

Punk star reveals abortion regrets

James Gillespie

WHEN the punk rock band the Slits burst onto the stage in 1977 they provoked even greater shock and outrage than the Sex Pistols.

The all-female group's chaotic performances and provocative antics catapulted them to the forefront of the punk movement, playing support to the Clash and developing close ties to the Sex Pistols.

Now in a new book the band's guitarist Viv Albertine has revealed the high price she paid for their moment of fame when she decided to have an abortion so she could continue playing with the group. Even today she is still troubled by the loss of the baby.

The singer was pregnant at 24 by Mick Jones, guitarist with the Clash, and decided she did not want the baby, although her mother offered to help her raise the child.

In her autobiography she writes about going to Brighton for the termination in 1978.

"How many of you boys have ever killed anyone? I have," she writes. "I've killed a baby. It doesn't get much worse than that. I think about the terrifying power that women and mothers have. We have the power to kill and lots of us have used it."

She admits that years later her desire to have a baby became so overwhelming she sympathised with women who stole babies.

"No logic, no sense, a compulsive biological urge," she writes. "I see a baby in a pram outside the gym. How lovely it would be just to pick her up and hold her. I look down at the sweet little bundle, I just want to hold... Oh, God, I am that close to stealing a baby."

Albertine says she can suddenly understand "that vile unbelievable crime".

"I get it - that's what the crazy bad lady always says, 'I just wanted to hold her.' You pick her up for a quick cuddle, and baby feels so warm and soft, and that lovely newborn smell makes you close your



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eyes in ecstasy, and you can't put her back down again. Ever."

An extract from her biography *Clothes, Clothes, Clothes, Music, Music, Music, Boys, Boys, Boys*, is published today in *The Sunday Times Magazine*. "I didn't regret the abortion for 20 years," she writes. "But eventually I did and I still regret it now. I wish I'd kept the baby, whatever the cost. It's hard to live with."

Trying to have a child, she underwent 11 gruelling IVF

attempts, including losing two babies, and 13 operations in an attempt to conceive. She writes: "Failure has become my middle name. Why don't I give up? Because I want a baby more than anything in the world."

At one point, she says: "I can't stand to look at pregnant women. I hate them. I can't even bear pregnant friends - I stop seeing them."

Her determination was rewarded in 1999 when she had a baby daughter whose birth made her "cry with joy".

Despite regretting her own abortion, Albertine says she still defends a "woman's right to choose". She writes: "That cannot and must not ever be taken away from us."

Never mind the boys' club, Magazine, pages 22-29

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Watch Viv Albertine in action

thesundaytimes.co.uk/news

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