



Women In Pop Music

Helen Challis

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WOMEN IN POP MUSIC REVISED AND UPDATED, WITH NEW ILLUSTRATIONS A survey of female pop and rock artists and their place in the largely male-dominated music industry, featuring studies of women in punk rock (The Slits, Poly Styrene, Siouxsie Sue), the Riot Grrrl movement (Courtney Love, Hole, Bikini Kill, L7, and others), bhangra, indie/ alternative pop, rap and hip-hop, and sexism in pop music. There are chapters on musicians and singers such as Kate Bush, Sinead O'Connor, Joan Armatrading, P.J. Harvey, and Madonna. 'Whatever I did was sabotaged by the fact that I had tits.' (Caroline Coon, on managing The Clash). In much of mainstream rock and pop, there are only a few types of 'femininity' available: women as mother-figures, or as wan wistful virgins (Mary Hopkins, Kate Melua, Lynsey DePaul), or as sexual, wild women (Madonna, Courtney Love, Tina Turner), who are often seen as prostitutes. One or two other female types have been developed, such as the socially-aware type (Sinead O'Connor, Tracy Chapman, 10,000 Maniacs' Natalie Merchant, Queen Latifah). Usually, women in pop simply have to do what men do, becoming tomboyish (Joan Armatrading, Sinead O'Connor, early P.J. Harvey), donning leather jackets and striking aggressive macho poses (Suzi Quatro, Joan Jett), or imitating male aggro and thrash bands (L7, Bikini Kill and the Riot Grrrl movement). Even when they are also songwriters or musicians as well as singers, many women in pop are not taken seriously, and are seen as relatively innocuous: Beverly Craven, Barbara Dickson, Kylie Minogue, Alanis Morissette. Carly Simon, Annie Lennox, Carole King, Karen Carpenter, Diana Ross and Rickie Lee Jones). The important female pop stars (Yoko Ono, Tina Turner, Madonna, Courtney Love, Kate Bush) simultaneously confirm notions of female identity and rewrite them. Stars such as Madonna actively confront gay, lesbian, queer, bisexual and heterosexual forms of sexual identity. But Madonna always has to do this in an environment dominated by patriarchal heterosexuality. Female pop stars - Tina Turner, Joan Armatrading, Sade, Madonna, k.d. laing, Poly Styrene - help to rewrite the way women are viewed in patriarchal culture. The successful stars counter the awful time that many less successful female acts have endured. Fully illustrated. Notes and bibliography. 144 pages. www.crmoon.com

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