

History of Rock
Chapter 19
Punk Rock and New Wave

Punk rock developed in the United States out of the raw, energetic music played by the garage bands of the mid-60's. Most of these bands were formed by teens who learned a few basic guitar chords and who would flail away at drums and cymbals in their own garages, while playing at as high a decibel level as their neighbors would tolerate. The resulting music was rough and musically undisciplined, but expressed the interests of teenagers and brought rock music back to their level.

At the same time that this music was being performed, a group of artistically trained, but jaded group of musicians in New York were writing poetry and singing about urban decay. That idea had been at the center of several literary, artistic, and musical movements in the 20th century, including the dadaists and the Beats.

The dadaists were a group of artists who saw no intrinsic value in a civilization capable of the destruction that had been seen during WWI. They turned their backs on artistic traditions of the past. They believed that madness and chaos prevailed over human reason and named their art dada. One of the premier dadaists was Marcel Duchamp.

Marcel Duchamp---*Glider Containing a Water Mill in Neighboring Metals*
<http://www.peak.org/~dadaist/Art/tu-m.jpg>

Marcel Duchamp---*You-Me*
<http://www.peak.org/~dadaist/Art/glider.jpg>

Marcel Duchamp---*The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors---Even*
<http://www.beatmuseum.org/duchamp/images/bride.jpg>

Marcel Duchamp---*To be looked at (from the Other Side of the Glass) with One Eye, Close to, for Almost an Hour*
<http://www.beatmuseum.org/duchamp/images/hour.jpg>

At the philosophical roots of punk were the ideals of the Beats and the dadaists. The beats had openly confronted the problems most people ignored. The dadaists were intent on producing a sort of *anti-art*.

Early Influences on the development of Punk

Lou Reed had been trained as a classical pianist, but Mozart and Beethoven could not express what he had to say about or to society. In addition to his piano training, Reed also wrote poetry about street life, prostitution, and drugs in New York. Reed and two other musicians, John Cale and Sterling Morrison decided to work together and leave traditional rock and roll styles behind to experiment with new forms of expression. They added a drummer and called their group the Primitives, the Warlocks, and the Falling

Spikes before settling on The Velvet Underground. At the outset, Reed recited his poems to simple and repetitious melodies while Cale played a continuous, pulsating drone on his electric viola. Maureen Tucker, replacement for the original drummer, sometimes added trash-can lids to the drum set---true to dadaist ideals.

The Velvet Underground met Andy Warhol and played for his traveling artwork, the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*.

Andy Warhol---*Elvis*

<http://utenti.romascuola.net/bramarte/pop%20art/img/war2.jpg>

Andy Warhol---*Campbell's Tomato Juice*

<http://www.newarkmuseum.org/americanart/images/tour/galleries/war/labels/warhol.jpg>

Andy Warhol---*Self-portrait*

<http://www.chrysler.org/warhol/images/SelfPortrait.jpg>

Reed's songs were centered on harsh themes such as drug addiction. He sang as if he were intimately aware of all aspects of urban life, but also as if he were coolly above it.

Listen to The Velvet Underground---Heroin (1:1)

While a student at the University of Michigan, James Jewel Osterberg sang and played drums with a group called the Iguanas. Later he formed the band, Iggy Pop and the Stooges. With this group, he played repetitious, angry, and pessimistic music. On stage, Iggy Pop (Osterberg) acted out his disgust by hitting himself with the microphone, by cutting himself with pieces of glass, and then smearing the mess with peanut butter. Iggy Pop developed an addiction to heroine and might have died, but he developed a friendship with David Bowie. His importance to the early punk movement lay in his early self-destructive image.

Listen to Iggy Pop and the Stooges---I Wanna Be Your Dog (1:2)

New York Punk

The New York Dolls added glitter to the loud, raw, rebellious sounds, and the alienated attitude of the Velvet Underground, then passed it on to other New York groups and the angry youth of London. The New York Dolls were formed in 1971 by five men who wore lipstick, heavy eye make-up, and stacked heels to perform songs about bad girls, drugs, and New York street life.

http://www.nyrock.com/imgs98/dolls_cov.gif

The themes used by the New York Dolls were similar to those of the Velvet Underground, but the attitude was less serious. The Dolls used heavily distorted guitar lines and a powerful sounding beat and combined them with a Rolling Stones-like rhythm

and blues. Vocals in this piece were shouted in an almost monotone manner. The lyrics are about a person who plays a role dictated by society during the day but then goes wild at night in an effort to shake off the day's frustrations.

Listen to The New York Dolls---Personality Crisis (1:3)

The New York Dolls achieved success in New York, but failed to gain commercial success in other parts of the country.

A nightclub in New York City was the starting place for many New York punk bands. Known as CBGB, the nightclub was actually CBGB-OMFUG, or Country, Blue Grass, Blues & Other Music for Urban Gourmets. Among the groups that began at that nightclub were Television, the Patti Smith Group, and the Ramones.

Television was formed in 1973 by poet/singer/guitarist Thomas Miller, who gave himself the stage name of Tom Verlaine, after the French symbolist poet Paul Verlaine. Paul Verlaine was known for his use of symbolism, metaphor, and lyricism, all of which Miller tried to emulate in the lyrics he wrote for Television. The group's first bass player, Richard Hell (Richard Myers) spiked his hair and wore torn clothing, creating an image that later became standard for British punks. Television's music included melodic lead guitar lines along with psychedelic-style wandering improvisations.

Listen to Television---Adventure (1:4)---recorded live at CBGB

Patti Smith was an artist and writer from Chicago who established herself professionally in New York. She began by reciting her poetry to simple guitar chords played by Lenny Kaye, rock journalist and guitarist. In an early album Smith sang a text that had originally been done by a male in an attempt to shock the average listener. Later, she covered The Who's *My Generation*. Only here, she shouted obscenities making it clear that her generation was a new and angrier generation.

Smith released *Trampin'* in 2004. Note the political nature of this piece, *Radio Baghdad*.

Dr. Tony A. Mowrer

Suffer not
 Your neighbor's affliction
 Suffer not
 Your neighbor's paralysis
 But extend your hand
 Extend your hand
 Lest you vanish in the city
 And be but a trace
 Just a vanished ghost
 And your legacy
 All the things you knew
 Science, mathematics, thought
 Severely weakened
 Like irrigation systems
 In the tired veins forming
 From the Tigris and Euphrates
 In the realm of peace
 All the world revolved
 All the world revolved
 Around a perfect circle
 City of Baghdad
 City of scholars
 Empirical humble
 Center of the world
 City in ashes
 City of Baghdad
 City of Baghdad
 Abrasive aloof

Oh, in Mesopotamia
 Aloofness ran deep
 Deep in the veins of
 the great rivers
 That form the base
 Of Eden
 And the tree
 The tree of knowledge
 Held up its arms
 To the sky
 All the branches of knowledge
 All the branches of knowledge
 Cradling
 Cradling
 Civilization
 In the realm of peace
 All the world revolved
 Around a perfect circle
 Oh Baghdad
 Center of the world
 City of ashes
 With its great mosques
 Erupting from the mouth of god
 Rising from the ashes like
 a speckled bird
 Splayed against the mosaic sky
 Oh, clouds around
 We created the zero
 But we mean nothing to you
 You would believe
 That we are just some mystical
 tale

We are just a swollen belly
 That gave birth to Sinbad,
 Scheherazade
 We gave birth
 Oh, oh, to the zero
 The perfect number
 We invented the zero
 And we mean nothing to you
 Our children run through
 the streets
 And you sent your flames
 Your shooting stars
 Shock and awe
 Shock and awe
 Like some, some
 Imagined warrior production
 Twenty-first century
 No chivalry involved
 No Bushido

Oh, the code of the West
 Long gone
 Never been
 Where does it lie?
 You came, you came
 Through the west
 Annihilated a people
 And you come to us
 But we are older than you
 You come you wanna
 You wanna come and
 rob the cradle
 Of civilization
 And you read yet you read
 You read Genesis
 You read of the tree
 You read of the tree
 Beget by god
 That raised its branches into the
 sky
 Every branch of knowledge
 Of the cradle of civilization

Of the banks of the Tigris
 and the Euphrates
 Oh, in Mesopotamia
 Aloofness ran deep
 The face of Eve turning
 What sky did she see
 What garden beneath her feet
 The one you drill
 You drill
 Pulling the blood of the earth
 Little droplets of oil for bracelets
 Little jewels
 Sapphires
 You make bracelets
 Round your own world
 We are weeping tears
 Rubies
 We offer them to you

We are just
 Your Arabian nightmare
 We invented the zero
 But we mean nothing to you
 Your Arabian nightmare

City of stars
 City of scholarship
 Science
 City of ideas
 City of light
 City
 City of ashes
 That the great Caliph
 Walked through
 His naked feet formed a circle
 And they built a city
 A perfect city of Baghdad

In the realm of peace
 And all the world revolved
 And they invented
 And they mean nothing to you
 Nothing to you
 Nothing

Go to sleep
 Go to sleep my child
 Go to sleep
 And I'll sing you a lullaby
 A lullaby for our city
 A lullaby of Baghdad
 Go to sleep
 Sleep my child
 Sleep
 Sleep
 Sleep
 Run
 Run
 Run
 Run

You sent your lights
 Your bombs
 You sent them down on our city
 Shock and awe
 Like some crazy t.v. show

They're robbing the cradle
 of civilization
 They're robbing the cradle
 of civilization
 They're robbing the cradle
 of civilization

Suffer not
 The paralysis of your neighbor
 Suffer not
 But extend your hand

written by Patti Smith and Oliver Ray © 2004 Druse Music, Inc. (ASCAP) and
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Listen to Patti Smith---Radio Baghdad (1:5)

The Ramones, another New York based band formed in 1974 and named themselves after Paul Ramon, a pseudonym used by Paul McCartney for a time during his early years with the Beatles. Each group member adopted Ramone as their last name. Only their drummer, Tommy Ramone (Tom Erdelyi) had worked as a professional musician. Consequently, he served as the group's manager and producer, continuing this role even after he quit playing. The group's very simple, fast, high-energy music, and monotone vocals became the prototype of much punk music to follow. Most of their songs were fairly short and were written by the group as a team. Their first album was not released until 1976, but they were instrumental in influencing the beginnings of punk rock in England as early as 1975.

Listen to The Ramones---53rd and 3rd (1:6)
From their 1976 release, Ramones.

The Ramones did experiment with other styles of music and used the services of Phil Spector for their 1980 album, *End of the Century*.

Listen to The Ramones---Baby I Love You (1:7)---cover of the 1964 Ronettes hit

British Punk

Groups of British lower and middle-class teens had grown to detest the values and lifestyles of their parents. They had come to believe that they were caught up in an economic and class-ridden social system over which they had no control. They felt they were doomed to a life of near poverty and they felt they had no hope of securing a job that would pay them enough to better themselves. Rock music played by wealthy stars surrounded by huge stage sets meant nothing to them. Their attitude became one of anger, frustration, and violence. They were antigovernment, antisociety, and antifashion. They adopted a way of dressing in torn second-hand clothing with large safety pins holding the pieces together. This look reflected their rejection of the image of respectability and became a raw symbol of their feelings of alienation.

The raw music of the New York Dolls had been transported to London by Malcolm McLaren. McLaren was the owner of an antifashion clothing store in London called Sex. He was sympathetic to the feelings of the youth who bought clothing in his store and wanted to produce a sound that would express their attitudes. He liked the sound of the New York Dolls, but the group had broken up, leaving McLaren to form his own group. He combined one of his employees, Glen Matlock, with two of Matlock's friends, Steve Jones and Paul Cook, and one angry young customer named John Lydon. Lydon had no experience as a singer, but the sound McLaren was after required no more polish than Lydon already had. McLaren changed Lydon's name to Johnny Rotten and named the group The Sex Pistols, using the name of his store as a starting point.

The Sex Pistols evoked disgust everywhere they performed. Unlike the New York Dolls, The Sex Pistols were not just toying with rebellion. They were fully caught up its emotional anger. They wanted to repulse the establishment and provoke the authorities

against them. That desire actually attracted more fans than the music itself. Performances were stopped mid-song, concerts were cancelled, and radio programmers pulled their music off the air. Their first single, recorded in 1976, was *Anarchy in the U.K.* It sold well in Britain, but was removed from record stores because of the vulgar language used by the group on a television show. Matlock left the group and Johnny Rotten brought in John Ritchie to play the bass. The group renamed Ritchie, Sid Vicious.

Listen to The Sex Pistols---Anarchy in the U.K. (1:8)

The Sex Pistols gained such a reputation that other bands began forming, copying their distorted guitar, bass, and drums instrumentation along with monotone shouted lyrics even before the group could release an album. The energy level of the group was high and violence at concerts was common. A punk dance called the *pogo* was started at a Sex Pistols concert. This dance involved just jumping straight up and down.

One way to anger a respectable English citizen was to show disrespect for the Queen. Queen Elizabeth II was celebrating the 25th anniversary of her coronation in 1977. In her honor, The Sex Pistols released a single, *God Save the Queen*, the same title as the English national anthem. The lyrics were so foul and insulting that the song was banned from British radio and television. The title was not even allowed to be displayed. It made its way up the charts as a black line.

Listen to The Sex Pistols---God Save the Queen (1:9)

Promoters in England began to refuse to hire them, so The Sex Pistols were forced to tour the U.S.A. To try to stir up American youth, the group changed the title and words to their British hit to *Anarchy in the U.S.A.* they were received as more of an oddity than as a musical group. The group had begun a movement and now had no place to go. Consequently, they disbanded in early 1978. Vicious moved to New York with his girlfriend, Nancy Spungen, whom he was later accused of killing. He died of an overdose before the investigation was completed.

One of the most important, and longest-lasting British punk groups was The Clash. Except for their bass player, Paul Simonton, the group was made up of experienced musicians. Simonton picked up his first bass when he joined the group. Rather than just expressing the anger felt by alienated teens, The Clash zeroed in on some of the central causes of the punk rebellion; youth unemployment, racism, and police brutality. In addition to keeping the punk rhythmic throb, The Clash added Jamaica's music of rebellion and added reggae to some of their albums. At one of their concerts, seats were actually torn up from the floor. One of The Clash's two top-40 hits was *Rock the Casbah* (1982).

Listen to The Clash---Rock the Casbah (1:10)

Hardcore Punk on the West Coast

When British punk bands like The Sex Pistols toured the United States, their music struck a nerve in San Francisco and Los Angeles. California punk bands used the same instrumentation as British groups, but their attitude was different. British punks were facing terrible economic circumstances. But, American punks had jobs, food, and clothing readily available to them. But, they still had anger. The groups had plenty to say about the values of their ex-hippie parents. They felt the value system of their parents were worn-out---or sold-out. Young people were angry about the government's involvement in Asia and South American countries and they were angry about its support of an oppressive regime in South Africa.

Formed in San Francisco in 1978, the Dead Kennedys performed fast, heavily distorted music with shouted monotone vocals. Their lyrics condemned the U.S. government, yet also displayed a sense of humor. The Dead Kennedys' lead singer, Eric Boucher, adopted his stage name of Jello Biafra after hearing that the government had sent a shipment of jello to the starving people of Biafra in Africa, calling it foreign aid. Their debut album was *Fresh fruit for Rotting Vegetables* (1980) and included *Kill the Poor*. This piece made a very strong statement against those involved in the development of the neutron bomb but resisted governmental aid to America's poor. The satirical nature of the piece is similar to that of Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) who proposed in his work, *A Modest Proposal*, that the English eat Irish children in order to solve the problem of starvation in Ireland.

***Listen to the Dead Kennedys---Kill the Poor* (1:11)**

In other albums the Dead Kennedys attacked the Moral Majority, the preppies, and even the punk community, itself.

American New Wave

The term, new-wave, had actually been used to refer to any new form of music until it became mainstream and a newer wave took it over. The label finally stuck with post-punk music of the mid-late 70's. Punk's monotone vocals and emotional alienation were adopted by groups that played within more mainstream popular rock styles and the term new wave began to be used to categorize the music of some of those bands.

Whereas punk music was almost always played only by guitar, bass, and drums, new-wave bands often added electronic keyboards, saxophones, or other instruments. Punk guitarists and bassists used distortion to cloud melodies or chord changes. New-Wave musicians produced a clean, slick sound. Angry strumming by punk guitar players was transformed to fast, clear playing of repeated notes on the electric bass by new-wave musicians.

Devo is one of the best examples of a new-wave band. It stressed a slick version of the very fast punk pulse along with chant-like monotone vocals. Devo was formed by two art students at Kent State University in Ohio. Their main purpose was to create a band for the making of their 1975 film, *The Truth about De-Evolution*. The film took a humorous look at the dehumanization of modern society. The group name was a play on the title from the movie---De-evolution. After completing the film, Devo recorded *Jocko Homo* (1976) which sounds like it is being performed by a bunch of robots. They used this image on stage and in videos, often appearing with a robot mascot they called Booji.

Listen to Devo---Jocko Homo (1:12)

Devo produced a clean, electronic sound that was entertaining and accessible to listeners. Their later work continued to use humorous, dehumanized electronic music but much of it had evolved into commercialism and they began to stress a dance beat and older rock styles instead of making statements about modern society. They commercialized to the point that they made recordings for Muzak.

Blondie formed in 1975 and debuted at CBGB's. Their first album, *Blondie*, put them on the commercial outskirts of new wave. Their later music was even less characteristic of the style. Their lead singer, Deborah Harry, seldom sang in a new-wave monotone and tended more toward pop-style melodies. Blondie toyed with disco, reggae, and a commercial style of rap.

Listen to Blondie---Rapture (1:14)

British New Wave

Nightclubs like CBGB's provided the setting for American punk and new-wave. In England, the setting was in pubs. Pub rock was an English *back-to-the-roots* movement that began during the early 70's but did not become commercially successful until later in the decade. Many pub rock bands were popular alternatives to punk and musicians in those groups became important as British new-wave artists.

Chrissie Hynde displayed a strong, tough, and yet, vulnerable female image. She was born in Akron, Ohio and studied at Kent State University, but moved to London in 1973. There, she teamed with musicians who were involved in punk. In 1978 she recorded a demo tape that landed her a contract with Real Records. With that contract in hand, she hired British musicians and formed the Pretenders. Their first single was a cover of the Kinks, *Stop Your Sobbing*. They maintained a strong backbeat and had heavy metal-influenced guitar lines. They had a hard rock sound that was new wave because Hynde's vocals were generally void of any sort of tender emotion. The energy, and often the anger, of punk was present, but Hynde made the element of melody more important than the punk beat. *I'll Stand By You* was on the Pretender's 1994 album, *Last of the Independents* and charted in the top 20.

Listen to the Pretenders---I'll Stand By You (1:16)