



SINCE it was first published in 1975, Greil Marcus's *Mystery Train* (Omnibus, 304 pages, £12.95) has been the touchstone for theoretical writing on rock and roll. Now in its third revised edition, it remains a work of remarkable erudition and singular vision, pulling together some of the primal forces of American rock and setting them in a context – and lineage – that includes Melville, Leslie Fielder's *Love And Death In The American Novel* and the myth of Stagger Lee, the hoodlum everyman that stalks the music of black America. Like Marcus's other major work, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of The 20th Century*, it sometimes overreaches itself, but it does remind you of how potent the best popular music can be.