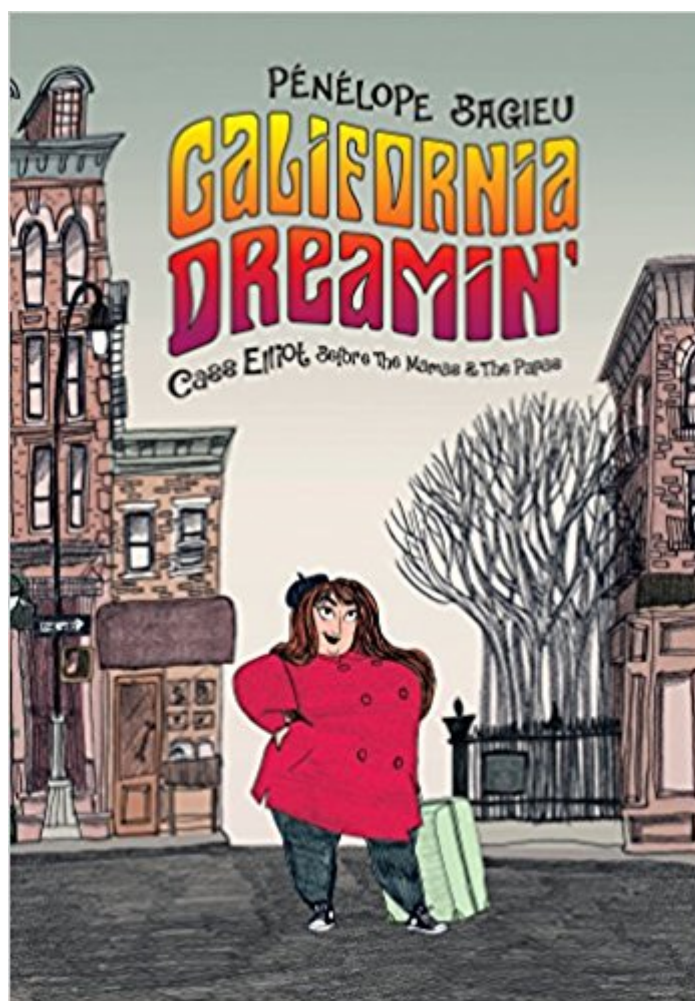


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# California Dreamin': Cass Elliot Before The Mamas & The Papas



## Synopsis

California Dreamin' from Penelope Bagieu depicts Mama Cass as you've never known her, in this poignant graphic novel about the remarkable vocalist who rocketed The Mamas & the Papas to stardom. Before she was the legendary Mama Cass of the folk group The Mamas and the Papas, Ellen Cohen was a teen girl from Baltimore with an incredible voice, incredible confidence, and incredible dreams. She dreamed of being not just a singer but a star. Not just a star—a superstar. So, at the age of nineteen, at the dawn of the sixties, Ellen left her hometown and became Cass Elliot. At her size, Cass was never going to be the kind of girl that record producers wanted on album covers. But she found an unlikely group of co-conspirators, and in their short time together this bizarre and dysfunctional band recorded some of the most memorable songs of their era. Through the whirlwind of drugs, war, love, and music, Cass struggled to keep sight of her dreams, of who she loved, and—most importantly—who she was.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[Bagieu's] drawings are suffused with delight . . . Exuberance and sadness coexist in her drawing style, as they coexist in the character of Cass Elliot—whose every moment of joy and perseverance seem to overlay deep loneliness and vulnerability." —The New York Times  
"If a graphic novel can be thought of like a three-minute pop song, then French author Penelope Bagieu wisely holds a beautiful epiphany well past the two-minute mark. The timing is sublime." —The Washington Post  
"Bagieu's drawings are superlative: soft

pencil lines that convey detail without constraining her figures and that animate the characters' exuberant facial expressions." *The Paris Review* "Bagieu's drawings bring Cass brilliantly to life, making her look full of energy and life and incredibly fashionable as well." *Bust* "...this graphic novel brings her [Cass Elliot] story to life in vibrant color." *Bustle* Praise for *Exquisite Corpse*: "Pénélope Bagieu has mastered a magic trick, and it is this: Somehow, even as she suspends our disbelief, she can turn paper into flesh. And ink becomes lifeblood...her characters not only breathe and pulsate with vivid life. They also seem entirely, organically authentic in their own skin." *The Washington Post* "Wonderful . . . her cartooning style is a sheer delight." *Mental Floss* "Recommended for older teen collections, this superb addition is sure to be a future graphic novel classic." *School Library Journal*, starred review "Her pencil-sketched characters are distinctive and emotive (and occasionally high and big-eyed), while their lively world is storybookcute and highly referential to the music Cass made so familiar." *Booklist*

Pénélope Bagieu was born in Paris in 1982, to Corsican and Basque parents. She is a bestselling graphic novel author and her editorial illustrations have appeared all over the French media. She blogs, drums in a rock band, and watches lots of nature shows. *Exquisite Corpse* was her first graphic novel to be published in the United States.

If you're a fan of Mama Cass aka Cass Elliott, never got into her or don't know who she is, this is a great book. Bagieu's artwork is great, somewhat recalling Jules Feiffer and his "Sick, Sick, Sick!" work and the narrative is from several points of view about the woman with the big voice - family, friends, fellow musicians. The author clearly has a deep love for Cass Elliott and it shows. Must read.

Brought to you by OBS Reviewer Scott The Mamas and the Papas were a musical phenomenon of the sixties and it was the song *California Dreamin'* that propelled them to the charts. Enter the year 2016 and the song is still being played and enjoyed by new generations of listeners. Behind that phenomenon was Mama Cass (nee Ellen Cohen) the singer who was multitalented and could hold her own against even the pop stars of today. *California Dreamin'*: Cass Elliot before the Mamas and the Papas, (hereafter *California Dreamin'*) is a well-researched, fictionalized story of Mama Cass, from childhood to success. The graphic novel is satisfying in this way as you are left

*California Dreamin'* is a novel about the life of Cass Elliot (who adopted that name after a fallen friend) would have acted from her youth right into the period before the Mamas and the Papas became a household name. It pulls glimpses from her past, for instance, her parents' love of opera; her singing talent debuting at a young age; and perhaps the driving force: her determination to be a star. *California Dreamin'* paints an almost surreal atmosphere throughout the novel, and captures the essence of sixties counter-culture and drug culture movements and the commune ideals of the time. Cass is depicted in all these social movements, on her way to becoming the iconic voice of the Mamas and the Papas. The writing is a little over the top, though, switching narrators, intrusive dialogue and other nit-picky things I could go on about; the important part is that it works in the end. The art is incredibly loose, almost pen scribbles on paper. Simplified form and shape make this style work well with the subject at hand. The free spirits of the sixties come alive in this (incredibly) loose style much in the same way *The Yellow Submarine* simplified the Beatles. Using a very eclectic style makes this story flow the more you read. I'll have to admit though it was awkward in the beginning getting used to it. Once you get over this threshold you begin to understand why the art is done the way it is. Bagieu can draw but her choice to almost leave pencilled roughs in for a more realistic style is part of the appeal of the story. There is no glamorization of figure and form just as Mama Cass didn't mind the way she looked, or anyone else looked, for that matter. Overall, *California Dreamin'*: Cass Elliot before the Mamas and the Papas is a go-to book on Mama Cass' early life. There is a list of biographical research at the end if you're still in the mood for more. Lovers of that sixties feel good vibe; that anti-authoritarian, drug-inducing, pre-rock star way of life; or fans of Mama Cass and her work with the Mamas and the Papas or her five solo albums afterwards. In any case you can land right here and pick up the authoritative graphic novel of one of the sixties greatest contributions.

This is one of those books that's going to mean much different things to you depending on how old you are. I grew up in Texas in the 50s, a much bigger fan of Jerry Lee than of Elvis, and I had no use at all for those floppy-haired guys from England with all their "yeah, yeah, yeah." And then I went to Northern California for a

couple of years in the early '60s just as beach-rock and folk music was being invented. I saw Baez in concert. PP&M came and played on campus for free, just for laughs. But all that was nearly swept away, as far as I was concerned, by The Mamas and the Papas doing "California Dreamin'." one of the most gorgeous renditions of one of the most heart-grabbing popular songs EVER. And Cass Elliot was the heart and soul of the group. French artist Bagieu only started doing graphic novels a few years ago (and Mama Cass had been gone for nearly a decade before Bagieu was even born), but she made her mark with *Exquisite Corpse*, and now she's done it again. The thing is, John and Michelle Phillips, plus Denny Doherty and Cass, spent their entire time as a group trying hard to destroy their own success. They gave the impression of a happy family living and making great music together, but the tension was considerable, the personal and professional betrayals were frequent, and it's amazing they lasted as long as the three years they were able to manage. Bagieu follows Ellen Cohen, daughter of a semi-successful deli-owner in Baltimore from her childhood through her self-reinvention as Cass Elliot and her escape to New York, to 1965 and the group's arrival in the big time. Cass was a very high-powered personality, funny, self-denigrating about her weight in self-defense, in love with Denny from the start, and the one who tried hardest, I think, to hold things together. And she had a voice in a million. The author tells the story of these four volatile personalities in a way that will keep you absorbed, and which (if you're my age) may teach you a few things you never knew. A gorgeous book.

I still read comic books and love biographies. A truly terrific combination of the two is "California Dreamin': Cass Elliott Before The Mamas & The Papas" by Penelope Bagieu. Superlative story-telling and 266 pages of brilliant b&w art panels produce what undoubtedly will be in my Top 10 reads for '17. Genuinely discovered lots of new characteristics about Mama Cass in a presentation as close to a movie as is possible to get whilst reading. So good, I put the book back on my "get-to" stack to re-read rather than on my shelf of finished books. My highest recommendation.

I knew little about "Mama Cass" from The Mamas & The Papas and this graphic biography was an excellent look into the life of one badass, fat-positive, Jewish lady who found success despite what the world wanted her to be. Bagieu's style really lent itself to portraying her in an appealing, accessible light. Perfect for fans of the band, of music history, and of girls who don't look the norm succeeding because they choose to do so for their damn selves.

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