

# Love Is a Mix Tape: Life and Loss, One Song at a Time

By Rob Sheffield



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Mix tapes: Stick one into a deck and you're transported to another time in your life. For Rob Sheffield, author of *Turn Around Bright Eyes* that time was one of miraculous love and unbearable grief. A time that spanned seven years, it started when he met the girl of his dreams, and ended when he watched her die

in his arms. Using the listings of fifteen of his favorite mix tapes, Rob shows that the power of music to build a bridge between people is stronger than death. You'll read these words, perhaps surprisingly, with joy in your heart and a song in your head—the one that comes to mind when you think of the love of your life.



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#### **Editorial Review**

#### From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. A celebratory eulogy for life in "the decade of Nirvana," rock critic Sheffield's captivating memoir uses 22 "mix tapes" to describe his being "tangled up" in the "noisy, juicy, sparkly life" of his wife, Renee, from the time they met in 1989 to her sudden death from a pulmonary embolism in 1997. Each chapter begins with song titles from the couple's myriad mixes—"Tapes for making out, tapes for dancing, tapes for falling asleep"—and uses them to describe a beautiful love story: "a real cool hell-raising Appalachian punk-rock girl" meeting in graduate school a "hermit wolfboy, scared of life, hiding in my room with my records," and how they built a tender relationship on the music they loved, from the Meat Puppets to Hank Williams. Their bond as soul mates makes his reaction to her death deeply moving: "I had no voice to talk with because she was my whole language." But Sheffield's wonderful, often hilarious and lovingly detailed stories about their early romance and their later domestic life show how they created their own personal "mix tape" of life in the same way a music mix tape "steals moments from all over the musical cosmos and splices them into a whole new groove." (Jan.)

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#### From **Booklist**

Sheffield was a "shy, skinny, Irish Catholic geek from Boston" when he first met Renee. Southern born and bred, "she was warm and loud and impulsive." They had nothing in common except a love of music. Since he made music tapes for all occasions, he and Renee listened together, shared tapes, and though never formally planning to, married. On May 11, 1997, everything changed. He was in the kitchen making lunch. Suddenly, she collapsed, dying instantly of a pulmonary embolism. Devastated, he quickly realized that he couldn't listen to certain songs again, and that life as he knew it would never be the same. Fun and funny, moving and unbearably sad, Sheffield's account at its quirkiest, and because of his penchant for lists, is reminiscent of Nick Hornby's novel *High Fidelity* (1995). Anyone who loves music and appreciates the unspoken ways that music can bring people together will respond warmly to this gentle, bittersweet reflection on love won and love irrevocably lost. *June Sawyers* 

#### Review

"No rock critic-living or dead, American or otherwise- has ever written about pop music with the evocative, hyperpoetic perfectitude of Rob Sheffield. **Love is a Mix Tape** is the happiest, saddest, greatest book about rock'n'roll that I've ever experienced."

—Chuck Klosterman, bestselling author of Fargo Rock Cty, Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs, Killing Yourself to Live and Chuck Klosterman IV

"This is a lightly-handed, skillful and sincere celebration of pop, of love, sad songs, bad songs and the long, nearly unbearable ache of being a young widower. Witty and wise; a true candidate for the All-Time Desert Island Top 5 Books About Pop Music."

-Kirkus, starred review

"I can't think of many books as appealing as Rob Sheffield's **Love is a Mix Tape**; Sheffield writes beautifully about music, he's hilarious, and his story is alternatingly joyous and heartbreaking. Plus, everyone knows there's no better way to organize history and make sense of life than through the mix tape."

—Haven Kimmel, bestselling author of She Got Up Off the Couch, A Girl Named Zippy and The Solace of

Leaving Early

- "A celebratory eulogy of life 'in the decade of Nirvana."
- -Publishers Weekly « starred review
- "Sheffield's description of Renée's brilliant eccentricity and lovable quirkiness causes the reader to fall in love with her just as he does."
- —*Library Journal* « starred review
- "A glorious elegy to a pop culture-blessed decade and a tender, unforgettable tribute to the power of love"
- —The Miami Herald
- "Humorous, heartbreaking, and heroic."
- —Entertainment Weekly
- "Sheffield writes elegantly without turning it into a depressing tale of love stolen away too soon. . . . Wry and sardonic, even in his suffering, he's the tragic romantic who never gets overwrought."
- —Newsweek
- "The finest lines ever written about rock 'n' roll . . . Like that song on the radio, every word of Rob's book is true. Love is a mix tape."
- Rolling Stone
- "Many of us use pop culture as a mirror of our emotional lives, but Sheffield happily walks right through the looking glass."
- -Los Angeles Times

#### **Users Review**

#### From reader reviews:

#### Jarred Chisolm:

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#### **Kathleen Knight:**

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