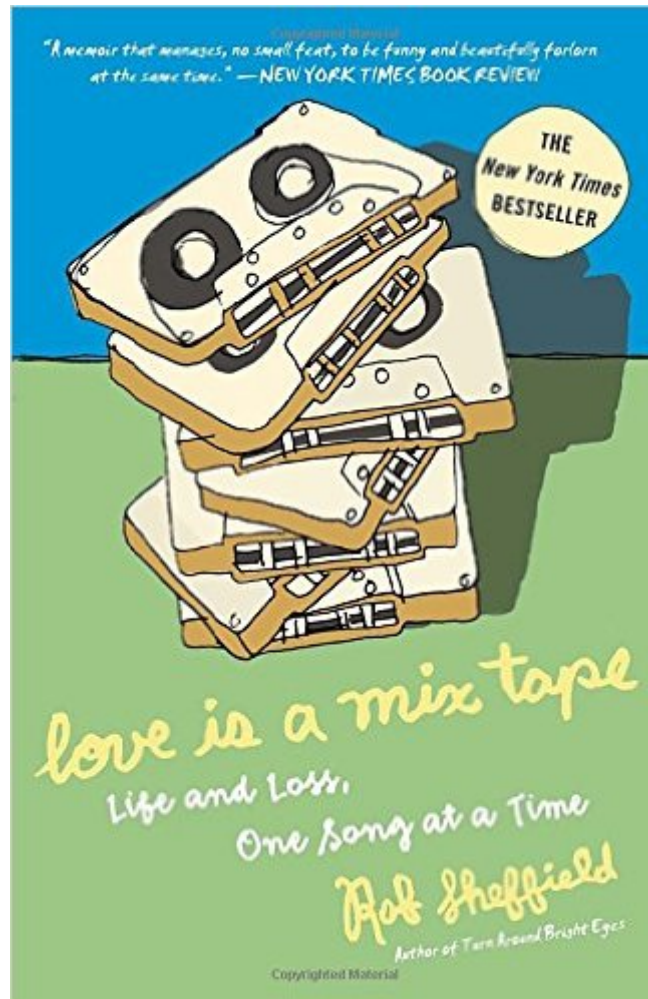


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# Love Is A Mix Tape: Life And Loss, One Song At A Time



## Synopsis

Mix tapes: Stick one into a deck and you'll be transported to another time in your life. For Rob Sheffield, author of *Turn Around Bright Eyes* that time was one of miraculous love and unbearable grief. A time that spanned seven years, it started when he met the girl of his dreams, and ended when he watched her die in his arms. Using the listings of fifteen of his favorite mix tapes, Rob shows that the power of music to build a bridge between people is stronger than death. You'll read these words, perhaps surprisingly, with joy in your heart and a song in your head—the one that comes to mind when you think of the love of your life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Started the book somewhat resistantly, because I am grieving my sister's recent death, and was not sure that I was ready to become involved with a sad subject. Only reason that I went ahead is because I heard that he recently married again (I don't know if this is true, it's just what I heard) so at least I felt that no matter how tragic the story was, there was a someday things can be ok out there. Read it cover to cover, stayed up all night to finish it, fell in love with Rob, Renee, and rediscovered my own mix tapes and added lots of new stuff to my iPod. Really great book about dealing with bereavement and it is helping me cope with my own tragedy around my dear sis. I will recommend this book to everyone that I know who loves music.

I knew I was in trouble when page 2 of this book was soiled by tears. Especially because they were fresh and mine. This book had it's way with me for the next several hours. By the end I had

experienced a wild ride of emotional peaks and valleys. Belly-aching laughter & woeful sobbing. The Sturm und Drang. The stuff of life. Rob Sheffield & Renee Crist were contributors to the SPIN ALTERNATIVE RECORD GUIDE. A book I've kept close at hand for years and referenced time and time again. It's led me to bands like The Wipers & The Only Ones. For which I'm eternally grateful. I haven't always agreed with Rob. In fact, once upon a time, I sent a spiteful diatribe to him because he used the word "miasma" to describe the sound of a Jane's Addiction song in a Rolling Stone review. I was too young then to freely admit that sometimes I like a little noxious foreboding in my Zeppelin spawns. Rob, I take it all back. I was unaware that Rob & Renee were married, or that Renee had passed in a sad & sudden manner. This book is their story told through the hiss & crackle of mix tapes. It's also about the journey from adolescence to adulthood and the music that gets you there. It is so gut-wrenching and, by turns, hysterical you devour it in one sitting and if you (like me) have any of your old mix-tapes around, you'll dig them up immediately. You'll play them and they will caress and maim you...or at the very least show you how much you've grown. It's hard for me to imagine anyone reading this book not being extremely moved. However, I know people for whom music is just background noise. They don't listen to it. They just consume it. These people have never made a mix-tape for anyone. These people are not my friends. These people have no soul. If music is how you enter this mortal coil...if it's how you love...how you hurt...how you cope...if music has ever been the only place you've found solace...if it's been your bridge to the next unfathomable day, then I'm bettin' you've made a mix tape. Probably dozens. You've courted people with them. You've crushed people with them. You've had fights about them. Maybe your spouse has thrown them out and with them the story of your life. You need to read this book.

You either made mix tapes as a kid or you didn't, and this book speaks to those of us who, though we may have moved on to iPods and ripped CDs, appreciate the emotive power and nostalgia-inducing ability of a customized cassette. [In many cases, we still have those cassettes though lack the means to play them.] Sheffield, a music writer since at least the early 90s (still with Rolling Stone), knows his stuff, and fills this autobiographical account of his love affair with wife Renee with as many pop references as the pages can handle. A beautiful story is woven about the geeky Massachusetts boy's instant and soulful connection with a loud and extroverted Southerner, originating with their shared interest in music and continuing in that melodic vein until Renee's timely 1997 death in Rob's arms (from a pulmonary embolism that hit her in their kitchen while Rob made French toast). Sheffield is as deft writing about love as he is about music, which is saying an awful lot; he expertly captures the thrill and helplessness of falling in love, and his worship of Renee is

heart-achingly poignant. Anyone who reads this and doesn't identify with Sheffield's powerful descriptions of fully giving his heart to another, and of loving someone to the point of fear (of losing oneself, of not being able to keep the other safe enough, of recognizing the other will be on hand to witness your inevitable worst), should leave his current relationship and immediately begin searching for the true "right one." It's all about the music, though, descriptions of which are shored up by Sheffield's encyclopedic knowledge of songs and the artists who make them. Mix tapes are described in general (the Break Up tape, the Fall In Love tape, etc.), and the playlists that narrate Rob's life begin each chapter. On the one hand, the constant assault of artists, tunes, and especially lyrics can be overwhelming, to the point where there occasionally ceases to be prose (and song lines are instead grafted together to make a point). On the other, the songs are so artfully chosen, and the mix tapes do such a good job of capturing the Zeitgeist of when they were assembled, that you'd best keep a pen handy to catch all the obscure gems (and some ice, for writer's cramp). There will come a point where each reader sees a favorite obscure song referenced in Love Is A Mixtape. It's kind of cool and personal, in a dorky way, recognizing someone who shares at least some of your tastes and knows some of your secrets. For me, it was reading that Big Star's "Thirteen" was a favorite of Rob and Renee, and that they in fact met while Big Star played on the jukebox at a local bar. Thirteen is just so sparse and beautiful, and somehow transcends even greater heights in covers by Elliott Smith and Evan Dando. Seeing it in print was a nice touch to an even nicer read.

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