

David Bowie Made Me Gay

100 YEARS OF LGBT MUSIC



"The history of one hundred years of social change—ambitious, wide-ranging, unpredictable, fast-paced, and very entertaining."
—CHRISTOPHER BRAM, AUTHOR OF GOSPEL AND MONSTERS AND QUEENLY OUTLANDS: THE GAY WRITERS WHO CHANGED AMERICA

Darryl W. Bullock
AUTHOR OF FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS

OVERLOOK

David Bowie Made Me Gay: 100 Years of LGBT Music

Darryl W. Bullock

Download now

Read Online →

David Bowie Made Me Gay: 100 Years of LGBT Music

Darryl W. Bullock

David Bowie Made Me Gay: 100 Years of LGBT Music Darryl W. Bullock

LGBT musicians have shaped the development of music over the last century, with a sexually progressive soundtrack in the background of the gay community's struggle for acceptance. With the advent of recording technology, LGBT messages were for the first time brought to the forefront of popular music. *David Bowie Made Me Gay* is the first book to cover the breadth of history of recorded music by and for the LGBT community and how those records influenced the evolution of the music we listen to today.

David Bowie Made Me Gay uncovers the lives of the people who made these records, and offers a lively canter through the scarcely documented history of LGBT music-makers. Darryl W. Bullock discusses how gay, lesbian, and bisexual performers influenced Jazz and Blues; examines the almost forgotten Pansy Craze in the years between the two World Wars (when many LGBT performers were feted by royalty and Hollywood alike); chronicles the dark years after the depression when gay life was driven deep underground; celebrates the re-emergence of LGBT performers in the post-Stonewall years; and highlights today's most legendary out-gay pop stars: Elton John, Boy George, Freddie Mercury, and George Michael.

David Bowie Made Me Gay: 100 Years of LGBT Music Details

Date : Published November 21st 2017 by Harry N. Abrams

ISBN : 9781468315592

Author : Darryl W. Bullock

Format : Hardcover 320 pages

Genre : Music, Nonfiction, History, Lgbt, Glibt, Queer, Culture, Pop Culture

 [Download David Bowie Made Me Gay: 100 Years of LGBT Music ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online David Bowie Made Me Gay: 100 Years of LGBT Music ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online David Bowie Made Me Gay: 100 Years of LGBT Music Darryl W. Bullock

From Reader Review David Bowie Made Me Gay: 100 Years of LGBT Music for online ebook

Shannon Cleveland says

I tend not to read biographical novels unless they really peak my interest. I'm very interested in LGBTQ music/musicians so I had to pick this book up from the library.

Off the bat, the title is misleading. There wasn't much David Bowie in this book, which was very disappointing! Don't mention a celebrity in the title unless they are a focal point! The book also constantly had portions of it drag on to the point of it being boring.

It felt like the author just copied and pasted a lot of this information and didn't write it in a way to make it fascinating. Which is very important in a book like this. Disappointed, but not the worst biographical book I've read.

Kevin says

Darryl W. Bullock's "David Bowie Made Me Gay" is a comprehensive, illuminating and entertaining celebration of LGBT singers, composers, producers and musicians who created music over the last century. Bullock enhances these mini-biographies by placing them in context with historic advancements and setbacks in the quest for gay civil rights.

"Written histories have tended to straightwash the stories of the female pioneers of the blues," writes Bullock before correcting accounts of Bessie Smith, Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey and Billie Holiday in the 1920s and '30s. Bullock then profiles Noël Coward, Marlene Dietrich and Cole Porter. (Porter's 1941 song "Farming" is the first pop song to use the word "gay" to mean "homosexual.") The 1950s brings scandal sheets, arrests and lawsuits (amazingly, Liberace sued two newspapers who hinted he was gay and he won money from both publications).

Things loosen up in the 1960s when Little Richard, Lesley Gore and Dusty Springfield came out to the press. And while the Who's Pete Townshend and the Kinks' Dave Davies didn't come out until the '90s, they were both writing popular queer-themed songs in the 1960s. Bullock also covers multiple musicians in chapters on specific genres like women's music (Janis Ian, Joan Armatrading, Holly Near), country (Ty Herndon, Chely Wright and Drake Jensen) and disco (Village People, Sylvester, Divine, Jacques Morali). Bullock's sensational reference guide uncovers a lot of fascinating and unfamiliar queer history and shares it in an entertaining and breezy style.

This comprehensive, briskly paced and essential reference guide uncovers a century's worth of hidden history on LGBT music-makers.

Joshua says

There is a pronounced lack of David Bowie in this book, but that doesn't lessen the quality or importance of this work. Darryl W. Bullock captured me with the title, and while I was hoping to read a bit about the Thin

White Duke, the man who is quickly becoming my philosophical, intellectual, and sexual icon, the book was actually a fascinating history about Queer musicians starting with the rise of Jazz in the early 1900s and ending in our current period.

There are a great many writers that have made a living writing about the importance and relevance of "representation" in the media, and so I want to avoid in this review anything that sounds like a soundbite. David Bowie Made Me Gay is relevant because it writes queer people into the culture by simply observing that we were here, that we have always been here, and that our sexuality is something that has been relevant to our success as artists. Bullock observes numerous instances of artists who were shoved back into the closet because of the repressive cultures they lived in, and the story of Gladys Bentley is enough to bring the reader to tears. But what's most important about this book is that Bullock does not attempt to editorialize or dramatize tragedy or success. Bullock's approach in this book is that of a record keeper.

David Bowie Made Me Gay finds queer personalities through the history of music simply to observe that they were there and that many of the most important, and sometimes even just the minor characters in the long history of the music industries and genres were queer. This goes a long way then to helping young queer readers who may be interested in finding queer icons in music. It helps readers, lovers of music period, who might happen to be queer to appreciate that they may not be so different sexually than an artist they love.

David Bowie didn't make me gay personally, but as I'm reading more about the man's life, and listening to more of his music, I see how important it is to have such an icon, such a human being in your life as an example. There are plenty of examples of wonderful, tragic, contemptuous, and of course, gay people in this book and it's worth the reader's time to read through this wonderful chronicle.

The queer community's received another in a long line of great books that reminds the reader of one important fact that so many people would prefer not to here: we've always been here.

Rosemary says

This is a hard book to review. The first three quarters of the book are really good. I learnt a lot. The chapters which cover the first half of the 20th century are particularly great. However when Bullock hits the 80s, the book starts to get confusing. He jumps from artist to artist and back and forth in time, resulting in no real insight into any of the artists he mentions.

I also noticed a few, not errors exactly, but quotes or events taken out of context and presented in a way which really didn't convey the whole story or gave the wrong impression. The instances where I noticed this were around discussions of the bands Suede and Queen, both of whom I know quite a bit about. It left me wondering whether this was the case for other artists discussed that I know less about as well.

John says

The first part of this book was really interesting and informative. I never knew there were so many GLBT artists from the 1920's-50's that had such influence on music and the struggles they went through. I enjoyed that part the best. The second half, mostly the 70's to today, was kind of a letdown. Most of the information was based on magazine articles or previously published source material, even though a large number of the people discussed are still alive today. I don't know if they just couldn't get interviews or if they didn't try, but

I think they missed a big opportunity. And what they did have just wasn't new information, at least for me. Additionally, it was very focused on men, more so that I had hoped. All in all, it left me wanting.

Jessica says

I genuinely wanted to really like this book, so I don't choose to rate it this low lightly. My main problem was with how all this information about LGBT performers and the various eras of music those performers came/come from was organized...or, rather, wasn't organized. This definitely could have used further editing in my opinion. It also bugged me that, while at least the performers' musical achievements would be highlighted...so would their scandals and the often tragic ways in which they died, almost morbidly and cynically so (for the latter, I think a sort of epilogue would have been best).

However, there were parts I did enjoy/found interesting, so this book isn't a complete write-off for me, just a bit of a disappointment, as I think this is a great idea to make a nonfiction book from. I liked that musicians were discussed that I otherwise had never heard of before. But, there were also just an inexcusable number of typos, which is always a little pet peeve of mine. It's got a great flashy title, it definitely has that going for it!

Richard Summerbell says

Once in a rainbow moon, a book comes along that exceeds all the expectations you've ever had for any books. This is one of those, a remarkable elucidation of the history of LGBT popular music in the 20th and 21st centuries. One of the factors that makes it remarkable is that it deals with music for which publicity and sales tended to be suppressed. As one of half a dozen volunteer programmers for an LGBT community radio program in 1979-81 in Vancouver, Canada, I got in with people who were dedicated to collecting and playing LGBT music that was otherwise going unheard. Our most played disc was 'Caravan Tonight,' a 1974 recording on Mercury Records by Steven Grossman from New York. The gorgeous title track about an older guy sewing up the ripped pants of his soon-to-be-wandering younger boyfriend seemed like something everyone should want to hear - but bias had long since damped out its major-label release and its sales were minimal. Grossman gets a substantial write-up in Bullock's book, and his ups and downs as an artist are placed into a well described historical context.

This book begins at the beginning of the 20th century, and features an almost academically detailed, but highly readable, chronicle of the career of, as writer Al Rose put it, "epileptic, alcoholic, homosexual Negro genius" Tony Jackson, a role model for his more famous friend Jelly Roll Morton. Unlikely that you would recognize Jackson's name, but you should, and you will, forever, after if you read his story in this book. The story then bridges to Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey, and the classic 1920's black lesbian blues tracks we loved to play on our show, like Ma's 'Prove it On Me Blues' ("They say I do it, ain't nobody caught me..."). And onwards and upwards through the 20th century, featuring the two main categories of LGBT artists -- the flamboyantly famous and never-quite-out, like Cole Porter, Liberace, Little Richard and Canada's own Jackie Shane, and the plain-spokenly out and much ignored, like a whole bunch of people who made great music you've probably never heard about, most notably Blackberri.

'Women's music,' like the extraordinary 'The Changer and the Changed' by Cris Williamson (1975), is thoroughly covered. These records at least got distribution during their early years, thanks to a network of women's bookstores across North America: when I bought my copy in 1977, the woman at the counter berated me for effectively stealing it from a woman by using my privileged male university student money. It was never easy to get LGBT music, other than the closety mainstream stuff. I'm afraid we were a little purist

on our show about people like David Bowie, who provided many dreamers with much fantasy about being openly gay, but couldn't bring themselves actually to sing the word. The mainstream artist who first did that in a sympathetic way - rampant heterosexual Rod Stewart in his 'The Killing of Georgie,' 1976 - gets full credit in Bullock's book. Luckily, Bullock, a full-out Bowie enthusiast, is unencumbered by purism that seemed so important to us at the time, and writes in long-time cringers like Freddie Mercury and Dan Hartman with full gusto. I think we can upgrade them to full LGBT heroes now, even if they had to be outed by AIDS.

The range of Bullock's research is beyond impressive. He does a great job with the UK, the U.S., and Australia. He gets into Europe, covers LGBT efforts in Kenya, and looks into Russia. In Canada, he catches Michel Girouard and Réjean Tremblay, whose 1972 civil partnership was unknown to me, and also devotes considerable space to genius singer-songwriter Ferron (comparisons to Yeats are often made with her lyrics), from Vancouver. Tragically, he misses mah man Lewis Furey, whose song 'Hustler's Tango,' about a gay hustler working the streets of Montreal, was a radio hit locally in 1975, and whose lipstick-smear album cover caught my eye and yielded my collection an astonishing classic that has also fascinated other LGBT musicians, like Tom Robinson.

The other serious omission this book has from the 70s is the first disco hit ever to acknowledge same-sex relationships directly, Theo Vaness's "As Long As It's Love" (1979), which blew the Village People's macho pussyfooting out of the water. In North America, this hit from the Dutch music scene (https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Shoes; Theo was actually Theo van Es from Zoeterwoude) was mostly just known to gay club DJs, but it made many eager liberationists like me run out and buy our own 12-inch 45 singles.

Towards the end of the book, as we catch up to modern times, the LGBT music scene starts to get crowded, and Bullock's text becomes ever more telegraphic and cross-linked, since he just can't give everyone their full page any more. The brilliant comic duo Romanovsky and Phillips are reduced to an epithet, albeit complimentary, and lists run into lists as Bullock's paragraphing structure collapses - something I suspect was due to bad editing, not to any deficiency of his writing. Still, it can all be followed, though it would be something if Bullock were able to expand this book into the three-volume set it inherently wants to be. He may need a new editor, though: knuckle-rap anyone who can leave a sentence with a misplaced modifier like "Infamous for stalking the streets of New York with the words 'fuck off' written on her forehead, Lou Reed was an early fan..." The 'stalker' was Anohni of Antony and the Johnsons, not Lou as the sentence would have you read. There are a number of these infelicities. I only mention this because some other reviewers have criticized the book for its editorial imperfections, and I think these need to be isolated as a dross that doesn't besmirch the gold of the rest of the book in any way.

May our beautiful, battered, banished and buried music all emerge to share its place in the sun next to the glittering images of Bowie, Mercury and Elton John. We owe tremendous gratitude to Darryl Bullock for this masterwork.

Alex says

Exactly what I wanted from this book, and exactly the kind of book I've been searching for over the past few years. A comprehensive, well-written but not overwhelming history of queer music and musicians over the past 100 years. A western focus overall, mostly within the US/UK/the occasional Australian act, but delightfully does cover all the letters within LGBT. Some stuff I knew, a lot of stuff I didn't know! I loved reading this, was glad to take a copy out from the library, and hope to buy a paper copy myself for my collection sometime soon.

Kirby R. says

This book is simply fantastic. I don't think I've ever seen another book dedicated specifically to the place of LGBT+ people in the music industry, but not only was it brilliant, after having read "David Bowie Made Me Gay," it was obviously necessary. Bullock describes each musician in all of their often bittersweet glory and proves to represent a good number of identities with his assortment of selected performers, and while I was aware of a good few of them, I am very happy to say that I had by no means heard of the vast majority. This book is definitely a favorite.

Lauren says

First off, the title of this book legit made me laugh out loud. I just thought: "If anyone had this magical power, it would totally be David Bowie." Ok... so not the greatest book, despite my decently high rating. I've never felt the need to do much studying on music but the summer reading theme at the library is Music/Libraries Rock.

I did find this book to be fairly amazing. (Ok... I know that I said it wasn't that great, but follow me on this one. I'm going to explain how I found it amazing but not so great all at the same time, thus amounting to my four star rating.) 1) For a topic that I haven't done much reading on, the book held my attention all the way through. 2) The research done was fantastic! Just so much & could have very easily been dry but was not. So, I have to respect that. 3) I had no idea that the LGBT community existed in any sense as far back as it did. I knew it existed in the 1970's. (The Stonewall Riots happened.) Clearly it existed in the 1950's due to the fact there were laws relating to homosexuality in both the UK & the US. (I'm assuming it was much more underground due to said laws.) But this book makes me think that there were stirrings all the way back to WWI & the 1920's.

I learned a lot in this book.

Ed says

The first half of this book is excellent and eye opening. Learning about queer, black New Orleans 100 years ago was eye-opening, and learning about how Tony Jackson figures into Jelly Roll Morton's history was fantastic. I knew of Ma Rainey, but learning about Ethel Waters and Lucille Bogan was fascinating, as was their shocking openness about their sexualities. I loved finding out about the popularity of the first modern drag queens in the 20s. The histories of the underground, camp recordings were fun, and I didn't realize that some of my oldies favorites like Johnnie Ray were gay. There's a lot of great "forgotten" history, even if I read patiently waiting for one of my favorites, Big Mama Thornton, to be mentioned, and she is not.

But once this book hits the 1970s, some flaws are exposed. The organization of the book is by topics, not by chronological, and that isn't the best. If you have any knowledge of modern gay artists, you'll find glaring omissions. Two Lou Reed songs are mentioned, but neither of them is "Candy Says," which seems like an obvious mention (even though Candy Darling is brought up). The chapter on lesbian singer-songwriters includes a few independent stalwarts, but he doesn't mention any songs as a point-of-entry if you are curious. Melissa Etheridge isn't mentioned until the last chapter and that is in the context of her song "Pulse" about

the Pulse massacre. She was one of the most prominent out artists on American radio in the 90s.

When he hits the 80s, I started to realize, not knowing the author at all, that he grew up in the UK. Frankie Goes to Hollywood and Soft Cell get a lot of attention, but I was stunned that the B52s and R.E.M. are only briefly brought up (and both within the context of AIDS; Ricky Wilson's death for the Bs and Michael Stipe rumors for REM). He gives Jimmy Sommerville a lot of deserved space, and he talks about Pet Shop Boys' early output. I was also disappointed at how briefly he goes over the "titans" of LGBT artists – if you are looking for deep dives into Bowie, Elton, and George Michael you are going to be disappointed. You will get an overview of the tabloid controversies they endured.

I enjoyed this book and found a lot of new music I didn't know about, which should be the goal of a book like that. But I can't ignore how frustrated and confused I was about omissions, organization, and lack of depth about certain artists.

Maria says

Let's get one thing straight - I learned a lot from this book and there are many interesting facets of information I did not know, and feel all the better for knowing. A tremendous amount of research obviously went into it, and that shows. My hat off to Darryl W. Bullock for that.

That being said, this book felt very disorganized to me. The chapters are (mostly) chronologically ordered, which I appreciate, but I often feel the author jumps when telling stories and histories; from one musician, to another, and then back to the first. This sometimes makes it hard to follow. In conjunction, the second half of the book feels like it happens too fast and doesn't include enough - there is not much mention of the Smiths, or of the Magnetic Fields (they get exactly one brief throw-in), or various other queer artists from the modern age who have/are changing the landscape. The main reason for the rating however, is that there is very little analysis of anything - actions, and especially lyrics. I feel the book would have benefited from a little more specificity in that regard, and perhaps that's what I was looking for and didn't get. It comes out predominantly in the passages on "Relax", but otherwise the book is fairly devoid of analysis.

And, yes, despite the title, there is not a deep focus on David Bowie, but really that's beside the point. I'm still glad to have read this book since it clarified some things I knew, and taught me that which I did not.

Mark Schlatter says

Overall, I found this a very disappointing read. I think the idea of the book (tracing the influences and performers of LBGT music) is great, and the introduction --- with a big focus on Bowie's importance --- makes an excellent case for the exploration. I learned a lot, including the facts that Johnny Mathis and Leslie Gore were gay, the existence of Camp Records and gay novelty LPs, the support of African American communities in the 1920's for LBGT performers, and the differences between the Women's Music movement in the US (folk-based) and the UK (punk-based). There's a ton of information, much of it beyond what this straight reader knew about LBGT music.

However, the organization is often horrible. The first chapters, which focus on just one or two performers, have a better focus, but later chapters suffer from information overload and no narrative structure to give the reader any guidance. A common practice by Bullock is to spend one to two paragraphs on a subject, talk about the performer's contributions, say where they are now, and then repeat with very little transition. (You

can even find some sentences which appear to change focus midway through.) There's very little clear connective tissue and an overabundance of personalities. The result is often confusing and feels shallow. I'm sure there are some fascinating stories and thematic explorations that can be written about LGBT music, but this wasn't it for me.

Nicole Valentine says

Lucky enough to have this ARC handed to me in advance and I have to say it's the most comprehensive history of how the LGBT community has shaped the development of music over the last century. I came to this as a 70's and 80's music aficionado with a deep and abiding love for Bowie, and left with a huge breadth of knowledge and appreciation for so much more. Thoroughly enjoyed the chapters on the New York and London punk scene and was fascinated to learn of the late sixties/early 70's first breakout use of the Moog and how the LGBT community was involved. It's an absolute necessary purchase for any music lover.

Christopher Jones says

What an incredible read , informative in an interesting and upBEAT way, total page turning paradise.....❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️
