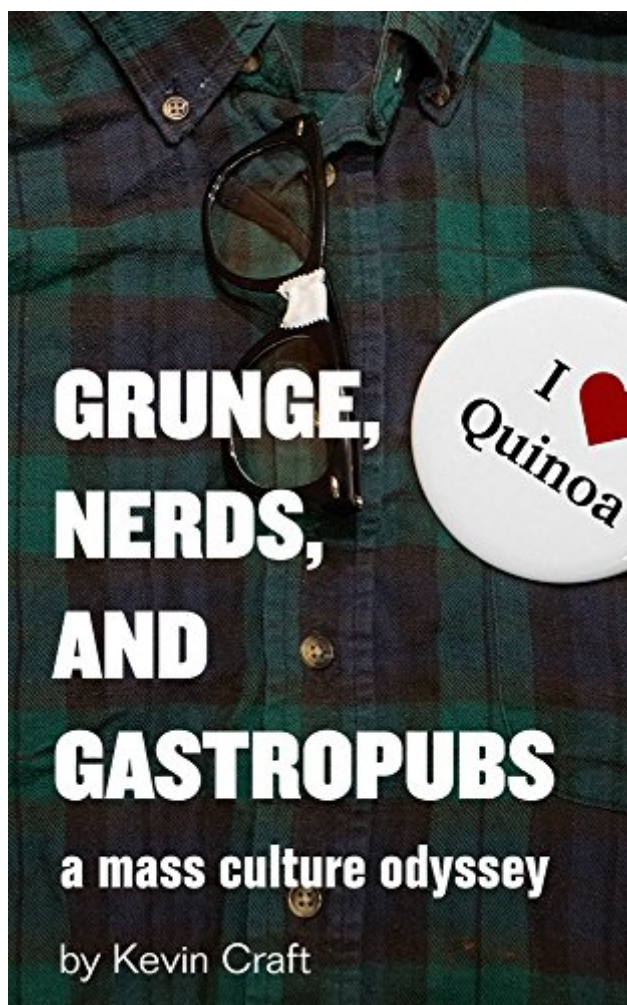


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Grunge, Nerds, And Gastropubs: A Mass Culture Odyssey (Kindle Single)



Synopsis

Grunge, Nerds, and Gastropubs: A Mass Culture Odyssey examines some of the most memorable pop culture phenomena of the past two decades and highlights the innumerable and often veiled threads which connect them. Ever wonder why glum rock À la Nirvana became popular in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, or why gastropubs that serve organic kale have replaced all-American chain restaurants like Applebee's as the trendy dining establishments? Can the tennis rivalry between John McEnroe and Björn Borg shed light on the type of sadness intrinsic to success? And what's the connection between the music of the bands Weezer and the Presidents of the United States of America? (Hint: It has to do with the difference between pretending to be nerdy and actually being nerdy.) Grunge, Nerds, and Gastropubs: A Mass Culture Odyssey answers these questions and explores how one trend—say, the marginalization of indie rock—relates to another—like our society's growing interest in organic food—largely due to the social contexts in which they occur. As a writer for publications like The Atlantic, Salon, Slate, GQ, and The Washington Post, author Kevin Craft has moonlighted as a craft spirits connoisseur to better understand why foodies obsess over authenticity, and spent sleepless nights pondering the tragic link between the Dave Matthews Band and doofy frat bros, all for the sake of identifying the latent connections between disparate bits of mass culture and figuring out if these connections matter. Grunge, Nerds, and Gastropubs: A Mass Culture Odyssey is a book that's edifying, fascinating, and downright hilarious, and it will take readers back to the decade when people listened to Smashing Pumpkins albums alone in the dark.

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Customer Reviews

Having spent my high school and college days in the 90's I was very intrigued by this book, but was not overly impressed with the overall book. It is definitely not one of those books that leaves you wanting to continue reading the next chapter and disappointed that you do not have enough time. It did help pass time on several legs of a couple hour flight, and is small enough it does not take much time to read.

Gave up early on, definitely not general interest.

Anyone who strolls through a mall, eats at a chain restaurant, and wonders how we got from grunge to fast fashion--that would be anyone--will enjoy this fascinating cultural history of the past twenty years.

Interesting and often provocative. Never much into pop music so I have to assume Craft's views are sound. What it did do is lead me to digging out Fukuyama.

a bit on the rambling, big wordy side

The grunge esthetic was not born in the early 90's, it has always been there -at least for a century-It was mostly repressed but for the 4 or 5 brave "weirdos" who could be spotted in high school neither wearing or caring about what was vogue. They were able to resist the enormous conformity pressure which began to lose power in the 60's. After this period, those with this disposition where freer to bring out their inner grunge and true nerdiness.

This was a very interesting sociological analysis of American mainstream culture from the early 1990s to now, with a particular emphasis on music's place in that culture. The uniqueness of the all-too-short grunge era is placed within a larger context of history (both American and musical) and a greater understanding of what led to it is thereby accomplished. Admittedly - as some other

reviewers have pointed out - the author's love of Smashing Pumpkins is extreme, so if you like that band a lot you will definitely enjoy reading about them here. And even if you don't like them you can just skip a few paragraphs and you'll be fine. Some of the high points of this book for me were:- an eye-opening side-by-side comparison of the release patterns of Smashing Pumpkins and Nirvana [let me just say they have far more in common than you realize]- a hilarious and spot-on examination of the authenticity of the nerdiness of the members of Weezer versus The Presidents of the United States of America- an intelligently expounded theory on why chefs are essentially the rockstars of today Regarding this last point, have you ever wondered why food culture and subculture is so prevalent now? Why there are seemingly a gazillion "options" for any particular foodstuff you want to buy? Why there are now people who call themselves "foodies"? Why modern day "rockstars" are basically chefs on Food Network rather than being actual rock stars on MTV? Well . . . this book goes a long way toward answering these and other questions. Definitely a well-written and interesting read, especially for anyone who lived through the early nineties. I highly recommend it!

Some interesting ideas. The author clearly loves the 90s. Or at least the nineties he has constructed from a mashup of Reality Bites, Singles and Seinfeld. As a fellow GenX I don't recall the nineties as being as bleak a time as he did. Just because I enjoyed Nirvana, Pumpkins, and yes Pearl Jam doesn't mean I internalized the world view of Troy from Reality Bites. The 90s weren't that bad for all of us. The disparate mashup of topics was fun to read and the theories were interesting but a little too pat and self-aware. Also, the writer has an annoying need to throw as many "high-value" words into a sentence as possible. I have advanced degrees and appreciate a well-chosen phrase, but the volume and frequency of "erudite" words made the author look more like an anxious freshman trying to impress his professor on a senior thesis than a person choosing the best words based on the points he is trying to set forth. Overall a quick and entertaining read, but one I would not put too much stock into. Especially if you are reading it as someone who didn't grow up at that time and can't spot where there is more hype and nostalgia than substance.

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