



Perfect Youth: The Birth of Canadian Punk

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A forgotten musical and cultural history of drunks and miscreants, future country stars and political strategists Perfect Youth is the story of the birth of Canadian punk, a transformative cultural force that reared its head across the country at the end of the 1970s. Bands like D.O.A., the Subhumans, the Viletones, and Teenage Head — alongside lesser-known regional acts from all over Canada — reshaped a dull musical landscape, injecting new energy and new sounds into halls, bars, and record stores from Victoria to St. John's. Reaching beyond the realm of standard band biographies, Sutherland unearths a detailed historical context to offer an idea of how the advent of punk reshaped the culture of cities across Canada, speeding along the creation of alternative means of cultural production, consumption, and distribution.

Perfect Youth: The Birth of Canadian Punk Details

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From Reader Review Perfect Youth: The Birth of Canadian Punk for online ebook

Jamie Hicks says

This book was fascinating. It revealed a movement and a scene that few Canadians knew about, let alone the world. A few name drops throughout add to the flavor...oops flavour, Canadian spelling. If you are a punk and/or music fan you will discover lots of new (to you) music. (I am now a fan of The Viletones). However there's a caveat - this was a tough read due to an abundance of run-on sentences. My high-school English teachers would have torn this apart. I had to read some sentences 2-3 times to get the point. Maybe that's just a weakness on my part. Secondly there may be some exaggeration on some of these bands being legendary. That is a matter of opinion always. I liked the new music I discovered, this was a cool scene and a great story. But I think the importance is blown out of proportion. I digress, I don't like to take down musicians, just spread the word that something cool existed in the Great White North that few knew of.

Pmceachnie says

Sam covers the breadth of Canadian punk without forgetting his present tense status and sense of humour. A refreshing and informative read for sure.

Chris Walter says

Essential reading for any Canadian punker.

Simon Harvey says

Perfect Youth is an excellent read, a consistently entertaining, informative and insightful glimpse into a moment in Canadian cultural history that has literally never before been covered with this sort of integrity. Neatly side-stepping the numerous genre pitfalls into which far too many punk books slip (the gaudy sex-and-drugs catalogue of inane debauchery, the dry academic exercise in bloodless irrelevance, the spirited but badly-written personal memoir), Sutherland has managed to incorporate all the amusing and/or shocking anecdotes into a narrative that still displays a remarkable sense of larger historical/cultural/political contexts. His genuinely good writing imbues these pages with a strong personal voice that remains generous-- if not indulgent-- with the often contradictory and sometimes dubious perspectives offered by his subjects. Best of all, Sutherland resists the temptation to focus only on the obvious, the popular and the easily available, instead doing punk nerds like me a huge service by illuminating the history of Canadian punk in such locales as Saskatoon and northern tip of rural Nova Scotia.

Having recently read Alex Ogg's similarly excellent "No More Heroes", I would wish that Perfect Youth was as expansive in its own coverage; some of these stories are clearly but the tip of the iceberg, and some areas of the country remain undiscussed (London, Windsor and Quebec outside of Montreal, for example). That said, these are more wishlist entries than real complaints; the book is already thick with information, and any

omissions owe more to the economic realities of modern publishing than to laziness or indifference on the part of the author. One can only hope for a second volume to take up where this one was compelled to leave off.

Reading this book was truly exciting. It made me more enthused than ever about this country's rich musical history, and eager to hear numerous groups and recordings that are finally receiving their due through these pages. I strongly recommend it to anyone curious about the less-travelled paths in Canadian music, as well as to fans of punk rock anywhere.

Steve says

I overreacted when I saw that Sam Sutherland thinks Personality Crisis were the best Canadian punk band, I'm sorry. This book has more meat than a pulled pork- and for once I think a punk book hit a great middle point between being introductory and drawn out and dull. A must for any Canadian punk without shit for brains, whether they're fans of any of these bands or not. And if they aren't? Tough.

Mark says

A great read with tons of great stories from all different pockets of punk in Canada. As somebody who was only vaguely information of early punk in Canada this book was both informational and entertaining.

Ty Stranglehold says

An amazing view of an almost always overlooked corner of the punk rock world. Canada has given the world much in the way of the arts, and this book shows that punk rock is no different. Well written and laid out, it is hands down the best book on Canuck music, let alone punk, out there! READ IT NOW!!!!

Gregory Klages says

Sutherland weaves a nice series of anecdotal tales culled from the memories of the Canadian punks who were "there" during the emergence of Canada's punk scene in the mid-to-late 1970s. His dogged determination in tracking down people who have left behind their punk roots (some to enter the sanctified realm of boardrooms, some to continue to struggle along in the music biz, and others who have simply moved to struggling...) is admirable and produces real insights into an era that is hard to source.

Sutherland's love of the subject, and of researching his subject, comes across in his writing. It is neither hagiography or shock journalism. It is simple and compassionate story-telling at its best. He conveys the spirit of the people, as well as of the music these people made, which is difficult to find. In this regard, Sutherland does a real service in providing something akin to a shopping list for those who want to find out more about Canadian punk, lends impetus to the effort to preserve these works and extend access to them, and increase awareness of the strong and important influence these bands had within their respective hometowns and (much to my surprise) internationally.

Donna Parker says

I opened this very heavy book that I had won from the Goodreads First Reads Program, creaky joints protesting, and as I adjusted my reading glasses I chuckled that now it's just my joints protesting. In my misspent youth I guess I could have been called: a punk, or at times goth, alternative, rebel without a clue, writer, editor, general pain in the...well, you get the point, if you really have to put labels on stuff. This book is interesting and I'm sure parts of it are even true, how much do people really remember after so many influences. I guess my favourite part was reminding people what punk was really about: acceptance, tolerance, being who you were. As births go the punk movement in Canadian was a bumpy ride, but wow, what a ride.

Paul Childs says

A really great read; people, places, bands and things I hadn't thought about in years. Not just pointless nostalgia either; an incisive view into what and who made Canadian punk unique, how geography and distance drove the formation of bands and the circles of bands and personalities that emerged. Reminders too of how small the scene was; even if like me you were on the edges of it the number of times there's 2-3 degrees of separation from people is amazing, for good (the Ottawa scene at Rotter's club) and not so good (my mother worked for Gerry Doucette's lawyer in Ottawa, so Sutherland's observations on Doucette's one hit career are hilarious). If you were around in '76 and '77 when things really started to heat up this book will remind you of those days, more importantly why we thought that new music was so great. It will remind you too of what today's indie music scene emerged from, and how the music industry today is just that, an industry with few redeeming aspects.

One minor quibble, the book could have used one more round of editing, there's some minor redundancies and repetition (and that's probably a result of the work the book emerged from). That said the accuracy of dates of concerts and events, down to the hour in some cases, more than makes up for that. Highly recommended.

Denise says

I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway. This book is a thoroughly researched and fascinating history of the punk scene all across Canada and boy does it bring back memories! Yes, I was there at the concert at the New Yorker in Toronto, my introduction to punk, the Ramones and Stiv Bators and the Dead Boys, thanks to my younger brother. Reminiscences, reminiscences....Nazi Dog of the Viletones singing "Possibilites", seeing the Diodes in Hamilton, The Forgotten Rebels...This book has it all! Was it ever easy to find Christmas presents this year. This book was it. The only improvement, that I could suggest, would be to have a discography of all the songs of the groups, that the author mentions throughout this book. That would take my rating to 10 out of 5. You know you have a winner when a book transcends music generations. The eyes popped out of a teenage daughter of friends, who visited during the holidays and who are fans of dinosaur rock. She asked to borrow this to read.

DeadWeight says

Sam Sutherland a little... over-enthusiastic at times, and his journalism as such should here be taken with some heaping salt spoons. He describes The Viletones, though I love them to pieces, as sounding "unlike anything else" or some such nonsense about how it's their vital "Canadian-ness." What? Can-Punk has certainly developed a unique sound and texture over the years, but it's hard for me to hear them as anything other than obviously trying to rip off the New York sound. The damn add Leckie posted for the band in the first place read "Ramones stylist seeking same," ffs.

That being said, this is certainly the first book I'd throw at anyone wanting to know anything about the premier waves of Canadian alternative music. Sutherland's passion is inspiring and occasionally contagious (I now fuck with the Dishes very, very hard), but his inability to ever dial down his nationalistic punk fanboyishness can make some sections a little dull, as it's hard to remain enthusiastic alongside him when every band that pops up over the span of NEARLY 400 PAGES is always ZOMG THE BEST MOST RADICAL THING EVER, but the journey is very much worth it for those interested.

Justin says

A great geographic gala from sea to shining sea. Alas only one mention of lowly London! Here in a town where surely there was as much as anywhere else in the country! Certainly more than in Meat Cove!

Katrina Griffiths says

I read this book in just over a day and a half. I couldn't put it down. I've dabbled in punk music, I'll happily let anyone teach me anything to do with punk and perhaps that mentality is what made me so open to the storytelling the author dives into here. I went into this with no knowledge that Canada HAD a punk scene outside of maybe Vancouver and Toronto. The book is funny, it's emotional and so informative. The author clearly adores his subject matter and it shows in every word and every paragraph.

The downsides? Sometimes there are a lot of names of musicians and bands. They can blend together. Also because of how the chapters are laid out sometimes you do have something repeated from two different bands POV. This is particularly noticeable with the Talking Head chapter vs the general Toronto chapter. They're the big Daddies of Canadian punk and frequently mentioned.

Also as a very proud Maritimer I was sad that the Atlantic Canada/East Coast chapter seemed so lacking in information. Don't get me wrong the author makes a point of giving reasons but I feel like there was lots of information out there that could have been added. Perhaps it's just because of the restrictions that needed to be placed on the book regarding date bands formed, after all Atlantic Canada is always 10 years behind the rest of the world and punk seems to be no different.

An amazing book. If you are AT ALL even a little interested in punk and/or are Canadian you need to spend the money and get this book. You will not be disappointed.

Michael says

freaking awesome book on the early early beginnings of punk in canada.
