakups to his most recent triumphs. St. John also chronicles Earle's diverse musical influences, which range from Townes Van Zandt and Guy Clark to Gram Parsons and Bruce Springsteen. When Earle's debut, *Guitar Town*, was released in 1986, he achieved success by reviving the pure sounds of legendary country musicians and combining it with the bluesy strains of rockabilly. Not long after the album's release, though, Earle began his slow descent into an inferno of drug abuse that nearly ended his life. After a four-year rut, Earle came roaring back to life with two flawless albums: *El Corazon* (1997) and *Transcendental Blues* (2000). On one hand, this first full-length portrait doesn't break any ground—the sordid aspects of Earle's life were already well documented. On the other, however, by using Earle's own words, St. John brings us closer to her subject's intimate relationship to music, which often gets overshadowed in the press. Ultimately, Earle emerges as a guy who wants to make damn good music. Recommended for all collections. Henry L. Carrigan Jr., Lancaster, PA
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I generally don't bother with writing reviews - I just rate the books and move on - but I felt like I had to say something about *Hardcore Troubadour*. Steve Earle has got an incredible story, but I'm not certain Lauren St. John was the voice to tell it. An English writer of children's animal stories somehow doesn't capture what, in my mind, Steve Earle is all about. St. John's writing is awkward at times and at other times veers into the strange, such as when she quotes Earle as using the word "bonnet" in reference to a car hood. I obviously

don't know Steve Earle, but I have lived in Texas and my guess is that he has never in his life used the word bonnet in the context of an automobile. St. John also annoyingly refers several times to the band Tesla as Tessler and spells Steven Tyler's first name as "Stephen." Whether this is sloppy proofreading or an overall lack of familiarity with her broader subject is a question I was left asking. I very recently read *Rocks, Joe Perry's* autobiography, and I think Earle could have benefited from writing his story his way guided by a co-(or ghost-) writer. I realize *Hardcore Troubadour* is 10 years old now, but my hope is that at some point Steve Earle will write his own story in his own, truer, voice.

Author's style jumped rather than using a continuous timeline. She contradicted herself in a few places and appeared to use the wrong wife's name. A linear approach would have been much easier to follow and avoided much confusion. There were also inconsistencies with Earle's parents story as well. What I was able to glean as fact was interesting and gave insight into Earle's life.

I'd recently become interested in Steve Earle, buying a couple of his older CD's, whilst I am not a fan of country music Earle does tend to cross genre's. After finding myself fascinated by the lyrics of his songs I did a little research and purchased this title. As I read it was very entertaining and well written, whilst delivering awarts and all picture of Earle and his life, it was quite sympathetic to Earle. I thought perhaps the book glossed over the negative aspects of Earle's life, not giving much commentary to his parting from Managers and those who had worked with him and helped him through his journey. As mentioned the book is sympathetic to Earle and certainly not judgemental.

Well written biography of one of today's music icons. Immensely talented, totally real and chased by his demons, he's come through to the other side better than ever. Great read.

Book arrived in almost new condition. Very fair price and fast shipping. Thanks

One of the few biographies that I have read that have kept my focus.

He's had a hell of a life and he hasn't always been a hell of a guy...but he remains one of the most prolific, talented, and dogged songwriters around. I haven't stopped listening to Steve Earle since I've finished reading this book and his book of short stories. He's worked hard to maintain his unique voice and his activism. This biography gets underneath all his songs - placing his music in the

context of his life. I highly recommend this book, and his music.

Bought as a Christmas gift and he loved it. Good winter reading.

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