



Blues & Chaos: The Music Writing of Robert Palmer

By Robert Palmer M.D.

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Now in paperback, the definitive anthology from a writer who “set the standard for newspaper pop-music criticism” (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*), the *New York Times*’ first chief pop music critic and *Rolling Stone* contributor Robert Palmer.

Robert Palmer’s extraordinary knowledge and boundless love of music were evident in all his writing. He was an authority on rock & roll, blues, jazz, punk, avant-garde, and world music—often discovering new artists and trends years (even decades) before they hit the mainstream. Noted music writer Anthony DeCurtis has compiled the best pieces from Palmer’s oeuvre and presents them here, in one compelling volume.

A member of the elite group of the defining rock critics who emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, Palmer possessed a vision so complete that, as DeCurtis writes, “it’s almost as if, if you read Bob, you didn’t need to read anyone else.” *Blues & Chaos* features some of his most memorable pieces about John Lennon, Led Zeppelin, Moroccan trance music, Miles Davis, Jerry Lee Lewis, Philip Glass, and Muddy Waters. Wonderfully entertaining, infused with passion, and deeply inspiring, *Blues & Chaos* is a must for music fans everywhere.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Throughout his career as a critic and journalist for the *New York Times*, *Rolling Stone* and other publications (as well as books like *Deep Blues*), Palmer (1945–1997) strove for a unifying perspective that could cover all strains of American music, a set of procedures that will allow us to evaluate Charles Ives and James Brown as he wrote in a seminal 1979 essay. The breadth of his journalism is outstanding: he was one of the first writers to interview Sam Phillips, the head of Elvis Presley's first music label; soon after, he was alerting *Times* readers to the developing world music movement, and the year after that he was hanging out in the recording studio with John Lennon and Yoko Ono. He could write reviews of comprehensive box sets or write the liner notes for them, and either way the result would be an engaging, insightful essay crammed with historical details. One key test of any retrospective anthology of this sort is whether the reviews and essays are as relevant today as when they were first published, and on that front, Palmer scores an absolute success—his work, like that of Greil Marcus and Peter Guralnick, sets a standard for a critical appreciation of American culture. (Nov.)

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Review

"There's so much good writing here."--A.V. Club

"A posthumous collection of music writing that single-handedly justifies Palmer's inclusion into the pantheon of Essential Music Writers. . . . For the uninitiated, a revelation."--*Oxford American*

"The breadth of genres and artists covered in *Blues & Chaos* can be astonishing"--*Memphis Flyer*

"Eloquent and calmly authoritative prose"--*The New York Times*

"One key test of any retrospective anthology of this sort is whether the reviews and essays are as relevant today as when they were first published, and on that front, Palmer scores an absolute success--his work . . . sets a standard for a critical appreciation of American culture."--*Publishers Weekly*

"Judiciously whittles down Palmer's writings--incisive, clever reviews, vivid, chatty profiles and more."--*The New York Times*

"Reading *Blues & Chaos*, a dazzling collection of writing . . . is to be reminded of [Robert Palmer's] singular talent, his range of interests and passions. . . . Editor Anthony DeCurtis has chosen wonderfully in this collection, which showcases Palmer's gifts as an informed enthusiast and brilliant chronicler of musical moments."--*Times-Picayune*

"If you're a junkie for great music writing, you owe it to yourself to pick up *Blues & Chaos*. Lovingly edited and assembled . . . this anthology does much to highlight Palmer's curiosity and enthusiasm as well as his scholarship."--*The Patriot Ledger* (Quincy, MA)

"Remarkable"--*Buffalo News*

"Palmer . . . set the standard for newspaper pop-music criticism for years."--*Philadelphia Inquirer*

“Bob was a kind of uber-tutor. Hanging around with him was like doing a PhD in whatever subject he was interested in. I was a fan, and I feel lucky to have met him.” —Bono

About the Author

Robert Palmer was born in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1945, and graduated from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock in 1964. He began writing for *Rolling Stone* in the early '70s -- and continued to do so as a contributing editor throughout his life. From 1981 until 1988, he was the chief pop music critic at *The New York Times*, the first person to hold that title, and he continued to write for the *Times* after that. He is the author of *Deep Blues: A Musical and Cultural History of the Mississippi Delta* (1981); *Baby That Was Rock and Roll: The Legendary Leiber and Stoller* (1978); *A Tale of Two Cities: Memphis Rock and New Orleans Roll* (1979); *Jerry Lee Lewis Rocks!* (1981); *The Rolling Stones* (1983); and *Rock & Roll: An Unruly History* (1995). He wrote liner notes for dozens of releases, and his work appeared in virtually every music magazine published during his time, including *Downbeat*, *Crawdaddy*, *Guitar World*, and *Musician*. Palmer died in 1997.

Anthony DeCurtis is a contributing editor at *Rolling Stone*, where his work has appeared since 1980. He has written for numerable music and entertainment magazines and newspapers. A former on-air correspondent and editorial director at VH1, he has contributed to a myriad of television specials and programs. DeCurtis holds a Ph.D. in American literature from Indiana University and he teaches at the University of Pennsylvania and the Graduate School of Journalism at the City University of New York.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Anthony Powell:

Have you spare time to get a day? What do you do when you have much more or little spare time? Sure, you can choose the suitable activity intended for spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a go walking, shopping, or went to often the Mall. How about open or maybe read a book allowed Blues & Chaos: The Music Writing of Robert Palmer? Maybe it is to become best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time with the favorite's book, you can wiser than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have additional opinion?

Tara Wilson:

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Paige Robinson:

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