

Shocking PINK!



An alternative No. 3
magazine
for
young
women 20p

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Shocking Pink

What's
been

happening i Wonder.



Well we're really sorry for the delay in getting issue 3 together, but before we go any further we'd like to squash the *nasty* rumour that we've been living it up with the other tax exiles in L.A. on the vast profits from issue 2. This is simply not true. We have however got five new collective members and a different mailing address.

There are several reasons why it's taken so long. It always takes a lot of time, energy and organisation to produce the magazine. Some women left the collective after issue 2, so we had the additional problem of advertising for new members. We think it's important to create an environment where all members feel able to contribute, not just those who have the confidence to be articulate.

Due to lack of outside contributions this issue has been written largely by women on the collective, which obviously takes up a lot of time. If number 4 is to come out faster than number 3, we need more articles, more ideas, more young women. If you are interested in joining the collective, or helping out, please get in touch.

Our new mailing address is:
SHOCKING PINK
c/o 90 Cromer St
London WC1



Julia
THE SHOCKING PINK
COLLECTIVE IN L.A.



Why are there no boys on the collective?

The magazine is specifically about young women and as young women, we feel that we are in the best position to decide what issues are most important to us. We do not usually have the space to be with other women, specifically to discuss these issues. Also we want to prove that we can work together successfully to produce something valid without the help of boys, or older people.

Isn't that just as sexist?

No. Men/boys have more power and opportunities than we do. We need discussion to understand how we have been taught to see ourselves and each other. Therefore we do not see it as excluding boys, but as making room for young women, taking back what has been taken from us. Apart from this we enjoy each others company, and have lots of fun.



Photo by Pam Isherwood

Here we see women from the 'Sisterhood of Spit' all dressed up and ready for a night out at the 'Shocking Pink'/'Spare Rib' benefit gig. Thanks to the bands, including the adventurously excellent 'Contradictions', and all the women literally hundreds, who came along. We made lots of money. It was highly spectacular and far more enjoyable than the other event being held in London that week, something to do with a bloke called Charlie???

WHAT THE PAPERS NEVER TOLD YOU!

A SHOCKING SHORT STORY

In the beginning

The idea of an alternative magazine by and for young women came out of a workshop held at the Young Women's Conference in December '79.

'Magazines like 'Jackie', 'Oh Boy', 'Blue Jeans', don't give a realistic impression of our lives, nor do they give us any credit for intelligence. Like all the rest of the media, they presume we are only interested in clothes, cooking and 'getting our man'. We need a magazine which looks at other things, issues that really affect our lives.'

(SP aims Feb '80)

It took a few months to build a collective. We next had to tackle the formidable task of getting our mits on some money.

AND THEN SCANDAL

Remember this:

Fuck off from us to the family loving members of the Talacre Social Club, top Brass at Jackie, Interaction,

Explanation

We had our first contact with the now notorious Interaction, as we were to discover, a somewhat dubious 'charitable' organisation which 'lends money with one hand and punches you in the teeth with the other.'

Under their 'Make it Yourself'

scheme they were to give us a loan of £600 and the use of their facilities. We went along with their methods of dealing with young people, suffering the usual psychologist's games, like drawing cartoons to reveal inner anguish, and terribly meaningful 'spontaneous' word association sessions. (We didn't want them to feel their years of training had been wasted), but drew the line when they tried to interfere with editorial decisions. They tried to persuade us not to include the 'Coming Out' photostory and the 'Age of Consent' article. They said we could be prosecuted for 'encouraging deviant sex'. We all felt strongly that both pieces should remain, and refused to withdraw them. Things were hotting up. Meanwhile back in the bar . . .

A TRUE EXPERIENCE

One evening after a meeting five of us were having a drink and a chat as usual in the bar at Interaction (The Talacre Family Social Club, not controlled by Interaction). One woman had her arm round her friend. People in the club started staring and pointing. The 'Chairman' came over and aggressively told us if we didn't stop 'doing that' we would be thrown out. He would not say what 'that' was. The evening wore on, then just before closing time, The Chairman, backed up by other members of the committee, stormed over, asked for our membership cards which he promptly ripped up, and yelled at us to leave. This gathered quite a crowd, some of whom decided to give us advice like 'Do it in your own clubs' and 'There are children in here'. The yelling match developed into a small

ALL IS REVEALED (WELL HALF OF IT)

skirmish and the skirmish broke into a scene out of a cowboy movie. Beer and tables went flying. Not content to let us leave on our own the men decided to act tough and physically throw us out. We were really shocked by their violent reaction.



We went to the M.I.Y. co-ordinator and threatened action, but were greeted by a small band of terribly embarrassed, white-faced social workers with clammy hands, who gave assurances like, 'We are having a meeting about it' and 'Leave it to us'. Nothing was ever done.

By this time Interaction were beginning to wish they'd never set eyes on us. Then followed a mildly hysterical period whereby, upon entering the building we would be rushed to a room at the back of the complex as far away from the Social Club as possible. Cups of tea were sent up every half hour so we didn't have to leave the room. Presumably they were frightened we would sneak out and ambush 'The Chairman' on his way to the toilet.

We received their official termination of contract notice, on the cont. on page 9

"Typical girls are looking for something
 Typical girls fall under a spell
 Typical girls buy magazines
 Typical girls feel like hell
 Typical girls worry about spots, fat and
 natural smells"

(The Slits)



People look at me and say 'But how can you be a feminist you wear make up?'. There seems to be a contradiction between being a feminist and being 'fashionable' - women are supposed to equate wanting to look good with attractiveness i.e attracting men. Feminists are supposed to be the opposite - men haters who want forced castration and who rebel against everything feminine.

There is a widespread male assumption (designed to soothe their egos) that feminists are only ugly women who turn against men because they are frustrated by not being able to attract me.

the observation that the human race now divides into three sexes - men, women and feminists - should not be seen as a cheap sneer so much as the statement of an important and agonisingly uncomfortable truth. Feminists, far more than male homosexuals, are those who cannot fit into the established social relationship between the other two sexes and must therefore find themselves in a permanent state of war with society.

From 'WHY WOMEN'S LIBBERS NEVER HAVE OOMPH' - a book review! by Auberon Waugh (Daily Mail).

A Woman's Right

to Pose

This and hundreds of other stereotypes reinforce the myth that fashion is 'feminine' is desirable.

"When I put on my make up
 The pretty little mask not me
 That's the way a girl should be
 In this consumer society"
 (X-Ray Spex)

This makes fashion a difficult topic for me as a feminist to deal with. How do I solve the contrast between the images and messages about women that are all around me and the way I think, feel and would like to look. (Sometimes I don't feel loveable underneath).

Most magazines present your body as a trap with fashion as the bait. Some subscribe to the 'If you look good you feel good' school, but this is normally accompanied by the assumption that a boyfriend is an essential final touch. Indeed 'looking good' is a male definition of what *they* find attractive. Women who don't obey the rules of appearance are labelled 'ugly' and the reasons behind the way they dress are completely ignored.

The fashion features range from glossy popstar fantasy - wouldn't we all like to be wild like Kim or cuddly like Claire - to the more practical - what to wear to the disco to catch HIS eye and capture his heart.



"Who invented typical girls
 Whose bringing out the new improved model
 Ah that's another marketing ploy
 Typical girl gets typical boy"
 (The Slits)



the famed muscle teeshirt

The problem is I like looking good. I like wearing make up. BUT I don't like being forced into feeling like public property just because this morning I spent five minutes in front of the mirror. It is impossible for women to become 'invisible'. Whatever we wear we will be commented on, whether it's 'Wouldn't mind knocking that one off' or at the other end of the sexual insult scale 'Hello Sonny'. I don't think they actually think that you are a boy but it's an easy way of pointing out your lack of 'femininity'.

I hope that I have got to the stage of dressing for *myself*. This is why being whistled at in the street makes me so annoyed. It is a combination of anger and vulnerability at having been (de)graded with one purse of the lips. Personally I can't imagine why any man thinks that a woman is going to leap into bed with him just because he opened his mouth.

The Begin- nings .



1958 Notting Hill riots – the black community was attacked by racists and a black man killed.

I often wondered why my family left their long white sandy beaches, hot peaceful days and friendly warm tropical isles; the myth of the West Indies I and many other black children grew up with. Looking behind their faded dreams, hopes and memories we saw bad housing, poverty, unemployment and a land whose wealth had been transported to build the great industrial cities of Bristol, London and Liverpool.

So with hopes, dreams and promises of good jobs, housing and schooling our families came to the prosperous 'You're welcome here' Britain of the 1950's. Only to find what Britain's small, hidden black communities already knew and were living the daily reality of; slum housing and bad conditions in Liverpool, Bristol and Cardiff. The work was what the white population refused to do; long night shifts on London Transport and the National Health Service, or low paid, shitty work in the ports, docks, foundries and mills.

Smethwick Labour Exchange 1955
"Coloured labour from the Commonwealth is greatly easing the labour shortage."

By the end of the Fifties it was becoming apparent that the economic boom was slowing down. Our parents were the easiest and most visible targets – they were blamed for the lack of new schools, housing and hospitals. The (un)important things that no one had bothered to build during the economic boom.

The Sixties saw rising unemployment, disillusionment with the Welfare State and the racist vote increasingly becoming part of British politics. In 1963 Labour Leader Harold Wilson was saying

"We are not having immigration used as an alibi for the total Tory failure to handle the problem of housing, . . . and education".

But in 1964 the Tories won the Smethwick By-Election on a platform calling for stricter immigration controls. By the end of the Sixties successive Labour Governments were bringing in racist legislation to stop black immigration.

By the early Seventies unemployment was rising and the British economy declining at an alarming rate. The welcome of the Fifties had turned to open hostility. There were rocketing rises in black unemployment, and large increases in police presence resulted in the continual stopping and searching of black unemployed youth. **1964-5** In Lewisham unemployment rose by 85%. In Lewisham black unemployment rose by 157%. The S.P.G. were called in to crack down on mugging.

There were protests against the racist immigration laws, the poor housing and educational facilities. The older black community voiced anger against the continual raids on black clubs and the 'SUS' laws but it fell on deaf ears.

1974 The first National Front broadcast on television. By the end of the Seventies a deaf Britain was feeling the anger and frustration of young blacks at their presence on the dole queues, and at the hostile police force.

1970 NOTTING HILL RIOTS – against a large police presence at a black carnival.

1977 The black community in Wood Green and Lewisham defended themselves against the National Front.

1979 SOUTHALL RIOTS Against the National Front. The same year the racist, pro heavy policing Thatcher Government was elected and the Nationality Bill introduced. (See Shocking Pink 2).

1980 BRISTOL RIOTS It was against this background of continual harassment from a hostile white population and the reality of life in Britain – with no jobs, bad housing and poor education that the riots of 1981 took place.



OH OH OH

"The majority of people's attitude to sex is so puritanical anyway — how are we ever going to get it to change? Even straight sex is a huge taboo subject."

"Oh yes; there's sex which is bad enough, and then there's 'perverts' which is just adding insult to injury..!"

This is part of a discussion a group of young women had about the ways we have been conditioned into thinking about sex; what we really think about sex; the way sex is confused with many other aspects of our relationships.

Everything said was personal opinion only — and not everyone present agreed with everything that was said. Of the young women there some are straight, some are lesbians, and some don't define their sexuality, some are white, and some are black, some are working class and some are middle class. And everyone is under the age of 21. To make it clearer everyone has been given a letter for a 'name'.

A: There are so many assumptions: when I first started having sex the assumption was that you got contraception, and that was your responsibility; you didn't talk to the boy about it, he might get upset, it's your body (even though you don't know much about it) and it's all a bit embarrassing... that's one thing I used to resent about the whole thing — contraception, and how it fucked up my body. The boys didn't help much either; as far as they're concerned it's not their problem. Another assumption; if you listen to the men I work with talking about sex, it's all really based around penetration — sex doesn't have to be like that, but they can't envisage anything else. Or if they can, well, that's 'kinky'".

B: "Yeah, sex is seen as something women have done to them. You're supposed to just lie there. It's all based on the idea that sex is a male act. But

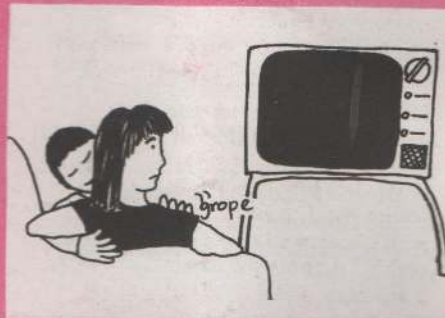
how do you get rid of all that conditioning in one go? You can say, well, it's better to work with men, people are being unrealistic if they think you can get rid of sexism by ignoring them. But when you are having a relationship with one, you're still in the position of being vulnerable to the power relationships that go on. It is possible, I think, to have a good relationship with a man, but only if you're conscious of the fact that you are working at aneq that you are working

at an equal relationship; you have to remind each other of it all the time, and..."

C: "Sounds wonderful"

E: "It must be a very powerful piece of conditioning that makes people try and get something out of a situation that almost has an inbuilt failure. Trying to make something that is imbalanced balanced. Saying 'You've got to work at it' the whole time."

C: "I think you have to work at any relationship though, not just straight ones."



E: "Of course, I'm not saying that there are no problems within lesbian relationships, but they are different problems. You're starting off from a more equal basis."

B: "The heterosexual power thing reflects, within a relationship, the power imbalances of wider society. So you are trying to work against the power imbalances that are accepted by society all the time, encouraged even."

We started talking about attitudes towards homosexuality. One woman said that although she was straight she didn't feel that it was necessarily her choice — she just was. To which the answer was

E: "But that's the whole point about our conditioning! Lesbianism isn't offered as a choice, heterosexuality is the norm, and if you step outside that you're considered a freak, a wierdo... Heterosexuality is a choice, because it can be recognised as a piece of conditioning; it's not necessarily BAD to be straight, but the compulsory nature of it in this society means that it is not meant to be a choice, whereas in fact it is."

B: "Yeah, but from the beginning it is assumed that you are going to have a boyfriend, so you just go along with it."

C: "So what? Look, I'm a lesbian, and, ok, I was trapped into having a boyfriend once too — I mean, the idea of sleeping with a bloke was never, like, uurrghh, it's just... boring. You might be missing something on telly, or something — but you can recognise it as a trap, get out of it."

A: "And heterosexual sex is pushed at you from all sides, sometimes it really makes me sick, you turn on the radio, you turn on the fucking TV, pick up a magazine... it really hits you, it makes you really depressed."

C: "Yeah, and then people have the nerve to say 'I don't mind gays as long as they don't flaunt it'. I think if they realised how many women are actually lesbians they'd have the shock of their lives."

D: "But they don't though. Most lesbians have always been invisible because of the stereotype of the woman who wants to be a man, wearing tweeds and smoking cigars — butch and femme, that sort of thing — whereas hardly any lesbians are like that at all."

Then we started talking about marriage...

E: "Everybody tries to make it work, and if you get a divorce you are seen as the failure, whereas in actual fact, why can't it be seen that the whole institution of marriage itself is a failure?"

C: "If you look at the structure of marriage, I can't believe that any work at all. I think a lot of the reasons why they do 'fail' is that you're a failure if you want separate beds, let alone

sweet LOVE & romance

your own room . . . I mean to me the idea of living with someone is enough to cope with, let alone having to share the same bed with someone for the next thirty years. I think it's really bizarre to expect people to do that. No wonder relationships get fucked up, when not only do you not get any privacy, but you are expected not to want any. And if you do, or if you want your own life style, or whatever, then that's the failure, YOUR MARRIAGE HAS FAILED. I ask you."

B: "Even if you're just 'going out' with someone they are supposed to be the only person - you're supposed to be with them the whole time, and when you're not with them you're supposed to be thinking about them."

A: "Yeah, but the blokes I know they're resigned almost, that 'I am going to get married because it is expected of me' . . . OK, they reckon 'I want someone to look after me and wash my socks' but there is also the stigma of NOT being NORMAL if you're past 25 and you have not got a fiancée or at least a steady girlfriend. So if there is any resistance to it - because on one level they are all 'WOOORRGHH bird, knoworrimean' on other level they have got to conform, and they are frightened of anything different."

C: "Yeah, but even that's got safety clauses in it for men. They get married and in the first year they are expected to get used to settling down, knock the wife up, then she gets on with having babies and that's her next few years sorted out. Then he can start going out with the lads again, it's even a bit of a put down to say 'He never comes out with the boys any more' . . . whereas the woman is stuck at home. And that's still true despite what Cosmo might be trying to tell us."

A: "There's still that resignation, though, that you challenge nothing."

C: "Yeah, but who gets the better deal?"

At this point we had an argument about whether we were being unrealistic. Someone said that her mother would never stand for such an un-equal relationship; "They're not equal, but they're fairly equal . . . much more than any of you seem to think is possible."



Most of us said that we didn't think that it was completely impossible to have a good marriage, but, as someone pointed out:

"People get used to living with an un-equal relationship - they share the washing up - that doesn't make men and women equal."

F: "I suppose it depends on what you see yourself getting out of marriage. Security and . . ."

C: "That's exactly what my mother said when I told her I was a lesbian. 'Well dear, you're going to have to realise that I'm going to worry that you won't have any real security' - by which I suppose she meant not having a mortgage and a certificate saying that I'd have someone to cherish me 'till death do us part - and I said 'What, security like your two marriages? Like your husband who beat you up?' And she sort of went 'Ah well . . .' A wedding ring doesn't buy you security . . . I know me and my friends really care about each other, and we didn't have to take any oaths . . ."

F: "But it's so much easier to know there's always going to be someone there who you can drag to the pub or whatever. And because you're sleeping with that person, supposedly they will always be there, and they'll listen to your problems. If someone is just your friend, they'll be allowed commitments to other people, and that assumption isn't always there."

D: "It's ego and status isn't it? You've got more status as a couple than as an individual - you're seen as having been rejected if you haven't settled down with someone."

A: "But what's commitment? I've got a really close friend - I don't sleep with her, but I'm very committed to her and I can see that relationship going on for a long time, and I think it's more important to me that I sustain my relationship with her than with someone I may have slept with a few times. Because there's also that assumption that, god, you must KNOW them if you've slept with them!."

B: "The morning after conversation . . .!"

C: "Yeah! Urgh . . . but I know what you mean about commitment; I used to have a really close friend, who I lived with. And the bloke she was going out with got really jealous because she wanted to spend time with me as well as him. Our relationship was seen as secondary to her relationship with him, because we were 'just friends' ."

B: "That's what happens though. When you reach your teens, you are supposed to instantly become attracted to boys, forget all your female friends - or see them as the enemy; watch it, or she'll take your boy off you! And there's all those things to make you more attractive than the next girl, because after all you are competing with her. Men are suddenly the focus of attention and women's relationships with each other are seen as nothing."

Which is where the rot begins to set in. But young women are beginning to take control of their own relationships and sexuality.

We'd like your opinions on this discussion.



These two women are doing a Japanese martial art called Shintaido.

Photo by Anita Corbin

There are karate classes for women every Friday evening at the Camden Institute, Holmes Rd, London NW5 (Kentish Town tube). Beginners class 8.30. The instructor is a young woman black belt. £1 per session. Phone 267 1414 for details. You have to be over 7 years old for medical reasons.

We hope to include an article on women's karate and self-defence in the next issue of Shocking Pink. If you have any experiences or photos relevant to self-defence, eg, have you ever used it!, ever wished you could use it!, then please send the material to our mailing address.

Punks, Mods + Rockers

Anita Corbin, a young photographer, has put together an exhibition of Young Women in sub-cultures, eg punks, mods, rockers etc. She says that too often the styles and presence of these young women is ignored. They are also treated as secondary to their male counterparts. Terms like 'punkette' tend to imply a smaller version of punk, not quite the real thing. Anita's pictures accompanied by a tape of the Young Women talking and playing their favourite records, dispel any doubt about their credibility.

There are 15 large full colour photos showing them at clubs, at home, and with each other. It's a really excellent, unpatronising, interesting exhibition. We all loved it. Available for hire to groups, rates negotiable according to financial situation from:

Cockpit Gallery Holborn
Princeton St
London WC1
Tel 01 405 5334

ROCK THE BOAT (Then film it sinking)

'Women In Entertainment' are organising a number of talks in schools and colleges to provide information for Young Women who are interested in pursuing a career in the entertainment industry. This includes work in TV, theatre, film, music etc. For instance if you'd thought about becoming a lighting technician, then they can tell you what qualifications you'll need and how to get them. They have a national network of contacts, to find the one for your area, write to:

Women In Entertainment,
11 Acklam Rd,
London W10
Tel 969 2292, 969 3742

If you'd like someone to visit *your* school or Young Womens Group, then drop them a line. Here's an indication of the need for an organisation like W.I.E.

In British TV there are only 4 camerawomen and 2 women sound

recordists. Only 18 out of the BBC's 132 producers are women, and 14 out of 105 at LWT and Thames.

Although women are grossly under-represented in the skilled and upper management levels they do of course keep the industry going, being grossly over-represented and under-paid as cleaners and secretaries.

W.I.E. will also be running workshops in drama, dance, art and music for Young Women.

These activities are all part of their 'Women Live' May '82 project which will be a month when women will participate in all areas and at all levels within the Entertainment Industry. There will be plays on TV by women writers, womens bands playing in youth clubs, and women's films shown in cinemas. If you'd like more details about any of these activities, then write enclosing sae to the above address.

New Book by Young Women

STOP PRESS
Special offer £3 inc postage
SHEBA PUBLISHERS
 488 KINGSLAND Rd
 LONDON E8

'Girls Are Powerful' to be published in mid-April will be the first book containing pieces by, rather than about, Young Women. The sections include looks at home, at school, at work, unemployment, friends and lovers. The Young Women speak out against the sex, race, class and age discrimination they experience. There are articles on racism by Young Black and Asian women. "Growing Angry. Growing Strong" is by a group of Young Asian women describing the strength they get from each other and the ways they

fight racism, at school, on the streets and everywhere. The article on Ageism highlights both the subtle and blatant forms of this oppression and points out that Young Women will no longer tolerate the patronising attitude to which they/we have been subjected. Most, not all, the pieces have been previously published, but this collection will be well worth reading. It costs £3.75, so hassle your local library or school to get a copy.

cont from p.3

grounds that 'There is a division within the collective' and that we no longer adhered to the aims and objectives in the contract. By this time we had already booked the printers and typesetters, and decided to move headquarters and publish without them.

Cllr Green gave his opinion of 'Shocking Pink' in a letter to the Acton Gazette. This broad-minded gentleman is also a school governor.....

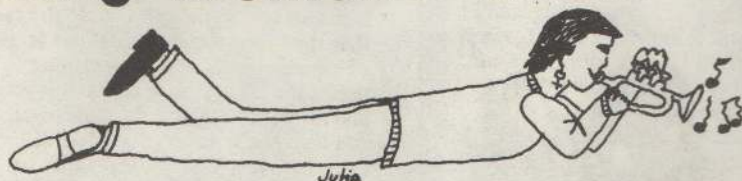
The norm must not be flouted

I think any mature mind will acknowledge that there are 'norms' of acceptable moral standards in our society, and that these are, in the main, the biological norms of both the human and animal world, and should apply equally to adult and adolescent behaviour.

I hope that in any future editions of the magazine, the Editors will omit items in which abnormal behaviour is portrayed as being perfectly acceptable.

CLLR J. D. GREEN
 Ealing Town Hall.

Young Women's Music



West London Music Workshops	6.00-8.00	Young Womens Band
Acton Community Arts hold regular music and vocal workshops at the Priory Centre, Acton Lane, London W3. Workshops are open to women only unless otherwise stated.	8.00-10.00	Young Womens Band
	Thursday	
	1.00-3.00	Guitar workshop (mixed)
	7.00-9.00	Vocal workshop

Monday

11-12.30	Jam session with all kinds of instruments.
1.30-3.00	Workshop for unemployed people (mixed).
3.30-5.00	Young Womens Band

Wednesday

1.30-3.00	Women's guitar workshop.
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There are different instruments available, so you can go along and experiment with something new. For instance, they have a trumpet and a saxophone. All the workers are women, and you don't have to have any previous experience or skill. It's very cheap. Phone 992 5566 ext 2296 for details.

'Outwrite'

Women's Newspaper

The first feminist newspaper 'Outwrite' is scheduled for publication on March 8th, International Women's Day. It aims to present world news with a feminist perspective. There will be special emphasis given to the struggles and issues affecting Black and Third World Women. For a long time now, within the Women's Movement in this country, it has been very easy for white women to fight sexism, ignore racism, and masquerade under the banner of

Women's Liberation. Quite clearly this is not liberation for Black Women and therefore not women's liberation.



The paper aims to be highly visual as well as accessible and contain articles relevant to all groups of women. Initially it will come out monthly and then hopefully more regularly. Lots of luck. Watch press for details.

NOW

We have control over all areas of the magazine. There are ten young women on the collective, although numbers fluctuate, and the present age range is 16-20. We come from different race and class backgrounds. None of us are members of established political parties. Some of us are lesbians, some are heterosexual (straight) and some of us are questioning our sexuality.

We do the design, layout and paste-up, as well as publicity, distribution etc. We skill-share so that everyone has a basic knowledge of each process. This way the technical aspect of magazine production is de-mystified and everyone can contribute at each stage.

Shocking Pink collective

NEW WAVE

The Au Pairs are Lesley Woods (Guitar/Vocals), Jane Munroe (Bass), Paul Foad (Guitar/Vocals) and Pete Hammond (Drums). They were formed in Birmingham, in early '79, and since then have released three singles – 'You', 'Diet/It's Obvious', and 'Inconvenience' – and one album – *Playing With A Different Sex*.

We wanted to talk to the Au Pairs, because from the beginning they have written and sung songs which look at life from a realistic, woman's perspective, and because Lesley and Jane are two of the 'New Wave' of women musicians who refuse to be pushed into any of the stereotypical 'Women in Rock' moulds.

Originally we were going to talk to the whole band but when we got to the Hammersmith Palais nobody knew where Pete and Paul were so it was just Lesley, Jane and us in the Ladies Boudoir.

The first thing we asked them was how they'd got into *playing* music in the first place. Jane had never touched a musical instrument until a few months before she joined the group. "It was pure fluke, really, with me, because I decided to get a bass – it's the easiest thing to learn, there's only four strings! – but I didn't really do anything with it until I got this phone call from Lesley one day, and went along to see them, and that was the Au Pairs". Jane was never interested in music at school. "I didn't like the things that girls were supposed to play. No, I used to *hate* music lessons at school, it used to be really tedious. I mean, the way they teach it is enough to put anyone off, unless you want to be an opera singer". Lesley, on the other hand, started to play acoustic guitar when she was "quite young" (she's now 23, Jane's 27), but she hadn't played an electric guitar until she joined the Au Pairs.

How did the band get started? – "It was the heyday of punk and there was a lot happening culturally for young people" Lesley said. "And also women were moving into that area in a way they hadn't before, like Siouxsie, Poly Styrene, Patti Smith – I think the first woman I ever listened to who didn't sing in your typical feminine way was Patti Smith, she's great"



Photos by Sq 114

At that time, when they were still relatively unknown outside Birmingham they got "The usual remarks, the typical sexist crap", especially from men they were working with at gigs, but they say this doesn't happen so much now. "But we've got no illusions about that; we know that the only reason they're being polite to us is because we're in a position where they *have* to acknowledge us – we see how they treat any other woman..." Lesley went on to talk about a Woman's Rock Festival they played in Berlin in the Spring. "It was a really great event, but it was all male PA guys (PA – Public Address system) and in between all

these women's bands coming on, you'd have things like all this heavy metal stuff coming over the disco, it was really strange. I think those guys had a lot of problems handling the fact that they were doing this PA for largely all women bands, it did something to their egos". They both really enjoyed playing at a Women's Music Festival, and thought it was a good idea. "I thought it was great! A large part of the audience was women too, and we really enjoyed things like going into the gig and being able to stand there without being hassled. And the atmosphere backstage was great".

Then Lesley and Jane asked us a bit about Shocking Pink – how we started, the various problems we'd had, etc. We were talking about censorship, and that led to the way that the Au Pairs were banned by the BBC from doing one of their best songs, 'Come Again', which is about – shock, horror – faking orgasms. We all thought it was a typical example of the warped standards applied by the censors – Thin Lizzy can sing "I'm a mad sexual rapist" and that's fine. Jane said "Women aren't supposed to sing about sex, anyway, not in any way that isn't passive". Lesley agreed "If you present things in a certain way then they are acceptable. It has nothing to do with morality really. We were talking about that the other day, about Bucks Fizz – you know 'I just wanna piece of the action' – ripping off the women's skirts on stage, and that's *fine*. It just matters how you present it, and as long as you do it the way that people are used to hearing it then

it's okay. If you don't, people get really threatened . . . I mean 'Come Again' is *funny*, it's sending it all up".

Lesley writes all the groups lyrics, they're very strong, and as Lesley said, often funny, yet people seem to find them hard to cope with. For instance, NME's Paul Morley called them 'man hating'. How do they react to that? "It just shows people's ignorance" Lesley said, "If the only conclusion they can come to from hearing those lyrics



or from seeing you on stage is that you must be man hating . . . It's just another male image of any woman who is independent, strong, ambitious, or who is trying to be successful - she's automatically some sort of femme fatale, evil type. Like what happened to Patti Smith, how badly she was treated by the press - whereas a man might be regarded as sensible and strong a woman would be regarded as arrogant and bitchy. Another case of double standards. Women are neurotic, men get angry . . ."



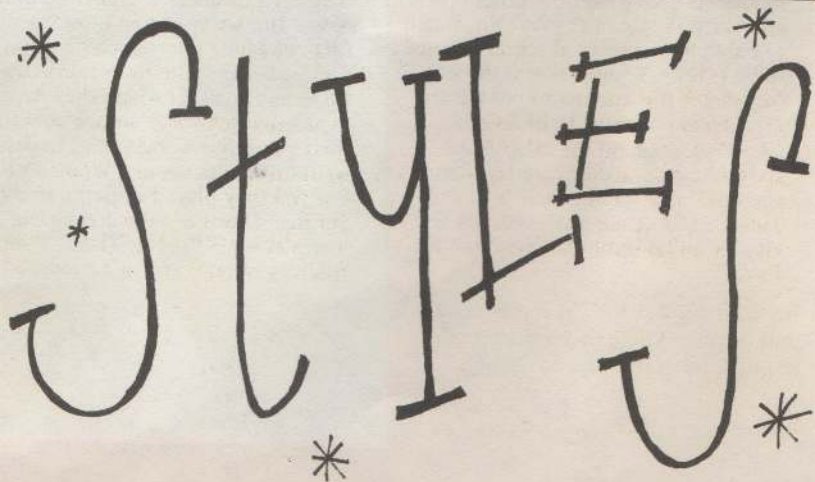
We wondered if they ever got the other classic response to a woman on stage - the 'Show us yer tits' kind of attitude. Lesley said "Not much, but - I mean so what if you did? Big deal, someone's tits. Again it just demonstrates their mentality, their ignorance. Having said that you obviously get pissed off if that's all they can 'get out' of your being on stage". Jane: "She just lashes them with her tongue and they crawl off somewhere and die".

Did either of them ever read Jackie? Lesley "Occasionally. Well hardly ever. I knew girls that did." Jane "Didn't really, I read Judy and Bunty". Lesley "Bunty! Bunty's great! Bunty's still . . ." ignoring this outburst Jane finished ". . . but I never used to read Jackie. It never really appealed. All those stupid stories . . ." Lesley calmed down and agreed "They're just really, really pathetic. All that crap. I think girls are becoming much more critical of those sorts of papers. I think Jackie is very deliberately *aimed* at girls who's only prospects when she leaves school, if she can get a job, is working in somewhere like Woolies or in a factory and then getting married - and that's what Jackie helps to ensure, that image, that lifestyle". So how do we get away from that conditioning? What would you say to women who want to do something else, play music for instance? "Listen to old Jimi Hendrix records! NO, NO, . . . just try to get access to an instrument and mess around with it.

If you can pick up some basic things, just know what the strings are etc - and don't be influenced by how you're *supposed* to be able to play. Be innovative. One of the things about women moving in on music - and other areas - is that we've got to create our own standards, and our own traditions - new styles - because women do have a different approach to music and instruments from men because we don't have that 'history' and background".

Last question - did they ever think they'd be pop stars, or indeed, did they ever want to be? Jane said - "I wanted to be an astronaut". Lesley looked amazed. "I never knew that". Jane smiled. "I think I've failed so far". "Oh I dunno . . .". Lesley looked thoughtful. "You never know do you?"

Sally, Kate, Julia and Fran



the riots

We were told that short, sharp shocks were to be Thatcher's cure for the 'wicked ways' of Britain's rebellious youth. But 1981 was the year that Britain's increasingly hostile police force was on the end of a short, sharp shock from the black youth of Brixton, Toxteth, Southall, Moss Side . . .

FEBRUARY — THE ROYAL ENGAGEMENT

The message was simple — think happy, think party, or simpler still — don't think at all. This was to be a summer of 'love and joy', forget your problems and dance!

BRIXTON APRIL OPERATION SWAMP '81

During the week prior to the riots over 1,000 people were stopped and searched.

P.C. in Brixton, 'Daily Mail'. "We call this the Front Line. They call it Babylon trying to make it sound religious — sacred. But we know too much about too many of them crooks and yobs".

Tension was high by Friday night because of the increase in the (over) aggressive policing tactics being used. On Friday night the police arrested and wounded a man and refused to take him to hospital. Fighting broke out, the man was seized and taken to hospital.

Nurse on local radio. "It was criminal that it took so long to get the boy to hospital, he nearly bled to death".

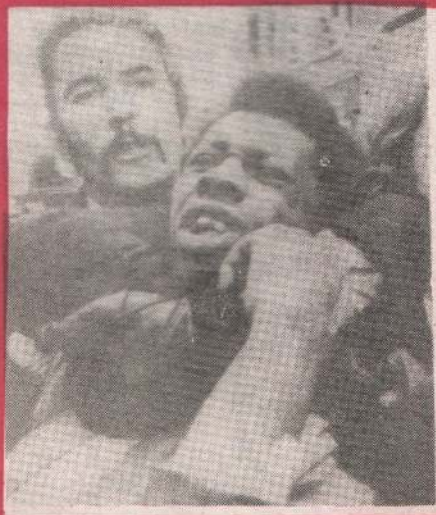
Rioting broke out over the weekend.

In Brixton 1,000 people under 20 have never had a job. Unemployment among blacks is now three times as high as among whites. But charges of over policing, hostile and insensitive attitudes were dismissed as rubbish.

For the police it was a case of street tactics; they had lost the battle but not the war.

Metropolitan Police Officer after Brixton. "We control the streets of London and that's all there is to it".

So they want to control the streets. But who do they control the streets for, i.e. who are they protecting?



Brixton, to a large extent, was dismissed by the police and the press as a 'race riot', mainly because the riots centred around the largely black community. But some young women who were involved in the Brixton riots have said that it was a riot against the police by mainly black but also white members of the Brixton community.

After Brixton there were small clashes between police and crowds in parts of London. We noticed an increase in police presence, particularly late at night. To some extent we were waiting for something to happen — but were still shocked when it did and by the scale of it.

JULY The riots of the summer, which centred mainly around Southall, Toxteth, Moss Side and Brixton, were sparked off by 'minor' everyday events. In Southall a racist attack before a gig, in Toxteth a wrongful arrest. The riots started mainly in the black community but soon spread to include large numbers of the white community. Toxteth has been described by a N.U.R. member in Liverpool as the first white army to have black generals.

Peter Wright, Deputy Chief Constable, Liverpool. "At the savage climax of trouble the rioters were mainly white".

The gap between the grim reality of our lives was narrowing and in some cases was almost identical.
Toxteth — black unemployment — 47%
Toxteth — white unemployment — 43%

Liverpool 8 Defence Committee, Toxteth. "Down here if you're black you're a nigger and if you're white you're a nigger-lover".