



**Clothes, Clothes, Clothes. Music, Music, Music.
Boys, Boys, Boys**

Viv Albertine

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The guitarist for seminal female punk group The Slits recounts playing with Sid Vicious, touring with the Clash, dating Mick Jones, inspiring "Train in Vain," and releasing her solo debut in 2012

Viv Albertine is one of a handful of original punks who changed music, and the discourse around it, forever. Her memoir tells the story of how, through sheer will, talent, and fearlessness, she forced herself into a male-dominated industry, became part of a movement that changed music, and inspired a generation of female rockers.

After forming The Flowers of Romance with Sid Vicious in 1976, Albertine joined The Slits and made musical history in one of the first generations of punk bands. The Slits would go on to serve as an inspiration to future rockers, including Kurt Cobain, Carrie Brownstein, and the Riot Grrrl movement in the 1990s. This is the story of what it was like to be a girl at the height of punk: the sex, the drugs, the guys, the tours, and being part of a brilliant pioneering group of women making musical history. Albertine recounts helping define punk fashion, struggling to find her place among the boys, and her romance with Mick Jones, including her pregnancy and subsequent abortion. She also gives a candid account of what happened post-punk, beyond the break-up of The Slits in 1982, including a career in film, surviving cancer, and making music again, twenty-five years later.

A truly remarkable memoir told in Viv's frank, irreverent, and distinctive voice, *Clothes, Clothes, Clothes. Music, Music, Music. Boys, Boys, Boys*. is a raw, thrilling story of life on the frontier.

Clothes, Clothes, Clothes. Music, Music, Music. Boys, Boys, Boys Details

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Lynx says

Wow what a fantastic memoir!

You don't have to be a fan of The Slits, or even punk for that matter, to love this book. Albertine courageously pours her heart and soul onto each page, recounting not only her involvement in the early UK punk scene but her relationships, her struggles trying to become a mother, her battle with cancer and her search for identity outside of being just "wife" and "mother". Such a powerful woman proving that allowing yourself to be vulnerable is not a sign weakness but one of strength. Wonderful.

Lynn says

This gritty memoir was written by Viv Albertine who was at the epicenter of the London punk rock scene and was in one of the few all girl punk rock bands (The Slits). I loved this book because it was written in a strong and distinctive female voice. Topics include: crushes on boys, periods, fashion, pregnancy, the quest for the perfect pair of shoes, abortion, finding and losing love, motherhood, domestic malaise, relationship violence, and sexism in many forms.

The book captures four time periods: the early days, The Slits, making a family, and rediscovering self & music. I found the part about her band the least interesting. What happens as she ages is much more compelling. My new favorite song is "Confessions of a MILF" an anthem for the unhappy housewife,

I've peeled the potatoes, there's not much left to do/ Lovely lemon drizzle cake, heat up the fondue.

TL says

I received this via Goodreads First reads in exchange for an honest review

An interesting sometimes "Meh" read for me... Overall it was an enjoyable ride. Some stories made me laugh, other had me raising my eyebrows. It was a journey into the past, getting a glimpse of her life and the times back then.

It had an abrupt feel to the story-telling style, but in a good way... she keeps ya on your toes not sticking to a straight 'Point A to Point B' writing style.

Would recommend :) Happy reading!

El says

Viv Albertine is interested in three things. Can you guess what they are? Spoiler alert: They're a part of the title.

She talked a lot about these things, which upon first thought made me think she was incredibly shallow and superficial. But what I came to realize as I read was these are things that have had a significant impact on her life over the years. Most people know Viv for being the guitarist for the Slits, which is what made me want to read the book to begin with. I didn't know much else about her, and here she is, spilling her guts for everyone to read, telling us about her stylish side, the beginning, the middle, and the end of her time with the Slits, and the men-folk she has met along the way who have made an impression on her.

This is not always an easy read. Viv has done things that she is not proud of. There is a very open discussion of an embarrassing encounter with Johnny Rotten that she had no reason to want to share other than it was an important experience for her. She is fairly no-holds barred, something that I felt was missing from Kim Gordon's recent memoir, *Girl in a Band*. In Gordon's book, there was always this sort of weird distance that never made the reader feel super comfortable with Gordon's confessions; Albertine, on the other hand, makes her readers uncomfortable with her stories at times, but is very direct about it, sharing every hairy detail. Even in some of the briefer excerpts, I walked away feeling I had a better understanding of her as an artist and as a person. There's the sort of resigned air about Albertine - not in a bad way, but more in a "Hey, this happened, and this is who I am now" way, which I fully appreciate.

I didn't want this to be a roster of all the men she has loved and slept with. There is a lot of that, but I still found it fascinating - probably because Albertine wasn't being braggy or name-droppy about it. She *did* have a powerful relationship with the Clash's Mick Jones. She *did* know Sid Vicious and had an opportunity to know his softer, smarter side than was ever show publicly. She *did* have a brief and strange almost-affair with Vincent Gallo. These are the people in her neighborhood, so to speak, another great time in music history.

I've seen a few complaints that for as honest as Albertine is in this book, she still fails to talk about other things - like it may have included the shortest mention of Sid Vicious's death in the history of mentioned of Sid Vicious's death, which is strange, right, considering how close they were. Or that Ari Up's mother, Nora Forster, eventually married Johnny Rotten, and isn't that sort of weird after that thing that Albertine did to Johnny Rotten, and did Albertine and Forster even have a relationship after the Slits anyway? Yes, I agree, there are a few weird things missing from this account of Albertine's life, but that's the nature of the beast. We're always so hungry to learn more about the people we look up to that we almost take it personally when they leave out things, or treat the discussion of other things in a way we wish were different.

Because we're the audience and audiences are assholes.

What I especially liked is that, yes, she didn't gloss over the music industry end of her life, but she was just as honest about what life is like for her after the band. She is still making music and it's still pretty awesome. She's doing it her way, which is the way it should be. She's a middle-aged woman with a teenage daughter, and she had heartbreaking experiences with fertility issues and cancer and divorce and learning how to find herself again and to continue growing from all of those things, even when she felt defeated. She's not trying to be the old Viv Albertine, she's not trying to maintain what she was in her teenage years and in her 20s. She's not shunning any of that, she appreciates everything she has been through. But this is who she is now, and it's just as awesome.

This song is pretty great, btw, off her album from a few years ago. The mouth-clucking thing she does in this song is fucking great.

julieta says

Me encantó. Una historia buenísima, la vida de esta mujer, no solo porque habla de música de la época más punk (y cero desde el punto de vista de una groupie, todo lo contrario), la mirada de una mujer música, buscando mostrar su visión. Super entretenido, cercano, triste, y de todo. Como la vida.

Kelly says

I love music biographies, and it was definitely interesting to read about the 70's british punk movement from the perspective of Viv. This was feeling like a 4 star book until I got to the last part, which I really loved. Not only is this a great reflection on a seriously influential moment in time, but there are so many great bits about being a woman, artistic inspiration, and how to keep your identity intact while having a family (or NOT doing that). My heart was kind of breaking for girls in the first part - the expectations heaped upon them, and the boxes they are expected to stay in. It was a real delight to see her break out of that & bust some stereotypes. When she comes to the realization that she doesn't need a man to believe in her but rather can inspire herself it is just a real delight.

Tosh says

Superb. Great book. Viv Albertine was in the band, The Slits, that were a great big deal in my young age. For years I totally forgot her and the band. Then recently, and by mistake, I heard her latest album "The Vermilion Border" which is fantastic. The lyrics were witty and wise, and the music itself sounded so fresh - there were traces of The Slits in the mix, but it came out sounding totally new to my ears. Then there is this memoir. Probably one of the better music memoirs, almost ever. On the same level as Dylan and Patti Smith's memoirs. What makes the book special is the essence that is Viv Albertine. Totally human, honest, and genius like. The book works in two parts. The first part is the childhood and punk years, and then the second deals with middle-age, illness, and ...Making music. The fact that after a marriage and having and raising a child, she decides to go back to making music is an inspiration in itself. I would recommend this book to any young female musician and anyone in my age bracket who want to pick up a guitar, write songs, and especially when the world around you says "No."

Also she writes about others quite well - of course her band mates in The Slits, but also Johnny Rotten (Lydon), Keith Levene, Mick Jones - and she brings a lot of color to their personality. Her observations are sharp, which is one of the ingredients that make a writer great. And she is without a doubt, in one word, "great."

Leah says

I wanted to both devour this and savor this; which is telling that a book is really, really good. Don't let the

reviews and interviews about this book fool you; everyone wants to focus on what this book talks about regarding her relationships to household punk names that precede her: Sid Vicious, Johnny Rotten, Johnny Thunders, Joe Strummer, Siouxsie Sioux, etc. These parts of the book are rich, yes, but Albertine was more than a muse; she was literally a superhero, and punk as fuck. This book tells the story of a girl who didn't know shit about playing music but did it anyway (none of her friends knew shit about it either, but being a girl and without any other punk lady guitarists to look up to, was up against much more). Throughout the book she approaches her endeavors this way, including writing the very thing (turns out, Albertine is a compelling as hell writer, too.) This was truly inspiring, and when you think it's going to settle into adulthood: marriage and motherhood, it picks right back up again. This woman said "yes" to a lot of things, and her humility is palpable on every page. It didn't have to be, the book hopefully proves to not only the readers but to herself that she is fucking remarkable, but it made her path through life relatable, like I could do it all too if I just said "yes" more often.

Paul Bryant says

I'm not big on music memoirs, in fact I'd rather ram a dead water vole up my nose than read one, but there was something about the ten thousand good reviews of this book which persuaded me. Turns out, they weren't wrong.

Rock music is so tediously predictable. As the sun rises in the east so there will be white boys in a rock band. It's such a white boys' club. How many female rock bands have had any sort of career? Ten? Maybe. What about female rock musicians in otherwise male bands? There's a notable few but it's unusual. (Compare that with pop music where women have practically taken over.) When English punk jumped up into something in 1975-77 The Slits were the girl band. Some people think they were great. (They sounded like a bit of a tuneless racket to me, but I'm not a punk head, all I've got is the Clash's first album. I defy anyone to listen to The Slits' 2nd album *Return of the Giant Slits* and spot a single tune in there.)

Viv Albertine was the guitarist. Embodying the punk attitude, she blew £250 (a colossal amount in 1976) on an electric guitar when she couldn't play at all, had never tried, but she wanted to. She couldn't be bothered learning on an acoustic first & also couldn't be bothered with all those tiresome chords. So her style was unusual. But that was okay, same thing went for the bass player and the drummer. And the vocalist was a 14 year old nutter who squawked and roared and flailed around wildly on stage all the time. I wished I'd have gone to a Slits gig. It would have been something.

Viv Albertine from an interview

because we hadn't seen any girls on stage before we used to have massively long discussions about how we should stand on stage. Should we stand with our legs apart? No, all the guys with guitars in skinny jeans stand with their legs apart, and you'd think, we can't stand like that. We'd spend hours and hours, days and days, discussing how to stand.

So this is the story of the beginning of punk, Viv is in on the ground floor knocking around with Sid Vicious,

John Rotten, Mick Jones and all the later well known crowd, then comes the tale of The Slits and all of that is great, alarming and funny and she has this voice, kind of deadpan and a little bit spaced out and weirdly compelling. The Slits split up after 5 years, which she doesn't properly explain, and she then becomes poor and alone, and we are on page 249 with 162 pages to go.

The rest of the book is, well, the rest of her life which is like snakes and ladders, down down down then up up whoosh then tumbledown crash then painfully dragging herself along and up a bit, so, like that. It wasn't all Little House on the Prairie. She's always falling, always rising, always falling. She has been through a lot & had three different careers excluding the domestic non-bliss 17 year hiatus.

In 1987 she formed a Bridget Jones-style pact with her singleton best mate. These were the rules :

- 1. We're going to go out with anyone who asks us. And we are going to give that guy three dates, even if we want to kill ourselves after the first date.*
 - 2. We have to ask out two guys a month. It doesn't matter who they are, if we like them or not, it's the act of asking that's important.*
 - 3. Whenever we go out, men must be included in the party. It's so much easier to take refuge in the company of your girlfriends after a hard day's work but it's not going to help us meet anyone.*
- Conclusion: after three months our expectations are considerably lowered.*

You can expect many contradictions here – she believes in love, no she doesn't; she needs a boyfriend, no she doesn't; she can live without music, no she can't. And some forthright opinionating:

Look at most of the couples I know, they're not in love., they're scared of being alone., financially entwined or hanging on to a partner to try and convince the world they're acceptable human beings. I can't think of one couple I'm envious of. When a woman comes up to me and says "I'm so sorry to hear about your marriage" I think No, I'm sorry to hear about yours.

Ok that might sound like Viv is all up in your face all the time, she's not. She has a great voice, it rises and falls, she's great company. But some people will be a bit revolted, I can't deny. Your maiden aunt may not like the I shot up once & my arm went black for months tale. And you know how people describe Lena Dunham's "aggressive nudity" in Girls? Well for Viv it's more "aggressive bleeding". So much blood on so many pages, as she herself says, it's like the final scene from Carrie all over again and again and again.

There are a few things I really wanted to hear about which she skips – nothing about the 2nd Slits album after lavish brilliant pages all about the first; nothing about how Johnny Rotten became Ari Up's stepfather (she was the Slits' teenage singer - come on, that rates a mention Viv); nothing about what she thought of the other punk bands' music. But hell, I'm so glad to have 418 pages of stuff from Viv Albertine. Maybe there will be a volume 2.

PS- her new-ish album The Vermilion Border sounds great....there are tunes!

Amy says

If you've ever wondered what Johnny Rotten's junk smelled like in 1977, Viv Albertine will tell you. She will also tell you about the time she got crabs from a junkie in a squat in Amsterdam, and she and her mom (!!!) combed them all out in their tiny kitchen and smashed them with the backs of spoons. And about the years of IVF treatments and gory miscarriages she endured to have a baby. And, gorgeously, about how something inside her made her keep practicing the guitar until she found her unique sound, even though her next-door neighbors begged her to stop trying. And about all her regrets and her triumphs and the lovely boots she wore for both. I've never read a memoir quite as frank and funny and weird as this one. I adored it. Viv Albertine is a strong, chaotic, feminist punk and my new hero.

Nigeyb says

I like The Slits and I'm very interested in the punk era however significant parts of this book are not about punk. What's more even if I had no interest in punk, or indeed no idea about Viv Albertine, I am sure I'd still love this book. I devoured it. It's just brilliant.

Split into self-contained chapters, Viv variously describes growing up in Muswell Hill, her family, school, teenage experiences, working at Dingwalls, punk, The Slits, close relationships with some of punk's biggest names, making records, teaching aerobics, filmmaking, cancer, trying to conceive, marriage and domesticity, and creative reinvention. That inexhaustive list is just the half of it though, it's all interesting, and Viv describes everything with honesty, candour and plenty of hard won wisdom and insight.

This is not a punk memoir - it's a life memoir. It's also a memoir about a courageous woman and original thinker. A true artist. The writing is clear and concise - the contents fascinating, and frequently profound.

Ana O says

My muse.

I will never reach this level of badass.

K.A. Laity says

I kept thinking I'd already written this review because the book has so completely seeped into my consciousness. This is a warts and all memoir that tests you at the start to see if you're strong enough to make the journey, throwing the messy chaos of her early life at the reader with both hands. I doubt the teen Albertine and I would ever have bonded as friends -- she's just too much of a girly girl for me, I never dealt well with the 'boy crazy' types -- but I so admire this woman, I cannot tell you how much. She had a lot more chutzpah pursuing the things I only dreamed of like swanning her way into the music scene and picking up a guitar and keeping at it. Her life is tough from the get go but she persists through it all. She was there at so many of the pivotal moments in punk and beyond. Our culture does not idolize women except for beauty (which she has plenty of but never mind) or she would be mentioned in the same breath as Mick and Joe and

Johnny and Sid, but they Slits don't even get more than a grudging mention as one of the 'girl bands' of the era. The obsessiveness any art requires (the title comes from her mother's lament about the young Viv's preoccupations) is scorned in women as 'narcissistic' which seems to be what all women who create are disparaged as being. How dare they spend time on themselves?!

Like the Raincoats the Slits stretched so far beyond the simple punk chords so fast that in part their identity didn't really sit with that particular genre. An amazing bunch from the singular Ari Up and fabulous Palmolive on drums with a vengeance. They moved onto more experimental stuff, changed, changed innovated added the amazing Neneh Cherry for a time and like most bands, broke up, moved on and found new things. Albertine pursues everything with the same zeal, throwing herself headlong into filmmaking, pottery, marriage, and a desperate fight to give birth, which is almost immediately followed by an agonizing battle against cancer.

And one day she wakes up to find herself a ghost of what she was, living in the country, which had once been an escape and had become an exile. And she resurrects her love of music and starts to battle back to it one pub gig at a time. She's still a work in progress (thankfully!) at times frustratingly abject (there were times I just shouted at her through the pages, "What are you thinking, woman?!"), at times so amazingly strong that you have to cheer. It's a remarkable journey that will leave you feeling exhausted but thrilled, just like a great gig.

Fred Garnett says

Terrific book, I love, love, love Viv Albertine! (Just been voted by MOJO magazine as the best music book of 2014) I think this is possibly the best book on the punk era in British music, although England's Dreaming by John Savage is kind of "definitive" about the scene overall. Viv Albertine's more personal memoir tells us more directly about the scene, how it began and emerged, then developed, as she knew many of the key players (Mick Jones, Johnny Rotten, Sid Vicious). She was part of the amazing Slits (Cut is one of my all-time favourite albums) but then faded away. As the book is a warts (literally) and all autobiography of her full life we find out why she quit and what she did in her quiet years, as well as being a Mum. I was one of many who responded a couple of years ago to her crowd funding of comeback album The Vermillion Border and the story behind this is also fascinating. Her directness and honesty, and her enduring principles, ensure that this is rivetingly honest, include lots of crap sex, and is never less than insightful. Well worth reading, even if you aren't enamoured of the UK punk scene, because this is a great autobiography by a modern woman.

Phil says

Although she'll forever - and rightly - be known as the guitarist in that most original, uncompromising, and essential band The Slits, Viv Albertine has brought the same questing, creative, feminist principle she showed as a musician and songwriter to bear on all aspects of her subsequent life. One of the results has been a series of second careers as a filmmaker, ceramicist, solo musician, and latterly actor. Another is this inspired memoir, by far the best I've yet read by a veteran of the Punk Wars of 76-77. It's a sequence of episodic recollections rather than an attempt at spurious autobiography, by turns affectionate, scathing, heartbreakingly honest (particularly in the chapters dealing with her cancer and hard-won motherhood) and infused by a sharp, dark, and genuine humour. She's particularly good at character sketches of family,

friends, acquaintances and adversaries, and entirely lacking in the self-importance and desire for justification that afflict so many old rockers who turn to the printed word as an attempt to eke out a failing career. This is a book by a real woman who has done extraordinary things and still has plenty of life and creativity left in her.
