

What Is Post-Punk?

Genre and Identity in Avant-Garde Popular Music, 1977-82

Popular music in the US and UK during the late 1970s and early 1980s was wildly eclectic and experimental. "Post-punk," as it was retroactively labeled, could include electro-pop melodies, distorted guitars, avant-garde industrial sounds, and reggae beats, and thus is not an easily definable musical category.

What Is Post-Punk? combines a close reading of the late-1970s music press discourse with musical analyses and theories of identity to unpack post-punk's status as a genre. Mimi Haddon traces the discursive foundations of post-punk across publications such as *Sounds*, *ZigZag*, *Melody Maker*, the *Village Voice*, and the *NME*, and presents case studies of bands including Wire, PiL, Joy Division, the Raincoats, and Pere Ubu. By positioning post-punk in relation to genres such as punk, new wave, dub, and disco, Haddon explores the boundaries of post-punk, and reveals it as a community of tastes and predilections rather than a stylistically unified whole. Haddon diversifies the discourse around post-punk, exploring both its gender and racial dynamics and its proto-industrial aesthetics to restore the historical complexity surrounding the genre's terms and origins.

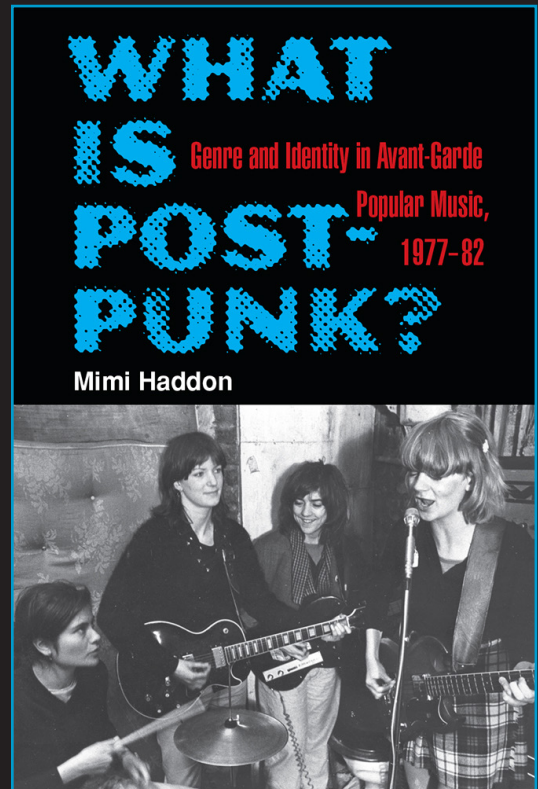
"Mimi Haddon expertly unpicks the tangled threads of cynicism, noise, disco, dub and decay which are woven together in post-punk. A compelling portrait of an intoxicating musical moment and a significant contribution to genre theory."

—Caspar Melville, SOAS, University of London

"Haddon provides keen insights into the interplay of images, sounds, words, and performance in post-punk. A fresh look at how gender, race, and media discourse critically shaped a genre."

—Ellie M. Hisama, Columbia University

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