

**“Talking to Girls About Duran Duran” by Rob Sheffield**  
**2010, Penguin Group 269 pages**

When you think of the 1980's, what comes to mind? Parachute pants? Aqua Net hairspray (extra hold, of course)? Cassingles? Dr. Pepper Lip Smackers? Jelly shoes? MTV? Molly Ringwald? For those of us who were teens in the 1980's, nothing evokes memories of specific times and places quite as powerfully as the music of the decade.

Music journalist Rob Sheffield spent the 80's trying to figure it all out - life, love, happiness and good hair. In *Talking to Girls About Duran Duran*, Sheffield shares the soundtrack of his adolescence.

Sheffield tells his readers that, "the songs in this book are some of my favorite 80's relics, the songs that warped my brain with dubious ideas, boneheaded goals, laughable hopes and timeless mysteries. They might not be the greatest songs of the pre-Snooki era, or the most important, or the most popular. But they're all songs I love. And they add up to a playlist that gives a great taste of that moment." He's right. Each song or artist Sheffield mentions triggers a trip down memory lane.

Ray Parker Jr. and Paul McCartney taught Sheffield how to love a woman, but it was from Madonna that he learned just how difficult that love can be. Morrissey's songs led him to never-before-explored depths of angst and hopelessness, but over the years, it was listening to girls talk about Duran Duran that taught Sheffield everything he knows about women.

Readers follow along as Sheffield recalls poor fashion choices and first kisses, cars, jobs and apartments. We're there when he discovers that the humor of the movie *Airplane* simply doesn't translate in Spain, and we're right beside him when he awkwardly declares his crush on a girl who simply responds, "that's nice." She was a Lita Ford fan, but he never got the chance to "Kiss Her Deadly." Every song provides a perfect snapshot of one moment on the confusing and bumpy path to adulthood.

On some level, *Talking to Girls About Duran Duran* is Sheffield's attempt to understand why the hits of the 80's, which were thought to be nothing more than a passing fad at the time, have endured. After all, when Madonna gyrated onto the music scene in the early 80's, no one seriously thought she'd be around in five years, much less 25!

Sheffield has a wonderful ability to bring his readers back to a very specific time and place in his youth. More importantly, he's a very funny guy. One second he's making a convincing argument for the similarities between bands such as The Human League and the Romantic Poets, then a few chapters later, he's comparing Morrissey to Mrs. Garrett from *The Facts of Life*, and likening the life of a pop fan to that of a religious devotee.

As I turned the pages, I couldn't help but think that this book begs to be read with a soundtrack. Luckily, I've got a great 80's playlist on my iPod. I'll bet you do, too!

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