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# My Week At The Blue Angel: And Other Stories From The Storm Drains, Strip Clubs, And Trailer Parks Of Las Vegas



## Synopsis

A savage journey into the heart of Hunter S. Thompson's Las Vegas with the Good Doctor as tour guide. A Lord-of-the-Rings-like adventure in the city's underground flood channels. A seven-day stay at a seedy motel on East Fremont Street. The stories in *My Week at the Blue Angel* aren't about Steve Wynn, Cirque du Soleil, or how to play poker, and they aren't set in Caesars Palace, XS Nightclub, or a 2,000-seat showroom. They're about prostitutes, ex-cons, and the homeless, and they're set under Caesars Palace and in trailer parks and weekly motels. In this creative nonfiction collection, Matthew O'Brien--author of *Beneath the Neon: Life and Death in the Tunnels of Las Vegas*--and veteran photographer Bill Hughes show a side of the city rarely seen. A side beyond the neon lights, themed facades, and motel-room doors. A side beyond the barbwire fences, No Trespassing signs, and midnight shadows.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There is something so alive and ever-present in the author's string of events at The Blue Angel that they appear to be taken out of the context of time, soÃ¢Â"like in his other book, Beneath the NeonÃ¢Â" I get to watch him again almost like in a movie; I see him talk to the cab driver (and I feel the motion of that cab to boot), I look under the bed in the motel room together with him, and I remove four shirts and two pairs of pants from his duffel bag, and so on. Simple things but they're stuck in the reader's mind (mine, at least) like some special events, and God only knows why. As if the integrity and credibility of the writer depended on the art of describing how he unpacks. I am sold to that 100%, or, in other words, I loved that description a lot. Here, like in Beneath the Neon, a hero nails it againÃ¢Â"for me it is Lisa, having a hunch why we are here on Earth, when she says, Ã¢Â»In other words, as long as you love and are peaceful and you suffer, you're going to be alright. In that case I know I'm going to heaven.Ã¢Â« Even though the first sentence sounds like taken from a tedious Sunday sermon, and the second one is a bold profession of faith, it all nevertheless rings very true to me. As you can very well be surprised by a great meal served in an inexpensive restaurant, here everything philosophical about life that really matters just happens to be put on the table in a pizza parlor, and what's more, it has had a prologue in a similarly anonymous place, i.e. in a seedy motel. The author seems to put his heroes right before the reader's eyes for their values (love, peace and suffering) to be mirrored, and the depths of their souls (faith, better place after death) to be reflected in the words of wisdom coming from the homeless and the nameless. The impression is as if Las Vegas had a license to perform a big, all-American plastic surgery on life itself for anyone who wants itÃ¢Â" all-inclusive, of courseÃ¢Â" from relatively innocent hair coloring to putting on makeups and acts to cover up for broken dreams; from manipulating other people's bodies, lives and souls in every way imaginable in atonement for one's own worthlessness to buying off one's own stolen innocence with money; from making love to dancing poles and substances to hushing up the inner voice of dignity in an attempt to undress and redress soul pain; in short, doing everything possible love never had anything to do with just to try to claim back that same love. But, hey, trying to get to THE love is what keeps us all going, right?! And in the process some truly beautiful souls are sifted through the promise of slot machines or poker tables, merely to end up down below, in the tunnels made of concrete, or in even much more depressing and darker tunnels of their broken hearts, not made of concrete but of pure despair. Maybe all is not lost and dwelling in the tunnels is there just for one single reasonÃ¢Â" the glimmer of hope to be pulled back up and exposed to the light of real love by some miraculous force? Maybe, who knows...? Let's talk business!Ã¢Â»(All those) rattlesnake handshakes,Ã¢Â« ---whoah! Two words played by a true virtuoso with a pen. And, of course, my favorite expression, salted with the pinch of the author's

obvious disenchantment with people and life. We all hold on so fast to the grassroots of this planet that there is no place for anything more than using people as mere transactions. Emotional, financial, pain-killer-like transactions. So much is said about the fallen human nature. Two words. Food brings joy at many levels. "Yum yum yum," said Flynn. "Is it lunchtime yet?" --- Amidst all that stench and foulness of the sewage plant he says that?? I bet it's his daily routine!! I laughed so hard, I should be held accountable for inappropriate reader behavior. "if there was such a thing! -- My ultimate high. That exclamation must've been written just for me!! But I did have a hard time paying the visit to that plant and taking in everything around that exclamation uttered by Mr Flynn because not all of it was yum though. So much more as the writer has the ability to automatically pull me into all the scenes to be there with him, before I even know it. All in all, go find your own treasures that are waiting for you in this book if you're ready to be confronted with the highs and lows of human spirit and existence as it is.

Overall good job by O'Brien, and never dull reading. If you're at all fascinated by the wildly differing facets of Las Vegas you will be interested in this chronicle. Only criticism is the book could have been enhanced with more context. As it is, the author lets the conversations, and the settings, tell the stories, and the reader will have to create some of the context internally. I do enjoy a creative spirit that doesn't attempt to hit people over the head with the message. You'll gain a very sympathetic appreciation of the Blue Angel, but readers who are not familiar with the opulence of Bellagio may lack a frame of reference.

Although I had never heard of Matthew O'Brien before the meetup I had heard stories about the Storm Drains in Las Vegas and the people who lived there from my friend Jesse a few years back who claimed to have explored the miles of underground tunnels hidden beneath the streets of Vegas. My curiosity was piqued. After listening to Matthew talk about his adventures in the Storm Drains and discuss his experiences at the Blue Angel Motel I immediately bought one of his books which were conveniently available for sale after the meetup. (I would have bought both but I only had enough for 1 at the time). The book is written in first person by Matthew and you follow him as he takes you on a journey through the Las Vegas that most people never really see. One of your first journeys with Matthew is his epic quest to discover the remaining Las Vegas from Hunter S. Thompson's "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas". After that Matthew takes you on a trip to Larry's Villa where you meet Larry LaPenta a strip club owner who has found God? The story left me wondering whether or not I should laugh or cry. Then on Page 49 you meet the Blue Angel a Motel that has

definitely seen better days but has not kicked the bucket yet. There you meet Steve the Vietnam War veteran and his Toy Poodle Dot who had lived at The Blue Angel for six months when the book was written and could possibly still be there. I found this story to be tragically beautiful and am tempted to visit the Blue Angel someday. However if you're truly one of the so called fearless Matthew dares you to take journey with him and his fellow reporter Josh into the Storm Drains and Flood ditches of Las Vegas there you'll meet Ron and John who warn you about the cave Troll that lurks in the dungeon like tunnels with "cockroaches that crawled along the walls like liquid graffiti" that lay hidden under Sin City. Is he real or were they just pulling your leg? You be the judge. I recommend this book to anyone who like me is interested in learning about the hidden Vegas they don't advertise to tourists at Vegas.com. It's no Cirque de Soleil down there but who knows if the Troll really does exist maybe he can do a really sweet "Love Me Tender" before he thwacks you with his crowbar. Review by Kayleigh Frost

A great companion piece to O'Brien's *Beneath the Neon* (which, if you haven't read, you absolutely should), this book explores even more places in Las Vegas, places that at first glance would be ugly and easily forgotten, but which O'Brien imbues with an honest integrity and sense of life. No town is only one thing, and this book proves that Las Vegas is a glittering thing of beauty as well as a place of deep sadness and struggle. The writing is stunning, free even of the subject matter, and the accompanying photographs will allow even the most experienced Las Vegas visitor or resident to feel like they've discovered a whole new place for the first time. Well worth the time and effort to get it.

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