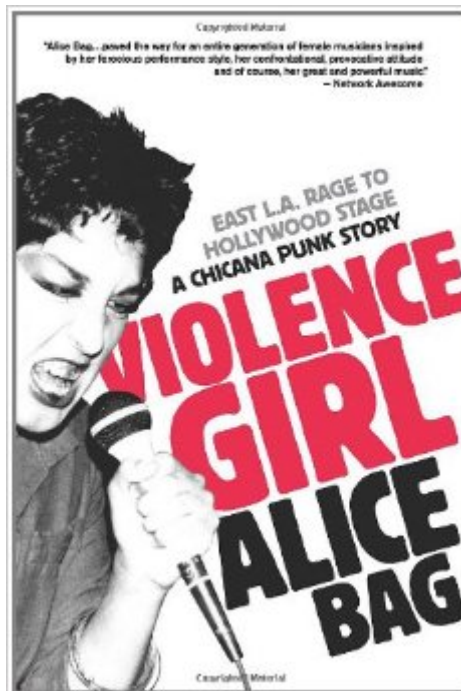


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# Violence Girl: East L.A. Rage To Hollywood Stage, A Chicana Punk Story



## Synopsis

The proximity of the East L.A. barrio to Hollywood is as close as a short drive on the 101 freeway, but the cultural divide is enormous. Born to Mexican-born and American-naturalized parents, Alicia Armendariz migrated a few miles west to participate in the free-range birth of the 1970s punk movement. Alicia adopted the punk name Alice Bag, and became lead singer for The Bags, early punk visionaries who starred in Penelope Spheeris' documentary *The Decline of Western Civilization*. Here is a life of many crossed boundaries, from East L.A.'s *musica ranchera* to Hollywood's punk rock; from a violent male-dominated family to female-dominated transgressive rock bands. Alice's feminist sympathies can be understood by the name of her satiric all-girl early Goth band *Castration Squad*. *Violence Girl* takes us from a violent upbringing to an aggressive punk sensibility; this time a difficult coming-of-age memoir culminates with a satisfying conclusion, complete with a happy marriage and children. Nearly a hundred excellent photographs energize the text in remarkable ways. Alice Bag's work and influence can be seen this year in the traveling Smithsonian exhibition "American Sabor: Latinos in U.S. Popular Music."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Alice Bag's memoir is less about the first-wave LA punk scene that she was such an integral part of and more about family, growing up, finding yourself, and testing your limits. A discursive book written in short chapters, "Violence Girl" is a quick read, even though it's more than 300 pages long. Alice's voice shines through -- a thoughtful, confrontational, sometimes confused but rarely cowed

woman, Alice goes from being an awkward, overweight teenager with an Elton John obsession and crooked teeth to being the lead singer of the seminal proto-hardcore band, The Bags. Along the way, she befriends and bemuses a bevy of LA scenesters like creepy impresario Kim Fowley; doomed, nihilistic Darby Crash of The Germs; the women who would become The Go-Gos; Patricia Morrison, who co-founded The Bags and would go on to be in both The Gun Club and influential Goth act Sisters of Mercy; even Tom Waits makes a cameo. But the book is more than a name-dropping trek across the glittery landscape of late-70s Los Angeles. It's about struggling with family and faith, it's about reconciling ambition with reality, and it's about how punk rock's D.I.Y. ethos helped a young woman define herself and claim her place in the world. While many in the early punk scene burned bright and died young, Alice Bag seems made of sterner stuff. Near the end of the book, readers get a glimpse of her post-punk rock trajectory -- she travels to Managua, Nicaragua at the height of US meddling in Nicaraguan affairs and finds a country stripped to the bone and surviving on little more than willpower and pride. I wish this section of the book had been longer, and I would have enjoyed hearing more of the tantalizing anecdotes she only hints at. A love affair with a prisoner? Rebuffing an invitation to dinner with Oprah? Tell me more! Ans that's what I take from this book: Alice's voice. Wise, wry, funny, bold, and honest, it's a voice I wanted to spend more time with. Violence Girl and Babylonian Gorgon -- Alice Bag is an undeniable original, and you'll enjoy your time with her. Well worth reading.

Being a fan of the late seventies west coast punk scene, I ordered this book based on the author's history in the Bags, a band I had only heard of in relation to other bands of the time. I have to admit that I expected this book to be similar to other punk tomes I have read: either a sloppily written oral history or a breathless tell-all about the crazy punk days. What I got was so much more. Violence Girl is a universal coming of age story of a bright young artist who is struggling to come to terms with her identity as a daughter, a woman, a chicana...and how she finds her voice and sense of purpose through her incredible experiences. I was blown away. Certain scenes made me catch my breath with their ferocity and then I would turn the page and find such heartbreaking tenderness and forgiveness that I was moved to tears. NOT your average rock and roll fairytale, Violence Girl has many lessons to teach. In fact, I turned around and ordered books for my entire high school advanced reading class. Get this book, share it with a young person. It will inspire you.

This is an autobiography unlike any other..not selectively choosing only the flattering memories to tell the reader, but rather openly, willingly, painfully at times & with great humility Alice's

recollections are conveyed. As a woman who was part of the same music scene a few years already into her genesis as a frontwoman for the Bags, I am humbled to have shared the intimate details of just how this woman put HERSELF up front. There is a constant thread throughout this book...it is one of hopefulness & truth. The lessons in futility become the fuel for this formidable female who realized her value emanated from within not from the external view..there is great beauty in this book, even within the violent times painful as they must have been. This is a story for everyone..about growing up, rising up, surviving, finding your voice & healing your heart through your own actions. Inspiring, interesting, funny & powerful define this book....these same traits describe the Author. Get this, share it with your daughters. Empowering. xoxo

I just got the book last week and I couldn't put it down... It's an amazing memoir from one of punk rock's first ladies. Alice's first hand accounts of her memories are heart-warming, frightening, familiar (myself being first generation Mexican-American as well), eye-opening, and inspiring all at the same time. It was fantastic getting her first-hand account of how the punk rock scene in Los Angeles first blossomed and reading all about Alice's early influences...but the best if the way Alice tells and conjures up memories of her life as a little girl and all that happened to her and around her that influenced her stage presence and art. To me, Alice is truly a visionary artist and this book illustrates just how much of an influence she has become to so many. It's truly inspiring and fascinating to read about her life "after" punk rock in her journey through college to her position as a school teacher. A truly great memoir that I can guarantee you won't be able to put the book down either... Felicidades, Alicia!

I can't put it down so this is only a partial review from a reader halfway through who has to get back to finishing it. Alice (Uh-lee-sha) writes with humor, grace, and a wry sense of irony, as well as an incredible perception of her own situation, without judgment. No "poor me"s here, but you'll be shaking your head over "the fuzzy tortilla" (I won't spoil it for you) and other only in Alice-in-Bag-land situations. Get it!

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