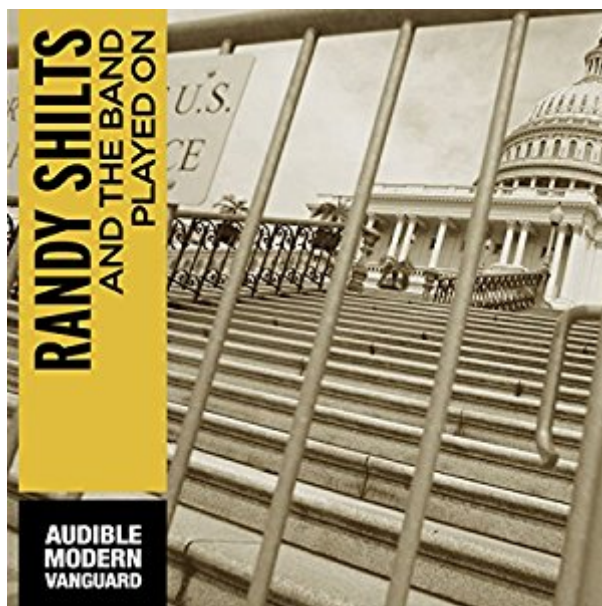


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And The Band Played On: Politics, People, And The AIDS Epidemic



Synopsis

FOR USE IN SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES ONLY. : Politics, People and the AIDS Epidemic A modern masterpiece of investigative journalism-perhaps the most important single work of the last twenty years. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In Randy Shilts's 'And The Band Played On', the author successfully documents a moment in time that represents a major shift in the world. The AIDS epidemic has killed millions, but the fight against death mobilized the gay voice and can be seen as having led to the modern political rights we now have because it forced us out of the shadows and into living rooms. Drawing upon a wealth of sources Shilts' social history of the AIDS epidemic is a moving piece that uses oral history to illuminate a world not ready for the AIDS epidemic. Whether this was because of homophobia or prudishness or other social forces is unclear and up to the reader to decide. But it was not until the death of the manly and supposedly straight Rock Hudson that there was a true paradigm shift in treatment of the AIDS epidemic. Until then responses to the epidemic were woeful. Beginning in the late 1970s in Africa and continuing to the late 1980s in the US, this particular history needs to be known. The cast of characters is large. And the death toll is almost as large. This is what makes this tragic history especially poignant and remarkable. As a gay man, I am always aware of AIDS and precautions against it. But this story starts in a period before AIDS was known. In this idyllic post-Stonewall period, sex was freedom for many. Having been born in 1980, I avoided the worst of

the plague, but having recently seen *The Normal Heart* on HBO, I wanted to learn more. And this book succeeds in educating a reader about what can happen when ignorance and politics trump science. Now that we are entering the Truvada period, I think it especially important to understand what can happen again. Will it? Who knows but antibiotic resistant gonorrhea is out there. Who knows what other plagues lurk. Waiting.

I have a deep love of sciences and learning how things work. I especially enjoy infectious disease. Now, I was never quite impressed with HIV and never really wanted to learn about it. However, after a college class took us on a tour of the CDC and they talked about HIV in depth I became more interested. Flash forward a few years to now. I was home and wanted to watch TV, as I looked through the free streaming movies feature of Prime (which is awesome and totally worth it) and I came across a movie called "And the Band Played On." I vaguely remember discussing my love of epidemiology and someone had recommend I watch this movie. I guess I never looked it up then and it vaguely sounded familiar, sure enough it was THAT movie. So I began the movie and you could tell it was filmed in the 90s, which didn't make me think I would really love it. However, from the first scene I was hooked! I only watched the movie, completely paying attention. I rarely watch TV or movies and pay 100% attention, just kind of have it in the background and be doing other things around the house or making things. This movie was SO good that I was almost late for an appointment because I completely lost track of time. After, I saw that movie I was completely enthralled with learning more about HIV and how we discovered it. I came and got this book and it has yet to disappoint. It is a thick book with small print, but the writing style is easy to read and interesting; unlike some books that bore you to death for the whole 500 pages. I would recommend this book to anyone in the medical field, science field, or just likes this kind of stuff. It is great.

This is nothing less than a compulsively readable tour-de-force in modern medical journalism. It's the history of a disease, a people, and an era all in one. I always knew I'd read this book eventually, but as with any long non-fiction tome there comes a risk that at some point your attention span might have to bow out. Not here: this book holds your interest on nearly every page (I skipped one or two of the more dense courtroom testimony pages, but often later went back to read them anyway). Randy Shilts does not ask for your time lightly - every chapter here is earned. It seems almost an omniscient narrative voice is involved, and with over 900 interviews and his own previous years of investigative work on AIDS, there's a reason for that. Before reading, I had foolishly assumed the word politics had been added to the title to sex it up a bit. Nope. The story of the

various responses people, communities, and entire governments had to AIDS was all about politics. So often reading this book did I get the impression you could actually hear the bullet whiz past your ear. If you were born around or before 1980 in a first world country and ever had a blood transplant, this could have been your story too. While Mr. Shilts avoids sensationalism, the story is sensational enough in its barest facts for that point to be clear. I immediately looked up the author to learn more about what he had written only to discover he too died from AIDS in the 1990's. His book, already a tribute to a lost generation, is now an example of all the substantive contributions those men and women could've made if politics could have been shoved aside sooner. This book is a rare thing: it is both a great, historic work and a damn good read. Would that Randy Shilts had lived long enough to give us many more of its calibre.

I read this originally right after it was first published, and regretfully gave away my copy. This 20th Anniversary publication, in paperback, is of course easier to hold, but I really missed the photos from the original. It is THE book to read about the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, and reading it again was especially poignant knowing the the author had subsequently joined the ranks of whom he had written so eloquently.

This book gives the story of the start of the aids epidemic and the missteps and prejudices by doctors, government, and media that led to this problem. Providing a intimate view of some of the people actually involved leaves you horribly sad and angry at the same time. Despite the density of material it keeps you riveted even knowing what happens.

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