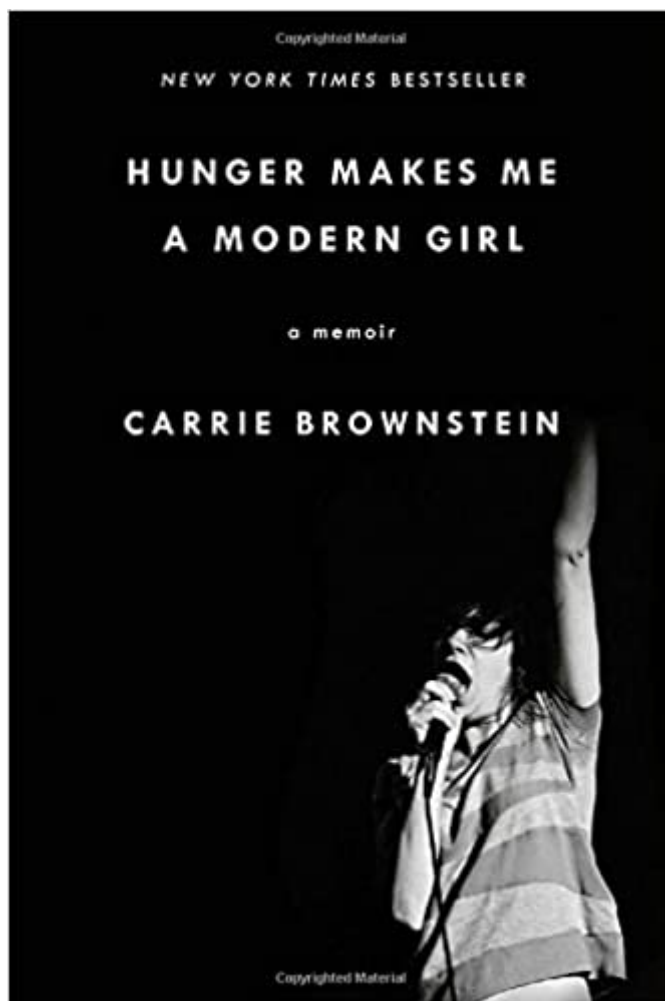


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# Hunger Makes Me A Modern Girl: A Memoir



## Synopsis

From the guitarist of the pioneering band Sleater-Kinney, the book Kim Gordon says "everyone has been waiting for" and a New York Times Notable Book of 2015-- a candid, funny, and deeply personal look at making a life--and finding yourself--in music. Before Carrie Brownstein became a music icon, she was a young girl growing up in the Pacific Northwest just as it was becoming the setting for one the most important movements in rock history. Seeking a sense of home and identity, she would discover both while moving from spectator to creator in experiencing the power and mystery of a live performance. With Sleater-Kinney, Brownstein and her bandmates rose to prominence in the burgeoning underground feminist punk-rock movement that would define music and pop culture in the 1990s. They would be cited as "America's best rock band" by legendary music critic Greil Marcus for their defiant, exuberant brand of punk that resisted labels and limitations, and redefined notions of gender in rock. *HUNGER MAKES ME A MODERN GIRL* is an intimate and revealing narrative of her escape from a turbulent family life into a world where music was the means toward self-invention, community, and rescue. Along the way, Brownstein chronicles the excitement and contradictions within the era's flourishing and fiercely independent music subculture, including experiences that sowed the seeds for the observational satire of the popular television series *Portlandia* years later. With deft, lucid prose Brownstein proves herself as formidable on the page as on the stage. Accessibly raw, honest and heartfelt, this book captures the experience of being a young woman, a born performer and an outsider, and ultimately finding one's true calling through hard work, courage and the intoxicating power of rock and roll. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Riverhead Books; Reprint edition (October 25, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0399184767

ISBN-13: 978-0399184765

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.7 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 195 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #68,095 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #135 in Books > Arts &

Photography > Music > Biographies > Rock #873 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Specific

## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of November 2015: Hunger Made Me a Modern Girl isn't the stately, studio-oriented music memoir that we've seen in the wake of Keith Richards's epic Life--Townshend, Costello, and others--but perhaps most closely resembles Chrissie Hynde's Reckless, at least in spirit, if not content: both are relatively short, intensely personal, and less concerned with chord progressions than personal progression (Hynde's being particularly gritty). Moving through her childhood in the Seattle suburbs, we see the proto-performer searching for her personal stage while navigating tumultuous family dynamics. And when she finds her voice with the pioneering punk band, Sleater-Kinney, we're in the van and on stage with her, lugging amps and filthy mattresses until road-stress compels her to end it (the first time, anyway; they're back). It's not a tell-all; Brownstein is selective about what she shares, but what she does give us hits hard. Her memoir resembles her songs: taut, thoughtful, and honest. —Jon Foro

"In the vast library of recent rock memoirs... Ms. Brownstein's may be the one that most nakedly exposes its author's personality." —The New York Times  
"Carrie Brownstein writes the way she plays guitar, with raw honesty, passion, and great humor in Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl." —"Vanity Fair"  
"A memoir that's both candid and brave, and a powerful tribute to the power of music to heal, to connect, to break you down and then make you whole again" —Brownstein's music has always helped people feel like they really do belong somewhere, and her wonderful memoir does the same thing. —NPR  
"Meet your fierce and funny new comrade-in-arms. [Brownstein] takes us on a backstage tour of her life, from quirky kid-dom to angsty teen-dom to the feminist subculture of the riot grrl scene to not quite superstardom" —Chronicling Sleater-Kinney's tumultuous history and her own volatility —"the tours that electrified fans, one brutal, ballsy concert at a time; the anxiety that often plagued her"  
"Brownstein illuminates the euphoric highs and crushing lows of a life spent both on the fringes and in the spotlight." —"O, The Oprah Magazine"  
"[Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl] is earnest, endearing, at times angry, critical, confessional, raw" —[it's] the compelling chronicle of a born performer, from fandom to stardom" —The richness of the writing ensures that Hunger will satisfy die-hard Sleater-Kinney fans as well as those who've never heard a note. —Kirkus Reviews  
"Brownstein is as nimble, articulate, and honest a writer of literary nonfiction as she is a musician, actress, and cultural critic." —Vogue.com  
"A sharp, emotionally intimate new

memoir. • "People [Brownstein's] honesty is disarming, and buoyed by the same dry wit that makes her scener-lacerating IFC series *Portlandia* so good. That's how she artfully manages to transcend the backstage tropes of the rock-bio genre, and why *Hunger* should become the new handbook for every modern girl (and yes, boys, too) looking for the courage to pursue a life less ordinary. • "Entertainment Weekly | A journey to self-possession and a portrait of an era. • "Vogue | She can play, but man, can Carrie Brownstein write | Her blazing memoir is lit by the same flair for adventure, fearless inquiry, and honesty that mark her gritty licks and trenchant vocals. • "ELLE | *Hunger* doesn't try to enumerate every hat she's ever worn, only what emboldened her to keep experimenting. • "TIME Magazine | Solid musings from the *Portlandia* star/feminist punk hero. • "Cosmopolitan | Brownstein in an American indie culture avatar | "funny, smart and always on point. • "Los Angeles Times | Brownstein's writing is strongest when she describes the passion and sheer joy she experiences connecting with music. • "BUST Magazine | (Brownstein) peels away any residual glamor and mythology of the Riot Grrrl movement and tells her tale of suburban upbringing and liberation. • "Newsweek | *Modern Girl* offers a stark look at the strain that touring life took on Brownstein; she talks openly about her battles with depression and anxiety, including a difficult-to-read account of her nervous breakdown, which ultimately ended the band. • "Paper Magazine | Life on tour isn't all rock n' roll fantasy, as Sleater-Kinney icon and *Portlandia* cocreator Carrie Brownstein attests in her corrosively honest, impossible-to-put-down memoir, *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl* | "both a journey to self-possession and a portrait of an era, as indelible as one of her songs. • "Vogue.com | In her new memoir, [Brownstein] tells the story of how she found salvation in music. • "Out Magazine | "To find her calling, Carrie is going to experience hard work, sacrifice, and independence that makes her thrive. • "Buzzfeed | "Revealing and raw. • "The Daily Beast | "Few reign power and femininity like Brownstein whose haunting vocals and soul punching lyrics leave listeners rattled, in a good way, the way only truly great music can | "something *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl* is bound to do as well. • "Bustle | [Brownstein] is an incredible observer, with a gift for phrases and imagery and making sense of memory | it's not hard to predict that Brownstein's book will go beyond the usual rock-star victory-lap and turn out to be one of the wisest and most poignant memoirs in quite a while. • "Salon | [A] moving story about Brownstein's life before, during, and after the rise of America's greatest rock band. • "Flavorwire | "Brownstein writes with an impressive level of self-awareness and wry humor, even when she's tackling difficult moments in her life." • "Refinery29 | "The Sleater-Kinney guitarist,

writer, and Portlandia and Transparent actress has always been curiously eloquent. That quality has become obvious over the course of eight albums with bandmates Corin Tucker and Janet Weiss... and now in her refreshingly forthright new memoir, *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl*.  
"SPIN  
"Brownstein's *Modern Girl* offers a lot of value for a wide range of readers. Music historians get a first-hand POV of one of punk rock's most interesting scenes, aspiring artists will take away Brownstein's mandatory perspective and casual readers get a damn fine read.  
"Paste Magazine  
"Sleater-Kinney guitarist Carrie Brownstein debunks the nostalgic clichés of rock-star life on the road. Instead, she candidly recounts the panic attacks and stress-induced shingles she experienced on tour.  
"The Cut  
"Hunger is a testament to the fact that the transient and permanent are, in fact, intertwined.  
"The Jewish Daily Forward  
"Sleater-Kinney's Carrie Brownstein will make you laugh and cry in *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl*.  
A hunger to be noticed, a hunger to perform and a hunger to be loved are clear motivators for Brownstein as she looks back on her childhood at the start of her entirely self-written and often funny book.  
"NY Daily News  
"Engrossing | For fans of Sleater-Kinney, it's immensely compelling, particularly because Brownstein writes crisply, insightfully, and without vanity | Brownstein's memoir shows that she can keep a secret. More important, it shows how compelling she is when she opens up.  
"The A.V. Club  
"[Brownstein's] writing is sharp, erudite, and witty, and it makes *Hunger* my favorite music memoir since *Just Kids* | [it] arrives at a moment of unprecedented reverence for the feminist rock memoir."  
"Pitchfork  
"Carrie Brownstein is the legendary guitarist in Sleater-Kinney, one-half of the comedic genius team responsible for *Portlandia* and, now, in a move that surprises no one, a brilliant memoirist.  
"Spectrum  
"Sleater-Kinney guitarist and 'Portlandia' co-creator Carrie Brownstein's reflections on performance and community will move and shake you.  
"Huffington Post  
"Brownstein's a great writer and *Hunger* is a smooth, electric read. She carries a lot of humor and gentle self-deprecation throughout the work.  
"Consequence of Sound  
"Honest and irreverent, Brownstein shows herself to be a talented rock journalist and memoirist without losing the intelligence and humor her fans have come to expect.  
"Nordstrom Blog The Thread  
"Sometimes it's nice to love a band just for their songs, without concern for their backstory, but when you get a chance to know where one of your all-time favorites comes from, and written in such a way where it feels like you've dived into a pool and like a cartoon, the whole world changes around you, it would be a crime not to indulge. Spend some time with Carrie, it'll be totally worth your while."  
"Lenny Letter  
"Carrie strikes a great balance of fond reminiscing and truthful (sometimes regretful) memories spent on the road, in the recording studio and moments of humility in her youth.  
"AfterEllen  
"[Brownstein's]

memoir, looking back on those formative years with the band, offers the kind of intimacy and insight fans and enthusiasts will eagerly devour. • "Biographile" • "This portrait of a life lived above the realm of daily concern may be accurate if you're a Rolling Stone or Beyonce, but the truth, for most moderately successful musicians, is that rock 'n' roll is mostly about hard work, uncomfortable sleeping arrangements, and a lot of carrying your own instruments. Which is why Carrie Brownstein's new memoir, about her years with the band Sleater-Kinney, is so welcome. • "Biographile" • "What would it be like if all your dreams come true? For Carrie Brownstein, who grew up in the Riot Grrrl movement in the Pacific Northwest, they did: She started out playing in countless punk bands until settling on one with her BFF and romantic partner, Corin Tucker, which they eventually turned into the best rock band of all time, Sleater-Kinney. In *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl*, Brownstein recounts her time before worldwide fame, what Riot Grrrl meant to her as a young woman searching for her voice, and how rock 'n' roll saved her life. • "Cosmopolitan.com" • "In this dynamic memoir, Sleater-Kinney's Carrie Brownstein tells her story of coming up through the 1990s feminist punk scene of the Pacific Northwest. Her portrait is vivid, transporting readers back to the intimate moments that sowed her own roots, and made her the cool-girl icon she is today. Brownstein is honest, funny, and, well, everything you want her to be. • "Bustle" • "Carrie Brownstein is brilliant and hilarious in *Portlandia*, and iconic as the singer for punk-rock band Sleater-Kinney, but her memoir *Hunger Makes Me A Modern Girl* reveals a more raw and vulnerable side to her. • "Bustle" • "From her rocky childhood to becoming part of the feminist punk-rock movement to her days as a comedic writer and actor, Brownstein brings us into the most intimate moments of her life. • "First Slice" • "For decades, the guitarist for the legendary Sleater-Kinney has been celebrated for her unapologetic queer politics and general bad-assery. When she became the co-creator and star of the IFC comedy series "*Portlandia*," we were introduced to her slippery wit as well. Her new memoir unveils a third Brownstein: a melancholy, intellectually rigorous introvert who's been musically unpacking the concept of family ever since her suburban Washington childhood fell apart. • "WordandFilm.com" • "Brownstein has written an absolute love letter to music, a gift to Sleater Kinney fans, and above all, an expertly crafted memoir. • "Lambda Literary" • "Brownstein has insightful things to say about growing up with a closeted gay dad and an anorexic mom, about how the creative process works, about the 'performance' of the audience at a concert, about the punk aesthetic. • "Newsday" • "A performer through and through, she translates her story to the page with characteristically blunt humor and observational prowess. • "Village Voice" • "Brownstein is both an icon of pop culture and an astute observer of it. • "The Boston Globe" • "Carrie Brownstein's local history as part

of Sleater-Kinney is, for many of us, our ownâ”and she has long been an articulate and funny and intelligent voice behind piercing guitar that left tatters behind.â”Willamette Week âœBrownstein has a story to tell, and it doesn’t include satirical sketches about a certain element of local cultureâ” | What Brownstein does instead is open a window into her turbulent, creative Northwest life.â”The Oregonian âœFor Sleater-Kinney fans, [Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl] is an absolute mustâ” | The author writes focused and uncluttered prose, choosing the best, most telling details, as she recounts stories that show what it means to perform for the first time and what it means for a woman to be both a fan and a star in a staunchly male-dominated world. â”It’s revealing and riveting. On the page as in her songs, Brownstein finds the right words to give shape to experience.â”Kirkus starred review âœA candid look at life in rock and roll in a deeply personal and revealing narrative of her life in music, as ardent fan, pioneering female guitarist, comedic performer on TVâ”™s Portlandia, and luminary in the independent rock world.â”Publishers Weekly âœ[Brownstein’s] memoir delivers on all counts, offering a sharp-eyed tale of a singular time in music and cultureâ” | A strong, engaging pop culture memoir: personal detail, a little dish, and a well-written look at what made the music, and the culture that spawned it, matter.â”Library Journal starred review âœBrownstein flips easily from brainy ruminations on nostalgia, fandom, and record labels to trenchant stories about sexism, music journalism, and how a soy allergyâ”not drugs or alcoholâ”brought her to her knees on tourâ” | her vivid Sleater-Kinney stories and descriptions of their albums are downright irresistible. Sleater-Kinney fans went nuts late last year when the trio broke their years-long hiatus, and Brownsteinâ”™s memoir will give them more to salivate over.â”Booklistâœ[Brownstein] looks back with a healthy balance of romanticism, critique, and humor... she has talent... Her writing is super solid, at times even gripping... You donâ”™t need to be a superfan to appreciate someoneâ”™s well-told story about the inherent joy and strife that comes with being in a band; a personâ”™s story about finding, then losing, then re-finding her destiny.â”Electric LiteratureâœBrownstein has a gift for describing how collaboration works. She’s got a clear critical grasp of how the push and pull between her and vocalist-guitarist Corin Tucker and the essential talents of drummer Janet Weiss made the powerful, abrasive, addictive music of Sleater-Kinney. And to that she adds an important personal perspective.â”Los Angeles Times”Deftly woven narrativeâ”|.A brisk and fascinating work.â”Flavorwire”A document of self-actualizationâ”|[Brownsteinâ”™s] writing is measured, dispassionate, and well considered; itâ”™s engaging for exactly those reasons. Her insight is some of the best on that era and subset of punk thatâ”™s been written.”â”Jezebel”âœDeeply felt and smartly unpackedâ”|Essential readingâ”|One of the best rock memoirs anyone is going to read in quite some time.â”Austin

American Statesman. Her honesty is disarming, and buoyed by the same dry wit that makes her scener-lacerating IFC series *Portlandia* so good. That's how she artfully manages to transcend the backstage tropes of the rock-bio genre, and why *Hunger* should become the new handbook for every modern girl (and yes, boys, too) looking for the courage to pursue a life less ordinary. "Entertainment Monthly. On the page, Brownstein comes across as funny, charming, self-deprecating and self-aware." "Willamette Week" It's Brownstein's ability to recount her decorous punk life that blazes through. It's as if she's sitting across from the reader sharing a friendly cup of coffee, bringing you up to speed on her latest musical adventures. "Slug Magazine" asks there anything [Brownstein] can't do and do brilliantly? "Cuepoint" From the Hardcover edition.

If you want me to tell you all about Sleater-Kinney, Riot Grrrl, and *Portlandia*...I can't. I know nothing about any of these topics. I know that S-K were a band (and are, as they've reformed), and I have heard the term "Riot Grrrl" thrown around in books about music in the Nineties. And *Portlandia* is some show that I've heard of only in passing. So maybe I'm not the ideal audience for this book...but then again, maybe I am. "Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl," by Carrie Brownstein, was the subject of a review on the Onion's AV Club that I came across recently. The review piqued my interest in a book written, admittedly, by a musician whose work was (and still is) unknown to me. In much the same way that I let curiosity steer me towards Questlove's memoir without really knowing much about the Roots, I found myself interested in reading this book even though I was in the dark about Sleater-Kinney or Brownstein's other endeavors. For a non-fan, this is actually a really interesting, enjoyable book. The subject is not so much Brownstein's life (though it is the main thrust of it) as it is creativity, and her search for artistic fulfillment and meaning. Having a voice, having something to say, is the noblest reason to pursue artistic success, and Brownstein shows that she found that voice and that message through her work inside and outside of music. She shines a light on the music scene in the Northwest circa 1992, when Nirvana was hitting big and any band with a Seattle zip code and a wardrobe of flannel could find success (even though S-K, according to her, always remained on the margins of commercial success, they did find a rabid fan base that exists to this day). She also addresses the sexism that rock music has ingrained within it (reading some of the reviews S-K got that she includes in the book is cringe-worthy, even from the journalists who meant well). This memoir might be written for the S-K fan, but even non-fans like me can find their way through without too much of a map to navigate the various ups and downs of the band's history. I may not be the go-to guy on Sleater-Kinney or Carrie Brownstein's other projects, but that



doesn't mean I can't enjoy her memoir. And I will likely be checking out S-K in the near future.

Without seeing Carrie Brownstein on a television talk show, I can guarantee my Kindle library list would never included "Hunger Makes Me a Modern Woman:A Memoir." However, seeing her guest appearance on theLate Night Show with Stephen Colbert revealed Brownstein as an intelligent, funny, articulate woman that I wanted to know more about. I am not a musician; I detest punk rock; know very little about the girl bands and the indie musical movement in the Northwest begun in the 1990s. Sure, I was familiar with the names Nirvana and Kurt Cobain, but that was the extent of my knowledge about the world of Carrie Brownstein, guitarist for the all-girl band Sleater-Kinney. I had never even heard of a band by that name, or the many other bands she mentions throughout her book. However, as I read this memoir, I became impressed and fascinated by her vocabulary and use of language. As a reader I connected more with her sharing herself as an avid reader, her disfunctional home life, and her deep introspection as she searched to understand herself: where she had been and where she was going. The string of evidently "well-known" bands and individual artists within this genre meant nothing to me. Yet, I found her word smithing compelling and most intriguing. For that reason, this book is worth reading. I never glimpsed the total woman I saw on the talk show, but saw glimmers of her here and there. The work certainly burst my stereotypical vision of punk rockers and busting stereotypes is always a good thing. I would love to see Brownstein pursue a literary career; if her use of language could keep me reading through all the material in this book that completely disinterested me, just imagine how enjoyable she could make a good fictional story!

I'm not sure I can be objective as I am a long time Carrie Brownstein fan and this book did everything for me I could have dreamed. Barely a mention of Portlandia? Perfect! She's done a ton of press about it and what more is there to say? LOTS of juicy info about her love life which is so immature of me to be excited about but I don't care. I had such a severe rock star crush on her in my youth and the fact that she was so cagey about her sexuality for so long (and who could blame her, most people do NOT want that picked apart) that to get the full story was so exciting to 20 year old me. And finally, to know the details of the recordings of my favorite albums of all time is just something I hope everyone who loves a band can experience when their fave band's fave member writes a biography! As for the writing, it is concise and straight forward, which was a relief, I feared it might be too flowery or pretentious. She tells many great, descriptive anecdotes from her whole life which pull you in. She's an awkward goofy weirdo, much more so than her public persona usually

allowed (especially before Portlandia) and it made her much more endearing than I expected. I will say that this book is definitely of the "middle class white girl problems" genre so if you aren't a fan of her music and you feel like you've read enough of these kinds of stories, maybe skip it.

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Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl: A Memoir  
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