



# Rake at the Gates of Hell: Shane MacGowan in Context

*Robert Mamrak*

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## **Rake at the Gates of Hell: Shane MacGowan in Context** Robert Mamrak

Rake at the Gates of Hell: Shane MacGowan in Context is a mix of Irish history and culture, biography, and music criticism. It explores Shane MacGowan's art by juxtaposing details of his life with those elements of Irish culture and history that inform the themes in his work. The book presents MacGowan's life chronologically, supplementing information on Irish history and culture at those points where it can best illuminate MacGowan's story. His career with the Nips, the Pogues, and the Popes is covered extensively. The book includes critical assessments of significant live performances and all studio recordings made with each of these three bands. MacGowan's life story is told warts and all. His hedonistic lifestyle and history of substance abuse is reported in a way that neither sensationalizes nor minimizes the facts. The text is enlivened by extensive quotations, primarily from MacGowan himself, which were either taken from conversations with the author or culled from published interviews. The book explores several themes prominent in MacGowan's work. Foremost among these are Irish Republicanism, the Irish Republican Army, Irish emigration, and various factors that contribute to Irish emigration. While the discussion of these topics is not exhaustive, it is detailed enough to enhance appreciation of Shane MacGowan's art. Moreover, Rake at the Gates of Hell: Shane MacGowan in Context is the only book yet written that chronicles MacGowan's remarkable comeback with the Pogues, the band that fired him nearly two decades ago.

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