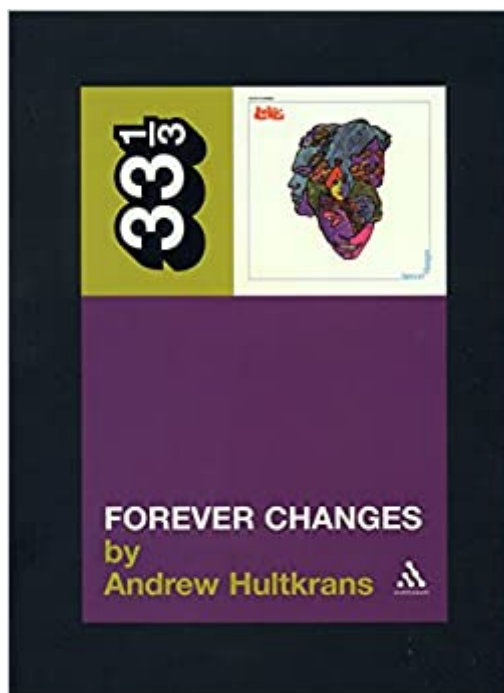


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Forever Changes (Thirty Three And A Third Series)



Synopsis

Conceived as the last testament of a charismatic recluse who believed he was about to die, 'Forever Changes' is one of the defining albums of an era. Here, Andrew Hultkrans explores the myriad depths of this bizarre and brilliant record. Charting bohemian Los Angeles' descent into chaos at the end of the '60s, he teases out the literary and mystical influences behind Arthur Lee's lyrics, and argues that Lee was both inspired and burdened by a powerful prophetic urge. EXCERPT 'Forever Changes' may be thirty-six years old at the time of this writing, but its hermetic fusion of the personal and the political feels more relevant than ever. It speaks to the present in ways that, say, a Jefferson Airplane record never could, whatever the parallels between the late '60s and our contemporary morass. For unlike most rock musicians of his time, Arthur Lee was one member of the '60s counterculture who didn't buy flower-power wholesale, who intuitively understood that letting the sunshine in wouldn't instantly vaporize the world's (or his own) dark stuff. For him, the glittering surface of the Age of Aquarius obscured an undertow of impending doom.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"I love a critic who doesn't profess to be infallible, so Andrew Hultkrans immediately won me over by admitting he was previously "absolutely, laughably wrong" about Forever Changes. Hultkrans takes the record very, very seriously; accordingly, his book is a reverential, fastidious tome." — Seattle Weekly
This former Bookforum editor openly identifies with this most apocalyptic of 60s El

Lay albums, but he keeps his head in the game, fearlessly splashing around in lead Love-r Arthur Lee's disturbed psyche. He's sharp on the lyrics (maybe too sharp, given Lee's confused state) and slightly less so on the music, but he's killer on context: the album's fear, its overwhelming strangeness, its death-drive in a culture that only Lee knew was suffused with it. A-" â "Austin American-Statesman, 10/17/04

"Thirty Three and a Third" is a new series of short books about critically acclaimed and much-loved albums of the last 40 years. The authors provide fresh, original perspectives – often through their access to and relationships with the key figures involved in the recording of these albums. By turns obsessive, passionate, creative, and informed, the books in this series demonstrate many different ways of writing about music. What binds the series together, and what brings it to life, is that all of the authors – musicians, broadcasters, scholars, and writers – are huge fans of the album they have chosen.

Love's Forever Changes, often over shadowed by Sgt. Pepper, is one the greatest albums most people have never heard of. The best way to describe Forever Changes is Hauntly Beauty. A complex work that demands to listen to over and over.Hultkrans work sometimes reads like a PhD thesis. It can become over reaching in its analysis. Sometime a cigar is just a cigar. Where this book really shines is to put Forever Changes into the context of its time. The "Summer Of Love" give way to the Manson Family and the death of the Hippy.

Make no mistake about it, Love's Forever Changes is an album deserving of intellectual study. Not many albums are. With all the cerebral (and pseudo-cerebral) literary comparisons undertaken with Bob Dylan and Jim Morrison lyrics, it's clear that Arthur Lee should receive some of the same treatment.Hultkrans' enthusiasm is obvious, but his analyses are often overwrought. On the positive side, a number of worthy sources and ideas are scattered throughout this short book. Hultkrans discusses how "Alone Again Or," though written by Brian MacLean, was in line with some hermetic tendencies exhibited by Lee. Also, note the "count me out" line and mysterious double-words in Lee's "The Red Telephone," as well as the "locked in my armor" and "secrets are your own" lyrics in Lee's "Andmoreagain." The strain of social alienation is apparent in many of the songs.Another interesting area explored by Hultkrans was prophesy the idea of the bard (or even a preacher) gazing over the city, warning others in cryptic fashion of

the impending doom. The third verse of "A House Is Not A Motel" can certainly be interpreted along those lines. Lee lived at the top of Lookout Mountain in 1967, and with the chilling opening lines of "The Red Telephone," one could imagine Lee perched in deep thought, distraught with his surroundings. On the other hand, I don't believe Arthur Lee actually studied Gnosticism. Hultkrans would have been better off making it clear that he was drawing comparisons in his analysis "between Lee's vision and some of these literary traditions, NOT stating how Lee actually was inspired. Additionally, MacLean's contributions are glossed over. "Alone Again Or" is analyzed, but I don't recall "Old Man" receiving the same treatment. While not thematically in line with concepts explored by Hultkrans, "Old Man" is a strong song, and part of the album. Ultimately, it's best to view this as a chaotic book of ideas. There are wild tangents and many of the connections are dubious, but they at least make the reader think. Unfortunately, there is no bibliography, not much information on what actually inspired the songwriting, and absolutely nothing about how the album was recorded from a technical standpoint. This makes the book something of an anomaly in the 33 and a third series. Despite this, I recommend the book to readers not exclusively interested in the technical aspects of recording. That's probably most people who are reading this, frankly, though this book is far from the final word on *Forever Changes*.

Every book in this series is a gamble. Some (Ween's "Chocolate And Cheese", Slayer's "Reign In Blood") are detailed accounts of what was going on with the band at the time of recording (recountings of the recording sessions, what the songs are about, etc.) Then there are those (Led Zeppelin's "4", Black Sabbath's "Master Of Reality") that are purely based on the author's interpretations of the album. For example of the latter, read my reviews of those two books (essentially, LZ4 is an over-analysis, and the Sabbath book is pure fiction that shouldn't belong in this series.) This book falls in-between, on the LZ and Sabbath side. The author goes overboard in providing an analysis of what Arthur Lee was or may have been thinking at the time he wrote these songs, and provides it within a context of the 60's and that decade's social and political upheaval. He also provides several extended essays linking the essays to various written works, and argues the links to the existential truth of the album. That's fine, but I already know this is a great album-that's why I bought the book. I wanted to know more about the making of it, and in that, this book fails miserably. No technical answers, no idea how many takes were required, no mention of how many days the band spent in the studio.

Try reading "Forever Changes: Arthur Lee and the Book Of Love" - The Authorized Biography of Arthur Lee by John Einarson. While interesting, "Forever Changes (Thirty Three and a Third)" is at times a very personal and somewhat pretentious interpretation of Arthur Lee's possible inspiration for Forever Changes lyrics.

I've been having a great time reading the books in Continuum's 33-1/3 series. They're intelligent but not pompous, easily digested in a single sitting given their 100-page length. Of those I've looked at, I have to say this one on Love's Forever Changes is my favorite. Part of it is the exotic choice of subject---the original album remains a cult "nugget" of 60s rock, even after its 2002 reissue and Arthur Lee's recent tours. But Andrew Hultkrans' thesis that Lee is a "crank prophet" whose 67 opus was an apocalyptic portent of what would come two years later with the Manson murders, Altamont, and the overall collapse of the 60s youth culture is fascinating and informative. The range of scholarly reference here is impressive; you'd expect a mention or two of Greil Marcus, but I give the author props for associating Arthur Lee with Sacvan Bercovitch's work on the jeremiad tradition. I also found the interviews and histories excerpted refreshingly new; although Todd Gitlin's *The 60s* is well-known, Barney Hoskyn's *Waiting for the Sun* isn't, though it deserves to be. Maybe the ominousness of the Summer of Love that Arthur tapped into is best epitomized by the fact that a future Manson family murderer, Bobby Beausoleil, tried out as the group's rhythm guitarist. That fact alone seems to confirm a malevolent design to fate. The book made me do what good books on music should: it made me want to study the music more. I've been reading and listening at the same time, in fact.

I enjoyed this addition to the series but it focused too much on the lyrics.

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