

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

Issue: September 1, 2020

★ **Black Diamond Queens: African American Women and Rock and Roll.**

By Maureen Mahon

Oct. 2020. 408p. illus. Duke, \$114.95 (9781478010197); paper, \$30.95 (9781478011224).
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Long misrepresented as an exclusively white, male genre, rock and roll has been significantly shaped by the African American women who endure erasure within the genre. Cultural anthropologist Mahon (*Right to Rock*, 2004), brings a critical eye to her work, continually contextualizing the genre and its performers amongst larger considerations. For example, Mahon explains, assigning higher value to instrumentation has decreased the value assigned to vocalization and, by extension, to the artists who vocalized. A bright, straight line can be drawn between Big Mama Thornton's 1953 hit single "Hound Dog," covered upwards of ten times, and Elvis Presley's 1956 version that netted him millions. The power of Mahon's writing is in her nuanced unpacking of the fibers of that connection and others, to include the performance of gender and sexuality, commercial limits placed on Black-owned labels by white institutions, and suppressed histories. With depth and breadth, Mahon's work centers the many African American women who heavily influence rock and roll, from LaVern Baker to Tina Turner. Rock and roll emerged neither from a vacuum nor from the minds of white, male performers alone. Mahon's comprehensive research and intelligent thinking are captured in her compelling writing.

Women in Focus: The 19th in 2020

— *Emily Dziuban*