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Forbidden Beat: Perspectives On Punk Drumming

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Among the many clichés that linger around the world of music, one of the most common is that drummers never receive the amount of respect they truly deserve. Even in the microcosm of punk, this banality is apparent. In an effort to make up for the shortage of chords or musical prowess out front, the drummer is the needed force to ensure the urgency and intent break through the apocalyptic din to give the message an extra umph.

Despite the drummer being the band's undeniable backbone, the attention is usually saved for the slogan-spouting front person or the charismatic guitarist. In *Forbidden Beat*, SW Lauden gathers interviews, remembrances and homages to remind us about the importance of these normally forgotten bandmates.

An array of essays on the history of punk drumming are strewn among the pages of *Forbidden Beat*; all of them well-researched with compelling yet differing narratives. Curt Weiss, biographer of New York Dolls drummer Jerry Nolan, destroys the concept of punk deriving from a sudden gush of divine inspiration by laying out Nolan's early days backing everyone from Bette Midler to Suzi Quatro while aligning his playing with iconic 1960s rock drummers like Charlie Watts and Mitch Mitchell. Meanwhile, noted punk historian John Robb pleads the case for drummers like The Slits' Palmolive and Siouxsie & The Banshees' Kenny Morris, and how their primal singularity helped smash the paradigm of virtuosity which plagued rock music during the 1970s.

In an ambitious attempt to track the origins of the 4/4 beat made famous by UK hardcore heroes Discharge, Matt Diehl might have penned the most absorbing

chapter in the book with "The Nightmare Continues: Deconstructing The D-Beat". Exhaustive in its analysis, the piece can come off heavy-handed in places, but Diehl does an excellent job drawing its origins back to such disparate sources as The Buzzcocks' "You Tear Me Up" and the tribal thud of Cozy Powell's "Dance With The Devil".

Lynn Perko-Truell, drummer for long-running indie rock troupe Imperial Teen and pioneering all-female hardcore band The Wrecks, recounts the liberation found banging on garbage cans in lieu of a drum set at early band practices as well as the discouragement served up by their peers, such as when a Black Flag roadie detuned The Wrecks' instruments before they were to take the stage. "I'm guessing he wouldn't have done that to a band of teenage boys," muses Perko-Truell.

Although punk notably granted permission to play for a generation raised

on progressive rock superstars, there was still a blatant disconnect on how to actually pull it off. For some, the gap was camouflaging their now irrelevant rock 'n' roll past and attempting to embed it into this newly minted abrupt style of playing. For others, it was simply learning how to play an instrument.

Within that divide is where you'll find what made the drumming of anyone from Rat Scabies of The Damned to Minutemen's George Hurley so magical. Whether rambunctious or savvy, it was all a language in rhythm no one pursued before, and Lauden conveys this truth throughout the patchwork of contributions and interviews he's gathered. Within the seemingly endless flow of books on the genre, *Forbidden Beat* stands out in being both enlightening and lively as it sheds light on the forgotten beat keepers of punk.

Tony Rettman