



## New York Calling: From Blackout to Bloomberg

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“Anyone who knew New York in the 1970s knows it was a different city from that of today. *New York Calling* is like a Rough Guide to a city receding into a dim past but now brought startlingly, evocatively to life by the amazing group of writers assembled by Marshall Berman and Brian Berger.”

—Francis Morrone, author of *The Architectural Guidebook to New York City*

New York City in the 1970s was the setting for *Taxi Driver*, *Annie Hall*, and *Saturday Night Fever*, the nightmare playground for *Son of Sam* and *The Warriors*, the proving grounds for graffiti, punk, hip-hop, and all manner of other public spectacle. Musicians, artists, and writers could subsist even in Manhattan, while immigrants from the world over were reinventing the city in their own image. Others, fed up with crime, filth and frustration, simply split.

Fast-forward three decades and today New York can appear a glamorous metropolis, with real estate prices soaring higher than its skyscrapers. But is this fresh-scrubbed, affluent city really an improvement on its grittier—and more affordable—predecessor? Taking us back to the streets where eccentricity and anomie were pervasive, *New York Calling* unlocks life in the unpolished Apple, where, it seemed, anything could happen. All five boroughs—the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island—comprising hundreds of neighborhoods and the interlaced worlds of politics, crime, drugs, sex, and mischief, are explored with a love of the city unclouded by romance yet undimmed by cynicism.

Acclaimed historian Marshall Berman and journalist Brian Berger gather here a stellar group of writers and photographers who combine their energies to weave a rich tale of struggle, excitement, and wonder. John Strausbaugh explains how Uptown has taken over Downtown, as Tom Robbins examines the mayors and would-be mayors who have presided over the transformation. Margaret Morton chronicles the homeless, while Robert Atkins offers a personal view of the city’s gay culture and the devastating impact of aids. Anthony Haden-Guest and John Yau offer insiders’ views of the New York art world, while Brandon Stosuy and Allen Lowe recount their discoveries of the local rock and jazz scenes. Armond White and Leonard Greene approach African-American culture and civil rights from perspectives often marginalized in so-called polite conversation.

Daily life in New York has its dramatic moments too. Luc Sante gives us glimpses of a city perpetually on the grift, Jean Thilmany and Philip Dray share secrets of Gotham’s ethnic enclaves, Richard Meltzer walks, Jim Knipfel rides the subways, and Robert Sietsema criss-crosses the city, indefatigably tasting everything from giant Nigerian tree snails to Fujianese turtles.

It’s a long way from old Brooklyn to the new Times Square. But *New York Calling* reminds us of what has changed—and what’s been lost —along the way.

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#### **Alexander Taylor:**

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