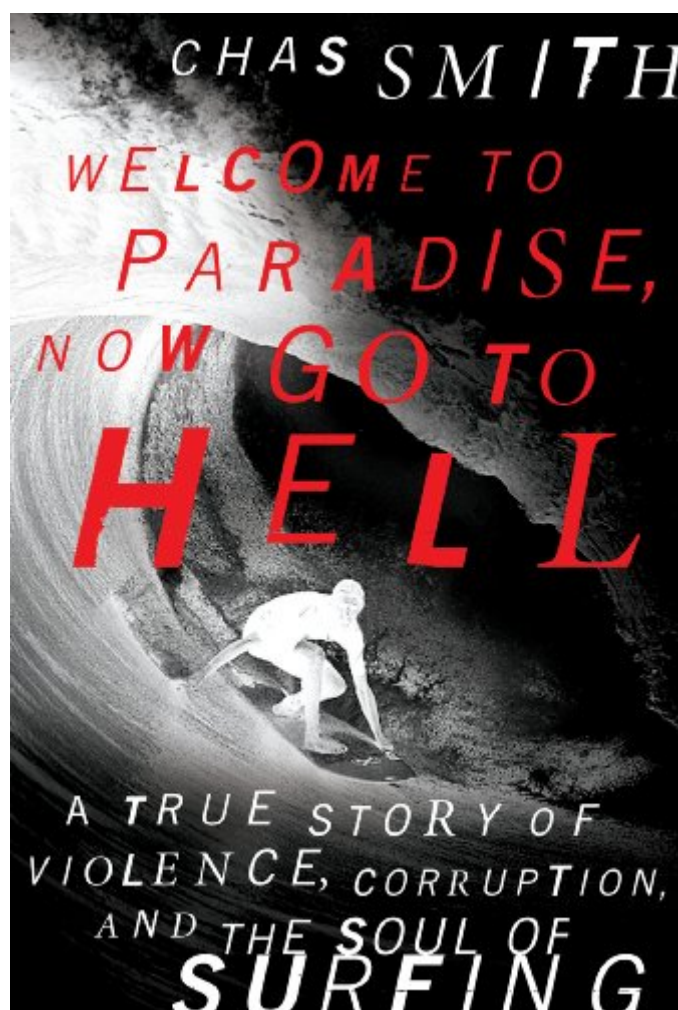


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# Welcome To Paradise, Now Go To Hell: A True Story Of Violence, Corruption, And The Soul Of Surfing



## Synopsis

A finalist for the PEN Center USA Award for Nonfiction *Welcome to Paradise, Now Go to Hell*, is surfer and former war reporter Chas Smith's wild and unflinching look at the high-stakes world of surfing on Oahu's North Shore—a riveting, often humorous, account of beauty, greed, danger, and crime. For two months every winter, when Pacific storms make landfall, swarms of mainlanders, Brazilians, Australians, and Europeans flock to Oahu's paradisiacal North Shore in pursuit of some of the greatest waves on earth for surfing's Triple Crown competition. Chas Smith reveals how this influx transforms a sleepy, laid-back strip of coast into a lawless, violent, drug-addled, and adrenaline-soaked mecca. Smith captures this exciting and dangerous place where locals, outsiders, the surf industry, and criminal elements clash in a fascinating look at class, race, power, money, and crime, set within one of the most beautiful places on earth. The result is a breathtaking blend of crime and adventure that captures the allure and wickedness of this idyllic golden world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

After building a large pile of rejected reads on my bedside table this past month, finally I was gripped by *Welcome to Paradise*. I loved the fast paced, wry style that kept me alternately laughing, thinking, questioning, and cringing throughout my marathon reading session. I loved the twisting blend of history, surfing education, and adventure story. I loved being thrown into a world so unfamiliar to me and coming out the other side feeling an unearned intimacy. I loved having my illusions of Hawaii burst and being reminded that EVERYTHING, even paradise, has a seething, raw, underbelly feeding it. As someone who prefers to take her danger in literary form, I'm grateful for this virtual wild ride into uncharted territory. Couldn't put it down.

The subtitle of this book is 'A True Story...' and it likely is mostly true. I think the author took some liberties with time and events but likely not in a way to alter it much. Any surfer has more than a passing familiarity with the North shore even if he has never been there for it is surfing's most sacred ground. All who have surfed there, or attempted to, or who have kept up with the scene are also aware of its peculiar form of unofficially sanctioned frontier justice. Some would call it localism, but this is a far more highly evolved system of justice, retribution and surf socialism that has evolved around the world's most iconic waves in one of the world's most iconic tropical paradises, and Chas Smith has come to town to break it down for the lay reader....and does a really good job of it. After giving us a taste of who he is: Thrill seeker, Journalist, Crap stirrer, Dandy, Surfer, World Traveler, and so on, the author proposes to take us on a journey through the labyrinthine inner workings of North Shore's high stakes, big wave surf scene. The problem is one of a finite resource, the world's best waves; a discrete area, seven miles of prime surfing; a near-infinite source of filthy lucre, corporate purveyors of globally consumed surf-themed goods, a put-upon minority with huge muscles, steely nerves, amazing physical skill and few compunctions about resorting to violence; the self-proclaimed rulers of their beloved, besieged surfing kingdom. The solution is an unarmed mob, roughly organized into an elite cadre of enforcers meting out justice based upon a rough calculus that takes into account the respect one has earned on the North Shore, surf-cred, corporate sponsorship, indigineity, the ability to take it and dish it out, and social connections. Underlying this is a subculture of drugs and ripoffs of various kinds done by people often not directly involved in the surf scene but who are woven into the social culture through blood ties and affiliation. What Mr. Smith has done is to paint us this picture through observation and through the eyes of various larger than life characters who are the key players in the scene. Even though he makes it read like a story, this is almost an ethnography based upon the Hawaiian big wave scene circa 2009. The book is a really fast and easy read and it holds one's attention all the

way through. This is because the author is an excellent raconteur. Technically, he's only mostly literate though, and I'm shocked that Harper Collins didn't give him a better editor. For, the book is littered with numerous errors obviously resulting from over-reliance upon a spell-check program, and the author's unfamiliarity with word usage in general sometimes trips him up, e.g. on page 208 he uses the words compliance and implicit when he means complicit, with this sort of thing occurring throughout the book. At first it is jarring and then irritating. Still, the author makes a valiant attempt at literary flight by directly referring to Joseph Conrad and Jacques Derrida, and my hat goes off to him for that. This is a book I really looked forward to receiving because I've been engaged in a lot of rather dry reading of late and wanted a change. This was just the tonic. I received it yesterday morning, began it yesterday afternoon and finished it yesterday night with the thought that it would've been a wonderful accompaniment to a transpacific flight, indeed.

Chas Smith's ego is outrageous and interferes with what he is writing about...surfing. something he probably doesn't do well and has no business writing about or sticking his nose into...go back to Syria tough guy! book was boring and didn't even get into the nitty gritty of the North Shore like it claims to...kept reading hoping to get to some point where he talks about witnessing big name surfers and their drug habits or specific examples of violence but he is obviously afraid to talk about the real guys and only gets into what most surfers already know...waste of time and money only reason I got thru it was cuz I was stuck on a plane and it was the only reading material I had....BORING

Good book to get a first hand view of how the North Shore surf culture works. Chas has a strange writing style. He likes to talk about his fashion taste and hair cut a lot, which is strange. He definitely sounds overly metro-sexual. But it is kinda funny at times. Over all I really enjoyed reading this book and recommend it for surfers.

This book is an easy and thrilling ride. I enjoyed every bit of it, aside from the somewhat confusing chapter names, it is rich in its story of Hawaii and for anyone who has been to the North Shore does an incredible job of reminding you how hellish and beautiful it is all at the same time. I have been there many times and felt this was an accurate description and much more fun than the place itself. I love Chas Smith's funny fashion elements and his ability to be cocky and endearing at times. His flow has a distinct style and in a time where there is a lack of journalistic integrity I appreciate Smith's ability to recognize his own battle with dark influences of corporations and the empathy he

provides for the Hawaiian's feeling fiercely protective of their land. He actually humanizes some of the darker forces that dominate "country" and gives you a true inside peak as to why things are they way they are and maybe that's just how it's supposed to be. This book is a great read for surfers but ESPECIALLY for non-surfers who want to know why this place and these people create a hellish paradise.

I could relate to everything that happened in this book.. I lived on Oahu for eight months in 1970.. This book put me right back to that time and events similar to those of the author.. If you are unaware of the deep down distrust, hatred for us coming to "their" Island Paradise, you will be in for a rude awakening if you stay awhile.. Many rules unspoken but learned the hard way... Good reading... Bad memories mixed with the beauty of the islands..

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