



Soul Music

Terry Pratchett

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Other children get given xylophones. Susan just had to ask her grandfather to take his vest off. Yes. There's a Death in the family.

It's hard to grow up normally when Grandfather rides a white horse and wields a scythe – especially when you have to take over the family business, and everyone mistakes you for the Tooth Fairy.

And **especially** when you have to face the new and addictive music that has entered Discworld.

It's lawless. It changes people.

It's called **Music With Rocks In**.

It's got a beat and you can dance to it, but...

It's **alive**.

And it won't fade away.

Soul Music Details

Date : Published September 1st 1995 by Corgi Books (first published May 19th 1994)

ISBN : 9780552140294

Author : Terry Pratchett

Format : Mass Market Paperback 378 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Humor

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From Reader Review Soul Music for online ebook

Mitticus says

(Leí este libro a dos bandas, en inglés y en español al mismo tiempo, así que probablemente debería valer por dos)

Probably you'll enjoy more this book if you like music, or should I say if you have something to do with music or music business.

Is the story of a band of friends that joins the rocky way that leads for a new form of music, a sort of infection of strange proportions that affects to almost all in Discworld.

And it is the story of a grandfather and his granddaughter trying to understand the meaning of life and Death.

And Music wanting to be free.

HE HAS NO LIFE. HE HAS MUSIC.

“Music’s taken him over?”

YOU COULD PUT IT LIKE THAT.

“Making his life longer?”

LIFE IS EXTENSIBLE. IT HAPPENS ALL THE TIME AMONG HUMANS. NOT OFTEN.
USUALLY TRAGICALLY, IN A THEATRICAL KIND OF WAY. BUT THIS ISN’T
ANOTHER HUMAN. THIS IS MUSIC.

El 95% de la gente que conozco son músicos, cantan (ópera, folclore andino, coralistas, rock/pop), tocan piano, guitarra, violín, flauta traversa, violonchelo, contrabajo, DJs. Este la clase de 'cantinfleo' que disfruto, haciendo una sátira del gremio, de los managers, y de los que tratamos de hacer música. Las anécdotas de cualquier músico es mucho más que ésto, llenarian enciclopedias, y largometrajes con versión extendida y tetralogías.

Las rocas están allí para todos :)

Bilbo Baggins says

4.5 Stars!!!

This is probably going to be my favorite Discworld book ever!!! Loved it!

Richard says

6.5/10

Another solid entry into the Discworld series and the Death sub series (although Death has a relatively small amount of screen time) which this time tackles Rock 'n Roll coming to the Discworld. I love Rock 'n Roll and I enjoy humour so what's not to like?

The book started really well and got two differing strands of story line going, one with Rock 'n Roll and the other with Death going AWOL so his Granddaughter, Susan, has to take up the mantle and start to run the show. As the story progressed I became more involved with the Death story line and Susan became quite the character to read about. There was the usual overlapping of the two threads by the end and things tied up nicely.

Terry Pratchett throws in the usual jokes about the subject matter with the residents of Discworld not quite getting it or making it slightly different to our own know how which produces the funnier moments in this book. The "music with rocks in it" joke became a bit stall after cropping up once every ten pages or so though.

I think the best way to describe this one is enjoyable but forgettable. Worth the read but not worth starting this series with.

If you like this try: "Island of the Sequined Love Nun" by Christopher Moore

Ben Crozier says

Falls into the category of Disc World novels where he is moving through obvious targets such as the music or film industry lacks the bite or philosophical insight you would hope or expect.

Ashley says

"He had the feeling, once again, that he'd missed out on something somewhere. He'd never really realized it until the last couple of days. He didn't know what it was. He just wanted to do things. He didn't know what they were. But he wanted to do them soon."

"There are millions of chords. There are millions of numbers. And everyone forgets the one that is a zero. But without the zero, numbers are just arithmetic. Without the empty chord,

music is just noise."

It was just happenstance that the first Pratchett book I got to read after Sir Terry died last month is one of those that feature DEATH, and musings on, but it certainly made the experience of reading *Soul Music* more bittersweet than it would have been otherwise. It didn't end up being my favorite Discworld book, but it's still a reminder of what we've lost in losing* Terry Pratchett.

**A euphemism implying we can probably find him hiding under our beds or stuffed in the fridge next to the ketchup if only we just looked hard enough.*

The Discworld books don't have to be read in order, but I have to read them that way. If you're looking for a way in to the series, you could do worse than with this book. I feel it's good, not great. But if you want a stellar one to start with I'd recommend *Guards! Guards!* instead, or even *Reaper Man*, which was the previous book in the DEATH sub-series. Terry Pratchett's version of Death is an anthropomorphized, soulful, skeletal sort of guy who's always having emotional crises, losing faith in his job, and then wandering off for a while to find himself. He also speaks IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS.

This time around, his crisis precipitates his granddaughter, Susan, taking over the business. Susan is a very practical girl, raised by her parents (Death's adopted daughter and his old apprentice) to disregard anything even remotely nonsensical. While Susan is busy learning the Family Business, magical disaster is of course once again invading the Discworld, this time in the form of music. Specifically of the type "with rocks in." Imp y Celyn (Welsh for Bud of the Holly . . . get it?) and two new acquaintances also new to the fine disaster of a city known as Ankh-Morpork decide to start a band after being rejected by the Musician's Guild, and after finding a guitar in a Mysterious Shop that produces the most wondrous music . . .

As they tend to do in Discworld books, the two stories converge in a manner I can only describe as "wonko," but the twin themes of Death and Music actually work really well together, and I ended up coming out of the book sort of teary-eyed, and not just because I was thinking about its dearly departed author.

Cora ? Tea Party Princess says

I love the Death books. They're my favourite within the Discworld, closely followed by the Witches.

Gotta love some Music With Rocks In It.

Brooke says

I am convinced that Sir Pratchett wrote this book for the sole reason of putting in a "grateful Death" joke.

It wasn't my favorite Discworld book, but the phrase "Music With Rocks In" is so charmingly Pratchett that I kind of wanted to hug it.

Igor Ljubuncic says

40 books on my Pratchett shelf, 40 books to review, if I write one now, there'll 39 books on my Pratchett shelf left to review.

But it should be interesting.

The way I remember it, through the first half of the DW series, Terry was busy exploring existentialism in different ways, with witches, death (and associates), a fast-running coward, the genius Night Watch (my favorite) ...

... before he finally nailed it. He eventually got well comfortable with his own writing, and the series picked up pace, quality, humor, and depth, and he abandoned some of the darker characters.

Soul Music is a largely forgettable if fun yet slightly grim novel, which straddles the two worlds, between the initial heavy tone and the more over-arching adventure-driven second half. We have Death of course, but then we also get Susan, who replaces Mort as a sidekick. That is just the backdrop, as the main story is around a music band who almost destroys the fabric of time with their performance.

There isn't too much to say that won't be a spoiler. Soul Music is a nice piece of written work, but it does not have the punch like some of the later works, mostly because its theme is a one-off. I guess this was a turning point for Terry, although I cannot be sure he wrote the books sequentially, as the books later in the series suddenly become more vibrant and interesting.

If you're a DW fan, you will like this. It has its special charm and flavor, and it's one big pun, after all.

No limerick, as this book is about music. Mwuahahahaha.

Igor

Ivan says

I re-read this book slowly past few weeks. So slowly I even forgot to added it to GR.

Sadly my initial opinion still remains: This is the worst Discworld book I read (but not worst Pratchett's book that title goes to Long earth). That doesn't mean it's bad book but it's way bellow sir Terry's best works. Death is my second favorite Discworld character (first one being Sam Vimes) but like in Thief of time him Susan ended in totally uninteresting plot with overall very weak cast of characters.

Soul music has brief flashes of Pratchett's brilliance but it's not enough and I feel this re-read was wasted time. Time I should have spent reading or re-reading better Discworld books.

Tfitoby says

Remain In Print

Sir Terry Pratchett

1948 - 2015

Once upon a time I was given a book voucher from my school and with that book voucher I went straight out and made sure I could actually own a Discworld novel rather than having to go to the library. It just so happened to be that small window in time when I would have preferred a Disc novel about music with rocks in than one with moving pictures, and so for a while Soul Music was my favourite book about life on Disc.

I went on to criticise the animated movie based on this book for losing the magic of the prose. Turns out I had no idea what I was talking about and Soul Music the book is as lacking in the magic and the intellect as Soul Music the movie.

Essentially following the same plot as for Moving Pictures, magic from another world invades the Disc causing obsession amongst the residents that could lead to the end of the world only for an intrepid hero to save the day, this sixteenth entry in the series feels empty, an excuse for pushing puns beyond their breaking point and making really obvious jokes about rock n roll seemingly from the point of view of somebody who doesn't *really* understand the appeal of the music.

Sure, there's a bit about Death and his granddaughter Susan and the evolution of Ponder Stibbons in the High Energy Magic building of Unseen University but there's very little else going on here.

Kalin says

Soul Music was, I guess, my first true love. Um, I mean with Terry Pratchett. Um, I mean ... you *know* what I mean. :D

So much so that when I had to pick the topic of my 4,000-word IB extended essay, there was no room for doubt. It *had* to be Susan. And Death. And the Music With Rocks In. And the life-saving, human-defining importance of rebellion. (*Teen angst, ha! teen me would fume. What d'you grown-ups **know**?*)

Meet 4,000-word essay here:

<http://kal.zavinagi.org/?p=92>

WARNING: Even though this is the least academic of all the many drafts I wrote, it still sounds terribly highfalutin. Thousand apologies.

Melki says

Now do you believe in rock and roll?

Can music save your mortal soul?

Don MacLean

A fab foursome causes wizards to shake, rattle and roll, and manages to bring some hot times (not to mention broken furniture) to the Mended Drum. Suddenly, there's an earworm loose in Discworld, and now everyone's got their toes-a-tappin' and a song in their hearts.

Though I can't say exactly what was wrong, this one fell flat for me. It squeaks by with 3 stars ONLY because I liked the Death of Rats, Susan, the swing that Death built for her (Awww!), and the part in the book where an inebriated Death gets his pockets picked by the bar patrons before they toss him into the river. (Or, more precisely, ONTO the river.)

Gavin says

Not up there with the best of his stuff, but I should point out at this juncture that since Guards Guards he's been getting marked on a scale relative only to his other books. If I'd picked up this book last week written by some po-dunk nobody it'd be getting five stars and I'd be desperately googling them for websites, blogs and news of their next release.

Soul Music is a slightly unbalanced pair of narratives, one about the infringing of rock and roll into the Discworld and the other a rather sombre meditation about the toll that being Death would take upon the newly humanised Death (and the continuation of the theme through his Granddaughter, a not-yet-full-formed Susan). The Death stuff works brilliantly and is as enjoyable and thought-provoking as you'd expect, Susan is a little roughly drawn but still very engaging, however the Music with Rocks In stuff -in particular the dovetailing of the main threads at the end and pop culture referencing- makes the book feel episodic, and a little... less than it could have been.

I should say here that I don't find pop culture references funny, I realise that there was a time that a person could come on stage and do a film quote to rapturous applause and endless plaudits, but that time is long gone. Obviously yes I realise this book is twenty (!) years old now and that there isn't really a clearly defined line as to why referencing books = Literature and referencing other media = Trash but it still doesn't work for me. Apart from the gag about the De(a)f Leopard. That was brilliant.

These are tiny, tiny criticisms though and for all of them I still got through the thing cover to cover in two days so it should go without saying that it's un-put-down-able. Another great Discworld book, not to be missed.

Malin says

Susan Sto Helit goes to a boarding school, and for the lessons she's less interested in, she has a tendency to fade into the woodwork - literally. Susan has the ability to fade away, should she so wish it. Turns out, this is because her grandfather is none other than Death, and when he goes missing, Susan, as his closest relative, is required to take over his duties for a while. Being deeply pragmatic and rational, thanks to her first rate education, it takes Susan a while to be persuaded, even when a tiny rat skeleton with a cloak and a scythe and a talking raven, not to mention the big white horse, shows up on her doorstep.

While Susan gets reacquainted with the family history her parents tried to keep from her, something new is sweeping through Ankh Morpork - the Music with Rocks in it. The young bard Imp Y Celyn (who looks a

bit Elvish) and his band mates, Cliff the troll and Glod the dwarf become unbelievably popular in record time, thanks to the guitar Imp discovered in a mysterious little music shop shortly after he arrived in the capital. The music is something new and different, it has a beat and you can dance to it, and it makes almost everyone who hears it, completely obsessed. This includes many of the esteemed wizards at the Unseen University. Ridcully, the Arch-Chancellor, is curious and unimpressed, and determined to get to the bottom of what is making his faculty and the majority of citizens in the city to behave so strangely.

Soul Music was the very first *Discworld* novel I ever read. I found it at my local library, which in the mid-90s didn't really have all that many English books and certainly not a great selection of fantasy. The unusual and colourful cover appealed to me and I suspect the blurb on the back made me curious. The book came out in 94, and since I read the trade paperback, I must have discovered Terry Pratchett sometime after 1995, probably before I'd even started high school. It was a completely different reading experience for me. I remember that I kept reading until far later than was sensible on a school night, because the book didn't have chapters, and as such, it was difficult to force myself to put the book down and stop. *Soul Music* is not one of the greatest *Discworld* books, but it will always hold a special place in my heart, because it was my first introduction to the writing of Terry Pratchett.

I was still at work, getting everything ready for my lessons the next day, when my husband called to tell me that Terry Pratchett had died. I'm not ashamed to say, I burst into tears. Of course I knew that it would only be a matter of time, as he suffered from Alzheimer's and had always been very open about wanting to choose his own time to die, but it was still a shock. I cried for quite some time before I was able to return to my duties, and kept bursting into tears on and off for days afterwards, every time I read something online about him and the impact his writing made on so many people. It's the strongest I've been affected by the death of a celebrity, someone I never actually knew personally.

I feel lucky and privileged that I got to meet Pratchett at signings, more than once. My husband has a copy of *Good Omens*, which is signed by both Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman, which, considering Gaiman didn't do signings in the UK all that often, makes us cherish the book for more than just being probably the best book they both wrote. Before he got diagnosed with Alzheimer's, Pratchett would pretty much do a UK signing tour every year. He apparently joked once that it was more unusual to find an unsigned copy of his books than one with his signature in it, but I still think the times that I got to see him, and exchange a few words with him were very special. One of the dwarfs in *The Truth* is called Gunilla, which is my middle name. When I mentioned this to him at a signing, he smiled and said: "Then you probably know what gender that dwarf is."

Pratchett was a wonderful, important writer and in his *Discworld* books he managed to satirise so many important issues in our society. In some of his books, he is more angry than funny, but until the last few books of his career, when his brain had really started to go, he is a master of language, of plot construction and of wit. His books have made me howl with laughter, and cry buckets. A few of my favourite books of his, are non-*Discworld*. *Good Omens*, which I have already mentioned, was co-written with Neil Gaiman and is an amazing take on the apocalypse. *Nation* is a YA novel that looks at identity, belief, prejudice and cross-cultural understanding. While he may have been writing in the comedic fantasy genre, that doesn't mean that he didn't have very profound things to say. We are lucky that he was a very prolific writer, so there is a great literary legacy remaining now that he's gone. RIP Terry Pratchett.

David Sarkies says

Rock n Roll invades the Discworld

26 July 2014

Well, I can't believe that I have just finished my 16th Terry Pratchett Discworld novel, and that is over two years (no, not sixteen books in two years, 16 Discworld novels in two years) since I decided that I would give Pratchett the benefit of the doubt and actually read them again prior to writing up a commentary, and this isn't even the last of the Discworld novels on my 'to read' list (I think there are another six, which would bring it up to The Last Continent). Anyway, enough of my pondering over the Terry Pratchett books that I have read because I think it is time to say a few things about this particular book.

As I was discussing this book with a friend last night we came upon the conclusion that there were a number of things in this book that felt forced, such as the parody of Rock n Roll. While the concept was good, and amusing in a way, I felt that the term 'Music with Rocks In' just seemed a little too forced. It seemed as if Pratchett had come up with another modern phenomena to throw into Discworld but struggled with a suitable name, which suggests that maybe Pratchett's creative juices in regards to Discworld are starting to run out. However, as I suggested above, there are another six books on my to read list (Discworld novels that is) so we will see where they go from there.

Soul Music was a little strange in that while wikipedia lists it as a 'Death' novel (that is a novel starring the favourite Discworld character, not the state one enters when one ceases to live) it seemed that Death was a minor character, and the whole Susan Sto Helit storyline was more of a subplot. I say this because the focus of the novel was more on Buddy, Cliff, Glod, and their Music with Rocks In band. To me it felt more like Moving Pictures, in that a new idea arrives in Ankh-Morpork and takes the city by storm, which is the modern phenomena known as 'Rock n Roll'.

When I say Rock n Roll, Pratchett is referring to:

or:

as opposed to:

or:

though he does give a tribute to:

and:

(You can click on the image to open up a video-clip on Youtube).

Well, that is enough of me showing off my limited HTML skills (even though some of the limit is imposed by Goodreads) and time to get back to the book. Considering the content of this book (and others like it) I sometimes wonder whether Pratchett has a conservative outlook on life since, once again, we have a modern phenomena invading Discworld and by the end this phenomena is defeated and Discworld goes back to being your normal (or not so normal) fantasy world. In *Moving Pictures* we had an invasion of, well, moving pictures, and in *Reaperman* we had an invasion of shopping centres. In another sense it could simply be satire, and here we have Pratchett taking aim at the music industry, especially with CMOT Dibbler successfully (or not so successfully since he doesn't get any of the money) profiting heavily off of the band (we have five thousand dollars for Dibbler, and out of that comes our cut of twenty dollars).

I guess in another sense Pratchett is using the absurdity of Discworld to poke fun at the absurdity of modern life, in this case being rock n roll music. The phenomena that arose in the fifties saw a change in the way music was performed. Then again there was not actually all that much of a change. I guess what changed is the style of music in that prior to the fifties much of the popular music, such as jazz, was played in pubs and clubs, while classical music would be played in the concert halls. What musicians like Elvis and The Beatles did was take the popular music out of the club and moved it to the concert hall (or more fittingly the outdoor stage). Where as before you had huge orchestras performing in concert halls, the number of musicians suddenly shrank significantly, usually hovering between three to five. Then there was the mass marketing of music, and this came about with the development of the record player, the radio, and then the television (though while record players had been around for quite a while, we suddenly begin to see them in every home).

What I guess Pratchett is really poking fun at here is the effect that the music seemed to have on people. As Pratchett points out, applause would begin at one spot and then radiate out, however when the Band with Rocks In arrived on stage, the entire crowd erupted simultaneously. We have the wizards changing hairstyles and clothes (with one wearing a leather jacket with 'Born to Rune' studded on the back, and this jacket plays a rather interesting role at the end of the book) and we have fans going absolutely crazy when the music is played. In fact that is the key to the antagonist in this book: music changes people - in fact the music has a life of its own.

Where does Death fit into all of this. Well, the book opens with Death, and it closes with Death, and it seems that Death is going through another of his crises. I would suggest that it is a mid-life crisis, but this is Death we are talking about, and he is technically not mortal (and as such cannot have a 'mid-life crisis', but rather is a personification of an idea. This time it is the realisation that he cannot forget anything, so he goes on a quest to learn how to forget. Obviously, when he goes off on his merry adventures somebody needs to fill in the void, which is where Susan Sto-Hellit comes into the picture, the daughter of Mort and Ysabell. In fact, what we discover that sixteen years (or longer) has passed since the events of *Mort*, which is longer than the amount of time that passed between the publication of *Mort* (1987) and this book (1994).

Emer says

Discworld Playlist:

- 1) *"There's a Great Deal of Shaking Happening"*
- 2) *"Give Me That Music With Rocks In"*

3) *"Pathway to Paradise"*

4) *"Born to Rune"*

two and a half stars

Julie Davis says

Not the best but enjoyable enough, as are even the least of Terry Pratchett's books. This one is notable for introducing Death's granddaughter, Susan, who takes on a similar role to that we'll see her in later in the much superior Hogfather. It is highly reminiscent of Moving Pictures which the characters, in true self-awareness, comment upon themselves. However, Pratchett's points are always worth pondering and his adventures surrounding the life force that music can take on is, as I said, enjoyable.

Lyn says

Sex, drugs and rock and roll in the Discworld.

Except there's really not any sex to speak of, and ... to be honest really not any drugs either.

But 1 out of three ain't bad, er, well, I guess that's 33 percent, so really not that good but ...

But in Sir Terry Pratchett's able writing, it is good, as the Discworld experiences rock and roll –

or actually, Music with Rocks In as performed by The Band with Rocks In.

Imp Y Celyn (which literally means "bud of holly,") calls himself Buddy, and his band mates Glod (as in on a mission from Glod) and their troll drummer Cliff set out to hit the big stage of Ankh-Morpork and things get bigger than they ever imagined as Buddy finds a magical, mystical guitar that takes over and makes things interesting.

Checklist of Discworld characters:

Death – check

The Librarian – check

Cut-me-own-throat Dibbler – check

The Wizardly staff at Unseen University – check

Susan – check

Sgt Colon and Corporal Nobbs - check

And a host of other fun folks who inhabit Pratchett's Discworld. Most of the action takes place in Ankh-Morpork but the Band also goes on tour. As in most of Pratchett's work, this is also a satire on a great many

things, most notably here commercialism, music industry, art and music, and human nature.

Fun, fun, fun.

YouKneeK says

Every now and then, we get one of those “real world stuff bleeds into the Discworld” books. For example, *Moving Pictures* involved, as you might guess, a sudden discovery of and obsession about movies. With a *Discworld* flare, of course. Those books are the ones I seem to enjoy the least. *Soul Music* is the third book in the *Death* subseries, and it was one of those types of books. In this case, the sudden discovery and obsession is for rock and roll music although, in *Discworld*, it goes by the name “Music with Rocks In” and includes some trolls using rocks as drums.

Maybe part of the problem is that I just don’t seem to get a lot of the jokes in these types of books. I’ve never watched a lot of movies, so a lot of the stuff in *Moving Pictures* went over my head. Likewise, I’m not terribly knowledgeable about rock and roll, and I think most of the references were probably from the 50’s and maybe 60’s, and I’ve never listened much to the music of that era. (view spoiler)

In addition to that, we have Death once again going off the grid and shirking his responsibilities, leaving other people to deal with the repercussions. This is only the third Death book and yet it already feels repetitive. Part of the reason it frustrates me is because Death is a fun character, and I want to see more of him actually being Death. I think I actually enjoy him more when he shows up in the other subseries books.

I guess it sounds like I hated the book, and I really didn’t. It’s just easier to write about my complaints. So, what did I like? I enjoyed the humor that didn’t relate to rock and roll music. Pratchett has a great way of coming up with funny descriptions for common things. For example, this one made me laugh enough that I took the time to highlight it: “*And people got up and started cheerin’ and dancin’ and stampin’ their feet like there was a plague of cockroaches.*”. I also really enjoyed the concept of the character of Susan, who was one of the aforementioned characters who had to take up the slack for Death. I say “the concept of” because she really didn’t get nearly enough page time and her part of the story was too similar to another story in an earlier book. Despite that, she captured my attention when she was first introduced and I really liked the idea of her character.

Kaethe says

19 Feb 2008

20 Jun 2014

25 Aug 2016

Death takes a sort of holiday, so the Death of Rats goes looking for Death's granddaughter to fill the gap. Susan is off in boarding school, being an unusually practical teenager with no memory of her grandfather, when she gets the message. Meanwhile a bard, a troll, and a dwarf meet up and form a band and a magical guitar introduces the idea of Music with Rocks in to the Discworld.

The magic that is unleashed has more to do with lampooning record company contracts than the typical fantasy, with room for plenty of puns, an hilarious tour, and some profound thoughts on what music means to people (interpreted broadly). And also, lots of silly business with the Death of Rats and Quoth, a raven. Funny as anything, and never mean-spirited.

These books get even better with age, both mine and theirs.

personal copy
