



Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution

By Sara Marcus

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“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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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A Brooklyn-based journalist gives a brash, gutsy chronicle of the empowering music and feminist movement of the early 1990s led by young women rock groups like Bikini Kill and Bratmobile. Politicized by such national events as the backlash against feminism in the press, the first Iraq War, and the Supreme Court's gearing up to review *Roe v. Wade*, young women were incensed. Kathleen Hanna, a college student from Olympia, Wash., was spurred to action after interviewing writer Kathy Acker and working for a domestic violence shelter, and she decided to start a band. Hanna, along with Tobi Vail, a fanzine writer (*Jigsaw*) and former punk rocker who was dating Nirvana's Kurt Cobain, were on a mission to spread female rebellion via their band, Bikini Kill. Meanwhile, Allison Wolfe and Molly Neuman, who had met at the University of Oregon, were in Washington, D.C., cobbling together their own band, Bratmobile. Thus, writes Marcus in this compelling account, the Grrrl Revolution was sparked. Marcus enthusiastically tracks the "scattered cartographies of rebellion" and captures the combustible excitement of this significant if short-lived moment. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Marcus' compelling history covers a specific time period, 1989–1994, and a particular type of music that turned into a larger social movement. The riot grrrl movement was a potent form of female empowerment as well as a postfeminist reaction to sexism and the rising number of sexual assaults against women when expectations for equality were high. A writer and musician, Marcus describes some of the major players on the scene, including individuals (Kathleen Hanna, Tobi Vail) and bands (Bikini Kill, Heavens to Betsy)—all set against the backdrop of the so-called postfeminist period. She tells colorful anecdotes (such as the origin of the title of Nirvana's breakthrough single "Smells like Teen Spirit"). She describes the music scene in such important riot grrrl locations as the Pacific Northwest and Washington, D.C., and chronicles the rise of riot grrrl zines and riot grrrl conventions. In all, Marcus has done a commendable job of telling the little-known history of an important social and cultural movement. --June Sawyers

Review

"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: all in all, a richly moving story." (Vivian Gornick)

"Compelling. . . . A brash, gutsy chronicle of the empowering music and feminist movement of the early 1990s. . . . Marcus enthusiastically tracks the 'scattered cartographies of rebellion' and captures the combustible excitement of this significant if short-lived moment." (*Publishers Weekly*)

"Marcus has done a commendable job of telling the little-known history of an important social and cultural movement. . . . A compelling history." (*Booklist* (starred review))

"Original, witty, idealistic and down-to-earth, *Girls to the Front* is a chronicle of women, girls, music, sexism—and, best of all, what it means to be alive. Reader take heart: Feminism is not dead." (Brenda Wineapple, author of *White Heat*)

"Sara Marcus's *Girls to the Front* is a great & true & real history. Thank God. At last." (Eileen Myles, author of *Chelsea Girls* and *Inferno (A Poet's Novel)*)

“Feminism seems to change every five years. It’s hard to grasp the movement. . . . *Girls to the Front* is not just a keeper of the flame but brings you to yr own fire.” (Kim Gordon)

“Stirring. . . . Eloquent. . . . Like Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain did in *Please Kill Me*. . . . Sara Marcus’s *Girls to the Front* tells the story of riot grrrl, one person at a time.” (*Bitch Magazine*)

“Ambitious and convincing. . . . *Girls to the Front* makes narrative sense out of events that had so far been recorded only in mythic, unverified, and fragmentary form.” (Johanna Fateman, *Bookforum*)

“A historical rockument of the revolutionary 90s counterculture Riot Grrrl movement. . . . A rousing inspiration for a new generation of empowered rebel girls to strap on guitars and stick it to The Man.” (*Vanity Fair*)

“*Girls to the Front* is more than just a historical account of the riot grrrl movement. It is a reliving. For those who missed the happenings of that era, this book will make you feel as though you were right there.” (*Venus Zine*)

“One hell of an empowering read. . . . A scorching history of the Riot Grrrl movement. . . . There’s inspiration here. Read this book and feel it—a renewed energy, in talking about the roles women play in the scenes that we live in today.” (HTMLGIANT)

“A painstakingly researched and well thought-out tribute to a punk feminist era Sara Marcus clearly holds dear. . . . It should be heralded as an uncannily insightful revelation of the motivations and inner-workings of Riot Grrrl.” (Allison Wolfe, *New York Press*)

“Exhilarating. . . . *Girls to the Front* is the well-documented history Riot Grrrl deserves. . . . Marcus writes with the empathy, grace, and balance of a good war correspondent. . . . Her book will undoubtedly prompt a whole new generation of teenage girls.” (*The Los Angeles Times*)

“A fascinaqting social history. . . . In her impassioned study, Marcus focuses on the girls in the crowd as much as stars like Bikini Kill, placing the story in the context of liberalism’s post-Reagan crisis and mapping a civilization of Xeroxed jeremiads.” (*Rolling Stone*)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Robert Hatch:

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Jenny Perez:

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