



In Heaven Everything Is Fine: The Unsolved Life of Peter Ivers and the Lost History of New Wave Theatre

By Josh Frank

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In the late '70s and early '80s, *Saturday Night Live* and *National Lampoon* were leading a comedy renaissance, while punk and new wave turned the music world on its head. At the nexus was the underground, cable-access show *New Wave Theatre*, hosted by the visionary Peter Ivers. Pre-MTV, the show forged a groundbreaking union between comedy and punk, placing comedians like John Belushi, Chevy Chase, and Harold Ramis onstage with Black Flag, the Dead Kennedys, and Fear. On the cusp of mainstream recognition, *New Wave Theatre* came to a sudden end on March 3, 1983 when Ivers was found beaten to death in his downtown Los Angeles loft. The show was forgotten, but Ivers's influence on pop culture has lasted. A magnetic creative force, his circle included Doug Kenney, Jello Biafra, David Lynch, Ramis, and Belushi. He was also a fascinating musician: in addition to composing the centerpiece song on the soundtrack of Lynch's cult classic film *Eraserhead*, Ivers recorded seven albums. Josh Frank's research inspired renewed interest in Ivers, and the abandoned murder investigation was reopened. Through his narration and interviews with the LAPD and those close to Ivers, Frank brings this underappreciated and compelling creative figure to life.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

On March 3, 1983, Peter Ivers was found murdered in his loft on skid row in L.A. When Ivers died, much of the history of his experimental television show, *New Wave Theatre*, went with him. In this frustrating book that is part detective story and part pop history, screenwriter and producer Franks awkwardly weaves interviews with Ivers's many friends and associates—from Harold and Anne Ramis to Paul Michael Glaser (*Starsky & Hutch*)—into his chronicle of Ivers's life. Franks recreates the thriving theater and music scene in New York and L.A. in the late 1970s and early 1980s as he traces Ivers's move from the *Harvard Lampoon* to his work with David Lynch. Ivers's most brilliant moment came with the creation of *New Wave Theatre*, which brought together comedy and punk music in a new way, featuring acts from the Dead Kennedys, Black Flag and the Circle Jerks alongside Beverly D'Angelo and John Belushi. Because it tries to cover so much material—Ivers's unsolved murder, the history of *New Wave Theatre*—it fails to cover any of it effectively; nevertheless, it provides a new look into a now mostly forgotten moment of pop culture. (Aug.) ""

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From [Booklist](#)

Peter Ivers never quite entered the pop-cultural mainstream, though he influenced such contemporaries and friends who did as National Lampoon cofounder Doug Kenney, John Belushi, and David Lynch, who called on Ivers to write "In Heaven (The Lady in the Radiator Song)" for his reputation-making cult-movie *Eraserhead*. Ivers presaged punk rock with his Peter Peter Ivers Band (later just the Peter Ivers Band), formed after drifting out of the fatally overhyped late-1960s rock group Beacon Street Union. He is probably best remembered as host of *New Wave Theatre*, a 1980s TV venture that progressed from an L.A.-based UHF channel to the USA cable network. On it he delivered zany stream-of-consciousness raps before and after clips of then-cutting-edge acts like Dead Kennedys and Circle Jerks. Proceeding via snippets from interviews with the likes of Chevy Chase and Steve Martin, Frank and Buckholtz describe Ivers' appeal and try to illuminate his mysterious bludgeoning death in 1983, a murder still unsolved. An appreciative look at a figure peripheral to a clutch of now-aging major stars. --Mike Tribby

Review

PRAISE FOR THE HARDCOVER

"The lost life of a groundbreaking musician and artist, murdered on the (possible) cusp of fame . . . Well-stocked with interviews and evidence—a respectful, understanding portrait." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"Peter used to sign off personal notes with the words 'All good things,' and that's what he was. His life was an extraordinary gift and Josh Frank captures Peter's grace, talent, and incredible spirit with insight and compassion. The details and impact of his tragic death are offered in awful but compelling counterpoint, and this terrible contradiction continues to deeply affect all of us who knew and loved him, as it should anyone who reads the story of this remarkable man." —Harold Ramis, director, writer, and actor

"A must read for anyone who thinks that the L.A. subculture supported by true creativity and lack of monetary ambition ended in the sixties. Peter Ivers was the figurehead for a movement that burned through underground Los Angeles before the eighties—and his death—extinguished the flame. Josh Frank commits

to shining a light on this extraordinary man and his time, delivering an intricate thriller told through the voices of those who were there.” —Beverly D’Angelo, actress

“Surrounded by crazies, Peter Ivers faced the growing pains of a musical and social upheaval with a smile and aplomb. *In Heaven Everything Is Fine* is a transparent view into that world. Josh Frank’s interviews remind us of how many people we change a little while we are here.” —Spit Stix, former drummer for Fear

“Frank intersperses newly documented interviews to write an engrossing account. Overdue and highly recommended, this work assays a crucial era of popular culture history.” —*Library Journal*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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