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[Music CD/DVD Review: X-Ray Spex - Live At The Roundhouse London 2008](#)



Poly Styrene's vocals are still as brilliant as ever. Thirty years on, she sounds as vital as she did in 1977. I miss Lora Logic on the sax, nevertheless *Live At The Roundhouse - London 2008* is every bit the great anniversary show one would hope for.

Germ Free Adolescents has taken its deserved place next to the first Clash LP and *Never Mind The Bollocks* as one of the most vital initial salvos of British punk. Unfortunately, when the record was originally released, it was only available in the US as an expensive import, which limited things considerably for the band.

By the time X-Ray Spex disbanded in 1979, they had recorded a mere 16 songs. 12 appeared on *Germ Free Adolescents*, with the remaining four spread out on various singles. All of these, save "Plastic Bag," are performed on *Live At The Roundhouse*, plus four later numbers.

Poly Styrene (Marian Joan Elliott), wrote and sang all of the songs, so it is no surprise that when she left in 1979 to join the Hare Krishnas, the band fell apart. Over the course of the past thirty years, X-Ray Spex have re-formed in various guises, most notably with their 1995 record, *Conscious Consumer*, which promptly went to the cut-out bin.

So it was a bit of a revelation to hear Poly on this 30th anniversary live celebration of *Germ Free Adolescents*. The lady still rocks! Not only that, but she can still hit the notes as strongly as ever, which is a pretty impressive feat in itself.

The show opens with the classic "Oh Bondage, Up Yours," and the pace never lets up. Particular favorites are from *Germ Free Adolescents*, such as the title song, the aforementioned "Oh Bondage, Up Yours," "Warrior In Woolworths," and "Art-I-Ficial." Special mention must go out to one of the later tunes, as well—the ballad "Crystal Clear" is a great one.

As cool as *Live At The Roundhouse* is, the record is obviously geared towards a specific market: nostalgic old punkers like myself. But I honestly believe that the packaging and


presentation of this disc could be a real possibility for the nearly comatose record industry.

Live At The Roundhouse includes the basic CD of the concert, a DVD of the show, and a 24-page booklet entitled “Poly Styrene’s Diary Of The Seventies,” which is hilarious. It is a first-class collection of material, priced at what a regular retail CD would go for.

The professional band Poly Styrene has assembled behind her for this anniversary of the defiantly punk *Germ Free Adolescents* is somewhat discombobulating. It just does not fit with the memories of the young punk chick who first recorded “Oh Bondage, Up Yours” in 1977. Reportedly, the song was originally intended as a screed against Sex Pistols svengali Malcolm McLaren's "Sex" clothing store.

But it makes a weird sort of sense at the end, when Poly brings out not only her daughter, but also her granddaughter for a reprise of her anthem. Whether the song was ever intended to have had the reach it has had is irrelevant; "Oh Bondage" is one of the greatest blasts of punk ever.

Noted curmudgeon John Lydon (Rotten) certainly felt this way. Of X-Ray Spex, his comment was, “They came out with a sound and attitude and a whole energy—it was just not relating to anything around it—*superb*.”

Posted by grandfkn at [2:51 PM](#) 

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