

Is Rock Dead?

By Kevin J. Dettmar.
Southern Illinois University Press,
\$19.95.

Dettmar begins his rock dissertation with this salvo: "The story of rock & roll is, we might say, the story of the death of rock & roll: there is, seemingly, no way to tell one without the other." From there, he unfolds a savvy, scholarly and yet quite readable study that does not seek to answer the title's question, but rather to determine why the question has been asked continually throughout rock's history. His analysis of rock criticism leads to a conclusion that the question is daft to ask, but is not without important cultural and intergenerational meaning.



My Sister's Continent

By Gina Frangello.
Chiasmus Press, \$12.

After her twin sister's mysterious disappearance, narrator Kirby Braun responds to a therapist's mistaken diagnoses of her family—laden with sexual secrets and feminine angst—by carefully piecing together details from Kendra's life. While sifting through memories, Kirby muses, "How do I tell the story of a life... that is outside my own experience, wrapped in shatterproof glass and secrets that have everything to do with me?"

While Kirby is complacent and domestic, Kendra was passionate and bohemian. Devastated after an injury ended her promising career at the New York City Ballet, Kendra returned to family in Chicago only to become increasingly withdrawn before disappearing entirely. Though Kirby was

Dettmar has said that the decision to write his book came from author and rock writer Nick Hornby's smug review of Radiohead's *Kid A* in *The New Yorker* back in 2000. Hornby is one of the examples Dettmar uses to expound his idea of the "rock curmudgeon"—the baby-boomer music critic who will dismiss any ambitious departure from the music on which they grew up. That many of these curmudgeons, including critic scion Greil Marcus, declare most contemporary rock acts as "derivative" only furthers this view of "Boomer Triumphalism." He even breaks down the term *classic rock*, labeled as such by baby boomers, who "want rock & roll to stop changing and to become instead, like classical music, a standard repertory, a completed and surveyable body of work."

Unlike the rock critics he lambastes, Dettmar is more a rock historian than a purveyor of taste. He comes from the academy, and cites Barthes, Adorno, and Baudrillard in his critique. He begins with an examination of the "teenagers as undead" zombie-movie era of the '50s and ends with the recent song "My Hero," the Foo Fighters' elegy to Kurt Cobain, adding up to an expansive look at how the macabre sense of death is always at rock's heels. Dettmar views rock as a culturally pervasive art: its criticism worthy of deep analysis, and possibly a syllabus. While some of Dettmar's digressions seem ill-fit for those rock fans less studious, his class would indeed rock. —*Scott Stealey*

considered the "good" twin, she is inwardly troubled: no career, a banal sex life and health problems that become a serious threat to her wedding plans.

It is difficult to deal with female sexuality without exploring issues of body, consumption and purging (of food, thoughts, memories), and the novel's strength is how intricately these themes are linked. Between Kirby's digestive troubles and Kendra's depression, both girls lose weight rapidly, mirroring one another's bodies even while their personalities conflict.

Kendra's sadomasochistic relationship with an older man functions as a "therapy of humiliation," and it is in these scenes that Frangello's lush and poetic style is at its most lyric. The cat-and-mouse style of their coital dialogue is an annoying but necessary device in conveying their sex games, and during one particularly sophisticated conversation, Kendra muses, "I prefer my sex less civilized and urbane than this cigarette-lighting Noël Coward routine you call being direct."

Frangello's debut novel is akin to a woman's archeological dig into another life, as well as a modern retelling of Freud's famed "Dora" case. As such, it cannot help but be rather bleak, evoking a similar anomie as *The Ice Storm* and *The Virgin Suicides*. It is also an intriguing and darkly psychological look at and investigation of identity, the façades that cloak us and the complicated habitat of private, inner lives. —*Gretchen Kalwinski*

Listings

IF YOU WANT TO BE LISTED

Submit information by mail, e-mail (books@timeoutchicago.com) or fax (312-924-9350) to **Jonathan Messinger**. Include details of event, dates, times, address of venue with cross streets, nearest El station and bus routes, telephone number and admission price, if any. **Deadline is 6pm Thursday, two weeks before publication date.** Incomplete submissions will not be included, and listings information will not be accepted over the phone. Listings are free but, as space is limited, inclusion is not guaranteed.

★=Recommended or notable

Thursday 29

★after the quake

Steppenwolf Theatre, 1650 N Halsted St between North Ave and Willow St (312-335-1650). El: Red to North/Clybourn. Bus: 8 Halsted, 72 North. 7:30pm, \$20–\$60. Frank Galati's adaptation of two Haruki Murakami short stories—the lives of Japanese urbanites tangentially affected by a deadly earthquake are his subject—mostly sidesteps the main problem of most story-theater productions. Here, the narrative style doesn't distance us from the characters. Although the two stories adapted clash more than they complement, Galati's minimalist staging and a sumptuous live score make the show comfortable to watch and yet haunting to remember.

★Brokeback Mountain

Landmark's Century Centre Cinema, 2828 N Clark St between Broadway and Orchard St (773-509-4949). El: Brown, Purple (rush hrs) to Diversey. Bus: 22 (24 hrs), 36, 76. \$9.50, kids and seniors \$7. For times, go to www.timeoutchicago.com. Everyone is excited about some of the steamy tent action between **Jake Gyllenhaal** and **Heath Ledger**, but **Ang Lee's** movie is one of the most sorrowful films we've seen in years—a love story flattened by circumstance. Like most good movies, it first came from the land of literature. Fans of Annie Proulx will remember her short story that provided the basis for the screenplay, and her fans won't be disappointed by the movie. In other words, it's no *The Shipping News*.

★The Suicide Diaries

FREE **The Store**, 2002 N Halsted St at Armitage Ave (773-327-7766). Bus: 8 Halsted, 73 Armitage. El: Brown, Purple (rush hrs) to Armitage. 9pm. We're happy to see a new fiction open mike start up in town—there always seemed to be a desire but not much initiative. **Peter Barrett** pulls through with this fiction-only event. Sign-up starts at 8pm, and readers get eight minutes for their stories. At the end of the night, the soundman gives you a free CD of your reading, as well.

Friday 30

★after the quake

See Thu 29.

★Brokeback Mountain

See Thu 29.

Saturday 31

★after the quake

See Thu 29.

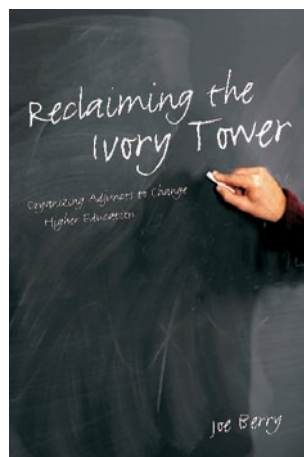
★Brokeback Mountain

See Thu 29.

First Night Evanston

1602 Orrington Ave at Davis St, Evanston

DON'T MISS



Joe Berry stands up for academia's little guys.

Uptown Poetry Slam

(See Sun 1) Your resolutions begin now. After ringing in the New Year, climb off the couch and become the poet you wanted to be in 2005.

Joe Berry

(See Thu 5) A little-known secret of the academy is how underpaid and underappreciated nontenured, adjunct professors are. Berry's book, *Reclaiming the Ivory Tower*, sees union organization as a lever for balancing the power.

(847-475-6483, www.firstnightevanston.org). El: Purple to Davis. 6pm–1:30am; \$8–\$14, kids 5 and under free. Ring in the New Year with a glass of apple cider at this family night. Celebrations include a midnight

fireworks display and 120 performances, plus storytelling, face painting and more.

Weeds Poetry Night

FREE **Weeds**, 1555 N Dayton St at Weed St (312-943-7815). El: Red to North/Clybourn. Bus: 8 Halsted, 72

North. 10:30pm. Open mikes were once unpredictable affairs, with a cast of local eccentrics spewing oddball theories and screwy wordplay. Thankfully, Weeds upholds the tradition.

Sunday 1

★Brokeback Mountain

See Thu 29.

Uptown Poetry Slam

Green Mill, 4802 N Broadway at Lawrence Ave (773-878-5552). El: Red to Lawrence. Bus: 36 Broadway, 81 Lawrence (24 hrs). 7pm. \$6. **Marc Smith** has been hosting this local slam at the great jazz joint since 1986. The slam poetry here is some of the finest in the city, which means you'll see a whole bunch of poets finding new ways to say they're angry at Bush. As of press time, plans for tonight's slam were still being hashed out.

Supasoul

FREE **Funky Buddha Lounge**, 728 W Grand Ave between Desplaines and Halsted Sts (312-666-1695) 9pm. El: Blue to Grand.