"Cherry Bomb": The Role of Female Rage in Amplifying Feminism and Reproductive Rights

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> I stalked around the stage like a tigress, twirling the microphone around me, wrapping the cord around my thighs, bringing it up between my legs… I moved with a vengeance, releasing all my fears. I felt like a conduit of pure power from a place I didn't know. I was no longer of this world. I had risen above it, beyond it, close enough to touch the face of God.
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> - Cherie Currie[1]

Fifteen-year-old Cherie Currie dreamed of being anyone other than who she was. Born in Los Angeles in 1959, the regular, normal Cherie Currie lived a life where she felt stifled; her father was gone, her mother worked to support four children, leaving the eldest sister, Sondra, to look after them. Cherie was bullied, alone, raped by her twin sister's boyfriend, and wanted nothing more than to avoid her mother's fate of marriage, children, and divorce. She attempted to channel the woman she wanted to be by finding her own style. She sought control in the way she dressed, cut her hair, and did her makeup, to revel in "[her] own creation, something monstrous, mysterious, and powerful."[2] Cherie Currie, future rockstar, was born.

The girls that would form The Runaways shared Cherie's vision. They struggled to break into the music scene and find a place for the sound they wanted to create. It was not until Kim Fowley, a notorious producer in the 1970s California music scene, sought to create an all-girl rock group that they met. Cherie was last to join, meeting Joan Jett, Lita Ford, Jackie Fox, and Sandy West.[3] California in the 1970s was a melting pot of teenage rebellion, an epoch characterized by the ever-present specter of sexism and misogyny. The United States was dealing with conflict over affirmative action, fallout from the Vietnam War, and extreme anxiety about the future of American society in the face of anti-war sentiments and sexual freedom.[4] The 1970s were "a shattering of the 1950s domestic ideal" as family structure and culture changed drastically.[5] The movement of 1970s feminism is the "second wave of the most important revolution in history. Its aim: overthrow of the oldest, most rigid class/caste system in existence, the class system based on sex."[6] Issues of gender, sexuality, and race were coming to the forefront as outspoken activism grew and challenged conceptions of a "great" America where all its citizens prospered.

Teenage girls were told that one day, they would grow up, settle down, get married, and have children, falling into respectable roles established by society, but the 1970s marked an incredible turning point for girls who refused to conform. *Sisterhood is Powerful; an Anthology of Writings From the Women's Liberation Movement,* edited by Robin Morgan, compiles the

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[1] Cherie Currie and Neal Shusterman, *Neon Angel: The Cherie Currie Story* (Price Stern Sloan, 1989), 112.
[2] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel,* 6.
[3] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel,* 71-72.
[4] J. Zeitz, "Rejecting the Center: Radical Grassroots Politics in the 1970s — Second-Wave Feminism as a Case Study." *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 4 (2008): 674.
[5] Andreas Killen, *1973 Nervous Breakdown: Watergate, Warhol, and the Birth of Post-Sixties America*, vol. 1 (New York City, New York: Bloomsbury, 2006), 46.
[6] Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York City, New York: Quill, 1971). 15.

work of women experiencing the awareness of liberation and reflecting on the rhythm of their lives and demonstrating the commonality of the female experience. The anonymous author of "Barbarous Rituals" explores the lifecycle of a woman, from being presumed male in-utero to feelings of bitterness toward their own children, who challenge their circumstances where they did not, and feeling that it is "too late" to act or change, aging with a sense of disappointment with how their life has gone. This author consistently returns to a woman's relationship with her body as a driving element of dissatisfaction in her life. In rituals relating to puberty, the author writes that women experience the ritual of "feeling basically comfortable in your own body, but gradually learning to hate it because you are… *something* that *might* make boys not like you."[7] While these feelings are not unique to women of the 1970s, the ability to publish a solely female-driven work exploring these emotions was unique, indicative of the need for social change. Literature helps to disseminate the ideals of second-wave feminism and organize the position of the moment. First-wave feminism was a challenge to Victorian lifestyles, a movement "built by women who had literally no civil status under the law… who were not taught to read, let alone admitted to college… who had no political voice whatsoever."[8] The ability to create feminist media that could generate publicity and reach women farther than a grassroots movement served to generate moment. Music especially was of significant importance as acts of creation, of poetry, able to create an emotional charge and thrumming undercurrent to feminist action.

Young women in the 1970s broke away from the form set by their mothers. A woman's career began to be viewed as permanent, rather than a "temporary pursuit." Women moved away from service and domestic work and began delaying marriage and actively pursuing divorce.[9] Amidst this shifting social landscape, second-wave feminism helped women break into the workplace, confront wage inequality, and influenced 1970s activism as it dealt with feminism, civil rights, and queer liberation.[10] Second-wave feminism permeated society, and the era of women's liberation did not start and end with adult women; rebellion infected the teenagers.

Young women found themselves in the music scene, wanting to be close to the musicians they loved and to be musicians themselves, escaping into the scene from "homes made newly unstable by changes in the family structure."[11] As their lives changed, they sought community and a place to belong and found each other in the dark corners of Rodney Bingenheimer's English Disco, a place where Hollywood hopefuls, industry luminaries, and the rebellious youth came together.[12] Rodney's closed in 1975 due to financial and legal problems and the unwanted press attention brought by Iggy Pop, a glam-rock musician. The "overblown and hysterical" attention on the club pushed it into the mainstream, exactly the place that Rodney's customers did not want to be, and so they moved to the Sugar Shack in the San Fernando Valley, which opened shortly after the death of Rodney's. The Sugar Shack provided the same energy as its predecessor, including the same DJ, with one important distinction; it was "an under-twenty-one

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[7] Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970). 170-188.
[8] Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York City, New York: Quill, 1971). 16-17.
[9] Katherine J. Lehman, *Those Girls: Single Women in Sixties and Seventies Popular Culture* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 122.
[10] Lehman, *Those Girls,* 5.
[11] Ann Powers, *Good Booty: Love and Sex, Black & White, Body and Soul in American Music* (New York, NY: Dey St., an imprint of Harper Collins, 2017), 211.
[12] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel,* 60.

club," actively providing a scene for the underaged.[13] Teenagers sought a place to meet like-minded people and find a sense of belonging, and the Sugar Shack brought teenagers together, providing respite from adults and an escape from the real world where they could form their own ideals. The Runaways were born into an era of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll, of women testing the boundaries of what society would allow them to do, and it came together at places like Rodney's and the Sugar Shack.

The Runaways' music was the sound of rage. They sang about the anger they felt and used that to fuel their music and how they presented themselves, drawing the attention of men who wanted them to be quiet and angering women who did not like their particular brand of feminism, all while inspiring young girls who wanted to be just like them. The 1970s West Coast scene brought forth an intersection between feminism and rock music, both of which were "in constant crisis and transformation," indicating a major cultural and societal awakening.[14] The Runaways' presence as an all-girl rock band, committed to producing angry, loud, wild music, was heavily influenced by the cultural shift. They were surrounded by messaging that told some women to be liberated, to pursue a career and exercise control over their lives, so long as the control served traditional femininity and did not interfere with marital and familial responsibilities, despite many feminist activists working for radical change.[15] White women in media were largely sexualized or depicted as submissive, and black women were fighting to be seen in media at all.[16] The Runaways took the instability of the era and the uncertainty that came with being teenage girls and married the two in their performance to express that rage.

A key indication of the way The Runaways sought to perform rage was their lead guitarist, Lita Ford. Lita Ford defied the expectations set for female guitarists and refused to conform to "gentle" music. While many popular female musicians avoided the electric guitar, seeing it as "an extension of the male body," Ford leaned in.[17] Her use of electric guitar and the band's tendency to feature her in guitar solos brought her technical prowess front and center, showing that she could play as well as or better than her male counterparts. Ford was not the first woman to find liberation through guitar. Rosetta Tharpe, rock luminary, played the guitar with emotion and technical skill, able to play her instrument behind her back and make the guitar sound as though it was speaking. Her style of playing was described as playing "like a man"[18] But while Tharpe did battle stereotypes that linked guitar to masculinity, she did not hold her guitar as a "phallic symbol" as Ford did.[19] Lita Ford's use of the guitar as a phallic symbol, akin to other popular male guitarists of the 1970s, was part of how The Runaways fought to break down the wall between male and female in the rock genre. Ford played on the level of "male sexual libido" that Tharpe did not, since her music was largely religious in nature.[20] The Runaways place in an era of sexual liberation and bodily autonomy, as well as the

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[13] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel,* 58-59.
[14] Kate Grover, "Rocking the Revolution: The Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band and the Politics of Feminist Rock and Roll," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 46, no.2 (2021): 489-512509.
[15] Angie Maxwell and Todd G. Shields, *The Legacy of Second-Wave Feminism in American Politics* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 41-42.
[16] Lehman, *Those Girls*, 121.
[17] Mavis Bayton, *Frock Rock: Women Performing Popular Music* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 120.
[18] Gayle F. Wald, *Shout, Sister, Shout!: The Untold Story of Rock-and-Roll Trailblazer Sister Rosetta Tharpe* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), 166.
[19] Wald, *Shout, Sister, Shout!* 84-6.
[20] Wald, *Shout, Sister, Shout*, 86.

hypersexualization of The Runaways in media, created the need to play into sexual themes as both self-expression and part of fitting in the genre. Aligning with the image of other popular male musicians was imperative for The Runaways as they tried to emulate what they knew from male-dominated rock. Many feminist musicians favored acoustic instruments and rhythm guitar, an instrument that was "not assigned any more prominence or status than any other instrument."[21] Ideals of "guitar virtuosity" are often associated with masculinity and electric guitars. The Runaways refused to back out of male space in rock music. They kicked in the door and took what they wanted.

Alternative music, specifically punk and hard rock, are well documented avenues of feminist ideology. These genres actively seek to subvert conventional expectations of artistic expression with music made by and for an unconventional audience. Punk is inherently political, as its message is one of protest and anarchy, a subculture centered around counterculture, defying the mainstream and challenging corrupt institutions.[22] Artists like Alice Bag, lead singer of The Bags, Talking Heads bassist Tina Weymouth, and Blondie frontwoman Debbie Harry challenged ideas of race, gender, and sexuality as punk artists.[23] Their presence in punk challenged norms of how women in music were supposed to be by creating angry, brash, music and embodying anti-traditional aesthetics, with torn clothing, choppy and often short haircuts, and bold makeup in dark colors.[24] Alternative music embodies feminism by challenging the traditional expectations placed on women, allowing them to find community and take control of the narrative.

The Runaways are often overlooked in the annals of feminist history, just as they were while they were an active band. In *Good Booty: Love and Sex, Black & White, Body and Soul in American Music,* Ann Powers explores American music's connection to gender, sexuality, race, and culture, but only cites The Runaways as an example of the misdeeds of their manager and creator, Kim Fowley, mentioning only that he managed the band and "allegedly assaulted at least two women connected to [The Runaways]".[25] The Runaways are often a footnote in the success story of Joan Jett, who went on to have an incredibly successful career. *CREEM* Magazine, a publication dedicated to music journalism, repeatedly disparaged The Runaways by focusing only on their sexuality in the 1970s. The misogyny and sexism that marked the era directly contributed to why The Runaways are often written off or unknown.

Despite an apparent lack of visibility in the historical record, The Runaways' influence is undeniable. The Runaways are a thrumming undercurrent of feminist rock and roll. Young girls who saw the band perform and bought their records found inspiration; they were witnesses to an all-girl rock band who were producing records, touring, and performing. They sent a message to girls who wanted to be rock stars, even before they picked up an instrument, that they, too, could live that dream.[26]

The 1970s were a pivotal time for feminism and marked development in the movement on an ideological and legal level. The Women's Right's Movement encompasses multiple generations of action ending in achieving the "limited goal of suffrage," where the right to vote was seen as a stopping point as newcomers dedicated to the focus of achieving suffrage did not

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[21] Bayton, *Frock Rock*, 69.
[22] Alice Bag, "Work That Hoe: Tilling the Soil of Punk Feminism," *Women & Performance* 22, no. 2–3 (2012): 233–84.
[23] Powers, *Good Booty,* 262.
[24] Claire Nally, "Goth Beauty, Style, and Sexuality: Neo-Traditional Femininity in Twenty-First-Century Subcultural Magazines," *Gothic Studies* 20, no. 1–2 (2018): 7–8.
[25] Powers, *Good Booty,* 212.
[26] Bayton, *Frock Rock*, 62.

look beyond this single issue.[27] Where women had gained a great deal of ground legally, in education, in clothing and sex, women did not true political power, were not expected or permitted to use their education, and were sexually exploited.[28] The Runaways represent teenage girls and this new iteration of youthful brand of feminism. The Women's Collective of the New York High School Student's Union wrote in "Excepts from the Diaries of All Oppressed Women" that a sense of freedom grows with each new generation and that sexual freedom in particular is important as the first step in the ability to "cope with the real problem of women's liberation."[29] Freedom of sex is not liberation itself, but a path to it. The existence of The Runaways was a protest against traditional societal and cultural norms while embodying a main struggle of feminism. The Runaways spoke about the experience of being teenage girls and feeling powerless. Women's liberation starts with sex, the freedom to have sex, be sexual, express need and desire and be able to put those desires as a front-and-center priority instead of being ashamed of, abstaining from, or refusing to talk about sex.

Angry, female-forward, unapologetic rock music was an avenue of escape from societal pressure. Cherie Currie remarked that she had "spent most of [her] life as a slave to something" – to her parents, to society, to men, to even the music industry.[30] The Runaways, like many of the women who contributed to *Sisterhood is Powerful* and many women around the country who did not write their experiences, were subjected to sexual exploitation and critique, forcing them to balance their youth, their desire to be sexually liberated, and their need to be taken seriously. The Runaways fought and fought hard, against the abusive Kim Fowley, against societal expectations, the industry, and often, against each other. They grew into adulthood after they became rock stars, and though their influence and artistry may not have been widely appreciated in the mainstream of the 1970s, their impact on teenage girls is undeniable. If first-wave feminism is "the aborted revolution," second-wave feminists are the "rebellious daughters of this wasted generation."[31] The Runaways were a driving force, the "Cherry Bomb*"* of young, angry, radical feminism.

The Birth of the "Cherry Bomb"

> Our songs were about sex, heartbreak, partying, and the teenaged rock-and-roll lifestyle… all of the things that mattered to us.
>
> \- Cherie Currie[32]

Life in America from the 1950s and 1960s proved to be dramatically different from life in the 1970s due to shakeups in the political structure of the United States, affecting family, labor, race, gender and sexuality. President Nixon opposed abortion amidst his impeachment hearings, and the passing of Roe vs. Wade invalidated the abortion laws of forty-six states.[33] Roe vs. Wade was the first sign of the major cultural shift in the 1970s, with 1973 considered "Year One" of the

[27] Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: Quill, 1971), 22.
[28] Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: Quill, 1971), 30.
[29] Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 418.
[30] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel*, 145.
[31] Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: Quill, 1971), 30.
[32] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel*, 93.
[33] Ron Elving, "The Leaked Abortion Decision Blew up Overnight: In 1973, Roe Had a Longer Fuse," *NPR*, May 8, 2022.

culture wars.[34] Women entered the workforce in droves, due to both cultural liberation and necessity. A sexual revolution was beginning with widespread use of birth control pills.[35] This unrest carved out the space in the music industry for all-girl bands and female performers who wanted to follow suit in the charge forward for women, emblematic of the changing decade.

The political climate is important to understand when considering the need for female driven punk and hard rock. American politics affected every facet of their lives. As change came to the political forefront of feminism, teenage girls experienced the effects, potentially without fully understanding what was happening in larger society. *Roe v. Wade* was issued in 1973, sending shockwaves through the country for feminists fighting for reproductive rights and those who opposed abortion, further pitting liberal and conservative America against one another as challenges to the traditional American family continued. A sense of "fracture" and "floating turmoil…on both the right and left" were broad feelings of the 1970s, suggesting that society was "veering out of control."[36] The passing of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in 1972 and *Roe* in 1973 brought pushback from conservative women, denoting the division in feminist movement. Where some feminists wanted radical change, others wanted some aspects of liberation but thought "the movement for women's rights had gone much too far."[37]

The Runaways struggled to define themselves and their place in music amid the major changes hitting society. A majority of their members were struggling with family instability and looking to find a place to belong. Cherie Currie's mother, Marie Harmon, had also come to Hollywood with a dream, wanting to be an actress, and though found some success, had to turn away from acting to seek regular employment to support her children after divorce in 1972, separating the Currie children from their father due to his Vietnam War-related post-traumatic stress disorder. This left much of the parenting to her eldest daughter. Marie Harmon did not discuss the nuances of the female body, puberty, or sexuality with her daughters and was an absent figure in Cherie's life.[38] Cultural change in the 1970s meant that stories like this were not uncommon and it is vastly important to consider the impact the changing family structure had on children. Women were only able to maintain part-time jobs due to workplace discrimination. These jobs did not provide healthcare, sick leave, vacation time, retirement benefits, and paid low wages. This also meant that many worked multiple jobs to make ends meet.[39] Harmon's forgone ambitions influenced her daughter, just as her absence did.

Many of the other members of the band experienced similar disruptions to family life. Joan Jett was raised by a single mother who worked multiple jobs. Jackie Fox, the original bassist for The Runaways, was also raised by a single parent. Their original songwriter, Kari Krome, was often alone, frequently left behind by absent parents.[40] The Runaways' mothers are an important factor when considering what led to their aspirations in the rock and roll scene. While they had a desire to create and a love of music, they also sought family and community in a way they were not able to have at home. Their mothers were raised largely with the assumption that their entire life in adulthood would be dedicated to family, an ideal of traditional America. Any dreams and aspirations they had would be put on hold in "a society in which most women are denied access to work that pays enough to support a family," without access to child-care,

[34] Killen, *1973 Nervous Breakdown*, 1.
[35] Killen, *1973 Nervous Breakdown*, 46.
[36] Powers, *Good Booty*, 222.
[37] Maxwell and Shields, *The Legacy of Second-Wave Feminism in American Politics*, 41–42.
[38] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel,* 11.
[39] Maxwell and Shields, *The Legacy of Second-Wave Feminism in American Politics,* 32.
[40] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel,* 75, 93.

forcing them to be dependent on marriage.[41] The mothers of The Runaways had, in many cases, no choice but to be absent, leaving behind angry, vulnerable, but ambitious and rebellious daughters, who needed something stable to hold onto.

The Runaways' creator and manager, Kim Fowley, was one of the most prominent oppressors of The Runaways, positioned to easily abuse the vulnerable girls with his apparent status as God and father. Fowley was a "legendary Hollywood scene-maker, songwriter, producer," well-known in the industry for his "wild" appearance, brightly colored suits and bold makeup, and his loud opinions.[42] Kim Fowley opened the door into the music industry for these teenage girls, playing intentionally on their dreams and insecurities, positioning them as "the fortunate dogs that [he]had plucked out of the gutter to be superstars."[43] His treatment of them was indicative of the way the band would be treated by the music industry, the '70s rock scene in California, and by a larger, misogynistic society.

Radio during the 1970s was dominated by disco and rock, from Donnie Osmond to The Doors, playing music that was at the front of the mainstream. Narrow, mainstream perspectives alienated underground and up-and-coming musicians, relegating them to the shadows of small, local clubs. Artists who prospered in the mainstream, such as Joni Mitchell, Carole King, Kate Bush, and benefited from self-production, and The Runaways were positioned against these mainstream, well-respected female musicians.[44]

The Runaways' performances were marked by a wild atmosphere, a band of teenage girls among crowds that largely thought they could not perform, treating the girls like sex objects. They did not have the protection of security, nor did Kim Fowley use his influence to protect the band he created, leaving them at the mercy of misogynistic crowds. In one early concert, Cherie was "grabbed," a man leaping up at her, "ripping [her] stocking." Joan Jett was the one to respond, "without missing a beat, [she] casually kicked him in the head."[45] The Runaways were thrust into the music industry, a gimmick with potential in the eyes of Kim Fowley, and teenage girls with no business holding instruments in the eyes of the typical rock audience.

"Cherry Bomb*"* was the first hit song for The Runaways, written by Joan Jett and Kim Fowley for Cherie, inspired by her and written for her to sing at her audition for the band.[46] This was the song that put them on the map. The Runaways portrayed the over-sexualized idea of the all-girl band with a sense of irony, evoking teenage rebellion while proving their mettle as performers. The song opens,

> Can't stay at home, can't stay at school
> Old folks say, "ya poor little fool"
> Down the street, I'm the girl next door
> I'm the fox you've been waiting for![47]

[41] Ellen Willis, *Beginning to See the Light: Sex, Hope, and Rock-and-Roll* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 207–8.
[42] Lisa Robinson, "The Runaways: Naughty Nymphets Leave Lisa Cold," *CREEM*, November 1, 1976.
[43] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel*, 85.
[44] Bayton, *Frock Rock*, 7.
[45] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel*, 112.
[46] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel*, 75.
[47] The Runaways, "Cherry Bomb," written by Joan Jett and Kim Fowley, track 1 on *The Runaways*, Mercury Records, 1976, vinyl LP.

"Cherry Bomb*"* was the closing song for performances, a song that would leave a lasting impression on each audience. Cherie would change from jumpsuits of shiny, brightly colored fabric tailored to closely fit her body into a corset and fishnets, decorated with bows. The change was dramatic and intentional, a shift from how Cherie chose to appear to the image of how she was expected to appear, a blonde woman in feminine lingerie instead of a fifteen-year-old girl or a rockstar. She would dance and twirl across the stage, bend over seductively while staring directly into the audience with an unwavering gaze, her face serious.[48] Cherie's performance, though sexual and seductive, was anything but submissive, using musical performativity and the stage to communicate her anger in the only outlet that she and the other members of the band had.[49] The song's lyrics and Cherie's outfit change to lean into the sexualization of The Runaways in an attempt to own it, to use it ironically. She would show her rage by pairing the lyrics with hunched shoulders, bending over at the waist, and screaming at the audience.[50] By using this sexuality ironically in their performance, The Runaways evoked rage, demonstrating that they are aware of perceptions of them that reduce them to objects. Sexuality in "Cherry Bomb*"* is an attempt to process these events and address them, allowing them to express their emotions.[51] Traditional femininity was intentionally turned back at the audience, "parodied by taking fetishized items of clothing," acting in a sexual manner and singing suggestive lyrics.[52] "Cherry Bomb*"* is both anthem and critique.

> Hello Daddy, Hello mom
> I'm your ch-ch-ch-ch-ch-ch-cherry bomb!
> Hello world, I'm your wild girl
> I'm your ch-ch-ch-ch-ch-ch-cherry bomb![53]

The band's vocals and musicianship push against notions of traditional femininity for teenaged girls. The entire band would shout the chorus of the song, ending the performance by repeating the title words. Sandy West's drums would punctuate the words like bombs while Lita Ford performed intense, masterful guitar solos, holding her guitar the way male rockers would, with a prominent position on stage while Cherie wrapped the microphone cord around her leg.[54] Cherie sings in a low register, a deep voice that is unexpected for a girl her age and one that is unique and recognizable. Currie did not delve into a higher pitch or falsetto, never playing with a youthful or girlish tone. Her voice defies traditional notions of how a female lead singer might perform. The Runaways spoke to sex, rebellion, to the pressures of parental ideals and family life in this song and they use their rage to connect to their audience. With their performance, they evoke rage in their listeners with "intentional feeling towards musical events which exactly matches a pattern of feeling we experience in ordinary life."[55] By performing aggressive, rageful

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[48] The Runaways, "Cherry Bomb," *YouTube* video, 2:20, posted by The Runaways VEVO, originally released 1976, https://youtu.be/_EBvXpjudf8?si=fRYrQNcL07R260Y6.
[49] Paula Danielle Propst, *Sonic Feminism: Intentionality, Empathy, and Emotions at Rock and Roll Camps* (PhD diss., University of California, Riverside, 2017), 115.
[50] The Runaways, "Cherry Bomb," *YouTube*.
[51] Propst, *Sonic Feminism*, 113.
[52] Bayton, *Frock Rock*, 65.
[53] The Runaways, "Cherry Bomb," track 1 on *The Runaways*, Mercury Records, 1976, vinyl LP.
[54] The Runaways, "Cherry Bomb," *YouTube*.
[55] Geoffrey Madell, *Philosophy, Music, and Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), 131–32.

music that did not shy away from sexuality, The Runaways embodied a predominant struggle of second-wave feminism.

The "Cherry Bomb*"* performances are the most pivotal in the context of the early Runaways. Kim Fowley was constantly involved, and though music and lyrics were written by the band, his influence was prominent as he supervised his creation to ensure their work could hold its footing. Cherie describes Fowley as "ruthless," "rude as hell to all of us," and "a nasty bastard."[56] The abuse The Runaways endured under Kim Fowley fueled their rage, affecting the way they performed to both please him in effort to stop or minimize his abuse, and to rebel against him. Despite Kim Fowley's extreme reputation and lack of discretion with his own behavior, no one attempted to step in to help The Runaways. They were surrounded by an all-adult male crew and other male performers who either engaged in behavior similar to Kim's or did not acknowledge it. The Runaways were expected to take whatever was thrown at them in order to prove they had a right to a place on stage and had no connection to other women while touring. Fowley encouraged teenage sexualization and let the band fall victim to predatory and misogynistic behavior which fueled their angry, aggressive sound.

With "Cherry Bomb*"* as the first song on their debut album, The Runaways brought in audiences who knew them from live performance, but the album ended with "Dead End Justice," a song that was meant to show their artistry and storytelling. The song was inspired by Queen and David Bowie. Bowie was a major influence on The Runaways, a musician who spoke openly about his sexuality and played with gender. Before his Ziggy Stardust era, Bowie had been considered tame and conventional, a "folky old hippie," until he took on the persona of a human-like alien in an exploration of music, gender, and sexuality.[57] His alien Ziggy Stardust persona exemplified "futurism" as a "bisexual space alien" who drew inspiration from Little Richard and the Velvets, blending rock and doo-wop.[58] Bowie's influence gave The Runaways someone to emulate and admire, someone who successfully operated outside of gender norms without sacrificing message, artistry, or intention. Cherie's fascination with Bowie drove the artistic direction for the band, as the frontwoman. Even the jumpsuits she wore on stage were inspired by his style. "Dead End Justice" features Cherie and Joan Jett vocally and tells the story of a teenage rebel who ends up in jail, similar to Bowie's 1972 "The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars" album. The song opens with a description of a teenage girl and nods at their intended audience - other angry, rebellious teenagers:

> I'm a blond bombshell and I wear it well
> Your momma says you're going straight to hell
> I'm sweet sixteen and a rebel queen
> And I look real hot in my tight blue jeans
> Dead end kids in the danger zone
> All of you are drunk and stoned
> Dead end kids, you're not alone
> You sleep in the streets when you're not at home[59]

[56] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel,* 80.
[57] Powers, *Good Booty,* 200.
[58] Powers, *Good Booty,* 201.
[59] The Runaways, "Dead End Justice," written by Cherie Currie, Joan Jett, Kim Fowley, and Scott Anderson, track 10 on *The Runaways*, Mercury Records, 1976, vinyl LP.

Addressing the audience directly using the word "you," their lyrics speak to The Runaways' desire to have commonality with their audience, to address other teenagers they knew and speak about the life they lived. These lyrics address parental dissatisfaction and rebellion, youth, and homelessness caused by unsettled family conditions. Addressing these societal circumstances in song categorizes The Runaways not only as rock musicians, but punk, a genre dedicated to dissent. Early punk music is meant to provide societal commentary, "a rejection of the status quo," created by "the products of the rejects of the status quo."[60] Their intention was to address society from a perspective that was unique to what an all-female band could provide. The Runaways wrote these lyrics to criticize and challenge "ideological hegemony," drawing attention to what they, as rebellious, fringe-of-society teenagers, experienced.[61]

"Dead End Justice" also demonstrates dissatisfaction with government, commenting on the "cheap run-down teenage jail" where the protagonist of the song finds herself. Joan and Cherie "break out" of jail in this song, though Cherie falls and is left behind in a tragic ending.[62] While this song does not express rage in the same way "Cherry Bomb" does, it explicitly speaks of elements of their lives that informed their anger and what they were rebelling against.

Many women, coming out of the 1960s and into the 1970s, were becoming aware of the feminist agenda and wanted to start "pushing the limits," and began focusing on "reforming institutions like marriage" to address power imbalances in their lives.[63] Exposure to the Women's Liberation Movement through the radio, particularly talk-radio, was an awakening for many young women to injustice.[64] With growing popularity, The Runaways would become part of the score. The vocals in this song are clearer, layered over steady drums and bass while Currie and Jett weave their lyricism. "Cherry Bomb" is an introduction to The Runaways, an anthem that tells the audience who they are dealing with and refuses to let them look away, while "Dead End Justice" is the parting letter, a direct confrontation.

"Cherry Bomb" On Tour

> Last night I'd discovered what it felt like to be a rock star. This morning I knew what it felt like to be a whore.
>
> \- Cherie Currie[65]

Balancing the new ideal of the liberated and sexually free American woman against depictions of women that served to objectify them was a difficult battle that reached across the United States. Television shows in the 1950s and 1960s included "dutiful office workers," sexualized female main characters, and women focused on men, in shows like *Meet Millie, Private Secretary,* and *How to Marry a Millionaire.*[66] There was much debate over the presence of "sex kittens" and "dingbats" on television, dominant stereotypes, during protest toward media depictions of women.[67]

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[60] Bag, "Work That Hoe," 238.
[61] Bayton, *Frock Rock*, 68.
[62] The Runaways, "Dead End Justice," written by Cherie Currie, Joan Jett, Kim Fowley, and Scott Anderson, track 10 on *The Runaways*, Mercury Records, 1976, vinyl LP.
[63] Zeitz, "Rejecting the Center," 679.
[64] Morgan, *Sisterhood is Powerful,* 407.
[65] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel*, 119.
[66] Lehman, *Those Girls,* 83.
[67] Lehman, *Those Girls*, 118.

One of the greatest barriers to commercial success for The Runaways was the sacrifice of their identity. Commercialization meant image and intention had to be sanitized to be marketable and the idea of the "all-girl band" was sexualized to attract an audience.[68] It is impossible to separate societal conditions from the music industry. Systemic sexism and misogyny affected the way female musicians were allowed to create and perform their art. Popular music influenced modern life, helping to "make us the people we are, both reflecting gender differences and also actively helping to construct them."[69] The Runaways could not exist in an apolitical bubble but had to engage with societal issues.

The Runaways achieved popularity and a measure of success that put them on tour, across the United States and internationally, and allowed them to produce further albums and find the public eye. *CREEM* Magazine, founded in 1969, intended to be a "raw, unfiltered, unapologetic music rag," and still claims to be "America's only rock 'n' roll magazine."[70] The Runaways caught the attention of *CREEM* Magazine, an opportunity that ideally would have given them the space to speak about their craft and an avenue to receive serious and intentional criticism. *CREEM's* devotion to music and popularity, however, did not protect The Runaways, nor did it serve them. The magazine portrayed The Runaways as objects, discrediting their musical talent by claiming they didn't write their music. A full-page photo of The Runaways, wearing swimsuits, appeared in a 1976 issue of *CREEM* shown in Figure 1, with a caption addressing the magazine's male audience and a "lack of female type meatrackjobbery," with The Runaways as a solution, and urges the audiences to "slurp" this photo.[71]

[Image not included due to copyright restrictions.]

Figure 1. The Runaways, August 1, 1976. Photograph by Richard Creamer. Published in CREEM magazine (California).

[68] Bayton, *Frock Rock*, 183.
[69] Bayton, *Frock Rock*, 1.
[70] "CREEM History," *The CREEM Archive*, accessed November 10, 2023, https://archive.creem.com/history.
[71] Richard Creamer, "The Runaways," *CREEM*, August 1, 1976, 57, https://archive.creem.com/article/1976/8/1/the-runaways.

This language positions The Runaways as sexual objects, to be consumed, and only present in a serious rock magazine for fanservice. This was The Runaways' first appearance in *CREEM* and set the groundwork for the magazine to continue their disparaging articles about the band and encouraged male audiences to view The Runaways as a sexual gimmick.

The Runaways were growing up and moving away from parental influence, separated from their families while on tour, and left in the hands of the ravenous public. Kim Fowley's abuse was ever-present, even when absent from the band on tour. He told Lisa Robinson for *CREEM* that "once a man designed a car, and there were flaws in that car…," clarifying that he had built The Runaways who, in his opinion, now resented him, and suggesting they were no longer his responsibility.[72] Fowley encouraged disparaging press, making negative comments, suggesting that the band was ungrateful. Despite being heavily involved with the music making process, Kim commented that "what AM radio wants is garbage. And The Runaways are gonna give 'em garbage."[73] Fowley suggested that The Runaways were not serious musicians and were a gimmick, often to reporters whose articles would help to define how the audience saw the band. His language was an avenue of his control. As The Runaways defied him, he would drown them in negative press, painting them as little girls to be laughed at. Robinson uses Fowley's statements to emphasize that even the band's manager and creator did not want to tour with them due to their attitudes and demonstrates that Fowley did not hesitate to put The Runaways in a negative light.

Multiple articles in *CREEM* reference Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, a novel in which the narrator, obsessed with "nymphets" (sexual pre-pubescent girls), engages in a manipulative and disturbing relationship with a twelve-year-old. *CREEM* refers to The Runaways as nymphets in an attempt to degrade them.[74] This language portrays The Runaways not as a serious band, but as a sexual gimmick intended solely to indulge male fantasies. Lisa Robinson agreed with Fowley's assertion of the band's ineptitude and their sexualization, perceptions that are part of an "antifeminist dictum," asserting that "autonomy and femaleness – that is, female sexuality - are incompatible."[75] By agreeing with Kim Fowley, Robin's article served to both demean and blame The Runaways for the overtly sexual perception they struggled with. Kim Fowley played with this impression by bad-mouthing the band to the press while encouraging them to lean into the *Lolita* perception and use the idea of being "underaged and sexually active" to generate an audience.[76] Fowley encouraged The Runaways to play up these aspects in photoshoots and in the way they dressed, to play hard, angry music and give into male desires. Fowley wanted to continue using The Runaways as a publicity stunt, while the band was still fighting to be taken seriously as musicians.

Media sexualization hit the band hard, a theme that played a vital role in their music. While still teenagers, The Runaways had to face a larger society that equated their worth with sex. Cherie often faced the brunt of this sexualization as the front woman, writing in her memoir that "rock magazines were the worst! They constantly compared us with each other, not in terms of who was the best songwriter or the most talented musician, but by who looked the hottest."[77] The Runaways' efforts to use this angrily and ironically was largely misinterpreted. Patrick

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[72] Robinson, "The Runaways," 46-47.
[73] Patrick Goldstein, "Lissome Lolitas or Teenage Trash?" *CREEM*, February 1, 1977, 29, https://archive.creem.com/article/1977/2/1/lissome-lolitas-or-teenage-trash.
[74] Robinson, "The Runaways," 46; Goldstein, "Lissome Lolitas or Teenage Trash?" 67.
[75] Willis, *Beginning to See the Light*, 209.
[76] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel,* 93.
[77] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel*, 161.

Goldstein, another writer for *CREEM*, also referenced *Lolita* when writing about The Runaways, suggesting that The Runaways "exploit this nymphophilia to the hilt."[78] The Runaways left youthful oppression of a society that did not respect them and parents they could not rely on to a life of touring and performing, without parental guidance or advocates with their best interests at heart.

A woman's image could be the deciding factor in her success and could dictate whether she was loved or hated, making The Runaways' image one of the most important obstacles for them to navigate. A stereotype often applied to 1970s feminists was the image of the "man-hating lesbian," an image of women that revolved around a heteronormative and male dominated society. Representation of women in the media and advertising in the 1970s attempted to cater to the "new woman;" the working, independent women, while still maintaining an air of femininity that would separate the liberated woman from the anti-man "bra burner."[79] 1970s feminism was marked by a "more confrontational style," protesting "fashion accessories that shackled women" by burning bras, rebelling against conventional makeup and hairstyles, and dressing within subculture styles.[80] Joan Jett and Cherie Currie are queer and explored their sexuality as teenagers, but were not publicly out during their time in The Runaways. Openly exploring their sexuality could ruin their image, categorizing them as anti-man and alienating the men that could determine their commercial success and ability to record. The Runaways pushed back on the status quo of society in their music, and their feminism fed into the fetishization of them. Exploration of their sexuality and sexual freedom allowed audiences and critics to see them as objects, rather than musicians or simply teenagers. Subculture is not immune to popular culture's influence, including heteronormativity and hyper-femininity.[81] Everything The Runaways did was manufactured to some degree, as they needed to cater to Kim Fowley and his vision to continue making music. Their second album, recorded in Japan, was their first opportunity to break away from a cleaned-up studio sound and Fowley's domineering presence.

Activism in the 1970s had a great deal of influence on music, despite "scholarly tendences to privilege feminist musical resistance in underground scenes" with the perception that 1970s female-forward music was a "failure."[82] Much of this has to do with commercial success and the erasure of smaller bands. Mainstream conceptions of 1970s female musicians have to do with the "accidental nature of success," wherein only a certain sound from "high-profile, professional" female musicians was publicized.[83] The Runaways began to approach punk and metal in their sound and goth in their looks with harder, heavier guitar and drums, more guttural, screaming vocals, and heavier, tougher makeup. Lita Ford drove much of the push for The Runaways to be part of metal and punk with the way she played guitar. She had frequent solos and performed with her guitar held at her crotch in a pose associated with "cock-rock," which referred to guitarists feeding into male ego with loud, aggressive, sexual, and self-indulgent performances. This style of performance was not often seen from women, as feminist musicians favored smoother sounds and acoustic music, orbiting in genres like reggae, pop, and jazz.[84]

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[78] Goldstein, "Lissome Lolitas or Teenage Trash?" 67.
[79] Lehman, *Those Girls*, 125.
[80] Zeitz, "Rejecting the Center," 680.
[81] Nally, "Goth Beauty, Style, and Sexuality," 11.
[82] Grover, "Rocking the Revolution," 492.
[83] Bayton, *Frock Rock*, 68.
[84] Bayton, *Frock Rock*, 69.

The Runaway's second album, *Live in Japan*, featured songs from their debut album, covers, and new songs. "I Wanna Be Where The Boys Are" retains the rebellious spirit of The Runaways' early music while demonstrating their desire to be treated the same as their male counterparts. This song was co-written by Roni Lee, a seventeen-year-old girl who had experienced great familial struggle like The Runaways. Lee was raised briefly by a single mother after the death of her father, before living with her grandparents.[85]

> I am the bitch with the hot guitar
> I am the air, the sun, and stars
> I wanna be where the boys are
> I wanna fight how the boys fight
> I wanna love how the boys love
> I wanna be where the boys are[86]

The recording of this song that appears on *Live in Japan* is a recording of Joan Jett addressing the men in the audience, calling out their locations in the crowd before she yells the title of the song, followed immediately by Lita Ford's electric guitar. Joan's voice is guttural, raspy, screaming the word "bitch," chanting the chorus with the rest of the band, before Lita Ford wails on another electric guitar solo.[87] The song is angry and aggressive, with more of the "crunch" that Joan Jett wanted their music to have.[88] By performing live, The Runaways could perform with raw, unpolished rage.. As the band matured, their music developed, using their own experiences to drive that angry sound. The emotions they evoked were not "those of another person," but their own, and using sound frequently deemed unpleasant, such as dissonant vocals, communicates the rage, exclusion, fear, and uncertainty they lived with.[89] Sandy West, drummer, insisted that they were "the voice of a generation…the voice of teenagers all around the world."[90] While Fowley and the media discussed the nuances of The Runaways' sexuality and none of the nuances of their performance, The Runaways had every intention of continuing to scream.

Though The Runaways were determined to fight against the image of them created by their manager, they had no choice but to use it. Professional status and acclaim brought "the pressure to conform to a band image," with increasing photoshoots and promotional material, including videos," a situation in which female musicians were pushed toward sexual images to sell the band.[91] Cherie appeared in photoshoots, under the impression her bandmates would get solo photoshoots of their own, and was influenced by photographers to pose in revealing outfits, with her legs open, feeling unable to protest or refuse.[92] The Runaways struggled with sexuality, attempting to lean in and dominate the narrative. "Neon Angels on the Road to Ruin" speaks to this dichotomy, the existence of their sexuality and desire for autonomy:

> Neon angels on the road to ruin

[85] "Bio," *Roni Lee Group*, accessed November 12, 2023, https://ronileegroup.com/bio.
[86] The Runaways, "I Wanna Be Where the Boys Are," written by Kim Fowley and Roni Lee, recorded 1977 at Onkio Haus Studio, track 9 on *Live in Japan*, Mercury Records, 1977, vinyl LP.
[87] The Runaways, "I Wanna Be Where the Boys Are," vinyl LP.
[88] Goldstein, "Lissome Lolitas or Teenage Trash?" 30.
[89] Madell, *Philosophy, Music and Emotion*, 53.
[90] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel*, 144.
[91] Bayton, *Frock Rock*, 167.
[92] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel*, 210.

> Everybody who's ever on fire
> Now's the time for our desire[93]

This song features heavy guitar, with a riff from Lita Ford to open and Joan Jett's voice travelling into her higher octaves to penetrate the noise. Jett distorts her syllables, dragging out vowels and word-endings before bringing in the rest of the band to sing the chorus with her. Their voices come together powerfully, resonating over rhythmic guitar and a pulsing drumbeat before launching back into Lita Ford's electric sound.

While on tour, The Runaways began to lean toward harder sounds, diving more into metal and punk. The Runaways were away from Kim Fowley and their live performances could be more authentic to the music they wanted to make. By evoking these genres, along with their songwriting, The Runaways fully joined the feminist movement by "[playing] rough with stereotypes of sexual allure."[94] "Neon Angels" marks a turning point for The Runaways in which their anger and sound become more intentionally critical of the misogyny they faced.

For women who do not fit into traditional notions of femininity, subcultures are a place where they can make a name for themselves among like-minded individuals who experience the same obstacles. Punk, metal, and goth music were subcultures of the over-arching rock music scene, genres that pushed against more socially acceptable and male-dominated rock. For those who identified as "different" or "other," and found it difficult to fit into a specific niche during the 1970s, these genres were "the next Big Bang."[95] These subcultures allowed cultural outsiders a new beginning, a universe all their own.

As their careers progressed and they spent more time on tour, The Runaways had the opportunity to develop their sound, especially as they continued to face misogynistic treatment that sought to exclude them. Their punk sound developed from this "othering" that came from the music industry and the press.[96] Punk music allowed for a "wide variety of image and presentation," where women could "shriek, scream, bellow, roar, and more, ignoring the traditional rules of feminine stage glamor."[97] The Runaways brought this image to the forefront of the scene as the negative press and their willingness to use those perceptions kept them in the spotlight. Even when the industry was not talking about The Runaways for their talent, they were talking about them, and The Runaways used this often-hostile spotlight to scream their message of empowerment.

The End Of the "Cherry Bomb"

> I thought of Jackie, stumbling toward me with the blood dripping from her arms and a look of total and utter *despair* in her eyes. The memory made me shudder. Then I thought of Vicki. The poor girl had no idea what she was in for.
>
> \- Cherie Currie[98]

[93] The Runaways, "Neon Angels on the Road to Ruin," written by Lita Ford, Kim Fowley, and Jackie Fox, recorded 1977 at Onkio Haus Studio, track 9 on *Live in Japan*, Mercury Records, 1977, vinyl LP.
[94] Powers, *Good Booty,* 212.
[95] Bag. "Work That Hoe," 236.
[96] Bag. "Work That Hoe," 236.
[97] Bayton, *Frock Rock*, 69.
[98] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel,* 221-222.

Jackie Fox left while The Runaways were still in Japan and Cherie Currie followed shortly after, both fed up with the abuse they had suffered. Jackie was attacked, resulting in a major injury at the hands of a roadie who "had no respect for [them] as people or musicians."[99] Down their lead singer and bassist, The Runaways kept going, replacing Jackie with Vickie Blue, and putting Joan on lead vocals to release their final album of the 1970s, *Waitin' For The Night.* This album, while maintaining the hard rock and punk sound, marked a shift in The Runaways, where their songs, now written by Joan Jett, were no longer from a youthful, wild, rebellious teenage perspective, but with reflection.

It had been a long decade, and by the end of the 1970s, the United States had seen three presidents and dramatic changes in the political landscape. The ERA and the passing of *Roe v. Wade* implied a more progressive, female-forward future on the horizon, but this was not the case. In 1976, President Carter "installed an anti-abortion Catholic as his Secretary of Health and Human services," marking a resurgence in conservative pushback.[100] The Runaways found themselves having to navigate a rapidly evolving cultural landscape as well as the loss of two pivotal members of their band. They faced challenges in adapting to evolving tastes and expectations of the industry and their audience. The end of the 1970s was not only the close of a chapter for the band, but also a turning point in the trajectory for women in rock music.

Waitin' For The Night addresses these changes in society and a shift in maturity for The Runaways. The first track on the album, "Little Sister," perfectly embodies this stance, the "older sister" perspective, their audience no longer their peers, but the teenage girls of tomorrow. The Runaways were now young adults in both age and experience, having endured Kim Fowley's abuse, misogyny in the music industry and media, and physical and sexual violence from their own road crew:

> Little sister don't you be so straight
> Let your old folks call ya jailbait
> This mean world it belongs to us
> It can be yours so don't hesitate
> It's too late to be a kid in love
> It's too late to be a kid in love
> We're the kids in hate[101]

"Little Sister" continued the trend of opening with hard, fast guitar, though Joan Jett performed the only vocals. Jett yelled the chorus while Sandy West hammered the drums, bringing Lita Ford in for another solo. By addressing the audience as "kids," Jett demonstrates a shift in her song-writing perspective. Rather than being the subject, she addresses girls who want to be like her. This is a conceptual element, but still intentionally done in order to evoke a desired emotion from the listener.[102] Opening the album from this "older sister" perspective summons a sense of rage on behalf of the women who were coming next, serving as a warning against prejudice and acting as the guiding hand that The Runaways did not have.

The album ended with "You're Too Possessive," a send-off from The Runaways, their final goodbye to the decade, to the band members they lost, and a final call-out to their

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[99] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel,* 217.
[100] Elving, "The Leaked Abortion Decision Blew up Overnight."
[101] The Runaways, "Little Sister," written by Joan Jett and Inger Asten, track 1 on *Waitin' for the Night*, Mercury Records, 1977, vinyl LP.
[102] Madell, *Philosophy, Music, and Emotion*, 129-130.

oppressors. The song referenced Kim Fowley in the opening lines, with "let me out of your iron grip, I don't want your lover's tips."[103] This line refers to Fowley's possessiveness, his desire to be involved with every aspect of the band to ensure control over their sound and legal right to their profits, as well as multiple incidents of sexual abuse. Joan Jett then ends the song with a statement that addresses larger society and the 1950s housewife ideal:

> You're too possessive for me
> So leave me alone
> Get off my back, go on home
> You're too possessive for me
> So get out of my life
> Get off my back, I ain't your wife[104]

With Joan Jett as lead singer, face of the band, and main songwriter, the late performances of The Runaways took on her unique perspective, referencing all that she had seen in the band's life. *"*You're Too Possessive*"* sends The Runaways off with precise electric guitar, dissonant vocals, and the band harmonizing for the chorus of the song. Joan screams to introduce Lita's guitar and Sandy West's thunderous drum beat before launching back into criticism of the audience. The Runaways address the listener as the oppressor, calling out their numerous adversaries. The song fades with The Runaways still playing, an almost eerie conclusion to what would be their last album of original songs until 1993.

After *Waitin' for the Night,* The Runaways disbanded, heading off to solo careers that would prove successful, enormously so for Joan Jett. Her band, Joan Jett and the Blackhearts, were inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2015. Lita Ford went on to have a notable career, launching fully into the metal genre. Sandy West, the "heart of the band," passed in 2006, and The Runaways faded into obscurity until 2010, when Cherie Currie's memoir *Neon Angel* was republished to include a reflection on her life as the "Cherry Bomb" and events she could not write about originally. *Neon Angel* inspired the 2010 movie, *The Runaways,* featuring Dakota Fanning as Cherie Currie and Kristen Stewart as Joan Jett.[105] The film adaptation brought The Runaways back into the conversation, reminding the music industry where the powerhouse performer, Joan Jett, came from and of the importance of all-girl rock bands, a form of recognition and appreciation that is nearly four decades too late. The girls in The Runaways cannot be saved from the abuse they survived, but the band still shines through the decades, blasting the feminist mantra of the "Cherry Bomb," a message that teenage girls will not be ignored.

Roe v. Wade was overturned in June of 2022, sparking outcry across the United States from reproductive rights advocates.[106] Though impressive strides have been made in feminism, normalizing the movement to reach wider audiences with continued legal and social progression, the fight continues. Feminism is a mainstream concept, "the currency of corporate credibility," and many women in the United States identify as feminist, a vastly different reality from the

[103] The Runaways, "You're Too Possessive," written by Joan Jett, track 10 on *Waitin' for the Night*, Mercury Records, 1977, vinyl LP.
[104] The Runaways, "You're Too Possessive," written by Joan Jett, track 10 on *Waitin' for the Night*, Mercury Records, 1977, vinyl LP.
[105] Currie and Shusterman, *Neon Angel,* 346.
[106] Shefali Luthra, "50 Years since Roe. Seven Months since Dobbs.," *The 19th*, January 20, 2023.

movement in the 1970s.[107] It is impossible to separate modern feminism from second-wave ideology, which marked a turning point for the United States. Just as modern feminists stand on the shoulders of the activists that came before, so too does feminist music.

Feminist ideology is still a popular theme among female musicians, from Madonna to the 1990s "riot grrrl" movement and bands like Bikini Kill, TLC, the Dixie Chicks, and the Spice Girls, and Lauryn Hill to contemporary popular musicians like Billie Eilish, Lady Gaga, Beyoncé, Doja Cat, Florence and the Machine, and all-female groups like boygenius, BLACKPINK, and Baby Metal.[108] These artists face the same issues The Runaways did, battling critics that oversexualize them or ignore their skill, struggles of how to portray and own their sexuality and gender identity, and barriers to commercial success based on gender and genre. The success of female musicians has not always been guaranteed, and The Runaways were one of the first all-girl bands to break that barrier while still making the music they wanted to make. Punk allowed more women the space to form all-girl bands, thanks to an increase in "female instrumental role models."[109] It is difficult to know which musicians will stand as giants in feminist music in the next fifty years, but The Runaways helped to pave the way for outside-the-norm, angry, aggressive feminist music. The Runaways were a group of teenage girls who wanted to be rock stars and who fought for their place on the stage, raised by women who had fought for their place in the workforce and their right to govern their lives without the control of men. The Runaways survived misogynistic, sexist, and pedophilic treatment from the media, sexual assault, rape, and Kim Fowley's mental, emotional, and verbal abuse to launch the "Cherry Bomb*,"* the message that they could and would take what they wanted from the world, and there was nothing that men could do to stop them.

[107] Lauren Jackson, "The Shifting State of Feminism in America," *The New York Times*, May 8, 2022.
[108] Erica Danielle Garcia, "A Brief History of Music and Feminism," *Amplify Her Voice*, June 23, 2022.
[109] Bayton, *Frock Rock*, 189.