the archive of music journalism

rocksbackpages.com
introduction

Rock’s Backpages is the largest database of music journalism online.

The archive features over 50,000 articles on thousands of artists from ABBA to Zappa, plus over 800 audio interviews with legends from Jimi Hendrix to Kate Bush.

We’ve been going for over 20 years and work with hundreds of writers to archive their interviews and reviews for students, researchers and music-lovers.

The Library Journal praised Rock’s Backpages as “an essential acquisition for large public and academic libraries,” while Variety called it “an online museum that may well be the best hope rock has of being documented in all its fullness for future generations.”

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All articles on Rock’s Backpages are full-text, primary-source and fully searchable by artist, date, genre, publication and keyword.

The articles are taken from the widest possible range of music publications in the US and UK, from Creem and Rolling Stone to the New Musical Express (NME) and Vibe.

We also include pieces from fanzines such as Sniffin’ Glue and Who Put the Bomp!, underground papers such as The Great Speckled Bird and World Countdown News, and national newspapers such as The Guardian and the New York Times.

Each week, we add a minimum of 50 interviews and reviews from the pages of the greatest music publications, plus a newly digitized audio interview.

We also create free features, spotlight the work of one of our contributors, and pay tribute to departed artists on our weekly homepage and newsletter.

“Rock’s Backpages is hallowed insurance that all those hard-won interviews, priceless rarities and cultural snapshots will live forever in one grand gallery.”

— CAMERON CROWE, Journalist and Filmmaker
The 50,000+ articles in the Rock’s Backpages database feature over 8,000 artists from Aaliyah to ZZ Top, and from classic rock icons to game-changing rappers. The articles range from short reviews and reports to long interviews and retrospectives.

The earliest article is from 1948, the most recent from 2022. In addition, the archive contains over 800 exclusive audio interviews, stretching from David Crosby in 1967 to Beck in 2019. It includes fascinating conversations with the following legends:

- 1969: Little Richard
- 1972: David Bowie
- 1975: Bob Marley
- 1977: Fleetwood Mac
- 1980: Paul McCartney
- 1986: Chrissie Hynde
- 1988: Al Green
- 1991: Bob Dylan
- 1993: Snoop Dogg
- 1998: Joni Mitchell
- 2002: Madonna
- 2005: Stevie Wonder
- 2015: One Direction
The Rock's Backpages library draws on a vast archive of over a thousand different publications, from Crawdaddy! and Mojo Navigator in the mid-1960s to Echoes and Stylus in the 2000s.

We also source articles from national newspapers, specialist magazines, trade publications, fanzines and websites from all over the world. Publications include:

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<th>Decade</th>
<th>Publications</th>
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<td>1960s</td>
<td>Blues &amp; Soul, KRLA Beat, Melody Maker, NME, Rolling Stone, The Village Voice, The Village Voice</td>
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<td>1970s</td>
<td>Circus, Creem, Let It Rock, Sounds, Trouser Press, ZigZag</td>
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<td>1980s</td>
<td>The Face, Kerrang!, Musician, Smash Hits, Spin, The Wire</td>
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<td>1990s</td>
<td>Details, Mixmag, MOJO, Select, Uncut, Vibe</td>
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<td>2000s</td>
<td>Complex, Harp, Paste, Pitchfork, PopMatters, The Word</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010s</td>
<td>Coup de Main, The Guardian, Line of Best Fit, NYTimes, The Quietus, The Times, The Times</td>
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There are over 800 writers on Rock’s Backpages, covering all eras of popular music from the 1940s to the present day. These include many of the biggest names in the history of music journalism, from Crawdaddy!’s Paul Williams to Shock & Awe author Simon Reynolds. We launched the site in 2001 with the work of such legendary names as:

- Al Aronowitz
- Caroline Coon
- Simon Frith
- Charlie Gillett
- Vivien Goldman
- Mary Harron
- Lenny Kaye

Subsequently we’ve added hundreds more writers whose work we preserve for posterity in the Rock’s Backpages library, including:

- Loraine Alterman
- Lester Bangs
- Carol Cooper
- Nick Kent
- Greil Marcus
- Lillian Roxon
- Nick Tosches

Every year, we add many new writers to expand and diversify our historical and contemporary content.
The study of popular music history overlaps closely with the study of social history, politics, fashion, film, photography, technology, the music industry, and other disciplines.

For this reason, Rock’s Backpages articles are tagged not only by artist, publication and writer but by subject, extending the application of our content far beyond music.

Subjects include:

- Cultural studies and theory
- Fashion, art, and design
- Festivals and events
- Journalists, authors and publications
- LGBTQ+
- Politics, race, religion and society
- Women in music, feminism

Despite its name, Rock’s Backpages covers almost every genre of popular music from the past 60+ years.

From gospel and rock ‘n’ roll to hip-hop and electronica, the library does not discriminate between punk and reggae, or between country and heavy metal. We believe there is incisive writing about all these musical styles and more.

Genres include:

- Blues and rhythm & blues
- Chart pop
- Folk and folk-rock
- Hip-hop, rap, garage and grime
- Jazz and jazz fusion
- Punk and hardcore
- Soul, funk and R&B

“Rock’s Backpages [...] benefits not only music students and faculty, but those studying and researching journalism, history, English and pop culture. The inclusion of underground and street publications in addition to mainstream journals like Rolling Stone and MOJO makes it unique.”

LORI WIDZINSKI, University of Buffalo

“Reading rock articles was a crucial part of my education, formation, and inspiration. The great thing about Rock’s Backpages is that it’s been done by experts, by people who’ve got a feeling for it. For me it’s definitive...”

JOHNNY MARR, musician
The Rock’s Backpages podcast began in November 2018 as a casual conversation between RBP co-founders Barney Hoskyns and Mark Pringle, shedding light on the articles and audio interviews added to the site each week.

Produced and co-hosted by Jasper Murison-Bowie, the podcast swiftly expanded into a one-hour-plus format featuring guests sharing personal anecdotes about their lives in music. These have included:

- Neil Tennant (writer turned Pet Shop Boy)
- Midge Ure (Ultravox/Live Aid legend)
- Stewart Lee (comedian)
- Alan McGee (Creation Records founder)
- Barbara Charone (celebrity PR)
- Danny Fields (former Ramones manager)
- Bernard Fowler (Rolling Stones backing singer)
- Nelson George (R&B/hip-hop writer)
- Mary Harron (film director)
- Michael Zilkha (former ZE Records manager)
- Jill Furmanovsky (photographer)
- Peter Guralnick (historian/biographer)
- Adele Bertei (postpunk icon)
- Jez Butterworth (playwright)
- John Harris (Guardian columnist)
- Vicki Wickham (former Labelle manager)
- Geoff Travis (Rough Trade founder)

“A fantastic podcast from which I always learn so much. The Rock’s Backpages team makes a point of tracking down and featuring unsung women pop journalists from the ’60s and ’70s. The guests are invariably great.”

DAVID STUBBS, author and journalist
books & licensing

In addition to its online library, Rock’s Backpages has produced a number of books and audio downloads over the years.

Bloomsbury published The Sound & the Fury, an acclaimed Rock’s Backpages anthology of music journalism, and a partnership with Constable/Little, Brown led to anthologies of interviews with Joni Mitchell, Steely Dan and Radiohead.

We also license exclusive audio clips for use in TV, film and radio documentaries, and text articles for inclusion in books, magazines and album reissues.

Licensors of Rock’s Backpages content include:

- Spotify
  Stay Free: The Story of the Clash
- Epix
  Laurel Canyon
- Parlophone
  David Bowie: Who Can I Be Now?
- Sony Music
  Michael Jackson’s Journey from Motown to Off the Wall

our story

Rock’s Backpages is operated by Backpages Limited, a company set up in 2000 after MOJO’s U.S. correspondent Barney Hoskyns returned to London and teamed up with musician Mark Pringle, designer Martin Colyer and financial director Tony Keys.

The company has since been bolstered by the additions of Paul Kelly and Jasper Murison-Bowie. We recently celebrated our 20th anniversary online.

Although Rock’s Backpages was initially conceived as a research tool for music writers, it soon became clear that it would be a fantastic resource for universities and public libraries. We attended our first American Library Association Annual Conference in 2005 and have subsequently exhibited at a number of other conferences in the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom.

“Little did we realize we’d still be going strong two decades after our launch party in 2001,” says Hoskyns. “The idea was to create the definitive library of pop writing from all the great popular music publications — a library, moreover, that kept growing and expanding as all the best libraries do. We hope you enjoy it as much as we do.”

“Rock’s Backpages is the best resource we have ever subscribed to. It’s had a great impact on our library, especially for younger users — you need this!”

JO GUIDICE, Director of Dallas Libraries
All content within the Rock’s Backpages archive is presented with the full agreement and permission of the copyright holders or their estates. The vast majority of this material is exclusive to Rock’s Backpages.

All text content is full-text, primary-source HTML which is designed to be used for academic purposes and includes auto-citations in APA, Chicago, MLA and Harvard formats, making for easy and accurate referencing.

The resource is OpenURL compliant and is discoverable via OCLC WorldCat, the EBSCO Discovery Service™ (EDS) and ExLibris ProQuest’s Summon™ discovery service, easily embedding into your current library management system.

Authentication methods for access include Shibboleth, IP range to include proxy, library card login, PIN, referring URL and via username and password. Remote access is granted by default.

Usage Statistics are COUNTER Compliant Level 5 including SUSHI.

The articles are fully searchable by keyword utilising standard Boolean operators or faceted search by artist, date, genre, publication, subject, writer and article format.

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