

If It Sounds Good, It Is Good

Seeking Subversion, Transcendence, and Solace in America's Music

Richard Manning

Foreword: Rick Bass

Music is fundamental to human existence, a cultural universal among all humans for all times. It is embedded in our evolution, encoded in our DNA, which is to say, essential to our survival. Academics in a variety of disciplines have considered this idea to devise explanations that Richard Manning, a lifelong journalist, finds hollow, arcane, incomplete, ivory-towered, and just plain wrong. He approaches the question from a wholly different angle, using his own guitar and banjo as instruments of discovery. In the process, he finds himself dancing in celebration of music rough and rowdy.

American roots music is not a product of an elite leisure class, as some academics contend, but of explosive creativity among slaves, hillbillies, field hands, drunks, slackers, and hucksters. Yet these people—poor, working people—built the foundations of jazz, gospel, blues, bluegrass, rock 'n' roll, and country music, an unparalleled burst of invention. This is the counterfactual to the academics' story. This is what tells us music is essential, but by pulling this thread, Manning takes us down a long, strange path, following music to deeper understandings of racism, slavery, inequality, meditation, addiction, the science of our brains, and ultimately to an enticing glimpse of pure religion.

Use this book to follow where his guitar leads. Ultimately it sings the American body, electric.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

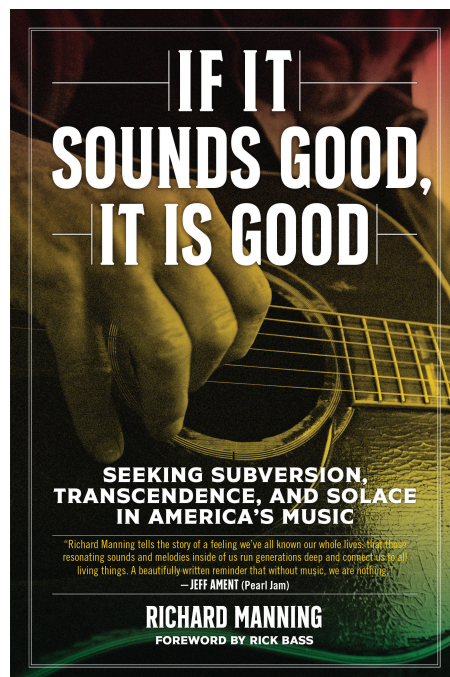
Richard Manning is a lifelong journalist, the author of eleven books. He is a contributing editor for *Harper's* magazine, was a John S. Knight Fellow in Journalism at Stanford University, and has received many awards, especially in environmental journalism. His book *One Round River* was named a significant book of the year by the *New York Times*. His work was featured in *Best American Science and Nature Writing, 2010* and *Best American Travel Writing of 2017*.

Rick Bass is a writer and environmental activist. Bass won the Story Prize for books published in 2016 for his collection of new and selected stories, *For a Little While*. He won the 1995 James Jones Literary Society First Novel Fellowship for his novel in progress, *Where the Sea Used to Be*. He was a finalist for the Story Prize in 2006 for his short story collection *The Lives of Rocks*. He was a finalist for the 2008 National Book Critics Circle Award (autobiography) for *Why I Came West*. He was also awarded the General Electric Younger Writers Award, a PEN/Nelson Algren Award Special Citation for fiction, and a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship.

ACCOLADES

"Richard Manning tells the story of a feeling we've all known our whole lives: that those resonating sounds and melodies inside of us run generations deep and connect us to all living things. A beautifully written reminder that without music, we are nothing."

—Jeff Ament, Pearl Jam



SUBJECT CATEGORY

Music/History & Criticism

PRICE

\$26.95

ISBN

978-1-62963-792-1

PAGE COUNT

272

SIZE

6x9

FORMAT

Hardcover

PUBLICATION DATE

10/2020

DISTRIBUTED BY

Publishers Group West
(510) 809-3700
www.pgw.com

DISTRIBUTED IN THE UK/EUROPE BY

Turnaround Publisher Services Ltd
t: 020 8829 3000
orders@turnaround-uk.com

♦ PM PRESS ♦

P.O. Box 23912 • Oakland, CA 94623
www.pmpress.org
info@pmpress.org
(510) 658-3906



PM Press was founded in 2007 as an independent publisher with a veteran staff boasting a wealth of experience in print and online publishing. We seek to create radical and stimulating fiction and nonfiction books, pamphlets, T-shirts, and visual and audio materials to entertain, educate, and inspire you.