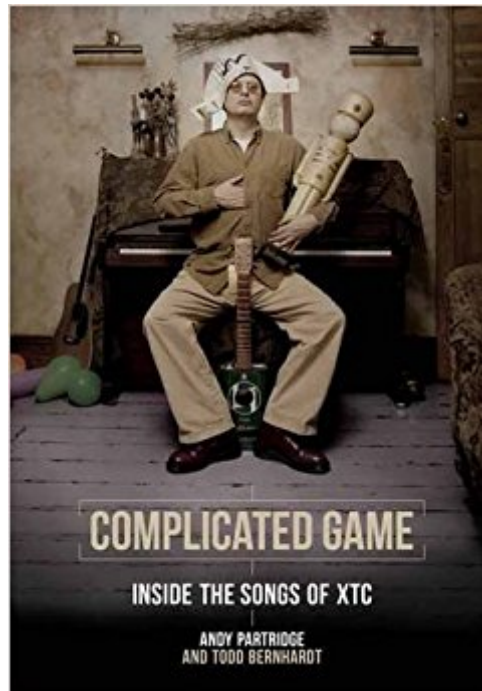




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# Complicated Game: Inside The Songs Of XTC



## Synopsis

"I like accidents. I like to put myself in the way of musical harm. I like being at the wheel of that musical car, and aiming it at the wall, just to see what shape the car's going to come out. It might come out an interesting shape that would have taken me forever to decide on otherwise." *Complicated Game* offers unique insight into the work of XTC founder Andy Partridge, one of Britain's most original and influential songwriters. It is also an unprecedentedly revealing and instructive guide to how songs and records are made. Developed from a series of interviews conducted over many months, it explores in detail some thirty of Partridge's songs - including such well-known singles as 'Senses Working Overtime' and the controversial 'Dear God' - from throughout XTC's thirty-year career, as well as an extensive interview dedicated solely to the art and craft of songwriting. While the interviews cast new light on the writing of lyrics, the construction of melodies and arrangements, the process of recording, and the workings of the music industry, they are also filled with anecdotes about Partridge, his XTC bandmates, and their adventures around the world - all told with the songwriter's legendary humour. This fascinating book also includes pages from Partridge's songwriting notebooks and reproductions of his original artwork designs; a guided tour of his hometown of Swindon; and a foreword by Steven Wilson, the guitarist, songwriter, and record producer best known as the founder and leader of Porcupine Tree.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Andy Partridge's body of work is the deepest, strongest, and most interesting of any songwriter of

the last 40 years. He is intensely influential because he is a musician's musician. We, the faithful, know this to be fact, and now have this set of probing interviews to dig into, to perhaps get a sense of how this brilliant madman thinks, works, and creates. On behalf of XTC fans, Partridge fans, Music fans - thank you for this book. - DAVID YAZBEK (THE FULL MONTY, DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS, WOMEN ON THE VERGE OF A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN)"If you think you know what makes Andy Partridge tick-and if you believe you're read, heard and/or gleaned everything there is to know about the music of XTC-prepare to have that belief system blown to smithereens. Every one of these gloriously comprehensive interviews is loaded with valuable information that will deepen and enhance your understanding of this fascinating man and his unremittingly beautiful, inspiring music-and give you a thousand hearty belly laughs in the process. And all hail Todd Bernhardt for a constant line of well-informed questioning-representing well the hardcore XTC fandom without stepping over into sycophancy, he knows precisely how to elicit the kind of priceless nuggets of information fans are starving for." - MIKE KENEALLY (FRANK ZAPPA, SCREAMIN' JAY HAWKINS, ANDY PARTRIDGE)"Chock full of fascinating information from the mind of one of the most brilliant songwriters of our time. No one else does what Master Partridge does. This book tells us why." - ADRIAN BELEW (KING CRIMSON, DAVID BOWIE, TALKING HEADS)"Delving deeply into history, process, harmony, rhythm, and lyrics, this vivid and insightful tome contains the very conversation I wish I could have with Supreme Musical Strategist Partridge. He and Todd Bernhardt have handed us a treasure trove of juicy detail that is easily the ultimate XTC geek-fest!" - GREGG BENDIAN (ORNETTE COLEMAN, TODD RUNDGREN, ZOOT HORN ROLLO)"A phenomenal blow-by-blow account of the behemoth that is the XTC scrapbook. As a teenager, I was knocked out from note one by Andy Partridge & Co. From the blistering, amphetamine-paced early records, to the slanted perfection of Black Sea, Mummer, The Big Express, and so on - these records illustrate the endless possibilities of recorded music. The exceptional song craft and emotional range rarely give you what you expect, which is something I always appreciated. I owe a tremendous debt to Andy for his lead-by-example definition of a true maverick. Read this book." - JASON FALKNER (JELLYFISH, THE GRAYS, BECK)"Like Todd, I LOVE XTC! I had the pleasure of seeing the band twice in 1980, and later had the unique opportunity of spending weeks with them in the studio. (Dare I say, it was almost like being in the band!) I know first-hand how obscenely brilliant these gents are, and take great delight in reading the details of songs that meant so much to me. This great reference book is going on the shelf next to my dictionary. Vive la XTC!!!!" - PAT MASTELOTTO (MR. MISTER, KING CRIMSON, XTC)"Todd's book has gone into some serious detail here-it is indeed a 'good read'. Recording Nonsuch was a career highlight for me; I'd have to have been an

idiot to screw up material as great as that! A big 'thank you' to XTC for asking me to play with them - 'twas a real pleasure." - DAVE MATTACKS (FAIRPORT CONVENTION, NICK DRAKE, XTC)

Born in Malta but raised in Swindon, England, where he still lives, Andy Partridge is a singer, songwriter, and guitarist. He is the founder of the internationally renowned new-wave group XTC, with whom he recorded fourteen widely acclaimed albums--among them *English Settlement*, *Drums and Wires*, and *Skylarking*--during a career spanning four decades. Todd Bernhardt has played, recorded, and toured with a number of bands based in the Washington DC area. He also has years of experience in corporate communications and freelance writing, having created pieces for *Modern Drummer* magazine and a number of other music-related publications. He's proud to be the father of two wonderful children, lover of a beautiful woman, and friend of Andy Partridge.

Andy Partridge's enthusiasm for discussing his work is infectious, and he never fails to respond to Todd Bernhardt's questions with some combination of wit and self-effacing reflection and brutal honesty. He denies being too knowledgeable about the technical aspects of music-making and songwriting, but I think he underestimates himself on that. He's a songwriter and musician who thinks deeply about how to convey his ideas in words and music, and his memory of decades gone by serves him well. For me, it's a real page-turner. Great questions from Bernhardt that will satisfy the most hardcore fan, and also an entertaining overview of Partridge's town of Swindon in the introduction by John Morrish. Some cool visuals, too, from Andy's notebook.

A unique insight into the mind of one of the most influential songwriters of the last 40 years. This book takes the form of a conversation between a writer (and uber-fan) and the musician - and delves into the place and time that shaped each of a number of songs written and performed by XTC. A must-have for fans of the band.

If you're an XTC fan or just a fan of the musical producing process, this is an incredible book. The book is incredibly easy to read as it is conducted in a question and answer format. Andy Partridge's friend Todd Bernhardt asks Andy a question (in bold) and Andy comments or answers in a free form reply. Todd seems quite familiar with XTC and Andy and knows which questions to ask Andy and the responses are often quite humorous and/or surprising. It's been a true joy to read this book as it makes Andy and the rest of the band (which Andy often heaps plenty of praise upon) more real to those of us who have never seen them in concert. (Especially important since XTC stopped touring

in the early 80s)The only drawback to this book is that it left me wanting more. There are certain songs that I wanted to hear about which Todd and Andy never got to. But who knows? Maybe if this book is popular, they'll get around to writing "Complicated Game, Vol 2" :)

Excellent reading! Get inside Andy Partridge's world and mind throughout the pages of this book. 5 out of 5 stars!

If you're an Andy/XTC fan, this is a fun read. I would have picked about 1/3 different songs to discuss. I would have focused more on the guitar picking patterns and voicings, chord shapes and harmony which, to me, are the most original parts of his music. Some chord charts / pictures illustrating some of what he's describing, especially when alternate tunings are discussed (though not always clearly), would have made the book ideal for me. That said, Andy is such an original artist and brilliant lyricist that this little window into the way his mind works is worth the price of admission.

This book ain't Shakespeare but Partridge comes pretty close to Lennon and McCartney sometimes. I've loved XTC since I discovered them in the 80's and was always bummed that I never got to see them perform. But some of the insights into Andy's songs almost make up for that. Thanks Andy!

This is a collection of interviews focused on specific XTC's songs along time, it's great to have such first hand impressions and memories about those songs directly from Andy, and the author really has in-depth knowledge regarding those songs, so he gets the best from him. I guess this is just for hardcore fans, even though there is a story behind as time goes by and very much related to the Swindon origin and places where those songs were conceived. There will be always a lack of enough information about XTC, and that's also true regarding its music and available video stuff. Don't miss a minute and get your copy, and don't get discouraged by the starting chapter where you'll get a sort of Swindon sightseeing, a need in the opinion of the author.

This is not only a great book about Andy Partridge and XTC, it is a book about the process of songwriting and mechanics of recording. There are many incredible stories and a wealth of detail available about the bits and pieces that go into his style of songwriting, it's hard not to come out of with ideas and a new perspective. Done in interview style by the very knowledgeable Todd

Bernhardt, this book is made all the better by Todd's experience as a recording artist and songwriter. I highly recommend this book.

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