

Sky Burton

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The Love It Takes, the extraordinary influence of Louis Tomlinson

Written interview with Sky Burton, author and editor

Book Summary

The Love It Takes is about the remarkable impact of Louis Tomlinson, a celebrity whose life and career exemplify the pinnacle of resilience and the strength of collective support. In contrast to conventional celebrity stories and photo collections crafted by management teams or officially sanctioned writers, this book is uniquely authored by his fans. Being unauthorized, it stands out as raw, sincere, and deeply moving. I compiled it from the heartfelt stories, poetry, photography, and art from over 250 individuals from all over the world. The book paints a vivid picture of Tomlinson through the eyes, ears, and hearts of his deeply loyal fans, and why they remain loyal after all these years.

Louis Tomlinson rose to prominence as a pivotal member of One Direction—a band that, within a span of five years, broke records with five chart-topping albums, embarked on four global sell-out tours, and garnered numerous accolades before going on indefinite hiatus in 2016. Tomlinson's contribution was critical to the development of the band, gaining more writing credits than other members as the sound of One Direction grew from boy band pop to an edgier rock-inspired discography. Since then, all five members of the former band, Tomlinson, Niall Horan, Zayn Malik, Liam Payne, and Harry Styles have carved out successful solo careers. Yet Tomlinson is the one you hear about the least. Reasons include family tragedy in 2016 with the death of his mother, and again in 2019 with the death of his sister. At the same time there was the breakup of the band, challenges within the industry, and difficulties finding his own voice. There's a lot of useful information about him in his documentary *All of Those Voices* that came out in March 2023. I highly recommend it for a deeper understanding of what was going on in his head at that time.

Why did you do the book?

I've always been drawn to creative people with an authentic voice, and I know that's where my admiration for Louis Tomlinson began and continues. He never seems to stop amazing me. There are two reasons I wanted to do the book. First, I believed something should be documented in writing about his evolution since the success of the *Faith In The Future* tour. This tour has been a



Skylar Burton



turning point for him and changes everything as we're now seeing with the LIVE album. I felt like it needed to be acknowledged by his fans not by his management or public relations people.

The second reason is because he has a unique and natural ability to bring people together, to make them feel comfortable. He is naturally inspirational, and how often do we feel that today? I'm not sure he fully recognized that. The stories in the book are relatable to so many people. They are similar to yours, ours, and the world's. They acknowledge how hard it is to find our own perspective when we are herded into structures that want to keep us contained. I think the world could use that inspiration right now and I don't think that's something he would have even thought about.

It's noted on the cover that you are author and editor, and you also compiled all the stories. Can you tell me about that?

From the beginning I had a clear idea of what I wanted the book to do, look like, and how I wanted it to be organized. This was because I saw it as a book that would resonate outside his current fan base. I believe it will be relatable to a lot of people who need inspiration or who need some support in moving on after things don't go right, which is all of us. We all need motivation at times, and he has a unique way of helping people through things without even being there, just through the power of his music.

I knew people would send me their stories and photos, but I knew that I would be writing a lot throughout the book to tie things together. The book is not just a hodgepodge of randomly placed stories and photos, there's a reason for the way it flows. I wrote fifteen articles and a couple of my own stories for the book. Other people wrote several more. There are nine sections in the book and each of those begins with an article or a story related to that section. I also wrote an article to start off the book called, *Our Collective Journey*.

You are not on his team and yet you've done a book about him. Can you tell me about that?

As I was listening to the live streams for several months, I just fell in love with him and his music and his ability to pull in an audience and this was all just from my living room from a live stream I was watching on Instagram. That really surprised me. By mid-2022, I decided to go to Sicily to see him in concert in Taormina. Soon after I got home, the album came out and I remember hearing *Faith In The Future* for the first time thinking that it was such a brilliant album.

When I realized it wasn't getting promo or radio play, the PR person in me got angry. It's very rare in public relations to come across an individual so unique. We're always struggling to find the uniqueness in someone to promote and rarely do we find someone like that. So, as I'm hearing these concerts and seeing him perform, I just couldn't understand why we hadn't heard more about him and why we weren't hearing his music everywhere.

I figured I should try to do something about it, so I started interacting more online and found people who wanted to do promo and we started with the Times Square videos and giving away tickets and it just snowballed from there.



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As I was thinking about doing the book, I thought about this and what drove me to do this kind of thing because it's not in my nature to be a celebrity watcher. I've loved many bands and have been to a lot of concerts and festivals but I've never in my life been compelled to do promo and then a book!

But there's one other thing that I realized recently. Coming from public relations and also from Silicon Valley technology, which is where my background is, I knew the struggles of trying to be heard. Maybe it's changed now, but at that time there was no being heard as a female in Silicon Valley (and I'm kind of a techie geek). I had to knock down a lot of doors. My mantra was always, "nothing's ever easy" and now those are Louis' lyrics, and they are now tattooed on my shoulder.

So the combination of me coming from public relations in Silicon Valley and having to push down doors and then knowing Louis' back-story and all the challenges he's had with the industry but also just trying to do things his own way all these years, I understood the battle and it felt very near and dear to me. Obviously, a different industry and challenges, but still very relatable in terms of the constant struggle to make things work, not just professionally but also personally.

How did the idea for the book come about?

The idea of a book came to me when I was in Athens for Louis' show in late September 2023. Athens was a place on my bucket list because of its importance as a center of philosophy and artistic achievement. It's a place where things are still standing all these years later and what isn't—is because it was destroyed by people. I felt a connection to Louis very strongly in Athens perhaps because of the endurance of a place like Athens and a man like Louis.

***The Love It Takes* is truly and uniquely driven by fans. When you put out the call to his fans, how did they respond?**

It was slow at first because not that many people really knew me and probably figured I wouldn't really go through with it. But eventually it started coming along and I put some reels together to show progress and then more people came on board. I really didn't think it was going to be this big of a book, though. I thought it was going to be half this size and it just grew and grew.

The power of his fandom shines throughout the book. What does fandom mean to you, both conceptually, but a big part of your life?

That's an interesting part of what I learned. I've kept to myself in the last eight years after I stopped doing public relations because I just couldn't relate to it anymore in the way I was doing it and with the people I was working with in that industry. Then I decided to leave California and leave some of my negative past behind. I went on a 2-year road trip alone to get my head together. I had become a bit of a loner, and I was fine with that. When I started listening to the *Walls* live streams, I started engaging a bit online and so many people were friendly, happy, and funny. It was the funny part that really got me hooked. There is a real sense of community and people have a wonderful witty sense of humor and I found myself laughing all the time. My background had been a little challenging, as everybody's is, and I'd lost my sense of humor. After I started interacting more and went to shows and met people, it made



Skylar Burton



me feel good. I laughed more. I smiled more. I had more fun. It was a positive experience all around. My daily life improved. I was literally happier than I had been in quite a while.

We have laughed and cried while reading *The Loves It Takes*. Is there a story or section that is your personal favorite or means the most to you?

I cried from happiness and sadness while I was reading those stories and deciding where to put them in the book and that's how I came up with those specific sections. I can't pick one story, but the *Surrounded by Light* section might be my favorite because that is the section about inspiration and how Louis has inspired people to do something, be something, try something, not give up.

***The Love It Takes* is a beautifully authentic way to share the love for Louis Tomlinson with the world. In fact, it was #1 on the Amazon Hot New Releases! What do you hope the world takes away from *The Loves It Takes*?**

The book isn't so much about fans and his music, although obviously there's that too, but it's about how he inspires people to be better people and to continue going when things get tough, and I think that's a message for the world. A lot of awful things are going on right now in the world. I hope this book is given away to people who need inspiration, who need support, who are depressed and need an uplifting thing to read instead of a lot of the strange things on television that are bringing people down.

What do you hope Louis takes away from *The Love It Takes*?

He's always known he's had a loyal fan base, but because of so much that's happened with his career and the pandemic interruption, I think he had questions about whether that was going to continue, particularly when he changed his musical style. But during this tour that became clear. And with each concert it's obvious he has grown in confidence and knows the level of support he has. I hope that if he's ever in doubt about that, because we all have our moments of doubt, that he can flip through the pages of this book again and remind himself that his fans absolutely adore him, respect him, and recognize what his music, lyrics and voice do for people. I suspect that he has compared himself and his voice to others in the past and I hope he doesn't do that now.

Louis has changed his musical sound but also this year he's doing a lot of festivals in addition to more tours. As a public relations specialist what do you think about that strategy?

I've expressed on X how I felt about his former promotional activities. Many of us did. We thought his promo team missed the mark on a number of things. But we're just fans and we don't know his long-term strategy. We expressed a lot of ideas online and I truly believe he listens. He's an intelligent man and always seems to have a plan that's a few steps ahead. Between doing all the festivals this year and putting out a LIVE album he's doing exactly what I think he needs to be doing to expand his fan base.

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This book is extensive and well done. I'm not sure I've seen one quite like it—that is from the perspective of fans for a celebrity. You seem to have experience. Can you give us some insight into that and a bit about you?

I believe my studies in sociology were instrumental in working with clients in public relations in Silicon Valley. It was a highly competitive, challenging, and rapidly changing industry. Most of what I did was for advanced technology companies—mostly C-suite (executives). I have also been writing for myself for years, mostly short stories and poetry, but a couple of books, too. Several are in the works to be published. Just after the pandemic started, I was working on finishing several personal writing projects when I had an accident that shattered my elbow and arm that put me out of commission for two years. After that I started working for myself doing graphic design, art projects, pr, marketing and author consulting.

I have quite an eclectic background in terms of things I've done. When I was very young, I started a children's clothing line and had products sold in several of the baby stores. I also started the first history of computing website (before the Computer History Museum!), a VIP Silicon Valley Technical History Tour (back when it was a technical tour not a city tour of San Francisco). I was a gallery represented artist in Palo Alto and Santa Fe and still paint today. And I've done quite a bit of travel including several long road trips and a two-year trailer adventure by myself. I guess you could say I like to stay busy.