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Ramones: An American Band



Synopsis

The authorized story of an American band who shaped the history of music for generations. Today's new music-makers are looking back at the bands that broke the ground, and the Ramones are it: the original high priests of punk, the stars of rock 'n roll high school, the royal avatars of rock, raunch, and rebellion. 60 photographs and illustrations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Music journalist Bessman's closeness to his subject--he is a good friend of the members of the Ramones--has both positive and negative effects on his authorized history of this seminal American band, famous for knowing only three chords and for playing everything as fast as possible.

Bessman has great access to details such as the Ramones's mistrust of the Talking Heads--"a bunch of intellectuals"--with whom they toured Europe. But it also means that he sometimes misses the ironies and inconsistencies in their behavior, like the fact that members of a band whose lyrics include the infamous line "Well I'm a Nazi, schatzi, you know, I fight for the fatherland" claimed that their work had no political content. The "four guys from Queens" who formed the original group in 1974 seem to have been truly without pretensions, which makes Bessman's overheated interpretation of their achingly simple lyrics just silly. Bessman's theory is that the Ramones were always poised on the brink of stardom but missed out due to the mistakes of others, i.e., the release of one of their best-known songs, Rockaway Beach, during the winter and the poor distribution of their only film, Rock 'n' Roll High School. Photos. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This journal of the "Grateful Dead of punk rock" is well paced, streamlined, and tautly built. It pulses home its main point with fierce precision: that the durable yet quirky band has earned a place in the annals of rock'n'roll history. The book chronicles the lives of the band members with a cold eye, depicting everything from the tragic flaws (drug addiction, personality disorders) to their dedication to their style of music: three-chord punk rock songs that so viscerally capture the teenage angst of suburban youth. The author argues that the Ramones symbolize the breakout from the stranglehold of disco music and the salvation from the self-congratulatory babbling of progressive rock (e.g., bands like Emerson, Lake, and Palmer and YES). The Ramones recaptured the essence of rock'n'roll, and their rewards included a feature film (*Rock'n'Roll High School* , 1979). Inspiring and often hilarious, this book is appropriate for libraries with extensive music or rock history collections.

--Mike Tierno, New YorkCopyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The first Ramones book I bought and still my favorite! from other books I read it's pretty accurate and detailed like manager's MonteMelnick's book. Johnny's book is his version of events and seems bias so it's okay but this one is better. It has some pictures butnot enough but it's still a interesting and very good read for all Ramones fans.

I have to say, Jim Bessman did a pretty good amount of research to get some of the information in this book. But the data does not compare to all the stuff featured in the book "Hey Ho, Let's Go: Story of The Ramones", but it doesn't fall flat all together.I originally got this is in mid 2003, but didn't take up reading it until late 2003. Anyways, it does have a fare amount of info- the only Ramones book to talk about the hidden demo "Succubus". And since it was the first Ramones book I read, I learned that the show Marky missed in 83' do to being drunk, was actually at my hometown- Virginia Beach, VA. Though other books said it, this was the first of my hearing of it.Bessman goes over all the usual subjects- forming of the band, band members, and etc. He does include a nice array of hard to find, or only found in this book pictures. He includes lyrics from songs and such, but ironically, he lost most of the money he made from this book because he included the lyrics with getting permission! (Nice one Jim) And unlike a few other Ramones books, he goes over the short (2 show) lived band member-Elvis Ramone, AKA- Clem Burke from Blondie. Though, he doesn't cover to much of Richie, or the pre-Joey, Johnny, Dee Dee, Tommy grouping- Richi. But if you read Dee Dee's autobiography, he explains some about Richi, and the "Hey Ho Let's Go" book mentions him to.After reading all English written Ramones books, I've classified them all as "Band Related"-

mainly diving into what went on between everyone as time's went by, "Media Related"- primarily focused on what happened around the band before it came about, while they were together, and what they influenced in this world; also tapping in on record sales, videos made, and such. And finally: "Mixed"- these are the best types of Ramones books, including the inside of the band and the outside. I classify "Ramones: An American Band" as "Media Related", but close to "Mixed". It tells of the band's upbringings and such, but focuses more on the songs themselves than the creators. In relation to this book, I recommend "On the Road With The Ramones"- really great mixed book. Provides more inside info than I've seen any other book about The Ramones have. Plus, a vast collection of photos. Also, "Hey Ho, Let's Go: Story of The Ramones" was very well documented. Though, to finish this up, I have to say that Bessman released this a bit early- making it seem as though The Ramones would have kept touring at least another 10 or so years. But, they broke up about 4 years after this book's publishing. Thanks for reading and have a nice day, Mikey.

That's right, I couldn't put this book down. Well, I was writing a term paper on the influence and etiology of the Ramones, so I kind of had to read it. The book has its strong and weak points. First of all, it is great at giving accurate dates of many important events in the Ramones saga. It also gives a decent historical context for band, although Bessman could have dealt more with how and why the Ramones became popular. The idea of a three chord band emerging from the ashes of Hendrix, Janis Joplin and the late, experimental Beatles is a puzzling reality. The Ramones seem to have appealed to people who were fed up with disco and Led Zeppelin. It is unclear whether the Ramones emerged because they were something or because they weren't something else. Bessman doesn't exactly address this issue, but he gives the reader a great deal of information with which to form his or her own opinion. Lots of great pictures and actual quotes from the band and music reviews make the book vastly entertaining and informative. The hilarious anecdotes about the band are perhaps the most entertaining part of the book. Ramones: An American Band is especially useful for people of my generation, who grew up with 80's and 90's punk and wondered how it all started.

Book Title: Ramones an American Band Author: Jim Bessman Have you ever heard the song Rock n' Roll Radio? Do you know who wrote it? The Ramones, the band that everyone thought was a joke has lasted almost twenty years. This book is about an American band that started a new era of music. Jim Bessman wrote the book with the Ramones and describes how a couple of kids from New York began playing a kind of music no one had ever heard. The critics either loved or hated the

Ramones, but they developed a strong fan following. There were bands that played similar music but not with the fast tempo or chainsaw guitar licks. The lyrics were rough and told about hard times and struggles in New York. The band started in 1976 with four rough looking characters dressed in ripped jeans and leather jackets. The first concert was played at CBGB, short for Country, Bluegrass and Blues. Their style of music was far from what those fans were used to hearing. They're formin' a straight line. They're goin' through a tight wind. The kids are losing their minds. The blitzkrieg bop. That was one of the songs that change punk rock forever. Some even think it was the best song the Ramones had ever written. It wasn't always easy for the band. Some critics hated them and album sales were low, but they never strayed far from their original style. The book was very well written. I learned a lot about the history of the band and a lot of songs that I haven't heard. You never really know how a song is thought of until you read it on paper and hear the story behind it. That's exactly what this book achieved. You don't have to be a Ramones fan to read this book, but you might be when you finish it.

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