



## July, July

By Tim O'Brien

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### July, July By Tim O'Brien

“Insidiously, compulsively readable.” — MSNBC

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With humor and a sense of wistful hope, *July, July* speaks directly to the American character and its resilience, striking deep at the emotional center of our lives.

“A symphony of American life.” — *All Things Considered*, NPR

“A small-scale tour de force by an American original . . . O’Brien is one of the most accomplished members of a generation of writers that includes Don DeLillo and Thomas Pynchon.” — *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

“Astonishing for [its] clarity of character, for [its] narrative thrills and surprises, for [its] humor and hard-won wisdom . . . *July, July* gives readers plenty of reasons to celebrate.” — *Chicago Sun-Times*

“Perceptive, affectionate and often very funny.” — *Boston Herald*

“A deeply satisfying story . . . O’Brien is intelligent and daring, but he is also eminently accessible.” — *O, the Oprah Magazine*

“Taut and compelling.” — *Los Angeles Times Book Review*

“Beautifully realized, heartbreakingly honest.” — *Providence Journal-Bulletin*

“Almost impossible to put down.” — *Austin American-Statesman*

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

Like *The Big Chill*, National Book Award winner O'Brien's latest novel is about a group of college students from the radical days of the late 1960s. Assembled years later, the friends and acquaintances go through the usual motions of reminiscing, regretting, lustng, laughing and crying. Unlike the gang from that 1983 movie, though, this group is not brought together to mourn the death of a mutual friend but rather a 30-year class reunion. Yet they're still mourning, lamenting their lost youth, vibrancy, ideals, looks and health. Among the ruins, however, they find old friends, common struggles and rekindled passions. Although this is more a group of interwoven short stories or character studies than a traditional novel, O'Brien (*The Things They Carried*) fully fleshes out each character with aplomb. Actor and experienced audiobook reader Sanders offers a smooth and knowing delivery. His cynical, dry, yet humorous tone perfectly matches O'Brien's prose. The surface of this comic tale seems jaded and despairing, but sympathy, camaraderie, solidarity and love run deeply throughout.

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#### From Library Journal

The 30th reunion of Darton Hall College gives O'Brien the chance to play with a host of troubled characters. If you think you've seen this before, you're right: it was excerpted in *The New Yorker* and *Esquire*.

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#### From Booklist

"What Went Wrong," the deadpan title of one O'Brien's chapters, could be the slogan for the class of 1969, gathered in *July, July* for their 40th reunion. There's drinking, dancing, and groping, but the cheer is false; what's real is divorce, addiction, dashed hopes, boredom, mental illness, and failing bodies. The revelers' dialogue is witty, but their youthful contempt for any sort of spirituality has not aged well. They seem shallow and, bereft even of their good looks, irrelevant. A few have children but take no pride in them. They have no social conscience. They aren't worried about global warming. In fact, there is little of interest to say about the reunion, but thankfully, O'Brien breaks off from the festivities to flesh out individual lives. There's the lonely senior center activities director in Tucson, whose repressed lust draws her into a mawkish but effective horror story south of the border. One of O'Brien's most attractive characters steps from the pages of his now classic *The Things They Carried*: a Vietnam vet--and amputee--who tries to silence the voices he hears with drugs. There's the bored suburban wife who flies away for an affair and then must deal with her lover's death; and the couple on their honeymoon, who hit a lucky streak at a casino, only to discover they aren't even slightly in love. In fact, *July, July* is a terrific story collection, but as a novel, while it is not exactly a failure, it disappoints. Maybe that's because the mirror O'Brien holds up to these folks in their fifties reveals only narcissists. *John Mort*

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**Bruce Delvalle:**

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