

They Might Be Giants' Flood (33 1/3)

S. Alexander Reed, Philip Sandifer

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For a few decades now, They Might Be Giants' album *Flood* has been a beacon (or at least a nightlight) for people who might rather read than rock out, who care more about science fiction than Slayer, who are more often called clever than cool. Neither the band's hip origins in the Lower East Side scene nor *Flood*'s platinum certification can cover up the record's singular importance at the geek fringes of culture.

Flood's significance to this audience helps us understand a certain way of being: it shows that geek identity doesn't depend on references to Hobbits or Spock ears, but can instead be a set of creative and interpretive practices marked by playful excess-a flood of ideas.

The album also clarifies an historical moment. The brainy sort of kids who listened to They Might Be Giants saw their own cultural options grow explosively during the late 1980s and early 1990s amid the early tech boom and America's advancing leftist social tides. Whether or not it was the band's intention, *Flood*'s jubilant proclamation of an identity unconcerned with coolness found an ideal audience at an ideal turning point. This book tells the story.



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