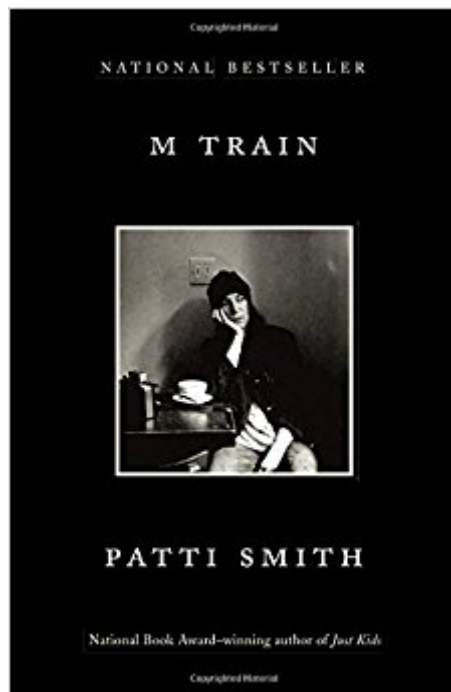


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# M Train



## Synopsis

National Bestseller  
Featuring a new postscript including five new photos from Patti Smith  
From the National Book Award-winning author of *Just Kids*: an unforgettable odyssey of a legendary artist, told through the cafés and haunts she has worked in around the world. It is a book Patti Smith has described as “a roadmap to my life.” *M Train* begins in the tiny Greenwich Village café where Smith goes every morning for black coffee, ruminates on the world as it is and the world as it was, and writes in her notebook. Through prose that shifts fluidly between dreams and reality, past and present, we travel to Frida Kahlo’s Casa Azul in Mexico; to the fertile moon terrain of Iceland; to a ramshackle seaside bungalow in New York’s Far Rockaway that Smith acquires just before Hurricane Sandy hits; to the West 4th Street subway station, filled with the sounds of the Velvet Underground after the death of Lou Reed; and to the graves of Genet, Plath, Rimbaud, and Mishima. Woven throughout are reflections on the writer’s craft and on artistic creation. Here, too, are singular memories of Smith’s life in Michigan and the irremediable loss of her husband, Fred “Sonic” Smith. *M Train* is a meditation on travel, detective shows, literature, and coffee. It is a powerful, deeply moving book by one of the most remarkable multiplatform artists at work today.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“This book is brilliant. A poetic, energetic search for the secret links between life and

art and coffee. Henning Mankell “An eloquent and a deeply moving elegy for what she has lost and cannot find, but can remember in words. The New York Times “Elegiac, melancholic, and meditative, filled with wistful flashbacks and haunting Polaroid snapshots. NPR “Begins in a tiny Greenwich Village cafe and ends as a dream requiem to the same place, encompassing an entire lost world. . . . Yet despite all of these losses, there is extraordinary joy here. . . . Readers who share in Smith’s transcendent pilgrimage may find themselves reborn within the pages of this exquisite memoir. The Washington Post “Weaves poetry, dreams, art, literature, and conversational fragments into a phantasmagoric, atmospheric, and transportive whole. . . . Brilliant. . . . Where Just Kids concerned Smith’s hopefulness, hunger, callowness, and loss, M Train is about being lost and found. The Boston Globe “M Train is a great meditation on solitude, independence, age, a ride-along with the last Romantic standing. . . . Patti Smith inventories her inspirations, and makes her house out of the life lived, out of the love spent. USA Today “M Train comes near to accomplishing Marcel Proust’s goal to follow the workings of the human mind and the human heart. By the end of the book you know that nothing is everything, and that life is a labor of love. Harper’s Bazaar “[Smith] opens her extraordinary heart and soul to us, holding nothing back and never permitting vanity to intrude. It’s a gift, this record of beloved absences, to which one can only respond: thank you. O, The Oprah Magazine “M Train is an impressionistic weave of dreams, disasters, and epiphanies, a meditation on life and art by a woman who sees them as one. Rolling Stone “A sublime collection of true stories concerning irredeemable loss, memory, travel, crime, coffee, books, and wild imaginings that take us to the very heart of who Patti Smith is. Vanity Fair “Marvelous . . . M Train is a book of days, a year in the life, a series of reflections. . . . The message is that living is a kind of invocation, or better yet, a form of prayer. Los Angeles Times

Patti Smith is a writer, performer, and visual artist. She gained recognition in the 1970s for her revolutionary merging of poetry and rock. She has released twelve albums, including *Horses*, which has been hailed as one of the top one hundred albums of all time by *Rolling Stone*. Smith had her first exhibit of drawings at the Gotham Book Mart in 1973 and has been represented by the Robert Miller Gallery since 1978. Her books include *Just Kids*, a winner of the National

Book Award in 2010, *Waltz with Bash*, *Babel*, *Woolgathering*, *The Coral Sea*, and *Auguries of Innocence*. In 2005, the French Ministry of Culture awarded Smith the title of Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres, the highest honor given to an artist by the French Republic. She was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2007. Smith married the musician Fred Sonic Smith in Detroit in 1980. They had a son, Jackson, and a daughter, Jesse. Smith resides in New York City.

What sort of book is this? Nothing like "Just Kids." It's not exactly a memoir and certainly not an autobiography. I'd say more than anything it's a journal—some entries deal with recent events, some with events in the author's earlier life, and some describe her fantasies and dream life. So, what's it about? Certain themes occur and recur here—coffee, fascination with television police procedurals, foreign travel, and grief. The entries describe the life of an aging widow who lives alone with cats. The distinguishing traits of this person's journal and why it's eminently worth reading are her renown as a godmother of punk rock and, even more importantly, her tremendous facility with the written word. Furthermore, what kept me immersed in this journal were her descriptions of the books she read and re-read, many of which I feel we've shared.

I've been a fan of Patti's music, and poetry since her first album "Horses". I loved her book "Just Kids", and I own most of her poetry books. Seeing Patti perform is exciting, and she exudes a strange, exotic, sensuality on stage. So...I was so looking forward to "M Train." I felt that it took us on an uncomfortable excursion around the world visiting dead "Icons" she admired, including photos. Coffee, and detective shows were also a strong theme, and if you didn't watch these shows you wouldn't understand some of her passages. I wanted to know more about her life now, aside from visiting coffee shops. This book was not terrible, however, not her best. Sorry Patti. This book's title should have been titled "Eulogies".

I enjoyed "Just Kids," which had a central theme and interesting details. "M Train," by contrast, is one of the worst books I've recently read. The author nails the reason herself, ironically, in her repeated emphasis on the difficulty of writing when one doesn't have anything to write about. The result is a work filled with extraneous details, narrative drift, and excruciatingly boring self-absorption.

The only people in our book club who liked it were a couple of Patti Smith fans. To most of the others it wasn't worth reading. This book is the verbal equivalent of distracted doodles that a talented artist might make on a cocktail napkin. You know they were done by a great artist, but they are only doodles. Some liked portions of the prose; others thought the prose wasn't very compelling. We wondered: what's the point? Also: what were we thinking when we chose this book?

Patti Smith describes *M TRAIN* as a "book about nothing." That seems to be literally true. A lot of it traces the impulsive travels she takes, where she stopped to pray (she does a lot of praying), where she went for coffee, what TV shows she watched. If you're a huge Patti Smith fan I guess all the mundane details of her life would be fascinating. I'm not that big a fan and I found the book a bit hard to stay interested in. There were some interesting parts but I gave up about one-third through and I doubt I'll ever get much further.

This is a surprisingly compelling book. I have followed Smith's music and writings since the 1970s, and had the great fortune to meet her at the 2010 Miami Book Fair. I'm still unsure as to why I find her so intriguing. This is an unpretentious and often rambling book, dwelling frequently on what could only be considered the mundane activities of everyday life. But Smith somehow draws the reader in. Her trips abroad, largely brought about by literary quests, provide interesting insights into what she finds worthy. Interspersed with these episodes, Smith reveals the loss she felt subsequent to her husband's death, and what can only be described as her philosophy of life. In addition to the more serious stuff, one finds that she lives with three cats, drinks a lot of coffee and devotes considerable time to just thinking and writing. Like her previous book "Just Kids," this book is required reading for Smith fans and those wanting to get to know her better.

A fascinating, non-linear account of a true Renaissance woman. If you only know her as a musician you will be astounded, as I was, to know she is an author, poet and voracious, eclectic reader.

I don't admire this style of writing, a disjointed pouring forth of the writer's inner thoughts. It's quite different from her book about her years with Robert Mapplethorpe. The exception was her account of a hurricane that struck NYC. That I found effective and haunting. It's why I gave the book two stars rather than one.

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