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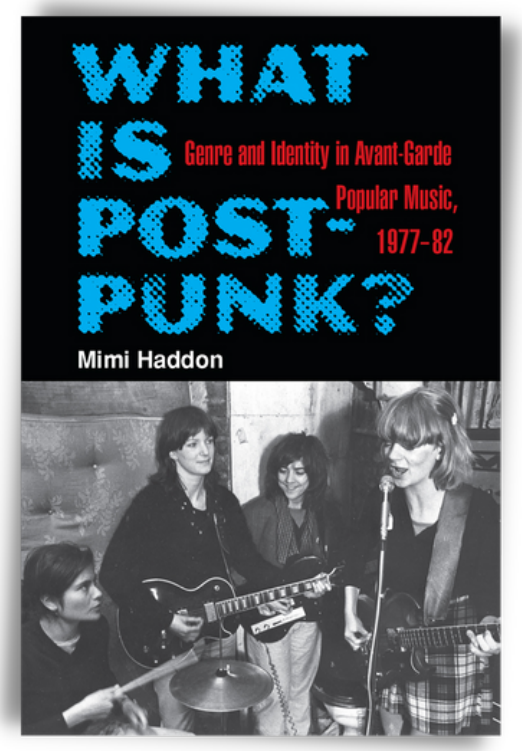

WHAT IS POST-PUNK?

GENRE AND IDENTITY IN AVANT-GARDE POPULAR MUSIC, 1977-82

Mimi Haddon

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 *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.

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