



# Women Drummers: A History from Rock and Jazz to Blues and Country

Angela Smith

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In 1942, drummer Viola Smith sent shock waves through the jazz world by claiming in *Down Beat* magazine that “hep girls” could sit in on any jam session and hold their own. In *Women Drummers: A History from Rock and Jazz to Blues and Country*, Angela Smith takes Viola at her word, offering a comprehensive look at the world of professional drumming and the women who had the courage and chops to break the barriers of this all-too-male field. Combining archival research with personal interviews of more than fifty female drummers representing more than eight decades in music history, Smith paints a vivid picture of their struggles to overcome discrimination—not only as professional musicians but in other parts of their lives. *Women Drummers* outlines the evolution of female drumming from pre-biblical times when women held important leadership roles to their silencing by the church during the Middle Ages to spearheading the fight for women’s rights in the modern era. The stories and personal accounts of female drummers who bucked tradition and societal norms are told against the backdrop of the times in which they performed and the genres they represented, from rock and jazz to blues and country.

Although women have proven time and time again that they can more than hold their own against their male counterparts, female drummers not only remain a minority, but their contributions have been obscured by the traditional chauvinistic attitudes in the music business and gender stereotypes that surround the drum itself as a “male” instrument. *Women Drummers* takes a major step forward in undoing this misconception by acknowledging the talent, contribution, and growing power of women drummers in today’s music environment.



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