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Heather McCormack

Daniel Levitin, Meet Your Dream Reader

July 30, 2008



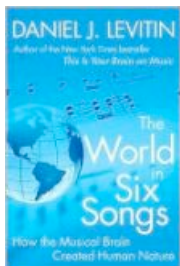
Jim Lieberman's [starred Xpress review](#) of Daniel Levitin's forthcoming *The World in Six Songs* (Dutton) made me think about a certain deceased rock critic and author. Pictured left and below with The Clash, [Lester Bangs](#), an early reviewer for *Rolling Stone* who made his name writing for *Creem*

magazine, loved everything from Van Morrison and Iggy Pop to John Coltrane. His writing possessed an incredible emotional range—by which I mean the man knew how to articulate music's psychological significance, its emotional effect (if it had one at all). Nobody I've read comes close to talking about music the way it should be talked about, that is, as a force capable of shaping our perception of people and the world.

Here he is on [The Clash](#): "Somewhere in their assimilation of reggae is the closest thing yet to the lost chord, the missing link between black music and white noise, rock capable of making a bow to black music without smearing on the blackface." On his hero, Lou Reed: "[He] is a completely deranged pervert and pathetic death dwarf." And, finally, on Van Morrison's "Madame George" from *Astral Weeks*: "Morrison saw the absolute possibility of loving human beings at their farthest extreme of wretchedness, and that the implications of that are terrible indeed."



Why am I telling you all of this? Because Lester Bangs would've been Daniel Levitin's dream reader (*not* that Jim Lieberman's a slouch). If he hadn't accidentally overdosed in his craphole apartment on Sixth Avenue here in New York City, I guarantee you Levitin's people would've gotten a quote from Bangs along the lines of "I'll be goddamned if Levitin didn't just figure out what makes me tick and what would make the debacle called Humanity happier in the process."



In other words, 1) read *The World in Six Songs* (it's going to bigger than his [This Is Your Brain on Music](#)), 2) listen to copious amounts of music, and 3) while reading *The World in Six Songs*, pick up Bangs's *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung* to get a sense of a person who fully integrated music into his life.

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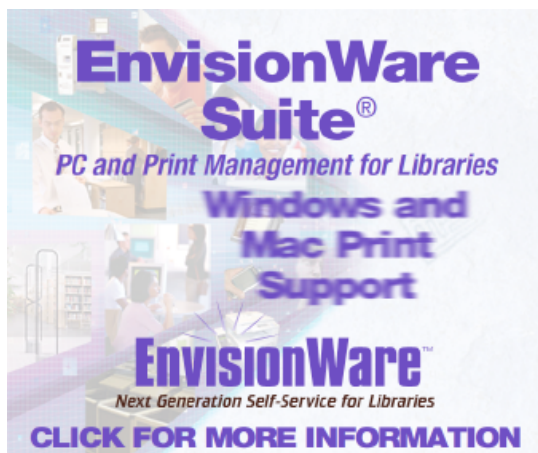
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