



## The Autobiography of Donovan: The Hurdy Gurdy Man

*By Donovan Leitch*

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### The Autobiography of Donovan: The Hurdy Gurdy Man By Donovan Leitch

Donovan's autobiography charts his life from a post-war, Glaswegian childhood to the height of an international career as one of the leading figures of the 1960's music scene. Always feeling like an outsider, he found relief through music and poetry. The book reveals how he came to be influenced by Buddhist teachings, and the music of Woody Guthrie and Joan Baez. The book explores the significance of falling deeply in love with the woman who was to become his muse, and the profound sense of loss he felt when their relationship came to an end, and how the loss affected him both personally and creatively. A leader of the folk revival in both Britain and America, the book recounts how he rose to be an international star, releasing songs such as "Mellow Yellow" and "Catch the Wind", and his most successful album, "Sunshine Superman". Donovan is acknowledged as one of the most significant cultural icons of the 1960's. The book provides a frank account of his early experiments with drugs and his search for self. He reveals the story of how he developed friendships with Baez, Dylan and the Beatles, with whom he shared a spiritual sojourn to meditate with the Maharishi in India. Donovan's autobiography offers first-hand insights into his music and poetry, recollects his rise to fame and the way in which destiny was to play a hand by re-uniting him with the lost love of his life through a chance meeting.

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## The Autobiography of Donovan: The Hurdy Gurdy Man By Donovan Leitch Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #435331 in Books
- Published on: 2005-11-29
- Released on: 2005-11-29
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.50" h x 1.18" w x 6.28" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 304 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A folk rocker and early prince of flower power, Donovan (b. 1946) shares wistful memories of his youth growing up in bombed-out Glasgow, Scotland; rambling adolescence in England; and precipitous stardom at age 18. Early on, Donovan (who's known by his first name) contracted polio, leaving him lame. An art student, Donovan left home by 16 to wander with his lifelong friend Gypsy Dave and taught himself how to play guitar by mimicking the folk styles of the Carter Family, Doc Watson, Woody Guthrie and Ramblin' Jack Elliott, among others he credits. After appearances on the British TV show *Ready Steady Go!* in 1965, he landed a record contract, and *Catch the Wind* (with its Bob Dylanesque sound) rode the crest of the British Invasion. Fusing folk with jazz and metal, Donovan forged "Celtic rock," and in his recording sessions, engineered brilliantly by Mickie Most, he worked with all the happening musicians and even collaborated with the Beatles. Donovan toots his own horn, amiably. As he achieves in his music, Donovan writes his bohemian manifesto personably and earnestly, stopping short around 1970, when he reunited with muse Linda Lawrence and dropped out. Color photos not seen by PW. (Dec.)

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From [Booklist](#)

The quintessential flower-child musician begins his memoirs in the Scots of Glasgow, where he was born in 1946. Moving with his family to England, he changed his accent to conform to new surroundings. He heard Bill Haley and the Comets while still in Scotland, bought Buddy Holly records in England, and as a teenager turned to Joan Baez, Pete Seeger, and Woody Guthrie. At 16, he left home, hitchhiking to Cornwall to lead an itinerant life. Eventually settling in London, he made his first records, prided himself on being the Scottish Woody Guthrie, and enjoyed his first real success with the hit "Catch the Wind" and his first American tour. Anecdotal and name-dropping, he also discusses the British rock invasion of America, folk-rock, his first LSD trip, his drug bust in London, and a visit from a Paul McCartney armed with tunes that would eventually be "Eleanor Rigby" and "Yellow Submarine." In the late sixties, tired of it all, he walked away from the music business. A warm, gentle recollection of a turbulent time. *June Sawyers*

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### Review

"The Hurdy Man comes singing songs of love."

--*Vanity Fair*

"Touching, illuminating and frank."

--Janet Maslin, *New York Times*

"Flower power rises again."

--*New York Post*

"Donovan and his enduring charms and achievements are well revealed here."

--*The Washington Post*

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#### **Timothy Brown:**

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#### **Sandra McLean:**

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