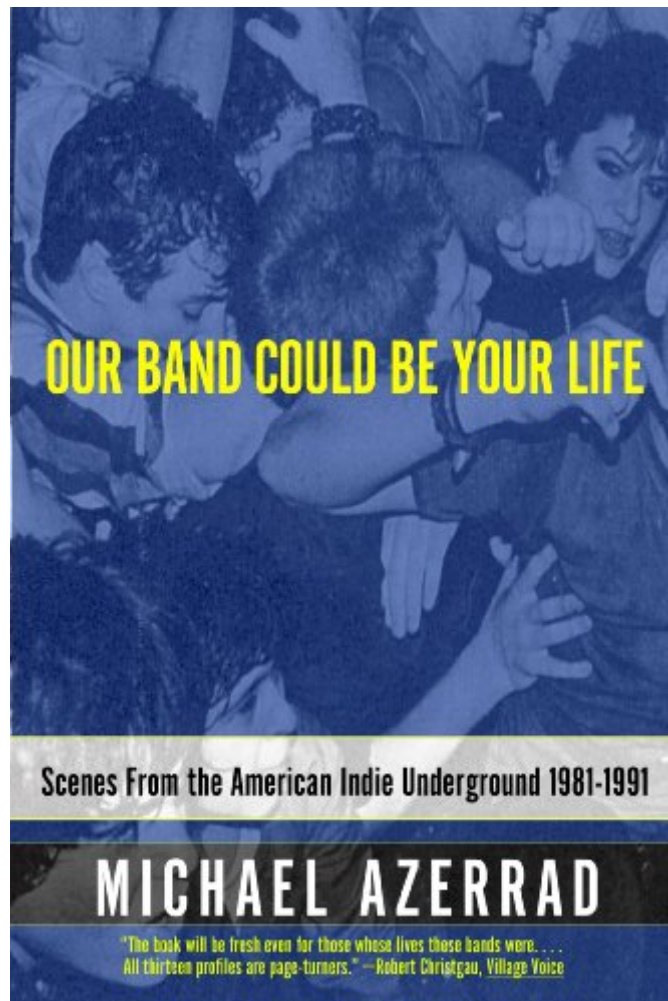


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# Our Band Could Be Your Life: Scenes From The American Indie Underground, 1981-1991



## Synopsis

This is the never-before-told story of the musical revolution that happened right under the nose of the Reagan Eighties--when a small but sprawling network of bands, labels, fanzines, radio stations, and other subversives reenergized American rock with punk rock's do-it-yourself credo and created music that was deeply personal, often brilliant, always challenging, and immensely influential. This sweeping chronicle of music, politics, drugs, fear, loathing, and faith has been recognized as an indie rock classic in its own right. Among the bands profiled: Mission of Burma, Butthole Surfers, The Minutemen, Sonic Youth, Black Flag, Big Black, Hüsker Dü, Fugazi, Minor Threat, Mudhoney, The Replacements, Beat Happening, and Dinosaur Jr.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I like this book a great deal; Azerrad writes well, for the most part, and neatly (perhaps too neatly) encapsulates some of the most important bands of the last 20 years, from Black Flag to (\*gag\*) Beat Happening. The book is loaded with interesting tidbits, stories, vignettes, and so forth. There are some great lines throughout, and it seems nearly every chapter has somebody offended by Public Image Ltd., in one way or another, which'll probably have John Lydon coughing up his tea and

biscuits if he bothers to read it. I am unsure whether Azerrad's doing indie rock revisionism in this work, however. The stories fall within the same narrative confines -- quirky, disenfranchised would-be rockers XYZ run into each other in an amusing fashion; decide to form a band; against all odds, they produce considerable sonic (and, of course, punk rock) excellence until they either implode or join a major label. They all seem to follow this basic arc, which seems a trifle tidy to me. I came in on the earlier, punkier side of things (Black Flag, the Minutemen, Mission of Burma, Minor Threat), and I feel like Azerrad is weaving a tapestry linking those important bands to grunge and "alternative," creating a seamless web of musical innovation and negation culminating in Cobain's primal sonic scream. Not like the later bands aren't important, of course, but I think they were very different from each other, while Azerrad tries to paint them all with the same punk rock paintbrush -- it comes out more in the later chapters, where his comments are the equivalent of "how punk rock is THAT?" or "You can't get much more punk rock than that." Sure you can, Michael.

The 1980s are being turned to chum, diced into simple nostalgia bites, so that the decade is best remembered now for a few MTV synth pop hits, maybe a Springsteen/Cougar Americana song, hair metal and the Rolling Stones' "Steel Wheels" tour. What is always lost in the VH-1 retrospectives is the remarkable American indie underground movement that began in roughly 1979 (the first Black Flag EP), peaked in the mid 1980s and had its last gasp in 1991 (when Nevermind, a record that could not have existed without the indie movement, hit #1). So it is a blessing that we have at last a fine, relatively unbiased and intelligent history of Husker Du, the Replacements, Sonic Youth, Beat Happening, the Buttholes, Dino Jr. -- bands that were the equivalent to the Beatles and Stones to me, and whose influence inspired whatever life there was to be found in 1990s pop music. It's not a perfect book. For one, everyone will have gripes about which bands did and didn't deserve chapter-length studies (the most obvious oversight -- the Meat Puppets, and I'd go to bat for Camper Van Beethoven as well), and did we really need two separate chapters on Ian MacKaye's bands? Once a band signs to a major label its story effectively ends for Azerrad, which is fine when you're covering Dinosaur Jr., for example, but which also means that the Replacements' Tim -- one of their finest records -- isn't even mentioned. An influence of MacKaye's rather hysterical obsession with "purity", perhaps. Azerrad's writing on the whole is fine, though he occasionally litters his prose with a gruesome slang phrase, like "all about" (viz.

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