HITSVILLE UK:
PUNK IN THE FARAWAY TOWNS
During the punk years, I was lucky enough to live near one of the premier independent record shops, Small Wonder in Walthamstow, London. Every time I visited, there would be a new exhibition of art – by which, I mean the owner festooned the walls with the latest seven-inch record sleeves. He’d also play the new sounds very loud, which meant his ‘gallery’ had a soundtrack. It was all very mesmerising, and on a Saturday the shop would be packed with adolescents like me, not buying very much, but standing there half-deaf and gawping like zombies.

Russell Bestley’s *Hitsville UK: Punk in the Faraway Towns* revives that sense of (small) wonder, but isn’t just an exercise in nostalgia. It makes a case for seven inch sleeves as a signifier of a point in history when DIY took over a significant sector of popular culture, and when art was up for grabs. 1976-84 was a period when a scissors-and-glue mentality empowered youths up and down the country to produce sleeves of often stunning originality. The mix of bizarre colours, playful typography, and stitched-together images captured the spirit of the equally DIY records perfectly.

There was also a political element. The phenomenon straddled the end of the Callaghan Labour government and the beginnings of Thatcherism, and had varied agit-prop manifestations (Bestley is not afraid to highlight the far-right elements of punk as well as the better-known left-wing and anarcho-punk scenes). Localised production circumvented the corporations, and as each of the Faraway Towns gave rise to its own version of the Small Wonder shop, so punk became as much about local issues, local politics, even the local pub, as about anything happening down the King’s Road (‘Sten Guns in Sunderland’ was one of the more amusing song titles).

*Hitsville UK* is thus a riposte to the received wisdom of so many ‘top-down’ BBC documentaries about punk. It’s not about pogo-ing with Malcolm at some legendary Pistols concert in London. It’s about how the movement was lived by tens of thousands of teenagers all over the country, and about the bands they loved: the like of Discharge from Stoke; the Cult Maniax from Exeter; the Prefects from Birmingham; Budi from Belfast; Johnny and the Self-Abusers from Edinburgh, and the bands that never made it beyond their immediate surroundings such as the Small Mercies from Tunbridge Wells (with one R.Bestley on bass). Southampton itself could boast a clutch of such bands, including Strate Jacket, Catch 22, and the mighty Catholic Girls. (In due course, the Small Wonder shop in London became a record label, and signed up some of the top regional acts: Bauhaus, from Northampton, the Cockney Rejects from East London and The Cure, from Crawley being the best-known. They declined, however, to sign my band – the rotters.)

There is a graphic design dimension to the show (Bestley teaches the subject at university). But these sleeves were often not ‘designed’ in any conventional sense. They were about mates deciding upon the most punkish/outrageous/amusing/dumb image, and then adding some typography – often filched from elsewhere or inexpertly lettrasetted on. The sleeves, and the records they housed, were not meant to last, and were not intended to make their creators famous. The ethic seemed to be, in the words of one fanzine from the time, ‘Ain’t Bin to No Art School’ – though, as Bestley shows, some of these lo-fi designers certainly had been to art school, and were more knowing than they let on.

Does this amateur status make the sleeves any less ‘valid’ than a product that might have come out of a major label and had thousands of pounds spent on it? Does their throwaway-ness make them not worth remembering? Does the regional aspect detract from their appeal or authenticity? I’d argue the very opposite - but, please, take a look and decide for yourself.

Roger Sabin

Roger Sabin is the Editor of Punk Rock: So What? (Routledge)
Vinyl records seem to hold a deep-seated emotional value for many of us - we can remember where we were, who we were with, and that gut feeling dragging us back in time whenever we hear a particular record, or come across a certain record sleeve. I can remember hearing snippets of the new, outrageous phenomenon of 'punk rock' through items on the television news, and seeing the shocked reports in the newspapers (all that spitting, vomiting, swearing and rebellion certainly sounded appealing to a fourteen year old potential punk rocker), though it wasn't until the beginning of 1977 that I really heard anything of the actual music. I was skateboarding with my brother and some friends, and I remember overhearing the radio in my mate's back garden - the song was 'Grip' by The Stranglers, the debut single by the Harlequin Strippers, and I could genuinely describe it as a life-changing moment. I was so impressed, I began to seek out other examples of this 'new wave' of music. I ordered the debut album by The Stranglers from my mum's Freemans catalogue (those were the days...), and I started listening to John Peel on Radio One and Stuart Henry at Radio Luxembourg, discovering new groups and trying to find out more in the music press. Punk grew exponentially during 1977 and 1978, with the biggest explosion in the DIY scenes were cropping up all over the country, and young punk fans, annoyed at being told that they'd missed the boat and that punk was dead, decided to take control against their local council, or the village pub landlord who banned punk drinkers, or the lack of prospects or excitement in their own home town.

This exhibition is both a celebration of the wide range of graphic approaches adopted by punk sleeve designers, and an attempt to redress the balance of recent punk 'histories' which focus purely on a short-lived series of events based around the Kings Road and Oxford Street. It is based on the mapping and grouping of a wide range of punk-related seven inch single sleeves across the period 1976 to 1984, and seeks to tell a wider, more inclusive story of the punk years.
FROM THE FIRST WAVE TO THE NEW WAVE

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COLOURED MUSIC

Once punk and the ‘New Wave’ had become broadly acceptable and could be marketed by the major labels, chart entries became far more familiar between 1978 and 1979. The major labels were also quick to recognize the potential for a punk collectors’ market, following the success of independents such as Stiff who had started to produce ‘alternative’ versions and formats of their new releases. Stiff saw the potential for limited edition coloured vinyl releases, picture sleeves and alternative formats such as 10 inch albums and oddly shaped discs – reflected in good sales in the first few weeks following a release date – and were soon followed by other independents such as Small Wonder, Chiswick and Reggae Banquet. Virgin records also offered limited edition coloured vinyls of singles by the likes of X Ray Spex, The Members and The Skids, while US based major label A&M tapped into the trend for releases by The Dickies and The Police. The natural conclusion of this marketing style was the Lurkers’ debut Free Admission Single (Beggars Banquet 1977) in red, white and blue vinyl versions, while their fourth single, I Don’t Need To Tell Her (1978), came in four different sleeves, each depicting a member of the group – a similar technique was later used by Chiswick Records to market The Damned’s Love Song single in April 1979. Generation X released their fourth single, King Rocker (Chrysalis 1979) at around the same time, with initial pressings in notable different sleeves each featuring an individual member of the band, and four corresponding coloured vinyls.

Although the marketing strategies based on limited editions and coloured vinyl proved instantly popular in 1979, a more ideologically, austere and politicised punk, especially within the Anarcho Punk sub-genre, saw a decline in the market for alternative formats and coloured vinyl releases and a return to basic black vinyl - often housed within a simple black and white fold-out covers. This can be seen as an approach reflecting low cost production techniques on the part of independent labels, but the employment of deliberate visual codes with which to deliberately denote austerity and a 'back to basics' approach. Crass had already ‘...adopted black clothing as protest against the narcissistic peacockery of the fashion punks’ early in their career, and the reflection of this approach within their sleeve graphics was almost inevitable - as was the adoption of similar graphic styles by a subsequent range of Anarcho Punk groups heavily influenced by Crass themselves.
The independent sector grew strongly between 1978 and 1984, in particular benefiting from the widening market for punk and avant-garde records in the late 1970s. They later successfully captured the early 1980s punk market whilst the major labels turned to the promotion of new styles and a broader audience. A combination of low overheads and the ability to produce short runs of records which were both cost effective and audience-specific allowed the smaller independent labels to operate in this specialist market much more easily than the majors, who relied on mass production and distribution, and a high turnover of their product. Early 1980s punk-specific labels could then tap into a well-established market - notably punks who continued to define themselves as part of the movement rather than adopt a new trend, and those who were interested but had been too young to respond to the First (or even Second) Wave. Riot City, an independent punk label set up by Bristol group Vice Squad and Simon Edwards of local independent Heartbeat Records to release their first record, is a good example: after initially pressing 1,500 copies of the Last Rockers e.p. in December 1980, they found that sales far exceeded expectations, eventually selling in excess of 22,000 copies. The label went on to sign other bands and to gain a strong foothold in the independent market - Riot City eventually released some 29 singles, and 12 albums by a number of different Third Wave punk bands between 1980 and 1984, when they were forced to close following the collapse of their distributor Pinnacle Records. Other labels thrived during this period with the establishment of a firm Third Wave punk fanbase and market for their releases. Both Secret Records (based in London) and No Future (based in Malvern, Worcestershire) had a string of minor chart successes between September 1981 and the end of 1982, releasing singles by Oi-related groups such as Blitz, The Partisans, Red Alert, The Violators and Peter & The Test Tube Babies. The short-lived glossy magazine Punk Lives calculated Oi-related record sales in excess of two million across the sub-genre’s first four years, demonstrating a level of commercial success on a par with many First Wave record releases which has subsequently been played down within historical accounts of the movement.

It should also be noted that the visual styles of fanzines and graphic ephemera surrounding punk did not stand still during this period - there is no one standard punk visual language - but did in fact undergo an evolution in terms of both the creation and use of imagery and in typographic style. Techniques for reproduction of a range of punk graphic material also underwent change, partly because independent producers of fanzines and sleeves could build upon innovations and good practice developed by others. The growth of the independent DIY scene in the late 1970s also resulted in graphic design for record sleeves, posters, flyers and fanzines which could be targeted to specific, often small-scale, markets. Many record sleeves could be regarded as strongly non-commercial in terms of the mainstream record market, either in their uncompromising use of text and imagery, or in the hand-made, labour-intensive nature of the packaging itself which would be extremely expensive to reproduce on a large scale. The design of record sleeves often involved strategies that, although based on limited budgets, were inventive and sophisticated - incorporating alternative production processes, the adaptation of available, lo-tech materials, and simple printing techniques. Certain design strategies later became established more widely within the field of music packaging and proved influential within the wider practice of graphic design, while many others were ad hoc adaptations of more traditional design skills relating to the branding, marketing and promotion of popular cultural artefacts. It should not be overlooked that the growth in small-scale DIY punk outlets, labels and distributors also helped to establish an effective ‘alternative’ marketplace, which continues to thrive to this day.

**KEY CATEGORIES IN UK PUNK**

UK punk was a broad umbrella description, which incorporated a wide range of styles and approaches from the outset, finding some coherence as a distinct punk market developed during the Second Wave before fragmenting once again into a number of opposing and/or inter-related tribal groups during the Third Wave. Although a quite disparate range of potential new sub-genres emerged in the Second and Third Waves of punk, often originated and defined by music critics and record companies, many failed to become widely recognised. However, a number of broad themes and groupings did become accepted by punk bands, music critics and fans, and these categories could be broadly defined as follows:

- **Proto Punk and Pub Rock**
- **New Wave and Novelty Punk**
- **DIY, Post Punk and the Avant-Garde**
- **Oi and Street Punk**
- **Real Punk, New Punk and Hardcore**
- **Anarcho Punk**

It should be noted that certain of these categories may bear a relationship to UK punk but are not in fact sub-genres of it; groups in the Proto Punk and Pub Rock category might be defined as precursors to punk, which in some cases continued to operate alongside the developing new genre, benefiting from the association in the process. It certainly did no harm for groups such as Dr Feelgood and the Count Bishops when their labels adopted some of the visual styles of the new wave in the packaging and marketing of their records.
The Punk Community

From the beginning, UK punk was a fragmented and disparate grouping of distinctly musical and visual styles. Many groups were credited with an association to the emerging genre as a way in garnering public and press interest, and the perceived need to build a groundswell of new groups under the punk banner meant that some groups bore associations in quite indirect ways. This is particularly true of those groups who were already partly established on the Pub Rock scene, and who were associated with early independent labels linked to punk, such as Stiff and Chiswick Records. Therefore, although this study is concerned with the definitions of, and distinctions between, a number of emerging sub-genres of UK punk, other related sub-genres, such as Proto Punk (i.e. the Pub Rock and R&B groups operating around the start of UK punk in late 1976 and early 1977) and New Wave (e.g. artists such as Ian Dury, Wreckless Eric, Nick Love and Elvis Costello at Stiff Records) are also identified.

One point which does require reiteration, is that many UK punk groups were classified within more than one sub-genre, especially during different periods of their careers. When a group first appeared on the scene, many journalists would try to find a place for the group alongside those sub-genres already recognized, but once the group became more widely known they might be placed alongside a different set of peers. Also, groups tended to become more proficient, and potentially more commercially viable, over time - so the shift from ‘Funk’ to ‘New Wave’, or from DIY to ‘Post Punk’ was perhaps more the result of the group’s natural development rather than self-conscious industry marketing and promotions.

First Wave UK punk can be seen to have been fairly diverse, both musically and sartorially: in terms of this project, sub-genres are limited at this stage to Punk Style, as the early 1980s Third Wave led to the division of the movement into fairly clearly defined sub-genres such as Anarchic Punk, Oi, New Punk and Hardcore, as well as the crossover with US Hardcore and the early emergence of Neo-Fascist Punk. These emerging sub-genres of punk were defined in large part by the music press and by specific audience groups. Tribal differences became more clearly marked, and strong political, ideological and even regional factors led to some entrenched positions, both musically and fashionably. In terms of this project, the main focus of the group is the natural lineage into the punk scene of 1976. John Robb’s Punk Rock: An Oral History of Punk Music from a wide range of individuals involved in the early punk movement, and includes all the key, together with Slim Rock: The late 1970s underground punk rock scene. It is certainly arguable that individual punk ‘pioneers’ were influenced by the music and fashions that had gone before, and the well-documented attitudes of those First Wave artists who were familiar with the immediate entourage, more recent accounts have helped to cast a fairly rigid collection of pre-punk artists as inspiration for UK Punk First Wave. A more recent trend in punk history has given greater credence to groups such as Mott The Hoople, Dr Feelgood, Eddie & The Hot Rods, The Rats and the Pink Fairies as inspirations for punk music. However, one group that perceived move away from an Americanised form of Rock & Roll to a more localised approach would have been the small group of bands around the Sex Pistols and The Clash and the inclusions mentioned in The Clash and The Damned as part of punk’s natural progression.

For the purposes of this exhibition, Proto Punk and Pub Rock, as well as the beginnings of a Street Punk style, the early 1980s Third Wave led to the division of the movement into fairly clearly defined sub-genres such as Anarchic Punk, Oi, New Punk and Hardcore, as well as the crossover with US Hardcore and the early emergence of Neo-Fascist Punk. These emerging sub-genres of punk were defined in large part by the music press and by specific audience groups. Tribal differences became more clearly marked, and strong political, ideological and even regional factors led to some entrenched positions, both musically and fashionably. In terms of this project, the main focus of the group is the natural lineage into the punk scene of 1976. John Robb’s Punk Rock: An Oral History of Punk Music from a wide range of individuals involved in the early punk movement, and includes all the key, together with Slim Rock: The late 1970s underground punk rock scene. It is certainly arguable that individual punk ‘pioneers’ were influenced by the music and fashions that had gone before, and the well-documented attitudes of those First Wave artists who were familiar with the immediate entourage, more recent accounts have helped to cast a fairly rigid collection of pre-punk artists as inspiration for UK Punk First Wave. A more recent trend in punk history has given greater credence to groups such as Mott The Hoople, Dr Feelgood, Eddie & The Hot Rods, The Rats and the Pink Fairies as inspirations for punk music. However, one group that perceived move away from an Americanised form of Rock & Roll to a more localised approach would have been the small group of bands around the Sex Pistols and The Clash and the inclusions mentioned in The Clash and The Damned as part of punk’s natural progression.

The roots of UK punk are many and varied, and the discourses surrounding the ‘natural lineage’ of the movement has thrown up many conflicting arguments. While the influence of musicians in New York in the New York Dolls, Iggy Pop, Lou Reed, Patti Smith, Television and The Amboyines is often cited, other artists from the UK, such as Dave Rowland, were also claimed as the natural lineage into the punk scene of 1976. John Robb’s Punk Rock: An Oral History of Punk Music from a wide range of individuals involved in the early punk movement, and includes all the key, together with Slim Rock: The late 1970s underground punk rock scene. It is certainly arguable that individual punk ‘pioneers’ were influenced by the music and fashions that had gone before, and the well-documented attitudes of those First Wave artists who were familiar with the immediate entourage, more recent accounts have helped to cast a fairly rigid collection of pre-punk artists as inspiration for UK Punk First Wave. A more recent trend in punk history has given greater credence to groups such as Mott The Hoople, Dr Feelgood, Eddie & The Hot Rods, The Rats and the Pink Fairies as inspirations for punk music. However, one group that perceived move away from an Americanised form of Rock & Roll to a more localised approach would have been the small group of bands around the Sex Pistols and The Clash and the inclusions mentioned in The Clash and The Damned as part of punk’s natural progression.
**NEW WAVE AND NOVELTY PUNK**

New Wave Punk may have been the artists within the punk scene operating tangentially. However, there was a yearning within some fans for a punk-influenced genre that was distinct from early punk movement itself. Some artists who are closely associated with early punk influenced music which was geared to being more of a subculture rather than a mainstream movement. The term Novelty Punk covers the range of punk-related records which were produced, particularly during the First Wave. It is a term that is often used to describe pastiche punk, which was an early experiment with the New Wave. The tradition of generic punk parodies continued through the 1930s and 1940s in Britain, with The Monks' Nice Legs Shame About Her Face (Logo 1978) charting the following month, and the single by London pub rock band turned punks The Blockheads, Goin' Out Wiv A Punk (Response 1977). Pop singer Richie Race (Carrere 1979) took punk's by-now generic sound for either comedic effect or comment on the punk scene, and his raw production style perfectly pre-figures a number of key later developments in punk history. The chorus repeats the lyrical refrain: "Anarchist... Anarchist... An' I kissed a couple of ional girls..." playing directly with Johnny Rotten's vocal inflection in the opening lines of Anarchy In diy punk parody even managed to precede the furore surrounding the Sex Pistols television appearance in December 1976 - had it appeared a few weeks later, it could have achieved national exposure. Glama! That Punk Joke by the Water Pistols was released in November 1976, just a couple of weeks before the Sex Pistols debut single. A comic blend of clichéd tabloid punk descriptions (the singer boasts of wearing chains, swearing and petty violence) and generic rock pop, its play on words is very humorous and prefigures a number of key later developments in punk history. The chorus repeats the lyrical refrain: "Anarchist... Anarchist..."

I am a rebel and Simon's my name Mum thinks I'm crazy I drive her insane I know two chords and I sing out of tune If punk rock lasts I will make a fortune

While this notion of punk parody and humourous critique can be seen to originate from both inside and outside the genre, a distinction should be made between meta-punk, as a punk discourse from within, and the adoption of punk styles for either comedic value or commercial viability by artists outside of the punk movement.

One punk parody even managed to precede the furore surrounding the Sex Pistols television appearance in December 1976 - had it appeared a few weeks later, it could have achieved national exposure. Glama! That Punk Joke by the Water Pistols was released in November 1976, just a couple of weeks before the Sex Pistols debut single. A comic blend of clichéd tabloid punk descriptions (the singer boasts of wearing chains, swearing and petty violence) and generic rock pop, its play on words is very humorous and prefigures a number of key later developments in punk history. The chorus repeats the lyrical refrain: "Anarchist... Anarchist..."

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DIY, POST PUNK AND THE AVANT-GARDE

Beginning with the notion of self-publishing, often in parallel with other activities such as fanzine production, this category covers a broad range of musical styles and visual strategies, often produced in limited numbers. As indicated by the definitions used to compile the Independent Chart, independent releases were determined by production and marketing factors rather than musical style, and as such the range of independent and DIY releases in the late 1970s was very broad, covering everything from electronic pop to jazz and dance music. During the First and Second Waves of UK punk, the influence of new labels and distribution networks such as Small Wonder, Cherry Red and Rough Trade helped to create a more established sub-genre of DIY punk music. Together with more sophisticated marketing strategies and longer production runs, other small labels, such as FAST Product, Illegals and Stiff, also enjoyed the benefits of major label distribution deals with established companies.

This is the broadest category within this field, covering a range of activities from self-produced and distributed small label output through to more ambitious independent artists or labels with a more established catalogue, and as such it does impact across a range of other sub-genres. Many Anarcho Punk and Hardcore releases, for instance, could equally be defined as DIY, in that they were low budget releases, often with home-produced sleeve artwork and packaging, and were distributed via independents such as Southern Records or Rough Trade. However, a distinction should be made between groups who released their records independently and saw the Do It Yourself maxim as an explicit reflexive practice, and those who may have run their own labels but were less concerned with promoting and foregrounding the “anyone can do it” message. Independent labels were to have a strong influence on the structure of the music industry throughout the following two decades. The Cartel distribution network was very successful for the following two decades. The Cartel structure of the music industry throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and it took some time for this trend to wane as the major labels continued to sign up new and established bands, and the development was seen not only as successful in that it promoted new and independent artists, but also as providing a new market for the music industry.

Many Second Wave bands were heavily influenced by both media coverage of punk and by direct contact with bands on tour and records made available through national distribution and radio airplay. As Jon Savage suggests, a number of DIY, independent records produced by some of these bands in the early stages of the DIY movement, such as the band’s own records, were often the result of choice becoming ideology. When they did, a new theory, Indie, emerged as a loose branding tool, the major labels clumsily attempting to tap into the well-established independent market and audiences.

Though Spiral Scratch became symbolic of the punk DIY ethos, largely due to its success in gaining radio airplay and enthusiastic reviews in the music press, other groups were also experimenting with self-produced records around the same time. Some of the achievements of the DIY punk scene included the release of the Buzzcocks’ “Spiral Scratch”. Unlike the UK, where major label distribution was the norm, in the US the advantage that the DIY enterprise had was that the producer could control the entire process, including the distribution of the record. This is the broadest category within this field, covering a range of activities from self-produced and distributed small label output through to more ambitious independent artists or labels with a more established catalogue.
This category stems originally from the early Second Wave of UK punk, with bands such as Sham 69, Mensa and Slaughter & The Dogs providing a musical style based on traditional rock & roll forms twinned with Glam Rock and pop, and a visual aesthetic which referenced the image of the 'boot boy', skinhead culture, and working class youth iconography. The terms 'Oi' and 'Street Punk' were coined in the late 1970s by singer Garry Bushell of the group the 4-Skins at a gig at Sounds, in order to promote a particular genre of newly developing bands and labels who drew on other bands and bands and refined their sound into a loud, fast and aggressive new style. Often dealing with supposedly 'working class' subject matter such as skinhead, and street violence, songs usually combined singalong choruses and simple chants with melodic hooklines. The influence of earlier Glam Rock on both the musical and visual direction of Second Wave UK Street Punk and Oi should not be overlooked. Glam Rock had initially grown in popularity as a back to basics pop rock format in direct opposition to the increasingly complex and professional output of the Progressive Rock movement. The most successful UK singles band of the early 1970s were Slade, from Walsall in the West Midlands. Their early image tapped into the skinhead style of the late 1960s, wearing the outfits of the football terraces and street style of working class youth, and their music was simple, loud and heavy, utilising strong 4/4 drum patterns - which became central to the Glam Rock musical style. As the public interest in Glam Rock grew, Slade, along with other successful Glam artists such as David Bowie, Marc Bolan, The Sweet and Mud, moved further into the pop mainstream, adopting a musical style which married their earlier raw rock & roll with catchy hooklines and melodic choruses.

Oi! groups such as Cock Sparrer, who formed in 1974 as a pub rock band playing mostly Small Faces and Rolling Stones covers, and the short-lived skinhead and bootboy following in East London, were directly influenced by early Glam Rock, and later Oi! and Street Punk. Other Oi! and Street Punk groups included The Hoople, and both The Damned and The Rezillos covered The Sweet's 'Ballroom Blitz'. The Damned also toured as support act to Marc Bolan in March 1977, and a television special a few months later entitled Marc, which was commissioned by Granada Television and presented by Bolan, the autumn of 1977 featured a number of punk artists including Generation X and the Boomtown Rats. The interpretation of Oi! as an essentially live music form which utilised strong 4/4 drum patterns – which was common for Oi! - a (drunken) party atmosphere is also evident in other cover versions and in the development of Oi sub-genres such as whilst the Garry Bushell-manufactured 'Punk Pathetique' movement incorporating Splodgenessabounds, the Toy Dolls and Bushell's own group The Sononas, a 1981 book Oi! A View from the Dead End of the Street, written in the weeks following the Southall riot. Placing the contemporary skinhead culture firmly within a set of historical references which traced back to the 1960s rude boy fashions and their adoption of early ska and reggae music from Jamaica, and including photographs of black punk fans and ska musicians, Johnson states: 'white working class, than they have with white rich middle class'. He also argues strongly against both right and left-wing political groups, and tries to centre the Oi movement within an apolitical working class youth culture (thus mirroring the position of much First Wave Punk). Class was a significant element that put across by Garry Bushell and other sympathetic journalists, though their ideas of working class tradition and pride are often fraught with ideological problems.

Ironically, the press backlash which forced the Oi! movement underground may well have led to a consolidation and strengthening of the right-wing factions within it, with far-right elements continuing to grow throughout the 1980s and 1990s and the establishment of dedicated labels and fund-raising gigs and parties. The most successful Oi! groups such as Cock Sparrer and The Cockney Rejects (whose track Oi! Oi! Oi! on their debut album, Greatest Hits Volume 1, the album which put across by Garry Bushell and other sympathetic journalists, though their ideas of working class tradition and pride are often fraught with ideological problems.

The most successful Oi! groups such as Cock Sparrer, did make an attempt to redress the balance with his book Oi! A View from the Dead End of the Street, written in the weeks following the Southall riot. Placing the contemporary skinhead culture firmly within a set of historical references which traced back to the 1960s rude boy fashions and their adoption of early ska and reggae music from Jamaica, and including photographs of black punk fans and ska musicians, Johnson states: 'white working class, than they have with white rich middle class'. He also argues strongly against both right and left-wing political groups, and tries to centre the Oi movement within an apolitical working class youth culture (thus mirroring the position of much First Wave Punk). Class was a significant element that put across by Garry Bushell and other sympathetic journalists, though their ideas of working class tradition and pride are often fraught with ideological problems.

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Parallel to the development of Oi as a separate genre within Punk was the emergence of a number of bands such as the Exploited, the Newtown Neurotics and The Partisans, appearing on the early Oi compilation albums, before establishing their own identity as central to the New Punk movement. Others, including The Clash and The Damned and Second Wave bands, sought to distance themselves from early categorisation with the Oi movement following the negative publicity and connotations of right-wing political positions attributed to the genre. Some early influences, both musically and lyrically, also cross the boundaries: Sham 69, Menace, The Lurkers and Blitz, for instance, married overt working class sentiments to rabble-rousing chants and football terrace choruses - themes which continued to be central to both Oi and New Punk songwriting. However, fairly strong divisions - musical, political and sartorial - were to become apparent between the developing Hardcore Punk and Oi sub-genres.

The 4 Skins, The Business and Chron Gen were from working class backgrounds across the country, often outside white working class areas in existence as early as 1976. Many of these events raised funds for a range of political causes, from CND to the Animal Liberation Front, as well as smaller local campaigns. Book and record stalls at venues provided access to the underground and anarchist media, and gigs were sometimes scheduled for after-themes which had no connection to give an alternative view. The Buzzcocks' album released a series of their own 'punk 150' titles, such as Bullshit Detector, consisting of known tapes sent in by unknown bands sympathetic to the Anarcho Punk cause. Later developments in Punk songwriting were often directly influenced by the output of the leading Anarcho Punk bands. As well as acknowledging the genre's constituents, the members of this loose-knit, strongly ideological group formed a punk band to relay their anarchist message following the network established by Rock Against Racism and a wide base of support for CND, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Their media interruptions - incorporating flyers, books, films, events, concerts and posters - employed a distinctive visual style and an oral subculture, designed to make strong political messages. Using a strategy of (low) maximum price details on the sleeves, visual devices were employed in the bands' names, stencilled on walls across the country, even though their records were relatively rare and low in price. Using a strategy of (low) maximum price details on the sleeves, visual devices were employed in the bands' names, stencilled on walls across the country, even though their records were relatively rare and low in price. Using a strategy of (low) maximum price details on the sleeves, visual devices were employed in the bands' names, stencilled on walls across the country, even though their records were relatively rare and low in price.

Throughout the 1980s, at least in terms of approach. While Punk continued to offer a subversive critique of the British government's involvement in the Falklands War and the threat of global nuclear conflict, others such as Flux Of Pink Indians and Conflict took on political positions regarding animal testing as a form of resistance than the peaceful means the Animal Liberation Front, as well as smaller local campaigns. Book and record stalls at venues provided access to the underground and anarchist media, and gigs were sometimes scheduled for after-themes which had no connection to give an alternative view. The Buzzcocks' album released a series of their own 'punk 150' titles, such as Bullshit Detector, consisting of known tapes sent in by unknown bands sympathetic to the Anarchist Punk cause. Later developments in Punk songwriting were often directly influenced by the output of the leading Anarcho Punk bands. As well as acknowledging the genre's constituents, the members of this loose-knit, strongly ideological group formed a punk band to relay their anarchist message following the network established by Rock Against Racism and a wide base of support for CND, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Their media interruptions - incorporating flyers, books, films, events, concerts and posters - employed a distinctive visual style and an oral subculture, designed to make strong political messages. Using a strategy of (low) maximum price details on the sleeves, visual devices were employed in the bands' names, stencilled on walls across the country, even though their records were relatively rare and low in price.

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by a number of like-minded groups such as The Varukers, The Skeptik and Broken Bones. Songs recorded by these groups did indeed echo many of the sentiments of Anarcho Punk groups such as Sex Trial and Oi! Of Pink Indians, but the groups were more commonly associated with the evolving Hardcore scene for a number of reasons. Firstly, the overtly anarchic bands’ DIY-to-successful-endeavor so much of the Anarcho Punk scene during this period that many groups found themselves on tour wherever they had to either ally themselves with the Crass camp or be seen as distinct from it. Some music journalists adopted a very negative attitude towards the Crass. Discharge’s participation in the Apocolypse Now tour of 1981, alongside the Exploited, Anti Nowhere League, Patti and Chron Gen, saw them gain some level of critical and commercial success, but also placed them firmly in the New Punk camp by association. Whereas Crass, Conflict and Poison Girls deliberately operated outside of the music press and standard performance venues, and were prepared to vary their musical and lyrical styles to encompass a broad range of influences (including poetry, literature and spoken-voice performance for instance), the Hardcore groups tended to retain the visual and verbal language of ‘anarchy’ allied to a brutal, monotonous sound assault.

The success of groups such as Discharge, both in terms of chart placings and critical support in the music press, also saw them more closely aligned with the New Punk establishment. Discharge’s participation in the Apocolypse Now tour of 1981, alongside the Exploited, Anti Nowhere League, Patti and Chron Gen, saw them gain some level of critical and commercial success, but also placed them firmly in the New Punk camp by association. Whereas Crass, Conflict and Poison Girls deliberately operated outside of the music press and standard performance venues, and were prepared to vary their musical and lyrical styles to encompass a broad range of influences (including poetry, literature and spoken-voice performance for instance), the Hardcore groups tended to retain the visual and verbal language of ‘anarchy’ allied to a brutal, monotonous sound assault.

The punk categories and sub-genres listed above are not definitive. The later sub-genres of UK punk – Oi!, Hardcore, New Punk and Anarcho Punk – became firmly established during the Third Wave, and carried musical and lyrical signs of a change in mood. From the themes and methods they adopted, these movements took to the streets, as their public nature was not just a means of distribution, but also a way of connecting with other like-minded groups. Some of these groups would go on to become more explicit. A rift grew between those groups who identified themselves with Anarcho Punk, centred around Crass, the New Punk and Oi! bands who featured on the Oi! compilation albums and were championed by Garry Bushell in Sounds. Crass had included a song entitled Punk Is Dead on their debut mini album in 1978, and Bushell had taken it upon himself to criticise the group regularly within his reviews. The debut album by The Exploited, Punk’s Not Dead (Secret 1981), bears a direct relationship to the Crass title, and the group became stand-by-bands for the New Punk movement.

The war of words between New Punk groups and the Anarcho Punk bands went on as far as the trading of insults on vinyl: Crass released a flexi-disc entitled Rival Tribal Mob Revol (Gazette 1981), mimicking the stylised Cockney accent adopted by many Oi! groups, and exchanged words with Bushell in the music press and fanzine interviews. The argument was later taken up by Special Duties singer Steve Arrogant (the pseudonym itself an ironic opposition to Crass lead singer Steve Ignorant). Arrogant was a regular commentator in Sounds, frequently writing letters to the paper to put forward his vision of 1980s punk, and Special Duties released the single Bullshit Crass on Rondolet records in 1982, reaching number seven in the independent chart. Many of the sentiments expressed in this song were reiterated by other groups, including the Crowbar single Hippie Funks (1984) and The Gonads’ Peace Artists (1981). Ever easier to take an argument further, Crass re-torted with the track It’s The Greatest Working Class Rip-Off, itself a parody of The Cockney Rejects single The Greatest Cockney Rip Off. A genre-defining Oi! classic released in 1980: It’s the greatest working class rip off, oi, oi, oi! What a fucking rip off, oi, oi, oi!}

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subsequently mirrored by the major labels. Indeed, it should be unsurprising that many innovators in the music industry continue to release their initial recordings on a small independent label, before signing to a major label and developing their approach within a more commercial framework. The 'hard edges' of the original approach might be softened in the process, but the influence can often be seen to filter out across a range of subsequent releases. The success of 'indie' music since the mid 1980s bears out this assertion: the use of lo-tech materials and the incorporation of a hand-made and limited edition craft aesthetic is a central theme of many releases within this genre, and has become something of a visual trope in itself. Indeed, the increasing homogenisation of the music industry, reduced to four or five major international labels and distributors by the early 21st Century, together with the growth of new technologies such as the internet, has allowed the DIY underground - and punk with it - to continue to thrive as an 'authentic' voice of opposition.

Russell Beatley, March 2007

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