



Last Gang in Town: The Story and Myth of the Clash

Marcus Gray

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The definitive biography of the Clash and a thorough history of the punk movement. Pop music industry writer Marcus Gray details the early lives of Clash members, provides an objective account of the 1976 punk explosion, and unravels the complex, behind-the-scenes machinations that led to the Clash's eventual downfall. 16-page photo insert.

Last Gang in Town: The Story and Myth of the Clash Details

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From Reader Review Last Gang in Town: The Story and Myth of the Clash for online ebook

Chris Johnsen says

One of my favorite bands of all-time. A great biography of "the only band that matters." I need to read the updated and expanded Second Edition of this book, as it goes into greater detail about the member's post-Clash musical endeavors. I don't understand why anyone who is not a fan of the band would read this book and then review it poorly while stating they weren't much of a fan of the band. Idiots.

Greg says

I'm a Clash fan. A bit obsessed even, but this is out of control. Too much detail and not enough substance.

Ian Fiddes says

9/10. Excellent biography. Much better than many such books which lack any real analysis. Author does not pull any punches when considering the band's faults (and merits).

Craig Gilbert says

A little long but a fine history lesson of the "only band that matters". And it ain't all praise.

Heather says

Joe Strummer, rest in peace, signed my copy!!!

Tortla says

I'm no Clash scholar, so I skimmed over most of the debunking of the "Clash Myth." Which was, to be fair, pretty much all of it. My skimming aside, I didn't really like the way this book sat with me. The way it was organized was hectic. While I appreciated the thematic-grouping attempt (and the cute appropriation of Clash song titles which went along with it), I think some more chronological organization might have been in order. Or at least more explicit, clear statements of when events occurred in relation to another. I was frequently confused, and Gray's tone was unhelpful. He was too busy making his argument against that "Clash Myth" to really present what that myth was or where it came from in a coherent way. I seldom knew who or what he was talking about. And the newspaper-editor in me flinched at his usage of first names to refer to people (particularly when key people have names like "Joe").

That said, there are interesting tidbits to be mined for the uninitiated-into-punk/Clash (like me). And the argument against the "Clash Myth" might interest the initiated. Or those who have the patience to read about 500 pages of disorienting Clashiness.

Kurt says

The three stars here isn't meant as an indictment on the book, which is very thorough, but rather probably reflects my level of interest in The Clash. Don't get me wrong, I like The Clash, they just aren't one of my favorite bands. They form part of the soundtrack of my youth, but I don't find their material holding up for me the way some of my favorite bands have. I like Give Em Enough Rope best, when they were still a Punk Rock band, and London Calling blew me away when I first heard it, but I find I don't reach for it anymore. I always enjoy reading about the origins of bands and music; where things come from and their background, and this book pays off on that. It's cool to read about who knew who and what they were listening to and what gigs they were at. Then there's the history of the early pre-Punk band London SS, that included, at some point or other, various members of The Damned, The Clash and Generation X from the early Punk era. Love reading that stuff! So, I read the beginning of the book with relish and then, as it went on, my interest waned and I put it on the shelf. It's a very long, very detailed account, so if you are a Clash fan, go for it. You'll probably really enjoy it.

Richard Herbert says

Great historical record of one of the greatest bands of all time.

Steven says

An awesome book about one of my favorite bands ever. So interesting to see the genesis of them and their evolution.

Spiros says

While psychoanalyzing authors is always something of a jejune pursuit, I am willing to postulate that Marcus Gray believed in the Easter Bunny until he was twelve; I also feel sure he incinerated ants with a magnifying glass well into his adolescence. How else to explain this dreary exercise? I fought this book to a draw up to page 243, when Gray was describing the shambolic "Anarchy Tour" of December, 1976, at which point no mention of Topper Headon had yet been made. Then I threw in the towel.

The first 66 pages are an encyclopedic account of the bands Mick Jones played in before the Clash, which I kind of enjoyed: a little dry, perhaps, but fun and universal to rock. Little did I know that the only reason for this exhaustive inventory was to expose one of the seminal myths of the Clash. The following 175 pages or so are given to meticulously exploding all of the myths which were built up around the Clash.

Look, I am all for debunking; it can be an entertaining and enlightening approach to a subject. What we have here, however, is a bloodless examination in which no account is taken of what made the Clash worthwhile, why they mattered.

It is as if someone were to write a biography of Barry Bonds, describing in meticulous detail his disdainful treatment of the press, his father's alcoholism, his cheating on his wife and on his taxes, his steroid abuse, his altercations with Jeff Kent (who would be portrayed as a racist faker of car washing accidents) and Jim Leyland (who would be portrayed as a doddering fool who Baseball had passed by). It would not bother to mention:

- A.) That Bobby Bonds was a great player
- B.) That Barry was successful on nearly 80% of his stolen base attempts
- C.) That Barry was the only leftfielder ever to win a Gold Glove
- D.) That Barry could hit a little.

This book is written in that spirit. Not only are the Clash revealed as a bunch of hypocrites, so too is Johnny Rotten. What's more, all the journalists who covered the first wave of punk, Caroline Coon, Giovanni Dadamo, Jonh Ingram et al., were a bunch of stooges and dupes, completely taken in by Malcolm McLaren, Bernie Rhodes, and the bands. If Gray had been around then, HE wouldn't have been fooled, no sir. And you know what? He comes across as such a tight-arsed little cunt, that he probably wouldn't have been; you observe a lot about ants when you incinerate them with a magnifying glass.

Dave says

Easily the best Clash biography. Especially informative about life up to the release of the first record and after the sacking of Mick Jones (basically all the stuff that wasn't covered by the NME at the time it happened).

Gray does a good job of keeping you locked in and not excusing or rationalizing the times they were all assholes to their employees and fans (see first US tour) with some crap about the weight of fame/stardom (stardumb?).

Steve Bennett says

Good in depth detailed story of the Clash history. Perhaps a little too detailed. It may spend a little too much time on Mick Jones' pre-Clash bands than absolutely necessary.

Susan Barnaby says

Blahhhh blahhhhhh blahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh..... Oh, God, dude lighten up and have some fun telling this story. If I never see the words "Mott the Hoople" again it'll be too soon. Awesome subject! Too dry. This book lacks the vitality and infatuation-level excitement that are the best parts of what this band was. You're better off watching a good documentary about them - at least that way you get the story and some whale-ass performances to watch. Keep this one on hand for reference reading. I've tried to read it from beginning to end and found it as torturous as reading The Hobbit.

J says

I would have liked this book so much better had a good copy editor been allowed to cull the material. Otherwise, it's a worthy read.

Steve says

The ultimate rock biography about the only band that madders. Meticulously researched. Unflattering at times. Yet it only added to my admiration for the band and especially for Joe Strummer. Truly one of the great visionary, revolutionary artists of the 20th century. I also recommend *Passion is A Fashion* for all you Clashophiles out there.
