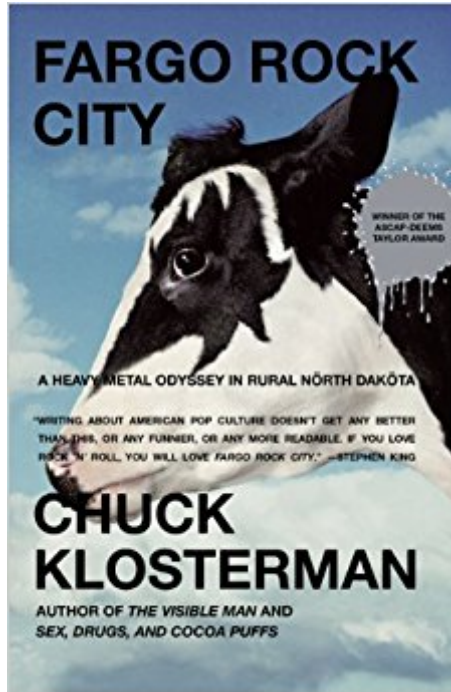


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Fargo Rock City: A Heavy Metal Odyssey In Rural North Dakota



Synopsis

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.

Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Scribner; Reprint edition (May 1, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0743406567

ISBN-13: 978-0743406567

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.7 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (106 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #308,106 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #83 in [Books > Arts &](#)

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Customer Reviews

At first, I was a bit disappointed by the book and then I read the epilogue. Why wasn't it more of a memoir? Why was it filled with so much analysis? Then, I realized that isn't really the point of this wonderful book. Klosterman has made me a fan for life. What wins me over his unabashed honesty. I've long held that the lowest critic life form is that of rock critic. Klosterman calls them on their pretension. He hammers away at what I have always believed is that music is important if it touches you. My MP3 collection has Sinatra and Warrant. Who cares who is better, both form the soundtrack to important parts of my life. Klosterman tells some hilarious stories and his takes on music and life is so refreshingly honest that I can't stop smiling. He isn't mean or nasty--just tells it as he sees it. Don't agree? That's ok. I learned more than I ever imagined about '80s heavy metal (some which I

finally realized I liked about 10 years too late) and I suspect I would have gotten more out of the book if I had understood all the references, but I loved what I read anyway. Except for the passage where he compares the Gospels to GNR Lies, this book really does rock. Isn't that the most important thing?

Chuck Klosterman can be an amusing writer, but he's such a fogey here, it's not much fun. Published in 2001, Chuck gives grudging props to "new" bands like Korn and Rage Against the Machine, but he's shaking his head uncomprehendingly as he does so. Along with older acts like Metallica, these bands commit the cardinal sin of being serious. This doesn't gibe with what Chuck thinks '80's metal was all about: The mindless good times embodied by Poison and Mötley Crüe. Yes, Klosterman is casting himself as a polemicist, and that's not a bad thing. But in addition to not comprehending recent metal developments, he's poorly informed about pre-'80s metal (e.g., Motörhead is always "Motorhead"). Worse, his opinions are often embarrassing, even for a writer who likes to cite Entertainment Weekly as a source. Some of his more cringe-worthy statements: "Intelligent metal fans always felt a grudging sense of respect for Whitesnake." (It's difficult to imagine a single reader agreeing.) "Jon Bon Jovi is kind of the Robert Frost of heavy metal." (Nope, Jon is the Rod McKuen of heavy metal.) "KISS is the second-most influential rock band of all time." (I'm speechless.) "No one born after 1970 can possibly appreciate any creative element in rock 'n' roll." (After a hundred pages herein, this rings pretty true.) Other groaners include: --How Alice in Chains is NOT heavy metal (!). --Chuck's shout-out to coolio music pioneer Lenny Kravitz (!!). --The ONLY good song Black Sabbath ever released post-Ozzy is "The Mob Rules." (This is asinine; "Children of the Sea, anyone?") On the plus side, Klosterman can be very funny, and he is capable of deep analysis. Of course, that means that you're treated to entire chapters on Guns 'n' Roses videos, but I guess that's preferable to picking up a copy of Entertainment Weekly.

This funny and enjoyable book is an answer to the pop culture elitists (such as myself!) who dismiss heavy metal as ridiculous junk. By relating the social and personal impact of metal on himself and his friends growing up in rural North Dakota, Klosterman makes a compelling case that this music has an importance and meaning far beyond how it compares musically and lyrically to Dylan, The Beatles, Springsteen, and other ordained members of the Rock Canon. The sprawling text is part memoir, part free-thinking criticism, part record guide, and always hilarious. I guess that FARGO ROCK CITY falls somewhere between Dave Eggers and Chuck Eddy, but it's really too sui generis

to be so glibly catagorized. This book is for the "Rocker within us all"! Check it out....

I'm a big fan of Chuck Klosterman's writing, so I thought I might enjoy Fargo Rock City even though I do not care about metal music in the least. But I only made it about halfway through the book before I had to give up. I assumed that this book would be as much about Klosterman and his teenage experiences as it is about metal, but I was wrong. This book is ONLY about metal. All 270 pages of it. And what I discovered is that Klosterman is a great writer when he is writing about characters, not when writing about concepts. That's what makes his novels Downtown Owl and The Visible Man so good--Klosterman can conjure up rich, fascinating characters in just a few pages. Sadly he cannot do the same for metal music. I would only recommend Fargo Rock City if you are/were in to metal music or if at least has some bearing on your formative years.

I bought this on the recommendation of Martin Popoff, and was terribly disappointed. If you want to read an insightful, entertaining, and fair review of heavy metal, this is most definitely NOT your book. Klosterman's "appreciation" of the form starts and ends with "glam" (basically L.A. club metal and derived forms of party-hairspray rock). He spends most of the book in postmodern smirky hipster mode, which means he continually trashes the music from a musical point of view, and chooses to battle for its "validity" in the more easily defended realm of "what it meant to me as a kid." As cultural studies, this is crap, and as a book about heavy metal it is an utter waste of time. He elevates glam (Poison, GNR, Cinderella, etc) and simultaneously slags Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, Metallica and the host of other metal bands which were the meat and potatoes of any real metalhead of the time. He has no appreciation for what most metal fans would actually grace with the term "heavy metal". As you will quickly be able to tell, this is masterfully well done, in that he affirms what most of the snobs have been saying all along about metal--all the 5 star reviews are from people who are...gasp...not metal fans--whilst and at the same time pretending to be a true fan. Hipster dreck at its worst. You are better off reading Ian Christe's "Sound of the Beast", or even Walser or Weinstein's books. Better yet, check out Sam Dunn's documentary "Metal-A Headbanger's Journey." Dunn and Christe are real fans of the music, and they don't spend all their time perpetuating all the stereotypes of the form.

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