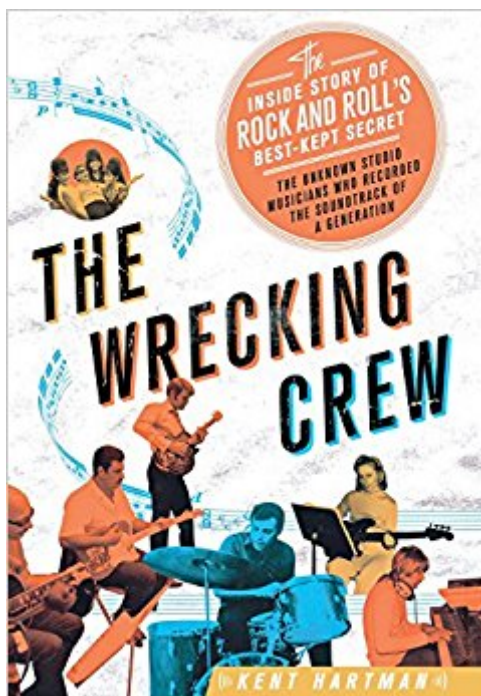


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# The Wrecking Crew: The Inside Story Of Rock And Roll's Best-Kept Secret



## Synopsis

Winner of the Oregon Book Award for General Nonfiction and Los Angeles Times bestseller "It makes good music sound better."-Janet Maslin in The New York Times "A fascinating look into the West Coast recording studio scene of the '60s and the inside story of the music you heard on the radio. If you always assumed the musicians you listened to were the same people you saw onstage, you are in for a big surprise!"-Dusty Street, host of Classic Vinyl on Sirius XM Satellite Radio If you were a fan of popular music in the 1960s and early '70s, you were a fan of the Wrecking Crew-whether you knew it or not. On hit record after hit record by everyone from the Byrds, the Beach Boys, and the Monkees to the Grass Roots, the 5th Dimension, Sonny & Cher, and Simon & Garfunkel, this collection of West Coast studio musicians from diverse backgrounds established themselves in Los Angeles, California as the driving sound of pop music-sometimes over the objection of actual band members forced to make way for Wrecking Crew members. Industry insider Kent Hartman tells the dramatic, definitive story of the musicians who forged a reputation throughout the business as the secret weapons behind the top recording stars. Mining invaluable interviews, the author follows the careers of such session masters as drummer Hal Blaine and keyboardist Larry Knechtel, as well as trailblazing bassist Carol Kaye-the only female in the bunch-who went on to play in thousands of recording sessions in this rock history. Readers will discover the Wrecking Crew members who would forge careers in their own right, including Glen Campbell and Leon Russell, and learn of the relationship between the Crew and such legends as Phil Spector and Jimmy Webb. Hartman also takes us inside the studio for the legendary sessions that gave us Pet Sounds, Bridge Over Troubled Water, and the rock classic "Layla," which Wrecking Crew drummer Jim Gordon cowrote with Eric Clapton for Derek and the Dominos. And the author recounts priceless scenes such as Mike Nesmith of the Monkees facing off with studio head Don Kirshner, Grass Roots lead guitarist (and future star of The Office) Creed Bratton getting fired from the group, and Michel Rubini unseating Frank Sinatra's pianist for the session in which the iconic singer improvised the hit-making ending to "Strangers in the Night." The Wrecking Crew tells the collective, behind-the-scenes stories of the artists who dominated Top 40 radio during the most exciting time in American popular culture.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“It makes good music sound better.”  
— Janet Maslin in The New York Times  
“Hartman’s book is a great tour through the California music scene of the 60s and 70s and a great introduction to how the music business functioned back then. This story has all the makings of a great HBO series.”  
— The Hollywood Reporter  
“A sweet and wistful meditation on the early days of the music business, full of little gems and wonders fit for serious music fans and a commendable, long-overdue tribute to the legendary Wrecking Crew - the ridiculously talented, go-to guys behind so many hits. This book will make your head spin.”  
— Shirley Manson, lead singer, Garbage  
“I’ve been in the music business for over forty years and I didn’t know any of this! The Wrecking Crew is a total page-turner. I couldn’t put it down. Kent Hartman is one gifted storyteller.”  
— John Kosh, three-time Grammy-winning art director and legendary album cover designer of Abbey Road, Who’s Next, and Hotel California  
“Hartman makes a compelling case for the skill of his subjects, who often fabricated the crucial hooks that brought their clients fame. Some chapters, such as one about the recording of “Bridge Over Troubled Water,” are rich in fly-on-the-wall detail.”  
— Kirkus  
“Is Larry Knechtel one of your favorite 1960s musicians? How about Hal Blaine? Carol Kaye? Oh yes they are. These three were part of The Wrecking Crew, a group of brilliant performers who supplied the music for many of the biggest hits during the blazing high noon of American rock. But nobody knew. Until now, that is, because Kent Hartman has at last written, with a verve and enthusiasm underpinned by scrupulous research, rock’s great missing chapter.”  
— Richard Snow, former editor-in-chief of American Heritage, author of A Measureless Peril  
“Turns out the heart of rock and roll isn’t Cleveland after all. It’s the Wrecking Crew. Kent Hartman’s behind the scenes look at the early days of rock turns much of

what we thought we knew about popular music upside down. So many secrets revealed. You won't think about artists such as The Beach Boys, The Mamas & the Papas, or Simon and Garfunkel quite the same. Mr. Hartman's book should go platinum.

— Larry Colton, author of *No Ordinary Joes*, *Counting Coup* and *Goat Brothers*, and founder of the Wordstock literary festival

— "A fascinating look into the West Coast recording studio scene of the 60s and the inside story of the music you heard on the radio. If you always assumed the musicians you listened to were the same people you saw on stage, you are in for a big surprise!"

— Dusty Street, legendary radio air talent (KMPX, KSAN, KROQ) and current host of "Classic Vinyl," broadcast live around the world from the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame on Sirius/XM

— "From 1962 to 1975, one group of studio players, the Wrecking Crew, provided the tracks for records as various as 'He's a Rebel,' 'Surfer Girl,' 'California Dreamin',' 'MacArthur Park,' 'Classical Gas,' and 'Bridge over Troubled Water.'" Industry insider Hartman opens our eyes to this fascinating group of musicians, tracing the careers of three members of this group--Glen Campbell, Carol Smith, Hal Blaine--who shared little more than an innate inner drive, musical talent, and a work ethic shaped by grinding poverty. Campbell, for example, lit out on the road when he was 13 to play guitar. Eight years later, Campbell joined the Champs, whose "Limbo Rock" Chubby Checker would soon record as "The Twist." In 1962, Phil Spector gathered Campbell, Smith, Blaine, Billy Strange, Bill Pitman, and seven other highly skilled session musicians to lay down the tracks for "Zip-a-Dee-Do-Dah," added the voices of Bob B. Soxx and the Blue Jeans, and a #1 record and the Wrecking Crew were born. Hartman also traces the work of later members of the Crew such as Leon Russell, Larry Knechtel, and Jim Gordon, as well as the successful solo careers of Campbell and Russell. Hartman's fast-paced tale offers dazzling insights into a little known chapter of rock and roll history.

— Publishers Weekly

— "In Los Angeles in 1960s-70s, if you wanted to record a chart-topping track or album, you called in the crack session musicians collectively known as the Wrecking Crew. Consisting of artists unknown outside the music industry, like drummer Hal Blaine and bass player Carol Kaye, as well as those who would go on to recording fame of their own, such as Glenn Campbell and Leon Russell, the Wrecking Crew was the West Coast's cream of the crop of session players, backing top-notch hit makers Phil Spector, Frank Sinatra, the Beach Boys, Simon & Garfunkel, and many more. Hartman (marketing, Portland State Univ.), who has worked with many well-known recording artists including Hall & Oates, Three Dog Night, and Lyle Lovett, tells the group's definitive story with a music industry insider's insight and enthusiasm. The only other work on these behind-the-scenes pros is Blaine's *Hal Blaine and the Wrecking Crew*, which is more narrowly focused on the experiences of the stalwart drummer.

Verdict: Recommended for readers interested in popular music and the music industry, particularly West Coast pop and classic rock. [Library Journal](#) “One of the key innovations of rock and roll was that it empowered young artists to not only write their own material but also play their own music. But in the music industry capital of L.A. in the sixties, even some of rock’s most innovative performers sometimes needed a helping hand in the studio. They got it from the assortment of L.A. session players collectively known as “The Wrecking Crew,” who are, in many ways, the unsung heroes of the West Coast sound. Dan John Miller narrates the book with the sly tone of an L.A. hustler, chewing on the words, making sure they snap with the same vibrant resonance as a twangy guitar or shimmering cymbal, as befits this fascinating story of musical and cultural legend. [AudioFile](#)

KENT HARTMAN is a longtime music industry entrepreneur who has worked with dozens of well-known artists, including Three Dog Night, Steppenwolf, Hall & Oates, Counting Crows, and Lyle Lovett. He has written for American Heritage, The Oregonian, and Portland Tribune. Hartman teaches marketing at Portland State University and for several years produced The Classic Comedy Break, a nationwide radio feature. He lives in Portland.

I am a huge fan of studio musicians, especially in the 60’s when I was a kid/pre-teen. I was a fan of a lot of the music that came out of the LA studios, especially Paul Revere and the Raiders, Mommas and Poppas and 5th Dimension. I was also a fan of music that came out of the Memphis studios (STAX) and, of course a single Detroit studio (Motown). In the 70’s when studio musicians got credited for their work, I became an even bigger fan: Steely Dan, Larry Carlton, Bob James, Stuff, etc. So, I am the ideal audience for this book and I am disappointed. If you’re like me you should probably buy the book. However, you should also be aware that the majority of this book is uninteresting and often frustrating. Specifically, the made-for-tv, docu-drama biographical details of the musicians.....most of it is way overdone. As you read this material you will find yourself begging for some commentary about the music or musicianship itself. Sadly, there is very little of that. And if there is an interesting story to tell about the musicians, it is that of Earl Palmer (no relation) who played in the New Orleans studios for Fats Domino, Little Richard and Lloyd Price. From what I can tell, Earl is the man with real R&B (pre-Elvis rock and roll) hit making cred who moved to LA and probably helped create the LA rock and roll session players scene. Why? Because as this book makes clear, producers want the musicians who played on the hits to try to get some of that same magic for their records. Hal Blaine, who is one of the players at the center of this book, came up

listening to Earl Palmer and arrived in LA after Palmer was already established. If you are not a studio musician fan, but are interested in what session players do and why they are amazing, this book will help clue you in. Who knows, you may also be interested in the life stories of these people more so than I am. However, all should be forewarned: Hartman's attempt at the "new journalism" approach to writing cannot begin to approach the masters like Gay Talese, Tom Wolf or Hunter S. Thompson. In many cases, the writing is cringe-worthy. This is all a shame to me. Studio musicians are some of the most amazing players ever and many, including some in this book, have made real contributions to music. Their story still waits to be properly told.

Carol Kaye's and other criticisms aside, as a music fan intrigued by the process of creation, I'm still willing to buy a book and sift through and get the wheat from the chaff. And I did in this case. Maybe this is in part because the songs mentioned are the soundtrack to my growing up as a kid, "transistor radio" strapped to my ear. The book is extremely detailed and of course you are going to get beefs from people that were actually THERE, because if you are the author and interviewing so many people (an impressive list) about a period many decades ago, nobody is going to agree on details and of course you have the leftover baggage that can fester over time. You guys with personal relationships can battle it out amongst yourselves. I did find Hartman's writing a bit tedious at first, and honestly there was a period about 20% of the way through where I wondered if I were going to make it. But then subject matter really did take center stage and I felt also that Hartman's prose magically got more to the point. One reason for the 5 rating is that I appreciated his construction of the story. It is a real challenge taking a decade-plus period, with a lot of key players, and trying to handle it all chronologically as he did (and is really what most of us want). Too many authors are too literal in their chronology and the stops and starts are maddening. You need to write a few sentences about Glen Campbell, or Carol, or Blaine, or whoever and then go grab somebody else and update us on them. Hartman took a measured approach, dropping in some names out of nowhere with just enough information to make us care a little, and then picking up their detailed and interesting stories later. Excellent job there. I read a lot of books about musical artists and the music business in general. But it's all been from the 80s on up. If you want to know what was happening when music became, well, rather "good" as it did sometime around the mid-60s, this should be on your list.

I watched the documentary first, which was done by Denny Tedesco, the son of one of the Wrecking Crew guitar players. As a director and editor myself, Denny did a nice job. This book is

good, but after reading Carol Kaye's 'not so good' review [guitar & bassist for Wrecking Crew] before reading, that was always in the back of my mind. What is true in here and what is not? Carol disagrees with a lot of the stuff in this book, and she was there!! She seems like a real cool person in my opinion. Would love to hear all her stories! The book held my interest for about 3/4 of the way through, and just fizzled at the end. Still a very very interesting topic to me. And if you haven't seen the Glen Campbell [also in the Wrecking Crew] documentary yet, I highly recommend that as well. Cheers! -RT

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