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Empirically proving that -- no matter where you are -- kids wanna rock, this is Chuck Klosterman's hilarious memoir of growing up as a shameless metalhead in Wyndmere, North Dakota (population: 498). With a voice like Ace Frehley's guitar, Klosterman hacks his way through hair-band history, beginning with that fateful day in 1983 when his older brother brought home Mötley Crüe's *Shout at the Devil*. The fifth-grade Chuck wasn't quite ready to rock -- his hair was too short and his farm was too quiet -- but he still found a way to bang his nappy little head. Before the journey was over, he would slow-dance to Poison, sleep innocently beneath satanic pentagrams, lust for Lita Ford, and get ridiculously intellectual about Guns N' Roses. C'mon and feel his noize.

Fargo Rock City: A Heavy Metal Odyssey in Rural North Dakota Details

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From Reader Review Fargo Rock City: A Heavy Metal Odyssey in Rural North Dakota for online ebook

Bryan Hovey says

This book was a mixed bag for me and a labor of love to read. At times I couldn't put it down and at other times I didn't want to pick it back up. The writing is really good and there are some great stories that remind me of things and decisions I made when I was much younger. The ATM story is pretty good stuff. With that said - you take an opinionated music lover and have them read a book written by an opinionated music lover, there are bound to be some hard feelings. I don't agree with some of the opinions and speculations Chuck shares with regards to the "how" and the "why" of the music but there are a lot I do agree with. After finishing the book and reading the epilogue I have to say that Chuck wrote his truth and accomplished what he set out to do by writing Fargo Rock City. He's not out to convince anyone of anything other than 80s metal is and was relevant to many of us who enjoyed it then and now. I'm a little older than Chuck so for me it's the soundtrack to my late teens and early twenties. For him it starts in middle school. I'd love to sit down with him and drink a few beers and listen to some old vinyl.

Mike Schaefer says

I really like Chuck Klosterman. I don't really care a ton about heavy metal music. Several parts of this were really interesting, but because my general knowledge and interest in heavy metal is pretty low, parts of it dragged for me.

Still, happier having read it than not.

J.K. Grice says

I don't like "hair" bands, but I love this book! To be fair, I grew up in an earlier time than Chuck did. My tastes ran toward Blue Oyster Cult, The Doobie Brothers, The Steve Miller Band, Creedence, ZZTOP, and many others.

If you are a music lover and want a fun read, FARGO ROCK CITY is a sure thing. Rock on Klosterman! It just might be true that no self-respecting rock band ever used an organ or a piano. Well, except of course for Skynyrd.... ;)

Corey says

Chuck Klosterman and his love for heavy metal. I was sold by the title alone. From the first chapter discussion on the definition of "heavy metal" to Klosterman's closing statements about why Motley Crue will forever hold a special place in his heart, I felt as if I was part of a discussion with the author about the importance, or lack thereof, heavy metal has in rock history. I found myself throwing open my computer to listen to obscure Motorhead songs and to re-watch the November Rain music video - trying (in vain) to keep

up with Klosterman's in-depth analysis of all things metal. Given that I am no expert on the subject, it was sometimes difficult to follow, and therefore I still rank Chuck Klosterman IV as my favorite of his books. That said, the epilogue (written for the paperback edition) was probably the most relatable part of the entire read. Klosterman responds to critics of his first book, defends lovers of all types of music and shits on the snobs who think people that prefer Van Halen to Sonic Youth are lower on the IQ scale. If there is one thing I hate in this world, it is when people cut in line. But I also really dislike when people cheat during trivia and pretend that they are too good for Poison.

Abraham says

Uno de esos libros con los que pude sentir una identificación inmediata desde las primeras páginas. Compartir experiencias con un autor puede ser la mejor manera de entender un libro. Si esto se hace desde la música, mejor aún. Y siendo este libro parcialmente autobiográfico, pues es perfecto.

No solamente se trata de compartir visiones sobre un género normalmente despreciado y desestimado por críticos y fans "serios" del rock (hablo del pop metal ochentero o "hair metal"). La parte de crecer con Mötley Crüe, Guns N' Roses y otros grupos de la época en un pueblito donde se oye cualquier otra cosa excepto ese tipo de música fue con lo que más me identifiqué. Klosterman creció en un pueblo mucho más pequeño que el mío, pero a pesar de ese aislamiento disfrutó de los grupos en su época de auge. Yo lo viví muchos años después, después de la explosión del grunge. En ese sentido, se comparte el sentimiento de ser una especie de "outsider".

Es un libro divertidísimo y plagado de citas y referencias musicales. Creo que la parte más importante es que logra mostrar, aún a quien no sea fan del género, el porqué esa música sí fue importante y, de muchas formas, sigue siéndolo para muchos, entre los que me incluyo.

Mark says

"Fargo Rock City" is Chuck Klosterman's first stab at writing more than an album review in SPIN or a story about Marilyn Manson in the Akron Beacon-Journal. And it shows.

The premise is ambitious, and therefore admirable: An entire book about heavy metal from 1980-1990. Essentially, the hair/glam scene that was taking place in Los Angeles and how it all shaped him as a youngster growing up in rural North Dakota.

It's about 100 pages too long and goes horribly askew when he takes heavy metal out of the context of his upbringing and makes his opinions the central focus (mostly the chapter in which he ranks the top albums of the genre and the amount of money it would take for him never to listen to that record ever again).

What's worse is that he worships and rants about Motley Crue and Guns n Roses. Which is fine. But then he makes the argument that glam metal was culturally important because they never wanted to be culturally important. Glam metal is smart because it's stupid.

This round and round gobbledegook, of course, is a tenet in Klosterman's entire philosophy for about everything. But he would redeem himself later with "Sex, Drugs and Cacao Puffs."

Ryan says

If someone attempts to defend the music they listened to in high school, don't listen. No matter what. And yet, on a recent road trip, I found this station that played all this music from when I was in high school. It was the best part of the road trip -- for me, at least. I could go on about it for another 270 pages!

Eric Kalenze says

Should be five stars for the amount I enjoyed it, but I save five-star ratings for books that somehow change the way I think of things from the point of reading onward.

This book didn't do that, but it certainly could have if, well, it hadn't so thoroughly REFLECTED my life: guy from rural ND (attended UND, as a matter of fact, which is in my hometown--I could take you straight to all the party houses he mentions in the book's later stages), was in his early teens as metal was exploding, spends lots of time thinking about the personal & social impacts of things like metal (it's valuable to me, okay?!), and on and on and on.

I am heavily recommending it to my wife, however, who shakes her head and endures my late-Friday and late-Saturday nights watching 'That Metal Show' on VH1 Classic. If any book might give her a peek into why I'm still so drawn to those bands, that time, and that place in my life, this would be it. (Plus, I know she'll laugh a lot when she reads it, and I love it when she laughs.)

Bravo, CK. Thanks for a great read. (And thanks to Lars Ostrom for recommending.)

Scott says

First of all this was not an odyssey. Secondly, Kosterman tried far too hard to write an intellectual book. He came across as overly self-important snob who could use big words and terms to take the joy out something fun just to make himself feel smarter.

Mariano Hortal says

publicado en <http://lecturaylocura.com/fargo-rock-...>

Vaya por delante que no me gusta demasiado el heavy metal. Y el subtítulo no dejaba lugar a duda Una odisea metalera en la Dakota del Norte rural. De hecho a los que más conocía musicalmente era a los Guns'N'Roses, que además pronunciaba muy bien cuando era pequeño y molaba un montón que te miraran como un bicho raro, pero de Mötley Crüe, Def Leppard, Van Halen (bueno sí, el Jump sí lo conocía), conocía muy poco y además no me gustaba demasiado. Del escritor tampoco había leído nada.

Entonces, ¿cómo narices me ha dado por leer este libro? Pues, como de costumbre, por recomendaciones, he oído hablar mucho de Chuck Klosterman, sobre todo desde el famoso Pégate un tiro para sobrevivir (que tengo que conseguir como sea..) y siempre se ha comentado que es un escritor imprescindible del que, además, por aquí, tenemos muy poco publicado. Teniendo todo esto en la cabeza hablemos del libro en cuestión.

Fargo Rock City es un ensayo a modo de memorias, ya que el autor, en cada capítulo relata un hecho de su vida y el año y el mes en el que sucedió, así que estamos ante un ensayo con tintes autobiográficos, pero, ¿se queda en eso? No, no sólo es contar alguna anécdota divertida, que las hay, y parte de su vida; sino que además lo emparenta claramente con la cultura norteamericana, con el contraste entre la sociedad agraria típica y el exilio a la gran ciudad, consiguiendo, al mismo tiempo un estudio sociológico de la sociedad norteamericana.

Así, hablando sobre los grupos de heavy metal y el contenido sexual de las canciones, el bueno de Chuck comenta “los feministas son una entre las tres clases de personas que más ultrajadas se declaran ante el contenido sexual del heavy metal. Los otros dos colectivos son los cristianos de ultraderecha (que se ultrajan con prácticamente cualquier cosa que sea remotamente interesante) y los académicos pseudointelectuales (que comparten mi atracción por las feministas)“.

Además ya podemos ver que el libro no es aburrido, ¡qué va!, Chuck es capaz de hacerlo con humor. Especialmente interesantes son sus opiniones sobre la cultura, el rol que ocupa en nuestras vidas “en la mayor parte de los casos, no necesitamos cultura, la deseamos. La cultura nos hace sentir bien. Y no culpo a los músicos que se aprovechan del mínimo denominador común para venderle su versión de la cultura al público” y en ocasiones su enfermizo fin: “nuestra cultura está fascinada, en general, con el fracaso público“.

Entra incluso en la dimensión de la muerte unido a lo cultural, con el caso más que conocido de Nirvana “Desde un punto de vista cultural el suicidio de Cobain fue la única cosa ‘genia’ que le pasó a la música de los 90. Fue el único artista de mi generación irrefutablemente sincero” y el ensalzamiento natural que tiene lugar habitualmente y del que hemos sido más que testigos en varias ocasiones: “La gente que no respira siempre lo tiene más fácil. Es evidente que el modo más sencillo de acabar siendo ‘genial’ es ser ‘bueno’ después de sumarle ‘muerto’”. Uniendo la muerte finalmente a la caída del heavy metal: “en el momento en que nacemos empezamos a morir; en el momento en que un músico se hace famoso, está empezando a caer en el olvido.”

Su premisa inicial, que retoma al final mismo del libro es “pretendía demostrar que todo aquel glam rock amariconado, sexista y superficial fue importante”. ¿Y lo consigue demostrar? Él mismo comenta “El hair metal fue un agujero de gusano para todos los chavales del Medio Oeste demasiado ingenuos como para comprender por qué no eran felices. Puede que yo sea un fracasado pero Vince y Axl y Ace y Ozzy eran guays por mí. Me permitían vivir una vida que nunca conocería y ni siquiera tenía que salir de mi cuarto para ella.” En este momento te das cuenta de toda la dimensión del libro y comprendes la premisa inicial. Para mí está comprobado.

Inmejorable edición de Es Pop Ediciones para un libro tratado con esmero y buen gusto. Una novela excelente y disfrutable en todos los sentidos. Aunque desde luego, para un metalero, me atrevo a decir que es imprescindible. Un estudio sociológico y cultural de un fenómeno sin precedentes en su época y que nos sirve para desgranar un poco más lo que es esa sociedad tan cercana y tan lejana al mismo tiempo.

Imogen says

I get the project, and I support the project. I was absolutely in love with Poison in fourth grade, and I still get super semi-ironically excited about a lot of the music he's writing about, in just the ways he describes. But Chuck, did you have to be such a douche?

The section on sexism in 80s glam rock is the most tautological, non-informative series of non-arguments I've ever read, which seems to culminate in the argument 'these bands were sexist, but in capitalism, who cares?' Which is problematic. (There's also an "I want to bone new school feminists but old school ones are stupid" theme running through the book.) The whole relationship of Chuck Klosterman and money, throughout the book, just doesn't make sense to me- it's like, there's vague impressions of a critique of the American capitalist system that makes things weird and messed up, unless it's in relation to a band he likes, in which case 'wanting money' becomes this totally legitimate motive.

Also 26 pages of listing albums he likes (and why) got super boring super quick.

I don't know. I kept thinking, 'that is a perfect quote for my scathing goodreads review of this book!' but not marking them, which means I don't have 'em for you. And since I spent the whole book hating the author, I can't really be bothered to go looking.

Hadley says

Oh man. I really thought I would love this book, but aside from a few humorous passages, I ended up never wanting to read anything else by Klosterman. Here were my issues with the book: 1. It's not so much about heavy metal as it is about hair metal (or "glam rock" as Klosterman calls it- not sure how appropriate a moniker that is for Poison and the like but whatever) 2. Klosterman has some serious issues with women, and really came off as an asshole on multiple occasions throughout the book. 3. I heartily disagreed with many of the musical opinions he expressed in general.

There's not much to say about issue #1, other than I think Pantera was maybe mentioned once in the book, and the ratio of discussion about Van Halen/Poison/Ratt/Cinderella, etc to Slayer/Metallica/Iron Maiden etc is about 6:1. As for issue #2: Klosterman says that male rock audiences are more faithful than women, and that men are more analytical about music and appreciate it past the emotional response. If this is not an incredibly sexist remark (and completely stereotypical and untrue in my experience), I don't know what is. He makes multiple references throughout the book to women as "whores", "hookers" and rock "bitches". He says he is baffled by feminists, and that if heavy metal was sexist, "what's the big deal?" because when art is "stupid", it can't really be harmful- an incredibly weak argument and copout at once. In this passage, he also is implying that feminists would never be heavy metal fans, which again demonstrates his ignorance about women. Later, he even goes so far as to say that more men probably purchased "riotgrrl" era music than women, because men are willing to spend more on music. And at one point, he says that "Ani DeFranco (sic) is trying a little too hard to look ugly". Such a predictable dig from this guy, and just not witty at all.

Issue #3: Klosterman says that talking about music is more exciting than listening to it. What?!? At one point he compares PJ Harvey to Yo La Tengo, implying that fans of one must like the other which I found to be a

very strange comparison. Klosterman says that rock bands should focus on the commercial, and not try to make us think. He says that Danzig (the band) was the first legitimate band that Glenn Danzig was a member of. Klosterman says that he wouldn't take any "desert island discs" with him if he were in such a predicament, because "music isn't really essential to survival". Well sure, not literally. But if you are a rock critic who chooses to center your life around the subject, I would think it would be pretty damn important to you. Finally at one point he says that Firehouse's "Don't Treat Me Bad" is one of the 40 best songs by an American artist. And no, he's not being sarcastic.

More rock criticism than memoir, Fargo Rock City still ended up being a very personal account of Klosterman's tastes and memories associated with hair metal. No, it wasn't all bad, hence the 2 star rating. But it took me serious effort to finish this one, and overall the multiple negative references toward women left a really bad taste in my mouth. Plus, I just don't think he has great taste in music-but that's just my opinion! :)

Sharon says

The author overanalyzes and trashes rock music (oh excuse me Mr. Klosterman, "heavy metal") so much that it's hard to believe he supports it as much as he claims. This book could have been named after any U.S. city, because it's NOT "a heavy metal odyssey in rural North Dakota" as promised. The author shares a few personal stories related to small town life and music, but the majority of the book is essays defining heavy metal (zzzzzz) and separating (based on Klosterman's tastes, opinions and prejudices) bands into good and bad. The kids wanna rock! They don't want to be criticized and mocked.

Carl says

There's something about Chuck Klosterman's writing that I literally eat up. I blew through this book in two days, ignoring my job, TV, and my girlfriend in the process. It felt like a vacation from normal book reading because I wasn't studying some socially relevant topic I'd recently deemed important to know, I was reading critical analysis of popular music that I can't help but love and obsess over. CK is perfect for guys like me: the kind of guy that tells himself he's got to read 50 more pages of whatever non-fiction book he's set his mind to finishing so that he can reward himself by getting high and watching a movie, alone. These guys like to think analytically, but sometimes they wish it could just be about Saved By The Bell or the video for Metallica's "One". This book (and his others, I've read all the others) fills that need in (the ace of) spades.

Reading this book felt like being at a party where you really didn't know too many people but you agreed to go because it was Friday and it was time to get drunk. There was good beer and after gulping half of the first beer you strike up a conversation with a stranger about the all that was metal during the decade you were in the single digits. Next thing you know, this guy's talking at length and seems to be making perfect fucking sense and your contribution to the conversation consists mostly of laughing out loud and introducing topics that he runs with. You then become mildly embarrassed that you've spent the duration of the party talking to a dude you just met about 1980s cock rock. Afterwards you tell your friends of all the insights this guy seemed to possess but as you're telling them you become less impressed by the shit he came up with, and you're friends certainly aren't impressed. Still, you know you had fun, and this guy made sense. Quite the heavy metal odyseey indeed.

Paul E. Morph says

Review to follow.

RandomAnthony says

I grew up in Chicago, another urban heavy metal bastion, so I can relate to Mr. Klosterman's love/embarrassment/love relationship with Marshall stacks and singers who screech like castratos. Klosterman does a great job of describing how he first discovered metal, what drew him to the music, and why he likes what he likes. Also, he loves TALKING about music, and if you love music, you probably like talking about music almost as much as listening to music. Klosterman gets it. There's a great story here, for metal fans, non-metal fans, and former metal fans like myself. Don't be embarrassed. I won't tell anyone you used to have a Metallica t-shirt. Read the book.

Kristel says

Klosterman declares early on that he wants to confront two of the most egregious accusations hurled at heavy metal: that 1) it is frivolous and disposable (therefore "not art"), and 2) it is offensive and dangerous. He argues that these two sentiments can't both be true at the same time. Becoming a danger presupposes a potency that contradicts frivolity. It may not be elevating art but heavy metal mattered, particularly to the crop of hormonal teenagers of post-Reagan Middle America.

Every chapter starts out with a "milestone" date, which makes probably people assume that the book is going to be a linear narrative. Instead they end up with what The New York Times called a "part memoir, part barstool rant." The dates are merely touchstones from which Klosterman can riff, using everything from garish album covers to committing ATM fraud in trying to explain why a musical genre that many people would rather consider an aberration meant so much to him.

And then we came to the part about the feminists. In the couple of months that yawned between finishing *Fargo Rock City* and writing this review, I've constantly thought about how I'm supposed to feel about Klosterman's overwrought attempt at explaining away heavy metal's tendency towards sexism and objectification. His defense is basically that that because hair bands were so baldfaced about their sexism, they somehow transcended their own objectifying tendencies and became commentaries on sexism. I mean, what? You can't suddenly transcend sexism by becoming too good at it.

Read more of my review [here](#).

Mary says

Much of this book is entertaining -- Klosterman writes about heavy metal with a lot of wit and insight that's fun to read...especially because I'm not a metal fan. If I felt strongly about any of these bands, all his

potificating probably would have gotten kind of annoying. Also, he can be hilarious, but can, on the same page, be overly detailed and completely lose the thread.

One of his points is how the metal audience is integral to the experience, and I think he still identifies rather strongly with the bands. He meticulously argues how much of the metal band's standard provocation was artifice rather than conviction -- Ozzy wasn't a satanist, Iron Maiden's geeky classical-music-influenced rock was tarted up with evil symbols by record label, etc. But he takes a bunch of random, unjustified pokes at feminists, hippies, the Peace Corps, Tipper Gore, you name it. It's sort of weird. He gets all heady about metal, letting us inside his adolescent head and really bringing to life the experience of a rural North Dakota farm kid/heavy metal fan. He's not trying to gloss over any of his teenage awkwardness either. But once he tries to place his own experiences in a context, everything he doesn't have direct experience with becomes sort of two-dimensional.

I read a profile of him in Salon that was revealing. The author described him as "kind of hard to know" and "emotionally detached." She asks him if he's autistic or has Asbergerger's (he was not offended but amused by the questions). I think he's one of a class of Midwestern guys who live in their heads and not so much inside the rest of their bodies. They are often articulate, smart, and funny, but not particularly observant of what's happening around them. They are hard to connect with and lack some serious empathy. I think Klosterman can parse the hell out of his own experiences and, better yet, communicate them to us so clearly, it feels like we're there. But we're not really there. He's keeping us at arms length.

I do appreciate his unabashed love for '80s metal, even if he did feel the need to write a whole book defending it. He writes in his epilogue: "How can the music that was the soundtrack to the lives of so many teenagers not be culturally important?" It's kind of endearing.

Ace Boggess says

Yes. Just yes.

Trin says

I have kind of a love/hate relationship with Chuck Klosterman. I've read all his books (I left this one till last, because it's about heavy metal and that's not a subject I'm desperately interested in) and I think he's frequently incredibly funny and often very insightful. But *man*, does he piss me off sometimes. In *Fargo Rock City*, that occurred when he decided to share his views on female music fans. Apparently, male music fans are more loyal and less likely to get distracted by every shiny new thing because men are more analytical and women are more emotional. Yeah. There are so many things wrong with that statement that I risk turning this into a huge rant, which I do not want to do. Leaving aside the issue of "loyalty" (well, after I point to exhibit A: the giant collection of U2 stuff that I've bought over the years even when a) I had no money, and b) what I was buying was redundant to stuff I already had save for an extra B-side or remix or miniposter or WHATEVER), for Klosterman to use the old "men are analytical, women are emotional" argument is so absurd in the context of this book that it's almost hilarious. Because the ENTIRE BOOK is about Klosterman's emotions. How much he loved heavy metal, and how much it changed and shaped his life, and how much he still loves it. How much it bugs him when people dismiss it without thought, and how

he thinks it should be considered important because it was important to him. This is a raw outpouring of emotion! Only he's a guy, so we're not allowed to call it that. We have to call it *analysis*. Right. Do people—Klosterman and anyone else—really think that when women have emotions—which, y'know, we're actually willing to admit are emotions—we don't analyze them at all? That we're just like, "I feel so HAPPY today! La la la!" or "I'm SAD today. I'm heading straight for the Ben & Jerry's, no thought involved!" Or even, "I really like this band! I'm just going to listen to them and go to concerts and scream and try to sleep with the drummer AND NEVER CONSIDER MY MOTIVATIONS AT ALL." Women are clearly brainless puppy-dog creatures!

Okay, so this may have tapped into some other issues I'm having right now? But the point remains. Klosterman's "analysis" of what makes heavy metal important is actually very minimal: it was important to him. It was important to a lot of other people. Therefore it is important in general. *And I completely agree with this.* I think pop culture should be talked about, because it does say a lot about people and what matters to them—and what could be more important than that? This is why I like reading Klosterman in the first place: because he recognizes that, and talks about it in an amusing manner. It's just when he decides that he's an expert on women that he pisses me off. (Well, and some other times. But never mind.)

ANYWAY...all of that said, I actually enjoyed the rest of the book a lot. And I don't care one iota about heavy metal. But Klosterman does make me care about other people caring.
