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Title: Class a Member: A Story of the Jersey Shore Music Scene

Author: Gary Allen Shann

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Review by: David Allen



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Class A Member: A Story of the Jersey Shore Music Scene, is a factual account of a young man and an entire generation's coming of age; the book is truly a treasure. Gary Shann's loving narrative of his teenage years on the Jersey Shore between 1966-1969 will pluck many heartstrings in its tuneful evocation of a period in our history and culture that, thanks to books like this, will never be forgotten.

Shann describes in exquisite detail the glorious and often painful turbulence of the time. This was the era of Vietnam and the era of an avalanche of music and poetry that still resounds in earphones and concert halls today.

What makes Shann's memoir particularly resonant is his personal experience as a teenager and a young man playing in a rock-n-roll band. Shann's encyclopedic grasp of the artists, recordings and concert venues of the day make for evocative and bone tingling reading. This is a scholarly work with a heart of gold! Whoever heard of a tribute to rock n roll with 10 pages of references and citations and many more pages of archeologically sound museum-quality photographs and archives? How great!

Shann quotes Springsteen who quotes other musicians before him: *You've got to pay to play*. In both the literal and metaphorical sense! The reader becomes Gary Shann's roadie, with front and backstage views of the arsenal of amplifiers, guitars and other equipment integral to the sound and success of a venue. Musicians and non-musicians alike will relish Shann's lifetime romance with the props and essentials of the band experience. Shann's readers accompany him to the exciting shows at the Upstage Club in Asbury Park and to the brash beginnings of the rock-n-roll cyclone at the Fillmore East. There is a wealth of information and memory in this book; whether you experienced the music first-hand, or only heard about it later, *Class A Member* keeps you glued to the page.

To his credit, the author never departs from a tone of honesty, true faith, and humility. There is none of the posing and non-essentials that often accompany chronicles of rock-n-roll. This book is a sweet reminiscence of a bold and artistically honest time in our history.