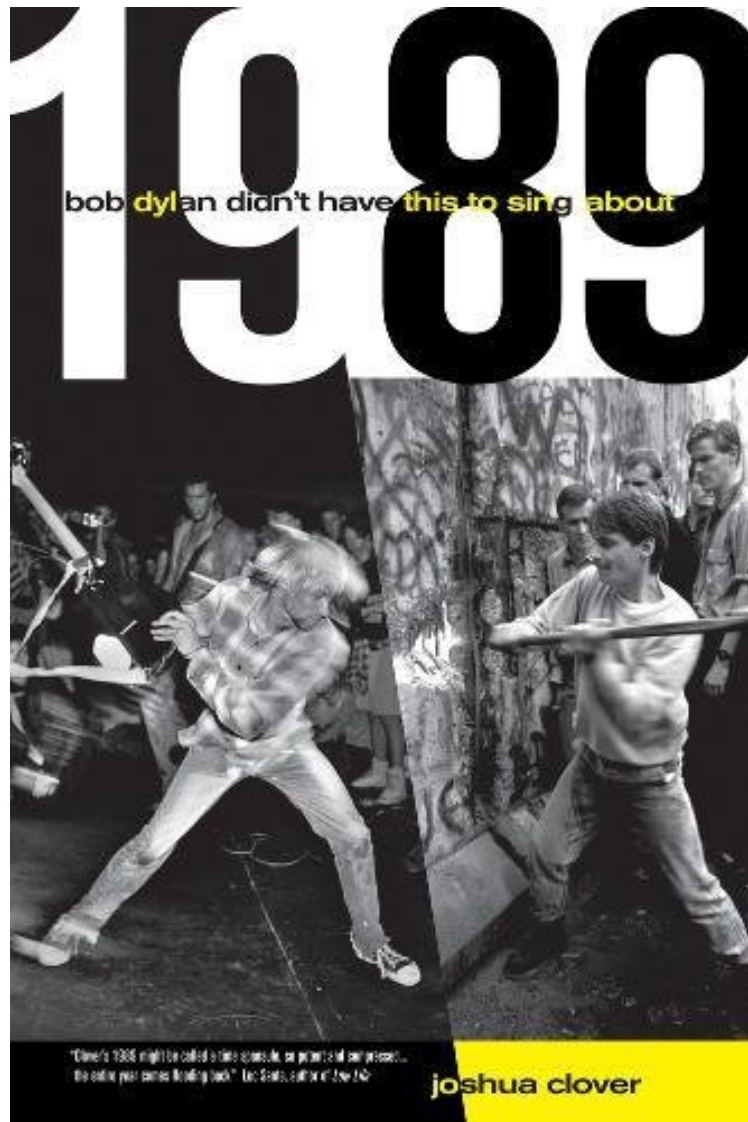


(Library ebook) 1989: Bob Dylan Didn't Have This to Sing About

## 1989: Bob Dylan Didn't Have This to Sing About

Joshua Clover

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**Joshua Clover : 1989: Bob Dylan Didn't Have This to Sing About** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised 1989: Bob Dylan Didn't Have This to Sing About:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Future's in the Air, I Can Feel It Everywhere, Blowing with the Wind of ChangeBy John WraithAn amazing little book. It's very intellectual and deals heavily in critical theory, so if you don't care for academic analysis, it's not for you. But if you have the stomach for it, Clover offers a creative and astute analysis of 1989 both as a year and as an idea. He focuses on three then-emerging genres. First, he views

gangsta rap, specifically on it as a replacement for the dominant style of the late 80s, black-nationalist rap, characterized mainly by Public Enemy's second and third LPs. Clover makes a compelling case that this transition took the rage and righteousness of black nationalism and directed it internally rather than externally, primarily as a postmodern satirical response to the "black-on-black crime" rhetoric that was increasingly alienating white America from the social problems plaguing black America. The white establishment, needless to say, did not get the joke, but their children ate up gangsta rap as a hyperbolic, cartoonish medium that they could safely consume because it did not challenge their white privilege with its internal orientation. Clover then focuses on acid house as a way for Brits, especially, to de-politicize utopian hippie impulses at a time that was being seen as one of de-politicization worldwide as American-style capitalist democracy "conquered" communism in Germany and China. Hindsight's favorite reactionary dimwit, Francis Fukuyama, and his "end of history" rhetoric are two of Clover's most salient whipping-boys in this text, and rightfully so. As the Cold War receded, the adversarial nature of Western capitalist democracy had nowhere to turn but inward. It had to look for conflict elsewhere, which meant within its own cultures and societies, although of course rave culture rejected this idea and instead proposed a new, decentered utopia that ultimately collapsed on its own contradictions and success -- another of Clover's main claims is that pop music is all-consuming yet ruthlessly Darwinian economically, so acid house's ascent into the mainstream was also the moment of its co-opting by consumerism. The third genre Clover discusses is grunge, which took punk's political fury and turned it inward, resulting in the "Negative Creep" self-loathing that Nirvana rode to highly-problematic success. Again, when this music hit the mainstream, it was effectively already over, had already been consumed by the pop beast. Along the way, Clover dissects how these genres and certain other "1989"-style songs -- Dee Lite's "Groove is in the Heart" and Jesus Jones's titular "Right Here Right Now" get some interesting treatment -- both reflect and affect Western pop's gazing out at the end of history and the emerging Pax Americana. The latter song's inward orientation and the listlessness are both notable. Jesus Jones is merely "watching" what happens when "the world wake[s] up from history," and tellingly the song's video features a media-saturated lead singer watching clips of Tiananmen Square on his TV while lying on the couch. The indomitable "Groove is in the Heart," meanwhile, globalizes its good times in a sixties-derived pastiche that is notably free of confrontational politics. Pop flattens all critique into consumerist spectacle anyway, as is clear by 1989. The book is relatively thin, but it's extremely thought-provoking. Really one of the very best books about music that I own, and I have a bookshelf full of them. 1 of 24 people found the following review helpful. "I am not smashing together the high and the low just because I can" By ROROTOKO "1989" is on the ROROTOKO list of cutting-edge intellectual nonfiction. Professor Clover's book interview ran here as the cover feature on February 24, 2010.

In a tour de force of lyrical theory, Joshua Clover boldly reimagines how we understand both pop music and its social context in a vibrant exploration of a year famously described as the end of history. Amid the historic overturnings of 1989, including the fall of the Berlin Wall, pop music also experienced striking changes. Vividly conjuring cultural sensations and events, Clover tracks the emergence of seemingly disconnected phenomena--from grunge to acid house to gangsta rap--asking if perhaps pop had been biding its time until 1989 came along to make sense of its sensibility. His analysis deftly moves among varied artists and genres including Public Enemy, N.W.A., Dr. Dre, De La Soul, The KLF, Nine Inch Nails, Nirvana, U2, Jesus Jones, the Scorpions, George Michael, Madonna, Roxette, and others. This elegantly written work, deliberately mirroring history as dialectical and ongoing, summons forth a new understanding of how history had come out to meet pop as something more than a fairytale, or something less. A truth, a way of being.

[A] dense, provocative, wonderfully written little book. . . . Masterful.