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Lexicon Devil: The Fast Times And Short Life Of Darby Crash And The Germs



Synopsis

"Lexicon Devil is, pure and simple, the finest volume on punk to have seen the light of print. (Yes, folks: that includes Please Kill Me.) Great book!" —Richard Meltzer
Production has started on the documentary feature based on the book.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Since his heroin overdose in 1980, Darby Crash has become a symbol of punk irreverence, but his posthumous fame has tended to overshadow the seminal work of the punk band he fronted, the Germs. Mullen (who coauthored *We Got the Neutron Bomb: The Untold Story of L.A. Punk*), along with ex-Germs drummer Bolles and writer Parfrey, quickly deconstructs the myth of Crash (n Jan Paul Beahm) to reveal an embattled and confused soul who struggled with drug use and his homosexuality. Featuring raw quotations from Crash's peers in the burgeoning 1970s West Coast punk scene, the book offers both positive and negative views of the singer and the scene that raised him. Crash's fans were known for their cultish reverence, and Crash himself is shown to be a self-conscious misfit who used psychological ploys to enlist followers. It is unlikely that this book will reach a wide audience and thus imbue Crash's legacy with more humanity and, in turn, the Germs with more respectability, but it does strengthen the growing literature on American punk music. Recommended for popular music collections, especially as a complement to *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, which covers similar ground and whose oral history format this book replicates. Robert Morast, "Argus Leader," Sioux Falls, SD Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This intense oral history traces the life of a rock icon so enigmatic that few knew he was gay. The Germs had released only one album, G.I., before their leader, Darby Crash (ne Paul Beahm), 22, OD'd in a suicide pact (the other participant survived). His death, covered in detail here, just enhanced the Germs' cachet as protopunks. The book's compilers--Germs drummer Don Bolles is one of them--also serve up a lot about early West Coast punk, reported by a virtual punk who's who, sans, perhaps refreshingly, Henry Rollins, but including Jello Biafra, Exene Cervenka, Phranc ("America's Favorite Jewish Lesbian Folksinger"), and two who figured massively in the love triangle that, among many other factors, precipitated Darby's last exit, Gerber ("Queen of L.A. Punk") and Rob Henley. Evocative as hell of the punk ethos ("Part of the \$400 [for the overdose drugs] was my rent money," mourns Ella Black), not least because of scads of photos of baby-faced adolescents (some nude) trying to look ugly. Mike Tribby

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As a cultural history of Los Angeles in the 1970s, this book can't be beat. Visually stunning photographs and a refreshing, multiperspective commentary bring qualities of both Faulkner and the blog together in a chronological progression to the suicide of Darby Crash. I especially enjoyed the coroner's document and the funeral bill, but all the exhibits were great. The book includes an unbelievable involvement of church and state in the Scientology influenced Innovative Program School in Los Angeles which 'graduated' Darby in 1976. This section once again shows the importance of LSD in late 20th century culture. The dynamic of LA punk as it emerged in artfag circles, was subsumed in a Huntington Beach testosterone surge of disaffection and violence consuming punk and creating thrash hardcore. Darby Crash's closeted homosexuality and his apparent fear of rejection for it in late 70's culture, adds historical depth to the effects of discrimination, even among the young. The book is compelling. I missed Darby's show at the Mabuhay, although I saw the other big show of the weekend, the Sex Pistols at Winterland. The great strength of the book is the stylistic approach, the book being years in the making. Adding the content into that, I think it's the biggest thing in American literature since Douglas Coupland's *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* in 1991. Best music history I have ever seen or read.

Excellent book.

I'm not a music fan or junkie. It's the cultural (or maybe sociological or even pathological would be better) side of these movements that interests me. This one's sad, reminiscent of fundamentalist followers hurling themselves into a devouring atmosphere much as The Germs flung headlong into their abandonment and escape. "Darby" had ability and problems. It's strangely creative (and human) that a very queer boy like him would cast himself in so homophobic a setting. Comments on events coming in snips from people were effective and gave a decent sense of the characters and times. A surprising lot of these "punks" went on to do rather well in a conventional way. Had he lived it's easy to imagine "Darby" going on in life somewhat like Oscar Wilde's "Bosie," tragically talented poet with sonnet skills no longer in demand and unhappy with the way his life turned. I'm glad to have the book. I'm equally glad I was not a part of that scene and slipped, instead, into my own form of self destruction.

if you're as big a fan of the punk underground of the 80s, hardcore, the germs and darby crash as my wife and myself (we named our son darby), then you already know how essential this purchase is

I remember buying the Germs GI album because it was produced by Joan Jett. The music was a little different but I liked it. This is an interesting book about the band and their lead singer who died with the name Darby Crash. It's all interviews and many many of the people you will know if you were into music in the 70's and 80's. The story is a little sad but it's an interesting part of music history and the emerging punk scene.

Dissipating the numerous rumours, myths and outright lies this book gives quite a detailed oral history of the legendary Darby Crash, founder and singer-songwriter of the infamous, seminal L.A. punk band The Germs (a band you either love or hate with equal passion). Although this book does away with a lot of the misinformation commonly regarded as fact and certainly puts a much clearer focus into the events that led up to Darby's death you can't help but still feel, despite the intense details provided by those close to him that no one ever truly "knew" Darby and he will forever remain the enigma he wanted to be all along. As a fan (one of my children is actually named Darby) this book was indeed a "must have" and a thoroughly good read but it certainly left me wanting more (time to read Mr. Mullens other book on LA Punk!) and with many "what if?" questions. This book is really only for the true Germs fan (which there are many despite Pat Smear's assertion in the book that they were only a "teeshirt" band and "no one really listened to the music" -HAHAHA) so I wouldn't really recommend it to the non-initiated.Footnote: Does anyone know if there is ever

going to be an "X" book???? The worlds ready!!!!

About 80-85% of this book is, word for word, the text of We Got the Neutron Bomb. Not sure how that's even legal, but there it is. Neither book is all that revelatory.

Awesome book with plenty of adventurous tales from the luminaries who were actually there. Black Randy should have his own book!

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