



Encyclopedia Gothica

By Liisa Ladouceur

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Encyclopedia Gothica is a guide through that shadowiest of subcultures: modern Goths. It collects and defines more than 600 words and phrases used by these children of the night so that you too can engage in conversations about deathhawks and rivetheads and who is more u`bergoth: Bela Lugosi or Robert Smith. Compiled by acclaimed Goth journalist and poet Liisa Ladouceur, it gives readers insight into the unique vernacular of this fascinating community, describing in detail and with black humour the fashion, music, and lifestyle as well as sharing insider slang such as Baby Bat, Corp Goth and the Gothic Two-Step, and the first ever Goth Band Family Tree. From absinthe to zombies, it's the Encyclopedia Gothica!

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Editorial Review

Review

"A wickedly funny portrait of this community in black...If you're the sort who gives out gifts on Hallow's Eve, *Encyclopedia Gothica* is ideal for babybats and elder goths who'll appreciate the wealth of reminders of the experiences that make up goth life." —*NOW Magazine* (October 2011)

"We knew that we were going to like this book from the very first page. . . . Ladouceur is a rare gem of a commenter that has the ability not only to laugh at herself, but to be able to get you to laugh at yourself too." —www.HoustonPress.com (October 2011)

"Ladouceur has compiled a thorough and amusing encyclopedia about all-things-Goth . . . Whether you want to read about Nosferatu, Goth Juice or mall Goths you'll find brief and truly informative segments in *Encyclopedia Gothica*." —www.AntiMusic.com

"*Encyclopedia Gothica*, contrary to what you might think of goth culture, doesn't take itself too seriously. Just the opposite: Ladouceur's humour is a welcome rarity in an oft-misunderstood subculture." —*Maclean's* (November 2011)

"For those who continue to fear Goths, this book is a powerful antidote. Despite their spiky, menacing exterior, *Encyclopedia Gothica* details a culture as harmless and geeky as your average Star Wars fanboy or Kiss Army foot soldier." —*National Post* (November 2011)

"Anyone who identifies as a Goth but wishes that people would stop asking what that means now has a book that they can point people to. Including illustrations from the talented Gary Pullin, *Encyclopedia Gothica* is the essential Goth reference whether you're wondering who Sisters of Mercy are or what absinthe is (and why Marilyn Manson has his own brand of the green stuff)." —www.GeeksOfDoom.com

About the Author

Liisa Ladouceur is a music and culture journalist. She writes a music column for *Rue Morgue* magazine and can be heard on the weekly all-horror podcast on Rue Morgue Radio. She has been recognized as a Goth expert on numerous television programs and hosted the 2010 Gothic Toronto literary event at the Luminato Festival. **Gary Pullin** is an illustrator and the art director for *Rue Morgue* magazine. They both live in Toronto.

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What Is "What Is Goth"?

Ask a Goth person "What is Goth?" and they'll likely tell you, "I'm not Goth." Which is a sure sign that they

are, in fact, 666 Goth. If you find this confusing, this book is for you. If this makes perfect sense, this book is for you — but it is also about you.

It's no wonder that the G-word perplexes both insiders and on-lookers alike. This one hard-working four-letter word has been asked to define so many things: music, fashion, architecture, typefaces, literature, cinema, a Germanic tribal horde and, for about 30 years now, the kind of people prone to hanging out in graveyards sipping red wine and pretending it's blood while reading Shelley aloud and contemplating the bleakness of existence (and/or holing up in their bedrooms with Joy Division records). At least that's who one might think a Goth person is by the way we are most often portrayed in news reports and the kind of articles that pop up around Halloween or whenever a teenager wearing a black T-shirt shoots someone.

I say "we" here because I am, unabashedly, Goth.

I wasn't born that way, a daughter of darkness. But it didn't take much. In fact it took exactly 4 minutes and 20 seconds of television. MuchMusic, then the Nation's Music Station in Canada, had just come to my area and, being obsessed with popular music, I watched every day after school. And on one afternoon in the late 1980s Much played "She Sells Sanctuary" by a British band I didn't know, The Cult. Like most videos of the era, it was a simple performance clip, the band lip-synching and fake-playing in a studio — in this case one bathed in psychedelic coloured lights. It's not, viewed today, particularly Goth. (Singer Ian Astbury is dressed like a hippie and guitarist Billy Duffy has short white blond hair, to start.) But its opening moments — a red curtain parts to reveal a shadowy, Shaman-type figure all in black slowly swirling his hands around in a fog — hypnotized me like nothing I'd seen before. And the song itself — with its incessant drumbeat, intoxicating echoey guitar riffs and infectiously simple, haunting refrain about the world dragging us down was my first exposure to something that bombastically melodramatic. I knew melancholy from poetry, but this was ache you could dance to. For me, being exposed to "She Sells Sanctuary" was like getting a blood transfusion: I woke up afterwards and my insides were completely different. I had a totally new pulse.

After The Cult came The Cure. And Love and Rockets and Bauhaus and The Sisters of Mercy and Siouxsie and everything else I could get my hands on in a small town, pre-internet. A random photo of three scary looking guys in a free magazine turned me on to Skinny Puppy, and from them came the discovery of industrial music. By this point, I had moved to Toronto, knew the word "Goth," and was well on my way to exploring everything that meant. Ultimately, I started publishing my own fanzine (*The Ninth Wave*, named after an album side by Kate Bush) and guest co-hosting a campus radio show, Beyond the Gates of Hell, with the Gothiest boy in town. It was about this time that I started being asked, "What is Goth?" A lot. Especially by the media.

On many occasions I primed for evening news cameras or wayward reporters and tried my best to explain what the hell all this was. I would declare how we are not (all) suicidal or satanic, speak haughtily of a love for poetry and philosophy and beauty and romance, trying my best to convey, in a way that just might make it into the inevitably truncated soundbite, just what is Goth.

I was, of course, doomed.

Since it first crawled out of the clubs of England and America in the death throes of the 1970s, the subculture we've come to call Goth has been difficult to explain. At the start, these denizens of the night were known as batcavers or death rockers, the music was generally considered part of post-punk and the clothes were simply ... black. Mystery lingers over who first appropriated the word "Goth" to describe this new kind of young freak; my beloved Ian Astbury (one of those Goth icons who insists he's not Goth at all) is just one who has staked his claim to it.

By the mid-1980s, the G-word was well established, and a collective consciousness evolved around the

term. Gothic rock was a legit musical genre. There were Goth-specific shops, Goth magazines and Goth festivals. Goth was now a somewhat recognizable thing, a world of Victorian- or Medieval-inspired sense and sensibilities co-mingling with punk rock and S&M attitude and fashion. And the diverse crew of anarchists, art school brats and horror movie fans who had started it seemed to have been distilled into a fairly homogenous bunch — one quite easy to identify. Or so we thought. Thanks to explosion of the internet in the mid-1990s these people — many of them misfits in small towns around the globe — started to find each other in great numbers. And as they chatted amongst themselves, they discovered that as much as they were all drawn to what had come to be known as Goth, they weren't necessarily alike. A popular question became, "Is [this thing I like/hate] Goth?" Because, like any good species seeking immortality, the subculture was mutating, drawing upon new influences such as cyberpunk, rave culture and anime and finding new ways of expressing a devotion to the dark side beyond black eyeliner and backcombed hair. The different factions named themselves: rivetheads, Cybergoths, Romantigoths, etc. Each new wave brought their own codes of conduct and methods of communication. For the one thing these sub-groups had in common was that each sought to distinguish itself from the others, and from youth culture trends at large. And so, Goths reevaluated what the G-word meant, twisting it into new variations to suit the bewildering number of subgenres and sub-subgenres, so much so that terms such as Trad Goth emerged to distinguish the oldschool original folk from the new.

Users Review

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