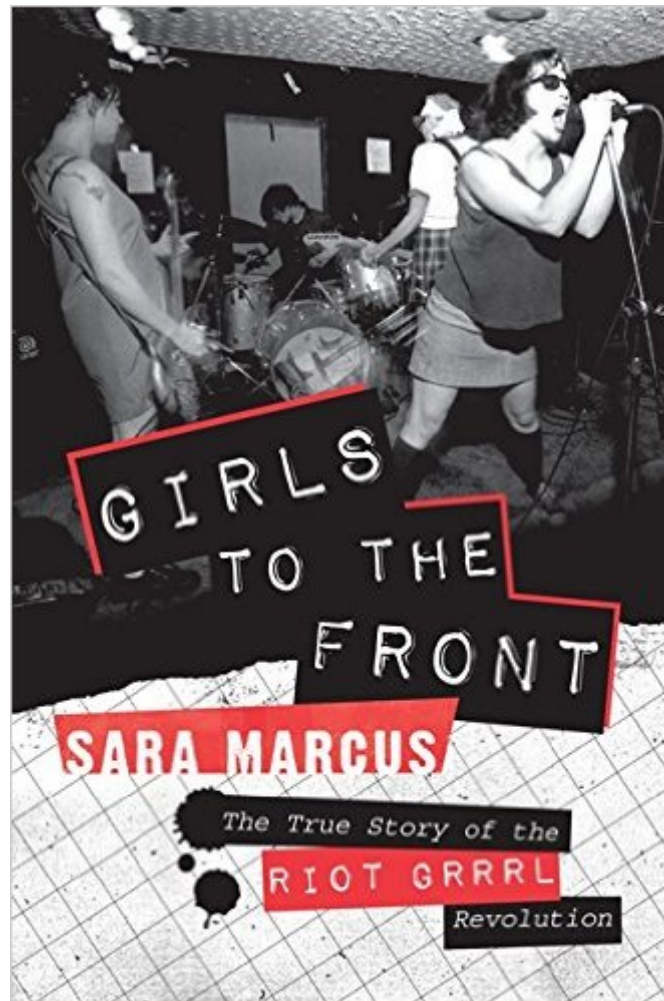


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Girls To The Front: The True Story Of The Riot Grrrl Revolution



Synopsis

For a Second Wave feminist like myself, *Girls to the Front* evokes wonderfully the way the generation after mine soaked up the promise and the punishment of feminist consciousness....A richly moving story. Village Voice writer Vivian Gornick *Girls to the Front* is the epic, definitive history of the Riot Grrrl movement—the radical feminist punk uprising that exploded into the public eye in the 1990s, altering America's gender landscape forever. Author Sara Marcus, a music and politics writer for *Time Out New York*, *Slate.com*, *Pos*, and *Heeb* magazine, interweaves research, interviews, and her own memories as a Riot Grrrl front-liner. Her passionate, sophisticated narrative brilliantly conveys the story of punk bands like Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, Heavens to Betsy as well as successors like Sleater-Kinney, Partyline, and Kathleen Hanna's Le Tigre and their effect on today's culture.

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Customer Reviews

Wow! Just finished the book and many thoughts are taking over my brain. This book explains a lot of things that I always wondered about: Things such as who were the people involved in Riot Grrrl besides the famous faces we always see?, did other girls really act evil with one another besides Ms. Love? and most of all what were the good parts of the movement that I never knew. It's easy to understand why riot grrrl started/ why it fell apart, but it takes a book like this to understand the in between parts none of us knew. The latter is the best part of this book. The author does not try to kiss anyone's ass nor is she burning bridges. She's diplomatic with a healthy dose of truth and

skepticism. Also, the other book with the seemingly same subject matter "Riot Grrrl: Revolution Girl Style Now!" is a totally different book because its focus is on the music/style than the nuts and bolts of riot grrrl as a grassroots movement. This one is for the people who care about what exactly happened in the history of this feminist movement while the other book is more for music and pictures. Buy both and get schooled the fun way.

Sara Marcus starts out by informing us that she wanted to uncover the mystery of a movement she herself had just missed out on, and she does...kind of. As with most things written about Riot Grrrl (particularly by those who weren't there), Marcus puts an emphasis on the girl bands that played a part in shaping the part of third-wave feminism that we now think of as Riot Grrrl. Whether because that's the part that was most interesting to her as a biographer, or because she chose to spend most of her time interviewing the musicians of said bands or for some other reason, the fact remains that music was but one aspect of the "girl culture" that was being borne from that movement. Some people who had significant roles within Riot Grrrl, like Donna Dresch, don't get so much as a mention, while countless others that gave their heart and soul to that scene get a sentence or two in the course of the book. Lastly, Marcus' own necessary impartiality seems to get more and more tainted as the book wears on, reaching something of a crescendo by the time she details the banning of several Riot Grrrl members from the now-defunct Beehive Collective. In summation, read the book and enjoy it for what it is: a love letter from a fan who spent some time collecting the stories of others. But do not, in any way, take this to be the be-all-end-all "True story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution", because it's not even close.

Caveat: I was way into Riot Grrrl in the early 90s, so i am not remotely an objective reader of this book. That said, i loved the s*** out of it in a grand, passionate, angry, weepy, wall-punching, boot-stomping way. Perhaps it's partly nostalgia, and perhaps it's partly directionless frustration at a lot of present-day misogyny, but even though this book is far from perfect, i am thanking every last star that Marcus wrote it, and that i read it.

This is a powerful rendering of some crucial years, a time that still resonates today in phenomenon like Pussy Riot and Girls Rock! I was part of this moment, and it still matters immensely to me... this book is a worthy document, and the result of painstaking research... check it out if you can!

I wanted to give this 3.5 stars, but since half stars aren't an option I felt like this deserved a bump up

instead of a bump down. The book covers the years grunge became pop music between 1989-1994, and tells the rarely heard feminine side of that culture. With a movement like Riot Grrrl it's impossible to separate the political from the music, but I wanted to read more about the music than was presented here. The author jumps around a bit, and at times seems to lose focus. I would have also like to read more of an analysis of the movements broader impact on culture (other than "big media tried to buy and sell us" and "Spice Girls ripped off Girl Power") but the subtitle is "true story of" not "analysis of." As someone who wasn't there (obviously) I think between this book, and the documentary "The Punk Singer" I was able to get a good idea of what the Riot Grrrl movement meant to the women of the early 90s.

Just finished this book and did not feel quite as enthusiastic about it as a number of my friends. It was very well-written, and especially captivating towards the beginning, but it follows a decidedly negative narrative trajectory towards the second half, basically suggesting that Riot Grrrl was always already over (the old "punk is dead" refrain) before it even began. The second half, in particular, traces a disintegration of feminism, sisterhood, and collaborative activism and privileges the voices of dissent and disillusion. This seems unfortunate to me, since Marcus is clearly aware of this trajectory and apologizes for her own perspective often, while also attempting to remind us-- in an uninspired, even pedantic sort of fashion-- that the feminist struggle continues. To me, a broader look at the organic outcroppings of Riot Grrrl around the country and a more diffuse perspective (even a longer time frame) would have enabled a more grassroots sort of movement to emerge and indicate its many permutations rather than the focus on leaders that Marcus decided to take. Perhaps a marketing decision here? My feeling is that this could have been avoided with a basic, structural shift of focus from bands to the broader movement (which included self-defense workshops, house parties, puppet shows, movie making, political protests for a wide range of issues, zines, etc.). Marcus does mention these, but her central focus (and the narrative) is music, and really just the big three bands, which I feel inherently skews the story in a direction of decline. If this "revolution" is symbolized by the concept that "a band is any song you have ever played with anybody even if only once" then perhaps evolution, growth, commitment, and sustainability are foreclosed from the start. Thoughts?

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