



# Rockin' out of the Box: Gender Maneuvering in Alternative Hard Rock

*Mimi Schippers*

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Given the long history of feminism and its contested place in popular culture, important, practical questions arise: What effect, if any, have feminist ideas and practices had on the lives of young men and women who grew up with them? How do these individuals negotiate the realities of gender in their daily lives?

In *Rockin' Out of the Box*, Mimi Schippers, employing the crucial feminist insight that gender is a constantly shifting performance and not an essential quality related to sex, explores the gender roles, assumptions, and transgressions of the men and women involved in the alternative hard rock scene. The author focuses on this sizable section of rock music both because it is widely inclusive of men and women and because it explicitly adopted feminism as its point of departure from mainstream music. Schippers uses the innovative term *gender maneuvering* to explain her observations that gender and sexuality are negotiated and always changing features of social relations. This process, she demonstrates, operates as a cultural practice and as an individual strategy of resistance to socially prescribed gender roles.

Schippers, who spent more than two years frequenting alternative hard rock clubs and concerts in Chicago, conducted extensive interviews with fans as well as musicians, including Ian MacKaye of Fugazi, Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam, Kim Thayil of Soundgarden, Donita Sparks and Jennifer Finch of L7, Kat Bjelland and Lori Barbero of Babes in Toyland, Rose of Poster Children, Louise Post and Nina Gordon of Veruca Salt, and Liz Davis and Valerie Agnew of 7 Year Bitch. As it documents the development of a rock music genre that has so far received little academic attention, this book also demonstrates how this musical culture contributes to our understanding of the daily practices of gender relations among young people.

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