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The World Without Punk Women

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If there had not been women in the punk rock scene, the music world would be very different. Erasing women such as Patti Smith, The Runaways, Alice Bag, the Slits, Siouxsie, Poly Styrene, The Raincoats and many others from history would have meant that punk would not have had the transcendence it has today. It would not be the multifaceted style that we have, not inclusive being male-oriented, probably more hardcore. If Patti Smith had not existed and published “Horses,” the music of artists such as Shirley Manson or Polly Jean Harvey would be very different. She inspired, influenced and empowered a whole new generation of female singers but also of male singers. Also, important social movements that came out of music, such as the Riot Grrrls, would not have existed without the women in the punk scene of Los Angeles. There would be no bands such as Bikini Kill, Sleater-Kinney, or Bratmobile, who in turn shaped many of the bands that came afterward all over the world. There is a direct line, for instance from Alice Bag to Kathleen Hannah to Teri Gender Bender (Le Butcherettes). Likewise, bands such as Girl in a Coma or its sequel FEA in San Antonio would not exist without Joan Jett, who produced their records in her label Blackheart, a record label devoted to women in music. If the punk pioneers had not existed, neither the Pussy Riot’s performance in the Cathedral of Moscow would have taken place, nor “Un violador en tu camino” by the Chilean group “Las Tesis”, which has become a global phenomenon empowering women all over the world. Hence, the vindication of women’s rights in the world would not be as powerful as it is, using music and performance as social and political tools.

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