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What Are You Doing Here?: A Black Woman's Life And Liberation In Heavy Metal



Synopsis

Laina Dawes is not always the only black woman at metal shows, and she's not always the only headbanger among her black female friends. In her first book, the Canadian critic and music fan questions herself, her headbanging heroes, and dozens of black punk, metal, and hard rock fans to answer the knee-jerk question she's heard a hundred times in the small clubs where her favorite bands play: "What are you doing here?"

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Customer Reviews

Laina Dawes is a heavy metal journalist and fan, who also happens to be a black woman. *What Are You Doing Here? A Black Woman's Life and Liberation in Heavy Metal* is her personal account of dealing with being the only black woman in the concert hall. Dawes also covers the history of black women in rock music from the early days of pre-rock with Bessie Smith and Billie Holliday to Tina Turner and Skin of Skunk Anansie. For a black person, male or female, one often faces a crisis of identity when drawn to heavy metal music. Dawes and the many women she interviewed for *What Are You Doing Here?* all revealed that they had to hide their record albums and when they were found out, had to face accusations from friends and family that they were somehow betraying their black heritage by their musical taste. Dawes states: "As a black girl into metal, I had nobody with whom I could share my adoration for Rob Halford or my crush on the late Steve Clark from Def Leppard. While listening to music and perusing music magazines became a great form of escape, I always felt a bit of residual guilt. After all, black people--real black people--don't listen to

metal."However she was drawn to metal for the same reasons it attracts many of its fans:"There was a lot of rage around me, and I knew it could be channeled into the positive energy that I found through metal."How do other black women metal fans reconcile their musical taste with the criticisms they hear because of it? Music journalist Keidra Chaney told Dawes:"'I didn't fit in,' she says, 'but I wasn't going to fit in anyway, so my loving metal was just another reason to be that weird chick.

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