



# 4th of July, Asbury Park: A History of the Promised Land

*Daniel Wolff*

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The story of the boardwalk town Bruce Springsteen made famous-and a quintessential portrait of small-town American democracy.

When Bruce Springsteen called his first album Greetings from Asbury Park, he introduced a generation of fans to a fallen seaside resort town that came to represent working-class American life. But behind this archetypal small-town landscape lies a complicated past.

Starting with the town's founding as a religious promised land, music journalist and poet Daniel Wolff plots a course through 130 years of entwined social and musical history, touching on John Philip Sousa, Count Basie, Frank Sinatra, and Frankie Lymon on the way to the town Bruce was born to run from. Out of the details of local history-the boardwalk in the Gilded Age; the celebrities who passed through, from Stephen Crane to Martin Luther King; sensational murder trials; the birth of Mob control; and a devastating mid-century "race riot"-emerges a universal story of one small town's fortunes. Told with grace and full of fascinating detail, Daniel Wolff's tour across thirteen decades of the Fourth of July in Asbury Park captures all the allure and heartbreak of the American dream reduced to blight and decay, with gentrification as the one hope for a return to its glory days.

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