



Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk

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A *Time Out* and *Daily News* Top Ten Book of the Year upon its initial release, *Please Kill Me* is the first oral history of the most nihilist of all pop movements. Iggy Pop, Danny Fields, Dee Dee and Joey Ramone, Malcom McLaren, Jim Carroll, and scores of other famous and infamous punk figures lend their voices to this definitive account of that outrageous, explosive era. From its origins in the twilight years of Andy Warhol's New York reign to its last gasps as eighties corporate rock, the phenomenon known as punk is scrutinized, eulogized, and idealized by the people who were there and who made it happen.

Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk Details

Date : Published April 13th 2006 by Grove Press (first published 1996)

ISBN : 9780802142641

Author : Legs McNeil , Gillian McCain

Format : Paperback 452 pages

Genre : Music, Nonfiction, History, Punk



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Noel says

I absolutely inhaled this. Legs' view is that punk was a strictly American phenomenon with its roots in The Doors, The Velvet Underground, The MC5, & The Stooges, and that the British got it completely wrong and basically killed the movement. And he presents that argument well.

Pretty much everyone in the book appears to be exactly what I already thought:

- * Jim Morrison was often drunk and frequently terrible live, and wrote really bad high school-grade poetry.
- * David Bowie was a rather uptight guy until he fell in with the New York crowd.
- * The MC5 were phony revolutionaries, using it as a marketing gimmick.
- * Lou Reed is not, as you will see constant reference to, a scat-munching asshole. No, Lou Reed is a scat-munching douche.
- * Patti Smith was a truly creepy girl with a tenuous grip on reality, who stalked the stars of the underground scene until they invited her in. (OK, I didn't know that before, but FUUUUUUUUck!)
- * Everybody was SO. FUCKED. UP. I can't BELIEVE that more of them did not die...
- * Almost everyone in the NY punk scene turned tricks at one time or another to make ends meet.
- * Musicians are assholes, or so goes the refrain from the label A&R guy that signed a lot of these bands.
- * Of course, so are label execs.
- * Despite being just as fucked up, selfish, and self-absorbed as everyone else in the book Iggy Pop is the only guy that comes out looking good. I'm not even that much of a fan, but it's hard to hate Iggy.

So, highly recommended, is what I'm getting at here...

Michael Jandrok says

Sometime in the late 1960s, a bad mojo was beginning to well up within the ranks of the flower power movement. There were quite a few disaffected outsiders that seemed to have figured out that the revolution was not destined to last, that it was in fact quickly becoming a sham. As corporate America began to swallow and repackage the 60s, some of the folks left behind by the peace and love generation began to vent their anger and shape a new vision. Proto-punk bands like the MC5 and The Stooges started to build upon the foundation that had been laid by the Velvet Underground. Their music was raw and violent in it's presentation, sonically threadbare and unpretentious. By the mid-1970s, a true scene began to happen in New York City that would serve to galvanize and give a true voice to this disaffected generation, a scene that would take it's cues directly from the violent and sleazy underground that it dwelled in.

Co-author Legs McNeil was a founding member of the seminal fanzine that helped give the nascent scene it's name and identity. "Punk" magazine was truly a groundbreaker, giving vital press to bands who would have otherwise gotten precious little exposure in the mainstream rock fanzines.

"Please Kill Me" covers New York punk from its birth in the mid-60s at Andy Warhol's Factory all the way to its eventual death in the late 70s, as corporate America once again begins to catch the wave and numerous members of the original first wave of punk begin to burn out from the excessive and dangerous lifestyles that they embraced. McNeil and co-author Gillian McCain present their material in the form of interviews with a

vast number of the people who were there on the front lines, experiencing and inventing the punk scene as it developed. Johnny Thunders, Iggy Pop, Debbie Harry, The Ramones, Richard Hell, Danny Fields....they are all heard from here along with a host of groupies, drug dealers, hookers, agents and managers, club owners, and other scene hangers-on.

Overall, it's a great book, and the interview format really works well. The book is worth its price just on the strength of the Iggy stories alone, but there is a ton of great source material here covering a lot of ground. It's a weighty tome at 500+ pages, but it reads fast and the stories never drag. I might have wished for a slightly larger photo section, but that's a minor gripe at best.

Readers must make note that this book covers primarily the development of 1970s-era New York punk, with a side detour to England to witness the birth of the Sex Pistols and British punk. Punk did indeed die at the end of the 70s, and it has of course been resurrected and reinvented by succeeding generations. But if you want to know where the whole thing began, you have to get this book.

Coda: I pulled this out to reread it after I had recently made my way through Mickey Leigh's "I Slept With Joey Ramone." The distillation of New York punk rock is made crystal clear in these interviews. That so many subcultures could coalesce to create the movement was a small miracle in and of itself. The music itself was almost secondary to the boiling vat of street poets and posers and prostitutes and junk dealers (and users) that populate these pages. Add to that stew the burgeoning LGBT movement and it was the perfect setup for raw, uncompromising, real music made at ground level. The stuff that came later, like hardcore and crossover and grunge.....all of that owes a debt to these misfits that dared to compose a musical statement of what their lives were really like. Don't get me wrong, I love a ton of the music and artists that came after....but this was the true genesis, the bedrock foundation from which sprang all manner of wayward spawn. This is one of the few truly essential books on punk rock that you should own if you have any interest at all in the subject. Tell 'em that Iggy sent ya.

matt says

As an avid reader (and subsequent loather) of "punk rock" history, I was excited to get into this. And although I didn't get exactly what I was looking for, it's certainly worth a read for those who can stomach it.

I can't claim to not like oral histories having only previously read the "People's Oral History" by Zinn which is a blood orange compared to Wayne Kramers' red delicious. That being said, I found this book far too gossipy and "sceney" making me think that cliques in music existed long before the internet came and quantified it for the world to see/read. You fucked Johnny thunders? Great! He vomited on your couch!!? NO WAY!

For those who want the shortened version, I'll sum it up. Patti Smith was a delusional bitch. Lou Reed had tons of gay sex and was mean to everyone. Dee Dee Ramone was a prostitute and hated the rest of his band. The Dead Boys and The Heartbreakers did a lot of drugs. Iggy Pop manipulated people for smack. The New York Dolls were popular for a year, tops. MC5 were sexist and full of shit. A few people OD'ed, and the Sex Pistols came along and ruined the fun for everyone.

Sound good? Kind of. But a few major gripes here. This book, first and foremost should be about the history of NEW YORK punk. Or "people Legs McNeil was friends with." It is embarrassing that the Talking Heads were completely excluded from this because the writers thought that they were "yuppies." How you can talk

about Blondie, Television and Patti Smith and completely leave out David Byrne (for better or worse) to me seems ludicrous. It's the same with the British movement. Malcolm McLaren is of course given his due here but the raging prejudice put against the UK bands ("The Damned were posers! The Clash didn't know what they were talking about!") seems more like territorial squabbling than actual criticism.

Perhaps this book serves as an interesting antidote to the idea that it was "better in the old days" although I'm sure that the author (and the few that survived) probably believes otherwise. It certainly doesn't seem that way. Too many knife fights and junkies shooting up in the bathroom, thanks. Yes, Iggy might have been electrifying rolling around in glass but nihilism, as it turns out, isn't all its cracked up to be.

Nate says

One of the most purely entertaining books I've ever read. I can't count how many times I've read this book, whether it's cover to cover or just skimming through for particularly hilarious/bizarre/noteworthy parts. I love all of the 70s New York bands and artists that get covered in this book, so this definitely fulfills the role of the historical retrospective and sated all of the curiosity I had about the era. The other awesome facet of this book is the pure lurid and gross realism of the stories held within. The oral history format basically makes it one long interview with all of the luminaries, bystanders, groupies, industry people, etc. that were around at the time. Some of the stories and scenes in this book are just stunning. Also, a funny thing I started to realize as I read this book is that I would have *fucking hated* most if not all of the people whose records I worship. Iggy, Bowie, Reed, the New York Dolls...these people were sleazy, self-obsessed, egomaniacal, pretentious drug addicted fucking assholes. I'm seriously struggling to remember a person interviewed in this book that comes out looking good...maybe Danny Fields? Even the people who weren't outright horrible human beings in this book still come off douchey (I love her records, but Patti Smith comes off as a pretty intolerably pretentious person). This isn't really relevant to the quality of the book, just more of a funny revelation of the kind of people that great artists can be and an example of the uncolored light this shines on the whole era. This book is everything you could want.

Dr. Detroit says

Along with Dave Marsh's "Before I Get Old," Ian Hunter's "Diary of a Rock N' Roll Star," and Tony Sanchez's "Up and Down With the Rolling Stones," "Please Kill Me" is right up there on the Mount Rushmore of Rawk Tales from the Naked City but if you come here in search of Malcolm McLaren, Sex Pistols, The Clash, Generation X, or The Stranglers, look away now.

Although, inevitably, there is a bit of overlap with old-school Brit punk, just beginning to take seed across the pond somewhere along this sordid timeline, Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain hit the ground running er, staggering, trying to explain out how two bands of proto-punks – MC5 and the Stooges – placed Detroit, a noisy nowhere land in mid-America, on the map forever.

It must have been something in the water around here or the charm and comfort of living in a place where music biz marketing trends and gimmicks are met with a wizened, cynical roll of the eyes. When punk did finally break out, the Detroit faithful had reason to shrug and ask, "What took you guys so long?"

In the end, (MC)five knockaround guys from the downriver shot-and-a-beer enclave of Lincoln Park just

weren't cut out for the revolution, or at least not manager, guru, and counterculture cause celebre John Sinclair's complicated, woefully misguided, and hopelessly naïve version of it, "dope, guns, and fucking in the streets" completely out of their wheelhouse. Well, the guns part of the equation at least. Their idea of liberation had more to do with smoking marijuana cigarettes, dropping acid, and playing on "10" as a means to an end: avoiding the path of least resistance to their birthrights as shop rats in the automobile factories which have sustained Detroit for most of the past century. The rest they just sort of fell into.

The Stooges...well who knows what the hell they were thinking, their stock in trade a big-bang, primordial collision of monosyllabic angst and convulsing, tribal rhythm that staked out a section of real estate entirely its own, oscillating between grey areas of alienation, tedium, and outright dementia, Iggy yammering, grunting, and howling like a feral cat on methamphetamine and human growth hormone. Plain and simple: they weren't fooling around.

But by early 1974 the band was done like dinner, Iggy facing down a motorcycle gang at the Michigan Palace, finger on the self-destruct button while dodging eggs, light bulbs, paper cups and worse, taunting them with, "You nearly killed me but you missed again, so you have to keep tryin' next week" his final comment to close a seven-year run. Only problem was there wasn't a next week.

From Detroit it's onward but not necessarily upward to the New York Dolls and the reputation of the toxically-charming Johnny Thunders as a pharmaceutical repository, most of the band so high they had to call NASA to find their heads. Big Apple dreamers, the band went to the edge of teen-beat stardom and looked down, content to lift a few drinks, crank a few chicks, and wreck a couple of hotel rooms. Anything greater would have been just too much hassle.

Thunders was monumentally talented, everything Keith Richards was supposed to be but often wasn't; chaotic, lurching, and with nothing else besides rock and roll to live for except...um...a bump of heroin. After the Dolls went belly up in Florida (of all places), Thunders and drummer Jerry Nolan rebounded with the Heartbreakers (not the Tom Petty outfit), equal parts genius and myth and perhaps the most thrilling and self-destructively drug-addled group of bad influences to ever congeal in one place, once again stalling at second-level stardom by willfully mismanaging their career and never quite getting their collective shit together enough to even come close to a follow-up to their killer-but-woefully-mixed debut album "L.A.M.F."

By the time the Ramones stumble out of Forest Hills, into CBGBs, and then hit the road on a 20-year bus ride across the U.S. and beyond (over 2,200 gigs in all), much of America was ripe for the picking. They just didn't know it yet. Their debut album, released when punk was overlapping disco, fell on deaf dimwit ears for the most part and for those of us who felt they may just change the world – if not the music biz – the failure of their sales to approximate the accolades or even get on the radio once in a while is still a stake through the heart of the 20-year-old that beats within my chest somewhere.

Anyone who's been following the plot knows things don't end well here, the entire New York scene going down in flames faster than The Clash after releasing "Sandinista!" but it's like rubber necking a multi-car pileup on I-75 North the Friday before Labor Day. It's impossible to look away.

Meredith says

i loved this book. i picked it up on a whim, thinking "hm, i don't really know enough about punk," and i

couldn't put it down. (which became amusing: what's LESS punk than opting out of a crazy fun party on a friday night to stay in and read a book about punk?)

the book is compiled entirely of excerpts from interviews with all the people who were involved in the New York punk scene. Leggs McNeil, the author, was one of the founders of *Punk!* magazine, and was actually the person who came up with the term 'punk' to begin with. the structure of the book is the best part; there isn't a single word added in by the authors. they took interviews over the years and then from them pieced together a chronological account of the evolution of punk from its origins in the mid-60s in the andy warhol scene with the velvet underground, up through the heyday of new york punk at CBGBs, and finally through to its meltdown as the music went corporate and everyone started dropping left and right from heroin addictions (on a side note, if you want a reason not to do smack, read this book and you'll be convinced).

it's like one long chat over coffee the night after an amazing show: just stories from everyone involved. gossip, sex, drugs, music, love, prostitution (dee dee ramone hustled guys! a fun fact for your next dinner party), fights, record deals... the whole 9. the interviewees include iggy pop, angie bowie, william burroughs, all the ramones, danny fields, bebe buell, patti smith, richard hell, and everyone you never knew was involved. you'll end up knowing all kinds of crap about punk, but mostly having loved the book.

Jessica says

I read most of this one night while working the graveyard shift at a very institutional group home in the real methy part of SE Portland. I was the only person awake and not severely mentally-ill in the whole building, except for the parole guys, who I was pretty sure were faking it, or at least greatly exaggerating. There were these big sliding glass doors where of course the methhead psychos lurking in the dark could watch me mopping, all lit up, but I couldn't see out, and most nights I'd be really on edge and ready to run for the parole guys' room if any of the scary noises I heard outside turned out to be some twisted someone smashing through the glass and grabbing my spleen as an ingredient to use in his basement meth lab.

Anyway, that one night I didn't have time to worry about getting chopped into pieces by violent, spun-out hicks, because I was too busy drinking Vanilla Coke after Vanilla Coke in the office, not mopping the place and absorbing (naturally) this very absorbing oral history of the seminal New York City punk scene. The best part by far -- and I wish I had my copy still, so I could quote directly -- was this description of Richard Hell, who'd rip all those holes in his shirt and then go around all moony-eyed and moaning, "Oh, poor me, my life is so hard, here I am, with all these holes in my shirt!" You'll have to find the book to get the actual verbatim, which is better phrased, but if you don't have time for the whole book (though you should make the time), that's the passage that brilliantly sums up the gist of that whole glorious punk rock movement.

From an educational standpoint, this book really made me appreciate the ladies who intervened in the years after the era it described. Not that things ever got great, but reading this paints a pretty horrifying picture, from a female perspective. With the exception of Patti Smith, and to some extent Debbie Harry, the early punk scene was pretty damn limiting if you were a woman. Basically if you were amazingly gorgeous you were Bebe Buell, and you were considered a "muse," which meant you'd pick some hot rock star and be a highly coveted, specialized, and respected version of what most of the other girls around seem to have been considered during this time, which was interchangeable fuck-hole groupies. It might've been worth it to see these bands live in their heyday at CBGB's, but I don't think being a lady hanging around that scene sounds very fulfilling. This book makes for an interesting contrast with his newer porn oral history, from a feminist perspective. I mean, I'd rather be Marilyn Chambers any day of the week than most of these punk chicks.

This is not to say it was bad for all of them, but that's one of the impressions this book left me with.

In any case, it's a great read, and anyone who cares at all about classic punk has doubtless read it already, or should have.

Lynx says

I've read this book many times before and will often pick it up and reread chunks here and there. It is simply the best book you will ever find on the birth of punk rock. Everyone who was in the scene adds fascinating, fun and often outrageous stories you won't find elsewhere. From musicians, poets, artists, groupies, friends, management.... Legs McNeil & Gillian McCain knew where to go to get the goods. Super informative and so much fun. Very highly recommend!

BAM The Bibliomaniac says

4.5 stars just not a 5 because I don't think a reread will affect me the same way

Little did I realize that the punk movement started as early as 1968 with the Velvet Underground and amphetamine usage. Thus begins Please Kill Me, a compilation of interviews with some of the most influential talent in the industry and on the streets through the early 90s. Photos throughout

The book is broken into chapters that follow a timeline that flow through music progression and drug prevalence. I'm seriously surprised more of these people didn't die during the early years, although many were dead by the re authorization.

The focus is on American punk, which, unbeknownst to me, is where the movement began, about fifteen years before England. There is a similar book on England's movement, and it is on my to-read list if anyone is interested. In this book only the Sex Pistols are discussed. I am ashamed to say that I've had to create a list of bands with whom I'm not familiar so I can Spotify the music.

These bands, except Patti Smith, were men, and were self-destructive. Their behavior was off the charts, but most were extremely artistic. How they attracted so many women in such a decrepit state is beyond me. I guess like attracts like.

This read was an absolute revelation. I'll never listen to music the same way.

Mike DaRonco says

Man, Lou Reed is such a dick.

Satyros Brucato says

There's a lot to like about this book. But is it a "definitive history of punk rock"? Fuck no. Not even close.

Although PLEASE KILL ME features tons of great material from the people who were there at Ground Zero

during the Factory and CBGBs scenes, I wound up fucking pissed at this book's contention that punk began with the Velvets and ended with the deaths of Sid Vicious and Johnny Thunders.

Bull fucking shit.

There was zero mention of the West Coast scene (which had already birthed the Runaways, Dead Kennedys Black Flag, Christian Death and X - among others - by the time Sid Vicious kicked it), the Washington scene (home of Bad Brains and Minor Threat, among many others) or the Australian scene (where Radio Birdman sounded like Television crossed with the Ramones before either band had released an album to influence them). Not even a nod to the Plasmatics, who were part of the same NYC underground, much less to the No Wave scene that produced Swans, Sonic Youth, Suicide and so forth. No Devo, no B-52s, no Grace Jones, not even a breath about Motorhead, who combined punk and metal back before most "classic" punk bands even existed. No indeedy - the authors assert that punk lived and died with the original CBGBs crowd, and that everything that came afterward was either cheap trashy spectacle or "corporate rock."

Bonus irony points: The authors go on several rants about the "integrity" of old-school punk; the book, however, is one long chronicle of stupid kids who live like rock stars on massive amounts of money they essentially scam from their major-label record companies. They buy cars, houses, and tons of dope with that money and then bitch and moan about how no one understands the "purity of their art." Fucking bullshit. Ian McKaye has more "artistic integrity" in his little finger than the New York Dolls displayed in their entire career.

Like I said, there's a lot to appreciate in this first-hand account of punk's roots. But it's nowhere close to telling even THAT story, much less the story of where punk went from the late '70s onward. The contention that "punk died" with Sid and Johnny is as pathetic as it is inaccurate. Essentially, PLEASE KILL ME is Legs McNeil's chronicle of the scene he and his friends enjoyed - an aud lang syne for a bygone era and all that crap. The fact that the authors end their collection of memories with a snide backhand at Nirvana ("Nevermind") just underscores their dismissal of everything beyond Patti Smith's initial retirement from the scene. And that is VERY far from the end of punk's history.

So yeah, sure Legs - go ahead and tell me again how Stiv Bators somehow possessed more punk artistic integrity than Joan Jett or Ian McKaye. And then go fuck right off back to your precious memories and leave the history-writing to other people.

courtney says

i learned not to leave a member of the dead boys alone with a guinea pig.

Rebecca McNutt says

This is the most extensive book I've ever read on punk culture, from the fashion to the music. It even briefly mentions similar styles, like goth.

Cynthia says

Punk rockers would make terrible dinner party guests. They will break your good china and roll around in the shards. They will defecate on the dessert. They will shoot up in your bathroom. They will hit on your grandmother. They also should make for interesting reading and, for the most part, the book delivered. I learned:

*Nico drank good wine.

*Phil Spector drank bad wine.

*Nancy Spungen was advised to go to England to clean up and kick her serious drug habit. That's where she met Sid Vicious.

*Even though Nancy was very disliked, everyone thought it was terrible that the police stopped investigating her murder after Sid died. Many people thought their drug dealer actually did it.

*The Stooges got the IRS to stop bothering them about back taxes by explaining they were drug addicts and, therefore, bad with money.

*The Sex Pistols were afraid to meet the Ramones after their show in England because they thought they would beat them up.

*Debbie Harry thought the record companies gave them lots of drugs, not because they liked them, but to keep them compliant.

*And, best of all, Iggy Pop, known for his terrible habit and dangerous excess had an epiphany. He realized he "was the product". He cleaned up and he started saving his money. That's right. One of the most famous punks of all time, saved his life, by replacing nihilism with capitalism. Isn't that fantastic?

Overall, interesting. I was disappointed that this book is billed the history of punk rock and really only covered New York punk and English punk as it pertained to the New York scene. They barely touched on the key differences between the two. (New York being a product of the art scene and England being a product of working class hopelessness.) The LA scene wasn't touched and other East Coast punk bands of great importance, such as Black Flag, didn't get a mention.

Troy says

After the horrendous disappointment that was American Hardcore, I decided to pick up this book, an old favorite, to see if my younger self was delusional. Maybe this book, which I loved so much, was a steaming pile of dog shit?

So I picked it up, trepidatious, and started randomly. And I was hooked. After careening through many chapters and completely losing myself in the crazy panoply of deranged and contradictory voices, I stopped reading and started from the beginning. And read the book straight through, except for work, food, and sleep. It was better than I remembered. This is oral history done right. Several different voices will sketch out the same story, and the stories are always great, and the various characters nearly always disagree about what happened and how it happened and sometimes even who it happened to. The book is catty and funny, and full of great freaks who are out of their mind, but in a way that makes you want to emulate them; in a way that made me want to throw my desk through the window and go start a band and go shoot dope, but then comes the end of the book, which is extremely sad, and switches gears, as we now follow a large chunk of the endlessly fascinating and destructive people spiral into death.

So then I went and listened to several of the bands mentioned in the book, from Nico to The Dead Boys to Television to The Stooges. And they were fucking great. And still are.

Rod says

Goodreads defines the five-star rating as "It was amazing." I've given books five-star ratings before, then asked myself, "Was it *amazing*?", and then had to admit to myself that the answer was "no" and changed my rating accordingly. In the case of *Please Kill Me* I don't even have to think about it. It was *amazing*. I've read it three times and I'm sure before long I'll probably make it four. Greatest rock 'n' roll book ever and one of the greatest oral histories ever.

Erika says

Things I learned from this book...

- Everyone involved in the early American punk scene was one big incestuous relationship. Everyone had sex with everyone else at one point or another. Male, female, transsexuals, johns, etc.
- Everyone was on drugs. How did punk even get started? I mean really, it amazes me that punk even remotely got off it's feet, everyone was so messed up.
- Patti Smith still kind of freaks me out, but you have to respect her determination.
- Lou Reed is a douchebag.
- Even completely drugged out of his mind, I still love Iggy. He's so perfectly strange.
- They consider Jim Morrison to be a forerunner of punk because of his stumbling drunk performances seemed to be a fuck you to the buttoned up squares going to the shows to be "cool". I love the Doors and Jim to a fault, but let's get real. Those performances were less fuck you's and more I'm wasted out of my mind and don't know what is going on. But hey, it gave Iggy motivation too do the Stooges so I'll take it.
- Nancy Spungen went to England to clean herself up. Well that worked out well.
- to quote William S. Burroughs "I always thought punk was someone who took it up the ass". I find it interesting and a little amusing that this was the term that was used to coin this movement. I respect that they took a derogatory term and flipped it on it's head though. It's very punk of them.
- No one liked Steven Tyler. Well, that isn't really new, but it needs repeating.
- Malcolm McLaren is still one of the worst things that happened to punk.

I'm a little torn on my feelings on this book. It was incredibly interesting, but less an "oral history of punk" and more of an oral history of the absolute sex and drugged fueled insanity that was NY/Detroit punk. How the albums that came out were even remotely decent is shocking, much less as game changing as they were. It was interesting to see the NY scene's take on the origins of punk, obviously they lay claim to the title for themselves rather than the UK scene. I see it as more of feeding off each other, they both used the same nihilistic anarchy and general fuck off feeling put out through simple but heavy guitar riffs. They both brought music away from the heavily synthesized embellishment that came out of the late 60s/early 70s rock and took it back to the basic 50s rock with a twist. It was garage rock with a flair of fuck you. I guess a majority of the hate towards UK punk seems to come at the heels of the fashion statement that came along with them. Like so many other genres, people latched on to a fad to follow and then they lost their way with the music. It doesn't make [some of] those bands any less influential under all of that crap though.

Anyway.

I loathed to enjoy most of this book. While the antics of the scene had it's moments of enjoyment, the fact that the same scene played a part in destroying so many lives makes it hard to read about it. They did it to themselves, yes, but that doesn't make it any less sad to see how they ended up. They definitely lived the sex, drugs & rock n roll lifestyle full tilt though and created amazingness in their wake. No matter whether it was the NY or the UK scene who started punk, they created something amazing and in turn influenced so many others to create even more.

Now I need to find a book on the Cali punk scene to finish my journey of punk off.

Laura says

If you love gossipy oral histories, this is the book for you. It's probably better if you're familiar with the music, but that's not a prerequisite. And it's often hysterically funny, depending on who's being interviewed -
- Richard Lloyd and Richard Hell both made me laugh out loud a number of times.

One of the best parts: several people are talking about how Jim Morrison was an 18-carat prick, and Ray Manzarek comes along saying, "Jim was a shaman." I'll let Danny Fields have the last word on Mr. Mojo Risin', as he said it far better than I ever could:

"Patti Smith was a poet. I think she elevated rock & roll to literature. Bob Dylan elevated it. Morrison's wasn't poetry. It was garbage disguised as teenybopper. It was good rock & roll for thirteen-year-olds. Or eleven-year-olds . . . There has got to be a reason why women like Nico and Gloria Stavers, the editor of *16 Magazine*, fell so deeply in love with him, because he was essentially an abusive man to women. But it sure wasn't his poetry. I've got to tell you, it wasn't his poetry. He had a big dick. That was probably it."

Thomas says

when i was a kid and i would whine about not getting new shoes or some stupid shit my mom would sing that old Rolling Stones song, "You can't always get what you want" only she wouldn't sing it she would talk it like it was some ancient wisdom from the lips of Plato inserting pauses to let the complicated cadence of his words sink in, "but if you try some time...you just might find... you get what you need." It always pissed me off and made me embarrassed that my mom thought she was being cool quoting some stupid ass song by some guy with a drippy face. Guess what mom...that song was about heroin.

bad music often good sometimes great noise made by terrible people.

kick out the jams

Ben Winch says

Am I the only one who thinks Legs McNeill is a pretentious tosser and the omnipresence of the so-called 'blank generation' is the next-worst thing to the previous media-takeover by the boomers? The amount of

marketing/repackaging that's gone into this shit has just about reached utter absurdity, accelerated by the internet beyond anything anyone could have dreamed of. And yeah, some of it was good. But I'm supposed to care about who sucked Stiv Bators' dick when his band is maybe 50% the intensity of its obvious primary influence The Stooges and I'm just not big on dick-sucking stories in the first place? Added to which, this squabbling over what's 'real' punk and what isn't is just not seemly in a guy who must be pushing 60. Yeah, I agree, the Pistols and The Clash are overrated, *just like all the bands you're eulogising, dickhead*. You ask me, *Raw Power* shits all over anything from NYC in the 70s except Suicide, and The Saints' *I'm Stranded* is the equal of most of it. Besides which, me, I'm a believer in the punk *spirit*, which can't be confined to one place or time. Legs, even if you and your buddies did discover it (and personally I'd say Iggy got there before you did), that's all you did. Planted your flag at the summit. Named it (where Iggy just danced around on top of it). But you want that name to last, you can't confine it to a few years in some shithole in the Bowery in the 70s. Yeah, it's been misappropriated, annexed by alien forces, but you gotta live with it, let it evolve. Me, I like the word. I hope it lasts. It's better than dada, that's for sure. But it might just be that even you and your drug-fucked cronies don't know exactly what it's all about. Let it go, Legs. Move on.
