



## Violent Femmes

A new anthology salutes the original girls gone wild.

**T**he iconic bad girl of last century's detective magazines has more than just kitsch value hidden in her cleavage. Collected by the hundreds, as they are in *True Crime Detective Magazines* (Taschen, \$39.99), these sultry, stiletto-heeled pinup girls reveal the skin-deep obsessions of a society still struggling to sort out its feelings about sex and sin.

This compendium from Taschen's "sexy-book" editor Dian Hanson and magazine aficionado Eric Godtland traces the popular publishing niche decade by decade, from its Prohibition-era origins through its decline in the 1960s. For most of the last century, Americans could turn to crime magazines for forbidden forays into reefer orgies, S/M parties, and same-sex trysts. The femmes fatales that graced each cover didn't just tempt and titillate—they carved a pioneering path into taboo terrain, with sensational headlines ("Sex Habits of Women Killers," "Sweet 16 and Already a Wayward Queen," "Gay Life") blaring over lavish, hand-painted illustrations.

Buxom beauties—think Bettie Page meets Bonnie Parker—make delightfully dated proclamations ("I Frame Sex Mad Playboys"), prison-striped convicts menace blonds in silk negligees, and pin-curved housewives juggle lighted cigarettes and smoking guns with unruffled mid-century glamour. And the coffee-table compilation divulges more than just "illicit" antics—it illuminates a forgotten genre credited, for better or worse, with helping shape modern mass media. **JESSANNE COLLINS**

*True Crime Detective Magazines is available now.*