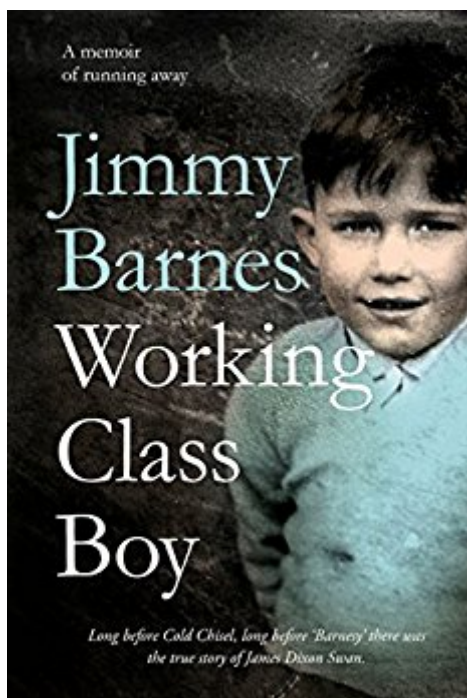


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Working Class Boy



Synopsis

The critically acclaimed number 1 bestseller in paperback. A household name, an Australian rock icon, the elder statesman of Ozrock - there isn't an accolade or cliché that doesn't apply to Jimmy Barnes. But long before Cold Chisel and Barnesy, long before the tall tales of success and excess, there was the true story of James Dixon Swan - a working class boy whose family made the journey from Scotland to Australia in search of a better life. *Working Class Boy* is a powerful reflection on a traumatic and violent childhood, which fuelled the excess and recklessness that would define, but almost destroy, the rock'n'roll legend. This is the story of how James Swan became Jimmy Barnes. It is a memoir burning with the frustration and frenetic energy of teenage sex, drugs, violence and ambition for more than what you have. Raw, gritty, compassionate, surprising and darkly funny - Jimmy Barnes's childhood memoir is at once the story of migrant dreams fulfilled and dashed. Arriving in Australia in the Summer of 1962, things went from bad to worse for the Swan family - Dot, Jim and their six kids. The scramble to manage in the tough northern suburbs of Adelaide in the 60s would take its toll on the Swans as dwindling money, too much alcohol, and fraying tempers gave way to violence and despair. This is the story a family's collapse, but also a young boy's dream to escape the misery of the suburbs with a once-in-a-lifetime chance to join a rock'n'roll band and get out of town for good.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I had read ninety percent of Jimmy Barnes autobiography before he describes the beginning of his life as the lead singer of Cold Chisel, one of Australia's most popular rock bands. Ninety percent of the book is taken up with the story of Jimmy's life from birth in Glasgow, Scotland, to emigration with his family of origin to South Australia, and his childhood and teenage years in Adelaide. Barnes writes well and the story moves along at a hefty pace. However, it is not an easy read. The violence and much more that was 'normality' for Jimmy and his siblings, and the drunkenness and survival strategies of his parents, was almost beyond comprehension for me, and I suspect it will be for the majority of those who read this true story. I had initially thought that at least two-thirds of the book would be about life as a rock star and member of Cold Chisel. It wasn't until I finished the book and read Jimmy's Afterword that I learned he is now writing Book Two, which will take his life's story forward from when he became the lead singer of Cold Chisel. If you are interested to know what life was like for working-class people living in the slums of Glasgow in the 1950s and 60s - the consequences of the hatred between Catholics and Protestants of that city - the lives of those who spent each day from opening to closing in the pubs of the city - then this is the book for you. If you are interested in the life-experiences of 'ten-pound' migrants to Australia from the UK and Europe in the 1960s - then this book will inform you. Jimmy Barnes said on a recent TV programme in Australia that he needed to write this book to move on with his life - and that writing it has been a cathartic experience for him. Having now read 'Working Class Boy' I can appreciate his explanation. But I have to be honest and say that for me reading his story was how I imagine I would feel swimming across an ocean of sewage. And that's not a judgmental statement - I have admiration for the author's survival skills - it's just how difficult it was for me to keep going from one violent description to the next one for 90% of the reading.

An interesting story, but the lack of polish in the writing could be really grating at times. The book needed some sympathetic but ruthless editing, to tighten up repetition and get rid of the clichés.

I cannot imagine growing up like this. It's a miracle any of the family survived. I lived in Adelaide about the same time Jimmy did. Always knew Elizabeth was a rough place but had no idea just how bad. This book is a real eye opener. Makes me realize just how fortunate I am. Thanks Jimmy!

Jimmy Barnes's memoir is an interesting story of a troubled childhood and adolescence. However, compared to Frank McCourt's story of how he survived an impoverished childhood, it does not come close to that powerful and emotional memoir. Jimmy's account of his upbringing in Ireland, and then Australia, is rambling and could have done with a lot more editing. Nevertheless, Jimmy somehow survived a seriously disadvantaged childhood and became a very successful musician and it appears, a very likeable person. I look forward to the continuation of Jimmy's story and how he became a great rock 'n' roller.

A disappointing read which turned out to be little more than a self-indulgent purging of personal baggage that while sad, is not unique and dragged on for way longer than necessary. The potential for this to be inspirational and message on overcoming early-life adversity was totally lost. I adore Barnesy and think he sold himself short by not taking the opportunity to send a message of hope to those with similar issues. He has made a success of his life despite a difficult start. This could have been great but instead is just a waste of money.

Graphic story of a abusive childhood stretching from the slums of Glasgow to a housing suburb on the outskirts of Adelaide. This is a memoir that could reek, quite reasonably, of victimhood but instead it shows an amazing insight into the tangled sadness and distress of Jimmy Barnes' chaotic family and an amazing degree of personal strength and humour that somehow pulled a traumatized child through his action-packed (and rather alarming) adolescence. I'm looking forward to the second, promised, book about his later years.

Love, love, loved it. I lived and grew up in many of the areas Jimmy wrote about, at about the same time as his was there. To open up as much as he did about his tough upbringing must have been very difficult but so enlightening. I to have my stories, and know how much better it is to talk about them. Can't wait for the sequel.

Very moving story , but I did think the drinking and fighting although it happened ,was mentioned far too much especially once they were in Australia ,but how interesting how someone can rise from

that early life .

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