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# Love Goes To Buildings On Fire: Five Years In New York That Changed Music Forever



## Synopsis

Punk rock and hip-hop. Disco and salsa. The loft jazz scene and the downtown composers known as Minimalists. In the mid-1970s, New York City was a laboratory where all the major styles of modern music were reinvented—block by block, by musicians who knew, admired, and borrowed from one another. Crime was everywhere, the government was broke, and the infrastructure was collapsing. But rent was cheap, and the possibilities for musical exploration were limitless. *Love Goes to Buildings on Fire* is the first book to tell the full story of the era's music scenes and the phenomenal and surprising ways they intersected. From New Year's Day 1973 to New Year's Eve 1977, the book moves panoramically from post-Dylan Greenwich Village, to the arson-scarred South Bronx barrios where salsa and hip-hop were created, to the lower Manhattan lofts where jazz and classical music were reimagined, to ramshackle clubs like CBGB and the Gallery, where rock and dance music were hot-wired for a new generation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Practically every paragraph about music here is also about something else just as fascinating—race, city planning, ambition, drugs, hair-dos. Braiding intricate research with his own teenage memories, Hermes has a bird's eye view of a great city, and has his ear to the ground.” —Sarah Vowell “By simply putting things in chronological order, Will Hermes shows just how astonishing New York City's music was in the 1970s. But he does more than that: he brings depth and discernment and an eye for odd detail, making his book an essential

work of cultural history. *Luc Sante* "Love Goes to Buildings on Fire is an almost perfect portrait of New York music culture: specific yet comprehensive, enthusiastic yet objective, and as informed as it is personal. The four-page section of what (seemingly) every interesting person in NYC was doing on the night of the 1977 blackout could have been a book unto itself. *Chuck Klosterman* "A must-read for any music lover, Love Goes to Buildings on Fire will no doubt inspire nostalgia in readers who lived through the era, and make those who didn't wish they had. *Liz Raftery, The Boston Globe* "Will Hermes grew up in Queens, but Love Goes to Buildings on Fire, his new book on New York's 1970s music scene, is no nostalgia jag--it's a detailed time-machine trip that zooms in on everyone from the New York Dolls to Steve Reich. *Rolling Stone* "Meticulously researched and engaging. *Eric Beem, The Wall Street Journal* "I thought there was nothing left to say about the seventies NYC music scene, but Hermes puts it all together--punk, salsa, jazz, hip-hop, disco--into a portrait of a city in ferment, with new bubbles of innovation popping up all over. *Dan Kois, Vulture Recommends (New York magazine)* "Revelatory. *Entertainment Weekly (Grade: A)* "There's no mistaking that this book will have a special appeal for people who were exposed to this music when it was developing--mostly those living in New York in the mid-70s--but Hermes does what a good writer does. He makes the rest of us (this writer included) wish we'd been there. *Georgia Young, Paste* "[Hermes] does an expert turn here in his book about the music scene in 1970s New York, moving between musical genres and the human worlds they contained with the light-headed excitement of a bright grad student who's transferring from one subway line to another. *Emily Carter, Minneapolis Star-Tribune* "[A] breathtaking, panoramic portrait of five years . . . that music in New York City was alive, flourishing, and kicking out the jams. *Publishers Weekly (starred review)* "Hermes moves effortlessly back and forth between the various musical genres while interspersing stories of New York at a time when the city was on the verge of financial ruin and moral collapse. *Booklist (starred review)*

"(4 stars) The first book to trace the parallel ascents of every sound born in the city in that dense time--not just punk, disco and hip-hop but salsa, loft jazz, and downtown minimalism... Rich in details and laced with the author's own musical memories, this tells the sonic tale of a city at a low point that finds its creative peak." *Mojo magazine UK* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I bought this book as research for a novel I'm writing. I loved the concept of focusing on this pivotal period in music in New York. And while there are some great nuggets buried in these pages, the fragmented narrative made for an unsatisfying read at times. I longed for an overarching narrative, something to tie this collection of anecdotes together. There really are some lovely gems in here, and I appreciated the exhaustive attempt to document this period in music history. But as another reviewer said, the book lacked both structure and depth.

As some other reviewers have noted, the book jumps around quite a bit. Initially, I found it really frustrating how quickly the author would jump from subject to subject, as I frequently wanted more depth than was provided. However, as the book developed, I found that the pacing of the book really helped reinforce the author's viewpoint of what these times were like, and all of the interesting acts competing for a young man's attention. And, as the book unfolded, there was a lot of depth provided on many different artists/subjects. I also liked that it was not just about the punk movement, but encompassed a wide range of other musics. All in all, a really great read, and very informative. It's really a shame that the Kindle edition was not full to all sorts of links to the different subjects, but there is a handy list at the end of suggested sources to get deeper into some of the subjects.

I've often felt that in the mainstream rock press mainly ignored the advent of Hip Hop and Disco and overstated the importance of Punk Rock. The cultural significance of Hip Hop and Disco often found little appreciation with writers on popular culture. Only in recent years has Rolling Stone magazine begun to take Hip Hop serious for example, a mere 40 years after its conception. Will Hermes book does a lot to place Hip Hop and Disco in the proper context. Not only does he seem to have a fond appreciation of the genres, he places them against a political and social economical backdrop that does a lot in explaining why the genres would grow as big as they did. Such insights were long overdue in writings about popular culture. But the book even goes further than that. Will Hermes restores Bruce Springsteen's place in the early seventies Rock and Punk scene. Because Springsteen became an act of mega proportions it is easy to forget how close he was to acts like the Tuff Darts, the Dictators and the Heartbreakers early in his career when he played the same joints as the Ramones and Patti Smith. Hermes also analyses parallel developments in classical music, Jazz and Latin-American music. Minimalism seems to have been a common trend across the board as a response to the dire economical

times. Will Hermes often writes from the perspective as a fan, tells about his own experiences seeing some of the now legendary acts when they were just coming up, thus adding a contagious flavour to the book. But he also seems to have gone to great lengths to familiarize himself with the genres that did not necessarily play an important part in the soundtrack of his youth. The book portrays a full picture of an era without coming off too academic. Though the book comes off as a bit fragmentary at times I applaud the author in how he avoids creating connections where there are none, but leaves the reader to discover the common thread. Will Hermes has managed an enthusiastic but to the point style, which left me curious for music I would not have considered listening to before reading this book. I highly recommend reading *Love Goes to Buildings on Fire* with a little help from Spotify, mister Hermes and the music will take you on a trip through the Big Apple that by now has (sadly) disappeared.

I bought this for a friend. Everyone captures NYC under a certain light. Will Hermes is no different but the difference is his take is enjoyable.

10/10.

This book is a beautifully detailed account of a very fertile time and place in art and music: New York City the 1970s. Hermes' insights into punk, disco, rap, salsa, as well as avant garde jazz and classical music are enlightening for any music fan. Hermes proceeds chronologically giving a good amount of historical context: local and national politics and news. Very much gives the flavor of 'being there'. Fantastic piece of work.

I lived in NYC during the period covered (1973--79) and he captured the tone, the atmosphere, the craziness, and of course all the music. So thorough, with so many citations. He is an amazing researcher and writer. His style draws you in, whether he is discussing punk or jazz or any other genre. Highly recommend to anyone interested in the 70s or just music in its many forms. He evokes the era!!

exhaustive and fascinating story about a tremendously important moment in both music and NYC

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