



**Poppy, Jeffrey**  
**FULLFILLING EMPTINESS**  
**WITH THE TIMES**  
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Memoir of a substance-abusing singer-songwriter reveal a harrowing path to self-acceptance.

Poppy started his life tenuously. Born the last child to a mother who was warned not to have another, doctors waited on standby to perform a complete blood transfusion on the newborn. Poppy avoided the operation just as he has ducked the many threats to his life since, including a cliff-dangling car accident, a head injury that left him unconscious for two days with maggots tunneling into his wound, dementia and alcoholism. A singer-songwriter, Poppy begins with the lyrics to a song—a total of 28 compositions are interwoven throughout 13 chapters that chronicle the author’s unsteady journey. All the songs are included on a two CD set that accompanies the book. Using a pleasant, country-western-tinged voice to croon melodic tales of love and life, Poppy proves to be a much better singer than writer. His smooth tenor evokes emotions that are buried in his clunky, elementary prose. Songs such as “Shaky Ground,” with the lyrics “walking around on solid ground/the soles of my feet feeling every pebble / seems like I’m always on the decline winning life’s uphill battle,” neatly illustrate core issues that take him several chapters to tediously explain. Despite many grammatical and spelling problems, the essence of Poppy’s triumph over a cycle of abuse and destruction shines through. Saddled with an abusive alcoholic father, the author gradually repeats the pattern laid out for him until winding up a homeless drunk. Plagued by dementia and three ex-wives, Poppy enters psychiatric rehab though adult-protective services. In an attempt to break free of his stifled life, he heads to Amsterdam and starts writing poetry. There, the creatively energized Poppy enters a song-writing contest and garners first runner-up. This, along with the pride he feels for the accomplishments of his daughter, are the simple joys of his life. Although filled with many instances of sadness and pain, there are few traces of regret or bitterness in Poppy’s account. He’s grateful for life itself, and his sincerity overshadows the limits of his writing.

An uneven combination of songs and prose that reflect lessons many self-help fans would appreciate.

