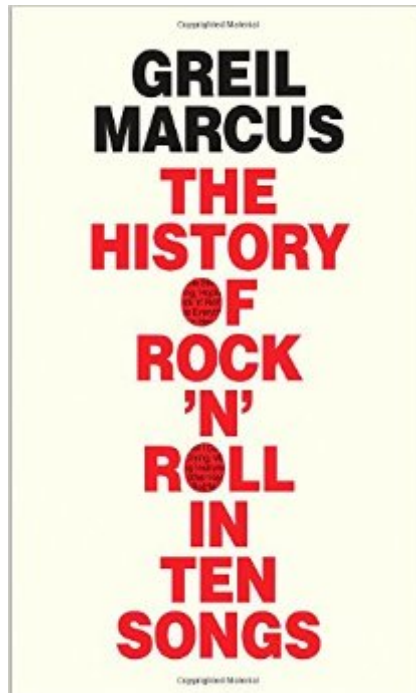


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# The History Of Rock 'n' Roll In Ten Songs



## Synopsis

One of our finest critics gives us an altogether original history of rock & roll. Unlike all previous versions of rock & roll history, this book omits almost every iconic performer and ignores the storied events and turning points that everyone knows. Instead, in a daring stroke, Greil Marcus selects ten songs recorded between 1956 and 2008, then proceeds to dramatize how each embodies rock & roll as a thing in itself, in the story it tells, inhabits, and acts out—a new language, something new under the sun. • *Transmission* • by Joy Division. • *All I Could Do Was Cry* • by Etta James and then Beyoncé. • *To Know Him Is to Love Him*, • first by the Teddy Bears and almost half a century later by Amy Winehouse. In Marcus's hands these and other songs tell the story of the music, which is, at bottom, the story of the desire for freedom in all its unruly and liberating glory. Slipping the constraints of chronology, Marcus braids together past and present, holding up to the light the ways that these striking songs fall through time and circumstance, gaining momentum and meaning, astonishing us by upending our presumptions and prejudices. This book, by a founder of contemporary rock criticism—and its most gifted and incisive practitioner—is destined to become an enduring classic.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

• This could be Marcus's most inviting book: Emotion paces erudition, and the present gets to ride shotgun with the past, real and imagined. • Will Hermes, Rolling Stone (Will Hermes Rolling Stone) • Marcus is our greatest cultural critic, not only because of what he says but also, as with

rock-and-roll itself, how he says it.âDavid Kirby, *The Washington Post* (David Kirby *The Washington Post*)âIn his new book, which is surely one of his best and most beautifully written, Marcus revisits ten songs, recorded during the last sixty years, some of them long forgotten, in order to capture the pulsating and powerful language of rock &#39;n&#39; roll. . . . The book, I am certain, will compel readers to return to the songs Marcus has anointed, and to others. Even if they have heard them before, they will listen to them as if for the first time.âGlenn C. Altschuler, *The Huffington Post* (Glenn C. Altschuler *The Huffington Post*)âMarcus, of course, is one of the epic figures in rock writing. . . . Like so many of Marcusâs previous books, *The History of Rock â Roll in Ten Songs* often feels like a tone poem or perhaps a written embodiment of the cultural memory. âHe flows through the songs and musicians he loves as if creating a waking dream crowded with the stars of rock history.âTourÃ©, *The New York Times Book Review* (TourÃ© *The New York Times Book Review*) You could go to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and take in the artifacts and roll call or you can read Greil Marcusâs kinetic, pulsing, brilliant history of this deeply American art form, *The History of Rock â Roll in Ten Songs*. From his choice of which ten songs to explore to his invention of a kind of a listenerâs lexiconâa new way of bending sound to languageâMarcus captures why Rock and Roll resonates down to our bones. âWALTER MOSLEY (Walter Mosley) "When I was 18 and leaving home for college, my brother put one thing in my hand: a copy of Greil Marcus&#39;s *Mystery Train*. It changed my life. More than 20 years have passed, and he&#39;s still the Don, still connecting caves. He&#39;s as good on BeyoncÃ© in this new book as he was on Harmonica Frank back then, but the range of associations is wider, the mind making them deeper, and the deceptively jazzy precision of his prose sharper. He&#39;s a treasure."âJOHN JEREMIAH SULLIVAN (John Jeremiah Sullivan) "Greil Marcus lingers inside a song, following it from the first utterance to the last note, through performances across time, to give us the context, meaning, and interpretation not only of the song but of peoples and nations as well. His is an unconventional, fearless chronicle of the famous and the less well-known, the sacred and the profane, of the limitations and full-blown possibilities."âFARAH JASMINE GRIFFIN (Farah Jasmine Griffin)âRevolutionary.âElissa Schappell, *Vanity Fair* (Elissa Schappell *Vanity Fair*)âMarcus ingeniously retells the tale of rock and roll as the undulating movement of one song through the decades, speaking anew in different settings. . . . Marcus brilliantly illustrates what many rock music fans suspected all along but what many rock critics have failed to say: rock â roll is a universal language that transcends time and space and reveals all mysteries and truths.âPublishers Weekly, *Starred Review* (Publishers Weekly, *Starred Review*)âMarcus is a great prose stylist, fun to read even when heâs spinning his

wheels, and often " there's no telling when he will pick up speed and zoom off into unexpected territories." Evan Kindley, The Los Angeles Times (Evan Kindley The Los Angeles Times) Cultural critic Greil Marcus's new book, The History of Rock & Roll in Ten Songs, goes beyond a simple list of tunes that define a genre. Marcus uses each of the songs as a jumping off point to write about an era, a time, place or emotion, and that's the least of it. Leah Garchik, The San Francisco Chronicle (Leah Garchik The San Francisco Chronicle) Marcus springs free of linearity and chases associations across decades and from music to books, movies and other art forms that at once raise the question of what rock & roll is and answer it. . . . Marcus is, at his best, the music critic equivalent of Gore Vidal when Vidal was also at his best: an essayist whose digressions are as intriguing as his main points and who almost always connects the former to the latter. Jon M. Gilbertson, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Jon M. Gilbertson Milwaukee Journal Sentinel) Greil Marcus hears things no one else hears. He translates fleeting moments of sound into historical fantasy, extrapolating poetry from what may have been just another day in a recording studio. . . . It may take longer to read Marcus's dissection of a two-minute pop song than it does to listen to the source material, but it's often worth it. Michael Barclay, Maclean's (Michael Barclay Maclean's) The book is really a series of essays, cunningly chiselled, lovingly woven, bold, tough and illuminating, the intention being to feel one's way through music as a field of expression and as a web of affinities. Mark Ellen, New Statesman (Mark Ellen New Statesman 2014-09-29) The History of Rock & Roll isn't a rational or defensible history of rock & roll. That's the point. The narrative fluctuates according to every listener's unique experience. Sam Lefebvre, East Bay Express (Sam Lefebvre East Bay Express) For Marcus, every great song is a Rosetta Stone, an esoteric code. This approach gives him great imaginative, literary breadth . . . Out of Marcus's dozen or so books, Ten Songs is the purest distillation of his ideas . . . The chapters on Joy Division, on Buddy Holly, and on the two "Money" songs are tours de force. Carl Wilson, Slate (Carl Wilson Slate) Another allusive, entertaining inquiry by veteran musicologist Marcus. . . . [He] does what he does best: make us feel smarter about what we're putting into our ears Kirkus, starred review (Kirkus 2014-03-31) A great essay begins with a theme and then makes it fly. Greil Marcus can make it soar. In The History of Rock & Roll in Ten Songs he does just that. He says of Amy Winehouse that she could unlock a song. Marcus unlocks rock & roll history to find more than you ever thought might be there. Jenny Diski (Jenny Diski 2014-03-31) I first heard Elvis in early 1956 in a school corridor in Norfolk, England. I knew something profound had happened.

Where was Greil Marcus back in those Dark Ages to explain to me what was going on? He knows everything and tells an electrifying story.âSTEPHEN FREARS (Stephen Frears)&#39;Overall, it&#39;s a stunning, virtuosic performance, as good as any and better than most of what Greil Marcus has written since 1975&#39;s genre-redefining *Mystery Train*. It&#39;s a hectic, wild and occasionally bumpy ride, loaded with trapdoors and wormholes leading to unexpected places where you never quite know who you&#39;ll confront next, and where you&#39;ll immediately yearn to hear every record to which he alludes.&#39;âCharles Shaar Murray, *Literary Review* (Charles Shaar Murray *Literary Review* 2014-10-01)âMarcus is a man in brainy love with the music. I donât know of anyone else who writes as beautifully, and deeply, about songs and singing.âRoddy Doyle, *The Irish Times* (Roddy Doyle *The Irish Times* 2014-10-25)âThe title of the US criticâs latest playful, erudite and passionate work, *The History of Rock n Roll in Ten Songs*, should come with lurid neon inverts around each constituent part: âThe Historyâ of âRock ânâ Rollâ in Ten âSongsâ. Itâs a magnificently subjective history, in which significant chunks are set outside the realm of rock, in pop or soul.âKitty Empire, *The Observer* (Kitty Empire *The Observer* 2014-10-19)âLike Leslie Fiedler, Greil Marcus is a critic for the ages.â There arenât many writers Iâve learned more from, nor many whose word for word and sentence for sentence writing I enjoy more.â *The History of Rock ânâ Roll in Ten Songs* is among his richest work, perhaps his most heartfelt.â Like *Mystery Train*, itâs something we will be learning from, that will give us new ways to think about the sounds that have filled the worlds around us and the worlds inside us, for years to come.âMIKAL GILMORE (Mikal Gilmore)&#39;True musos need little introduction to Marcus, whose meditations on the rock and pop canon have delighted many. . . Here, he is at his most ambitious and obtuse, defying the obvious choices to map an alternative history of popular music.&#39;âLouis Wise, *The Sunday Times* (Louis Wise *The Sunday Times* 2014-11-30)&#39;His accounts of listening to these songs, of being transported in unearthly directions by them, show him to be as bewitched by this music as he ever was. . . *The History of Rock ânâ Roll in Ten Songs* might have been a truer name for his latest inspired, wonder-struck book.âPaul Genders, *TLS* (Paul Genders *TLS* 2014-11-14)âNo writer puts you inside the experience of music the way Greil Marcus does. His descriptions of songs, especially, unfold like thrillers or romantic rhapsodies, sucking you in and revealing aspects of each beat or vocal trill that you&#39;d never have noticed on your own. As the most esteemed music writer of his generation, Marcus has made a career of challenging conventional wisdom on everything from Elvis to punk to Bob Dylan&#39;s *Basement Tapes*. . . . It&#39;s so much fun to let him drag your brain onto the dance floor.âAnn Powers, *NPR.com*

(Ann Powers NPR.com) "Try telling a teenager who's just heard 'Black Dog' for the first time that rock 'n' roll is dead. Marcus knows it's not. He maps recordings, re-recordings, and performances as if they're veins belonging to the same body, warm and breathing and very much alive."

• "Lara Zarum, Bookforum.com (Lara Zarum Bookforum.com) [A] wonderfully alive book."

• "The San Francisco Chronicle, best of the year 2014 list (The San Francisco Chronicle) Winner of the 2015 Deems Taylor Virgil Thomson Award in Music Criticism, given by the American Society of Composers, Authors & Publishers. (Deems Taylor Virgil Thomson American Society of Composers, Authors & Publishers 2015-09-25)

147; Another allusive, entertaining inquiry by veteran musicologist Marcus. . . . [He] does what he does best: make us feel smarter about what we're putting into our ears."

• Kirkus, starred review Q: How did the idea for the book come about? A: My editor Steve Wasserman wondered if I'd write a history of rock 'n' roll. I thought it was a terrible idea, that it had been done to death, well and poorly, that there was a finished and accepted narrative that rendered any retelling of the story redundant and pointless. But, then I thought: What if the book was nonchronological, discontinuous, and left out almost everyone who couldn't be left out (Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, James Brown, Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, Aretha Franklin, the Sex Pistols, Michael Jackson)? What if it neglected the well-known, iconic moments (the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show, Bob Dylan going electric), and centered instead on a small number of songs, each of which in its own unique way embodied rock 'n' roll? That interested me; and the idea became this book. Q: Isn't this a ridiculous conceit? A: Sure. The premise of the book; trying to ascribe the entire history of a form containing hundreds of thousands of exemplars into ten; is fundamentally absurd. That's what makes it fun. "Maybe we could hold a contest to see what ten songs readers would choose to sum up this history. The prize would be a copy of this book for the winner to tear up. Praise for Lipstick Traces: "Lipstick Traces has the energy of its obsessions, and it snares you in the manner of those intense, questing and often stoned sessions of intellectual debate you may have experienced in your college years. It was destined, in other words, to achieve cult status."

• Ben Brantley, New York Times Praise for Mystery Train: "A classic. . . . Full of passion and intellectual fervor."

• Michiko Kakutani, New York Times

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