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It Came From Memphis



Synopsis

The first book to explore the other, less obvious factors that conspired to make Memphis the birthplace of rock and roll--factors as diverse as TV cowboys, professional wrestlers and Holiday Inns--It Came from Memphis sheds new light on the origin not just of rock music, but the rock and roll lifestyle. 20 photos.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Robert Gordon has performed a valuable service to music history in penning "It Came From Memphis" and correctly amplified attention to names known to cognoscenti but are overshadowed by the overly familiar. Indeed, Gordon could increase his scope for a second and third volume with little trouble. Gordon's focus on the offbeat musical offerings paired with the critically respected Chilton, Dickinson, and Lewis, captures the spirit of Memphis music that emerges in the rich melange of swamp trash culture overlaid with bourgeois convention and its anti-thesis of rebellion. In many ways this is Gordon's point: this music could only have come from Memphis. The casual reader may wonder why this matters, and the simple answer is that between the clean sounds and production values of Los Angeles, Nashville, and New York City, Memphis's Sun Studios, Stax Records, and Ardent Studios emerged as birthplaces of something that was much more than merely "The Memphis Sound." Indeed the Memphis sound could not be circumscribed. Gordon's proper emphasis on the commercially overlooked is also appropriate. For the tragedy of Memphis music is also rooted in its curse: Memphis Music is nearly always damned with commercial failure yet critical success. Today, musicologists speak in reverential tones about Dickinson's work with Ry Cooder,

and hold Big Star 3rd and The Scruffs as mortal products that now abide as music for gods; such is the influence of these masterpieces that lack the airplay and exposure of even Elvis's "Clambake." Commercial success of Memphis music is a binomial model, either you are elder god like Elvis and W.C. Handy, or you have a number one hit record like "The Letter" but still end up a flophouse habitude and washing dishes in New Orleans.

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