



# Big Star: The Short Life, Painful Death, and Unexpected Resurrection of the Kings of Power Pop

By Rob Jovanovic

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The formation, music, and break-up of Big Star, a band that for many was the embodiment of the 1970s, is detailed in this definitive history. Even though Big Star was together for less than four years and had limited commercial success, the legacy of their three groundbreaking albums has influenced artists as diverse as R.E.M. the Bangles, Wilco, Jeff Buckley, and Garbage culminating in their song, "In the Street" as rerecorded by Cheap Trick, becoming the theme song for That '70s Show. The band's music and romance made Big Star a holy grail for the post-punk generation. This book recounts how band leader Alex Chilton put his heart and soul into the music and believed that he would become a big star-and how when he didn't, he engaged in a fascinating sort of musical self-sabotage. Also described is the tragic story of his coleader on their first record, Chris Bell, who after leaving the band recorded "I Am the Cosmos" a devastating adolescent love song, and then died in a car crash just months later. Featuring new interviews with the band, family members, friends, and the major players at Ardent Studios in Memphis, this book offers the complete story of this incredibly influential band.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Memphis' Big Star had a short and tumultuous life in the early to mid '70s, but its legacy and impact are still felt today; Paul Westerberg, Peter Buck of REM, Matthew Sweet and Ryan Adams have all loudly sung the praises of this cult band that carved out a unique brand of power pop that went unheard by the masses after poor distribution, infighting, substance abuse and poor tour support coalesced to sink the band. If it weren't for the evangelism Big Star inspired in rock writers, they probably wouldn't have even made a second album, let alone a third. Jovanovic (Nirvana: The Complete Recordings, Perfect Sound Forever: The Story of Pavement) has an eye for detail, but this book is strictly for hardcore fans. His near-molecular dissection of band members' musical histories grows tiresome as more time is spent discussing the minutiae of the band's existence and recordings than their contributions to pop and rock music as a whole. While Jovanovic explains the factors that contributed to the band's downfall, he never fully explains why Big Star means so much to its small but devoted and influential following. That said, those who love the band will be in heaven with the fruits of Jovanovic's meticulous research: he includes an exhaustive discography, concert list and even a list of Big Star songs covered by other bands. Timed to coincide with the release of *In Space*, the band's first album of all-new music since 1975, this definitive biography is the ultimate Big Star reference. Photos.

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### Review

"Entertaining and informative." —*Time Out Chicago*

"Too fascinating to pass up." —*Ruminator Review*

"[Will] satisfy even the most knowledgeable Big Star fan." —*Harp Magazine*

"Goes some way toward clarifying the story of the band." —*Nashville Scene*

"Big Star served as a Rosetta stone for a whole generation of musicians." —Peter Buck, R.E.M.

"The range of Alex's stuff, from sweet to nasty . . . and always interesting melodically, really inspired me to write." —Matthew Sweet, musician

"Perhaps, the definitive Big Star biography . . . illustrates the band's history with fanatical devotion and a historian's drive for objectivity." —*Rockpile*

### About the Author

**Rob Jovanovic** is the author of *Beck! On a Backwards River*, *Nirvana: The Complete Recording Sessions*, and *Perfect Sound Forever: The Story of Pavement*. He contributes to *Mojo*, *Q*, *Record Collector*, and *Uncut*.

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