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Vacant: A Diary Of The Punk Years 1976-1979



Synopsis

Punk was born in the World's End, King's Road, London. Nils and Ray Stevenson were present from the very beginning of the movement. Ray's photographs and Nils's candid 1976-1979 diaries seek to recreate punk's first flurry and chaotic growth. The book looks at the instigators: Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood; Sue Catwoman; and Jordan. It follows the Sex Pistols on their UK tour and Siouxsie and The Banshees, The Stranglers, The Clash and X-Ray Specs as they set out to annihilate the tedium of the 1970s scene.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A nice addition to the recent explosion of books on punk. With the loverly image of young Sue Catwoman gracing the cover (a cool parody of "Vogue" magazine), you know the publishers are appealing to those already in the know about UK punk. Brothers Nils and Ray Stevenson were chroniclers of this demi-monde, now over twenty years old, and in their words and pictures capture the era. Color and b/w photos abound, with glorious portraits of all the guilty parties, from the usual suspects like Johnny R, Sid, Siouxsie, & Poly Styrene, to the fringe characters like Debbie Wilson, Linda the dominatrix and Helen Wellington-Lloyd. Nils' diary entries start February 1976 and close August '80 (hanging out with the Banshees on a California beach). In between comes all the mayhem, the excitement, and the wonderful creative, anarchic energy that is true punk rock. Look how young they all are! Sigh. It's amazing that these kids were between 16 and 20 years old and changed pop music so drastically. It's fun to read the contemporary handwritten comments written

about those days by the folks involved. You just know that their lives were forever altered by these couple years. There's a good intro that traces the roots of punk, from the mods and rockers of the sixties to the teddy boys of the early seventies to Malcolm's shop Sex. This book will go nicely on the shelf with "England's Dreaming," "Rotten," and "Blank Generation." It's not for the casual fan of punk, but for the true fan.

This book is an excellent photo journal of the early Britpunk era. As the writer was the early manager of Siouxsie and the Banshees, he has included many pics of Siouxsie, along with all the major people during the scene back then. I think this book is a good companion not to "Please Kill Me" (as a previous reviewer mentioned) but to Jon Savage's "England's Dreaming". I say this because Savage's book is all about the British punk scene during the late 70's and he talks about all of the people who appear in photo form (and write their own little notes) in "Vacant"; "Please Kill Me" is really about the American punk scene which was totally different. I agree that Nils Stevenson's journal entries are a little disjointed and don't always connect with the photos being shown, but it doesn't seem to matter all that much because many of the people he mentions are pictured more than once in the book anyway. The quality of the photos, even the live concert shots, are exquisite. The still shots are crisp, with detail that makes them look like they were taken just yesterday. I definitely recommend this book for people interested in the early British punk scene; the photos alone are well-worth the price of the book!

This is a thoroughly enjoyable romp through the formative years of punk in the UK, courtesy of Nils' journal entries, and more importantly, through excellent photographs. In many ways this book makes the whole original punk scene/moment look not only incredibly avant garde, but also very disturbingly beautiful and innocent (in a deranged way of course--excluding the junkie tendencies of many of the characters...). My only complaint is that I wish the book were a bit meatier text-wise. The photos compensate for this slightness in text--candid, unstaged photos of Johnny Rotten, Siouxsie et.al. in all their shock glamor splendor.

This book is a great one if you're into the '77 sound of the early British punk scene. It's a great companion to the Punk magazine book and "Please Kill Me." It seems to be a bit more honest than "Please Kill Me" and less pretentious also (though I still enjoy "Please Kill Me"). The photographs that accompany the text of the diary are great and really show the spirit from the hip attitude that punk music and art had at the time. I would recommend this book for young kids first getting into

punk as a primer on the who's who, and also to old timers to get a glipse at their long loved heroes.

If you are into the punk years you MUST have this book. Period. Written and photographed by authors who hung out with the punk legends the photos and commentary are precious. Imagine camera phones existed in the '70s. You were hanging out with Sid, Johnny, Siouxsie, Billy Idol, the Clash, etc.. You took dozens of candid pictures out on the street, in clubs or friend's flats. These are the kinds of photos you get here. Precious. Irreplaceable. The commentary narrates the history of the punk movement firsthand from the very beginning. There are stories and anecdotes about these people who created punk. The authors were right there, friends with these legends. Nothing more to say.

Wow what a book. I once had a scary pet rock that had a mohawk. It brought me back two decades.

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