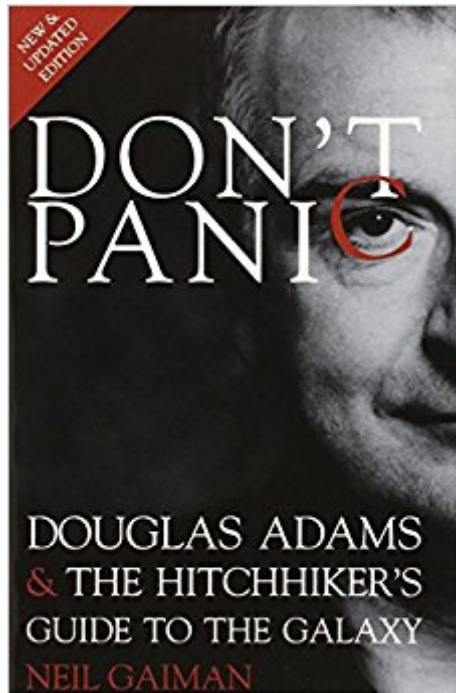




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Don't Panic: Douglas Adams & The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy



Synopsis

“It’s all devastatingly true – except the bits that are lies” • Douglas Adams
Upon publication, *Don’t Panic* quickly established itself as the definitive companion to Adams and *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*. This edition comes up to date, covering the movie, *And Another Thing* by Eoin Colfer and the build up to the 30th anniversary of the first novel. Acclaimed author Neil Gaiman celebrates the life and work of Douglas Adams who, in a field in Innsbruck in 1971, had an idea that became *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*. The radio series that started it all, the five – soon to be six – book trilogy, the TV series, almost-film and actual film, and everything in between.

Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Titan Books; New, Updated ed. edition (September 15, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1848564961

ISBN-13: 978-1848564961

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.8 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 20 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #275,804 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #74 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Movements & Periods > Modern](#) #150 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Genres & Styles > Science Fiction & Fantasy](#) #166 in [Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > History & Criticism](#)

Customer Reviews

"It's all devastatingly true - except the bits that are lies" - Douglas Adams * "Hilarious fun... a source of much delightful trivia" - Publisher's Weekly"

Neil Gaiman is a New York Times best-selling author and one of the most critically acclaimed living comics writers. There have been two recent movie adaptations of his work, *Stardust* and *Coraline*.

Neil Gaiman's *Don't Panic* succeeds in so far as the author manages to capture the humor of the late Douglas Adams. It lacks depth as a biography but more than blankets the various aspects and versions of the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (H2 G2) as well as the five book trilogy. It is

correctly described in one of the other reviews as the hyperextended bonus feature that was too long to include on any of the CDs or DVD versions of the radio broadcasts, television shows and unfortunately the Disney movie. If you have come looking for this book and have read this far my assumption is you are a Douglas Adams fan. H2 G2, Dirk Gently or possibly Dr. Who fans constitute the target readership for this book. Granted Douglas Adams had a very slight association with the Monty Python's crew; more of common friendships than creative participation but none of this qualifies *Don't Panic* for a general audience. That portion of the book that is about Douglas Adams is clearly intended as a friends and family type biography. That is, one that is more affectionate than analytical or critical. A very large portion of the discussion of Adams the writer centers around his inability to meet any deadlines which is nothing new for people who know about Adams's history. Gaiman does do a decent job of explaining Adams and missed deadlines by providing the additional context of Adams; too often self-inflicted complex life. Gaiman succeeds as an apologist for Douglas Adams and is someone who can speak in a voice very much like Douglas Adams. I have read as much of Adams published works as are available in America. I own and enjoy the original radio series and the original television series of H2 G2. So I was interested to get to read about the intimate background on most of what occurred in the making of -- to include electronic games and live performances. My conclusion is that this is a fan's book. There may be some other audiences such as those who collect biographies of writers or who wish to know more about the creative / production process in any of several media. The ironic / humorous tone makes for easy reading but one can get somewhat bogged down in details.

If you have ever stood in a field staring up at the myriad stars in the night sky and wondering just how it came to be that the humanoid life-form known as Douglas Adams managed to dream up such infinitely improbable adventures, or if you have ever stood in front of a vending machine that has just provided you with a plastic cup filled with a liquid that was almost, but not quite, entirely unlike tea, then in all likelihood you will enjoy this book. Neil Gaiman has taken time off writing his own fantastic adventures to share with us his research into the life and times of Douglas Adams. I for one am very glad that he did as the story he so masterfully unfolds is both sympathetic and enlightening. Gaiman manages to shed not a little light on Adams' creative process and life, from the rigors and panics of his early days of script writing for Doctor Who then the Hitchhiker's radio series all the way through to the very end of his career. Gaiman does a marvelous job of not only telling the tale but also revealing something of the man who said, 'I love deadlines. I love the whooshing noise they make as they go by.' Adams was a unique writer and a comic creator of

genius. He died all too young, but this book is a great tribute to a life fully-lived and to a very human humanoid.

Neil Gaiman and the associated writers cover Douglas Adams and the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy well. First there is an explanation of how Adams came up with the title "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" in 1971, then a brief biography of Adams from childhood to the period just before he wrote Hitchhiker's Guide. He always wanted to write since the age of ten when he received a rare perfect score from his composition teacher. However, Adams had trouble keeping up with deadlines, so his papers were usually late. He appeared in school plays and developed a love for performing. After watching Graham Chapman on TV, Douglas decided that he was going to be a writer-performer like Chapman. Adams later attended Cambridge University after winning a writing contest, there he joined the legendary Footlights performing society. Unfortunately, he didn't fit in there because the ideas he submitted to the group were rejected as being not particularly funny. But he kept trying and formed a small troupe with two other students, one named Smith and the other Adams. They called themselves Adams, Smith and Adams and were known for putting on sketches like the educated railway brakeman who tied up the line trying link existentialism with the switching system. After that he gave performing to write. He wrote several sketches for radio shows after that, some memorable, others forgettable. But in 1977, Adams came up with the script that would make him famous. He took the title that he dreamed up in 1971 and paired with with the story of a man driven from his planet (which was destroyed for a better path for spaceships) and forced to wander the galaxy with a reporter for the Guide. Adams submitted the script outline to the BBC and they approved it in March. One month later Adams completed the first script and submitted that hoping for a quick production agreement (and payment). However, the BBC staff spent the summer on vacation and didn't get back to Adams until August. In desperation he also submitted the script to the Doctor Who show, hoping that they would buy it. They didn't, but asked him to write some scripts for them. So when the BBC approved the production of six episodes of The Hitchhiker's Guide, poor Douglas found himself drowning in work for two different shows (but now he was a known writer and after The Hitchhiker's Guide was broadcast he became famous).

I had a previous edition of this book, but so much has happened in Adams' life since then, including his untimely demise. When I learned an updated edition was available, I had to get it. It does not disappoint. Neil Gaiman is a very humorous and informative writer, and he obviously possesses great knowledge of and affection for Douglas Adams. A great read.

If you are a Douglas Adams fan or want to know more about different phases of his life and/or how the HHGG evolved, this is a great way to do so.

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