



## With Nails: The Film Diaries of Richard E. Grant

*Richard E. Grant*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online ➔](#)

# With Nails: The Film Diaries of Richard E. Grant

*Richard E. Grant*

## With Nails: The Film Diaries of Richard E. Grant Richard E. Grant

First comes Grant's first big break, the starring role in Bruce Robinson's *Withnail and I*, the cult film that set Grant's career on a path bound for stardom—"I had no notion that, almost without exception, every film offered since would be the result of playing an alcoholic-out-of-work actor." Like Dante's Virgil he guides the reader through the hell of the making of *Hudson Hawk*. He knows he's an insider when Carrie Fisher reminds him, "You're no longer a tourist, you're one of the attractions." This heady mixture of eating spaghetti with the Coppolas, window-shopping with Sharon Stone, and working with and learning from the best actors and directors in Tinseltown will be irresistible to anyone who loves movies or aspires to be a Hollywood player.

## With Nails: The Film Diaries of Richard E. Grant Details

Date : Published March 1st 1999 by The Overlook Press (first published 1996)

ISBN : 9780879519353

Author : Richard E. Grant

Format : Paperback 304 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Biography, Culture, Film, Autobiography, Memoir, Diary



[Download With Nails: The Film Diaries of Richard E. Grant ...pdf](#)



[Read Online With Nails: The Film Diaries of Richard E. Grant ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online With Nails: The Film Diaries of Richard E. Grant Richard E. Grant**

---

## **From Reader Review With Nails: The Film Diaries of Richard E. Grant for online ebook**

### **David says**

My Japanese-fiction-athon was to have lasted until the end of the month, but I'm ending it early to read "With Nails" as a tribute to Richard Griffiths who died yesterday.

=====

He's too kind! These nails are trimmed. Still fun, and interesting about how movies get made, but not a bitch-fest.

---

### **Rachael Ryan says**

Really enjoyed this book. REG is a great communicator, and it translates well to the page. Stories on the sets were touching, hilarious, and surprising.

---

### **Eli says**

I have been a fan of this film diaries project since I read it upon its 1998 release, having been a big fan Richard Grant's performances in two Bruce Robinson films (*Withnail & I* and *How to Get Ahead in Advertising*) as well as his smaller roles in films like *The Player*, *LA Story*, and *Dracula* to the schlock fests of *Warlock* and *Hudson Hawk*. I most enjoyed this book the first time I read it, as it seems to lose its luster upon subsequent reads (I had forgotten Grant's excessive use of ALL CAPS). However, I would still recommend this to anyone who is a Richard Grant fan or enjoys the backstage tales of Hollywood. He has a great knack for capturing other Hollywood characters in all their glory, while never shying away from self-deprecation. Here are some highlights (with the chapter heading included so you have an idea which project it is about):

#### **Withnail & I:**

Two pages into the script and an ache has developed in my gonads – I am both laughing out loud and agonized by the fact that the *Withnail* part is such a corker that not in a billion bank holidays will they ever seriously consider me . . . Never before or since have I read something that conveys what goes on in my head so accurately. (pg. 11)

#### **Henry and June:**

His [Kevin Spacey] rage is mercifully waylaid by Batman's shortcomings, which he delineates with the precision of a neuro-critic, and which diverts me from my chestful of mucus and makes me laugh. Which spurs him on to even greater heights. I recognize this syndrome all too acutely and wonder whether having a brontosaurus-sized moan is common to every human or whether it is a particular specialty of actors. (pgs. 85 – 86)

LA Stories:

They [Steve Martin and Victoria Tennant] mutually conclude that I am missing that cranial ‘organ’ which censors ‘thought’ before it hurtles out of my mouth. No doubt confirming my RELENTLESS-ness. On a GOOD day, this comes out as comedy, but on others turns me into a fucking five-act TRAGEDY. (pg. 110)

Hudson Hawk:

‘HI, HONEEEE.’ She [Sandra Bernhard] has an instantly discernible trademark sigh, which insinuates itself through her speech and loping walk as if everything is slightly exhausting and demanding, and that whatever she is doing now is somehow keeping her from something she would rather do. Whether it be hair rollers, mascara, the freeway, photo sessions, Reagan, Haiti, Madonna-questions, global warming, it’s all a bit too much to handle. All of which makes her funny. (pg. 139)

The Player:

The collective salaries normally demanded by the stars who have agreed to do a day or two on this film would budget at around \$110 million. Why do they do it for ‘nothing’? For LOVE? For Bob [Altman], which is one and the same thing. (pg. 215)

Dracula:

The pleasure of working with [Tom] Waits. Like jazz riffing. No vanity. No ego on show. Just lets it go. (pg. 241)

The Age of Innocence:

Dinner with three other English thesp. The reason for us imports playing locals is that Marty [Scorsese] says it is easier for English actors to play this kind of Class and Society strata than it is to find American actors who would have to act it . . . The characters in Wharton’s novel are mostly Anglophiles anyway. Plus, English actors are that much cheaper to hire than their American equivalents. This cynical assertion is quipped between Alec McCowen, Jonathan Pryce, Stuart Wilson and myself. All of us are here on the same minimal movie wage – for Marty! (pg. 263)

---

### **Sean Kennedy says**

One of the best showbiz autobiographies around, Richard E. Grant speaks through the page as if you are having a drink with a good friend and telling the craziest stories. The section on Hudson Hawk, and all its Hollywood extravagance and egotistical rampaging, is worth the price of purchase alone.

---

### **Antonomasia says**

This would have been completely fabulous if I were more interested in Hollywood. I had some reservations for a while, thinking I preferred it when I knew less about Richard E. Grant and had the image of him as

Withnail-but-sober, but by the end I was completely won over by his wonderful blend of OTT campness, anxiety and moments of witty bitching tempered by his self-awareness and fundamental human decency. He made me interested in material I wouldn't otherwise have cared for. Straight afterwards starting a similarly structured diary-memoir by Belle & Sebastian frontman Stuart Murdoch - in style pretty dull and earnest, and seems unlikely to change - really showed me what entertaining and likeable company Grant is. (Writing about the UK music scene in a style like Grant's, now that would get 6 stars from me.)

Regardless, there is too much about Steve Martin. He's a good friend of Grant's; it's just that I find anything to do with Steve Martin terminally boring, with the exception of three films.\* (This review replaces a less complimentary one I wrote during a Steve Martin chapter.)

I've had copies of *With Nails* kicking about since university, but only started reading at the start of last year to hear more about Bruce Robinson. Then after about p.100 I ignored it for ages because of, you guessed it, Steve Martin. There were more snippets about Robinson afterwards, it turned out.

Other than *Withnail & I*, the films I most liked hearing about were ridiculous fantasy adventure *Warlock*, which I hadn't heard of before and now want to see, *Henry & June*, one of those things I've always meant to watch but never quite got round to, and camp comedy *Hudson Hawk* (chapter also includes high-octane diva madness from Sandra Bernhard, Sharon Stone and a couple of shouty minor actors). Even if you aren't one of the select few who regard *Hudson Hawk* as a hugely fun cult film, and not a turkey, this chapter contains so much ridiculousness, it's a great read.

The weirdest thing, though, was reading that Grant was the first choice to play the Sheriff of Nottingham in *Robin Hood: Price of Thieves*. R.E.G. is every bit as good a scene-stealer as Alan Rickman, so objectively it would have been interesting. But that film was out in the cinema when I was just the right age for things to imprint on me strongly, and even more strongly because it's not like I would have talked to anyone about something so weird and confusing as finding aspects of a villain sexy ... different casting and it might not have imprinted and bits of my lovelife would have been different. A surreal reminder of how, generally, little decisions in the entertainment world can have such an effect on audience members, especially the early-teen/pre-teen. (Grant narrates a wonderful account of a humungous boyhood crush on Barbra Streisand, and his later experience of being introduced to her at a Hollywood party, gabbling ridiculously at her.)

Most of the people gossipped about in *With Nails* are 80s & 90s Hollywood staples. (There's also an interesting scene at home with Madonna. Unfortunately the bit about *Spiceworld* mentioned in the blurb for some editions is missing from my copy.) I had high hopes for the chapter on *Prêt-à-Porter* when he reeled off a list of fellow cast-members I was much more interested in, including Lauren Bacall (whom he also met at a dinner in an earlier chapter, and who sounds ace whenever she's mentioned), Sophia Loren, Anouk Aimee and Marcello Mastroianni - but there was very little about them, and in any case this was 30+ years later than their heyday.

In the end this was definitely worth it for the writing, and for Grant's rare mixture of diva-ness and genuine congeniality.

-----

How have I managed to exist in this country for the last 15 years without knowing that R.E.G. starred in a BBC adaptation of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*?! (my favourite book for a while when I was younger.) It's on Netflix (US); will have to watch that soon.

\* As far as I'm concerned, Steve Martin has made nothing good since the 80s. I love *Planes Trains and Automobiles*, *The Man With Two Brains* and *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid*. (I'd seen *Dead Men* three times before I watched any film noir proper; as a result I find it difficult to view even many classics of the genre as anything but self-parodic, and laugh at inappropriate moments.)

---

### **Kiri says**

Yep, it's official, I could not love this man any more. I am relieved that he is as deliciously eccentric in real life as he is on the screen. I read the section on *Withnail and I* with such gluttonous pleasure, I kept re-reading passages for their sheer perfection. The simple fact that Grant is teetotal in real life and yet played the best pisshead to ever live - is nothing short of genius. Not only did I love the madness behind the scenes of my favourite ever movie, I was bowled over by the personal tragedy that marked his life at the very same time. My heart kept exploding at these tender moments, where he so beautifully described the loss of his stillborn child. His yearning for his deceased father to see him garner success was particularly heart wrenching too. I literally laughed out loud at his take on the ridiculous world of celebrity. He is utterly hilarious and has such a way with words. If only all diaries were like this!

---

### **F.K. says**

Funny, relatable, astute and moving.

---

### **James Lark says**

A book which dives into the razzmatazz of the filmmaking, Hollywood and superstar celebrity could easily try one's patience, but this one makes for an immensely enjoyable read, thanks in no small part to Richard E. Grant's wide-eyed, childish delight at the glitzy, over the top world he finds himself in. His enthusiasm rockets off the page, and though it's hardly a disciplined piece of prose, somehow his hyperbole and caps lock excitement perfectly communicate the madness around him, even though some of what he describes is impossible to picture.

For any film buffs the triple whammy of working with Altman, Coppola and Scorsese will provide all sorts of fascinating insights, but best of all is the chapter on Hudson Hawk and the sheer insanity of that whole experience. But it's also unashamedly personal - intensely so, at times. In the middle of the opening chapter detailing the experience of making *Withnail and I*, he floors you with an account of the stillbirth of his first child, and although there are undoubtedly details left out and there is surely a degree of artifice in his careless candour, it really feels as if he's giving you full access to his life.

He makes shrewd observations about the craft of filmmaking and acting, owning his shortcomings and insecurities with disarming honesty, and managing to spin many an entertaining yarn about some very big name celebs. They presumably had to sign off on these occasionally quite juicy details and the fact that he gets away with it is a mark of the extent to which he presents them as human beings - it never feels like gossip for gossip's sake, but part of a bigger picture that he is doing his best to paint as fully as possible, warts and all.

A really likeable read, then, and it would take quite a cynic not to come out of it with greater admiration for the man and his work.

---

### **Danielle says**

I've never seen or heard of *Withnail*. Was only vaguely aware there is an actor named Richard E Grant. Came across this one referenced in a forum and read it specifically to read about the horribad that is Hudson Hawk (a staple on TBS when I was growing up). Did not disappoint. Author's writing style is a bit colloquial and I had a difficult time understanding the sheer Britishness of it.

---

### **Basia Korzeniowska says**

VEry enjoyable, wittily written and has had the effect of making me want to see some of the films, which I had never heard of! *Henry and June* is one of them

---

### **Elliot Richards says**

In a word, entertaining. Fascinating insight and dare I say it treads personally familiar ground on general acting anxiety. I really enjoyed how personal it felt, and with the humour, it was a really good read, disappointed that it had to end, it's made me dig out some of his films to watch again anew!

---

### **Robert says**

This book is ideal for anyone interested in the day-to-day business of being a working Hollywood actor. It also helps to be a fan of Richard E. Grant and to be familiar with his body of work, which this book details from 'Withnail and I' in 1987 to 'Prêt-à-Porter' in 1994 (though the epilogue touches on REG's performance in 1997's unforgettable 'Spiceworld').

*With Nails* is basically a collection of REG's journal entries from his time working on these films and in-between acting gigs. The entries are a little disjointed and tangential at times, often going on at length about minutiae, but sufficiently entertaining to make the book a pleasurable and breezy read. The book is peppered with anecdotes and vignettes that illustrate the comedy in both the technical aspects of being involved with a big-budget film and the hectic world of a minor celebrity. It also gives an interesting picture of the Hollywood scene of the late eighties and early nineties, capturing the infancy of the "blockbuster" action film, Steve Martin's mid-career renaissance, the tabloid sensation around Gary Oldman/Winona Ryder/Uma Thurman, etc.

REG is a fantastic narrator: honest, modest, and often hilarious. He is enough of a normal guy to see the inherent wackiness of Hollywood, offering us an insider's look without coming across as an insider at all. Again: highly recommended, but only for people who like Richard E. Grant and have seen at least a few of the films detailed within.

---

## Godzilla says

I really enjoyed the start of this book, but what made it so enjoyable in the beginning began to pall by the end, hence a 3 star rating.

Some reviews seem to focus on the use of CAPITALS throughout the book - which seems a petty point to me. Ok, perhaps he could have used italics or embolden the text instead, but perhaps you just need to work through these aversions people?

The book starts strongly: depicting his struggle as an actor, then through a quirk of fortune he gets a break: *Withnail and I*.

For me it's a great movie: very little happens, but the dialogue and performances are compelling.

Grant is then thrown into the showbiz vortex, and some great anecdotes and insights tumble forth. However, although he seems to maintain his grip on reality, the nature of the "business" really started to grate on me.

There are some wonderfully comic moments interspersed too: his meeting with Barbara Streisand, his childhood heroine, is awkwardly hilarious.

There are some great insights into the workings of some great directors, and the awful backstabbing, insecure world they circulate in.

The book fades for me though, as Grant becomes more embroiled in this world he seem to have less of a focus on his family; sure, they're mentioned, but not in the same terms as the book opens with.

It's an interesting window on a world I have no desire to be a part of.

---

## Babs says

I think how you get on with a book depends, to an extent, on what you're feeling at the time you read it. Over the past few weeks I've been very busy and reading time has been at a minimum. Usually at times like this I need a book which will grab me and will keep my attention for a while. Unfortunately this book didn't, and I struggled to read 2 or 3 pages a night before falling asleep (hence why it's taken me so long to read!)

The book is a chronicle of Richard's (AKA "REG") time on his first few films up to "Pret a Porter". However, as a chronicle it was intensely annoying that he didn't include years in his dates which made it nigh on impossible to get a time frame for what was happening. Especially as he kept "name dropping" big stars who were around at the time. Having a year to put them in context would have been useful. And REG does like his name dropping!! The whole way the book is written makes him seem like an innocent bystander in his life who just "happens" to be an actor having lunch with Madonna, or Sharon Stone, or Steve Martin, or Antony Hopkins ("Tony") ... ugh! He seems to take no responsibility for what is going on and instead lets life wash over him. He starts the book off with some very personal information regarding his wife and first child, but the life of his second child is largely ignored and she only pops up now and again when "family

come to visit". I'm sure he's not really so passive in real life, but there's no evidence to the contrary in the book.

He constantly refers to himself as "the Swazi" which is nails-on-blackboard annoying, and the RANDOMNESS of CAPITALISATION and italicising (I may have made that word up ...?!) throughout the book is equally grating. May I also suggest that if REG is to write a follow-up, his editor sends him a big bag of "I"s, "We"s, "They"s, "She"s and "He"s as REG very rarely uses a pronoun in a sentence (and a book on sentence construction wouldn't go amiss either!)

As an author, REG is a good actor.

---

### **John Macey says**

A fast, funny, and entertaining read. Great journal of an actor on his way up in Hollywood.

---