



Kill All Your Darlings: Pieces 1990-2005

By Luc Sante

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In his books and in a string of wide-ranging and inventive essays, Luc Sante has shown himself to be not only one of our pre-eminent stylists, but also a critic of uncommon power and range. He is “one of the handful of living masters of the American language, as well as a singular historian and philosopher of American experience,” says the New Yorker’s Peter Schjeldahl. Kill All Your Darlings is the first collection of Sante’s articles—many of which first appeared in the New York Review of Books and the Village Voice—and offers ample justification for such high praise. Sante is best known for his groundbreaking work in urban history (Low Life), and for a particularly penetrating form of autobiography (The Factory of Facts). These subjects are also reflected in several essays here, but it is the author’s intense and scrupulous writing about music, painting, photography, and poetry that takes center stage. Alongside meditations on cigarettes, factory work, and hipness, and his critical tour de force, “The Invention of the Blues,” Sante offers his incomparable take on icons from Arthur Rimbaud to Bob Dylan, René Magritte to Tintin, Buddy Bolden to Walker Evans, Allen Ginsberg to Robert Mapplethorpe.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

New York City is fated always to remain my home, writes Sante, who became permanently linked with the city through the underground history he recounted in *Low Life*, and the lead-off essay in this collection revisits the frame of mind he was in when he conceived that book in the Lower East Side of the early 1980s. The best essays that follow maintain that strong personal connection, such as an eyewitness account of a riot in Tompkins Square Park or the time he lived in the same apartment building as Allen Ginsberg (who suffered me, if not especially gladly). The book and music reviews that make up the bulk of the remaining material are usually insightful and occasionally contain striking imagery: he describes, for example, how the punk-country band the Mekons built an imaginary America out of pocket lint. But collecting disparate pieces in a single volume is a risky proposition, and sometimes an awkward skip, as in a chapter on two books by photographer Michael Lesy, temporarily exposes the anthology's patchwork nature. It's worth working through those rough patches, however, to soak up Sante's various observations on the long legacy of outsider culture, from Rimbaud through Buddy Bolden to Bob Dylan. (Aug. 20)

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From [Booklist](#)

Creative social critic Sante has electrifying things to say about intriguing subjects, ranging from New Year's to Walker Evans, but it is his feint-and-jab prose that makes him noteworthy. At once tough in his thinking, empathic in his analysis, and liberated in expression, Sante selects barbed details, tunes in to danger and suspense, and dispenses wry humor and sure insight. In a memoirist mode, he chronicles a precollege stint in a small and brutal plastic factory in New Jersey, and writes evocatively about living in New York during its decline in the 1970s and 1980s and under Giuliani. His passion for music inspires a fresh look at the blues, a sharp assessment of Bob Dylan, and a caustic takedown of the Woodstock myth. Revisiting Victor Hugo and Rene Magritte yields unexpected results, as does an inquiry into the many meanings of dope. And then there's his tribute to the lost pleasures of cigarettes, in which he concludes, "We may all have stopped smoking, but we continue to burn." Sante is certainly on fire. Seaman, Donna

About the Author

Luc Sante's is a frequent contributor to the New York Review of Books and has written about books, movies, art, photography, music, and miscellaneous cultural phenomenon for many other periodicals. Sante has received a Whiting Writer's Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Literature Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and a Grammy (for album notes). He lives in Ulster County, New York, and teaches at Bard College.

Users Review

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