



Fire And Rain: The James Taylor Story

Ian Halperin

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Many musicians sing about heartache, despair, and confusion, but few have experienced those feelings more intensely than James Taylor, who rose from a childhood of privilege as the son of an affluent medical school dean to become a modern-day troubadour and pop superstar.

When he was seventeen years old, his demons led him to a Massachusetts mental institution where he confronted them the only way he knew how, by writing his first songs. Thirty years later, Taylor's songs are among the most popular in the annals of music, but the demons are still with him.

But unlike many of his contemporaries who faced a similar struggle, Taylor managed to emerge as an inspirational figure. *Fire and Rain* traces this remarkable path, including his troubled marriage to pop star Carly Simon and the premature alcoholism-related death of his brother: Taylor's ten-month stay in the exclusive private psychiatric institution where he finished high school; His self-imposed exile to England where he submitted some of his music to the Beatles' Apple Records, which signed him to his first record contract in 1968. Paul McCartney mentored Taylor's early career; The story behind his second album, *Sweet Baby James*, which contained the song "Fire and Rain" about the hopelessness of mental illness and suicide; As Taylor's fame increased, so did his problems with heroin, alcohol, and mental illness. In the seventies, the singer nearly fell over the edge many times.

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