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Rock Stars of David

After spending more than three decades capturing rock 'n' roll's biggest names on film, photojournalist Janet Macoska publishes a new coffee-table book that celebrates the role of Jewish musicians in building an American cultural phenomenon.

Katie Kuehn



Janet Macoska

Janet Macoska fell in love with the Beatles at age 10. She became obsessed with her parents' Kodak camera a year later, and her first published photo appeared in *Teen Screen* magazine when she was 13.

From then on, there was never any question about what she wanted to do with her life.

"If you cut my veins, I bleed rock 'n' roll," says the Cleveland photojournalist whose work has appeared in *Rolling Stone*, *People* and *Vogue* and at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. She recently released her first coffee-table book. But it's not the career retrospective you might expect.

Instead, it's a hardcover called *Jews Rock! A Celebration of Rock and Roll's Jewish Heritage* that's filled with photographs of Jewish musicians who have contributed to the evolution of the genre, and some of the musicians on that list may surprise you. As

Macoska explains, "Changing your name was a necessity in mainstream pop and rock music."

Chaim Witz and Robert Zimmerman — better known as Gene Simmons of Kiss and Bob Dylan, respectively — are two of the 68 artists featured in the book. Macoska is currently selling it online to raise funds for an exhibition she hopes to take on the road later this year.

It all began as a collection of photographs of Jewish rock stars that Macoska assembled upon the suggestion of one of her customers. But once she began her research, she realized there was more to the tale than just images.

"A fascinating part of the story is why someone had to give up being Jewish or keep it a secret to be a rock star," she says.

The book coincides with the rising Jewish practice of identifying with other Jews, explains Rabbi Brian Leiken of Temple Shalom in Norwalk, Conn., a Shaker Heights native who wrote the book's forward. "It gives people a certain amount of pride," he adds. "And this uncovers that."

Macoska, who calls herself a "lapsed Catholic," says you don't have to be Jewish to appreciate the human connection illustrated by her book.

"When we can point to one of our heroes and say 'Wow, he's like us!' it makes us feel better about ourselves," she says. "It makes us feel a part of it."

For more information, visit jewsrock.net.

Pop (Culture) Quiz

Which of the pop and rock musicians below do you think appear in Macoska's book? (*Hint: The ones who don't were raised Catholic.*)

- 1 Piano man and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee **Billy Joel**
- 2 "Straight Up" singer and current American Idol judge **Paula Abdul**
- 3 "Girls Just Wanna' Have Fun" and "Time After Time" singer **Cyndi Lauper**

4 Multiplatinum solo artist and the better half of Wham! **George Michael**

5 E Street Band leader and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee **Bruce Springsteen**

Answers: Billy Joel, Paula Abdul and George Michael.