
UNFAIR MAIDEN
by Wesley Sneker
#4
The Riot Grrrl issue
big joanie SISTA
RIOT NOT DIET
RIOT GRRRL
ZINE
DIARY
UNFAIR MAIDEN
NINA 22

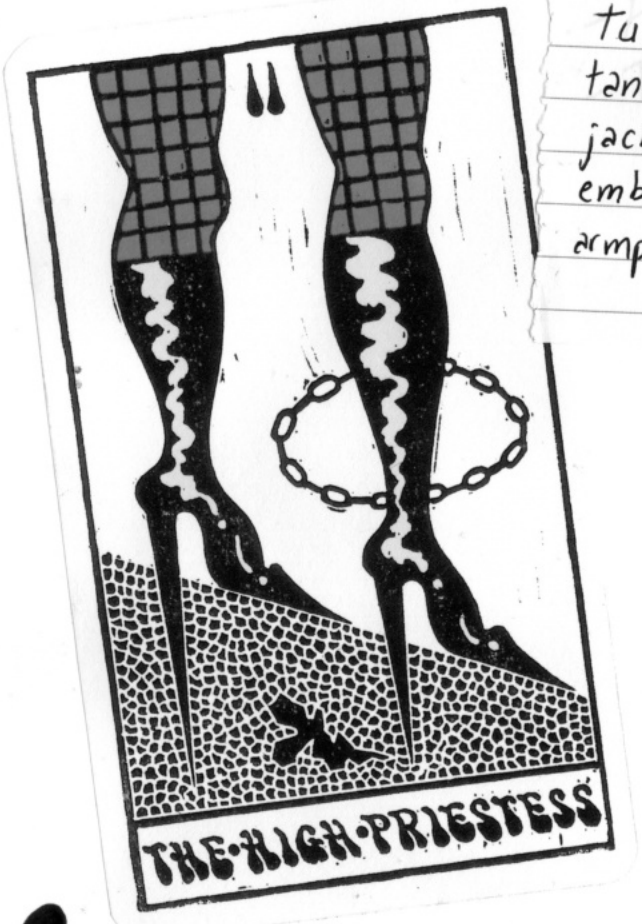
UNFAIR MAIDEN

2023

#4 THE MOTHER FUCKING RIOT GRRL ISSUE!!!

INCLUDING:
- tunez
- tank grrrl
- jacketz
- embarrassment
- armpit hair

& MORE!





♡ WESLEY SUEKER ♡ (he/she)

OKAY WAIT A GOD DAMN MINUTE!!!

Why the hell didn't I know about riot grrrl when I was in high school? Why didn't anyone tell me I could be punk and cool and badass? Why didn't anyone tell me that no, there's more [redacted] punk chik music than the ch-ch-ch-ch-ch-ch-ch-ch-CHERRY BOMB song they play on my mom's favorite radio station 99.5 The Mountain right after Grateful Dead Hippie Peace and Love bullshit? Why didn't anyone tell me that my mom was wrong, it's okay to be irritable on my period, it's okay to speak up about my own issues and injustice, that no not everyone is doing their best and we don't have to be nice to dickheads, that SOMETIMES IT'S OKAY TO JUST BE REALLY PISSED OFF YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE



AN ONGOING RIOT GRRL PLAYLIST (in no particular order)

Wet - Dazey and the Scouts

Becky - Be Your Own Pet

Nino - The Linda Lindas

I Want More - Bangs

Weird Girl - Mommy Long Legs

Spanish Bombs - Hinds

We Hate You Please Die - Crash and the Boys

Give Violence A Chance - G.L.O.S.S.

Maria - The Short Fuses

Rebel Girl - Bikini Kill

I Wish I Was A Riot Grrrl - Destructo Disk



Second Birthday - Dear Nora

Resting Bitch Face - Lavender Witch

The Backseat of my Car - IMONSTER

Night Witches - Sharp Violet

Parasite - The Coathangers

Ich brauch' keine Wohnung - The Toten Crackhuren im Kofferaum

Linger - The Cranberries

Love is the Slug - Fuzz box

Happier Still - Big Joanie

Up for Trade - Copy Scams

Up on the Roof - Dear Nora

Angst - Slotface

Time to Change - Canned Travolta

Don't Touch My Shit! - The Coathangers

I Don't Wanna Get Out of Futon - Uchikubi Gokumon Doukoukai

Say What You Want - Fabulous Disaster

Such a Stupid Girl - Fabulous Disaster

Get Outta My Room - The Donnas

I'm a Boy - The Who (secret trans anthem!)

Dead Men Don't Rape - Delilah Bon

Puffy AmiYumi - My Journal

The World is on Fire - Bullshit Boy

Hey Little Girl - SURLY GRRLY

Razor Burn - Teen Vamp Army

Malicious Muse - Lavender Witch

Tough - Hey, Richard!

「GOD SAVE THE MUSIC」 - Wienners

Mr. Lady - Lunachicks

Tartamundo - Go Betty Go

FemHex - The Antibuddies

Horse Girl - Goth GF

Second Skin - The Gits

Knockouts - Ouch My Face

Succubus - Cootie Cuties

Russian Doll - The Sewer Cats

Fauxminism - Cheap Perfume

Boys Riot - Cold Meat



i know it's not all "technically" riot grrrl. who cares. deal with it.

I'M EMBARRASSED (CAN I STILL BE A RIOT GRRRL?)



It all started with buying some shorts from Amazon. Shopping from Amazon... guess this is Karma!

My last pair of shorts were mid-thigh black ones I got from eBay like four years ago, and like all my pants I'd worn holes in the crotch from my thighs rubbing together. I went without shorts for a solid year but last week was a heat wave with temps in the 90s even through the night, so finally I caved and started looking for shorts. I hate looking for pants because nothing seems to be built for my fat belly and sizing doesn't make any fucking sense. So I picked a cheap pair of black shorts that looked like they'd be fine and ordered a 2XL since that's my shirt size. Meanwhile I only have two other pairs of pants and it's been so hot that I've sweat through them in hours.

So this morning I planned to wear the new shorts, and when I put them on I realized they were, uh, a little shorter than I'm used to. But I was late already and didn't have anything else clean to wear except a pair of slacks, but I didn't know where they were and it was gonna be really hot. My boss (who rules) had told me the day before, when I apologized for wearing a t-shirt, to "wear whatever I want." So I put on some knee-high socks hoping it'd be good enough in terms of skin coverage and went off to work. (Oh, I'm a temp teen librarian btw)

Coworker compliments my outfit, which was a good boost of confidence, and I figured it's definitely fine then. Did my best at work even though I'm on my period and having a hard emotional time, and I really did my best and tried not to tell myself that my best wasn't good enough and the patrons deserved more. Finally hit a groove. End of my shift, my awesome boss comes in to take over... and awkwardly says "so... I need to talk to you about the shorts."

Oh. My. GOD. I FUCKED UP. ~~I KNEW IT~~ I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN. I got too friendly and too casual and just too comfortable at work and ended up taking advantage of my boss's kindness and put her in the horribly uncomfortable position of commenting on my clothing when she doesn't want to, she just doesn't want the library director to get upset with either of us. And I wouldn't have left the house like this if I was working in the adult section, why would I think it's okay here??



If I were a real riot grrrl I wouldn't be embarrassed, I'd be self-confident, devil-may-care, even indignant! I'd criticize the idea that we need to dress a certain way at all if it wasn't for safety (why should we give a shit if our librarians are in shorts?)! I'd grumble about how hard it is to find work-appropriate shorts that fit! I'd rage about why a sliver of a woman's (or in my case, a demiboy's) thigh is considered unprofessional! I'd be so tough and cool that I would brush it off like it was nothing, and tell myself "whoops, I'll just wear these at home" like it was nothing, instead of having to make a whole zine page about it just to calm down!

Riot grrrlz don't necessarily break or fight against rules just for the sake of it... but I feel like they are strong and cool enough not to get embarrassed over little things like this... god, how is it that right when I'm getting more comfortable with my AFAB body, I manage to fuck things up like this!? SO. FUCKING. AWKWARD!



WE'RE NOT "BACK"

It really pisses me off when people talk as if riot grrrl and zines are relics of the 90s, as if they haven't existed and brought people together this whole time by a vibrant and kindhearted and dedicated community. So many comments and statements like "Riot Grrrl WAS a punk movement in the 90s", that at best there were "revivals" but really it was a snapshot of the times.

People do this with zines too, like when my library made a tweet about our upcoming zine fest, the county commissioner or whoever retweets it with "zines are making a comeback!" They never left you fucking suit, you just started ignoring us.

Riot grrrl isn't the past, it's the present and future. And relegating it to some former movement is just another way for people to pat themselves on the back for "how far we've come". As though the stuff grrrls ~~talked~~ growled about is solved and gone away now. Don't worry everyone, rape doesn't happen, we don't discriminate against girls for being too loud or emotional, makeup isn't an unspoken requirement in the name of "professionalism", we don't call women sluts and prudes, women aren't ignored and mistreated by doctors. We believe our problems are gone and so they are!

These people don't have the power to declare that riot grrrl and zines were in the past or are "coming back". These things never existed in their world anyway. They never could because those institutions by nature have to reject or dismiss things that aren't useful to them. As soon as punk was no longer "cool" and they weren't profiting from associating with it, they drop it and pretend it doesn't exist.

Radical DIY doesn't exist in fucking history textbooks. It doesn't exist in some theoretical emptyworld. It doesn't exist in the analytical essays of college students, no matter how awesome and involved they are outside of school. It doesn't exist on some commercial radio station with Budweiser giving out Springsteen tickets. And it doesn't exist in online storefronts, even the creators'. Those are at best windows we grant the privilege of looking through.

I'm a zine librarian at a public library (temp/part time for now, we'll see what happens after I graduate). And I'm so thankful to be in a time and place where I even COULD get paid for zine work. But sometimes I get a little sick because I'm reminded that the library--yes, even a cool public library--is still an institution, and there are ways it's fundamentally at odds with DIY, riot grrrl, ziney culture.

You can see it when people talk about how great it is that zines provide an outlet for people with marginalized identities, but we don't contact or include zinesters in collection management and decision making. When the collection is only as valuable as its circulation numbers. When a zine about monetizing your creative work is put in the "Race and Ethnicity" category because it's written for Black women. It's when donated zines sit neglected in a pile for six months because they won't give the collection the attention all the other collections get. It's wondering when you'll inevitably lose funding when zines are no longer "in".

It feels like some teen movie plot where the cool riot grrrl band gets picked up by some executive record label and then the label wants to change a bunch of things about the band because their rawness and energy and honesty doesn't fit the record's image, they just want to market to a young/cool audience. (Incidentally, I think that's the plot of Wayne's World).

I'm just so sick of having to explain and justify things to people using their language. I'm so sick of analysis. I heard the library's marketing director refer to the zine fest's posters and stuff as "branding" and it made me want to puke (sorry, I love you dude but that was just gross). I'm sick of being in a room of people who have never made a zine talking about their abstract "value", like dude, you don't get it, not really. Not until you've read a zine made on a shitty photocopier and had the text tug at a deep and human experience that had gone unacknowledged until that moment. They can't even share a zine they read and liked.

I tabled at Boston Pride and gave away zines for free/donation. I have this flyer I like to share from the 70's with a bunch of art affirmations, and it's titled "the"WHY CHEAP ART?" manifesto."

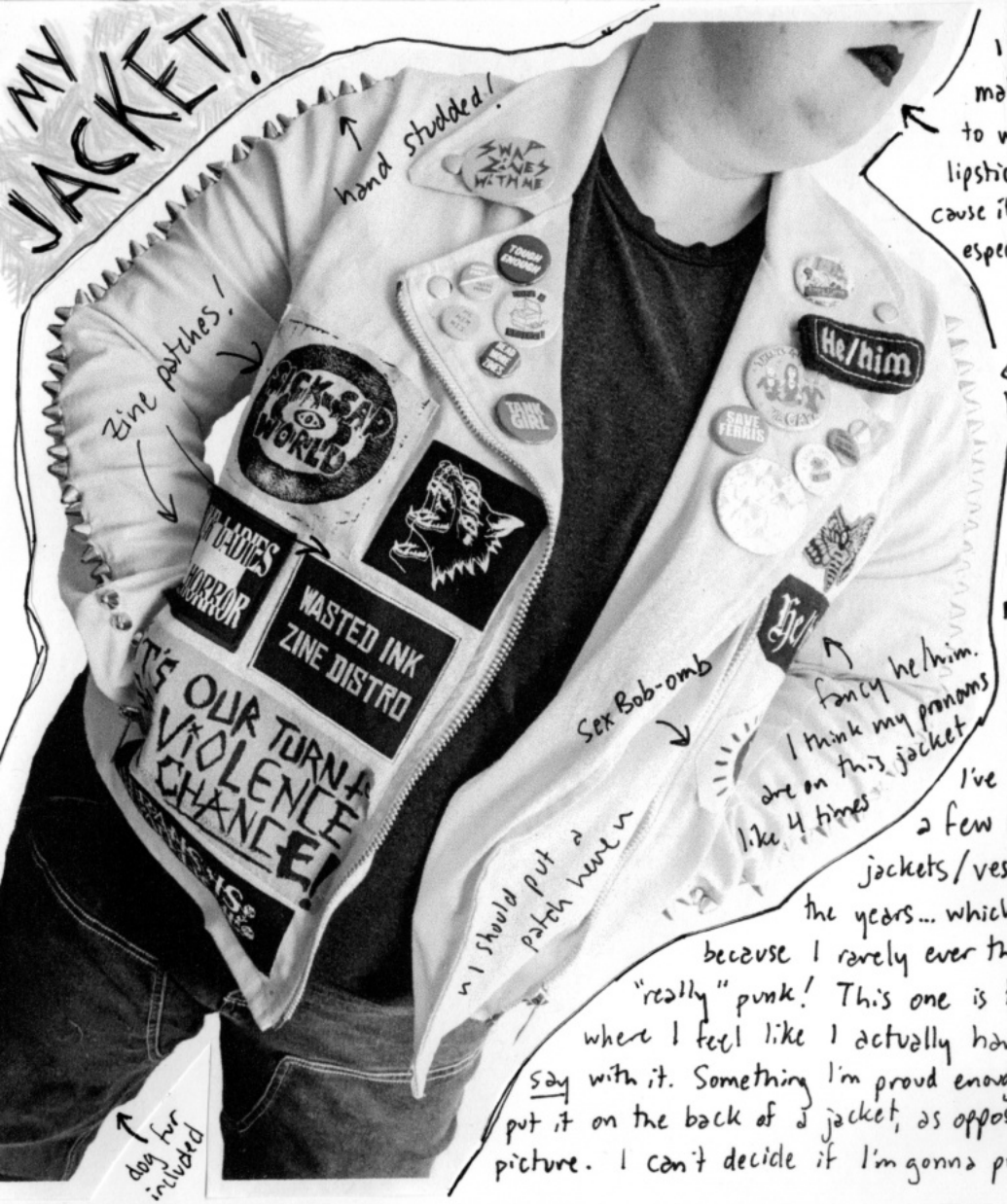
The whole thing is about making and sharing your own art as a way of deconstructing systems of economic privilege. A guy saw it and (right in front of me) said to his friend "well I guess bad art is cheap; oh, that's like their -thing-". It still makes me want to cry.

Our worth isn't dependent on their acknowledgement. Our value isn't determined by them. Our worth isn't something granted by fucking babies who lack object permanence--as soon as they're not looking they think we don't exist.

Zines, riot grrrls, queers, activists, radical DIY do-gooders and street fighters. We've always been here, and we exist without them. My life and my art and my values are not a fucking trend.

We're not "back", we're eternal.

MY JACKET!



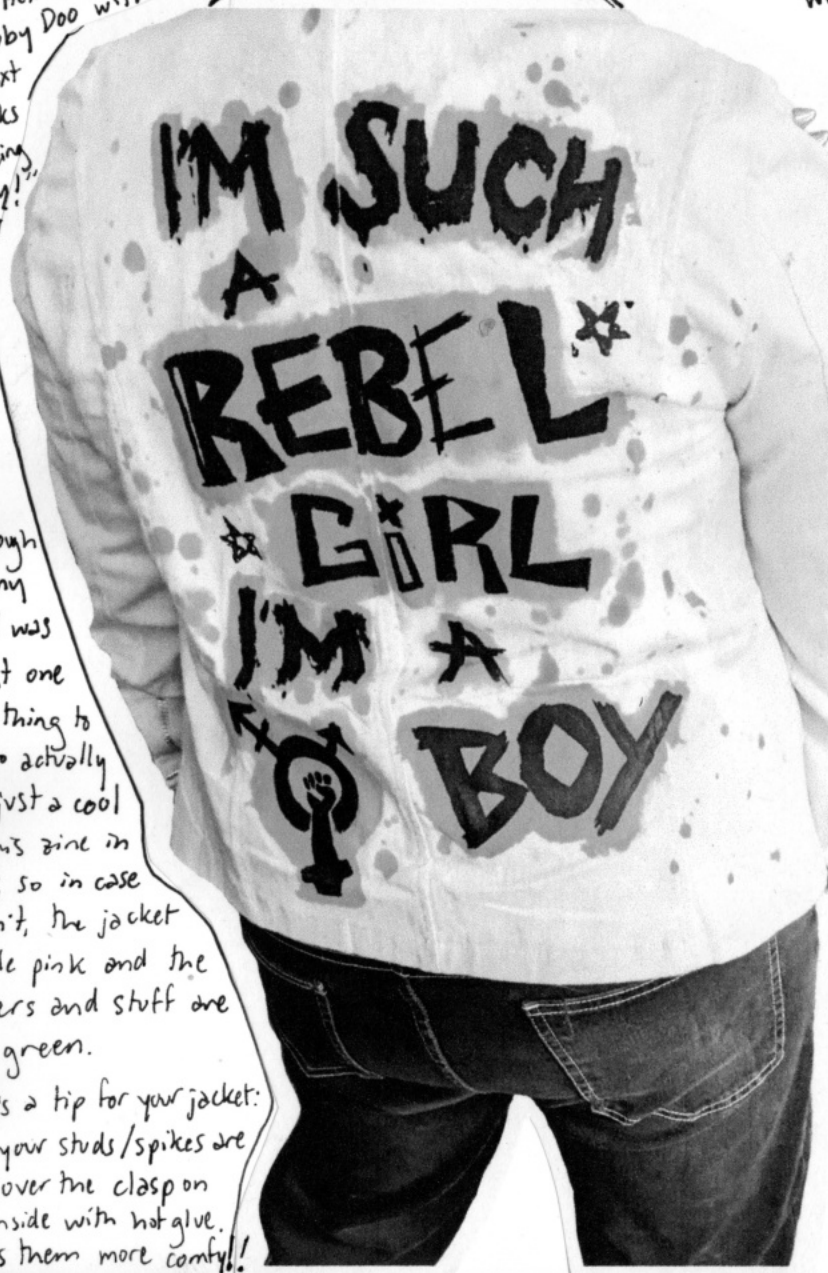
I hardly ever wear makeup but I wanted to wear this black lipstick for this photo cause it makes me feel especially goth haha

My favorite button is of the Hex Girls from Scooby Doo with the text "Thanks 4 making me gay!"



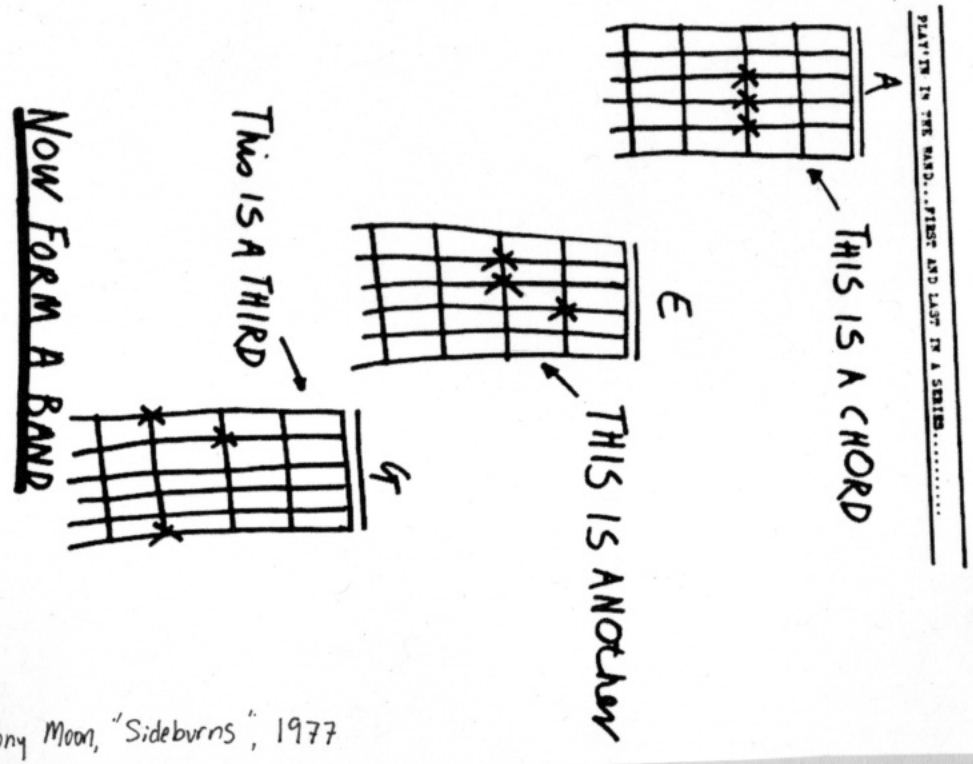
I've made a few punk jackets/vests through the years... which is funny because I rarely ever thought I was "really" punk! This one is the first one where I feel like I actually have something to say with it. Something I'm proud enough of to actually put it on the back of a jacket, as opposed to just a cool picture. I can't decide if I'm gonna print this zine in color, so in case I don't, the jacket is pale pink and the splatters and stuff are neon green.

Here's a tip for your jacket: once your studs/spikes are in, cover the clasp on the inside with hot glue. Makes them more comfy!



this jacket is already a little small for me now but I'm gonna try to keep wearing it

I originally made this to debut at the Boston Dyke March this year but I lost my nerve to go at the last minute. I was nervous about taking the train to the march in case someone knew that's where I was going. Even if I dressed stealth on the train I still kinda look queer, and where else would a queer person have been going at that train stop on a Friday night? I don't regret taking care of myself, but I will say my confidence has gone up since then.



Tony Moon, "Sideburns", 1977

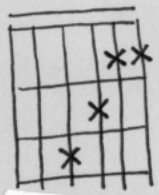
HOLLY CASIO FUCKING GETS IT! She showed this at a zine workshop and I really love it. Make things without fear, DIY culture is doing!

Holly Casio, 2011

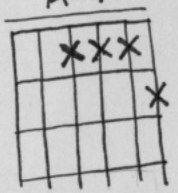


And in that spirit, I wrote a riot grrrl song! Imagine it at ~140 BPM and very loud. No melody really, just scream [redacted] or sing however you want. I don't have a guitar (or friends) but I would like to start a band someday. Here's the other chords for it, play if you like!

F



Ab7



E
IF I HAD A BAND
G
I'D TELL YOU WHAT'S WHAT
A
I'D SPEAK MY OWN MIND
E
AND I'D NEVER GIVE A FUCK

E
IF I HAD A BAND
G
I'D SAY IT LIKE IT IS
A
I'D CALL OUT ALL YOUR BULLSHIT
E
AND BE A BADASS BITCH

E F
I WOULDN'T BE SCARED
E F
I WOULDN'T BACK DOWN
E F
CAUSE I'M BEHIND A MICROPHONE
E F
AND YOU'RE A FUCKING CLOWN

E F
I WOULDN'T BE AFRAID
E F
OF WHAT YOU MIGHT SAY
E F
MY FRIENDS ARE RIGHT BEHIND ME
G Ab7 A
AND WE'RE HERE TO FUCKING PLAY

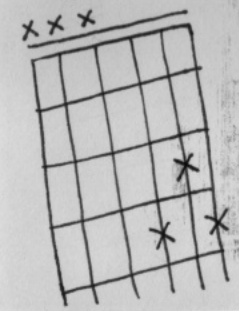
E G A E
[SOLOS ETC.]

E F
NOTHING THAT YOU TOLD ME
E F
COULD MAKE ME BE QUIET
E F
AND WHEN YOU TRIED TO HURT ME
G#dim
I'D START A FUCKING RIOT!

E
IF I HAD A BAND
G
I'D TELL YOU WHAT'S WHAT
A
I'D SPEAK MY OWN MIND
E
AND I'D NEVER GIVE A FUCK

E
IF I HAD A BAND
G
I'D BE A RIOT GRRRL
A
I'D HARNESS ALL MY ANGER
E
AND I'D RULE THE FUCKING WORLD!!

G#dim



or just do G again if this is too hard

alright, i'm gonna talk about the iconic cult classic riot grrrl and problematic fave:



HISTORY

tank girl was made by punk college students alan martin and jamie hewlett. she was formed in 1987 while working on their fanzine atomtan (i can't seem to find what it was a fanzine *of* or if wikipedia just calls it a fanzine instead of zine but whatever). they wrote her own series starting in 1988, dc picked it up for like a couple years from 1995-1996, and then after a 20-year hiatus alan wrote new tank girl stuff with different artists starting in 2007. that's the gist, anyway

READING ORDER *

*using most recent compilations / tpbs

Original Era
The Hole of Tank Girl (2012)

DC Era
Tank Girl Odyssey (2009)
Tank Gift Apocalypse (2009)

Modern Era
The Power of Tank Girl (2014)
We Hate Tank Girl (2011)
Dirty Old Tank Girl (2019)
Total Tank Girl (2017)
21st Century Tank Girl (2015)
The Legend of Tank Girl (2018)
Wonderful World of Tank Girl (2018)
Tank Girl All Stars (2018)
Tank Girl Action Alley (2019)
Tank Girl Forever (2019)
King Tank Girl (2022 ongoing)

i first encountered tank girl at a comic shop. my friend had been trying to get me into superhero comics—that is, the mass market kind—and honestly i didn't really like them. but one time while we were browsing at the used bookstore i found the collected paperback "tank girl #2" (1988), flipped through it and. holy shit. there was nudity! and sex! and swearing! and all of it was directed by this fucking awesome chik with a shaved head! and when i started reading it, it didn't even feel like the shock value was gratuitous. or like, it was, but in a who-cares sort of way rather than some hypermale power fantasy slash jerkoff material way.



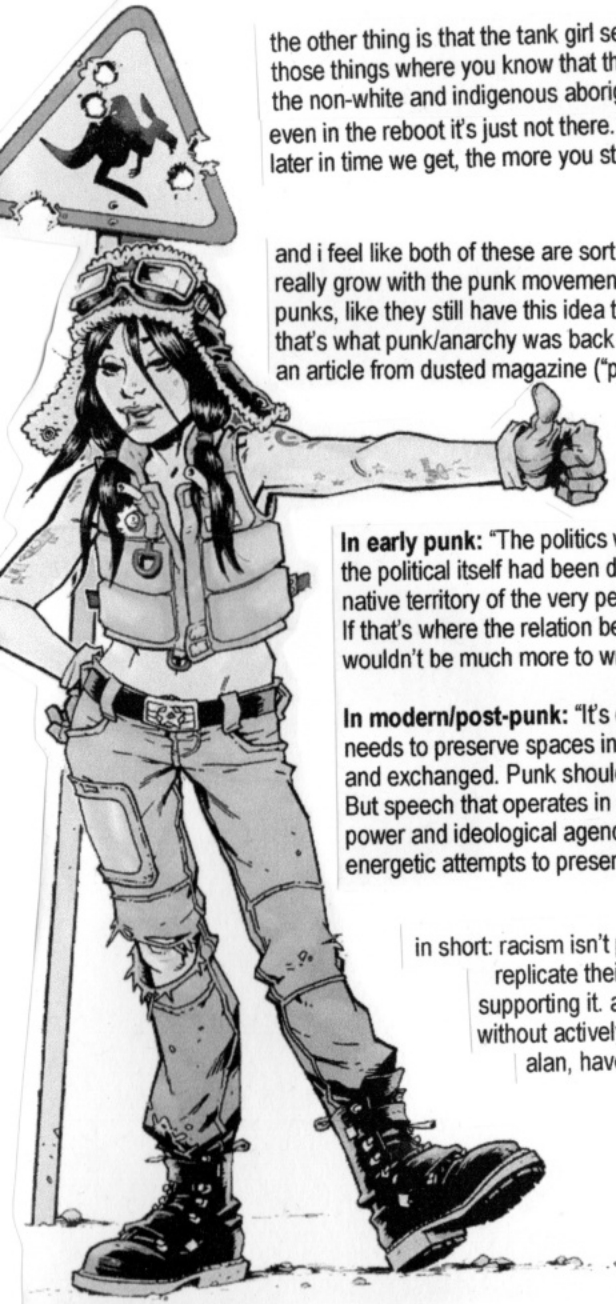
after that i started picking up the new issues, which was tank girl gold (now collected in "the legend of tank girl"). that was a fun way to get to know these characters because it was basically "what if you gave a bunch of anticapitalist outlaws billions of dollars" and it felt like reading a kid's activity book. (but like. definitely not for kids.)

i feel like the devil-may-care attitude was important for me at the time as a way of claiming some sense of autonomy. tank girl survives and thrives just through sheer force of will. she's a man of action. unapologetic. i was still a goodie two-shoes at the time (and still kind of am a little) but she was like. a manifestation of everything i'd repressed. she was… *angry.* can you believe it?! and she was a *girl!* it was right in her name!

really, tank girl opened doors for me. seeing someone so confident and yet raw, unpolished. it was such a major shift from all the dominant narratives that i hadn't even realized i'd internalized. my mom was a hippie but even she ended up perpetuating shit about beauty standards and sub-servience (i mean mostly to her, but still). tank girl shot a guy because she thought he was her dad, and i'd never seen anything like that. i feel like it gave a voice to the scared girl inside me. like saying hey. you don't just have to take it. you have teeth.

and yet

so now the iffy parts. for one, the official comics have apparently never had a female artist or writer working on them. and for the first run, it kinda makes sense because it was just creators alan and jamie writing and drawing the comics, but you'd think since alan has been working with new writers and artists they'd have an actual punk girl working on an iconic punk girl, and you sort of start to wonder if the creators are actually like. good punks.



the other thing is that the tank girl series is like. really white. like it's one of those things where you know that the authors aren't trying to push racism, but the non-white and indigenous aboriginal rep is either nonexistent or bad, and even in the reboot it's just not there. and its one of those things where like the later in time we get, the more you start to wonder.

and i feel like both of these are sort of indicative of the fact that tank girl didn't really grow with the punk movement. there's this problem with a lot of old punks, like they still have this idea that shock value is all that matters because that's what punk/anarchy was back in the day. i think this is well explained by an article from dusted magazine ("punk'd history, vol. viii"):



In early punk: "The politics weren't even an afterthought, because the political itself had been dismissed as corrupt, boring or simply the native territory of the very people the punks were striking out against. If that's where the relation between punk and fascism ceased, there wouldn't be much more to write about."

In modern/post-punk: "It's certain that a vigorously free society needs to preserve spaces in which unpopular speech can be uttered and exchanged. Punk should pride itself on defending those spaces. But speech that operates in conjunction with an ascendant political power and ideological agenda [read: facism] doesn't need defense or energetic attempts to preserve its right to existence."

in short: racism isn't punk. nazis aren't punk. it's not cool to replicate their shit in any way, cause it just ends up supporting it. and nowadays you really can't be punk without actively fighting against that shit. so come on alan, have tank girl go bash up some skinheads and proud boys or something

In Conclusion

tank girl is still a grrrl icon to me because she's totally got the badass tough chik parts down. it is a shame that they haven't really had her stand up against anything in particular lately. at least this shows that the punk movement has developed—we're starting to take this rage and intentionally stand up as & for people who've been marginalized by society, rather than just ignoring society altogether. (it's funny that there's been this role reversal—it used to be hippies that were the political activists and punks that were rejecting it all, now it's punks that are the political activists and hippies that are rejecting it all with their neoliberal "love everyone even facists" ideology).

but like... i still don't see enough of the badass tough chik parts anywhere else, so tank girl is still incredibly inspiring to me. i want her s/punk. i want her friends. i want to be tank girl. i've always had this fantasy of going to some march or pride event topless with the words "i'm a man, is this indecent?" on my chest and that's very much tank girl inspired. i want to be the tank girl that does something. smashing tanks through detention center walls. shitting on tory's front mats. or whatever they're up to in australia.



just girly memories

my sister was visiting for christmas and we compared the length of our armpit hair and it was really funny btw i won

my auntie and uncle took me and my cousins to disneyland when i was little and while my cousins went on a roller coaster i wanted to go on a winnie the pooh ride and the whole time my auntie kept saying she was so excited to have some "girls only" time but i actually think she was just sick of my uncle and cousins being adrenaline junkies and wanted to go on winnie the pooh

2016, i was visiting home and my mom asked me to grab her planner. i went to grab it and it was open to a random day in november. she'd written on election tuesday that she was so upset she wouldn't get to celebrate the election of the first female president with her daughter now that "she thinks she is a boy". welp sorry mom looks like we couldn't have celebrated anyway but at least you were transphobic about it

one summer (before i transitioned) i was hanging out most weekends with a bunch of old friends i knew from middle school. they were all guys (at least at the time). one night they were all peer-pressuring each other to shave their hair into mohawks, and in line they each encouraged the next boy to do it too. they never peer-pressured me though, and i felt strangely left out. at the end they asked me to style their mohawks because "i'm a girl i know how right?" to the girl whose hair hadn't been past her shoulder since 3rd grade. i tried anyway though because i wanted to be included in *some* capacity.



this isn't me but god damn i wish it was

(lizard or girl either way)



WELL THAT'S ABOUT IT...

OH EXCEPT FOR NINA ZINA!!! Yeah so the cover was made by my all-time zine and grrrl idol Nina, as a fucking gift no less. She's in a band and is a witch and makes zines and is an activist and is just so cool. She is also super nice and approachable and she's been my inspiration since before Unfair Maiden #1.

Anyway I was gonna do like interview-style questions with her but it's been an embarassingly long time oh my god SO I'm just gonna write about her instead. It'll be okay she said she didn't know what to say about herself anyway. (don't worry I get it!) (P.S. read her perzines!)

Nina, punk witch from Belgium, creates zines, postcards, spells, & art under the title Echo Zines, & witchy punk music with her band-mates in Lavender Witch! She's an intersectional feminist activist who uses her powerful art and powerful heart to fight for good in this world. Nina I totally love you!

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