

INTERROBANG?! #5
ANTHOLOGY
IN MUSIC AND
FAMILY
WRITINGS AND INTERVIEWS

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Interrobang?! #5: Anthology on Music and Family

Edited by Sharon Cheslow

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Decomposition

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Remember when you were ten and you couldn't keep your filthy hands off your mom's Led Zeppelin LPs because the ripping guitar solos were completely incomprehensible to your infantile brain? Remember hearing snippets of off-key operettas spouting from your father's throat when he thought no one was listening?

What about hearing music for the first time coming out of the creepy music box your weirdo grandparents gave you? What is the role of family experiences like these in shaping a person's involvement and interest in music? What does family even mean in a typically youth-dominated subculture like punk, whose adherents often reject their parents and elders in order to create outside communities of peers based on underground music?

Sharon Cheslow, who was an integral part of the early DC hardcore scene and continues to produce art and music through other avenues, has been putting out *Interrobang?!* since 1989, with each issue focusing on different themes. Beginning as a print zine and then moving in the direction of the internet with issue #4, *Interrobang?!* now takes the form of a glossy-covered bound book compiling writings on family, music, and the intersections of community and artistic expression. The contributors represent a wide array of creative backgrounds and use poetry, interviews with family members and friends, personal narratives, and non-fiction to explore these themes.

In this issue of *Interrobang?!*, Cheslow has compiled writings by fourteen musicians and artists, like Pauline Oliveros, Ian MacKaye, Jean Smith, and others, documenting their experiences with music, family, and community. The contributions cover seemingly random topics ranging from the death of John Lennon's mother and feminist psychoanalysis, to the importance of music boxes in shaping musical memory, to the lack of community surrounding the LA folk scene of the 1960s. Some writings describe formative early childhood moments filled with the stolen LPs of disapproving parents, lots of drugs, isolation, and musical awakenings, while others take more abstract routes to the land of performance art and experimental composition.

I really liked reading through this anthology. It seems like almost anyone who picks this up could find ways to relate to the anecdotes inside. The pieces are pretty short, each spanning only a few pages, but the transitions don't feel choppy or forced. Cheslow's goal with this anthology seems to be to get readers thinking not only about their own personal experiences with music in family settings, but also about what constitutes family in a broader sense...and for her punk readers, to consider our experiences with music before our exposure to punk to be just as important and as powerful as our entrances into the underground subculture. This book definitely brought me back to my roots as a pre-teen sixties psychedelic freak and now I can't stop inquiring about people's pre-punk musical tastes. A fast read, but compelling, nonetheless.

—Diane Anastasio