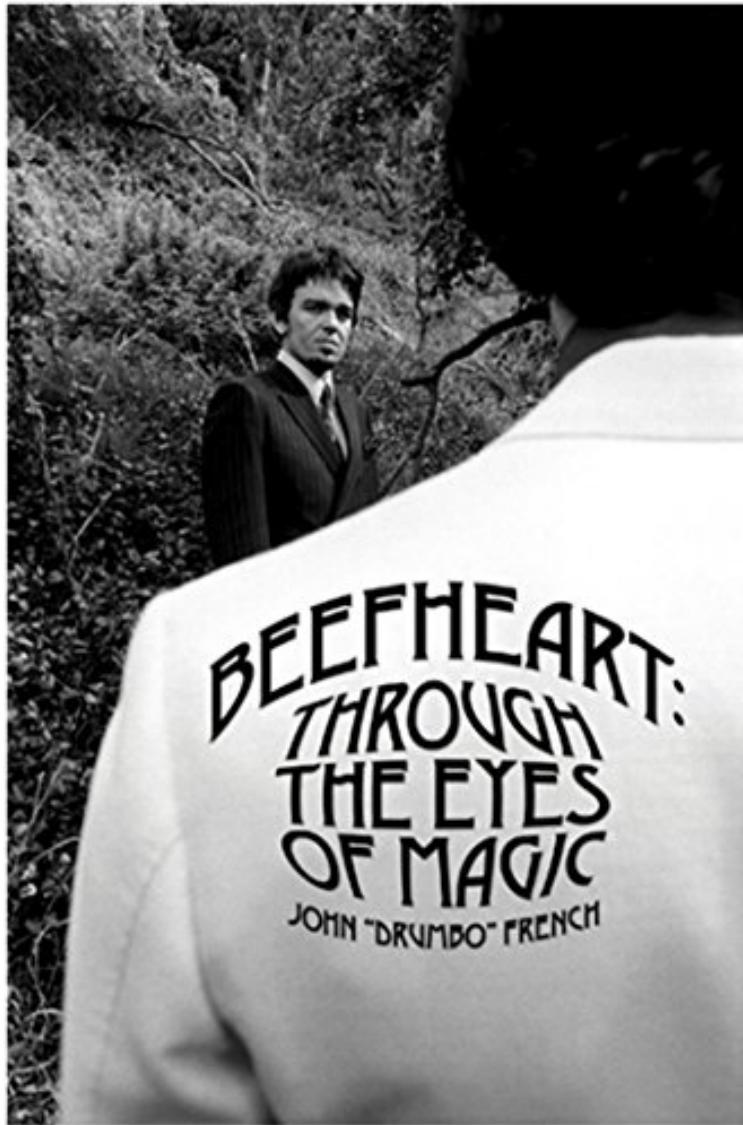


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## Beefheart: Through The Eyes of Magic

*John "Drumbo" French*

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**John "Drumbo" French : Beefheart: Through The Eyes of Magic** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Beefheart: Through The Eyes of Magic:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Through the Eyes of Magic. . .It's Good . . .Check It OutBy Mark ThompsonThis is a very detailed history of the band in it's various lineups. John French has a really exceptional recall and he adds a lot of memories/insights about the people places and times so you get descriptions of those in the band, their families and friends in a way that is incidental to their impact on the band and our narrator. The trajectory of the band's social dynamic is a sad one and a lot of time is devoted in describing the sadistic and controlling tendencies of

Don Van Vliet simply because that was the drama of everyday life for a long time . Though fascinating and full of that drama, it is a pretty stressful read . . . especially when you are wondering why anyone would tolerate that type of abuse. You're just reading thinking "Run Away!" It is clear that these musicians were dedicated to creating what they felt would be a very unique and powerful musical statement. I really liked hearing Doug Moon's take on their early material and comparing it to my opinions. Regarding the A and M sessions that brought us the Diddy Wah Diddy cover, he complained about the choice of "Moon Child" as the follow up single saying that "Frying Pan" would have been superior. I agree that "Frying Pan" would have been terrific but I love "Moon Child". One of my favorite tunes is Kandy Korn. French spends a good bit explaining the origin of that jam which occurred in a relatively collaborative spirit. . . so that was cool. It was great getting a feel for the opinions and perceptions of band members like Moon and Alex Snouffer and John French himself. The book has a lot of information about Don. . . he is at the center of the narrative and you can see his brilliance and limitations. It's not flattering overall but I think the words of the book reflect authentically what the author and his bandmates felt. Bill Harkleroad's "Lunar Notes" is also a good read. 11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Man, I wanted to love this book...By A. SykoraDear Drumbo, We love your music all the pain you endured working with Don but I got to ask; DID YOU EVEN THINK TO HIRE AN EDITOR. This 'book' rambles on on with large meaningless chunks of interviews with some guy or another who went to high school with Don can't quite remember what kind of shoes he wore. Do not let a cover pages fool you, this is not a book. It is endless pages of notes interviews with absolutely no cohesion at all! And its dull as hell. A masterful musician, one of the few truly innovative drummers of all time I am sure a really nice man, John French is not an author. Boom, for real. 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. An idiosyncratic book about an idiosyncratic personBy Charles PlattThis is the story of a deeply idealistic, naive young musician who went through a couple of years of humiliation, deprivation, and sometimes physical abuse. Viewed from this perspective, the book is a valuable document describing how a young person can be victimized by a charismatic, domineering cult figure. And, yes, the Magic Band during the Trout Mask Replica did have a very strong resemblance to a cult. If you just want to know about the music, you may find this book frustrating. Containing more than 850 pages of very small print, it drowns the reader in detail. On the other hand, the obsessional detail is appropriate to the subject matter. It's a fascinating document, and based on an afternoon and evening that I once spent with Don Van Vliet, John French's breathtakingly honest, unflattering portrait of the man seems accurate. More to the point: I think John French's most recent CD, City of Refuge, is utterly brilliant. And you can download it as an MP3 from .

Few names carry such formidable mystique and rabid cult status as Captain Beefheart, who led various lineups of his Magic Band to make some of the most startling, ground-breaking albums of the last century. In 1982, he retired to concentrate on painting, leaving the mythology he'd stoked himself to grow untamed over the years. John French is better qualified than anyone to talk about Beefheart, joining the Magic Band in 1966 at the age of 17 just before recording their Safe As Milk debut album, finding himself plunged into a tyrannical regime which would dominate his life for the next 14 years as he played a major role in eight subsequent albums, including translating the mindblowing avant-blues assault of 1969's Trout Mask Replica into readable music for the Magic Band from the Captain's piano poundings under torturous conditions he likens to a cult. Spanning nearly a thousand pages, French's remarkable memoir starts with a vivid description of the rarely-documented early 60s Lancaster garage-rock scene which also spawned names like Ry Cooder and Beefheart's childhood friend and later nemesis Frank Zappa, whose appearances in the book will enthrall his own legion of fans. As his spellbinding, often shocking tale unwinds, he encounters names including jazz giant Ornette Coleman, Jim Morrison and Paul McCartney, writing with dry, sometimes surreal humour and disarming honesty about his old boss and even himself, occasionally bringing in his old Magic Band comrades to jog his memory. The book is packed with new revelations, many previously-unseen photos and enough anecdotes to keep the Beefheart faithful ruminating for years, French finally crystallising and bringing to life over 40 years of legend and speculation in what has to be the ultimate book on the mercurial genius of Captain Beefheart.