



Q&A with Nikki McWatters, author of *One Way or Another: The Story of a Girl Who Loved Rock Stars*

Can you tell us a little bit about your memoir, *One Way or Another*?

One Way or Another is the culmination of twenty-five to thirty years of champagne-fuelled storytelling to friends and family. After reminiscing about my teenage years as a rock and roll groupie for the umpteenth time, my husband dared me to turn it into a book. I have always considered it rather spineless to walk away from a dare! Hence, the memoir.

What was the Vulture Club?

The Vulture Club was essentially a rock and roll club, like a stamp club or a quilting club, only we collected rock-stars. A small group of private school girls, obsessed with eighties musicians and bands got together to discuss, plan, plot and ultimately seduce rock-stars. It started as something of a joke, a fantasy, but as in most things, I saw it as a challenge and took it all way too far!

Why rock-stars?

Read the first paragraph of the book. It answers that question quite explicitly. Let's just say there was an early connection between rock-stars and my sexuality. But seriously, what's not to love about rock stars? They love fashion, have no trouble expressing emotions and write songs about passion and love like it means everything to them; they have volcanic energy and they're generally quite pretty – perfect men.

What's your favourite story from the book?

I still marvel at my audacity at getting backstage at Elton John's concert at the Sydney Entertainment Centre by pretending to be Rod Stewart's sister, bad Scottish accent and all! I don't even know if Rod has a sister. But the confidence and brashness of youth was in my favour and it was a fun night even if I did nearly blow Molly Meldrum's cue to join Elton on stage for an encore performance of *Crocodile Rock*.

If you could go back and give your sixteen year old self some advice, what would you say?

I have three sons who have reached and passed sixteen relatively unscathed and I have learned that no sixteen year old will ever take advice from a well-meaning adult. I would however tell teenage Nikki that sex, drugs and rock and roll are a great holiday but don't make them a home. I would also tell her to keep a firm grip on her dream of an Academy Award but advise her not to hold her breath because she still won't have one thirty years later!

Who are some of the bands that appear in your book?

Australian Crawl was my first obsession and that panned out quite nicely for me. Duran Duran was a lofty highlight. Other bands which spun in and out of my life, one way or another were The Angels, Cheap Trick, INXS, the Divinyls and many other bands that have remained nameless.

This is a memoir filled with big name rock stars, but you choose to protect the names of some famous characters, using nicknames like the ‘Poet’ instead. Can you explain your decision behind this?

I can answer that question two ways. Firstly, while I treated rock stars as bed notches not people, there was that element of symbolism. In many ways these lovers represented something rather than appearing as individuals in my life. The Initiator was just that. His name didn’t really matter to me other than the fact that it had appeared in a Countdown magazine. When a rock-star boasts of bedding x amount of groupies, no one wants to know the names of the conquests – it’s peripheral - and I wanted that flipside in my own book which tells the other side of that story. I wanted to portray these characters as ‘types’ rather than living breathing men by way of explaining that even teenage girls can be emotionally removed, predatory and calculating....or can they?

On a more sensitive note – the characters who are given nicknames – really are flesh and blood people and it was not my intention to damage anyone’s reputation but my own. These people have families and lives far removed from those hedonistic, crazy days and I wanted to be mindful of that. This is my story not theirs and thus I felt a little protective of their precise identities.

What made you want to write the book?

Apart from the dare by my husband, this book has been simmering beneath the surface of my life for three decades and it really wanted to see the light of day. The eighties music scene in Australia was a short-lived few years of such excitement and promise. There was a sense of innocent decadence and a fierce camaraderie between bands, fans and crew. I didn’t want that era to disappear from my memory and a book is a way of preserving those recollections forever. It’s my tribute to the decade.

Who would you see as the ideal reader?

This book should appeal to anyone who was young during the eighties or wished they had been. The musicians and fans of retro music will enjoy the trip down memory lane. There’s probably a definite market for contemporary rock fans as well because the groupie/rock star tango is timeless.

This is your first book – what was the writing process like?

I have wanted to write books since I was a child. I have probably written hundreds which ended up in the bottom drawer. *One Way or Another* was my first serious stab at getting

published and I'm so pleased that Black Inc. really 'got' the book. I wrote it in a kind of trance over six weeks, afraid that if I drew breath the memories would evaporate but the more I wrote, the more I remembered and it was like living it all over again which was a hell of a ride. The editing process was smooth with Denise O'Dea such a competent and supportive guide. I can't wait to see the book in a book store. It will be my pound of flesh on a bookshelf!

What books and writers (and musicians!) have influenced your work?

Influences. I have many. My first and lasting favourite book was 'Wuthering Heights' because of its passion, darkness and honesty. I have just read Ben Law's 'The Family Law' and found it refreshingly wonderful. Andrew McGahan, Helen Garner, Susan Mitchell, Diablo Cody, Lionel Shriver. What I love about these authors is their honesty. It's a lot easier to tell a story than it is to tell the truth. I think good writing is therapy for the writer and the reader.

My favourite music still echoes out from an ancient ghetto-blaster at home. The Police. Australian Crawl. Duran Duran. The Church. Cold Chisel. The Pretenders. And I have a real soft spot for Andy Gibb!

These days however, I only go to rock and roll gigs to watch my son play. No longer the groupie but mother of the band!

***One Way or Another* by Nikki McWatters will be released in April 2012.**

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