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X-Ray Spex

Marianne Elliot-Said (Poly Styrene)

Live at the Roundhouse CD/DVD

**By Christopher Duda
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Considered by many to be a domineering force in the early British Punk movement and also a figure that should be lauded as a pioneer in terms of women in rock –right up there with your Patti Smith’s and Deborah Harry’s.

Marianne Elliot-Said is a wealth of originality, independence and an individual whom is still creating 30+ years after the formation of the top notch Punk band X-Ray Spex.

On September 6th / 2008 X-Ray Spex played the Roundhouse in London to a rabid audience of 3,000 fans old and new. Thankfully, Future Noise Music and Year Zero have released a cd and dvd capturing the moment with an all in one package waiting to be



consumed by you the consuming public.

Art-I-Ficial- X-Ray Spex

I know I'm artificial
But don't put the blame on me
I was reared with appliances
In a consumer society

When I put on my make-up
The pretty little mask not me
That's the way a girl should be
In a consumer society

My existence is elusive
The kind that is supported
By mechanical resources

My existence is elusive
The kind that is supported
By mechanical resources

I wanna be instamatic
I wanna be a frozen pea
I wanna be dehydrated
In a consumer society

In a consumer society
In a consumer society

Chris- How do you manage to evoke the same energy in your performance compared to that of 30 + years ago?

Marianne- I don't think the energy levels are quite the same as 30 years ago so I try to concentrate on the vocal performance. The difference is that 30 years ago we only did about six songs in a set at the show at the Roundhouse we did 20 songs so a lot more than 30 years ago.

Chris-Do you feel as a society we have evolved (or using Devo's term) we are in a state of devolution- meaning we have gone backwards?



Marianne-. No I don't think we have gone backwards as a society. I love the indigo generation they are so forward thinking. You will always see some of the same old human nature things re-occurring though because we are essentially the same beings in every generation but attitudes change and generally I think we are more honest now than in previous times.

Chris- You lyrics are often cited as prophetic. How do you feel about the prophet tag?

Marianne- I think it's a good tag to have but in all honesty I don't see myself as something so grand as a prophet.

Chris- How do you approach your lyrical prose? Are your lyrics comprised of events and people you have met?

Marianne- My lyrics are not always personal but are more general observation and some times they are purely coming from imagination.

Chris- Do you feel your lyrics have been over analyzed?

Marianne- I don't really think about it that much, when I wrote them I was just trying to be colourful.

Chris- Was there not a time that you felt that X-Ray Spex was best left in past? If so, what motivated you to pursue the reformation of the band?



Marianne- I have never thought of X-ray Spex as a past present and future thing. Spex always seemed to me to just be something that is always there as a body of work. The Roundhouse gig was to celebrate 30 years of Germfree Adolescents.

Chris-Although your solo releases were critically acclaimed they were largely ignored by the consuming public. How did your approach to recording these releases differ to the X-Ray Spex output? Were they more personal endeavours?

Marianne- I like writing songs and some songs are not really Spex songs. So it made sense to do them as a solo project.

Chris-Your Hare Krishna background often creeps up in interviews and articles. How did you become involved with this faith and what are your thoughts of the public's perception as seeing it as a cult? How has this and Bhakti yoga changed you or has it?

Marianne- I don't really worry about what other people think about Krishna Consciousness. I know that it is the oldest philosophy in the world and that Krishna is the same God that is worshiped throughout the world by different names. I think Bhakti Yoga broadens the mind and ultimately only at the time of death will one really know if one has been a successful in ones practice.

Chris- When X-Ray Spex were first formed did you ever fathom that you would have such a large influence on other women in the future and how does that make you feel today?



Marianne- No I didn't think about it in that way but I hope that it has been for the good.

Chris- Do you feel the early punk scene became stale and cliquey fast as the once original approach gave way to calculated moves and formula? Did this contribute to the demise of X-Ray Spex?

Marianne- No the early punk scene was here and gone in a flash so never had a chance to become stale. X-ray Spex really became a body of work that has been around for 30 years thanks to modern technology it has been captured in time.

Chris- What bands or peers from the first wave of British punk do you feel are often ignored in the history books?

Marianne- I'm not sure as I don't read the history books.

Chris- In your opinion where did the term "PUNK" evolve from? Was this a term created by the press? Isn't it all just Rock and Roll -or do people have an incessant need to label things?

Marianne- Caroline Coon a music journalist coined the phrase PUNK ROCK to describe the mid 70's music born out of the Roxy Club as she said it wasn't stadium rock or glam

rock so she came up with punk rock. Chris- Do you feel that



Punk was created in the U.S.A and adopted by the U.K?

Marianne- No the British music scene was unique and we never really saw the US bands as Punk we liked some of them but Punk seemed a very British thing at the time.

Chris- What does a typical day look like in your life?

Marianne- Very much like 99.9% of every body else's day on the planet I should imagine.

Chris- Any thoughts / memories on the following people? Richard Branson, Adam Ant, Vivienne Westwood, Malcolm McLaren, Falcon Stuart, John Peel, Billy Idol, Joe Strummer, Richard Hell, Johnny Thunders, Joey Ramone

Marianne- I only have fond memories of all of these people they are/were all very colourful characters in their own unique way.

Chris- How did the X-Ray Spex gig at the Roundhouse come to fruition and subsequently the cd/dvd release of the performance? Have you actually watched the final production of the DVD?

Marianne- I produced the DVD so I have watched it over and over again. I was approached by a promoter to play live as X-ray Spex at a Concrete Jungle Festival on the South Coast where I went to see my friends play in Goldblade. I thought it would be a good idea to film the Spex show and the rest is history.

Chris-Every song from “Germfree Adolescents” was performed



at the Roundhouse gig except “Plastic Bag”. Why was this song omitted?

Marianne- Because the song has the lyric “1977 and we are going mad” in it and it was 2008.

Chris- Currently are you working on a project with X-Ray Spex bassist-Paul Dean? What is that project? Have you been in constant contact with Paul over the years? How did it come to be that he is the only original member to play the Roundhouse (knowing that Jak Airport passed away in 2004)?

Marianne- No I'm working with Youth at the moment on a new solo album called Generation Indigo. Paul is a friend that still lives in England. The original Spex drummer lives in the USA somewhere but I have no contact with him. Jak is sadly no longer with us and Rudi and Lora no longer play the sax. So Paul was the only original member apart from myself at the Roundhouse.

Chris-Are there any plans for a tour of Europe or North America or for that matter is there any interest on your part?

Marianne- Not at the moment my health isn't up to too much live work.

Chris-Whom would you cite as your biggest influence musically and whom would you cite as your biggest influence overall?

Marianne- There is so many wonderful artists that probably at some stage in my life I have been inspired by but I can't think of one that has really influenced me. When I was a small child I really liked Helen Shapiro's voice and maybe she was my biggest influence.



Chris- Are there myths or inaccuracies about X-Ray Spex that you would like to dispel?

Marianne- Not that I'm aware of.

Chris- Have you ever had contact with the supernatural, UFO's or angels?

Marianne- Yes I contact my Guardian Angel on a regular basis through automatic writing and I have seen a UFO.

Chris-. Do you own most pressings of your releases? Is there anything you wished you had from your past in your possession?

Marianne- No I don't have any original records of my releases but I'm not too bothered about that.

Chris- Parting thoughts?

Marianne- I think X-ray Spex has made a lot of people happy and that makes me happy.



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