

The Ghost of Neil Diamond by David Milnes

Book Review by Paul “The Book Guy” Alves, Canada

I had no idea what I was getting into when I started reading this book. There was a lack of description anywhere on the front or back cover. All I knew is that this book was titled “The Ghost Of Neil Diamond”. With a title like that, I just had to read this one right away.

The book really needs a description of the novel somewhere on the back cover. I didn't know if I should expect a ghost story or a story about Neil Diamond. Hopefully that is fixed on future printings. I know myself I rarely buy a book off a shelf unless I can read a short synopsis of the story.

Completely spoiler free I began to read. I knew this one was going to be a good book when I read the opening lines. Here they are:

Amen to all sorrows.

With a few splashes of cold water Neil washed away his sins. He watched them slip down the plughole, one by wretched one. The wrongdoings and the wrong turns, the bad debts and the bad memories sank beyond the U-bend, and his soul lay empty and prepared. A whiff reached him from the urinals, the stale reminder of that catalogue of men who had fallen short at just this point - the last call, the swan song. Well, forget them, he decided. They had their lives and this is mine. He lifted his aching head to the mirror. This time. Maybe this time.

The Ghost Of Neil Diamond is a dark, sometimes funny glimpse into the life of Neil Atherton, a British former folk legend and current Neil Diamond impersonator trying to make a lonely living in Hong Kong. Forget all the places you've seen on the postcards from Hong Kong; this story is set in the seedy areas. We follow Neil as he goes from gig to gig, all the while dealing with money issues and his failing marriage. Eventually Neil meets the shady Elbert Chan who gets him a new gig in town and the fun begins. As I don't like to put too many spoilers in my reviews, I'll leave it there.

If you're a fan of Neil Diamond you will love the references to his work. If you're not a fan of Neil Diamond, it won't take away from this story in any way. I knew very little about Neil Diamond before reading this story and still found it a fascinating ride through the life of one Neil Atherton.

The dialogue is excellent. Very witty. I enjoyed my time with Neil Atherton. The only disappointing thing about this book was that it ended. I turned the last page over hoping that

somehow there would be more and that I could spend one more day following the story's fascinating singer.