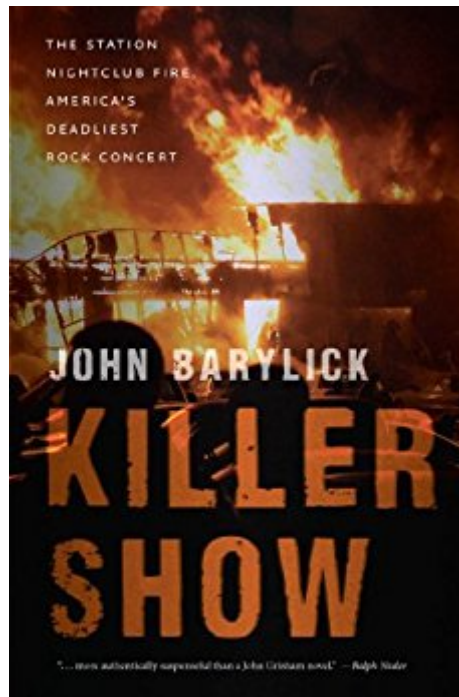


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# Killer Show



## Synopsis

On February 20, 2003, the deadliest rock concert in U.S. history took place at a roadhouse called The Station in West Warwick, Rhode Island. That night, in the few minutes it takes to play a hard-rock standard, the fate of many of the unsuspecting nightclub patrons was determined with awful certainty. The blaze was ignited when pyrotechnics set off by Great White, a 1980s heavy-metal band, lit flammable polyurethane egg crate foam sound insulation on the club's walls. In less than 10 minutes, 96 people were dead and 200 more were injured, many catastrophically. The final death toll topped out, three months later, at the eerily unlikely round number of 100. The story of the fire, its causes, and its legal and human aftermath is one of lives put at risk by petty economic decisions by a band, club owners, promoters, building inspectors, and product manufacturers. Any one of those decisions, made differently, might have averted the tragedy. Together, however, they reached a fatal critical mass. Killer Show is the first comprehensive exploration of the chain of events leading up to the fire, the conflagration itself, and the painstaking search for evidence to hold the guilty to account and obtain justice for the victims. Anyone who has entered an entertainment venue and wondered, "Could I get out of here in a hurry?" will identify with concertgoers at The Station. Fans of disaster nonfiction and forensic thrillers will find ample elements of both genres in Killer Show.

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## **Customer Reviews**

I am a survivor of the Station fire. I have worked extensively with family members and fellow survivors for the past 9 1/2 years in fundraising and offering financial and emotional support. With that being said, I truly felt as though I knew all there was to know about the fire as well as the people it affected. I have lived and breathed it since the very first night. I was wrong. I have been asked countless times to talk about that night and tell people what "really happened". I now intend to point them toward this book. It is a comprehensive and educational account of the facts surrounding the fire and the aftermath. You could read hundreds of newspaper articles (and there are certainly hundreds) that would not give you the concise and accurate information found here. I applaud John Barylick and his fellow attorneys for this daunting undertaking and the hard work they put in in order to bring some sense of comfort to those affected. Attorneys are often vilified for "taking advantage" of a situation. Those involved in this case (the majority) did it for the right reasons. Without their perseverance and tenacity, so many of the victims' families and survivors would have added financial decimation to their already devastating emotional and physical losses. I encourage you to educate yourself by reading this book. Remember the loss of life and those who will live with the physical and emotional scars forever. Remember what happened, and honor those lost, by helping to make sure it never happens again.

As a building code consultant, I would make this a "must read" for architects, contractors, interior designers, building owners, business owners, fire and building inspectors, attorneys, insurance inspectors, and anybody associated with the design, construction, operation, maintenance, and regulation of buildings. It is an anatomy of an event that should not have happened. The book explains the ignorance, arrogance, negligence, and greed that came together to create a setting that, once ignited, would kill and injure so many. Particularly interesting is the detailed post-event posturing of key players and the ensuing legal battles. The author adds sufficient technical detail to explain why things happened the way they did--why the fire was so intense, why the smoke was so thick, and why the exits failed. And finally, the personal stories, which make The Station Nightclub fire more than just a statistic in the history books. The personal stories add a human dimension to

the event that should cause people to think that the decisions they make could have consequences that can affect the lives of others.

The day after the Station Fire, I remember thinking : "How could 96 people (later, 100) die in a nightclub fire in America in this day and age?". This book answers it. It answers it so clearly, and with such an emphasis on the banality of greed and laziness that set the tragedy in motion, I feel like I was naive before reading it. It leaves you feeling that it is probably going to happen again somewhere else. The description of the fire is riveting. The stories of individuals that night will leave you saddened, impressed, and infuriated. So will the stories about the actions of individuals in the days, months and years following the fire. The tone of cowardice and selfishness, sometimes bordering on evil, of some of the people responsible is stunning. The one exception here is Daniel Biechele, the band manager who unwittingly set the event in motion, who took full responsibility for his part from almost the moment it happened. Sadly, his story is the rare one here. It is not all gloom and doom, however. The inspiring stories of the survivors, and the amazing ability to forgive of survivors, and some of the victims' families, adds a bit of sunlight into an otherwise dark tale. The book is told in a fast paced, informative style that covers every aspect of the fire, from what led up to it, how the building's layout played a part, to the science of fire and how it was a lopsided race between the quick-moving fire and the people trying to escape it. The author has a personal stake in the story (he represented victims), but even with a few asides that leave you no doubt as to his true feelings for some of the particulars, he delivers a pretty straightforward, compelling and excellent accounting of a terrible tragedy. An accounting that one hopes will act as a cautionary tale for future situations similar to the one that led up to this fire. However, after reading how this horrific night in Rhode Island happened, I am doubtful.

Last week I happened upon the author being interviewed on NPR. I ordered the book the same day. This is a masterpiece because in 244 pages, Mr. Barylick provides a richly detailed (and often gruesome), suspenseful and educational book. I would not have thought a 244 page book could cover so much information in a way so breathtaking and easy to understand. There are haunting stories of survivors and those not able to get out of the fire alive. There is some Rhode Island politics, history of fire codes and statutes involved in tort law. A very informative section on the requirements of tort law and why it works (however slowly) the way it does. There is not one page in this book that feels like a classroom lecture. Killer Show is the very definition of a page turner. As the author states near the end of the book: " The mere telling (or retelling) of interesting stories,

however, is not a very lofty goal if no useful lessons can be drawn from them. A tragedy like the Station fire should, if nothing else, force us to examine how we conduct our lives and businesses". I can't recommend this book enough. One of the most well written books I have ever read.

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