



Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music

By Hugh Barker, Yuval Taylor

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Musicians strive to “keep it real”; listeners condemn “fakes”; ... but does great music really need to be authentic?

Did Elvis sing from the heart, or was he just acting? Were the Sex Pistols more real than disco? Why do so many musicians base their approach on being *authentic*, and why do music buffs fall for it every time? By investigating this obsession in the last century through the stories of John Lennon, Kurt Cobain, Jimmie Rodgers, Donna Summer, Leadbelly, Neil Young, Moby, and others, *Faking It* rethinks what makes popular music work. Along the way, the authors discuss the segregation of music in the South, investigate the predominance of self-absorption in modern pop, reassess the rebellious ridiculousness of rockabilly and disco, and delineate how the quest for authenticity has not only made some music great and some music terrible but also shaped in a fundamental way the development of popular music in our time.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Barker and Taylor's exploration of the idea of authenticity in modern music takes them from the falsely labeled "pure" and "primitive" style of Leadbelly to the first truly "autobiographical song" (Jimmie Rodgers's version of "TB Blues"), the disintegration of the Monkees and Neil Young's "Drugged-out, driven, and death soaked" album *Tonight's the Night*—what the authors believe to be the most "honest" rock record of all time. Strangely, the book does not include a discussion of hip-hop, a surprising omission given the attention paid to other aspects of black music and the genre's particular concern with the book's themes. By the end, Barker (a musician and songwriter) and Taylor (*I Was Born a Slave*) find the distinction between real and fake "[b]reaking down and becoming increasingly meaningless." It becomes clear that even seemingly obvious examples of authentic and inauthentic defy easy categorization when scrutinized. After all, is disco's well-intentioned alternate reality any less "real" than the violent, "mocking pretenses" of the Sex Pistols? Though the book's final conclusions are not revelatory, it offers an intriguing take on the development of popular music. (Mar.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Searching for "authenticity" in a music intended for broad commercial success may seem an odd undertaking, but Barker and Taylor are hardly the first to try. What was more authentic, the Sex Pistols or disco? Setting aside that so asking demonstrates a misunderstanding of what Malcolm McLaren and his hirees were up to, that simple question expresses the authors' MO. Similar queries animate the discussion and help make a framework within which to consider desegregation in the American South and other historical matters. Perhaps the quintessential chapter is "Heartbreak Hotel: The Art and Artifice of Elvis Presley." Few other pop stars have so thoroughly covered the gamut from the plausible authenticity of Presley's musical roots to the obvious, saccharine artifice of the King's movies. Other chapters ponder Neil Young (a rocker given to concerns about authenticity and legitimacy, sometimes too much so), Kurt Cobain, John Lennon, Moby, and Donna Summer. With plenty of interesting and contentious assertions to stimulate even casual readers, this is a heck of an argument starter. *Mike Tribby*

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Review

Constantly thought-provoking....their range—from hillbilly bards to disco divas and beyond—should be an inspiration to other cultural historians. -- *Elijah Wald, author of Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary Barker:

Hey guys, do you desire to find a new book to study? Maybe the book with the subject *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music* suitable to you? The book was written by well-known writer in this era. The particular book entitled *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music* is the main of several books that will everyone read now. This specific book was inspired lots of people in the world. When

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Jessica Davis:

The particular book Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music has a lot of information on it. So when you check out this book you can get a lot of gain. The book was authored by the very famous author. The writer makes some research previous to write this book. This kind of book very easy to read you will get the point easily after perusing this book.

James Murray:

The reason why? Because this Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music is an unordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap that but latter it will distress you with the secret this inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who all write the book in such incredible way makes the content inside of easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning completely. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This amazing book will give you a lot of advantages than the other book get such as help improving your skill and your critical thinking method. So , still want to hold off having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the reserve store hurriedly.

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