

This Is a Message to Persons Unknown

The Story of Poison Girls

Rich Cross

Designed by Alec Dunn • Edited by Erin Yanke

Flesh and blood are what we are, flesh and blood is who we are, our cover is blown.

This Is a Message to Persons Unknown is the first book to explore the history of the legendary band Poison Girls, from their first gigs in Brighton, through their years of touring DIY venues across Britain and Europe, documenting their peerless collection of vinyl releases, the dissident campaigns the band supported, and the uncompromising political statements Poison Girls voiced on record, in print, and through their singular visual aesthetic. A band every bit as formative to anarcho-punk as Crass were, Poison Girls offered a passionate, heartfelt rebuttal to punk rock's Year Zero protestations. While their musical roots predated punk, their songs blended punk's ferocity, with a sense of wit, creative ingenuity, and emotional tenderness. Formed in 1977, with a line-up that spanned the generations, Poison Girls were fronted by the redoubtable Vi Subversa, a lyricist, songwriter, and singular vocalist. Armed with a message of anarchist self-reliance, Poison Girls confronted the misogyny and ageism of countercultures and opposition movements just as fiercely as that of the capitalist war state. Through the dark decade of Thatcherism, Poison Girls' path of most resistance took the band in a very different direction to that pursued by Crass, with some unexpected and revealing results.

Combining original interviews with surviving band members with a participants' history drawn from the pages of contemporary zines and papers, this comprehensive history of Poison Girls is richly illustrated with photos, posters, record sleeves, and ephemera drawn from the personal archives of band members, including numerous evocative images of the band at work and at play. *This Is a Message to Persons Unknown* presents the full story of an unparalleled group of radical musicians and artists who saw in punk the opportunity not just to rage against the machine but to create something new and extraordinary.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Rich Cross is a researcher and writer on British and European protest movements and counter cultural resistance, particularly from the anarchist and libertarian traditions, Cross has published and presented extensively about the UK's original anarcho-punk scene. He has edited the *The Hippies Now Wear Black* website for well over a decade, documenting both the history and the continuing creative dissidence of that scene's most resilient troublemakers.

Alec Dunn is a designer, printer, and nurse. He co-edits *Signal: A Journal of International Political Graphics & Culture* and co-authored *It Did Happen Here: An Antifascist People's History*. He is a member of the Justseeds Artists' Cooperative.

Erin Yanke is a self-taught documentarian with thirty-five years of projects. She regularly publishes zines and occasionally produces podcasts and films. She was a coauthor of *It Did Happen Here: An Antifascist People's History*.



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