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Revenge of the She-Punks: A Feminist Music History from Poly Styrene to Pussy Riot

Vivien Goldman
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Music journalist and professor Vivien Goldman was at the moshy, grotty heart of the 1970s and 1980s punk scene, working, playing, and even recording with other musicians. Her extensive firsthand knowledge is combined with two years of interviews to flesh out the riotously entertaining feminist music history *Revenge of the She-Punks*.

In addition to punk, the book covers reggae, hip hop, and experimental music, among other styles. What connects its spirited artists across their disparate genres is their fight for artistic and financial autonomy. Goldman's tart, artfully worded commentary about the Svengalis and misogynists who plague the music industry makes this a rollicking klaxon call to honor these exciting musicians.

Chapters explore themes of personal identity, money, and protest. They are headlined with auditory introductions in the form of playlists. From UK post-punkers the Au Pairs to more contemporary musicians like the Texas Chicana band Fea, the featured musicians express ideas that loom large in women's lives, including poverty, rape, children, and relationships.

The uniting theme is the struggle for independence and equity. She-punk pioneers recall battles with a boys' club music industry where power was centralized in a few gatekeepers' hands. Many of these musicians now enjoy career renaissances in a more independent music scene where they can carve out careers through social media. As Goldman points out, though, feminist musicians only thrive in countries where women's rights are the cultural norm. Whole swaths of Asia, Africa, and South America are represented by lone feminist musicians, with others having been shut down by government and religious actions.

She-Punks is a vibrant and inspiring introduction to feminist music history that invites more scholarship and music making. It is also a reminder of how lucky it is to live in a country where women's lives, rights, and self-expression are valued, even when there is still room for improvement.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (May/June 2019)

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