

Book Review: Greil Marcus, *The History of Rock ‘n’ Roll in Ten Songs*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2014. ISBN: 9780300187373 (Cloth). 320 Pages. \$28.00.

Reviewed by Charles Cuthbertson ¹

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Living as we do in a wired culture suffused with attempts to classify everything into lists that attempt to serve as taste-making countdowns of subjects ranging from the reasons “you should never visit Scotland” to practical guides on “things that are more fun than studying for your exams” (both presented on BuzzFeed), there are reasons to be wary about any new addition to this now-tedious form of clickbait, even one that presents itself between two covers, printed and bound. To be sure, any student or scholar of popular music is certainly familiar with periodicals and self-appointed experts ranking anything from the rock era’s greatest albums to the best post-punk singles to songs that need to be on everyone’s iPod. These evaluations are generally less of an attempt to argue for a pop music canon than increasingly frequent efforts to boost lagging newsstand sales and provoke indignant responses from readers (“How could you forget my favorite band? Cancel my subscription immediately!”).

There is even more reason, then, to groan inwardly at the arrival of a new volume that purports to chronicle the history of rock and roll in ten easy steps and in slightly more than 300 pages, including indices. What differentiates Greil Marcus’ new book from the flood of other lists and rankings? One: the author has been writing intelligently and

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