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Sweet Chaos: The Grateful Dead's American Adventure

Carol Brightman

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San Francisco's Grateful Dead brought its psychedelic blend of folk, bluegrass, and blues to the 1960s counterculture, along with a romance for the Beats and a love of anarchy that made it something more than a bond. Without radio play and virtually unnoticed by the press, the Dead forged a vast underground following whose loyalty survives to the present day.
National Book Critics Circle Award-winning author Carol Brightman returns to the bond's roots -- to Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters, the acid tests and the heady days of Haight-Ashhury, the free concerts in Golden Gate Park and the formative shows of New York's Fillmore East -- to uncover the secrets of the band's longevity. Drawing on exclusive interviews With band members, staff and crew, Deadheads, other musicians, journalists -- and her own experience as a '60s activist -- Brightman shows us how, amid the turbulent Free Speech Movement and antiwar rallies, the Grateful Dead's abandonment to music, drugs, and dance offered the faithful a shelter in the storm. Her riveting, in-depth portrait of Jerry Garcia, the "nonleader leader" who held to a vision of the Grateful Dead's destiny even as he recoiled from the juggernaut it became, shows us how it was that a Dead concert become something halfway between a revival meeting and a family reunion.
An absorbing and exhilarating exploration, *Sweet Chaos* offers, at last, a complete understanding of the Dead phenomenon and its place in American culture.

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