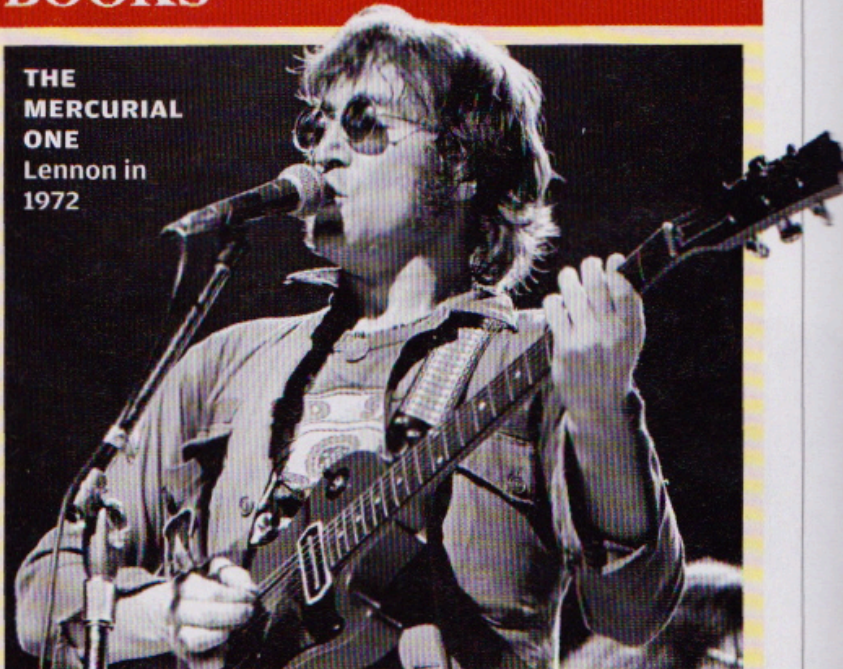


BOOKS

THE
MERCURIAL
ONE
Lennon in
1972



Gimme Some Truth

New bio is the most reliable guide yet to
Lennon's messy life and musical genius



Lennon ★★★★★¹/₂

By **Tim Riley** *Hyperion*

At this point, any book about John Lennon is also, necessarily, about the truckload of previous Lennon bios. Tim Riley's mission seems in part to be to supplant Albert Goldman's notorious *The Lives of John Lennon*, which Riley has called "hysterically tabloid." *Lennon: The Man, the Myth, the Music - The Definitive Life*, Riley's

784-page brick of a biography, does this handily, and a lot more.

This is no exercise in hero worship: Lennon was a complex man haunted by traumas, including an incident when his parents asked him, at age five, to choose between them (he ultimately lost them both). Riley draws these early years vividly, making connections to Lennon's relationships with friends (Stu Sutcliffe, whom Lennon once beat bloody), lovers (Yoko Ono, whom he called "Mother") and those in between (Brian Epstein, one of numerous father figures). What prevents this psychoanalysis from becoming insufferable is Riley's journalistic rigor. He parses contradictory data, confirming and debunking. It can get wonky - you may not care that the exact length of a holiday Lennon took with his dad in 1946 "is in dispute." But the result comes off as the most reliable, least star-struck volume on Lennon to date.

Riley is a keen music critic, and his analysis here is what distinguishes this bio. *Sgt. Pepper's* "Good Morning Good Morning" is "a dystopian cornflake jingle"; "That Means a Lot" is a "miraculous arc of feeling" in which "the swells in the middle eight expand in the fade-out as McCartney hints at 'Hey Jude' vocal glories." He is also a superb aggregator (essential in our data-surplus era), culling the best bits from the sagging shelves of Beatlesology. Amplifying, humanizing, *Lennon* helps you hear the man's music anew - and given its omnipresence, that's pretty amazing.

WILL HERMES