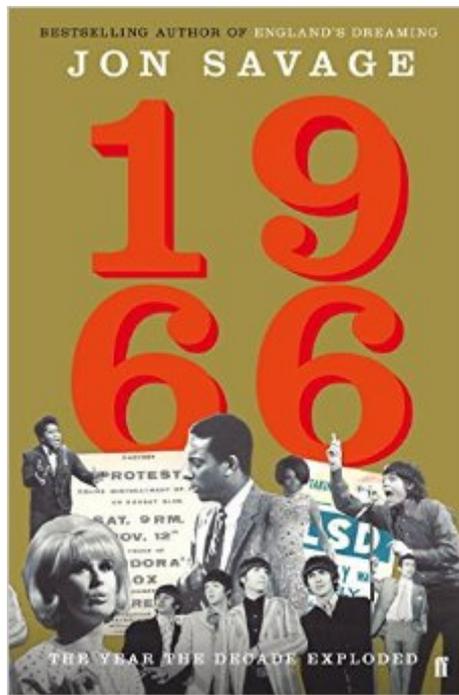


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1966: The Year The Decade Exploded



Synopsis

The pop world accelerated and broke through the sound barrier in 1966. In America, in London, in Amsterdam, in Paris, revolutionary ideas slow-cooking since the late '50s reached boiling point. In the worlds of pop, pop art, fashion and radical politics — often fueled by perception-enhancing substances and literature — the 'Sixties', as we have come to know them, hit their Modernist peak. A unique chemistry of ideas, substances, freedom of expression and dialogue across pop cultural continents created a landscape of immense and eventually shattering creativity. After 1966 nothing in the pop world would ever be the same. The 7 inch single outsold the long-player for the final time. It was the year in which the ever lasting and transient pop moment would burst forth in its most articulate, instinctive and radical way. Jon Savage's 1966 is a monument to the year that shaped the pop future of the balance of the century. Exploring canonical artists like The Beatles, The Byrds, Velvet Underground, The Who and The Kinks, 1966 also goes much deeper into the social and cultural heart of the decade through unique archival primary sources.

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Customer Reviews

This book looks at an extraordinary year in popular culture. As the author states, "1966 began in pop and ended with rock, and, although this book is concerned with all popular culture, it is music which as the centre of everything. This book contains twelve essays, one for each month of the year, which are based around a particular record and expand on themes and events in both America and Britain, in a year when music reflected the world. The first number one single in the American charts that year was, 'The Sound of Silence,' and it heralded a

year in which the mass market would not be afraid of depth. The author uses this initial song to branch out into folk music, folk rock, protest songs, CND and the threat of nuclear explosion. This style of writing works well; allowing him to bring in lesser known records on similar themes and looking at society and culture from the perspective of different viewpoints. Over the course of the twelve months of 1966, the book covers such diverse events as the war in Vietnam, feminism, the influence of drugs – in particular LSD – the counter culture, with Barry Miles and International Times, happenings, protests, violence, Civil Rights, art with Andy Warhol and much more. Obviously, this was an unsettled time of great change and possibilities. This was reflected in television shows such as “Cathy Come Home” and “The War Game”, with pirate radio and fashion and, of course, in music. This book has music at its heart – whether looking at Joe Meek, Motown, Stax, the Velvet Underground, the Byrds, the Kinks, the Who, Jimi Hendrix, the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band or Tom Jones; music both reflected the times and changed them. From songs of protest – to those lampooning the protesters - from folk rock to soul and the emergence of rock, music pours forth from the pages and will make you reach for your own collections to play those songs, which still sound so fresh and relevant today. By far, the two bands which dominated music then, and arguably now, are the Rolling Stones and the Beatles. There is much about the Stones and drug issues in particular and of how the Beatles were growing and changing. Of course, there are many classic songs by both in that year, but it is also obvious that the early years of relentless touring were exhausting both bands. In 1966 the Beatles released their, quickly papered over, “Butcher Cover” in the States and there was the Maureen Cleeve interview with John Lennon, which also caused furore during their American tour. Brian Epstein was still there, to smooth troubled waters, but 1966 saw their last concert at Candlestick Park – while the Stones saw Mick Jagger exhausted and Brian Jones slipping into increasingly troubled behaviour and drug use. This is a good, in depth, look at a monumental year in music, popular culture and politics. I felt that, as it darted between the US and the UK, that was often a little distracting. Possibly, I would have preferred the author to concentrate on either the States or Britain. However, he managed to combine the two well, for the most part, and link the issues together. A very enjoyable read and certainly a book I will return to. Lastly, I received a copy of this book from the publisher, via NetGalley, for review.

Jon Savage’s explorations of young people and culture continue in this fascinating account of a single, pivotal year in the sixties. 1966 was a year when so much was at stake for young people; where the sixties became more complex and contradictory and the fissures widened

irreparably. We still feel the shockwaves to this day. For instance, Ronald Reagan came to power in California in 1966, Savage states cannily avoiding questions about his right-wing affiliations, while promoting a classic laissez-faire agenda. The volatile politics of the time are framed by the concerns and demands of not only young people but of disenfranchised citizens. He looks at the developments in the social, cultural and political contexts of civil rights, feminism and gay rights, and of course, the anti-war movement. Savage also links overtly political movements to a range of cultural and artistic practices, from music to television and film-making as mediators and commentaries on the people and their time. But he also includes significant other practices such as drug-taking and clubs as means of creating identities, networks and a sense of agency and self-determination among young people. 1966 is formidably researched. Savage is non-judgemental and the degree of his commentary upon events is understated and even-handed. He allows his material to speak for itself, and for his readers to draw their own conclusions. We see an opening up of ideas and possibilities and encouragement to see familiar territory in new ways. The book is intellectual but not academic. A fantastic read for anyone interested in the sixties, popular culture or music.

Jon Savage's selection of 1966 as a year worthy of in-depth study in terms of both the music it produced and the socio-political events that were going on at the time is clever & compelling... in both areas what happened was indeed extraordinary and makes for fascinating reading. I was there, a mid-teenager & heavily into music, and I can confirm that his analyses of the music scene is spot-on in terms of its impact on teenagers like me. For example, his description of Love's "7 & 7 Is" perfectly recreates the impact of this still quite unique track - what he writes is exactly how you heard it on the radio for the first time and how you reacted when you did. Brilliant... and there are dozens of similarly perceptive and, for me, wholly accurate insights into what was going on & why in a year of huge musical change. And, his analysis of the threat of nuclear Armageddon and its impacts on young people who, for good reason, felt that life was likely to be very short and that it was the "older generation's" fault that it was likely to be so, is equally perceptive. It was the fundamental, often ignored, reason why the younger generation readily lost themselves in drugs, explored alternative ways of living, and rejected their parents' principles, attitudes & lifestyles. Jon Savage understands all of this and then astutely explains how it impacted on both the music produced in 1966 and the young people who listened to it. But, where it gets complicated is when he tries to correlate the music scene to wider social & political issues. What he writes in well researched detail is convincing; black power, gay rights, female emancipation and the escalation of

the Vietnam War were all highly relevant to the music scene in 1966. But, the problem is that trying to analyse these issues and their impacts on the younger generation is very difficult, particularly when operating within the constraints of the music released in a single year, with the result that large sections of the book take far too much time trying to explain how these changes arose and developed. And, while there's no doubt that they all impacted in various ways on the music, there's a fairly big question mark over whether those making it saw things in the cohesive ways they're presented here. 1966's music was so "explosive" precisely because its more adventurous artists - many of who form the backbone of this book - were innovating without any cohesion and without any particular understanding, or wish to understand, why they were doing what they were doing. And, on the music side, there's one fairly major and more obvious problem. "Revolver", arguably the best Beatles album and, without doubt, the most influential album of the year, gets scant mention - it really is impossible to assess 1966 objectively from a musical perspective without an in-depth analysis of this record and its impacts on other artists - omitted, I suspect, because everyone knows it rather than a number of the far more obscure tracks referenced elsewhere. Ah well, it's an excellent, highly engaging read for its copious information on mid 1960's music that, on the way, contains some quite brilliant insights into what was driving those making & receiving it. Worthy of serious respect... just be prepared to "speed read" some of the overly long sections.

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