



“Let Love Rule” by Lenny Kravitz with David Ritz-Reviewed by ‘Wale Irokosu for Renegade Book Club, Lagos. 11th February, 2023

“Lenny Kravitz Loves Lagos But Observed ‘Kiss Up, Kick Down’

“I loved Lagos. Still, there were attitudes I didn’t understand. I saw so-called upper class black employers treat their black servants sternly, even brutally. That threw me. As an American, I’d seen only whites treat Blacks like this. There was this one guy who had to sit at the front gate of a property in the glaring heat to manually operate the gate to let cars in and out. He would even sleep out there on the ground, to be ready whenever a car pulled up. When I asked the homeowner why he treated him like this, he arrogantly said, “He works for me. That’s his job.” Page 124

Unsurprisingly, Lenny Kravitz dedicated his excellent memoir, “Let Love Rule” to his mother, actress Roxie Roker. Best known for her role on "The Jeffersons. From the book, Roxie is the rock upon which Kravitz built an incredibly successful musical career. She, along with a supportive extended family, godmothers and "aunts" or more like the black entertainment aristocrats of the 70s which includes actress Cicely Tyson, Shauneille Perry, Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison and Diahann Carroll (married 4 times+ had a decade long affair with Sidney Poitier. Her 2008 memoir “The Legs Are the Last To Go” is worth reading. NY Post called it a bombshell) are Kravitz's secret weapon. In his words, “Their Black feminine energy is one of the reasons I've held on to my sanity through crazy times,” (Page 44-46).

Anyone from a diverse background would appreciate Kravitz’s analysis on it: “I am deeply two-sided: Black and white, Jewish and Christian, Manhattanite and Brooklynite”. He was Lenny in Manhattan and Eddie in Brooklyn. “My young life was all about opposites and extremes. As a kid, you take everything in stride. So, I accepted my Gemini soul. I owned it. In fact, I adored it. Yins and yangs mingled in various parts of my heart and mind, giving my life balance and fueling my curiosity, giving me comfort.” Kravitz revels in being a Gemini, the zodiac's master of contrast and contradiction. A rock’n’roll who doesn't drink and who believes fervently in Jesus Christ, he also goes through periods of major drug use (“I didn’t only learn how to get high but how to maintain my high”) and singing in a classical boys' choir. Rather than be confused by the contradictions, he feels galvanized by them.

Kravitz had a tumultuous relationship with his father, Sy Kravitz, who frequently criticizes him, is an overbearing disciplinarian, and ultimately sets a bad moral tone. Confronted by Roxie years into their marriage over a series of infidelities, Dad says little to his wife, but turns to his then-teenage son, coldly, and says, "You'll do it, too" and left (Page 188). One wonders if his father was defending his actions under the cover of the general belief that 'all men cheats'. It also begs the question: are men truly biological cheaters?

or men are biologically polygamist but repressed into monogamy?

It's worth noting that Kravitz does a nice job addressing the grey areas of the human psyche. On several occasions, his father gets Kravitz out of trouble, loans him money for a project without complaint, or is an otherwise positive force in his son's life. Kravitz had the kind of life where, even as his father yells at him to focus more on school and less on music, legendary guitarist (and houseguest) Taj Mahal chimes in and tells the younger Kravitz he's right to focus on his music. It reminds one that no parent is 100% perfect or 100% useless. Children from broken homeless are particularly faced with this love and hate conflicting reality. Good life lesson or a life-time scar? Ultimately, he appreciated his father not running out on him and his similarities to a man he didn't want to emulate.

Kravitz revealed that he dated and was madly in love with Actress Tisha Campbell of Living Single. She was serious singer before acting. He even produced a track for her. He also described his vision of his love interest: "if I didn't pursue a lover, I wasn't turned on. I loved the ritual of seduction. I loved the chase, the conversation, the mental stimulation, the build up, the candle light, the music. I didn't want it just laid at my feet(page136)

Like the Beatles, whom he reveres along with the Jackson 5, he also had a strong inner confidence even in the career was floundering. Paul McCartney often referred to a "Bethlehem star" that kept the Beatles on track. For example, the fabs turned down the chance to release a likely hit written by someone else as their first single, and they wouldn't go to America until they had a number-one on the charts here. Kravitz, too, benefits from a confident inner voice that several times tells him to turn down lucrative, if imperfect,

deals- gutsy for a guy without much going on at the time. After an odd phase as Romeo Blue, he ultimately discards that fictional identity to remain true to his vision for himself as an artist.

He also benefits from his relationship with actress Lisa Bonet, already a star on "The Cosby Show" when Kravitz first meets her. She becomes his best friend, his muse, and ultimately his wife and the mother of their daughter, Zoe Kravitz. His first album, the 1989 classic "Let Love Rule," had a slow build at first, but it's his live performances that ultimately put it on the map and catapult him to fame. His hard work and dedication pay off, and Kravitz is gracious in sharing credit with many others. His memoir ends on an ominous note. It's as if the wealthy, successful, glowingly happy Kravitz-Bonet couple is celebrating their luck with first-class tickets in hand as they walk up the gangplank of the Titanic. "My difficulties...were not behind me," Kravitz recalls of his 24-year-old self on the very last page of Let Love Rule. "They were all in my future." To be continued.

It's probably not a spoiler to reveal that Bonet and Kravitz divorce a few years after this volume ends. However, they manage to return to the place where they began: as very good friends.

Lenny Kravitz's intelligence, introspection, and dedication to emotional truth will make a good read in the next volume chronicling an amazing life. There are definitely some highs and lows to reveal in part two. Fortunately, he has the talent and perspective to examine and share that story with grace and maturity.

On the flip side, the book has no table of content and index. This doesn't aid easy referencing of the book. Still, a great read as the chapters are small and in an easily digestible form.