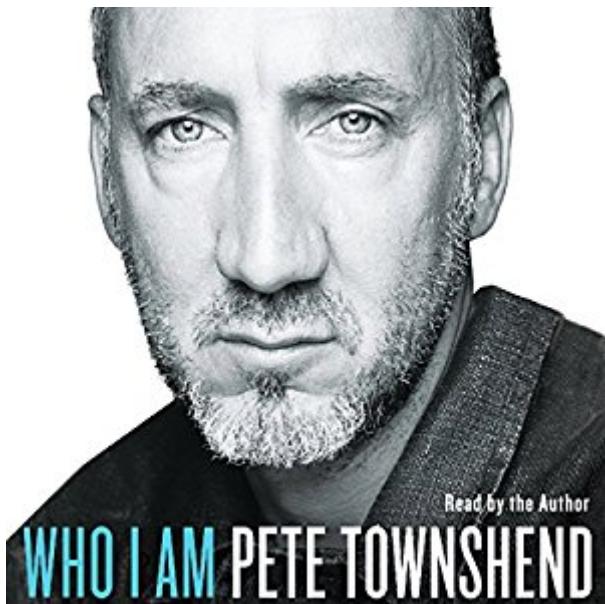


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# Who I Am



## **Synopsis**

From the voice of a generation: the most highly anticipated autobiography of the year, and the story of a man who.....wanted The Who to be called The Hair. ...wanted to be a sculptor, a journalist, a dancer, and a graphic designer....became a musician, composer, librettist, fiction writer, literary editor, sailor....smashed his first guitar onstage, in 1964, by accident....invented the Marshall stack, feedback, and the concept album....inspired Jimi Hendrix's pyrotechnical stagecraft....is partially deaf in his left ear....stole his windmill guitar playing from Keith Richards....followed Keith Moon off a hotel balcony into a pool and nearly died....did too much cocaine and nearly died....drank too much and nearly died....detached from his body in an airplane, on LSD, and nearly died....was embroiled in a tabloid scandal that has dogged him ever since....planned to write his memoir when he was 21....published this book at 67.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Throughout this book all of Townshend's stories have an abbreviated quality to them. It takes a while for this to sink in for the reader but by the end of this book the shallow treatment of many instances in Townshend's life. As long as I've been following his career the presence of Meher Baba been a given, a guide to Townshend's thought and creativity; but in this book, the spiritual leader in Townshend's life is almost totally absent, even in retrospect -- MB has maybe 5-6 Index entries! Townshend spends less than a paragraph mentioning some personal movement away from MB, although when and why this association has changed isn't made clear at all. The same "shallow" or abbreviated treatment of other important aspects of Townsend's life are equally

abbreviated. The deaths of Keith Moon and John Entwhistle are very short and not treated with much introspection. These are the obvious examples. They span the book, being especially irksome in the time spanning the beginning of The Who through to the book's end. Townshend's frequently acknowledges the "help" of his editor who cut the book roughly in half, from an estimated 1000 pages to 500. Both the editor and the publisher have done little favor to Townshend's and The Who's fans, whether they are fan club types or fan's with a desire to follow the thought of their favorite musician and creative spirit. The abbreviated treatment of Townsend's story does no good for either Townshend or his fans.

"Who I Am" by Pete Townshend is a good book from start to finish and very well-written by the author. I've always admired Pete Townshend as a composer, musician and vivid story-teller. He also has a wry sense of humor, which is just as enjoyable as his other talents. There are three passages in his autobiography which made me laugh out loud in particular. The first was when Pete and Roger Daltrey (lead singer of The Who and an accomplished actor as well) were attending a party in the early 1960s. Roger was known to be a bit rough around the edges, to put it mildly. Pete wrote of the party and Roger et al: "We saw fighting aplenty, and I have Roger to thank for the fact that no one ever laid a hand on me. Even a nasty drunk knew better than to provoke him." In 1965, Pete bought a 1936 Packard V12 hearse. He parked it outside his flat in Belgravia, London. One day the vehicle was missing, and he feared it had been stolen. Instead, he learned it had been towed and impounded. "Out of nowhere I received a call from a man who wanted to buy the Packard. It emerged it had been impounded at the request of the Queen Mother. She had to pass it every day, and complained that it reminded her of her late husband's funeral. The bill to recover the car was over £200, an absurdly large sum of money, but the buyer offered to pay the fee in return for ownership. I agreed, and resentfully dedicated 'My Generation' to the Queen Mother." And finally, in 1996, Peter was aboard a Concorde flight from London to New York. The plane emergency-landed in Halifax because of technical difficulties (intense shaking as he described it). Also on the airplane were Elton John and his partner David Furnish. Townshend remarked how calm he remained through the event, but then wrote: "I wanted to commiserate with Elton about a hysterical woman who'd started screaming (during the bumpy flight). 'That was me, darling,' Elton confessed." I highly recommend "Who I Am" to anyone who enjoys reading about the same era of culture and music. I'd rank Pete Townshend's book in the top five of all-time best autobiographies I've ever read (and I've read plenty of them).

Where, O, where to begin here? A young boy in Dallas, Texas, willing to work all afternoon in the hot sun simply to escape domestic discord. A young boy in Dallas at 13 taking poetry seriously to create his own space no one else could share without real love. That was this little "kid", a stubborn boy in free fall, picking weeds out of the St. Augustine front lawn, sweating bullets, listening to "Magic Bus" and "I Can See For Miles" through the old-time intercom. Those sounds resonated. Later, as I grew into awareness, I realized Townshend is perhaps the best rock guitarist ever. Techinque--check! Songwriting--check! Lyrics--check! A beautiful person--check! I still listen to Pete Townshend. I still laugh at Keith Moon driving a luxury car into a Holiday Inn swimming pool--that about says it all. I also admired Daltrey's softer albums, albums with which I related. I suffer from Bipolar, and had to live through Hell before the cure came. As did Pete Townshend. This is one of the better autobiographies by British musicians I have read. Townshend on the Board of Faber? Yeah buddy! Those street smarts paid off. I am glad Pete Townsend, almost a father figure for me when daddy was missing. and I still cry when I hear "Behind Blue Eyes", have been homeless, love Marianne Faithful, and yelled "Patti Smith!" from the nosebleed section of the big theater in Grand Prairie, Texas, when Dylan, Haggard and Sexton came to town. The folks in front of me seemed to have little comic question marks over their heads at that, but yes, because of Pete Townshend, I learned how to write songs. I wrote a poem about Eel Pie Island, Arthur Brown's Elton John intervention, and being an ally, gay rights in Dallas, a really backwards city that seemed to want to capture Townshend when he came to the Majestic with his operas. Who's next? A big heart, a winking smiley face emoticon, and a big heart. Love reigns over me now. It took some getting there, but music like that of The Who indeed pulled me through when it was rough. If this was "The Price Is Right", I'd holler, "PETE TOWNSHEND! COME ON DOWN!" I honor this man, and I honor The Who, and will never stop listening no matter how hard the wingnuts try to put cotton in my ears. Rock on, Pete Townshend! Just bought "Life at Leeds", and cannot help but note how tasteful the playing is. True professionalism in this book. True professionals don't always need to be the leader of the pack. Rats for those gangsters! Very highly recommended for music fans. Townshend has the code of coolness in a very warm way.

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