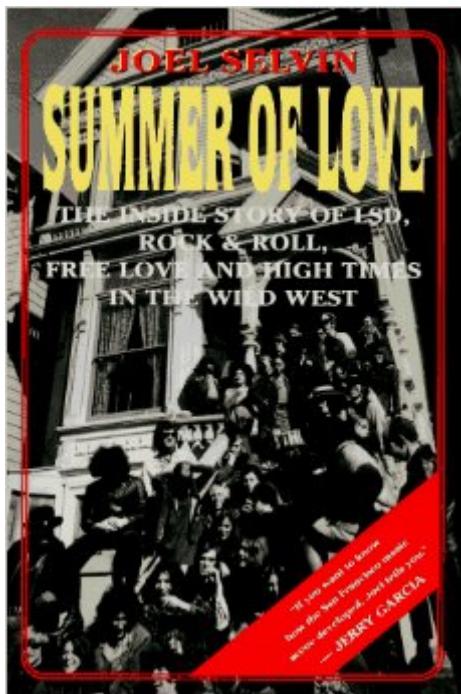


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Summer Of Love: The Inside Story Of LSD, Rock & Roll, Free Love And High Times (Plume Books)



Synopsis

"Sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll" was the rallying cry for a movement in the late '60s and early '70s that changed American culture forever. Drawing on more than 200 interviews with all the major players, including Jerry Garcia, Grace Slick, Steve Miller, and David Crosby, Selvin has assembled the first complete history of the era--a virtual "Psychedelic Babylon". Photos.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (17 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

This book is an engaging, densely detailed history of San Francisco rock-'n'-roll from 1965 to 1971. It opens with the Charlatans giving birth to San Francisco rock and ends with the death of poor ol' Pigpen. Selvin writes in great detail about how bands formed, learned (or didn't learn) how to deal with the music business, and broke up. It's a tell-all about who slept with who, the types of drugs each musician used and where and when they OD'ed, and the details of their recording contracts. To hear Selvin tell it, Janis Joplin bedded just about every male rocker in the business-- except for Jerry Lee Lewis: she got into a fistfight with him! Bill Graham's monstrous ego gets full play, until you get sick of reading about his temper tantrums and underhanded dealing. But the book's title is misleading, for a couple reasons. For one thing, the summer of 1967 is completely absent from the book! The chronology jumps from spring to fall and ignores the summer altogether. Perhaps this was Selvin trying to emphasize his stark assertion in the book's first sentence: "The Summer of Love never really happened." But why he would deliberately omit the central scene of the whole saga is incomprehensible. The other thing lacking in this book is a sense of the whole Zeitgeist of the

Haight-Ashbury hippie scene. The book has a focus on nothing but rock-'n'-roll music. Any mention of any other cultural aspects of hippie life, like folk music, the Human Be-In, the flower children, the communal Diggers, the arts and crafts, the antiwar movement, the Eastern mysticism, the wider scope of everything that went into the Haight scene, gets no mention except insofar as it directly relates to the story of the rock-'n'-roll bands.

Joel Selvin's chronicle of the span of years that saw the rise and fall of San Francisco's Ballroom heyday leaves one with a mixed bag of responses. While it is jam-packed with bits of "insider" history, it lacks synthesis, often making for a tedious read. Its title is misleading--"The Summer of Love: The Inside Story of LSD, Rock n'Roll, Free Love, and High Times in the Wild West" suggests a comprehensive exploration from the inside out. It would have been more accurately heralded under something like "San Francisco's Ballroom Era: Snapshots of the Players." There is no in-depth analysis of the culture here--none of the great and privileged perspective that is often the gift of time and distance. There is no insightful working over of how and why the elements came together the way they did. The text plods along, most of the time, with the certain monotony of required recitation --"this happened, then that happened, then this, then that..." It is distinguished only by chaotic leaps from scenes at one camp of personalities to those of another. It is the textual equivalent of a hastily compiled scrapbook covering some particularly seminal years in the rock n' roll counterculture. Some of the pages are given decidedly more consideration than others. We seem to be in Grace Slick's sidecar much of the time, but if this were the only exposure one had to the early days of the San Francisco scene, there is the danger of walking away thinking the Grateful Dead were a minor consideration, and Bill Graham was a pitbull who never had a good day. The text is rife with other minor sins.

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