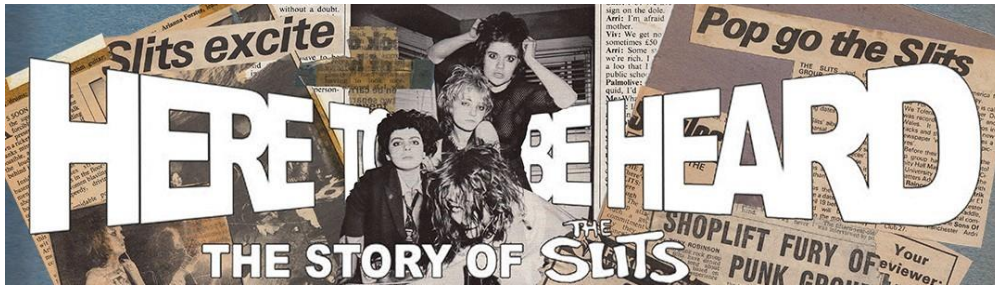




A FEATURE DOCUMENTARY  
DIRECTED BY WILLIAM BADGLEY



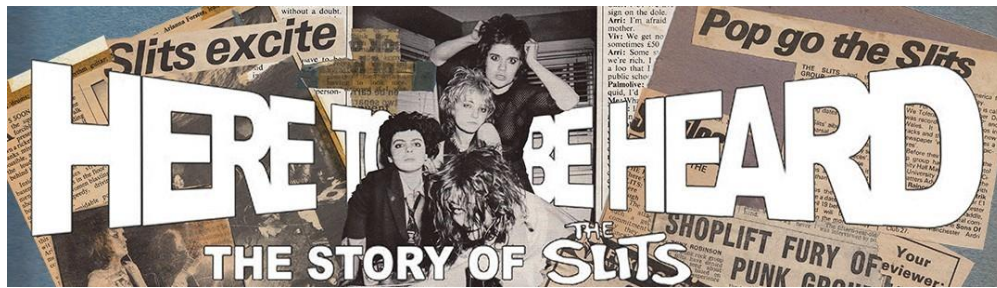
## Synopsis

Here to Be Heard tells the story of The Slits, the world's first all girl punk rock group, from their original formation during the pioneering days of punk rock in mid 70s London, through their individual stories of struggle, to the reformation of the band in 2005... a time period that ends in 2010 when singer Ari Up died of cancer while trying to make this film.

This story; a mix of archival footage, never before seen images, and interviews with the Slits along with Punk Rock royalty, extraordinary producers, scholars and those influenced by The Slits, can be best described by a quote from Ari Up herself: "I'm not here to be loved, I'm here to be heard".

## Interviews:

With interviews including Slits members from throughout their existence – core members Ari Up, Tessa Pollitt, Viv Albertine and Palmolive, along with Kate Korus (original Slit), Bruce Smith (Slits/The Pop Group/PiL drummer) and Budgie (Slits/Siouxsie and the Banshees drummer), and members of the reformed Slits Hollie Cook, Dr. No, Adele Wilson, and Anna Schulte, and fellow music industry professionals such as Don Letts (Original Roxy Club DJ and Punk Documentarian), Dennis Bovell (Producer of 'Cut'), Paul Cook (The Sex Pistols), Gina Birch (The Raincoats), Allison Wolfe (Bratmobile) and many more, this is the definitive story of a band how have innovated, influenced, and inspired thousands across the globe.



## Long Synopsis

London in the mid seventies was a city besieged by conflict, violence, and economic depression and in the aftermath of the cultural revolutions of the 60s, that had sought to dismantle the social norms that preceded it, artists and musicians of the mid 70s sought to redefine them.

The world was on fire with idea that you could be and say whatever you wanted in a society struggling to redefine the principles that had once controlled it... and this was all fine and good... for men.

Our film begins with Slits bass player, Tessa Pollitt, now in her early 50's, on her way home from work, walking through the neighbourhood of west London. As Tessa turns a corner she approaches her home, she enters and we see her quiet character begin to unfold as she sits down and picks up a worn and clearly loved scrapbook.

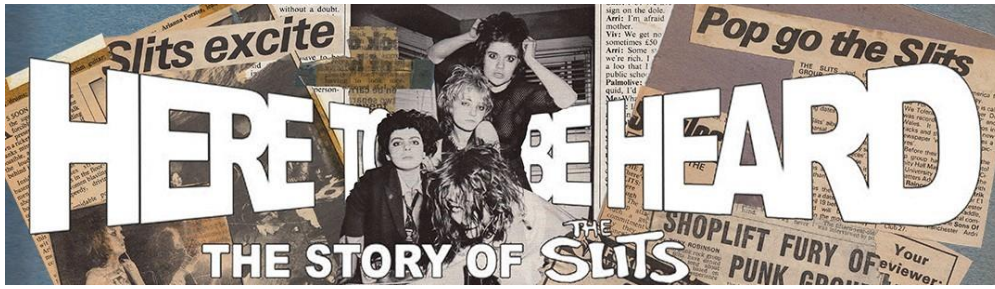
Leafing through the worn pages of the scrapbook we see images of a life past... photos, newspapers clippings, the drawings of a young girl... and as she opens her mouth to speak we hear the thoughts and emotions of "The Quiet One", now centre stage to tell the story of her dearest friends... as she takes us back to that same neighbourhood of west London in 1975.

From here Tessa is our main guide to the piece's narrative, telling the story of The Slits from their formation. Starting in seventies London, we are guided by Tessa and her scrapbook. Stories of her band-mates early days are told, from Ari Up's formative days being influenced by a German aristocrat mother, and musical luminaries such as Jimi Hendrix, David Bowie and John Lydon.

Viv Albertine describes her time spent with Jonny Thunders and Sid Vicious, and Palm Olive describes her time living in a squat with Joe Strummer (while he was still John "Woody" Mellor) and the infamous headline stating that the Punk girls make the Sex Pistols look like choirboys.

From there, the band comes together, brought there by a shared love of the Punk scene and an attitude of "Well why can't girls do it?" Tessa tells tales of their tour with The Clash, being "managed" by Don Letts and numerous others, and their introduction to the

Reggae scene (Bob Marley's original lyrics to Punky Reggae Party name-checked The Slits), and even more far-flung musical influences.



These influences led to a change in direction for the band, and Tessa leads us on the journey from critically-acclaimed Punk band to the recordings that have been said to introduce world music to the UK, all via the scathing criticism that met each of their release that “girls can't play that well”.

While the music was evolving the band were as well, and we hear Tessa and a number of others tell us of the trials and tribulations of the band's personal and professional lives.

Paloma tells of her split from the rest of the band, and the resulting spiritual journey that she takes, while Viv describes the struggles of being a woman in a male-dominated scene, and their fight to not be seen as sex objects, but as equals in the music industry.

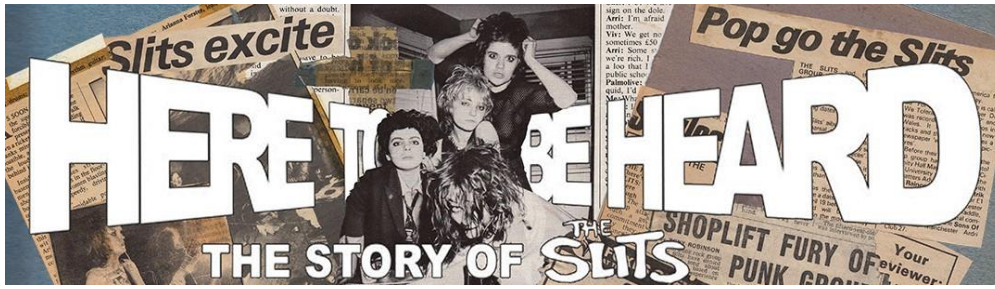
Tessa then takes us down the slippery slope from their tour with Jazz, Reggae, and Dub legends, the backlash over their second album, and then the end of the Punk mentality in the early eighties where musicians started going “to meetings with their briefcases instead of their guitars”, which led to The Slits splitting up in 1981.

However, the story doesn't end there. Tessa tells us of the band members life after their album “Return of the Giant Slits”; journeying between them through the Sahara, Jamaica, Bali, and motherhood, and then the fateful day when she received a call from Ari in 2005 wanting to get the band back together.

Having lost a number of the band, they set out to add to The Slits “tribe”, and bring The Slits music, style, and attitude to a new audience, from the teens out to see something new, the fans influenced by the Riot Grrrl movement, to the Punks with families like The Slits themselves. We speak with “The Baby Slits” who talk of the influence that the band had on them, while Tessa speaks of the inner quandary she suffered before realizing that this was what she wanted to do.

Following the reformation we are taken to the death of Ari Up in 2010, as Tessa and the rest of the subjects reflecting on the loss of one of – while not the biggest names in music – the biggest personalities, touching thousands of lives and whose influence and drive remains to this day

Ultimately we see the story becoming one about Tessa’s relationship with Ari, and how one individual's actions can take touch the lives of many in so short a time.



“Here to be Heard: The Story of The Slits” is the second feature length documentary by William E. Badgley and Molasses Manifesto Productions. The first film, “Kill All Redneck Pricks: A Documentary Film about a Band Called KARP” screened over 70 times in 10 countries and was translated into 3 languages.

## NOTES FROM DIRECTOR WILLIAM BADGELY: HISTORY OF THE PROJECT & WHAT THE SLITS MEAN TO ME

In the spring of 2012 I had just finished the 70 date – 10 country theatrical tour for my first film, “Kill All Redneck Pricks” a feature length rock doc on the American band KARP, when I got a call from a longtime friend Jennifer Shagawat.

Jennifer had taken a break from her own band, Shellshag, to tour manage The Slits US tour in 2006 and in addition to becoming very close to the band had begun to make a film at Ari’s behest.

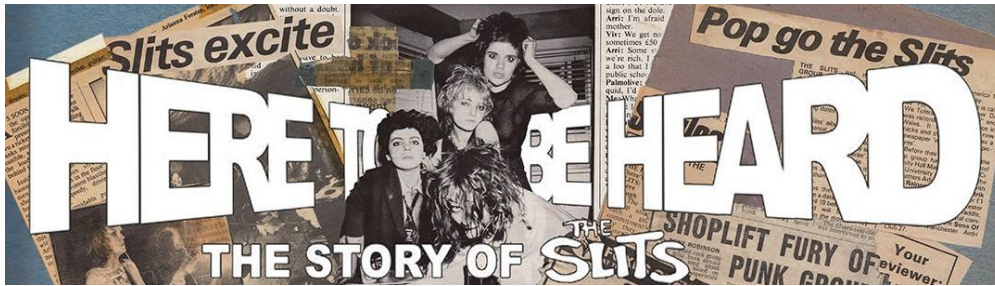
With neither Ari nor Jennifer knowing much about making a feature film and both being quite busy with other projects, the film started to flag and with Ari’s death in 2010, had come to a complete standstill.

So while Jennifer was grieving the loss of her friend she was also confronted with the daunting task of finishing the film that Ari had made quite clear was incredibly important to her. She was pretty upset understandably and wasn’t quite sure what to do.

I had been in a touring band for about a decade before I started making documentaries for network television before launching into making my own films and I had toured with Jennifer’s band several times. She and her boyfriend, Shell, and I had become close so I became an obvious choice of someone she felt she could entrust this project to.

And I was honored of course, although I was more than a bit hesitant about taking on a project where the archival and music rights would be so expensive to clear that initially I said no.

DIY work ethic can only take you so far when dealing with the majors and I was worried that I would invest years of my life and then not be able to finish the film due to lawyers, fees, etc... Jennifer was disappointed but understood.



Several months went by until one morning I woke up and thought to myself, “I must be crazy! Turning down this incredible opportunity to make a film about such an artistically inspired AND historically important band. ... no matter what the obstacles are.” So I immediately called her up and accepted.

The first two years went by pretty uneventfully as we travelled the US and Europe interviewing key members of the story with Jennifer financing out of her own pocket and me and my team, made up of my sister and her boyfriend and a friend of mine, doing the bulk of the production work. We all lived in the same little house together so we could afford to dedicate all our time to the project and together we made terrific progress and were getting fairly close to finishing when we got a call from Jennifer.

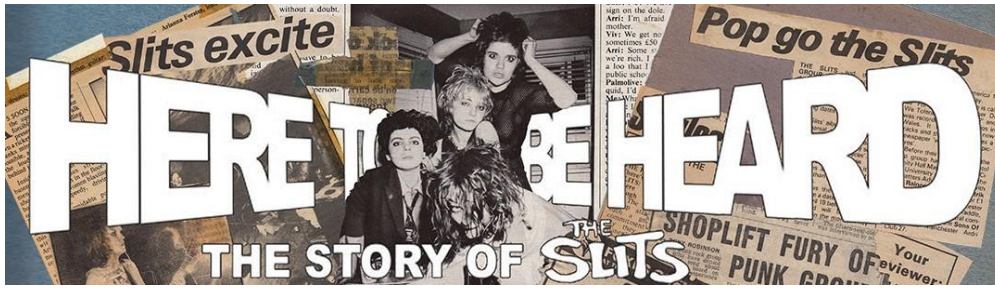
Jennifer, through no fault of her own, could no longer bear the burden of the project and we were forced to shut down. Me and my little crew had been living on an unbelievable shoestring already, living very frugally even with outside part-time outside work so when the funding for the project stopped we were without recourse as they say.

For the first time in my life, at the age of 38, I became homeless, I lost my house, the little office we maintained in the basement of an art collective and I went about trying to put my life back together best I could under very extreme conditions. I had no money, nowhere to live and after being so isolated on a long term project such as a feature doc, had no real way to start over.

But I didn't stop working on the film, I moved from living room to living room over the course of the next few months bringing my little work station with me and finished the rough cut in back bedrooms, kitchens, common areas... wherever someone would let me set up my computer and drives and crash at the end of the day.

Once we had something to show I went out looking for finishing funds, since like I said before, no DIY work ethic was going to pay the archival and music licensing fees, that had to be cash money... so I went hunting... I did this for 14 months with no luck, I knocked on every door I could think of, I had millions of meetings – some taking months to set up, but shopping a movie in as desperate of a situation as our film was basically impossible.

So I struggled on, trying to make a living in any way I could while keeping as my goal the completion of the film... needless to say this was a very dark period.



Until one day I got a call from a fan of my first film, I probably get one or two a year and I always take them, it's usually someone who is trying to make THEIR first film and just wants to chit chat. On this particular occasion it was an individual who had been working in television, just as I had done and this was his first feature on his own so we really hit it off.

At the end of the call he asked me how the SLITS DOC was doing and I gave him the full story. He listened patiently and then asked me if I'd be interested in being introduced to a film sales agent in London that he knew, Mark Vennis of Moviehouse, one of the last independent film sales companies in that area.

I replied emphatically "YES!" of course. I knew a few things about film sales agents: I knew that they were really hard to find, harder to sign with and they don't find you finishing funds, their business is the selling of finished films, so I was equal parts excited and hesitant when I took the call.

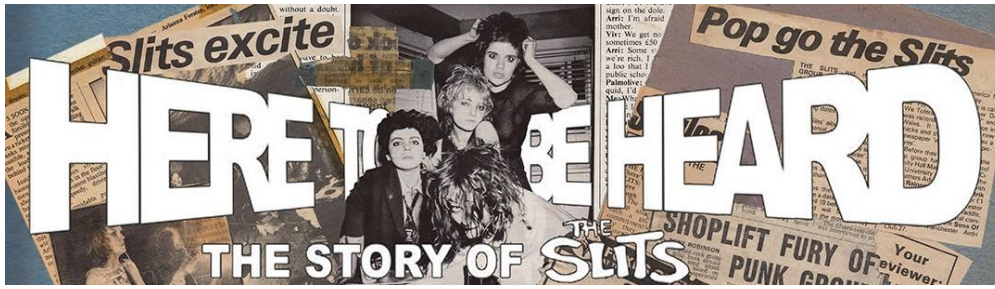
I had a good feeling about Mark from the beginning, he was honest, he didn't sugar coat anything, he was a longtime fan of punk music and music in general and didn't have any kind of attitude, much different from the majority of the folks I had interacted with in Los Angeles.

So after a few weeks of going over the particulars he agreed to come on board to help pull us out of the situation we were in and within a couple months had secured the funds necessary to finish the film.

He proved a loyal and dedicated partner and now as we stand poised to release the film we have all fought so unbelievably hard to produce I realize it would not have been possible without him.

My sister, who worked on the film with me once said that, "At some point in the making of these films you start to live in the reality of the band that you're making the film about." and that couldn't be more true with this project.

The Slits endured unbelievable hardships while trying to do one of the simplest and most difficult and courageous things that anyone can do, which I like to call, "Playing the song that's in your head." and in short ignoring what everyone around you is saying you should do.



Should I have abandoned this project and went off and got a “real” job? Absolutely. Was I judged by others for not doing that and going down with the ship so to say? Of course. Does any of that matter now? Not at all.

The greatest thing The Slits have ever taught me is that you MUST play the song that is in your head, you have no choice really, you can't play someone else's song and they can't hear your music if you don't follow your instincts, if you don't follow your instincts no one can never truly know you and more importantly you can never truly know yourself.

And in doing so you can't expect to be popular, you can't expect to be rich, you don't do it for fame, you don't do it for glory, you do it for the pure pursuit of the honesty of self-expression, it's the best and bravest thing that any of us can do, The Slits taught me that.

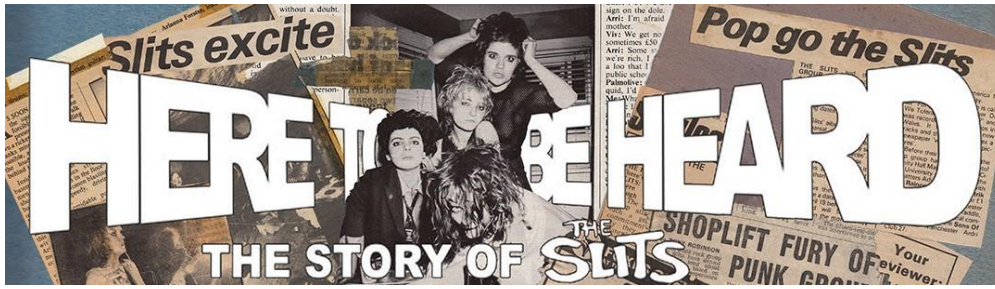
#### DOCUMENTARIANS I ADMIRE:

I'd say the documentarians that have had the most fundamental effect on me have been The Maysles Brothers and Frederick Wiseman.

The Maysles for their tireless pursuit and defense of the importance of empathy when dealing with documentary subjects. Their belief that by loving the subject as truly as we can, we have the greatest ability to see them as a complete person, was and still is truly groundbreaking and earmarks an unbelievably important distinction between documentary and journalism.

Frederick Wiseman I love for being an artist. One of my favorite definitions of documentary is that it is an “Artistic re-telling of the truth” and that is something that Wiseman does better than anybody. Wiseman said that, “In order for a film to truly work, it must work on two levels: the literal and the abstract.” That profound statement has had an unbelievable impact on me in my work. The fact that “Sally went to the store” is a plot point we need to know to follow the story, but why she went there is the real reason we're all watching.





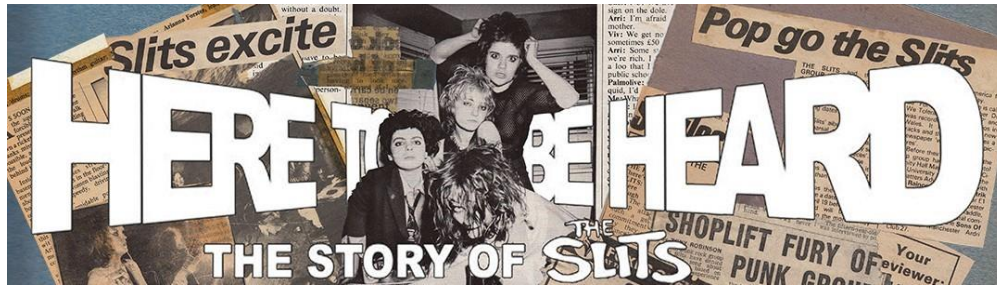
## MARK VENNIS/PRODUCER

“Bill came to me with the project in the Summer of 2016, through a mutual friend. We had a reputation at Moviehouse for working on rock films that were not completely mainstream (Scott Walker: 30 Century Man, New York Doll, 1234) and getting on with Bill and liking the Slits we were a perfect match. I came on board as producer, in 2016, when Bill had hit an impasse.

The story of the Slits is an untold story. We know a great deal about the male perspective of punk, about the Johnny’s and the Joe’s, The Damned and the Buzzcocks but very little about what punk meant to women. A huge influence on a whole number of different bands , not just because they are punk women, but also because they worked in different musical genres. Reggae, world music and rock all collided in their sound. They are a band who could only have come out of the melting pot of London generally and the London punk scene specifically. To get involved with a project from one of the original players in British punk and to tell their unheard story was very exciting for me.”

Mark has been in the film industry for 25 years and Executive Produced over twenty films, including *Blind Flight*, the true story of Brian Keenan and John McCarthy, *Fear X*, the first English language film from acclaimed Danish director Nicolas Winding Refn, *The Rage In Placid Lake* starring Miranda Richardson, *The Tigers Tail*, directed by John Boorman, Australian film noir *Swerve*, British theatrical hit *Nativity 2*, and music documentaries *Live Forever*, *Scott Walker: 30 Century Man* and Julien Temple’s *The Ecstasy of Wilko Johnson* amongst others..

He has just finished his first film as producer with Kevin Proctor, *Funny Cow*, starring Maxine Peake, Paddy Considine, and Stephen Graham with music by Richard Hawley, which will be released by eOne in the UK.



## FULL LIST OF CREDITS

### HERE TO BE HEARD: THE STORY OF THE SLITS

Starring: Don Letts, Viv Albertine, Paul Cook, Ari Up, Zoe Howe, Dennis Bovell, Paloma McLardy, Helen Reddington, Kate Corris, Tessa Pollitt, Hollie Cook, Bruce Smith, Jeni Cook, Vivien Goldman, Adrian Sherwood, Neneh Cherry, Suzy Gutsy, Budgie, Steve Beresford, Christine Robertson, Gina Birch, Anna Schulte, Dr. No, Jennifer Shagawat, Tanju Boerue & Jennie Matthias.

Music by: The Slits

Original score by: Von Wildenhaus

Written, shot, directed & edited by: William E. Badgley

Producers: William E Badgley & Mark Vennis

Executive Producers: Tessa Pollitt, Paloma McLardy, Christine Robertson, Jennifer Shagawat, Gary Phillips, Phil Hunt & Compton Ross

Associate Producers: Michael Frenz, Brooke Badgley, Tom Harberd, Guy Maddin & Devin Flynn

Assistant Editors: Brooke Badgley, Michael Frenz & Josh Miller

Music Supervisor: Carly Henry

Technical Support: Robert Austin

Titles by: William Badgley & Brooke Badgley

Motion graphics: Lariat Creative

