

## Russia 'n' Roll! The Story of Rock 'n' Roll – From a Russian Perspective

**Richard Hume**

Dorrance Publishing Co. (Oct 10, 2016)

Softcover \$35.00 (192pp)

978-1-4809-3094-0

*Entertaining and informative, this is a perfect volume for fans of classic and international rock music.*

Richard Hume's *Russia Rock 'n' Roll!* is a fun international journey through the history of rock music that explores how American rock 'n' roll found an audience in Russia, where it helped to democratize the nation before the fall of the Soviet Union.

The book is a collection of Hume's articles from the British magazine *Maggie's Blue Suede News*, organized helpfully by date. While living in Moscow, Hume wrote concert reviews of the musicians who originated rock, including Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and Elvis, as well as reviews and profiles of Russian bands, including the Coral Reefs and the Marshmallows.

The articles deftly connect the rebellion of American rock music to the Russian artistic expression of independence. The prose in *Russia Rock 'n' Roll!* is as energetic and exciting as the rock music it covers. Hume's enthusiasm for the bands he covers is evident when he writes about Russian rock musicians like the Hi-Tones playing rockabilly, the '50s mix of rock and swing music. Reviews give helpful details, exploring the musicians' lives and even their fashion choices, providing insight into the Russian music scene.

*Russia Rock 'n' Roll!* is a book about music, but it also touches on Russian history and how music bridged the divide between Russia and America starting in the 1950s. Russian musicians are not the only subjects of articles; American rock pioneers are also profiled in *Russia Rock 'n' Roll!*, which compellingly explores how Little Richard, Screamin' Jay Hawkins, and Chuck Berry broke down racial barriers by being popular black musicians who performed in front of white audiences. The firsthand accounts of their concerts add substance to the short musician profiles and show that rock music can bridge divides in race and culture.

Hume writes about serious topics but also peppers his articles with jokes, adding lighter tones to the articles. Frequent exclamation points add a feeling of excitement. Stylistically, the text is impeccable, though some musicians are covered more than once in the book.

Pictures showcasing the colorful musicians featured, from their retro costumes to their classic album covers, are vivid and add depth to the articles. Vintage Elvis album covers and black-and-white archival pictures are paired well with concert photos of Russian musicians influenced by Presley. Seeing old and new pictures together punctuates the idea that Russian musicians today are influenced by the past.

*Russia Rock 'n' Roll!* is entertaining and informative, making it a perfect volume for fans of classic and international rock music and of the sometimes forgotten originators of rock 'n' roll.

ELLA VINCENT (December 14, 2016)

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