

LCC Graphic Subcultures, MMY and PSN present



Entertainment!

Post Punk, New Wave and Authenticity

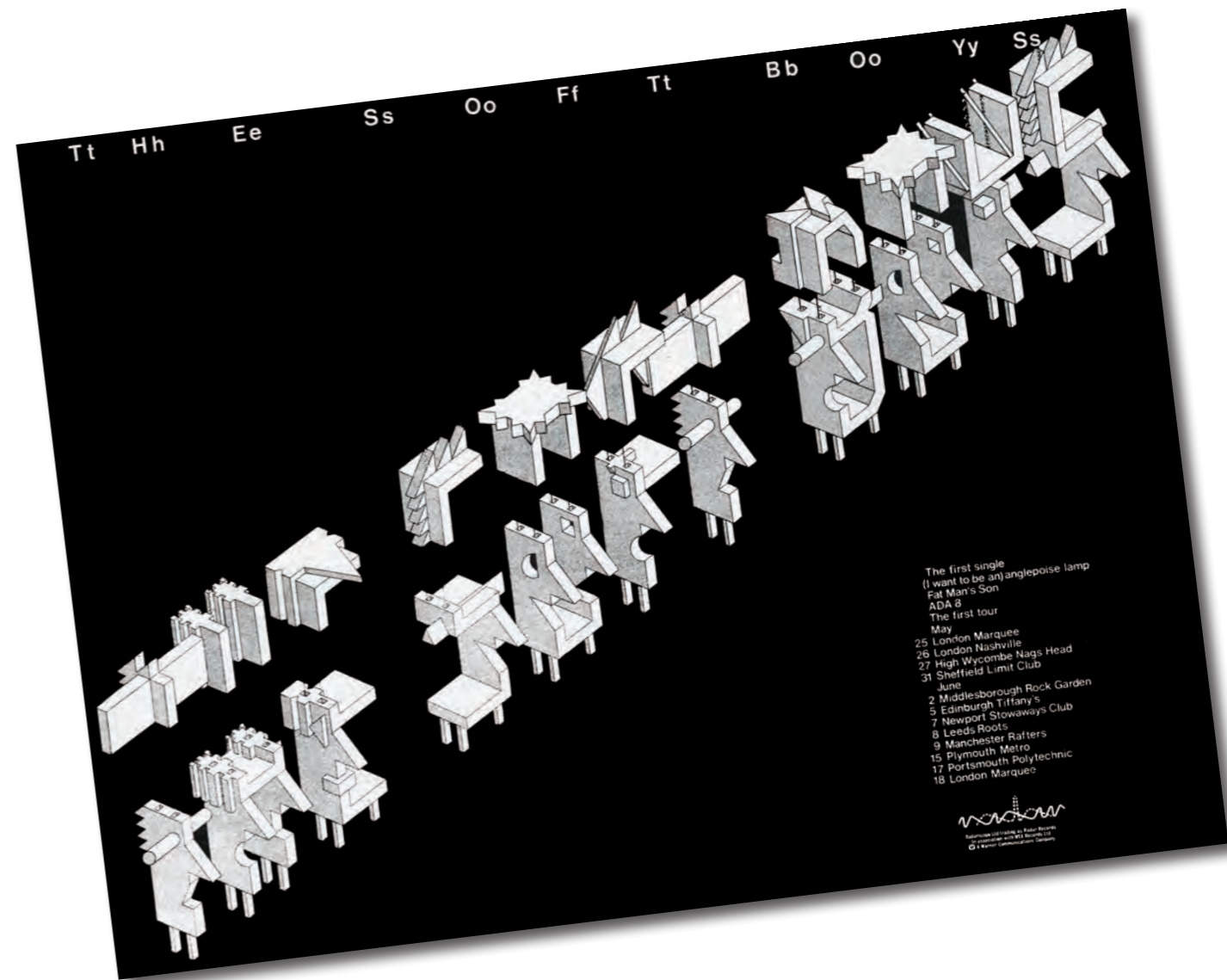
18:00-21:00 Thursday 8th May 2014

12:00-19:00 Friday 9th May 2014

School of Design, London College of Communication,
Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6SB

FREE

This is a RECORD COVER. This writing is the DESIGN upon the record cover. The DESIGN is to help SELL the record. We hope to draw your attention to it and encourage you to pick it up. When you have done that maybe you'll be persuaded to listen to the music - in this case XTC's Go 2 album. Then we want you to BUY it. The idea being that the more of you that buy this record the more money Virgin Records, the manager Ian Reid and XTC themselves will make. To the aforementioned this is known as PLEASURE. A good cover DESIGN is one that attracts more buyers and gives more pleasure. This writing is trying to pull you in much like an eye-catching picture. It is designed to get you to READ IT. This is called luring the VICTIM, and you are the VICTIM. But if you have a free mind you should STOP READING NOW! because all we are attempting to do is to get you to read on. Yet this is a DOUBLE BIND because if you indeed stop you'll be doing what we tell you, and if you read on you'll be doing what we've wanted all along. And the more you read on the more you're falling for this simple device of telling you exactly how a good commercial design works. They're TRICKS and this is the worst TRICK of all since it's describing the TRICK whilst trying to TRICK you, and if you've read this far then you're TRICKED but you wouldn't have known this unless you'd read this far. At least we're telling you directly instead of seducing you with a beautiful or haunting visual that may never tell you. We're letting you know that you ought to buy this record because in essence it's a PRODUCT and PRODUCTS are to be consumed and you are a consumer and this is a good PRODUCT. We could have written the band's name in special lettering so that it stood out and you'd see it before you'd read any of this writing and possibly have bought it anyway. What we are really suggesting is that you are FOOLISH to buy or not buy an album merely as a consequence of the design on its cover. This is a con because if you agree then you'll probably like this writing - which is the cover design - and hence the album inside. But we've just warned you against that. The con is a con. A good cover design could be considered as one that gets you to buy the record, but that never actually happens to YOU because YOU know it's just a design for the cover. And this is the RECORD COVER.



Revolt into Style

The *nouvelle of vague* has in various forms been applied to both pre-punk performers and by proxy to an array of subsequent musical trends starting with the New Romantics and continuing through such genre *cul-de-sacs* as the New Wave of the New Wave. It is an apposite and alluring prefix for marketers to imbue a product with contemporary zeal, especially in industries that display an unhealthy preoccupation with being "now."

Within the punk context, however, it has served a multitude of purposes. New wave provided a blanket generic with which to bracket what were, in terms of both New York and London traditions, diverse streams of music whose aesthetic kinship could be musical, sartorial or presentational (or, in some cases, none of the above - though they could still apparently be included for not fitting

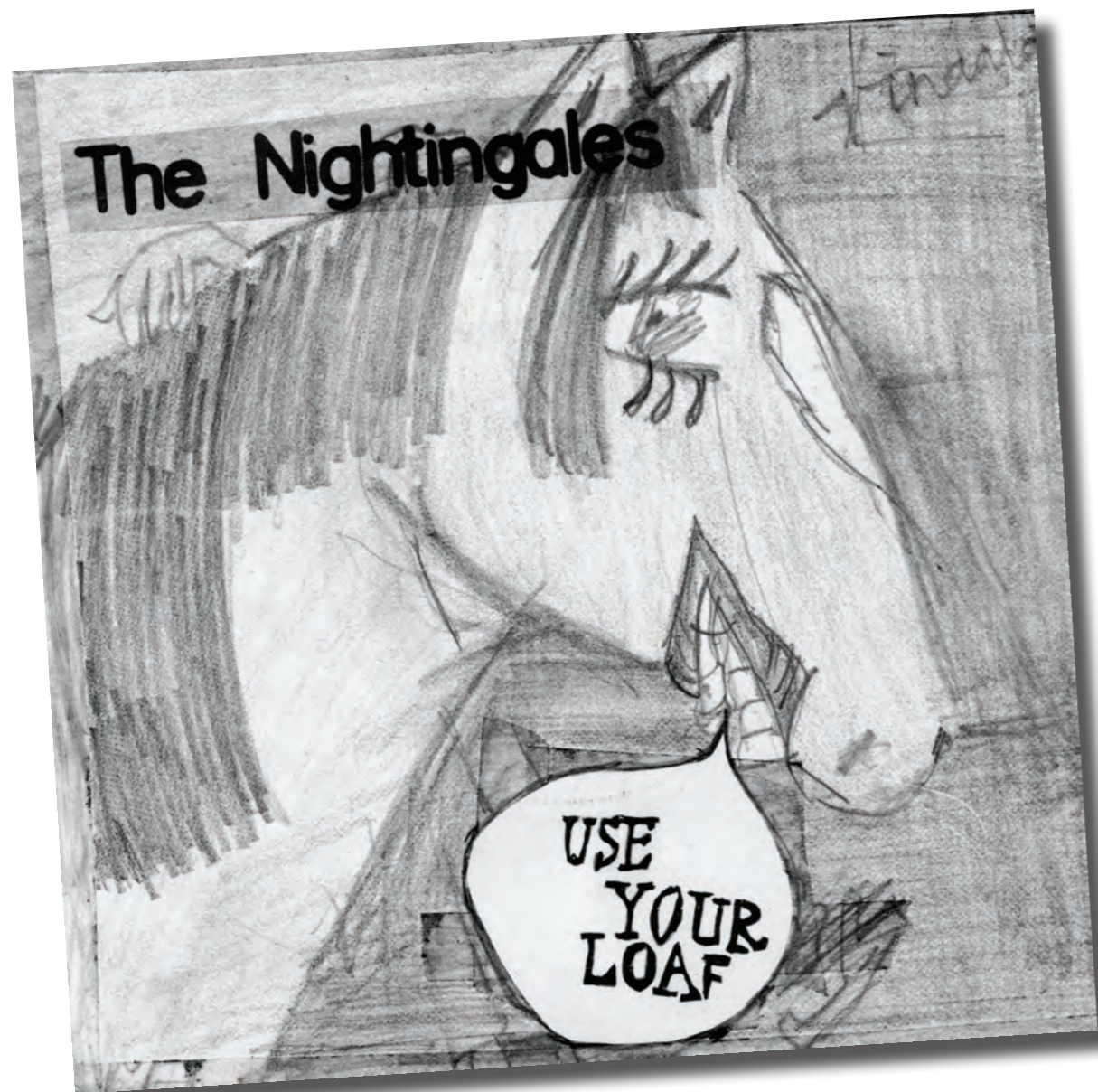
in with their peers in a particularly interesting way). For the industry it was indeed a marketing category and, in some cases, a process of self-definition for artists who were not prepared to fence-sit.

Contemporaneously, things were much less clear. To some audiences Elvis Costello's 1978 single "(I Don't Want To Go To) Chelsea" was a legitimate punk artifact, so too the wares of Ian Dury & the Blockheads (profanity always helps) or the Boomtown Rats, despite the funny smell. Retrospectively we can see the join, of course, and accept that the broader-brush definition of new wave is perhaps more appropriate, but it was not ever thus. And we can also note the manner in which punk's critical stock has risen over time. It was common at one time to posit that Costello and Dury were substantive artists who had "escaped punk's ghetto" and gained a measure

of credibility in the process - whereas now the new wave genre has lost both gravitational pull and a degree of critical respectability.

A similar battle for *authenticity* played out in the visual representations of new wave material. While early punk displayed a remarkably broad range of graphic and stylistic approaches, the simple process of financial investment, increasing maturity and public awareness of the genre, higher production values, mass production, and the adoption of industry standard marketing and advertising techniques cast a sheen over the rough edges left on display in more low key artists and labels. In short, the shift to a mass market meant the adoption of mass-market aesthetics. After all, a production run of perhaps a few hundred records or posters could just about be handled by hard graft and largely hands-on creative efforts, but a





run of several thousand copies required the machinery of mass manufacturing.

In-house graphic design and production teams at the major labels used industry standard techniques, materials and processes – content was less of a driving force and marketing, styling and visual identities were often handled by design professionals outside of the groups and their immediate circle of contacts. Standard packaging and graphic representation (with a bit of a twist to indicate modernity) abounded.

This isn't to say that the music, and its visual presentation, was not valid or interesting: the combination of punk's vital energy and untethered experimentalism with the greater artistic freedom (and investment) brought about by increasing commercial success ensured that genuinely new musical and visual practices could take root.

Such license to produce visual material with greater budgets and higher production values allowed key designers such as Barney Bubbles and Chris Morton at Stiff Records and Malcolm Garrett's Associated Images studio (and its various pseudonyms) to play with style and form, while labels such as Chrysalis, Gem, and Virgin picked up on the design and marketing power of the independents. These and others similarly replicated the independent labels' opportunism in tapping into the new collectors market set in motion by the popularity of the new wave. Coloured vinyl, shaped discs, limited editions, collectable sets, alternative formats, free gifts – all became crucial weapons in the battle for the buyer's heart, mind, and wallet.

This Is Not A Love Song

While punk was gathering pace – or dying an early death, depending on your critical position – and new wave was

hitting the charts and pumping some life into a previously moribund music industry, music critics and journalists struggled to find an alternative term to apply to another strand of the story as it developed. These groups operated beyond what was by now seen as 'traditional' punk (how brief that flame had burned in the UK – within eighteen months of the Summer of '76, many critics were banging the last nail in punk's coffin), but were still too new, too left-field, too edgy or simply too uncommercial to sit comfortably under the new wave umbrella.

Post-punk groups drew upon the creative spirit of the early years together with the eclecticism of the DIY punk scene, while reaching out to other genres and styles for creative influence. Funk, jazz, reggae, dub and even the previously off-limits blues and disco genres were raided and fused with punk



attitude and style – or perhaps simply reinterpreted with a combination of naivety and musical ineptitude to result in something new and unusual that was struggling for an identity, and a name. The catch-all post-punk term, then, was an attempt to draw a line around regional punk interpretations, hybrid aesthetic experiments, increasingly successful DIY artists and the difficult to define avant-garde. It also cast a critical shadow of *authenticity* over that elite set, segregating them from the muddy past of punk's old guard and the contemporary commercial mainstream of the new wave.

British designers such as Malcolm Garrett (Buzcocks/Magazine/the Members/the Yachts/999) and Peter Saville (Factory Records, Joy Division, New Order) were at the forefront of a new post-punk visual aesthetic that reflected the stylistic changes going on in the music. Saville helped shape a visual identity for Factory

Records that was modern and classically cool at the same time, forging a crossover visual style that impacted on fashion, magazine, branding and identity design throughout the 1980s.

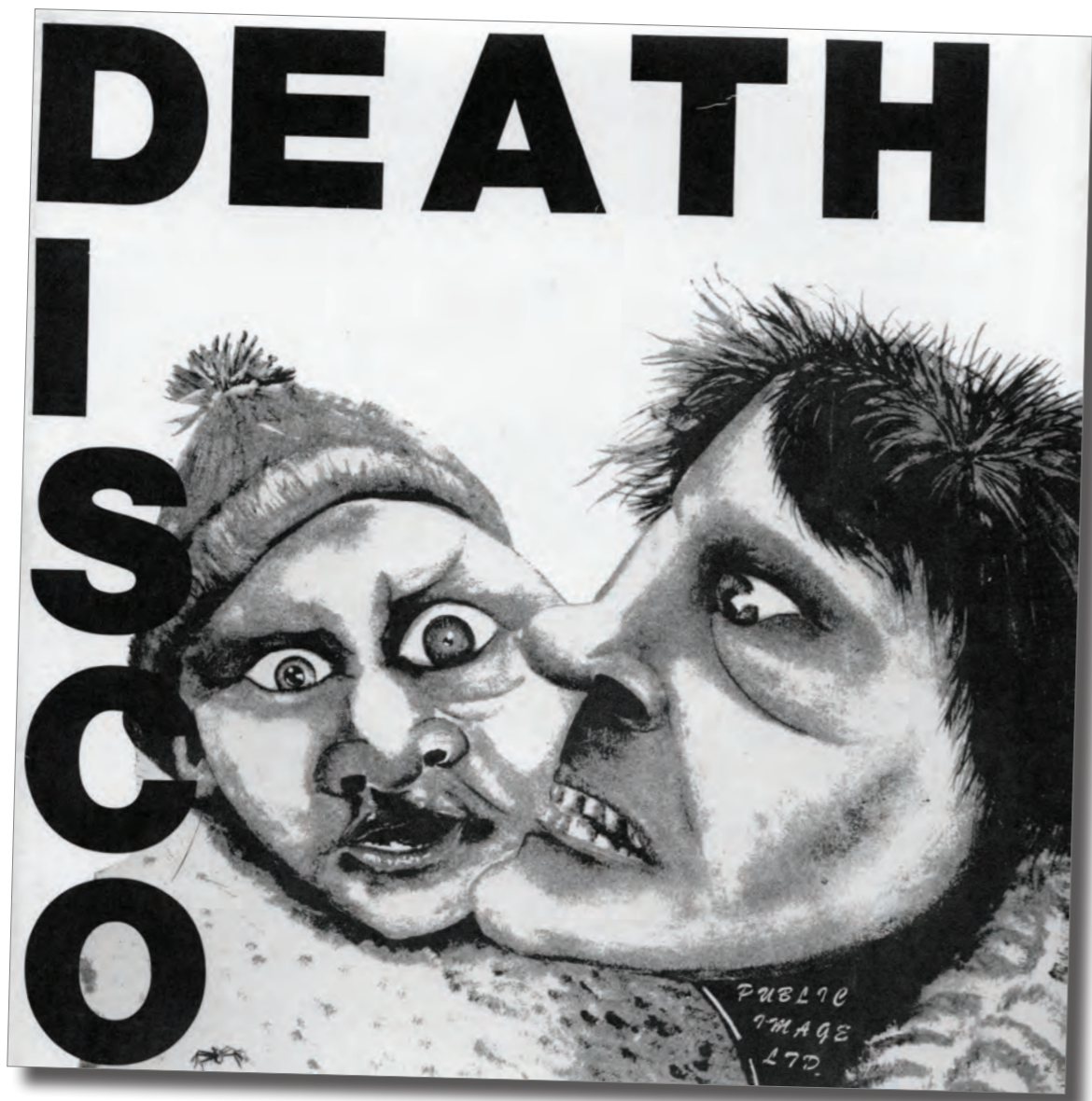
Post-punk styles also tapped into the spirit and experimentalism of the DIY and independent scene, and a new graphic minimalism was embraced by groups such as Public Image Ltd, Wire, XTC and the Gang of Four, and by labels including Factory, Malicious Damage and Radar Records. Designers helping to shape a new graphic language included Bob Last (Fast Product), Mike Coles (Killing Joke and Malicious Damage Records), Vaughan Oliver at 4AD, and Alex McDowell and Neville Brody at Rocking Russian.

All Mod Cons?

Conventional wisdom holds that new wave was a marketing aggregate which helped the music industry pacify its

enfant terrible, punk. This was all supposed to have happened, neatly enough, in 1977, and clear dividing lines ensued, readily observable in graphical and musical content. The truth is far more elusive. We know, for example, that McLaren had intended to use the term new wave for his movement but was dissuaded from doing so by wiser counsel. We equally know that the term *punk* was applied to a generation of New York musicians much earlier in the piece.

These ranged from Blondie – for many the definitive new wave band – to Television – led by a man who took his name from a French symbolist poet. Both groups bore little musical or presentational comparison to the nascent London set. We can begin with accepting therefore that the transatlantic constructs of what 'punk' was were radically divergent from the outset. And the same is true of new wave.



"Please don't use the term new wave," Damian O'Neill of the Undertones once stated to an author who had mistakenly applied the phrase. "We were punk". The group still claimed brotherhood with that tradition when they were peddling Derry's take on Motown. But that rather illustrates the inadequacies of the category in terms of musical description. For artists like the Undertones, new wave was a brand to be suspicious of, lacking in authenticity and complicit with major label conceits (it is interesting to note, for example, that 'new wave' was not a term that generally lent itself adjectivally to DIY or independent releases).

Punk, in shorthand, represented an 'attitude'. That attitude, however, could present a threat to the parent company image, if it wasn't handled correctly and the wilder elements of the new artistic progenies brought to heel. EMI and A&M both had their fingers burnt by the Sex

Pistols before the summer of 1977, and other major labels were taking note: while the new movement was gaining a huge amount of media and public attention (always a good thing in an industry obsessed with reinventing itself on a regular basis), the grubbier elements and negative associations of the product needed to be kept at arm's length from the brand image of the corporation. A sense of edginess and danger had been a staple element in the marketing mission of rock 'n' roll since its inception – but now there was a feeling that some parental control was necessary to ensure the security and future of the family.

Other artists self-chose the term new wave to distance themselves from some of punk's more disagreeable aspects, notably gobbing. Or, for the more career-minded, its perceived transitory nature and lack of avenues for advancement within the traditional music industry

structure, where doors were being closed rather quickly by nervous executives desperate for a return to the safe confines of AOR and easier listening.

The greatest schism was in America, where the battle lines became more entrenched. The fascinating example here came courtesy of The Knack, a featherweight pop-rock band whose 'new wave' affectations backed by huge industry spend led to chart-topping albums and the irksome 'My Sharona'. In the eyes of detractors, they represented a betrayal of the punk spirit and a neutering of its message – particularly when creative and adventurous punk scenes were emerging in several cities across the US. San Francisco conceptual artist Hugh Brown, who had designed the Clash's second album cover (itself a record that prompted a rich dialogue about punk authenticity) headed a campaign that inverted Capitol's 'Get The Knack'



slogan. His 'Knuke The Knack Sack' incorporated badges and photographs, alongside t-shirts bearing the Knuck The Knack legend that would be worn by members of Squeeze, Patti Smith's group and others.

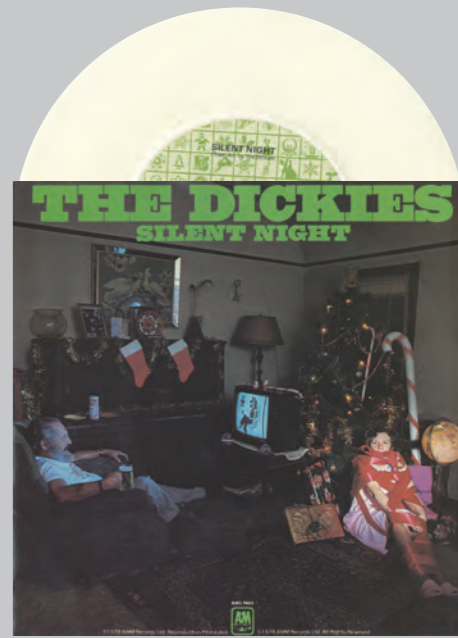
Another San Francisco resident, Jello Biafra, took the premise one step further. Asked to attend the March 1980 BMMIE Awards as a token punk band to prove the magazine's hip credentials, Dead Kennedys took to the stage in white shirts emblazoned with a prominent 'S'. Expected to play their 'hit' 'California Über Alles', they abruptly halted, Biafra's stage oratory crystallising the punk community's objections to its mealy-mouthed cousin, new wave. They then proceeded to play a pastiche of 'My Sharona' with the words changed to 'My Payola' and unveiled skinny black ties (a fashion garment synonymous with the Knack, and new wave generally). When

unfurled these conjoined with the 'S' on their shirts to form a dollar symbol.

Punk and new wave may have ended up with a messy divorce, but for some years it was a shared journey, with many artists flitting between or sharing affiliations with both. Like its hipper cousin post-punk, new wave has been retrospectively redefined and narrowed to fit a neat and precise historical framework, placing it even more firmly within the corporate stereotype that it initially set out to oppose.







SQUEEZE



for



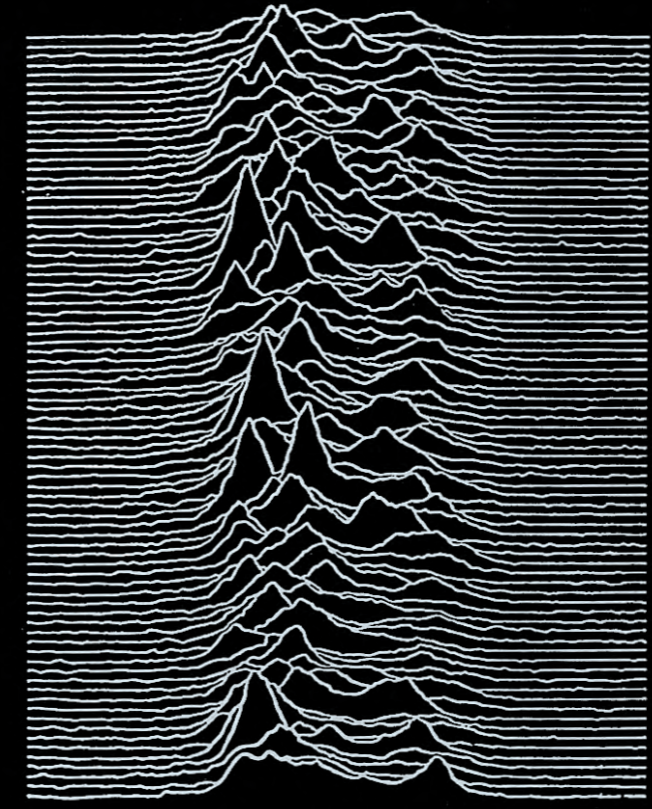
THE SINGLE.....THE ALBUM



SPROUTS



THE RUMOUR A FURO ALBUM FROGS SPROUTS CLOGS AND KRAUTS SEEZ 13



- FACT 10 + 4** —FACTORY RECORDS
JUNE '79
-
- FACT 10** —**UNKNOWN PLEASURES**
The first album by Joy Division.
- FAC 5** —**ALL NIGHT PARTY**
Single by A Certain Ratio.
- FAC 6** —**ELECTRICITY**
Single by Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark.
-
- JULY '79
- FAC 11** —**ENGLISH BLACK BOYS**
Single by X-O-Dus.
- FAC 12** —**TIME GOES BY SO SLOW**
Single by The Distractions.



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Colour is Cool, Hanging on your Wall

Once punk and new wave music had become broadly accepted and could be marketed by the major labels, chart entries became far more familiar between 1978 and 1979. The majors were quick to recognise the business 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 ten inch albums and oddly shaped discs – reflected in strong sales in the first few weeks following a release date and hence vital chart returns. They were soon followed by other independents such as Small Wonder, Chiswick and Beggars Banquet. Virgin also offered limited edition coloured vinyl versions 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 with releases by the Dickies, the Tubes, Squeeze and the Police.

The natural conclusion of this marketing initiative saw the second pressing of the Lurkers debut release issued in red, white and blue vinyl versions. The fourth single by Generation X, "King Rocker", featured four different sleeves, each featuring an individual member of the band, and corresponding coloured vinyls. The sleeve for the second single by the Skids, "Sweet Suburbia" even included a sticker declaring "This white vinyl single has a WEIRD GIMMICK. You'll like it!".

The UK Subs managed to achieve a surprising run of chart single and album successes between 1979 and 1981, and their early singles and albums adopted a range of brightly coloured vinyls. It was a tactic that helped propel the group into the charts in the first week of each

release as fans rushed to secure the first edition before it reverted to standard issue black, though there were cases where sales were actually insufficient to merit further pressings, leading to the conundrum whereby the 'standard' issue became ultimately more collectable. Notably, some coloured vinyl releases did reflect a deeper intent. The green vinyl edition of the Undertones' "Jimmy Jimmy" integrated the disc itself with the transparent, silkscreen printed sleeve, and at least there was a conceptual relationship between the colour of the vinyl and the song lyric on X-Ray Spex's "The Day The World Turned Dayglo".

Although the marketing strategies based on limited editions and coloured vinyl proved initially very successful, the inherent conflict with what could be seen as punk ideology did lead to criticism from both punk bands and audiences. Stiff Little Fingers even



insisted on a clause in their contract with Chrysalis Records that all releases by the group would be on black vinyl and standard 7-inch and 12-inch formats. The trend for coloured vinyl was also savagely parodied in both song lyrics and interviews. Brighton New Wave group the Piranhas recorded the track 'Coloured Music', which questioned the purpose of coloured vinyl as being anything other than superficial decoration; "Colour is cool, hanging on your wall, Records are really neat, And every lump of wax is an artefact, Music is obsolete".

Sometimes, too, the quality of coloured vinyl was questionable. Penetration fell foul of their record label Virgin when they complained that the luminous vinyl of their debut album rendered the actual disc unplayable. The label had seen the opportunity for a collector's edition of the album that glowed in the dark after exposure to light for three

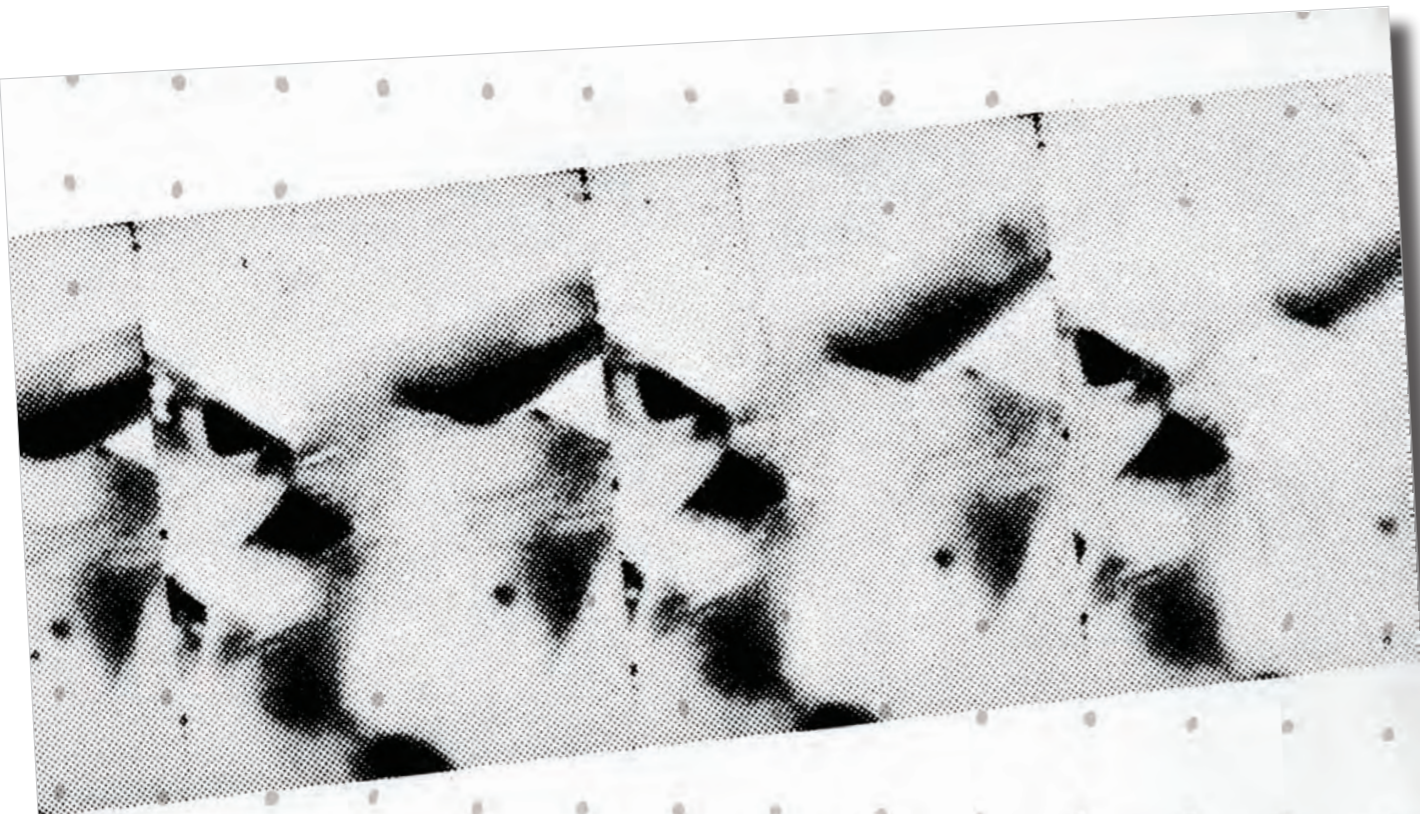
seconds – though the visually impressive gimmick had a drastic effect on the actual sound quality of the recording. The relationship between group and label was resoundingly soured when guitarist Neale Floyd wrote an open letter to the Fair Deal column in national music paper Sounds soon after the album's release in 1978, beginning "Dear anyone who bought our shitty luminous disc ...".

Eventually there was a backlash against such blatant marketing techniques. The shift in the late 1970s and early 1980s to a more ideological, 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 folded sleeve. This can be seen as not only reflecting low cost production techniques on the part of independent labels, but the employment

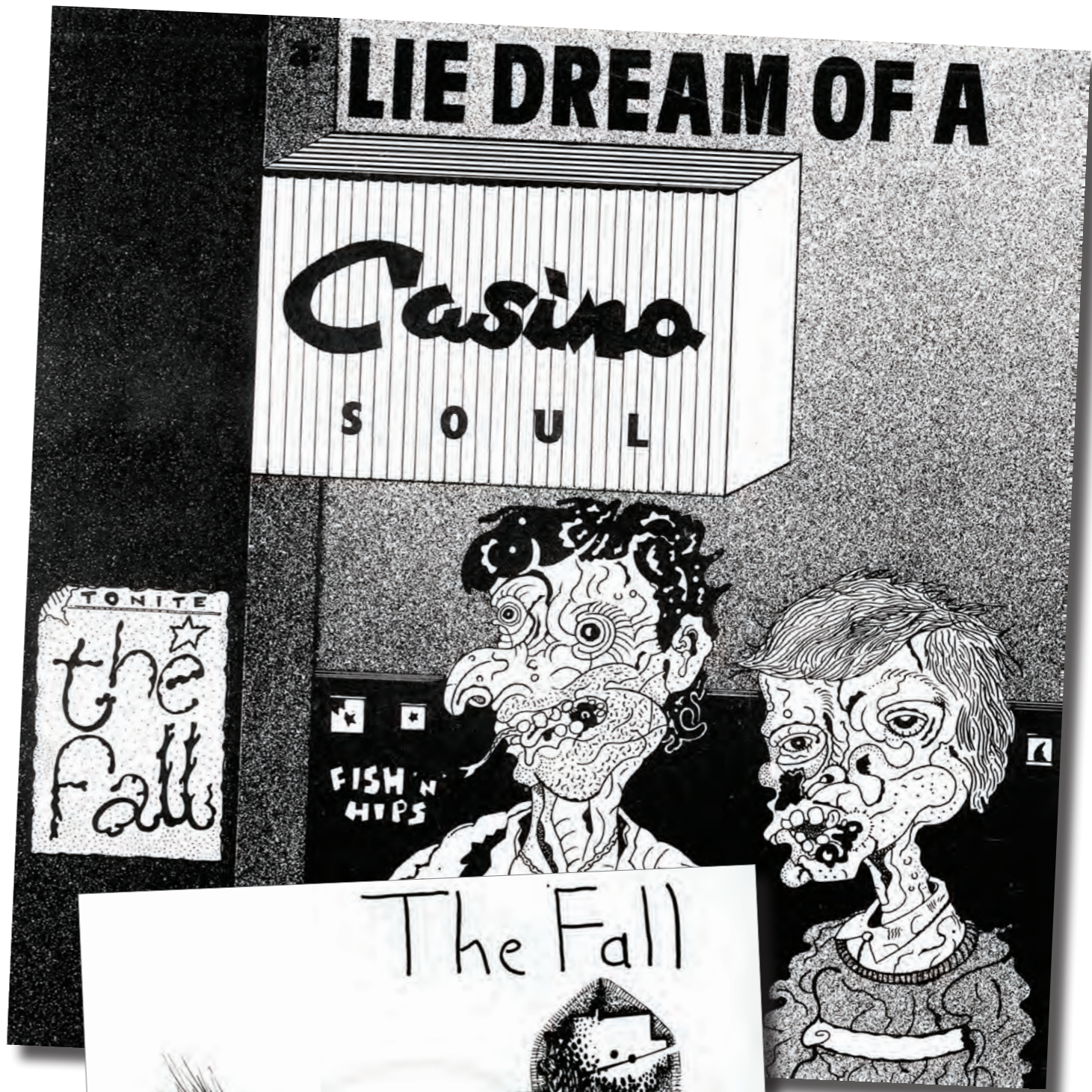
of deliberate visual codes with which to denote austerity and a 'back to basics' approach. Crass had already adopted a policy of plain black clothing and white stage lighting as a marked shift away from colourful punk stereotypes early in their career, and the reflection of this approach within their sleeve graphics was almost inevitable – as was the adoption of similar graphic styles by a range of Anarcho Punk groups heavily influenced by Crass themselves.

Contemporaneously, others within the punk community, following the rise and fall of the compact disc, have increasingly returned to the limited edition coloured vinyl format, though now any impetus to do so is largely drawn from aesthetic rather than commercial considerations. Colour is, after all, still cool.

Russ Bestley & Alex Ogg
The Art of Punk



MAGAZINE
rhythm of cruelty



London College of Communication Graphic Subcultures and Manchester Metropolitan University in association with the Punk Scholars Network

Entertainment! Post Punk, New Wave and Authenticity

Thursday 8th May 2014

Post Punk and New Wave Graphics Exhibition Private View

6:00pm Design Panel Round Table

Russ Bestley (Chair) / Rob O'Connor (Stylorouge design) / Bill Smith (Polydor: the Jam, the Cure designer) / Marco NFT (the Gaggers, No Front Teeth Records)

7:30pm Design Panel Interview

Malcolm Garrett (Assorted Images: Buzzcocks, Magazine, the Members designer)
in conversation with Richard Boon (Buzzcocks manager)

Friday 9th May 2014

12:00pm Registration and Refreshments

Post Punk and New Wave Graphics Exhibition

2:00pm Punk Scholars Network

Dr. Pete Dale (Manchester Metropolitan University): *I'm the Man with the Jigsaw Feeling*

Dr. Alastair Gordon (De Montfort University): *'I'm More Punk than You!' – Subcultural Theory, Distinctions of Authenticity and the Everyday Punk Self*

Guy Mankowski (University of Northumbria): *Pop Manifestos and Nosebleed Art Rock: What was the point of Post Punk?*

Prof. Martin James (Southampton Solent): *Archiving No Wave: Authenticity as Artifice*

4:15pm Music Panel Round Table

Alex Ogg (Chair) / Sean Forbes (Wat Tyler, Hard Skin) / Nicky Tesco (the Members) / June Miles-Kingston (the Mo-dettes) / Nicky Forbes (the Revillos, Pork Dukes)

5:15pm Music Panel Interview

Paul Harvey and Pauline Murray (Penetration) in conversation

6:00pm Audience/Fan Panel

Pete Dale (Chair) / Rich Cubesville (One Way Ticket to Cubesville fanzine) / Jonny Wah Wah (Rebellion Festivals) / Eugene Butcher (Vive Le Rock magazine)

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