



Just Between You and Me: A Memoir. By Myles Goodwyn. Toronto, Ontario: Harper Collins, 2016. 379 pp. ISBN 978-1-44344-670-9.

Reviewed by: David Montgomery, York University Libraries

The story arc of any rock memoir is predictable. It begins or ends with substance abuse, there are troubled family relationships, extra-marital affairs, betrayals, friends left behind, “musical differences,” management conflicts, and of course, as in any *bildungsroman* the vicissitude of fortune. The guitar slinger turned raconteur is duty-bound to caution that even modest fame comes at a price, that “rock and roll is a vicious game.” Like the music, the memoir embraces the cliché. On his third go at rehab, April Wine frontman Myles Goodwyn reflects, “Things come in threes” (341).

Goodwyn tells us that the goal of *his* unvarnished memoir was to set the record straight, and not to settle old scores. Neither as beloved as Rush, nor as emblematic as The Tragically Hip, April Wine was nonetheless quintessentially Canadian. With roots in the Maritimes and Quebec, the band regularly toured Ontario rock circuits in the early 1970s, expanding its range to the rest of Canada by the end of the decade. It peaked in the early 1980s, with modest success in England and the US, and garnered worldwide sales of 20 million albums—a solid career. Yet, despite winning several Juno awards and in 2010 being inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame, April Wine may also be a candidate for a quick fade. While songs such as “Weeping Widow,” “Oowatanite,” and “Roller” may resonate with the home demographic, future induction into Cleveland’s Rock & Roll Hall of Fame is unlikely.

There are other reasons why the last rung of fame may have eluded April Wine. Once the group’s management determined that Goodwyn lacked the looks for rock stardom, it opted for a distinctive logo to carry the brand. As a consequence, it was not Myles Goodwyn the star but April Wine the band, and the band’s name, intending to signal “original” or “new,” may have been ill-suited to the US market. Furthermore, like most of Canada’s early 1970s hard rock bands, April Wine earned its success through exhaustive regional touring. The promotion agencies that dominated these areas, like Montreal’s Donald K. Donald Productions, were reluctant to cross the border into territory where exposure was limited and a return on investment far from guaranteed.

Goodwyn’s personal life has been neither easy nor free of tragedy. After his mother’s death in 1959, the guitar was his salvation. Though his hard-working father grew remote, and other family challenges came and went, his childhood was admittedly unremarkable. Nova Scotia’s Hank Snow was a primary



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influence, along with other leading country figures, such as Hank Williams, Patsy Cline and Jimmie Rodgers. Goodwyn picked up chords from radio and television, and occasional trips to Dartmouth festivals with his family. His musical aspirations changed on seeing Elvis and the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show. In an adolescence that veered from obsession to delinquency, Goodwyn writes of his holding a variety of jobs while playing in a wide variety of local bands, but also of occasionally stealing cars. In the fall of 1969, he and Jim Henman formed April Wine, and the following year left Nova Scotia for Montreal, where Donald Tarlton agreed to represent the band.

During the early 1970s, the band went through a number of personnel changes with Goodwyn the only constant. The band that trod the boards in high schools, bars, and small halls in the early- to mid-1970s was not the April Wine that served as camouflage for the Rolling Stones' infamous shows at the El Mocambo in 1977, and appeared on the band's *Live at the El Mocambo* (1977). Nor was it the polished triple-guitar outfit that recorded "Roller" in 1979 at the now defunct but once internationally famous Le Studio, in Morin Heights. Goodwyn addresses these personnel changes, but his version of events requires one to read between the lines.

Goodwyn's memoir includes enough requisite "Spinal Tap" moments to engage the fan, from exploding cannons to miscues with border guards. Occasional reflections on the music business in Canada, such as the impact of CRTC regulations, seem perfunctory. Music writer and journalist Martin Melhuish, known for his work on Canadian rock, is acknowledged as an advisor to the author but passages of "historical" relevance feel like disingenuous insertions. This is unfortunate, as these are things we want to know. Greater detail might have helped lend insight into financial and marketing strategies, or demographic targets, and more generally of the band's relationship with the Donald K. Donald agency and Aquarius Records. Goodwyn does occasionally question his record company's wisdom, particularly regarding its lack of support in the US market. Readers might suspect that management had a bigger influence on the direction of the band than Goodwyn would like to admit.

The book could have used closer editing to reduce repetition, but Goodwyn's personable, even folksy, writing style works well. Reflections on his failed marriages and the trials of family life are not burdened with a pedantic authorial voice. Fans may appreciate Goodwyn's modesty, perseverance, and day-to-day struggles. Music and concert life are, after all, shared experiences. If *Just Between You and Me* is not an altogether brilliant account of 1970s rock, it is a story that will be relevant to an aging blue-collar audience. Taken with such other works as Dave Bidini's *On a Cold Road* (1998) or Bruce McDonald's mockumentary film *Hard Core Logo* (1996), Goodwyn's memoir corroborates the unique in Canada's rock experience.

David Montgomery
York University Libraries