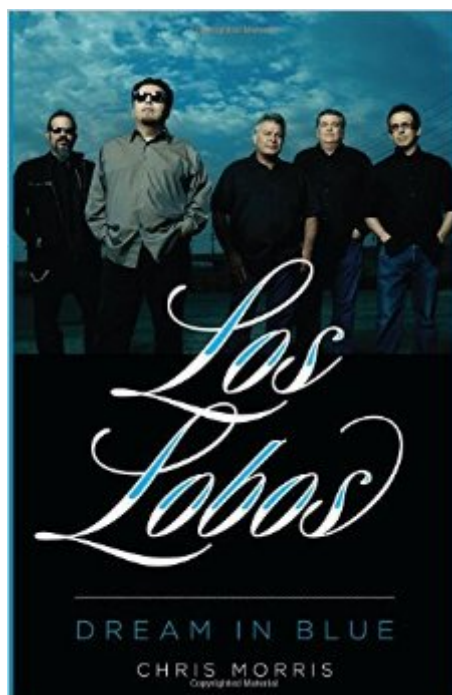


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Los Lobos: Dream In Blue (American Music)



Synopsis

Los Lobos leaped into the national spotlight in 1987, when their cover of "La Bamba" became a No. 1 hit. But what looked like an overnight achievement to the band's new fans was actually a way station in a long musical journey that began in East Los Angeles in 1973 and is still going strong. Across four decades, Los Lobos (Cesar Rosas, Conrad Lozano, David Hidalgo, Louie PÃ©rez, and Steve Berlin) have ranged through virtually the entire breadth of American vernacular music, from rockabilly to primal punk rock, R&B to country and folk, Mexican son jarocho to Tex-Mex conjunto and Latin American cumbia. Their sui generis sound has sold millions of albums and won acclaim from fans and critics alike, including three Grammy Awards. Los Lobos, the first book on this unique band, traces the entire arc of the band's career. Music journalist Chris Morris draws on new interviews with Los Lobos members and their principal collaborators, as well as his own reporting since the early 1980s, to recount the evolution of Los Lobos's music. He describes the creation of every album, lingering over highlights such as How Will the Wolf Survive?, La Pistola y El Corazon, and Kiko, while following the band's trajectory from playing Mexican folk music at weddings and dances in East L.A. to international stardom and major-label success, as well as their independent work in the new millennium. Giving one of the longest-lived and most-honored American rock bands its due, Los Lobos celebrates the expansive reach and creative experimentalism that few other bands can match.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Excellent chronicle of the musical evolution of one of the most innovative, entertaining and accomplished bands in American music today. From their beginning in the 70's to now, Los Lobos has always been about the music, letting their lyrics, musical prowess, versatility and musical curiosity do most of the talking. Morris takes a similar approach in this book, focusing on the band's music more than their personalities. If you're looking for an anecdote rich tell all of celebrity ups and downs and tales told out of school, this book may not be for you, although there is one somewhat disheartening story about the band's involvement in the making of Paul Simon's landmark album "Graceland". If you are interested in learning about their creative process and experience writing, producing and recording everything from "Si Si Puede" and "Just Another Band From East LA" in the mid 70's to "Tin Can Rust", this is an insightful, well researched, entertaining read with uncensored input from all the members of the band as well as a litany of music icons including Tom Waits, T Bone Burnett, Phil and Dave Alvin and many others. Morris paints a vivid picture of East Los Angeles with the resurgence of traditional Chicano music and the LA music scene in the 70's and early 80's when punk and American music ruled the local clubs and often shared the same stage and the same audience. Los Lobos: Dream in Blue is a must have for Los Lobos fans but undoubtedly a treat for anyone interested in the culture and evolution of American music and rock and roll. Highly recommended.

The author (Chris Morris) is a long time LA music beat writer and was an integral part of the LA "Punk" scene in the early 80's that spawned Los Lobos and a host of other great acts (X, The Blasters, Dwight Yoakam...etc.). As a result, "Dream in Blue" reads very much like an LA Times Sunday spread on steroids...It's written in a chronological order with more or less equal time spent on all phases of their career concluding with "Tin Pan Trust". Overall, he gives a very even handed view on the band's output...with equal parts praise and critic. This approach, combined with his insider status and journalistic background result in an unusual music bio...this isn't a "tell all" tale or one of gushing fandom proclaiming genius on every other page...instead, its simply a fantastic behind the scenes account of the bands music and overall career arc of this great band. Fans of the band or the 80's LA roots/punk scene will love this and it paints a vivid of their early success and touches a number of the key LA roots/punk bands operating during that time frame. Because of that this is one of the best trips down memory lane I have gone on in quite a while...now all we need is a book on the Blasters!

I knew, going in, that this would be more of a musical overview than an analytical study of the band. But I still found myself a little disappointed with the book's format. There are a lot of album reviews - which may not make much sense if you are unfamiliar with their latter-day Disney stuff. And even then you don't really learn about the lyrical inspirations for many of the songs, apart from the biggies like *Will the Wolf Survive*, *A Matter of Time*, etc. Perhaps worst of all, this very brief book seems padded, a lot of extraneous phrases thrown in to show that the author is a smart guy, which he clearly is. References to Milli Vanilli and Ronald Reagan and the decline of the Whisky a Gogo are strained, and the half-page bio on Lenny Waronker is redundant. Oddly enough the one person I would like to hear about more is Willie Dixon. His name is casually repeated in a few places like it's no big deal. WTF? This guy was a legend. Details. I need details. I want to smell and taste these encounters. How did the murder of Cesar Rosas' wife affect the band and its creativity? We'll never know. Do the guys get along, or is it a business relationship now? Are they making any money yet? Hopefully this book will prove inspirational to young readers, especially those with brown skin tones. But the LL crowd these days is mostly white and middle-aged. How do the guys feel about this? Personally, I enjoyed the occasional first-person references. I could have done with a few sentences on the band performing at Chris' wedding. Surely there must be pix as well? PS The Prince anecdote is hilarious, and I believe I will never be able to listen to *Graceland* again. Maybe Bob Hilburn's upcoming Simon bio will shine more light on the crime detailed in *Dream in Blue*.

Chris Morris combines a veteran journo's knack for eliciting fun anecdotes and sharp eye for detail with his long history covering the band up close and personal to create an authoritative page-turner. His well-written book charts Los Lobos' historic musical path in interesting and entertaining fashion. Highly recommended.

Chris Morris has written a most perfect, concise and thorough review of East LA's treasured heroes. The book is also fascinating in that it's also a great history of rock and roll's influence on East LA. The book is a great quick read. To the point and fascinating with no filler at all. My only hope is that Chris may one day do the same treatment for The Blasters and the city of Downey. Buy this book. You will be thrilled.

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