



Whole Healthy Group LLC

ROCK GODS & *Messy Monsters*

Q&A with Diane Hatz

Below are questions and answers with Diane Hatz, author of *Rock Gods & Messy Monsters*. Feel free to use these as a basis for, or to complement, to any interviews or articles. (Photo - backstage at The Who, Shea Stadium 1982)



Questions

- What is your book about?
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- What was your inspiration for Rock Gods & Messy Monsters?
- Is the book based on facts?
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- Why did you include aliens in the book?
- Who are some of the characters you particularly like, besides the main character Alex who's obviously based around you?
- How are you promoting the book?
- You recently changed careers to become a full-time writer. Tell me more about that.
- So you wrote Rock Gods after you got to Santa Fe?
- Is the book still relevant in 2022?
- How can people stay in touch with you?

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Q&A

What is your book about?

Rock Gods & Messy Monsters is one woman's search for self among dangling body parts, blood vessel explosions, and alien hatchings with a 1990s corporate record company.

The main character, Alex, thinks she's found her dream job only to find out the truth about her reality. Though absurdist and surreal, it's an experience many people go through.

(photo on right - my rock and roll, music industry days in the 1990s)



What is the book's message?

Rock Gods & Messy Monsters works on two levels. You can read the book for pure entertainment and go on a rollercoaster ride through a crazed record company. You can also read it for the underlying themes. One is that we create our own reality. Another is that we're the only ones who have the power to change the things we don't like. The novel is about the search for self, as well as the courage and commitment to love ourselves at all costs in order to change.

The book is about the interplay between the reality we dream of having and the reality that presents itself. Sometimes, what we think will make us happy can end up being a nightmare. Peace and happiness comes from within each of us, not outside in any material way.

Can you tell me about the release?

The book was released on September 7th. It's currently on Amazon and Barnes & Noble, and it should be up on other sites like Bookshop.org shortly. It made the #1 Hot New Releases list for Amazon Kindle in pop culture, pop culture music, and absurdist fiction.

You can get more information at www.rockgodsandmessymonsters.com where you can also sign up for my email list and newsletter.

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What was your inspiration for Rock Gods & Messy Monsters?

I worked in the music industry in the 1990s - at major and indie labels. I even managed a band for a while and was a publicist for a musician for a short time. I co-founded and ran a fanzine on the rock band The Who for many years. It's in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. After I'd gotten my Masters in Creative Writing in London in the 1980s, I decided to move to New York City and work in music while I wrote books.

I got my dream job at an independent label at the time but was laid off after a year. That led to several other jobs and eventually a position as an administrative assistant at a major label. I had a boss who would regularly scream at me, and who today would not get away with treating me the way he did. I started to see how uncreative corporate music was, how it was just a business, and it was so disheartening. When you read the book, you'll understand what I'm talking about.

In short, I wrote *Rock Gods & Messy Monsters* to save my sanity and survive in a surreal, insane environment.

Is the book based on facts?

The book is based on some personal experiences and also on stories I'd heard about. You'll see that the book is taken to a completely surreal level, so it's not an expose or anything like that. It's fictionalized experiences that I perceived. I have a very creative mind, so I took things a bit past standard reality, which is basically the world I live in.

My interest was in the main character's search for herself and the reasons why she stayed in such a soul-sucking environment. I was also interested in the play between perception and reality. I wanted to be a philosopher, writer or quantum physicist when I was younger, so my writing tends to center around the interplay between reality and our perception of reality.

You obviously have become the writer, what about the philosopher or quantum physicist?

I can't say I became a traditional philosopher, but I'm very passionate about spirituality - I'm a somewhat-practicing Tibetan Buddhist, so I think my search for meaning in life is based on my spirituality. And I think eastern practices are philosophical.

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Regarding physics, in the 1970s I got into an advanced science class in high school. Astronomy, if I remember correctly. It was a class that would have prepared me for a physics degree in college. I was the only female, and the male teacher told me girls weren't capable of doing math. Being the obedient sheep I was then, I believed him. So when he said I wouldn't be able to learn anything because I was a girl, I dropped out of the class and let go of any dreams of being a quantum physicist.

Could you pursue it now?

Oh, no. I think a person generally peaks around age 28 in physics. And, truth be told, I'm not sure I would have been happy in a lab or doing research. I firmly believe that quantum physics and spiritual practices like Tibetan Buddhism are very related and that they're essentially different languages for the same thing. Same with Law of Attraction and all that woo woo Sedona stuff. It's the same thing said in different ways. But that's for another book!

Why did you include aliens in the book?

Back in the 1990s, foreign corporations were buying out American record companies. I was brought up on rock and roll, and, back then, it was serious business. I proudly wore my t-shirt with the Beatles on the front and "Disco Sucks" on the back to high school at least once a week. When us rock and rollers would go to concerts up in Philadelphia - I grew up in Delaware - we would come back with a concert t-shirt and proudly wear it to school the next day so everyone would know where we'd been. Our t-shirts were the first type of social media!

For me, working in a record company was a dream come true because of my love for music. But when I found out that massive corporations were buying record labels in order to sell their technology without caring about the music, well, for me it was the day - or at least one of the days - that the music died. Remember the minidisc? Say no more.

As I've mentioned, the book is fiction, so rather than blame a certain company or country for the demise of music, I thought aliens were the next logical choice. They were the ones who bought USA Records in order to hatch a half robot, half human singer.

Who are some of the characters you particularly like, besides the main character Alex who's obviously based around you?

Oh, there are so many. I love Hellie the receptionist. Hellie to me was a precursor to the millennial generation who don't generally take shit from superiors. She did her job, but she

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spent her spare time on her startup, which happened to be training mutant sea creatures in the fish tank at her desk. She's the entrepreneur of the group and ends up being a good lesson for the reader.

I also love Weena, the doubly-named Senior Senior Executive President of Publicity and Media, and I feel sorry for her. Weena has an anxiety problem and constantly loses body parts. She spends most of the time in the book gluing herself back together, but she never becomes whole.

I don't go into the psychology behind Langley, but I also like him on some levels. Even though he's abusive to Alex, and she has to sew up his neck every time he explodes blood vessels, he's simply a sad character doing the best he can. He's caught up in materialism and power, and he can't see how damaging he is to himself and those around him. Rather than look within himself, he spends his life exploding outwards.

And Jeremy Wickett. He's perverse and doesn't have any lines, but, well, read the book and you'll see what he represents.

There's also Bret Horowitz and his box of smiles, Flanker and his rolling ball of snot, and the young, hip Sturgeon Westfield, the Vice President of Post-Mortem Product Development who'd previously worked in a funeral parlor. All of the characters in the story are flawed, which is true for all of us.

And as damaged and misdirected as most of the characters are, it was a joy to bring them to life. I believe we all do the best we can, no matter how surreal or crazy. I'm not saying what everyone does is good or right - and it might be misdirected - but I think we all do the best we can. That attitude has helped me develop deeper compassion for everyone.

How are you promoting the book?

As I was putting the material together for the book launch, I started wondering what stories other people had about their work and life. So I'll soon be launching the *Rock Gods & Messy Monsters* campaign.

I'm asking people to take a creative photo (you can interpret that as you wish - four-legged creatures welcome) with the book and to label themselves either #rockgod or #messymonster. Post it on their social media, tag @wholehealthygroup or email me at rock.gods@yahoo.com and share their story.

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When did they feel like a rock god, or what funny story can they share about meeting their rock god? Alternatively, the messy monsters can share their experience of being the boss with the wrong attitude or a story about them having a crazed boss. Nothing mean - just funny or surreal.

I have a couple other campaigns being developed, and I'm doing the usual reviews, interviews and social media. And I'm writing an article or two a month on my Substack [Next Draft with Diane Hatz](#), explaining the symbolism and meaning within the pages of the book.

You recently changed careers to become a full-time writer. Tell me more about that.

After nearly ten years in the music business, I was told by the CFO at the record label I was at that I'd never, ever get promoted at the company. I got the hint. I left and found a random job at a small nonprofit. It turned out to focus on healthy food, so I left music and started a career as an activist and advocate.

I helped a group of farmer consultants around the country shut down factory farms or hold them accountable back in 1998, and was able to expand and do creative projects at the nonprofit. I'm the executive producer of The Meatrix, an online animation about the problems with factory farming. It won tons of awards and allowed me some amazing experiences like going to film festivals, walking a red carpet, and feeling like I was having a positive impact on the world. I was even the founder and organizer of TEDxManhattan, which was a very successful TED event on sustainable food and farming.

Fast forward 20 or so years, and I realized I wasn't happy. The food movement had essentially become corporate and there was a lot of crazy swirling around, and I was starting to feel I was slipping back into Acht Records. I felt like Sisyphus - rolling the ball of justice and healthy food up a mountain only to have it crush me and roll back down. I got tired of trying to force it up the hill.

I would love to say I was like Alex, but a 20-year grant ended, my TEDx license was retired, and I didn't have the passion to keep doing what I was doing. I did some consulting here and there, and then covid hit. I did what I could - started a group called East Village Neighbors in the East Village of Manhattan, co-founded a community fridge that's still feeding up to a couple thousand people a week, and tried to keep my sanity.

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At the end of 2020, I packed up my life of 30 years in downtown Manhattan and moved cross country to Santa Fe, New Mexico. It took about a year for me to realize my nonprofit Change Food wasn't making me happy or fulfilled, so I shut it down at the end of 2021.

And I took the leap. I'm 61 now (do NOT get me started on ageism!), but when you hit your 50s or 60s, something amazing happens. Well, at least it did for me. I realized it was now or never. I also stopped caring so much what other people thought.

It was time to move across the country to a city I'd only passed through one night many years earlier, where I didn't know anyone. And it was now time to pursue at least two of my passions - writing and spirituality.

So you wrote Rock Gods after you got to Santa Fe?

Originally, I wrote *Rock Gods & Messy Monsters* back in the 1990s and self published it in 2008, before indie publishing was popular. I had incredibly low self esteem around my writing, so I couldn't handle all the rejections I was getting (which I now know is common). But, back then, it was too much. It took close to ten years for me to decide to self publish, and when I did, I did absolutely no promotion. I then got caught up in my life in New York City. Time slipped through my fingers, so my fiction writing essentially dried up even though I did make a few half-hearted attempts at books during those years.

A good friend from my early days in NYC reconnected with me in the spring of 2022 and said she'd just read the book. She then excitedly shared that she quit her job right after finishing it. She got me to understand that the book is not about the music industry, it's only set in a record company. The novel is about the search for self and having the courage to discover who we really are.

She convinced me to do some edits, add some things, and properly re-launch it. Her name is Kri Pelletier of Firehorsewest - and she did the amazing book cover! I am forever indebted to her for her encouragement and help.

Is the book still relevant in 2022?

The book is more than relevant today. Alex was part of the Great Resignation way before it happened. *Rock Gods* explains why someone would quit their job. I'm not saying Alex did, though - you'll have to read the book to find out!

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After my friend Kri told me how much the book had moved her, I picked it up and re-read it after fourteen years. And I surprised myself - it's a good book. And, most importantly, it's me. I saw that the book is not about the music industry - that's the vehicle for the message. The book is about the search for self and how we need courage and a commitment to self-love to change.

The plan is to indie publish *Rock Gods & Messy Monsters* through my publishing imprint Whole Healthy Group. I'm then going to see what kind of traction I get and will continue to indie publish, which is what I'd prefer, or I'll try the traditional route the next time (if I'm offered a massive advance).

I'm over 50,000 words into my next fiction book and am outlining another book on how to indie publish and promote. I'm hoping to help guide some other new writers so they don't make all the mistakes I did. And did I make mistakes!

How can people stay in touch with you?

The best way to stay in touch with me is to go to my website - www.rockgodsandmessymonsters.com - you'll find my social media info, ways to buy the book, book reviews, and other relevant information. I also have a substack newsletter called *Next Draft with Diane Hatz* (<https://dianehatz.substack.com/>). I publish original pieces about themes related to my books, as well as about the writing process itself.

I'm also on the usual social media channels:

[Facebook Author](#) page - @dianehatz.author

[Instagram](#) - @wholehealthygroup

[Twitter](#) - @dianehatz

[Ko-fi](#) (for donations)

[LinkedIn](#) - Whole Healthy Group LLC

[Pinterest](#) - @dianemhatz

[YouTube](#) - Rock Gods & Messy Monsters

If you have any questions, you can reach me at rock.gods@yahoo.com.

Thanks!

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