

The thrash punk you grew up with is back in force

Rhino's DiY Series — About the Young Idea

Compilation

Rhino

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You know you're getting old when the bands you grew up with stare out from a nostalgia collection. But such is pop culture's instant, self-generating nostalgia — we're so short-sighted that we remember the moment minutes after the moment's gone. If Coke Classic was a corporate plot to make our parents feel old, Rhino's new "DiY" reissues, a series of do-it-yourself punk era "classics" may do the same for our generation. After all, punk is the last unified event for English and American youth. "By the time the Sex Pistols broke up in January 1978, punk had fragmented," Jon Savage writes in the liner notes to *The Modern World*. "But its fragments held the future of rock and pop for the

series

SCOTT TIMBERG

next 15 years."

At no time is this more clear than 1993, when rough, hard-edged bands like Sonic Youth, Nirvana, My Bloody Valentine and Sugar, all children of punk, rule the alternative and college radio charts. The whole "riot grrrl" thing, as well as some gangsta rap, takes punk's rage across barriers of gender and race. And anybody who can recall Chronic Town or Murrmur knows that even bands like R.E.M. inherited punk's unorthodox, do-it-yourself ethic, if not its aggressive sound. Chapel Hill bands would still be playing Lynyrd Skynyrd covers if it weren't for punk.

British Punk — a movement kicked off by musicians, unemployed street kids, and art school impressarios — was brought together by its inability to imagine a future. (In dreary mid-'70s Britain, 40 percent of English youth wanted to emigrate, according to Savage.) "No future for you and me!" shouted the Sex Pistols on "Anarchy in the UK."

So it seems a little strange to give punk and New Wave this kind of historical, archival treatment. In fact, Rhino's release is desperately needed — almost three-quarters of the tracks on DiY are not available on CD anywhere, most of the original vinyl is out of print and many of the bands are only known to cultists. As Ira Robbins wrote of the

supposedly treasonous lyrics — and most of these cuts didn't even dent the Hot 100.

Included are the usual suspects — the Buzzcocks "Orgasm Addict," XTC's "This is Pop?," the Jam's "In the City" and "The Modern World," Squeeze's "Up the Junction," Generation X's "Wild Youth" — as well as obscure gems more often discussed than heard — X Ray Specs' "The Day the World Turned Day Glo," 999's "Emergency," Magazine's "Shot By Both Sides," Tom Robinson Band's "2-4-6-8 Motorway." Because of record company squabbles and licensing rights, Rhino has to tell its story without the Clash, Gang of Four, Elvis Costello, or Graham Parker and the Rumour. The liner notes to all the volumes are extensive and lively.

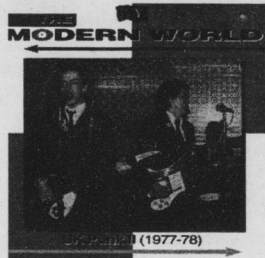
Savage — whose *England's Dreaming*, an overlong but still outstanding history of the Sex Pistols and punk, recently made it to paperback — was the right man for the job. Rhino has also put together a DiY collection for New York, Los Angeles, and Boston, and two American power pop CDs.

The Jam's "In the City" spoke for Britain's angry young under 25: "They wanna say/They're gonna tell ya about the



young idea./You better listen now you've said your bit!" Generational rebellion was at least as important as any kind of class struggle; the Buzzcocks were signed the week Elvis died.

The punks were tired of fat dinosaur groups that dominated the charts in the mid-'70s — the Rolling Stones, Elton John, Abba, Rod Stewart, and, yes Mr. Clinton, Fleetwood Mac. While the Baby Boomers roll into Washington, unable to stop thinking about tomorrow, our generation should turn its ears to angry young Brits who never even started thinking about it.



punk volumes in Rolling Stone, "None of these 38 singles ever bothered Casey Kasem." The Sex Pistols' "God Save the Queen" (included here in demo form) climbed the British pop charts only as a blank space — because of

Sex, androgyny combine to fuel risqué new read

Written on the Body

by Jeanette Winterson

Alfred A. Knopf

\$20.00

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Humor, sense and sensuality are the driving elements of this novel. Which, thrown in with a liberal dose of pure sex, can't be bad.

Jeanette Winterson has already made a name for herself with novels like "Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit," "The Passion" and "Sexing the Cherry." Her reputation as a vibrant, young author will only go from strength to strength if

book

ALEX FREW MCMILLAN

"Written on the Body" is the sign of things to come.

The novel traces the loves and losses of its protagonist. Winterson is always enigmatic and subtle, and, true to form, she doesn't reveal the sex of the translator/lover to whose skull and innermost thoughts the reader is privy. All we know is that she/he has had a long string of lovers, both male and female, and is looking for something new. Named Louise, to be more precise.

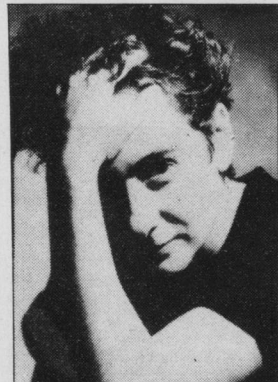
"Why is the measure of love loss?" the first sentence asks; and, indeed, "Written on the Body" is as much about how to live once love has been lost than

about what to do with love when you have it in your grasp. Winterson wrings emotion out of the reader, leading the unwilling through a miasma of affairs, relationships and hot cups of tea.

The novel's style is a stream, more of emotion than of consciousness, although academics would probably go for the latter. Winterson's delivery is masterful and witty, throwing light not only on love but on life in general. She is wonderfully observant, giving poignant cameo discussions of modern religion, modern medicine, modern wine bars and other things modern. "It's the clichés that cause the trouble," he/she says, and Winterson forgoes the trite, the bland, the established point of view and dives instead right under the skin of things, to the heart and quick of the matter.

"Written on the Body" is frank in a quirky sort of way; although she/he has unique problems, his/her situation touches home more often than not. She/he's worn out by the fast pace of lovers that glance through his/her life and depart, and so has settled, apparently for good, with the homely Jacqueline, whose greatest virtue seems to be that it is difficult to feel very strongly about her. Nothing is as it seems throughout the book, though, and even Jacqueline shows her wild side. She/he soon falls for the red-headed and passionate (and, unfortunately, married) Louise. As he/she says, "I had lately learned that another way of writing FALL IN LOVE was WALK THE PLANK."

Winterson's tone is wry and extremely quick — the novel is narrated at breakneck pace, as if it were being dictated by a very desperate semi-neurotic. The book is broken up with a scene from a play, quotations and even breaks into a commentary on a scientific textbook from the viewpoint of a lover trying to lose her/himself in the precision of anatomy. Which is more interesting in delivery than it may sound in description, and gives the novel a



Jeanette Winterson

fascinating unpredictability.

Time is disconnected in the novel, as memories and real life intertwine and create the true, messy reality of the complex nature of the narrator's love life. Such a subjective reality is not as simple as the excerpts from the anatomy textbook with which they are contrasted, and the reader begins to feel maybe nothing is true in this reality. The narrator even says at one point, with Winterson's trademark slyness, "I can by now that you are wondering whether I can be trusted as a narrator." The only solution Winterson seems to provide is that, among all this confusion, people must believe with their heart rather than their head.

Imagery, language and the fast pace of the novel make it writhe, make it simmer — qualities which are entirely in keeping with the novel's topic of passion and bereavement. As for where the novel leaves the reader, well, that's as unpredictable as the rest of the book. Even the narrator says he/she is not sure if it's a happy or sad ending, but, as Winterson would doubtless say, that's the way love is, isn't it?

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