



Secret History of Rock 'n' Roll: The Mysterious Roots of Modern Music

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Sex. Drugs. Loud music. Wild costumes. Dazzling light shows. These words can all describe a great rock concert or a hot dance club, but they were also part and parcel of the ancient cultural phenomenon known as the “Mystery religions.” In this book, author Christopher Knowles shows how the long-dead Mystery religions got a secular reincarnation when a new musical form called rock 'n' roll burst onto the scene. Knowles shows how the Mysteries prefigured subcultures as diverse as Santeria, Freemasonry and Mardi Gras, and explains exactly how ancient rituals and music found their way to the New World. In the process, *The Secret History of Rock 'n' Roll* traces the development of rock's most popular genres such as punk and metal, and reveals how many of rock's most iconic artists fill the same archetypal roles as the ancient gods. You'll see how many of the rituals, customs and musical styles of our postmodern society have stunning ancient parallels. You'll meet history's first pop divas, headbangers and guitar heroes and read the untold story of the Puritan Woodstock. Get ready for a wild ride that will take you from the Stone Age to the Space Age.

Secret History of Rock 'n' Roll: The Mysterious Roots of Modern Music Details

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From Reader Review Secret History of Rock 'n' Roll: The Mysterious Roots of Modern Music for online ebook

Jason says

Not bad. Interesting tidbits mixed with some hokey speculations and conjectures. Felt like it was reaching in an attempt to make connections and prove some sort of synchronicity.

Kara Backlund says

Thorough overview and categorization of many rock bands and artists according to archetypes present in the Greek mysteries. This book doesn't go deeply into the history of any one artist; that would take many volumes. It does just what it sets out to do: connect the dots between modern rock music and its archetypal roots. Is your favorite band Apollonian or Dionysian? Maybe Orphic, or Plutonian? Read this book to find out.

Steve Cran says

Rock and Roll music has affected all of us in one way or another. I too have had my mystical experience listening to some awesome mind blowing album or going to some off the hook concert. Rock music is a spiritual experience with its roots going all the way back to stone age Paganism. Rock and Roll offered it all as did the ancient Pagan religion.

Perhaps it began all the way back in Egypt based as it was on the agricultural cycle as personified by the Osiris cycle. The ancient Egyptians were based on the annual flooding of the Nile as it gave water for their crops. During the year there were times of little water and plenty of water. That meant food. To push this along the Egyptians invented ritual. Osiris was the original Greenman the vegetative God in a shortened version of the story his brother kills him a couple of time and Isis resurrects him only to have him killed again. Horus their son grows up to take revenge and Osiris becomes kindg of the Underworld. Horus was born by the say on December 25. The mystery cults would have rituals to celebrate fertility and crop growth. These involved the consumption of intoxicating substances, orgiastic behavior and loud rhythmic music. There were other festival like this to honor the Gods like in honor of Sekhmet where people would get really drunk and then fornicate in the marshes. Sekhment, the Lion Goddess went on a killing spree and only stopped after drinking red beer that she thought was blood. She then gets turned in Hathor, a goddess of booze, sex and good time. Bastet was another cat goddess who was honored with feasting and drinking. Her followers would get blitzed and then expose themselves in boat going down the Nile. The partying ended off in trump of love making.

Some of these mystery cults made their way to Greece. The Cabeiri or mighty ones though may have been Trojan or sea faring Indo Europeans. They were connected to Hephestus a smith god. Being half man and half crab these guys would show up and help people unexpectedly. Located as they were in Samothrace there were other deities who were worhsipped like Persephone, Hecate and the Phallic God Hermes. Most Samothracian mysteries were open to everyone and special sevicees were held in the house of lords. In these rituals were blood sacrifices, confessions and meditations. Sound familiar?

The Elusinian mysteries were dedicated to Demeter who lost her daughter to Hades. In grief she traveled the world looking for her and all the crops died in the process. We all know she gets her back but has to go back to Hades for parts of the year. Clearly based on the agricultural cycles like the Isis-Osiris chronicles, Demeter is called Isis-Sothis and is connected to the Egyptian Goddess. Both lost someone to the underworld who comes back temporarily. Both lived with mortal caring as a nanny for their children. Both burn the mortality out of the children. While living with the mortal Demeter has a shrine built for herself and she teaches the mysteries to the people living their. The mysteries she taught them extol the joys of parenthood. The lesser mystery rites happens once a years and the greater rites happen every five years. The five year rites wer open to initiates only and it was not easy to join. Something called kykeon was consumed and it was an intoxicating beverage. It was believed that the ecstasy brought one in communion.

Dionysis/ Bachus believed to be derived from Osiris has a sort of scandalous reputation. He was the god of wine and and harvest. He had female disciples called Maenads. These female followers of his would reach such a frenzy that they could rip up animals and become extremely hysterical. Modest women would become immodest. The partying would become so crazy that the Romans felt that the cult was dangerous to Roman unity so they quashed or at least tried to. Dionyus was born to Zeus in and adulterous fling. Hera his jealous wife had him killed and fed to the titans. Zeus zapped the Titans with lightning and from this mankind was made. Later he would be born again.

The Korybantes were warrior mad men who would raise a racket and sing until their throats were raw. They followed Cybelle a mother goddess in Phrygia. They are oft confused with the Kouretes and dactyls. Legend has it that the Korybantes protected Dionysis while the Kourets protected Zeus from Chronos. The Dactyls did the Olympic games. Historians get mixed up n these guys quite frequently.

The Galloi were gender benders. Often castrating themselves like Attis Cybels male consort. They had an hermaphrodite appears and sang with a high voice. They were sacred priests. Gender bending and homosexuality were not seen as sinful byt the Pagan population. In fact such activities could lead one closer to the deities. Later Rock and Roll stars would adopt this and other things. Orpheus was one such deity so saddend by his wifes demise and his failure to deliver her from the Underworld that he refuses all female contact. Some say he had male lovers he end up getting torn apart by meanad for turning down their advances.

The Romans who succeeded the Greeks adopted many foreign Gods. Cybeeel was adopted in the 3rd century after some disasters and victories. Isis was really popular and Mithras a God from Persia became popular amongst the Roman military. Their main meeting place was on today's Vatican hill/ They also partook of his blood and body. Sound familiar.

Roman ideas would spread all over Europe. As would the musical ideas. When the Christians rose from being persecuted underdogs to the upper ruling class they took over . They burned down Pagan shrine and what they could not eradicate they adopted as their own. Paganism amy have been underground but it was not dead. Groups like the Masons, Rosicrucians and Freemason kept the mystery teaching alive. Celtic musicians would bring their music to the shores of America and West Africans who inherited Religion and Music from the Egyptians would bring their stuff over as well. Many Rock stars studied the works of occultist like AE Waite, Alester Crowley and others.

Of course there were Gods that I failed to mention and they innpacted Music just as much. Apollo was a sun god and the god of poetry and prophecy. Often times his singers would couch big ideas in catchy tunes. Such would include the like of Elvis Presley, beach Boys and the Police. The wild Dionysian rockers would include Van Halen, the Doors and the Greatful Dead. Earth mOthers o Demeter types would be Tina Turner

and Janis Joplin. The Gender benders of the neo Galloi would be New York Dolls, Prince and Queen. The witchy women who were like Isis the mistress of magic would be the likes of Stevie Nicks, Patie Smith and Kate Bush.

Hermetic rockers are kind of like Hermes. He was a wordsmith and psychopomp. He could be super intellectual and be locked in a basement trying to figure things out. Pink Floyd and Hendrix fit well into this category. They can be inventive as well. The list goes on and on and I have given you more than a taste. If you want to find out more you will have to buy the book. Well worth the read.

Fernando Troyano says

Puffff.
Kind of stuck!

Darrin says

Seems to want to tie rock and roll into the mystery religions of ancient civilization. Settles for an encyclopedia of surface-level trivia (nothing "secret" here) and using the word "dionysian" way too much to describe everything.

Bruce Baugh says

My first abandoned-before-finishing reading of 2012.

The good part of this book is up front, with a review of various mystery cults and their practices that makes an effort to pull out points of modern interest from archaic descriptions. I like looking at areas of unexpected continuity in human life, alongside the ways cultures and generations vary a lot. Human diversity is neat! Knowles has to do a fair amount of speculative filling of gaps in between the available written and physical evidence, but that's fine, he's pretty good about noting when he's doing so.

Next comes an effort to trace lines of continuous inheritance from antiquity to modernity for various mystery cult practices. This is very much more speculative, and gets into something that really irritates me more and more as I get older. He keeps talking about the people engaging with a particular fad or trend as "everybody". He just doesn't seem to have any awareness that, for just about any fad you care to name, lots of people's lives are *not* especially changed by it, even if others really get into it. Nor does he show much awareness of the difference between short-lived enthusiastic obsession and actual changes in life, either in his own case or anyone else's.

I think this is more than just harrumphing on my part. Piled up in instance after instance, it has the cumulative effect of simply erasing the existence and significance of anyone who was neither ga-ga for the next hot thing nor zealously crusading against it. If you want to talk about the history of a particular sub-culture or kind of community, of course, you can and should focus on it. But if you want to say something about the society around it, you need to start by noting that other people exist and are being moved by other concerns. This book doesn't give much sign that Knowles is aware of people who aren't hip and innovative or

not-quite-so-cool followers and imitators or evil reactionaries in terms beyond "square".

After the compressed history, there's a section in which Knowles looks at various popular and/or influential rock figures in terms of archetypes taken from the gods worshipped by mystery cults. This is an idea I'm very open to - I like applying unusual frames of reference to familiar subjects, and believe that the effort can be genuinely illuminating as well as just plain fun. This particular effort, however, fell apart for me for two reasons, and led to me abandoning the book with about a third to go.

First, the histories of the various figures are very shallow, and completely centered on the personal taste of someone whose musical awareness built up in the '70s, peaked, and seems not to have a lot of room for any of the innovations of the last twenty-odd years. That's fine for personal memoirs and such - I mean, people's lives and tastes are what they are - but not so good if you want to say much to people who aren't completely synced with your individual outlook.

Second, he gets cutesy, and in particular he gets cutesy in talking about sexualities. In a compact list of reportedly bisexual rock stars, for instance, there were entries like "Jimi Hendrix. According to [sources snipped because I'm not going to go transcribe from the audiobook], he sometimes liked to kiss the guy." and "John Lennon. According to [sources also snipped], he liked to hold more than hands." This doesn't actually convey much that I would consider useful, and it just grated more and more as he kept doing it.

So I stopped.

Angie Lisle says

The first half of the book attempts to link ancient religious rites with the modern day music arena. The book does exemplify how the power of myth has been transferred to human figures, like movie and rock stars. But, the myths used to support the idea weren't common or wide-spread and were, occasionally, taken out of context while disregarding a substantial portion of the myths surrounding the rites or religious figures.

The author uses the phrase "renegade scholars" (page 33) to describe scholars trying to interpret ancient art as drug symbolism. The phrase stuck out as an apt description for this book.

The second half of the book reads like an encyclopedia of artist biographies, arranged by archetype - earth mothers, witchy women, princes of darkness, and so forth. I admit, I skimmed through them; they just couldn't hold my attention.

I received a free copy of this book in exchange for a review.

Calvin says

What does it say about a book, or the author, when I find it a bit to pretentious?

Patrick Neylan says

In a piece of spectacularly speculative hokum, Knowles tries to link the modern devotion of music fans to ancient mystery cults. Academically it's all nonsense of course, but it's a fun diversion and it does put a different spin on a subject that's produced thousands of books without much new being said since Lester Bangs bowed out three decades ago.

Knowles seems to know his mythology and his music, but he doesn't really do the research required to fill in the gaps in his knowledge. There are numerous mistakes in his account of Roman history, and even his rock history isn't reliable. He describes Black Country boys Robert Plant and John Bonham as being from England's "home counties", which is like calling Elvis a Connecticut Yankee.

It's diverting and amusing enough, and the chapters on the ancient mystery cults might give you some insight into what Jim Morrison was wittering on about. And there's something to be said for Knowles' argument that the nihilism of Nirvana ushered in an era when music lost its life-changing aura and became just another piece of packaged entertainment.

East Bay J says

This book is crap. Another college student gets their thesis paper published. Fortunately, I only spent \$3 on this book I couldn't stand to read.

Matthew Tote says

Added
