



Sells like Teen Spirit: Music, Youth Culture, and Social Crisis

By Ryan Moore

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Music has always been central to the cultures that young people create, follow, and embrace. In the 1960s, young hippie kids sang along about peace with the likes of Bob Dylan and Joan Baez and tried to change the world. In the 1970s, many young people ended up coming home in body bags from Vietnam, and the music scene changed, embracing punk and bands like The Sex Pistols. In *Sells Like Teen Spirit*, Ryan Moore tells the story of how music and youth culture have changed along with the economic, political, and cultural transformations of American society in the last four decades. By attending concerts, hanging out in dance clubs and after-hour bars, and examining the do-it-yourself music scene, Moore gives a riveting, first-hand account of the sights, sounds, and smells of “teen spirit.”

Moore traces the histories of punk, hardcore, heavy metal, glam, thrash, alternative rock, grunge, and riot grrrl music, and relates them to wider social changes that have taken place. Alongside the thirty images of concert photos, zines, flyers, and album covers in the book, Moore offers original interpretations of the music of a wide range of bands including Black Sabbath, Black Flag, Metallica, Nirvana, and Sleater-Kinney. Written in a lively, engaging, and witty style, *Sells Like Teen Spirit* suggests a more hopeful attitude about the ways that music can be used as a counter to an overly commercialized culture, showcasing recent musical innovations by youth that emphasize democratic participation and creative self-expression—even at the cost of potential copyright infringement.

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Editorial Review

Review

“With endearing authenticity and proper reverence, Moore skillfully articulates the brutal social truths that compel young people to create meaning and subculture out of chaos and anomie. Somewhere, Walter Benjamin and the Ramones are slamming through another brilliant set shouting, ‘Hey ho, let’s go!!’ ”
-Donna Gaines, author of *A Misfit’s Manifesto: The Sociological Memoir of a Rock & Roll Heart*

“Moore’s deeply personal take on the historical significance of heavy metal is also a refreshing addition to the independent music canon.”
-*CampusProgress.org*

“*Sells Like Teen Spirit* combines a fascinating ethnography of San Diego’s punk subculture with a profound rumination on the exhaustion of social movements and the emptiness of consumer culture in our society. Moore helps us see how large changes in economics and social relations manifest themselves in seemingly small sites and practices in our everyday lives.”

-George Lipsitz, author of *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music*

“Moore’s strength is his obvious admiration for the bands and genres he highlights. He is a first-class music journalist and historian and when he delves into a particular subculture like the “econo” ethos of the Minutemen, the Dickies use of “snortcore” or Minor Threat’s creation of straightedge, the reader is richly rewarded.

-*PopMatters.com*

"In his book *Sells Like Teen Spirit: Music Youth Culture and Social Crisis*, Ryan Moore brilliantly situates the histories of several musical styles within the political, economic, and social changes that lead to the development of an assortment of rock subgenres. Moore's engaging book is for scholars of youth culture, pop culture, and any who are interested in music history."
-Douglas N. Evans, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*

"Moore successfully positions the culture of white working-class and middle-class youths alongside that of working-class African Americans within the political economy of deindustrialization."-Eileen Luhr, *Southern California Quarterly*

About the Author

Ryan Moore is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Florida Atlantic University.

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