

THE BIG TAKEOVER

x-ray spex

live @ the roundhouse London 2008 (cd + dvd)

(Year Zero/Future Noise/MVD)

Skip the CD version of this triumphant, first X-Ray Spex gig since 1996: ex-**Rubella Ballet/Flux of Pink Indians** drummer **Sid Truelove** lacks the clunky fluidity of 1976-1979 stickman **B.P. Hurding**, while ex-**Arnold** guitarist **Gt. Saxby** can't replicate the late **Jak Airport**'s rapid-fire precision riffs. (Ex-**Rip Rig & Panic** player **Flash** handles the sax role.) But eternally inspiring **Poly Styrene** must be—to twist her famous debut single phrase—"seen," not just "heard" on the DVD. Original bassist **Paul Dean** draws little camera love, but Styrene steals all hearts, as charismatic, serenely smiling, and childlike at 51 and Rubinesque as she was in her thinner, braces-sporting, bouncy punk youth at CBGB. Swaying in an earth-mother black dress with pink Day-Glo frills, she looks as pleased, cute, and indefatigable as a flower-child June Carter Cash playing Mama Cass. Yet her booming voice and philosophical send-ups of identity, rampant consumerism, and subservient sisterhood sear a set of *Germ Free Adolescents* tunes on its 30th anniversary at the same venue she'd played then. Styrene's a star whose smart vitality remains a wonder; take that, clueless model waifs and wannabes. "Oh bondage, up yours!" (Sung with her riot grrl daughter for the encore!) (mvdb2b.com)