



## Stars of David: Rock 'n' Roll's Jewish Stories

*Scott R. Benarde*

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Inspired by a backstage conversation with David Lee Roth during which the rock star revealed that he first learned to sing preparing for his Bar Mitzvah, Scott R. Benarde spent five years investigating the Jewish contribution to rock music from 1953 to the present. Benarde was determined to find out how Judaism influenced rock music and the people who created it. Jews "kvell" when they discover that someone famous or accomplished in any field is a member of the tribe, but wouldn't it be something if these celebrities cared about being Jewish? Focusing on these musicians, singers and songwriters, this study offers a collection of short vignettes that demonstrate the rich strand of Jewish belief and sentiment that underscores the work of many of the best-known rock stars of our time. Among those discussed or interviewed are the legendary songwriting teams of Jerry Lieber and Mike Stoller, and Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil; performers such as Bob Dylan, Melissa Manchester, Janis Ian, Randy Newman, Billy Joel, Kinky Friedman (of the Texas Jewboys) and David Lee Roth; and members of such groups as the Tokens, Jay and the Americans, Country Joe and the Fish, Yes, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, Bon Jovi, Phish, the Wallflowers and many others. Based largely on one-on-one interviews with the artists, the volume reveals the sheer variety of the Jewish experience in rock 'n' roll. From the deeply religious childhood of some, to the late-in-life religious reawakening of others, from the explicit use of scripture in song to the subtle yet resonant religious motifs that influence this most secular genre of music, the volume links faith, art and popular culture in surprising and provocative new ways.

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