Short list of music books recommended by Pete Paphides (PP), Eavie Paphides (EP), Bob Stanley (BS), Dave Haslam (DH) and Tim Burgess (TB). With each one a “buy here” option which takes you direct to an independent bookshop that can get you the book (don’t forget some shops will take orders by email, or phone rather than online).

The pandemic is messing up orders, so the list sadly hasn’t included books we love but are hard to get, or out of stock, or that aren’t available from indie booksellers at the moment.

A list of independent bookshops is here, please browse them, you never what you might find. We will be adding to this list – and including secondhand stores. Stay independent!

Bob Stanley ‘Yeah Yeah Yeah: The Story of Modern Pop’ Recounts the history of pop music from 1952 onwards; the detail is encyclopaedic, and the stories eye-opening. (TB) https://blackwells.co.uk/bookshop/product/Yeah-Yeah-Yeah-by-Bob-Stanley-author/9780571322404

Dave Haslam ‘A Life in 35 Boxes’ Fantastically written and thoughtful small format book about the pleasures and perils of vinyl collecting and how Dave survived selling his record collection, all 4500 pieces. (TB) https://www.confingopublishing.uk/product-page/easter-offer-3-for-20-22-50-outside-uk

Pete Paphides ‘Broken Greek’ Pete’s memories of growing up in Birmingham in an immigrant, Greek household, and finding friendship with music is so engaging. He’s barely into his teens by the end of the book. We need more. (TB) https://www.foxlanebooks.co.uk/

Tim Burgess ‘One, Two, Another’ The Tim Burgess lyrics collection, interspersed with his stories and memories from writing songs over the last thirty years; a great way to tell a story of a life immersed in music. (DH) <http://www.claphambooks.com/>

Amy Raphael ‘A Seat at the Table; Interviews with Women on the Frontline of Music’ Amy’s previous work has included interviews with Patti Smith and Courtney Love etc. In this book she talks to some amazing contemporary artists, inc Kate Tempest, Nadine Shah, Christine & the Queens. Important insights on every page. (DH) https://www.foxlanebooks.co.uk/

Andrew Loog Oldham ‘Stoned’ Britain in the fifties and sixties nailed by a first-rate cheekster. It ends just as he meets the Rolling Stones. (BS) https://www.linghams.co.uk/

Beastie Boys ‘Beastie Boys Book’ An archive, a treasure trove, and so well put together. The photography, their full story; there’s nothing missing. (DH) http://www.ebbandflobookshop.co.uk/

Chris Heath ‘Literally’ & ‘Vs America’ In 1989 and 1991 Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe allowed Chris Heath to be an ambient presence as they embarked on their first tours. The resulting books are a thrilling portal into the shared interior world of a group that might be even smarter in real life than their music. (PP)

https://www.roughtrade.com/gb/s?utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=chris+heath

Chrissie Hynde ‘Reckless’ Her depictions of her childhood are concise yet lyrical. She's utterly aware of the person she was and the person she became, and the verve with which she guides you from the former to the latter is the purest of joys. (PP) It's so inspiring to hear the story of someone who achieved so much and did so totally on her own terms. (AP)

<https://www.linghams.co.uk/>

Cosey Fanni Tutti ‘Art Sex Music ‘ Powerful book, and grimly revelatory a lot of it; sets the record straight about her creative history, including her time with COUM & Throbbing Gristle. (TB) <https://to-be-read.co.uk/>

Daniel Rachel ‘Don't Look Back In Anger’ Oral history of Britpop that shows really well how the combination of art, politics, music and drugs all intertwined to create and eventually destroy that scene. (EP) <https://www.roughtrade.com/gb/daniel-rachel/don-t-look-back-in-anger-the-rise-and-fall-of-cool-britannia-told-by-those-who-were-there-signed-copies>

Goldie ‘All Things Remembered’ Goldie’s autobiography rocks and swirls from unbelievable anecdote to intimate self-analysis and back again; if you’ve ever been in his company for more than two minutes, you’ll know his mind works in a wonderfully unique, free-wheeling way. Absolutely one-of-a-kind. (DH) https://www.linghams.co.uk/

Grace Maxwell ‘Falling & Laughing: The Restoration of Edwyn Collins’ Edwyn Collins's wife and manager Grace Maxwell tells the story of her fight to help Edwyn back on his feet after two massive strokes (often against medical advice) and, against all prognoses, back on stage. (PP) http://www.ebbandflobookshop.co.uk/

Greg Milner ‘Perfecting Sound Forever’ Milner's expansive history of recorded sound is full of great stories and also underlines the fact that the vinyl vs digital debate has, in essence, always been with us – only the names have been changed (PP) <https://to-be-read.co.uk/>

Ian Penman ‘It Gets Me Home, This Curving Track’ Penman is one of the first music writers I followed religiously. This 2019 collection of recent essays has so much breadth and depth and food for thought. The chapter on Charlie Parker is incredible, and his writing on Mods will make you shudder with delight. (DH) https://fitzcarraldoeditions.com/books/it-gets-me-home-this-curving-track

Jon Savage ‘England's Dreaming’ Social history as much as a music book. Art history too. And punk history; definitively (BS). https://www.roughtrade.com/gb/jon-savage/england-s-dreaming-faber-modern-classics

Julian Cope ‘Head On/Repossessed’ From newly-arrived outsider of Liverpool's competitive post-punk scene to bona fide pop star, Cope's gonzoid account of his time The Teardrop Explodes is a riotous read. (PP) http://www.claphambooks.com/

Lloyd Bradley ‘Bass Culture’ You can devote your entire life to reggae collecting and still not unearth every single amazing track recorded in a tiny section of Kingston during a period of a few years, but for both beginners and longtime fans, Lloyd Bradley's comprehensive history of reggae is an essential accessory. (PP) <https://www.foxlanebooks.co.uk/>

Mark Lanegan ‘Sing Backwards and Weep’ Seriously, you don’t even have to be half a fan of the front man of the Screaming Trees to enjoy his autobiography. He stumbles from messed-up life experiences, heavy drugs, relentless score-settling, and unlovable madness in a raw and almost ridiculous way. You might hate him for most of the book but you’ll be rooting for him by the end. <https://www.roughtrade.com/gb/mark-lanegan/sing-backwards-and-weep>

Nick Tosches ‘Hellfire’ The best book on first wave rock'n'roll because it has the mania and ferocity of a Jerry Lee Lewis song. (BS) <https://www.foxlanebooks.co.uk/>

Nik Cohn ‘Awopbopaloobop Alopbamboom’ 'Pop From The Beginning' as it was originally titled, written in 1969. Reads like pinball. Endlessly inspiring. (BS) https://www.linghams.co.uk/

Nile Rodgers ‘Le Freak’ Rodgers hits the ground running with a dysfunctional childhood that could have borne the weight of a sizzling memoir irrespective of what followed. But Le Freak establishes even greater velocity when Chic germinates from a beautiful idea into a world-beating musical brand. (PP) http://www.claphambooks.com/

Pete Waterman ‘I Wish I Was Me’ Bill Drummond's secret twin, and how he became the King Of Pop. (BS) <https://www.foxlanebooks.co.uk/>

Peter Guralnick ‘Last Train To Memphis’ & ’Careless Love’ The life of Elvis, over two volumes. The greatest story ever told. (BS) https://www.linghams.co.uk/

Peter Shapiro ‘Turn The Beat Around’ The glorious, boundary-trashing story of disco. (BS) <http://www.ebbandflobookshop.co.uk/>

Robert Forster ‘Grant & I’ A story about the friendship that turned Robert Forster's teenage pop fantasy into a reality. Grant McLennan's tenure in The Go-Betweens was a consequence of the potential Forster saw in him. And the latter's tender telling of their escape from (and subsequent return to) Australia is surely an art-house buddy movie waiting to be made. (PP) <https://www.roughtrade.com/gb/robert-forster/grant-and-i-inside-and-outside-the-go-betweens>

Simon Goddard ‘Simply Thrilled: The Preposterous Story of Postcard Records’ Goddard's joyous, chaotic, hilarious telling of label that brought the likes of Orange Juice, Aztec Camera, and the Go-Betweens to wider attention. (PP) <https://www.foxlanebooks.co.uk/>

Stephen Morris ‘Record Play Pause’ There’s a mountain of excellent books about Joy Division and New Order, Factory and The Hacienda. The recent Jon Savage oral history of Joy Division, Bernard Sumner’s autobiography, Deborah Curtis ‘Touching From A Distance’, ‘Shadowplayers’ by James Nice, not forgetting Peter Hook’s various books, including ‘How Not to Run a Club’ (I have a walk on and then walk off part in the latter). Stephen’s book is funny, informative, honest, but also very heartfelt (with a sequel due later this year). (DH)

Steve Hanley ‘The Big Midweek’ Same as Dave says about Joy Division etc. So many great books about the Fall, not least those by Brix Smith, Dave Simpson and Si Wolstencroft, and Paul Hanley’s recent book about the making of the Hex Enduction Hour album. Steve Hanley’s is an incredible insider account of his year in the Fall, but also conjures so well what it’s like touring, being backstage and onstage in a band, and captures so many of the frustrations too. He survived! (TB) http://www.route-online.com/all-books/the-big-midweek-life-inside-the-fall.html

Stuart Cosgrove ‘Detroit67: The Year That Changed Soul’ Majestic book, and so inspiring. A document of an era, and a city. A must for anyone into black music, dance music; music full stop. (DH) <https://to-be-read.co.uk/>

Tom Doyle ‘Man On The Run: Paul McCartney in the 1970s’ As a biographer Doyle is quite Macca-like in his approach, the craft and cleverness in his writing is hidden and designed not to be noticed. This account of his first decade as an ex-Fab is empathetic but not uncritical. I tore through it. (PP) In a way, I felt it was easier to get into the head of Paul in ‘Man On The Run’, rather than with any Beatles books, because it showed you how he defined himself in the years immediately after The Beatles, and the character it took for him to do that. (EP) https://www.linghams.co.uk/

Tracey Thorn ‘Bedsit Disco Queen’ Tracey’s a great writer; we knew that from her songwriting. This is first book, from a few years ago now; she can do books as well! This takes us from her early days and first bands through the evolutions of Everything But the Girl with great honesty and gorgeous sentences. (DH) http://www.book-ish.co.uk/

Viv Albertine ‘Clothes Clothes Clothes, Music Music Music, Boys Boys Boys’ She essentially starts off as a musician's girlfriend before forming The Slits and, by doing so, helps to start a movement (and influence several more). I love the way she just wings it and does everything in her own style – and the surrounding cast of characters is just amazing. (EP) http://www.ebbandflobookshop.co.uk/

Vivien Goldman ‘Revenge of the She-Punks’ Thorough analysis of female music in the 20th and 21st century, reaching out as far as China and Russia. Fascinating on the way politics can impact on the music of each country. I love the connections she makes between, say, M.I.A. and Poly Styrene. (EP) <https://to-be-read.co.uk/>