

From Gay to Z: A Queer Compendium

Justin Elizabeth Sayre

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In *From Gay to Z*, a compendium of queer culture more akin to a kiki than an encyclopedia, Justin Elizabeth Sayre serves up a blend of earnest information and loving snark.

A humorist rather than a historian or social scientist, Sayre believes “culture is made up of people, so in some ways this is a who’s who of the LGBTQ+.” Arranged in alphabetical order, the inclusions are varied and cover people, places, media, and cultural objects and trends, as well as significant eras and historical moments. Because the focus is on “art created by and for gay people,” queer-coded media and straight icons, like Dolly Parton and Beyonce, also make the list. Although Sayre discards the idea that this compendium is a complete listing, it’s weighty enough to resist a single sitting read.

Largely focused on US queer culture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the book includes of-the-moment references, as with a biography on cult queer comedian River Butcher, as well as textbook queer history, as with entries on the Stonewall Riots and coverage of important technologies like YouTube, which created important new spaces for queer people. There are also surprises, especially in the recovery of historical figures whose queerness is often officially overlooked, as in the case of Jane Addams—the first woman to win a Nobel Peace Prize, the cofounder of the ACLU, and the lover of Ellen Starr.

From Gay to Z can hold its own, whether as a cultural primer for a baby queer or as a library resource. The perfect resource to dip in and out of, *From Gay to Z*’s entries are enlightening and entertaining, celebrating the “core of queer culture...how a group of people maligned and mistreated come together and try to make the world more beautiful, more fair, and perhaps more loving.”

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