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## **Deflowered: My Life in Pansy Division** Jon Ginoli

"We're the buttfuckers of rock-and-roll, We want to sock it to your hole!" With these words written in a notebook, Jon Ginoli sets off on a journey of self-discovery and musical passion to become the founding member of Pansy Division, the first out and proud queercore punk rock band to hit the semi-big time. Set against the changing decades of music, we follow the band from their inception in San Francisco, to their search for a music label and a permanent drummer to their current status as indie rock icons. We see the highs--touring with Green Day--and the lows--homophobic fans--of striving for acceptance and success in the world of rock. Replete with the requisite tales of sex, drugs, groupies, band fights and label battles, this rollicking memoir is also an impassioned account of staying true to the artistic vision of queer rock'n'roll.

## **Deflowered: My Life in Pansy Division Details**

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# From Reader Review Deflowered: My Life in Pansy Division for online ebook

## Paula Coots says

If I had known about this band in 1993, I'm sure I would've loved it. In 1993, they were one of the first gay pop/punk bands who were proud and out and funny, too. Green Day took them under their wing right as the single, "Longview" was taking off, so even though the guys in Pansy Division were making \$500 a night as their opening act on that tour, at least they got to play Madison Square Garden! And talk about the homophobia they faced! At one of the shows, some jerk off yelled out something to the effect of "You cocksucker!" And he said, "Of course I'm a cocksucker, and I'm good at it! That's the whole point!"

The bulk of the book concerns the daily business of running a DIY band in the 90's. The van breakdowns, the eleven different drummers (or was it twelve?) and the struggle of bands who did/do it this way. You try to find a fan that will let you stay at his house, because you can't afford a motel. You have sex in the van. You get some great shows that make it all worth it. And sometimes play to twenty people who don't give a damn. Jon kept a diary, and these short entries make up the bulk of the book, describing the venue, the turn out, and who got laid or not. This isn't a tell all, in your face recount of sexual conquests. In fact, there isn't a lot of detailed information about any of it. It does, however, get the point across of how dedicated and obsessed you have to be to play your music and be true to yourself; to drive thousands of miles in total, sometimes making only \$40 a night for the whole band.

The music business was in flux at the time. The indie labels were the way to go if you didn't want to be a carbon copy, and they made a difference, especially after Nirvana. Then the internet became a part of life; DIY now has a totally different meaning than it did then, and from what it will five years from now.

And the real take-away is that we need to remember how much has changed, even though we still have a long way to go. How brave they were to face all that homophobia and blow raspberries at it! That is stressed over and over, as well it should be.

I read this in one sitting. I enjoyed every second of it.

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## Carrie says

Interesting for the commentary on being gay but not feeling like part of the gay clubbing scene, and being gay in the very straight and sometimes homophobic alternative music scene.

Annoying because Ginoli had to prove his indie cred by dissing the sucky sellouts. Also a little bit annoying because it never really touches on anything in-depth. Fans of Pansy Division might be more into it, but for the rest of us, condensing it to a feature magazine article would have probably been enough.

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## P. says

Ok, so if you're not interested in band life, you might get bored. However, I am a person who has seen A Year and a Half in the Life of Metallica tens of times and is in a band, but more of a hobby band who plays locally, not a nationally touring band, so this was super interesting to me, as it goes into tour life (exhausting) and band disagreements, and royalties, etc. I appreciated that Ginoli wrote the book himself, or at least I think there was no ghost writer. Instead of flattened bio-narrative, his personality comes through, which

includes a lot of enthusiasm. And although I hadn't heard a lot of Pansy Division before I read this, now I definitely will be.

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### Gary Lee says

It's nice to see a Rock bio in which the author doesn't have an axe to grind against former bandmates (though, I guess Ginoli's feelings on Lookout! Records might fall into that category) or isn't apologizing for an alcohol or heroin addiction. Ginoli's book is simply an interesting, compulsively readable, straight-forward account of Pansy Division.

It starts off as rather Ginoli-centric, but once Chris Freeman (and the revolving door of drummers) enters the picture and the band begins to take form, Ginoli seems more than willing to take a backseat and let the **band** take the spotlight.

Nothing too deep, but it's not trying to be.

Pansy Division has always been more about having fun, and this book showcases that.

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### Mark Farley says

I first read about Pansy Division back in the mid nineties. Green Day mentioned how great they were in an interview and I remember Tre Cool wearing one of the band's t-shirts on their MTV Live and Loud special that I religiously watched every day for about a year when it aired in 1995. Of course I had to check this band out. I don't actually think I did until a year later. The album 'Wish I'd Taken Pictures' had come out and I thought it was the most wonderful cover and I actually had no idea about the intense gayness of the song lyrics or the stance of the band at all until I got back to my little room at the holiday camp in Bognor Regis that I was working in at the time. Of course, from the opening alarm clock bell that preceeds the excellent 'Horny in the Morning' till the final bars of 'Sidewalk Sale', I just fell in love with the band's music. The humour, the charm, the sheer openness of their sexuality was all packaged in this wonderful 30 odd minutes of camp pop punk. What I found extremely enjoyable about the music was how accessible I found the music, being very much the hereosexual and made me question my personal politics and the morals and belief system that I was brought up with. Not that it was anything overtly anti-gay or anything, I just saw other people's lifestyles in a truly different way and gave me a definite better understanding of others. Especially when I actually got to meet the band on a sunny day on Brighton promenade. I'd made the journey across Sussex for the gig and when I went to find the venue earlier in the day, I came across three wonderfully friendly and beautiful guys who emitted that San Francisco divine openness and kindness I have since fallen in love with and appreciate in some of my very closest friends today. The gig was in this tiny pub that no longer exists and the atmosphere was of just real positivity, fun and explicit naughtiness that you don't sadly see every day in the UK very much. All of this is truly celebrated, personified and represented in the very welcome memoir by guitarist and singer, Jon Ginoli. 'Deflowered' is a testament to a very kind, generous and funny man. From his upbringing in the less conservative birthplace to his journey and proud action to the creation of the band, not for personal gain but to provide and make a very brave statement is quite well crafted. Extremely enjoyable and really reminded me why I fell in love with their very different and powerful message and why I chose to admire and adore all that they stand for. A triumph.

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## **Mark says**

From a critical standpoint, I feel I can only give this book two stars. Ginoli really seemed to lack a sense of what facts would be important or interesting to the reader. This book read like a grocery list.

Nevertheless, I'm a fan of Pansy Division, so I'm glad I read it and found some interesting tidbits along the way. But they were hidden among the dull facts.

If you are a fan of Pansy Division, I recommend you go ahead and read this. If not, I don't think you will want to endure the banality.

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## **Devin Tait says**

This was a really fun book to read. I had been aware of Pansy Division for awhile but didn't really get into them until their latest album, "That's So Gay," which I highly recommend. After hearing the album, my boyfriend and I went to Jon's book reading at Skylight Books in Los Angeles and he was very nice and signed the book for us and chatted with us. The book itself is very entertaining and nicely described the highs and lows of Pansy Division's career, giving plenty of juicy details of sex and life on the road, as well as insights into the recording industry and what it was like to be the first queer rock and roll band.

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## **Erica says**

A memoir of the man who started the first gay punk band in the U.S. The book switches between a straight forward narrative, to a diary when on tour with Green Day, with some chapters simply being lists of the inspiration for songs on a particular album. The album focused chapters were probably the least enjoyable part of the book for me, but a die hard Pansy Division fan would probably find them fascinating. My favorite part was the beginning of the book, when the author focused on the divide between gay culture and punk rock.

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## **Alex says**

I don't read many autobiographies, especially about bands. I love music, but I really enjoy music for music, the sound, the motion, the colors, not for who is producing it. So it is rare for me to fall in love with a band, but I did and they are called Pansy Division.

So when my friend offered to let me borrow his copy of the lead singer's autobiography, I thought about it, but didn't take him up on the offer until I'd listened to all their music and was besotted. Half way through I put down his copy (it was autographed) and bought my own.

Obviously this book is more enjoyable to those familiar with the music and the band. But it was a light-hearted, enjoyable read. It was funny, honest and open. The journal entries from tours were raw, matching well with their music and style. Plus it made them feel believable.

Great read, recommend it to any fans of the band, or people who enjoy reading about bands, especially those who break down barriers and blaze their own trails.

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### **Larry-bob Roberts says**

It's great that Jon has documented the history of Pansy Division with an insider's view. Could an openly gay band like Pansy Division ever again get a start and achieve the underground success of PD? In some ways, I think they are a product of the times they lived through - from Jon's being a fan of 60s pop and then punk music, the activism of Act Up and Queer Nation, and then Pansy Division's rise during the surfacing to the mainstream of Green Days, whose coattails PD were invited to ride on tours that doubtless blew quite a few young minds.

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### **Daniel Severin says**

Entertaining memoir from openly gay punk musician Jon Ginoli. Being from the bay area, I've always considered PD a local band but am not as familiar with their music as I could be. I love queer music but not necessarily punk rock, though many of my favorite artist have roots in that scene. The memoir is a lot of fun and a quick read, really more of a 3.5 star book.

When I started this book I found it very interesting. I have a few records from PD and got a thrill from reading mentions of shows I had attended; it was kind of neat to get the artist perspective on those shows. Fans will enjoy this more than anyone else, but for a unique take on the music industry, its inherent homophobia and punk rock economics, this has a lot to recommend in it.

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### **Robert says**

This is a wonderfully readable and occasionally dishy account of Jon Ginoli's experiences singing, playing and touring with his groundbreaking gay pop punk band, Pansy Division. One thing I found particularly fun was learning various little cultural mores that Ginoli encountered through his experiences playing abroad; for example, why one shouldn't necessarily expect to give an encore when playing a gig in Italy, or why having a problematic audience member in Germany might be particularly problematic there. Also loved the stuff on PD's musical peers - the tale of his encounter with Jon Bon Jovi at an alt-rock festival is very funny in a roll-your-eyes way. Ginoli & co deserve much praise and multiple hosannas for putting themselves out there, braving the previously uncharted waters of performing explicitly and unapologetically gay music in a largely homophobic scene, and all in punk DIY style. Pansy Division has definitely left its mark, and the changed the music world just a little bit as well.

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### **Chloe says**

This was like a really long magazine article, full of facts but lacking in a complete and compelling narrative. It's probably a fun read if you are obsessed with the band and would be satisfied with lots of random stories and facts you didn't already know. For me, there were some interesting tidbits of 90s independent rock and

punk that were interesting to learn about but it got long fast. I left feeling like I almost knew less than I did before when I had only seen documentary.

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## Neil McGarry says

A good memoir delivers a sharp writing style, a compelling tell-all story, and a clear theme, and I'm delighted to say *Deflowered: My Life in Pansy Division* brings them all with a fiery pink vengeance.

For the uninitiated, Pansy Division was a pop-punk band founded by Jon Ginoli that, along with acts like Tribe-8 and Fifth Column, comprised the musical part of the homocore movement of the 1980s and 90s. Ginoli, who never felt at home with "mainstream" gay music, took up with bassist Chris Freeman and an ever-changing series of drummers to craft a sound that was anything but mainstream. In *Deflowered*, Ginoli chronicles the band's origins in San Francisco and takes the reader on a tour as amazing, but not nearly as exhausting, as those the band conducted throughout the United States and Europe.

Ginoli spares no detail in his descriptions of the way an indie band records music and conducts tours, and I found myself wincing at descriptions of the places the band had to sleep, the bad road food they had to eat, or the various other hardships they endured on the road, not least of which was harassment from the homophobes who were much bolder and more common fifteen years ago. Yet there's no sense that Ginoli grew cynical or bitter; indeed, he seems to view it all as part of a grand adventure, and the reader just can't help but agree. After all, how many other all-queer bands got to open for Green Day, or play at Madison Square Garden?

Through it all, Ginoli never apologizes for the sound Pansy Division created, and seems to accept that the price of blazing his own trail is, sadly, a lack of recognition from the wider musical world. He's also quite up-front about his sexual adventures on the road; it seems that women aren't the only ones throwing themselves at rock bands! Tying it all together is a clear, open, eminently readable writing style that invites the reader to keep turning the pages to find out what's coming next. (That's a single-entendre.)

So if you want a compelling look at a history-making (and sadly underrated band), look no further. *Deflowered: My Life in Pansy Division* is ready to bring it on.

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## The FountainPenDiva, Old school geek chick and lover of teddy bears says

To me, Pansy Division is one of the great gifts of San Francisco's once eclectic rock scene. Even though much of the 1980's/90's was dominated by the AIDS crisis, there was also a lot of brash, in your face life to counteract all the tragedy. It was a time that many in both the gay and lesbian communities along with younger feminists were recreating sexual politics that was edgy, hot and safe. And, it was the era of Pansy Division.

Over the years I've read quite a few first person rock n' roll biographies, and while interesting, most follow the standard sex, drugs, hit rock bottom, come back up, band infighting and gossipy dish template. *Deflowered: My Life in Pansy Division* from founder, vocalist and guitarist for the queercore band Pansy Division Jon Gioia, is the kind of fun filled, raucous, celebratory and DIY punk aesthetic tale that I'd love to read more of.

I remember seeing them at the Folsom Street Fair and after hearing one of their iconic tunes "Bunnies", became a fan. Silly string, male go-go dancers, and lyrics that left very little to the imagination, Pansy Division were far more than a novelty act. They were punk in the best way possible, and they were entertaining as hell.

There's a kind of love letter to San Francisco that is sadly no more. It's a story of coming out, discovering music and those with a like-minded sensibility. Gioia's writing is fluid and fun, like hanging out with a best friend, with wild and crazy tales from the endless tours, musician changes (their luck with drummers especially). It's not the glamorous life of rock excess like custom tour buses, expensive hotel rooms and groupies. Pansy Division was more like used vans with over 200,000 miles held together with spit, duct tape and wishes. It was playing tiny clubs and hoping not to get gay bashed for being who they were. It was the heights of opening for Green Day (an band I wasn't into but give them props). They played with the other famous queercore band, the female harder-core Tribe 8 (I still grin over that band's name), who were known for playing topless as a fuck you to sexism which allowed for sweaty male musicians to take their shirts off, but not women.

Deflowered: My Life in Pansy Division may have been short, but it still packed a lot between the pages. Oh, and yes, the guys definitely got laid. It's kind of nice to read that, though there's no blow by blow (no pun intended). And oh, both Kirk Hammett and Rob Halford appear, but you'll have to read the book to find out how.

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