

Xicana rock tales

Punk's groundbreaking women



Michelle Cruz Gonzales, left, and Alice Bag lounge on a couch. The two punk rockers will be sharing their stories at a book reading this week.

BY LINDSAY OXFORD

Punk Story and *Pipe Bomb for the Soul*. In *Violence Girl*, Bag describes her first impression of the punk scene as “a type of kinship that had been missing for most of my life, a sense of community that I had never known, feeling as I always had [and still often do] like a misfit, a weirdo, an outcast.”

Both Bag and Gonzales found a home in punk, yet both were still very aware that as Xicana women, their experiences were still very different. “Alice wrote what is probably the first memoir

by a Latina in punk, and I wrote the second,” Gonzales says. “We are from different scenes and different punk eras, but we’re both from Los Angeles, and violence in our families shaped our lives—which all probably had a lot to do with why we got into punk.”

Gonzales, now a professor at Las Positas College in Livermore, released *The Spitboy Rule* in 2016. It’s comprised of 21 essays that come together to tell the story of how she came to punk, and endured years as a drummer being told “you hit hard for a girl.”

Though their stints in the punk scene were decades apart, Bag says that she and Gonzales have a wealth of shared experiences.

“We’re from different times and different places, but we’re both steeped in Mexican traditions and live by our punk ethos,” Bag says. “Hearing both of us read excerpts from our stories can help the

listener understand the quality and scope of the Chicana punk experience.”

At Phono Select, their audience will have an opportunity to do just that.

“In some ways, our books are not about us,” Gonzales says, “but about how others react to people like us.”

Readings begin 5 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 7 at Phono Select Records, 2475 Fruitridge Road. No cover charge, donations accepted. Call (916) 400-3164 for more information.

In *The Spitboy Rule: Tales of a Xicana in a Female Punk Band*, Michelle Cruz Gonzales describes growing up feeling like an outsider, “as a Mexican American, a Xicana in a hick town, I was never allowed to forget that I didn’t fit in, that I muddled their waters. I would show them.”

Gonzales, drummer for the empowering 1990s punk band Spitboy, and Alice Bag, singer of the seminal ’70s band The Bags, have each written memoirs about their experiences being Xicana women in the punk scene, and both will be reading passages from their books on Saturday, Dec. 7 at Phono Select Records.

“We’re excited to come and read,” Gonzales says. “Record stores always feel like real places.”

Historically, the punk scene has been a place where people who feel out of place in “normal” circles gravitate, a community of people who feel othered. Still, there are biases that seep into punk subcultures, and people of color, women and the LGBTQI+ community often have othering experiences.

In their books, Bag and Gonzales share stories from within a scene still dominated by heterosexual, cis-gendered white men.

Bag has authored two books: *Violence Girl: East L.A. Rage to Hollywood Stage*, a Chicana

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Michelle Cruz Gonzales
punk drummer and author

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