

## Relix The Book: The Grateful Dead Experience

Toni Brown With Lee Abraham & Lee Munson

★★★★

Backbeat Books, £17.99

ISBN 9780879309865,

244 pages

**How the Dead spawned one of America's best music mags**



By 1974, the Deadhead phenomenon had mushroomed way beyond the normal band-

fan relationship, as the group famously encouraged taping at its shows. Fervent follower Les Kippel was inspired to start *Dead Relix* in 1974, a kind of *Exchange & Mart* for tape freaks which was an immediate success, then encouraged by Bill Graham as the merchandising side took off too. Over the years, *Relix* grew into one of America's most honestly reliable music publications, untainted by trends and market strategies to still religiously chronicle Dead activities, while later spreading its wings to cover like-minded artists on the west coast and beyond.

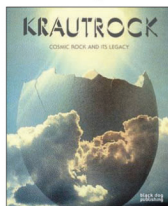
The mag's first 30 years have been boiled down into this lovely collection of past features, interviews, covers, photos and new comments, offering all you need to know about the Dead, along with features on anyone from Jim Morrison to Willie Dixon. Gary Kroman's incredible skeleton illustrations are still one of the most distinctively evocative images in rock, while the section covering Jerry Garcia's passing in 1995 is moving in the extreme, Dylan's heartfelt tribute as eloquent as his best lyrics. Few magazines start with a mission and see it through, but *Relix* never strayed from its golden road to unlimited devotion. Here's the 100 per cent proof. *Kris Needs*

## KRAUTROCK: COSMIC ROCK AND ITS LEGACY

Edited by Nikolaos Kotsopoulos

Black Dog

www.blackdogonline.com



My panting, undying love affair with Krautrock began in 1974 when, as a relatively unorthodox and pitifully wan 13-year-old, I borrowed a copy of Can's exceptional *Tago*

*Mago* double album from Greenock's surprisingly catholic record library.

I was intrigued and ultimately ensnared by the inscrutability: the fact that neither the band nor album names gave any kind of clue as to the nature of the music contained within that peculiar flip-top sleeve, with its cover shot of the backs of Damo Suzuki and Jaki Liebezeit. A helpful sleeve note invoked The Velvet Underground by way of comparison and suggested that Can were an altogether scarier prospect, and I can remember thinking: that'll do me.

*Krautrock: Cosmic Rock And Its Legacy* is the definitive overview so many of us have been waiting for: a detailed salute to main players and minor characters alike, but also a scholarly labour of love which amply supplies the intellectual rigour the topic demands – equal parts historical back story and universe-sized bigger picture.

So, preceding the thoughtful profiles you would rightly expect of Can, Kraftwerk, NEU!, Faust, Tangerine Dream, Amon Düül II, Popol Vuh, Cluster, Harmonia and less-celebrated worthies such as Floh De Cologne, Agitation Free, Guru Guru and Xhol Caravan, you will find illustrative and revelatory essays from Ken Hollings, Erik Davis, David Stubbs and Michael Faber, each as brimming with fresh ideas and associations as the music itself.

Add to this informed studies of the key record labels and producers – and a voraciously plundered photographic archive which brings the whole venture to swarming life – one comes away with a renewed understanding of the fact that many of these extraordinary bands had little or nothing in common, but remain united in our collective consciousness as much by their indefinable otherness as their birthright.

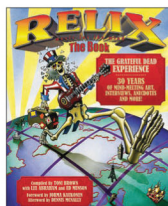
A fantastic, unimpeachable piece of work. **Marco Rossi**

## RELIX THE BOOK: THE GRATEFUL DEAD EXPERIENCE

Edited by Lee Abraham, Toni Brown and Ed Munson

Backbeat

www.backbeatbooks.com



When it comes to recorded evidence and memorabilia relating to their heroes, Deadheads always had it remarkably sussed. While other groups got in a panic about bootlegs harming their precious sales, the Dead acknowledged that none of their gigs were ever the same and that the fans who braved many hardships to travel many miles to witness them were entitled to some respect, plus a limitless amount of fodder to satisfy their constant craving. To this end, special areas were set aside at

gigs so the fans could tape shows, there was always merchandise carrying the familiar skull-and-roses logo and eventually, in 1974, the logical step of a magazine devoted to Dead activities. *Dead Relix* was started by Les Kippel as "a tape exchange in my head somewhere between Dark Star and St Stephen", the first photocopied issue flying off the shelves.

Before long, Les and crew were faced with the usual problems besetting such ventures and expanded a merchandise arm, which was taken under the wing of Bill Graham's Winterland Productions. Like the best ventures, it was never planned as a money-making business project, but grew over the years to become one of the most respected magazines in the US, up there with *Bomp!* and *Trouser Press*.

Unlike many magazines it managed to hang on to its passion, original ethic and simply expand healthily, continuing to cover the Dead but going on to include stellar contemporaries like Commander Cody, Hot Tuna, Quicksilver Messenger Service and other West Coast giants without being raped and pillaged by clueless money men.

Long-time driving force Toni Brown, plus staffers Lee Abraham and Ed Munson, have compiled a wonderful compendium of past highlights which, experienced as a whole, present a spectacularly eye-blasting feast of past artwork (including some beltlers from Gary Kroman), features and photos, not only chronicling Dead-related activities but extending to other artists like The Doors, Zappa, Dylan, Stones, Allman Brothers and Willie Dixon.

Obviously, Jerry Garcia's tragic death in '95 came as a shocking watermark, the magazine digging in its heels to fly the skull flag even higher.

Unsurprisingly, *Relix* got new publishers earlier this decade but is still going. A classic, shining example of how magazines can become so much more than just a "big name on the cover" PR-dictated shell and beautifully reinforce people's lives.

This mind-blowing book does it more than proud and Shindiggers may spontaneously ejaculate.

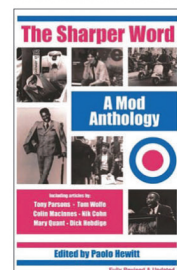
**Kris Needs**

## THE SHARPER WORD: A MOD ANTHOLOGY

Edited by Paolo Hewitt

Helter Skelter Publishing

www.helterskelterpublishing.com



First published in 1999 and now back on the racks as a new improved edition to mark the occasion of its 10th anniversary, *The Sharper Word* offers an unsurpassed insight into the movement variously described as "John

Lee Hooker, amphetamine and Jean Paul Sartre" and "clean living under difficult circumstances".

*The Sharper Word* remains the first in-depth study of the mod phenomenon and the first book to treat this fascinating and misunderstood chapter in the history of British pop culture with the affection and gravitas it deserves.

All aspects of the history and evolution of mod culture are explored here from the sharp threads, the sounds, the pills, the hippest hang outs and, of course, the Vespas and Lambrettas to the single-minded pursuit of style at all costs