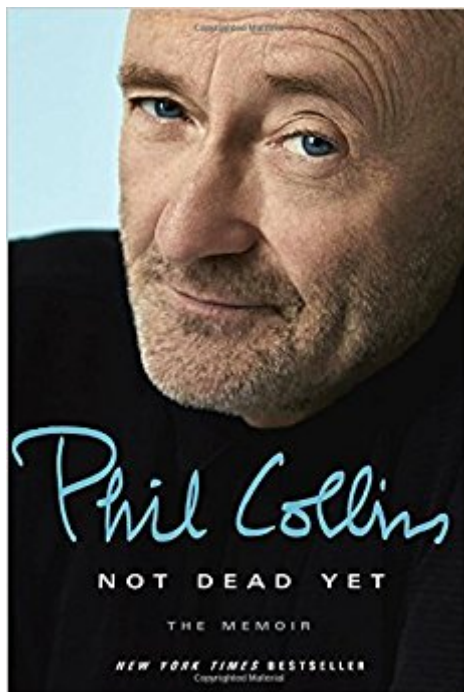


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Not Dead Yet: The Memoir



Synopsis

Phil Collins pulls no punches about himself, his life, or the ecstasy and heartbreak that has inspired his music. In his much-awaited memoir, *Not Dead Yet*, he tells the story of his epic career, with an auspicious debut at age 11 in a crowd shot from the Beatles' legendary film *A Hard Day's Night*. A drummer since almost before he could walk, Collins received on the job training in the seedy, thrilling bars and clubs of 1960s swinging London before finally landing the drum seat in Genesis. Soon, he would step into the spotlight on vocals after the departure of Peter Gabriel and begin to stockpile the songs that would rocket him to international fame with the release of *Face Value* and *In the Air Tonight*. • Whether he's recalling jamming with Eric Clapton and Robert Plant, pulling together a big band fronted by Tony Bennett, or writing the music for Disney's smash-hit animated *Tarzan*, Collins's storytelling chops never waver. And of course he answers the pressing question on everyone's mind: just what does *Sussudio* mean? • *Not Dead Yet* is Phil Collins's candid, witty, unvarnished story of the songs and shows, the hits and pans, his marriages and divorces, the ascents to the top of the charts and into the tabloid headlines. As one of only three musicians to sell 100 million records both in a group and as a solo artist, Collins breathes rare air, but has never lost his touch at crafting songs from the heart that touch listeners around the globe. That same touch is on magnificent display here, especially as he unfolds his harrowing descent into darkness after his "official" retirement in 2007, and the profound, enduring love that helped save him. This is Phil Collins as you've always known him, but also as you've never heard him before.

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Customer Reviews

Born in the United Kingdom, Phil Collins rose to fame as the drummer and frontman of Genesis, before establishing himself as a solo artist, and selling hundreds of millions of records throughout his career.

1Not Drowning but WavingOr: my beginnings, my childhood and how my relationship with my dad was a bit tidalWe think mums and dads know it all. But in fact theyâ™re making it up as they go along. Every day, busking it, winging it, putting on a braveâ™sometimes falseâ™face. Itâ™s something I suspect throughout my childhood, yet itâ™s only confirmed in adulthood, and only with a little help from the Other Side.One gray autumn evening in 1977, I go to see a medium. She lives in Victoria, central London, round the insalubrious back of Buckingham Palace, in a flat near the top of a tower block. Itâ™s no gypsy caravan, but I suppose it does mean sheâ™s nearer the heavens.I donâ™t have a particular affinity for spiritsâ™that will come much, much later, and be less an affinity than an addictionâ™but my wife, Andy, is somewhat that way inclined. My mum, too, is no stranger to the Ouija board. At our family home on Londonâ™s suburban western edges, my mum, nana and auntie, along with my so-called uncles Reg and Len, enjoyed many a happy late-fifties and early-sixties evening summoning the dearly departed from beyond the veil. Better that than the meager monochrome offerings flickering from the newfangled television set.The reason for my and Andyâ™s visit to this high-rise Madame Arcati: a naughty dog. Ben, our beautiful boxer, has a habit of dragging from under our bed a pile of electric blankets. Weâ™re holding on to these for our kidsâ™Joely, five, and Simon, oneâ™for when they stop wetting the bed and need a bit of extra warmth. It has not dawned on me that the folded electric blankets promise more than a toasty bedâ™bent filaments can break and catch fire. Maybe Ben knows this.Andy comes to the conclusion that thereâ™s a supernatural element to Benâ™s nightly ritual. Heâ™s probably not clairvoyant but thereâ™s clearly something we humans donâ™t know.At this time Iâ™m manically busy, touring with Genesisâ™weâ™ve released our album Wind & Wuthering and I have only recently taken over singing duties from Peter Gabriel. I am, accordingly, often an absent husband and father, so I feel perennially on the back foot when it comes to matters domestic and familial. I duly offer no opposition to this unorthodox course of action.So off to a medium we go. Into bustling Victoria, up in the tower-block elevator, a ring on the doorbell, small talk with the husband, whoâ™s watching Coronation Street. It couldnâ™t be any less spiritual. Finally he pulls himself away from the TV and gives me a nod: âœSheâ™ll see you now . . .â•Sheâ™s an ordinary-looking housewife, perched behind a small table. No sign of any other-worldly virtues. In

fact she appears totally normal, in a matter-of-fact way. This completely throws and somewhat disappoints me, and my skepticism now comes with a topspin of confusion, and just a shade of grumpiness. As Andy's I Ching readings have informed her that it's the spirits on my side of the family that are the dog-botherers, I draw the short straw and enter the chamber of the supernatural. Through gritted teeth I tell the medium about Ben's nightly antics. She nods gravely, closes her eyes, waits for a meaningful length of time, then finally replies, "It's your dad." "Pardon?" "Yes, it's your dad and he wants you to have a few things: his watch, his wallet, the family cricket bat. Do you want me to ask his spirit to speak through me? Then you could hear his voice. But sometimes the spirits don't want to leave and that becomes a bit awkward." I splutter a no. Communication with my father wasn't at its best when he was alive. Talking to him now, nearly five years after his death at Christmas 1972, via a middle-aged housewife in a disconcertingly drab domestic setting in a tower block in the heart of London, would just be weird. "Well, he says to give your mum some flowers, and to tell her he's sorry." Of course, being a fairly rational twenty-six-year-old who likes things to be down-to-earth and regimented "I am a drummer, after all" I should have discounted this as mumbo-jumbo con-artistry. But I agree that our dog habitually dragging electric blankets from beneath our bed is behavior possibly not of the mortal plain. On top of that, Madame Arcati has said some things about my dad that she couldn't possibly have known, not least that stuff about the cricket bat. That cricket bat has been part of the Collins clan's meager sports equipment for as long as I can remember. Outside the family, no one would know about it. I wouldn't say I'm convinced, but I am intrigued. Andy and I depart the anteroom of the afterlife and re-enter the real world. Back on terra firma I tell her the news. She replies with a look understood on both sides of the veil: "I told you so." The next day I phone my mum and relate the previous evening's events. She is blithely spirited, and unsurprised by both the message and the medium. "I bet he wants to give me flowers," she says, half laughing, half harrumphing. This is when she tells me everything. My dad, Greville Philip Austin Collins, was not a faithful husband to my mum, June Winifred Collins (née Strange). Having been recruited at the age of nineteen, he was a lifelong employee, like his father before him, of the London Assurance Company in the City of London. "Grev" had used his quotidian, bowler-hatted, nine-to-five suburban commuter's existence to maintain a secret life with an office girlfriend. Dad was not a particularly obvious heart-throb or lady's man. He was a little tubby round the middle, and his RAF mustache topped off his patchy head of hair. I got all my looks from my mum, clearly. But it seems that behind that mild-mannered insurance-man exterior lurked something more Lothario-shaped. Mum tells me about a particular incident. Alma Cole was a

lovely lady who worked with my mum in the toyshop she managed on behalf of a family friend. Alma was from the north of England and there was always a conspiratorial tone to whatever she said. She and my mum were close, and one day a slightly miffed Alma sniffed, 'I saw you with Grev in the car on Saturday and you didn't wave back to me.' 'I wasn't in the car with him on Saturday!'

The passenger, patently, was Dad's lady friend, being taken for a romantic spin in our black Austin A35. Now, nearly five years after Dad's passing, while I find it wonderful that my mum is confiding in me in this manner, hearing these revelations makes me simultaneously mad and sad. I now know that my parents' marriage didn't so much dissolve as fizzle out, partly due to my dad being, shall we say, distracted elsewhere. His infidelity was very much news to me. But why wouldn't it be? I was a very young boy back then and, to me, my parents seemed deliriously happy. Life at home had appeared normal and quite calm. Straightforward, simple. To my mind, Mum and Dad were happily in love for all their long married life. But I am very much the baby of the family, almost seven years younger than my sister, Carole, and nine years younger than my brother, Clive. Certain, grown-up aspects of home life would have gone straight over my head. Now, when I consider the facts before me this evening in 1977, I think I can divine an undercurrent of unrest in the house, something to which I was completely oblivious at the time. That said, perhaps I felt it in my water: I was a chronic bed-wetter to an embarrassingly old age. When I later relay this earth-shattering news to Clive, he gives it to me straight. All those sudden long walks I was taken on by my siblings? Those lazy, hazy strolls past the post-war prefab housing on Hounslow Heath with my brother and sister? Not the cheerfully nondescript norm of a simple late-fifties and early-sixties suburban English childhood. In fact I was being unwittingly complicit in the papering over of cracks. My father acting a little fast and loose with his marriage vows is something I still have trouble coming to terms with. His disregard for my mum's feelings is beyond me. And before anyone steps forward to state, 'That's a bit rich coming from you, Collins,' let the record show: I hear what you're saying. I am disappointed that I have been married three times. I'm even more disappointed that I have been divorced three times. I am considerably less bothered by the fact that these resulted in settlements with my ex-wives to the order of £42 million. Nor am I fussed that those sums were widely reported and are widely known. In this day and age, nothing is private anymore. The internet has seen to that. Additionally, while three divorces might seem to suggest a casual attitude toward the whole idea of marriage, this couldn't be further from the truth. I'm a romantic who believes, hopes, that the union of marriage is something to cherish and last. Yet certainly that trio of divorces demonstrates a failure to coexist happily and to understand my partners. It suggests a failure to become, and to stay, a family. It shows failure, full stop. Over the

decades I've done my diligent best to make every aspect of my life, personal and professional, work like clockwork although too often, I have to acknowledge that my best just hasn't been good enough. Still, I know what's normal is in my DNA; I grew up with it, or at least the semblance thereof, in the London suburbs and that's what I strove for while trying to make a living playing music. I have endeavored to be honest with all my children about my personal history. It involves them. It affects them. They live with the consequences of my actions, inactions and reactions every day of their lives. I try to be as straight and forthright as it's possible to be. I will do the same throughout this story, even in the parts where I don't exactly come out smelling of roses. As a drummer I'm used to giving it some stick. I've had to become used to taking some stick, too. However, to return to my mum: her stoicism, strength and humor in the face of my dad's straying (to use that very English word) says a lot about a wartime generation who would go through thick and thin to maintain their marriage commitments. It's something we all could learn from, myself very much included. All that said: when I consider my childhood from the vantage point of my advanced age, perhaps close-to-the-bone emotional upset and turmoil seeped into my young self, without my even knowing it. I was born in Putney Maternity Hospital, southwest London, on January 30, 1951, a belated and by all accounts surprise third child to June and Grev Collins. Apparently Mum initially entered West Middlesex Hospital to have me, but they weren't very nice to her, so she crossed her legs, left and headed to Putney. I was the first London child, as both Carole and Clive had been born in Weston-super-Mare after the entire family had been relocated there by London Assurance prior to the Blitz. Carole was not best pleased by my birth. She'd wanted a girl. Clive, though, was over the moon finally, a little brother to play football with, wrestle with and, when all that got a bit boring, to pin down and torture with his smelly socks. With Mum and Dad aged thirty-seven and forty-five respectively, my arrival made them, for the times, old parents. This didn't bother my mum in the slightest. She remained a generous and loving woman her entire life, without a bad word for anybody until the day she died on her birthday in 2011, aged ninety-eight. That said, she did once call a London policeman a dickhead when he chastised her for driving in a bus lane. Dad, born in 1907, came from then-fashionable Isleworth, a riverside neighborhood on London's western edges. His family home was big, dark, musty, quite imposing, not a little scary. Ditto his relatives. I have no recollection of my paternal grandfather, a time-served London Assurance man just like his son would become. But I do have vivid memories of Grandma. She was warm, embracing and very patient with me, but seemed stuck in the Victorian period, and as if to prove it was permanently clad in long black dresses. Maybe she was still mourning Prince Albert, too. She and I were very close. I spent a lot of time in her constantly

damp below-stairs rooms, watching her paint watercolors of boats and the river, an enthusiasm I've inherited. Dad's sister, Auntie Joey, was a formidable woman, armed with a cigarette holder and a rough throaty voice, a little like the baddie in Disney's *The Rescuers*: "Dahling, doooo come in . . ." Her husband, Uncle Johnny, was also a case. He had a monocle and always wore heavy tweed suits, another Collins from the land that the twentieth century forgot. Family history has it that a couple of Dad's cousins had been incarcerated by the Japanese in the notorious Changi Prison in Singapore. Great store was put by them "they were war heroes, men who survived the pitiless Far East campaign. Another cousin was apparently the chap who first brought launderettes to England. In Dad's family's eyes, they were all, each of them, somebody." Or, in other words, toffs. H. G. Wells was said to be a regular caller on the Collins household. Clearly Dad's family formed his attitudes, not to mention his working life "although after he died I discovered that he had tried to dodge conscription into London Assurance by running away to become a merchant seaman. But the ocean-going rebellion was short-lived and he was told to snap out of it, pull himself together and fall in line under the insurance-salesman yoke imposed by his own father. Conformity was the order of the day. With this in mind, it could be suggested that Dad was a little bit jealous of the freedom the sixties offered Clive, Carole and myself in our chosen fields: cartoonist, ice skater, musician. Call them proper jobs? Dad didn't. There's little proof that Grev Collins ever got used to the twentieth century. When North Sea gas came on stream and all the boilers in the U.K. were converted, Dad tried to bribe the Gas Board to leave us out of the conversions, convinced that somewhere there was a gasholder that would provide fuel just for the Collins family.

Phil Collins is a curious case. Like his fellow former Genesis bandmate, Steve Hackett, he is grossly underrecognized for his talent and vast contributions to rock music. Unlike Steve Hackett, he is an A++-list star whose name and music is known by nearly all, young and old. Yet, when you ask the average person who Phil Collins is, the association is usually one of his smaltzy ballads or, perhaps as part of Patrick Bateman's 'American Psycho' threesome soundtrack. In a fate arguably worse than Hackett's relative anonymity, he is quite well known - but as a PUNCHLINE. Many people don't even know he was a drummer (and one of the very best in the world, at that!) "Not Dead Yet" is a valiant attempt by Phil to put his reputation back in a proper, respectable light. His resume, achievements and experiences are mindblowing. Understandably, he would like us to remember him thus. After all, he has worked very, VERY hard to earn these things, as will become quite apparent to the reader early on. Phil Collins is no slouch and has an incredible work ethic. As a

drummer alone, he has influenced MULTITUDES of musicians, from Neil Peart to Vinnie Paul to Kanye West to Alex Van Halen to Jason Bonham to Mike Portnoy and on and on and on. So if it seems like he is being a bit "braggy" at times, remember where he is coming from and how few people outside the musical sphere have really acknowledged him for his accomplishments. Collins sprinkles plenty of humor and hilarious anecdotes throughout 'Not Dead Yet,' creating a seamless, entertaining journey from his childhood to early career in Genesis to '80s/'90s superstardom to his more recent struggles for the reader that's both informative and bittersweet. No matter how you feel about Phil when you pick up the book, you are almost guaranteed to like him when you finish. There are NO boring moments. The book is written in a witty, breezy yet informative style and is quite hard to put down. It is easy to see why so many musicians from so many backgrounds (from Brian Eno to Tommy Bolin to Sting to Adele to Eric Clapton to Robert Plant + so so many others) wanted to work with him. In addition to his talent, he has an affable charm, a quick wit and a very open mind with regards to music. He has the ability to laugh at himself and some of his best-known blunders (such as the 1985 Live Aid Led Zeppelin reunion debacle, which he will give a through account of). At the same time, Phil Collins is a formidable perfectionist, perhaps harder on himself than any critic could ever be. He takes his job as a musician very seriously, and you can tell that any missteps such as the Led Zep incident eat at him tremendously. For instance, his finger slips on a piano key during his Live Aid performance of "Against All Odds," which he describes as a "bum note that's heard around the world." But if you YouTube the performance, this "clanger," while perceptible, (especially given his brief 'oh sh!t!' smirk immediately after), is actually pretty subtle and would be easy to miss if you weren't actively listening for it. The performance is positively stunning overall, especially vocally. Another aspect of the book I really liked is that Phil focuses more on his musical career than on his personal life. Many musicians gloss over the actual nuts and bolts of their craft in favor of maximizing the salacious "sex, drugs & rock'n'roll" bits for gossip-inclined readers, but Phil is a musician first and foremost. Because he is such an entertaining narrator, this is by no means boring (I split my sides at the mental image of PC stripping down to his "graying Y-fronts" and diving into Peter Gabriel's parents' fancy swimming pool during his 1970 Genesis audition). Even if you already know everything about his career, you are sure to love the great stories he has to tell along the way. I highly, HIGHLY recommend this book to anyone. Regardless of whether you are a Phil Collins fan or not, you are sure to love his story and gain new respect for this man, his career, and the multitudes of musicians he has touched.

Phil Collins is not afraid of the truth, even if, as he states, it's HIS truth. This engaging read is his

story in his words. He tells it honestly. I found the tale fascinating. It was sometimes difficult to follow the story line because he knew/knows everyone and he knew them before they became who they are today. So the story can bounce around a bit. But that doesn't make it any less readable. He is a true star and this book is worth the time spent reading it.

I really liked Phil Collins up until he started becoming real commercialized but even some of his commercial music was excellent. But a lot of it was crap too. But the thing is great about this is that he comes across such a regular, nice and down to earth guy which I think he is. He never got caught up into the star making machinery and I feel he treats and treated people with respect. So if you're a Genesis fan which I was (at least up until *foxtrot* and selling *England By the Pound*) you'll enjoy this book a LOT. And even though I didn't like a lot of the stuff on Phil Collins as a solo artist especially his pathetic attempt to cover *GROOVY KIND OF LOVE* which was really hard to listen to, (the beginning of the end of my appreciation of his musical talent) I still found this book to be VERY entertaining if just from a human standpoint - One of the better books on rock music celebrities I have EVER read. Pick it up.

I've always like Genesis and Phil. As a musician I can't say they were my all time favorites, but they turned out a lot of good work, both together and apart. I did like the Genesis live show as well. His story is a very human one, told from the viewpoint of an ordinary person having an extraordinary experience. He never seemed to lose "being Phil", except in the darker periods of his life. I really enjoyed this book. Being his age, his journey through the decades seem a bit of a "Forest Gump" thing, as I recall some of his public events. And it must be very gratifying to him to be able to perform again, with his young son playing drums. Good job old bean.

As a Genesis fan since the early 1970s, I was interested to read Phil's book. Genesis, and particularly Phil Collins, have often been treated poorly by the music press over many decades. In the early days of Genesis, they were ridiculed for their relatively unusual style and their talent and superb musicianship was ignored by critics. For their fans, there was nothing better. When their music became more conventional, they were again ridiculed for being too "pop". Phil Collins took considerable heat along the way. His superb drumming was evident throughout the decades with Genesis, his solo work, and if there was any doubt, listen to *Brand X*. His singing and stage charisma, although different than that of Peter Gabriel, was excellent and enabled ongoing access to this great music. The book itself was very enjoyable for fans like myself and touched on many

aspects of the entertainment world. Music, theater, movies etc....In addition, his personal relationships were entertaining and often amusing-such as his early days with Genesis and humorous stories about George Harrison. Hearing the personal stories about many icons in the music field and related fields made me feel that overall this was a really nice memoir. Lastly, although I have never met Phil Collins, he met my young son in the lobby of the Broadway theater where Tarzan was being performed. My son approached him and said "my dad loves your music". Phil was kind and gracious and gave him a hug of thanks. Thanks to Phil Collins for sharing his stories!

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