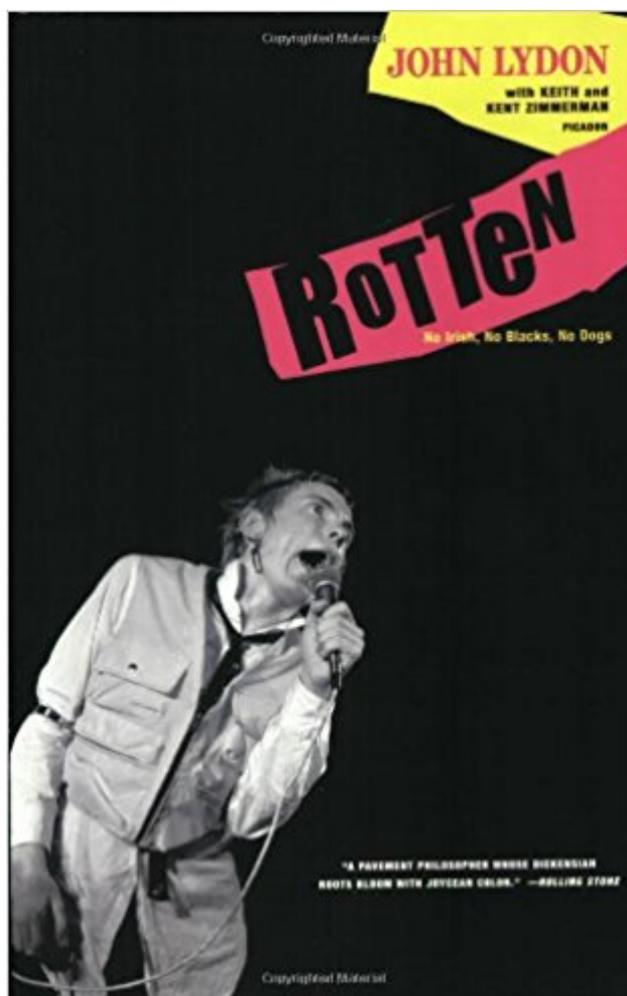


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Rotten: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs



Synopsis

"I have no time for lies and fantasy, and neither should you. Enjoy or die."--John Lydon
Punk has been romanticized and embalmed in various media. It has been portrayed as an English class revolt and a reckless diversion that became a marketing dream. But there is no disputing its starting point. Every story of punk starts with its idols, the Sex Pistols, and its sneering hero was Johnny Rotten. In Rotten, Lydon looks back at himself, the Sex Pistols, and the "no future" disaffection of the time. Much more than just a music book, Rotten is an oral history of punk: angry, witty, honest, poignant, and crackling with energy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

At long last, John Lydon (aka, Johnny Rotten) has opened up, nearly twenty years later. The Sex Pistols remain one of my favorite bands, and Johnny Rotten one of the more interesting media figures in the pop culture, so I devoured this book. It combines first-person accounts of all sorts of punk notables and wannabes, and the observations of Lydon himself, co-written by Keith and Kent Zimmerman. I'll admit a bias up front - so much of the history of punk has been obfuscated, I value anything that comes along. I was eight at the time the Sex Pistols did their thing, and I remember being scared when I heard the names "Johnny Rotten" and "Sid Vicious" - I didn't know who they were, but they seemed scary names (and remember, this was before MTV), and the radios weren't playing them - they were phantoms and boogeymen, and all the adults seemed scared of them. I remember when I was a teenager, finally buying their album, and thinking, "What's the big deal?"

This music rocks!"I'm glad to see some light shed on this period by one of the people at the center of the media storm. Lydon fills the book with tart observations - he retains his spite and anger and seems as volatile as ever. At the same time, I feel like he's pulling one over on the rest of us. Some of his recollections seem contradictory - perhaps very real to him, but everybody knows that one's perception of things changes over time. There's a subjective quality to this account that makes me long for corroboration. Some of the first-person commentary does back up Rotten's assertions, but I get the feeling there's impression management occurring (check out Goffman's "Impression Management" and you'll know what I'm talking about).

First, I wish to take issue with other reviewers who admit to knowing absolutely nothing about the '70s London punk scene, yet feel qualified to critique dear Johnny's representation of it. The picture painted in this book matches up quite well with all the others I have encountered in my journey to understand this punk world that I unfortunately am too young to have been a part of. From "The History of Rock and Roll" documentary to the Clash's autobiographical documentary ("Westway to the World") to books and essays by and interviews with people who were actually there (Jon Savage's "England's Dreaming," Mikal Gilmore's essays and articles from "Night Beat," Greil Marcus's work, etc.), John's portrait of the scene flawlessly fits in with the others. As far as I am concerned, it positively reeks with accuracy. Second, yes, John Lydon is obnoxious. It's not a secret that you're letting anyone in on. He knows it and takes pride in it, and his fans know it and love him for it. He is superior and he hates everything and he really is a c*nt (sorry if you disapprove of the language, but it's how the man describes himself). If you don't like him, that's just fine by both him and me. Punks didn't put much stock in trying to be liked by anyone. If you're trying to learn more about the scene, that's one key fact you should be getting out of this text. Third, if you don't know what the Ramones "stood for," you obviously should have started out with something much more elementary in your "School of Rock--Punk" lesson. The Ramones stood for a return to the '60s. They wanted to take rock back to the happy place it occupied when it was synonymous with pop music, which is a noble quest. However, I suspect most of Mr.

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