

Punk, BDSM and the Borg  
By Elizabeth A. Chaykowski

Lately, listening to vintage punk and watching documentaries about the punk movement has been arousing a renewed sense of counterculture enthusiasm and revolution.

The Sex Pistols were certainly the best poster boys for a movement that was timely and necessary in its arrival.

At the time of the punk emergence, the world was in a comatose state of self-centered feel goodness. It was a world of rainbow striped toe-socks and happy face buttons, not to mention pet rocks and the Bay City Rollers. Pop culture had become the sleeping disco giant of denial. Blinded by mirrored balls and hypnotized by endless laps around the roller rink, the mainstream, in its attempt to forget about the Vietnam war, had once again become oblivious to its own underbelly.

Then, just when everyone thought it was safe to stay in denial, from that underbelly came the cry, "I am an anti-christ. I am an anarchist," and up surged everything that had been designated to the wrong side of the tracks.

Punk was not a musical revolution. It was a cultural revolution that had its own soundtrack. Punk was the shadow of its contemporary pop culture and it rose up to remind the world that everything wasn't rainbow bright. It shouted out that it was high time that everyone snapped out of the mesmerization of a disco inferno that was burning the collective conscience to ashes.

Born out of the poverty and despair of the British ghetto's, ( and I am coming from the position that British punk is Punk , although I do believe that "punk" has a far wider social definition) punk erected itself as a call sign for the disenfranchised not only in England but everywhere.

These were the angry people. The dispensable byproduct of an overly self-indulgent mainstream that was boring itself and everyone else with its superficiality. The plastic Jesus on the dashboard was wearing roller skates and a sun visor.

Punk presented itself as a screaming movement that was both social and cultural. It had its own politics: fuck a corrupt system that doesn't care. Its own fashion: whatever you can find for nothing or next to nothing, plus your imagination and a whole lot of safety pins (used often out of necessity). Its own hairstyles: whatever shape and colour you like. Its own jewelry: just found this chain in the trash bin. Its own general appearance and attitude: I really don't give a shit what you think about me. I'm sick and tired of your opinions, especially knowing that you don't give a shit about what happens to me. This was definitely a very apparent shadow uprising, that was necessary to reawaken the mainstream to the fact that life was not disco fever for everyone.

The Sex Pistols, the Clash, Souxsie and the Banshees and the Damned are all call signs related to this reality check. Today the words Sex Pistol still represents the embodiment of that part of My own psyche that will not retreat quietly into obscurity---the part of Me that says,"I am anti-christ. I am an anarchist."

But punk did not have a long run, at least not in its original radically brazen and overt anti-system manifestation. Something insidious happened, just as it had happened to shadow cultural uprisings before. Punk fell prey to the claws of the corporation.

Like the Borg of the Star Trek series, the mainstream began to slowly assimilate punk culture to create a much more watered down version, metamorphosing punk into a more socially palatable “new wave” phenomenon. The hardcore moved underground and went through its own metamorphosis, while above ground it became fashionable to wear torn clothes with safety pins and it became fashionable to spike outrageously coloured hair.

It was the commercialization of a movement, to weaken the power of its message and dissipate its influence. The mainstream, by absorbing punk into itself, successfully disempowered the message to rebel against herd mentality. It successfully absorbed punk into itself, thus making punk indistinguishable to the masses. The mainstream said, “We are the Borg. Resistance is futile.”

The commercialization of an ideology or orientation is a horrible thing. It is also the best way for the mainstream to control anything that it perceives as a threat to its existing world view and world order.

By producing its own replicant version of an ideology or orientation, the mainstream is successful at diluting the strength of the ideology or orientation, so that it can be safely contained and monitored.

We have seen this occur to all kinds of underground movements as they have attempted to rise up different in comparison to the mainstream. They have been commercialized, stereotyped and then put in a little box: an acceptable mainstream version of the original.

You can be punk, as long as you are punk this way. You can be grunge, as long as you are grunge this way. You can be spiritual, as long as you are spiritual this way. You can be sexual, as long as you are sexual this way. Hell, you can be gay, as long as you are gay this way. As matter of fact, you can be kinky, as long as you are kinky this way.

Hold up! Wait a minute here. Is it possible that BDSM, unbeknownst to itself is already being assimilated into the Borg collective?

Remember, punk was commercially assimilated long before it had the opportunity to be fully known and accepted by the masses with its own voice and on its own merits.

Had the mainstream been wise, it would have recognized punk as its own valuable shadow, proceeding then to accept and integrate it, thus improving social ideas by adding punk ideologies.(there is actually an underlying punk philosophy that is very comprehensive)

But the mainstream did not integrate punk, it assimilated punk. Big difference. Integration, contribution. Assimilation, dissolution.

For integration to occur, the merits of that being integrated need to be recognized and consciously welcomed into the collective. For assimilation to occur, all that is necessary is that the merits of that being assimilated be commercialized and turned into a capitalistic venture.

In light of all this, it should not be surprising or unrealistic to hypothesize that the Borg are already in the process of assimilating BDSM. After all, BDSM can easily be viewed as an ideology or orientation that threatens to upset the current world view and world order of the mainstream. Is the mainstream corporate mentality already singing us its lullaby? "As a matter of fact, you can be kinky as long as you are kinky in this way. If you are kinky in this way, we can turn you into a capitalistic money making enterprise."

The mainstream does not have to accept BDSM to assimilate it. As a matter of fact, the more it resists conscious acceptance and integration, the more likely it is to choose the pathway of assimilation.

The mainstream may think BDSM is a pathology, however thinking something perverse or distasteful does not redeem it from being exploited to make a dollar or two or a million.

It's genius! Take something threatening, dilute it, give it a mainstream edge and sell it. Viola! The threat has been obliterated and capital has been generated.

Current observation of pop culture reveals phenomenon that makes one wonder if the mainstream isn't in some ways leading BDSM down the same garden path as punk.

If one looks closely, one can pick up on a number of covert references to BDSM in contemporary movies and television programs. Sometimes it is not even that necessary to look to closely, as some references are quite blatant and overt. The link between sexuality and sadism is certainly becoming more apparent and it doesn't seem to be a very healthy one. An eyebrow can and should be raised at both the covert and overt references being made to BDSM on both the big and small screens. Is the way that BDSM is being portrayed, accurate and satisfactory? Is the picture being painted, a picture that truly reflects the orientation.

There is also a new twist occurring in the genre of pornography. More and more, adult shops are lining their shelves with a "new wave" version of old style vanilla porn. Vanilla porn is wearing leather, latex, pvc and it is holding a whip. Nonetheless, it is also still inserting dildoes in all of its orifices and pouting its lips while squeezing its tits. It has adopted the apparel of BDSM, but is this type of pornography BDSM or has BDSM become...fashionable! Is this a way of diluting the true message of BDSM, thus making it both impotent and profitable? The average Domina would probably be appalled at viewing the archetype that she represents as being depicted in this way. What Goddess demeans Herself by acquiescing to this patriarchal image of feminine sexual power? More importantly, how much more difficult is it to assert the validity of the Female Dominatrix, when she is being portrayed by images such as these?

Even a growing number of prostitutes are jumping on the capitalistic band wagon and utilizing the current fashion trend of BDSM to turn an extra trick. By investing in a little bit of leather and one spanking tool, a prostitute can easily increase her clientele by offering a little spanking and then performing any of the other sexual acts requested. Once again this is an example of the use of the superficial accretions of BDSM to further increase financial gain with no concern or interest in BDSM as a valid and unique orientation all to its own. For a professional Domina this makes it infinitely more difficult to maintain Her D/S stand with

integrity, since these other expectations are being projected on Her.

Has the mainstream already made it's choice to bypass investigation into the legitimate validity of BDSM? Has it already chosen assimilation over acceptance and integration? Are we already being assimilated slowly and quietly?

Is a lifestyle that is sacred to so many, already being corrupted by the mainstream and its hunger for the dollar bill? Is the dignity of BDSM being compromised by mainstream commercialization? Is the lifestyle unwittingly and unknowingly participating in its own assimilation by mistaking it for acceptance?

If BDSM is not to go the way of punk, these are questions that need to be scrutinized, answered and addressed now, before it finds itself just another assimilated victim of the Borg, remaining forever misunderstood and left a mere mockery of itself...an object of derision.

BDSM is a legitimate lifestyle orientation with foundational ideologies that have sound psychological and spiritual principles at it's core. A comprehensive understanding of these psychological and spiritual principles needs to be formulated and documented, so as to create a fortress of credibility for this movement.

To take its legitimate place in the collective psyche of this society, BDSM must be able to clearly identify what it is and why it is. After doing so, it must undertake to educate the world around it, in an intelligent, self-respecting and dignified manner.

If BDSM can accomplish these things, it may well stand a chance against mainstream assimilation. If BDSM can view punk as a pioneer teacher of sorts, perhaps it can learn from the example.

BDSM needs to become a Sex Pistol and demonstrate that resistance is not futile. BDSM is not fashion, it is freedom.

It will not be assimilated.

It will not become the Borg.