

REVIEWS PUNK

This section covers non - Pistols products which I have enjoyed and may be of interest to Sex Pistols' fans.

Bad Brains - Live at CBGB 1982 (Wienerworld WNRD2393) Released 25th September 2006

In the early 80s, with punk largely on the wane back in the UK, over in the US the Hardcore scene was exploding. Filmed at a three-day Hardcore festival held at CBGB's 24-26th December 1982, the DVD brings together footage from the festival. Bad Brains are perhaps unique in hardcore terms as they intersperse full-on thrash, such as Big Take Over and Riot Squad, with great reggae grooves like King Of Glory. What's most striking about the footage, as well as the intensity of the band, is the audience who are so into the band they go crazy, spilling on and off the stage dancing like punks possessed. It's chaos. If you think you know how to mix it up at a punk show, think again. "Someone get this dude, he's bleedin" says vocalist H.R. as a punter sustains an injury. It's captured on film by multiple cameras both off stage and on, often getting caught up in the action. Bad Brains belong in the top echelons of US Hardcore, along with Black Flag and the Dead Kennedys. Fast, accomplished and wild.

Which brings us onto...

Dead Kennedys - In God We Trust Inc. The Lost Tapes (Wienerworld WNRD2207)

Brilliant. In God We Trust Inc. was a landmark EP heralding the arrival of Hardcore. The EP came as a bit of a shock, fans like myself were expecting more tunes in the mould of Holiday In Cambodia and Kill The Poor. This blast of 100 mph punk raised the bar in the speed stakes and had other bands quickly following suit. This DVD brings to life the original unused session which was filmed for prosperity, but was scrapped when the audio tapes deteriorated. A DVD extra explains what happened and how we're now able to hear the original session. The quality of the film is perfect; wherever it has been hiding since 1981, it's been well preserved. The tracks themselves are similar to the released versions which is no surprise since the recordings took place only two months apart. Nazi Punks Fuck Off, Kepone Factory, Moral Majority, they all sound relevant 25 years (yes, 25!) later.

In addition to the studio recordings, the DVD includes live performances of the songs taken from different gigs. It's a nice addition which means we also get to hear Jello rant to the crowd which is always worth watching. Let's face it, he's never short of something to say; his comments during We've A Bigger Problem Now could in fact have been uttered in 2006.

Also available is **Dead Kennedys - The Early Years Live** (WNRD2109). Originally released by Target Video, it features live performances from 1979 - 81, as well as a TV news item and interview with Jello Biafra conducted when he was running for mayor of San Francisco. Although the DVD is short at 30 minutes there are some great renditions of DK classics to enjoy, especially the tracks from Mabuhay Gardens, San Francisco, and Bleed For Me recorded live in the studio.

Review by Phil Singleton (2nd September 2006)

X-Ray Spex - Let's Submerge The Anthology (Sanctuary CMEDD1378)

The first flush of punk threw up many great bands with individual distinctive styles. X-Ray Spex epitomized this perfectly with their energy, unmistakable vocals, and saxophone. This new 2 disc collection shows this to full. It's a comprehensive look at the band that includes, well, as far as I'm aware, everything.

Disc one has all the band's original official recordings for Virgin and EMI which are joined here by two John Peel Sessions and three superb backing tracks, including Prefabricated Icon, a song we never got to hear in it's completed form.

Disc two kicks off with Mari Elliot's (Poly) pre-Spex single, Silly Billy / What A Way. A harmless reggae affair, but historically worth including. The complete 1977 Roxy Club recording follows, raw but exciting. Next up are 14 demos, some from a pre-signing session and others recorded during their time with EMI, which basically act as an alternative unpolished Germ Free Adolescents album, and there's nothing wrong with that. The collection closes with a couple of alternative mixes of Obsessed With You and The Day The World Turned Day-Glo, and finally with Poly Styrene's solo version of Age from her Translucence LP.

By 1979 X-Ray Spex were grinding to a creative halt, and split leaving their legacy intact. Enjoy this legacy with *Let's Submerge The Anthology*. A total of 52 tracks nicely packaged with excellent sleeve notes. This is a top collection for a top band.

Review by Phil Singleton (August 2006)

Thunders, Kane, & Nolan (Wienerworld WNRD2344)

Johnny Thunders Live - In Cold Blood (Wienerworld WNRD2151)

I'll put my cards on the table. I'm a huge Thunders fan. I have marvellous memories of seeing the great man in action in the 80s: Nottingham Rock City (The Heatbreakers!), Sheffield City Polytechnic, Manchester Hacienda (with Jerry Nolan on drums), and Manchester International 2. Following his death, I sent an obituary to Spiral Scratch Magazine, which they published. It's fair to say I have an emotional attachment to anything Thunders related.

If you enjoyed the New York Dolls movie **All Dolled Up**, Wienerworld have two other Johnny Thunders DVDs worthy of your attention. If, like me, you never got over the balls-up Jungle made with their Thunders video Dead Or Alive, you will naturally approach these with caution. The good news is these have not been overdubbed or cobbled together. These are genuine warts and all Johnny Thunders.

Thunders, Kane, & Nolan is billed as an unofficial New York Dolls reunion from January 1987, featuring the three, now deceased, Dolls. Although Thunders and Nolan played together regularly until Thunders' death in '91, this would be the last time Arthur "Killer" Kane would appear on stage with them. Barry Jones provides the rhythm guitar and Mrs."Babsie" Kane adds some backing vocals towards the end of the show.

Having called it a "Dolls reunion", the show, which took place at the Roxy in LA, is really a Thunders gig and the set list reflects this. It's filmed using just one camera, high up to the front left of the stage. The lone cameraman does a pretty decent job, following the action and giving us a few close-ups. The picture quality far exceeded my expectations and the sound is amazing. And boy, these guys can play.

The show opens and closes with Pipeline and many Thunders classics can be found in-between. Catch sensational versions of Born To Lose, Chinese Rocks, Personality Crisis, and Can't Keep My Eyes On You. Johnny throws in some solo acoustic songs in the middle of the set, which was a common occurrence, and allows for great versions of Can't Put Your Arms Around A Memory, Lonely Planet Boy and Eve of Destruction. Although Arthur Kane does, like he did at the Dolls shows in 2004, remain largely in the background, it's still a thrill to have him on stage with Johnny and Jerry. Jerry Nolan's drumming was always awesome and is so again during this show. Thunders throws himself about, while effortlessly sounding like...Johnny Thunders. No one can emulate that guitar sound. This is a dynamic performance.

The gig clocks in at a very impressive 1 hour 20 minutes. This DVD is without doubt a must, the closing

Pipeline had my heart pounding. If you love Thunders, you need this.

Johnny Thunders Live - In Cold Blood was recorded in NYC in 1982, with two cameras capturing the action. Like *Thunders, Kane, & Nolan*, the picture quality is excellent and the sound recording superb. This time fellow Heartbreakers guitarist Walter Lure is in the lineup. Thunders himself looks totally wasted, he has trouble keeping his guitar strap on during *In Cold Blood*, and spends part of *Sad Vacation* on his back discovering the heel on his shoe is loose, yet he still carries on as only he can. It has to be said, Thunders is mesmerizing throughout and turns in a blinding performance. The recording seems to have been compiled for a half hour TV slot, so all we get is nine songs from what was clearly a full gig. Nevertheless, this is priceless footage and definitely worth seeking out if you are a Thunders fanatic.

Sink a beer, put on either of these DVDs and blast out Pipeline. Even a non-musician like me wants to strap on a guitar and strut around the room knocking out those licks. God bless Mr Johnny Thunders.

Review by Phil Singleton (July 2006)

The Look - Adventures in Rock and Pop Fashion

Paul Gorman
Adelita £24.99



Having been out of print for some time, *The Look - Adventures in Rock and Pop Fashion*, has been given a new look of its own and is back on the shelves. The 2006 edition includes a CD featuring music from eleven of the fashion trail blazers referenced in the book such as Elvis Presley, David Bowie, Boy George, and of course Malcolm McLaren. Of particular interest to visitors to God Save The Sex Pistols, the new edition has a striking 3 page spread of Seditionaries clothing with each item accompanied by informative text. Keanan Duffy's work with the Sex Pistols is also discussed.

Beginning with a forward by Malcolm McLaren, *The Look* takes us on a global journey charting the ever changing and constantly evolving links between pop culture and fashion. Author Paul Gorman has literally traversed the world, assembling a fascinating insight gained by tracking down the very people who helped shape fashion in their respective eras.

The book starts where else, but Memphis in the 1950s where none other than Elvis Presley's clothier Bernard Lansky, now in his seventies, recalls an unknown Elvis pressing his nose against his shop window staring at the clothes within. The story criss-crosses the Atlantic throwing up a few surprises along the way, such as the influence of American jazz musicians on late Fifties UK fashion. Equally fascinating are the memories of The Beatles' tailor Dougie Millings, who was at the centre of the early Sixties look, and included in his list of clientele, Adam Faith, Warren Beattie, Gerry Marsden, Cliff Richard, and The Small Faces. Famous primarily for the round-collared suits, such was his importance to The Beatles, he was often in their company in the recording studio and even ended up appearing in *A Hard Day's Night*. As the Beatles themselves moved into the more outlandish clothing designed by Tommy Nutter, so Pop found itself in the colourful early Seventies in which the seeds of punk fashion were sown. One fashion pioneer of this period, Tommy Roberts, would later become a victim of the thievery of future Sex Pistol Steve Jones and Wally Nightingale, an act Roberts has never forgiven.

McLaren recalls the influence of King's Road shop Mr Freedom on his growing interest in pop fashion and the King's Road itself. McLaren's talent for courting trouble was evident from the moment he first moved into 430 The King's Road, taking over a part of the store to sell refurbished radios, records and clothes. Having struck the deal in the absence of the shop's owner, he was to find his stock thrown out onto the pavement when the owner returned! Although the history of the McLaren and Westwood

legacy has been covered elsewhere, here it's refreshingly stripped of the intrusive 'benefit of hindsight' pseudo political trappings, and concentrates on the evolution of the fashion itself. This allows many nuggets of information to surface such as the failure of the *Vive Le Rock* T-shirt (made in 1972) to sell, and subsequent conversion of the stock into pairs of knickers. This is made even more amusing by the knowledge that in 2001 a pair of these knickers sold at Sotheby's for £1,175!!!!

In addition to McLaren, the one person who in the best position to provide the inside view on both 430 The King's Road and the birth of the Sex Pistols, is Glen Matlock. Himself a former frequenter of Mr Freedom, Glen recalls the shop's evolution from teddy boy gear outlet into a fetish and bondage store. Matlock himself helped erect the giant Sex sign. The influence of The Faces on the formation of the Pistols is well-documented, but Matlock also reveals the Sensational Alex Harvey Band had served a purpose by not only highlighting McLaren's business paranoia, but forcing him to look beyond the clapped-out New York Dolls for something else...the Sex Pistols.

In many ways the only true competition for Sex was Acme Attractions. With its origins in the early Seventies, it had become a popular underground clothing shop years before the emergence of punk. The rivalry between the two was such that Vivienne Westwood once ejected Sex regular Phil Strongman from her shop on the grounds that he worked at Acme!

In the years following punk, the New Romantic scene emerged, aided and abetted by New style magazines such as *The Face* and *i-D*. Changes within pop fashion would take place at an ever increasing rate, taking in such styles as the late Eighties acid house look, and Nineties gangster rap. However, none would ever quite match the excitement, nor remain so fixed in the memory, than what was perhaps the Pop and Rock's defining fashion moment, punk rock. The one time that, as McLaren remarks; *'fashion seemed to be the place where music and art came together.'*

Aimed primarily at those with an interest in music fashion and style over the past 50 years, *The Look* does not rely on a view from afar, but draws from the personalities who really were there. It's a fascinating read, painstakingly assembled, and packed full of anecdotes from all eras of music. For aficionados of Pop & Rock history, *The Look* will prove to be an essential reference for many years to come.

Review by Phil Singleton (2001, revised/updated June 2006)

New York Dolls - All Dolled Up (Wienerworld WNRD 2356)

Incredible. I wasn't expecting this to be, well...like this. I was anticipating another documentary with lots of talking heads and hindsight-skewed recollections. I was totally wrong. This film consists entirely of Bob Gruen and his wife Nadya Beck's footage of the Dolls, shot on a portable black and white video recorder over a period of three years. They amassed over forty hours of the Dolls on stage and off - with this amount of footage to work with, it's no surprise the resulting movie is by far and away the best ever study of the band.

In an enlightening interview with Bob Gruen conducted for the DVD, Bob explains that when he purchased the video recorder he never envisaged making money or movies, no one even had video cassette players, so he could never sell tapes of his film. It was purely as a hobby which he could share with the band.

Three decades later and this old black and white footage has brought the Dolls back to life. Life, they are full of it, certainly early on, as the fresh-faced band relax on a grassy knoll in LA recalling how they all came together. They also look so healthy, particularly Johnny Thunders, who seems very together as the film starts, but much less so towards the end. The live footage filmed at such famous venues as Max's Kansas City and Kenny Castaways is superb. We even get to see the Dolls flying to LA, then driving down Sunset Strip for the first time looking for the Whisky A Go Go. We also get to witness Peter Jordon deputising for Arthur Kane, but most importantly, we get to witness what a phenomenal

live band the New York Dolls were.

The bonus material alone makes the DVD worth getting. Particularly the twelve uncut performances, which feature in part in the film, but here they are... complete. Other music DVD's could learn a lot from this: extras that provide a treat for the fans. In addition to the aforementioned interview with Bob Gruen, there are two separate commentary tracks by David Johansen and Sylvain Sylvain (with Bob Gruen). Both are good natured; Sylvain particularly has great recollection and is a mine of information. These act as documentaries in their own right and give an enlightening insight into the events. Most biopics are built around such reminiscing, here they are a DVD extra, such is the quality of this release. Utterly unmissable.

Review by Phil Singleton (June 2006)

Punk Rock: An Oral History
John Robb
Ebury Press (£14.99)

Now this is a big book! Whereas most books released to coincide with the 30th anniversary of punk are going to focus on '76 - '78, An Oral History takes the story up to 1984, which I remember myself was the year punks seemed to disappear overnight from the streets. The book is not a variation on England's Dreaming, but is a collection of the views of many of the participants. A vast collection. Although some of the anecdotes are familiar, there are plenty that are new. More than enough to make this worth checking out. The story is told in a roughly chronological order, with individual bands and topics pulled together, which means you can dip in and absorb yourself in a particular favourite band, or give yourself a crash course in something not so familiar.

All the major bands and events are covered from both the first and second waves of punk, along with fresh information on post -punk groups as well as intriguing looks at the Manchester and Northern Ireland scenes. By the book's conclusion the punk landscape had become vast, ranging from Crass to Oi! to Goth to Experimental, to Indie.... If nothing else, this book takes you on a journey that started with the amalgamation of vastly differing influences which came together as 'punk', exploded, then fragmented into an equally wide-ranging cultural landscape.

Like I said, this is a big book with a page count of approximately 550. However, it's very readable, and surprisingly waffle free and to the point. The passages chosen all have something to add to the story, and include many gems. One of the many quotes I enjoyed, (and I don't know why because I don't agree with it!) came from J.C Carroll of The Members: "The secret of punk was that everyone had one really good song inside them. That's why punk compilations are so much better than actual album releases by bands at the time."

Ok, so Punk Rock:An Oral History is not ground breaking, but it is a great punk rock tome, one you'll find yourself dipping into again and again. I know I will, I already have.

Review by Phil Singleton (April 2006)

Buzzcocks - Wish I Never Loved You / Don't Matter What You Say /
Orion (FRYCD261)

Release date: 20th February.

Wish I Never Loved You is an amalgamation of those trademark components

you demand from a Buzzcocks record. Soaring guitars, harmonies, rumbling bass, and a bucket load of energy. The single doesn't let up for a second, and like all great 'cocks songs, has a question relating to affairs of the heart at its core. "Tell me why, tell me why...?"

Tracks two & three are exclusive to the single. *Don't Matter What You Say* displays different aspects of the Buzzcocks sound as it switches from pounding verse to quicksilver chorus. Orion has a hypnotic grunge feel to it, strangely reminiscent of 1979's *Something's Gone Wrong Again*.

Buzzcocks - Flat-Pack Philosophy (COOKCD370)

Release date: 6th March.

The first thing to grab you is the packaging and artwork, which is pure 1970s Buzzcocks. Secondly, this is a punk rock album - a Buzzcocks punk rock album. Don't expect shocks, you don't want them. What you want is a true-to-form Buzzcocks album. *Flat-Pack Philosophy* is their best since *Trade Test Transmissions* back in '93. The band sound fresh and youthful, but what is most satisfying is the knowledge that they can put out an LP (it is an LP, 14 tracks in under 37 minutes!) that tells you that the 'cocks are not a nostalgia, museum piece band. They are still a great, current band, with a hell of a lot to offer.



The title track kicks off proceedings at a ferocious pace, with those unmistakable harmonies providing that reassuring Buzzcocks feel. "All of my hopes, dreams and desires, assembly required, that's flat-pack philosophy." I've reviewed the single *Wish I Never Loved You* above, so will skip to *Sell You Everything*, a Diggle composition. The strength of Steve's *Serious Contender* CD had me wondering if he'd saved all his best songs for his own album. He hasn't. Another tune that bashes away at your brain with consumer related lyrics continuing the flat-pack philosophy.

Pete's *Reconciliation* is a terrific song, that bellows pure Buzzcocks at you and is my favourite cut. *I Don't Exist* is a heady cocktail of Green Day meets Oasis, and bounces along in wistful fashion, while *Soul Survivor* follows in butt-kicking punk rock fashion (with a Manic Street Preachers touch at the end). *God, What Have I Done* has a sinister undercurrent, is Pete singing from the heart on this one? I suspect he is. It delivers a classic Buzzcock moment.

Credit continues more of the flat-pack consumerism theme; is this a concept album?! *Big Brother Wheels* is a fabulous song; very late 1970s in feel that reminded me of the Motors, combining a top melody with neat lyrics, imbued with robust Diggle guitar.

Dreamin' is undeniably Shelley; a quirky tune with "let's make history together" lyrics to match. *Sound Of A Gun* is, not surprisingly, a tough song delivered with a distinctive Diggle riff. It's a grower, fast emerging as one of my favourites on the album. *Look At You Now* is very much a sequel to '93s *Innocent*, "butter wouldn't melt in your mouth" bemoans Shelley. *I've Had Enough* is another highlight; Pete & Steve's guitars, Tony Barber's bass and Phil Barker's drums providing the soundtrack for a moment of Buzzcocks pop perfection. *Between Heaven & Hell* brings the album to a "vocal only" conclusion as the music fades away.

So is it all so wonderful? Well, I would have liked a mellow moment along the lines of Love Bites' *Love Is Lies*, tucked in the middle, to put a brake on the energy and catch breath. Perhaps I'm just showing my age? Flat-Pack Philosophy shows that the Buzzcocks are not showing theirs. Go out & buy it.

Review by Phil Singleton (February 2006)

'77 The Year of Punk & New Wave**Henrik Bech Poulson****Helter Skelter Publishing Limited Edition Hardback (UK: January £25 / USA: March \$30)**

This is one mighty piece of research. Sticking to UK & Irish punk or new wave artists, the book covers every release during this pivotal year, an astonishing 200 groups. Why just 1977? The author states his reasons: "1976 was year zero, by 1978 the punk revolution was dead & buried. 1977 belonged to punk". In an excellent overview of the year he looks at the multifaceted beast that was punk. Of course covering more than the one year in such detail would be a unenviable task in itself: the book already runs to close to 400 pages. It's also worth noting that 1976 releases do get incorporated into the narrative. The author also sets out to evoke the mood of the time, when all the groups listed were tagged as part of the new musical explosion, before punk & new wave would become separate terms. His critique is superb, reminding us that despite all the plaudits handed out today, the music press were not as supportive in 1977. When UK music paper Sounds asked its writers to list their top 10 albums of 1977 in December of that year, Never Mind The Bollocks appeared on less than half. England's Dreaming author Jon Savage failed to include it at all!

There is so much information in here that you'll find yourself dipping in again & again, primarily to read about bands you may have heard of but knew little about, or to discover bands you never knew existed. Even with those groups you think you know pretty well, you may find a surprise or two in store as the existence of a rare promo pressing is revealed! The author also injects some of himself into the book with his own assessment of the releases and the bands themselves. Every artist also has a post-1977 section which gives a brief history, featuring key releases and information on the whereabouts of the individuals involved, where known. I found this part as intriguing as the 1977 info!

The band profiles are accompanied by pictures of many of the record sleeves, labels, rare press & gig adverts, and some live shots. There is so much in here that I will not pick out any one band to highlight. On second thoughts, Satan's Rats anyone?

If you love 1977, or want to fall in love with it, this is for you. Buy it discounted from www.helterskelterbooks.com

Review by Phil Singleton (January 2006)

Hateful - Diamond Among The Coal

Rebellion Records 023

This release was brought to my attention due to the Pistols/Professionals influences of the band. Hailing from Glasgow, Hateful are a 3 piece with a leaning towards the meatier side of punk. Ten of the twelve tracks are self-penned, eleven if you include the music they have added to John Cooper Clarke's poem, Twat.

The opening song, Storytellers, is a statement of the group's commitment to the cause taking a swipe at the part-time 'hobby punk' bands. It's a powerful intro, delivered with a vocal growl from Alex, which should come with a 'Don't Mess' warning! They deliver another Glasgow kiss at punk bulls**tters with the even better Punk Fiction. Alex's guitar is unrestrained throughout and shows some great touches such as the riff on Backstabber. The group employ harmonies on many tracks which gives a hint of Buzzcocks, and adds a sing-a-long dimension, working particularly well on Powder. I also detected the influences of fellow Scots band the Skids on Gods Will and Mind Of A Giant, as well as the Rezillos on Reality TV. Mind you, Magazine and the Ruts were also brought to mind, all of which are influences to be commended.

So which are the polished diamonds on offer here? Guitar Zero is a standout which bounces along with gusto - it's funny as well. Twat is a fabulous take on John Cooper Clarke's gem. Backwards is terrific, buoyed by great pounding from drummer Kev and neat bass by Monty. However, the piece de resistance is Guaranteed, which is a fabulous track by anyone's standards. From an acoustic start, it develops into a top punk anthem, building up the sound and sentiment into a rousing song that is *guaranteed* to make the hairs stand up on the back of your neck. The highlight of the CD: 2.57 seconds into Guaranteed - listen to the key change in those harmonies.

When an album comes recommended, it often disappoints and is filed away after one listen. This is an exception. Tough sounding punk with its roots firmly in Punk Rock 76 - 79. A great album.

www.hateful.fsnet.co.uk

Review by Phil Singleton (December 2005)

The Roxy London WC2 - Box Set Sanctuary Records Group CMXBX1066

This is one of the best punk related releases of 2005. No less than 6 discs are included. The history of The Roxy club, *the* punk venue, contained in one compact, neat package.

The legendary *Roxy London WC2 (Jan - Apr 77)* LP is of course included, as is the less worthy *Farewell To the Roxy* LP. The first of these two provides an essential document of punk, a snapshot of the great, (Wire, Buzzcocks, Slaughter and the Dogs, Adverts, X-Ray Spex), the not so great (The Unwanted, Johnny Moped), and...Eater! In addition come complete sets from Buzzcocks, UK Subs, Adverts, and X-Ray Spex. Yes, they've been released before individually, but to have them all together makes for a terrific collection. Raw the performances may be, but they are above all exciting, and each band has something different to offer. The recordings and mastering is excellent, and the accompanying booklet is superb, with an in-depth informative history of The Roxy by Kieron Tyler, plus an introduction by Don Letts. Also included is a mind blowing gigography.

If you've an interest in punk, don't let this release pass you by.

Review by Phil Singleton (November 2005)

Steve Diggle - Serious Contender

EMI 563 7002

Another surprise, but I guess it shouldn't have been. Steve Diggle has been responsible for great tunes over the years, but what would a solo album reveal? This is a very musical album, with some neat tunes, changes of pace, and energy. Very Buzzcocks in places, which is a good thing, as it will be largely Buzzcocks fans who buy it. The Diggle trademark riffing is present in abundance, with tracks such as Lie In Bed, Round & Round, and Across The Sun (with harmonica) chugging along in familiar style. A good set of observational lyrics accompany the music, in fact the CD sits effortlessly alongside any Buzzcocks album in your collection.

Wallpaper World is a prime example, top lyrics with a great tune, a touch of Beatles mixed in with Love Bites 'Cocks. Starbucks Around The World has been pushed as the lead track, and it's good, very good, but not the best on show here. See Through You is even better; punchy, musical, subtle harmonies, it's got everything. Shake The System is another example of Steve Diggle at his best, mixing things up a bit, with the tempo ducking and diving, coupled with some cool guitar work. The closing track, Early Grave, is reflective, with the line "It's a waste of time, in the end." I prefer to gauge this album by the opening salvo, Serious Contender, "But I'm a serious contender, whatever life sends ya, when you touch my soul, it's like rock 'n' roll."

A first rate album.

Review by Phil Singleton (November 2005)

**If The Kids Are United - The Punk Box Set
Sanctuary Records Group CMETD1194**

First off the blocks in anticipation of the 30th Anniversary of 'punk' is this new 3 disc CD box set, boasting 60 songs in all. The collection draws from Sanctuary's own catalogue, which these days is extensive. We get a mixture of tracks from '76 through to the '90's (Buzzcocks, SLF). Many of the tracks are not the most obvious choices and you would need a vast personal collection to have all of them. The number of punk compilations over the years has made it increasingly difficult to put out anything surprising, so on that score this succeeds in mixing things up a bit.

So, The Damned (New Rose & Smash It Up) rub shoulders with Buzzcocks (Breakdown & Do It), Discharge (Never Again & Decontrol), Slaughter And The Dogs (Cranked Up Really High & The Bitch), and Anti Nowhere League (I Hate People & On The Waterfront). Other bands featured include: X-Ray Spex, Stranglers, Wire, Sham 69, Chelsea, 999, Vibrators, Adverts, Undertones, Revillos, Nosebleeds, The Ruts, along with early 80's punk stalwarts, G.B.H., English Dogs, and The Infas.

If The Kids Are United - The Punk Box Set, is available at around £12, and for 60 tracks, it's a value way of getting in the mood for some punk action.

For further details visit www.sanctuaryrecords.co.uk

Review by Phil Singleton (September 2005)

**Green Day: American Idiots And The New Punk Explosion
Ben Myers
Independent Music Press £12.99**

I feared a quick cash-in with this book, but thankfully was proved wrong. The author tells the full story

with passion, and at a cracking pace. I'm no Green Day expert and therefore cannot say with any certainty how accurate the book is, but it seemed convincing to me! I was unfamiliar with the childhood backgrounds of the band, and the how the world around them shaped the group. It's still quite incredible how three seemingly average teens gelled to produce a gripping and thrilling sound that captivated a whole new generation of kids.

Personal encounters with the band seem to stoke the author's fire as he wrestles with the dilemma posed by a band whose very success flies in the face of 'punk'. Ben Myers clearly loves his subject, and this, coupled with the fact that Green Day are still delivering fantastic quality records and performances, is enough to overcome any concerns. "If you hate Green Day for what they have become then it is you that has changed and not the band," he concludes. Analysis of individual tracks is a welcome touch, especially to someone unfamiliar with the stories behind them.

The book left we with an overriding feeling that Green Day's low points were not low in comparison to those experienced by some other bands. However, a band earns its good fortune, and Green Day have worked damned hard to achieve it *and* remain relevant. And fun. They possess a commitment and work ethic that breeds success. Ben Myers conveys this in a compelling style that had me reaching for that forgotten copy of Dookie.

Review by Phil Singleton (August 2005)

Stiff Little Fingers - At The Edge Live And Kickin' (Secret Films SMADVD 221X)

SLF, with the long established line up of Jake Burns, Bruce Foxtan, Steve Grantley and Ian McCallum, are filmed for this release at The Ocean, Hackney, London, in October 2004. Fingers are one of the few bands who still sound startlingly fresh and exciting today, just as they did back in the late 70s & early 80s. Although Jake is the only one remaining from my first live experience of Fingers in Torquay back in 1980, I've continued to attend SLF shows and they have never once disappointed. Jake's passion and commitment has never waned, and he has ensured the legacy and integrity remain intact.

This DVD captures the excitement perfectly. A crisp, confident band, this 20 track gig revisits their early classics in rampant form. Of course, Suspect Device, Alternative Ulster, etc. are here and sounding great, but most thrilling of all are dynamic renditions of Bits Of Kids and Back To Front, two less celebrated, but no less worthy nuggets. The most recent album, Guitar & Drum, was their best work in years, and the tracks from the album featured are an asset to their catalogue. The title track and Strummerville are destined to remain fixtures in the group's live show, and rightfully so.

The gig is superbly filmed with excellent digital sound. I was stunned at how well the gig has translated onto DVD. The main extra is an up-to-date band interview. If you like SLF, this is the DVD for you.

UK Subs - 25th Anniversary Marquee concert (Secret Films SMADVD 120X)

23 songs performed by, without doubt, the best Subs line-up: Harper, Garrett, Gibbs and Roberts. The Subs have, like their slogan states, been "on tour forever." They know how to knock out the songs with punk prowess, and as you would expect, that's exactly what they do for this DVD. Endangered Species, Crash Course, and Time And Matter sound particularly fine. However, it was the performance of Squat '96 that had me digging out my copy of the superb album, Quintessentials.

What makes this DVD special is the extras. The band talk through the stories behind all the songs they play during the gig, but best of all is the interview with Charlie, something you don't see very often. Charlie talks with typical honesty about his musical origins, which even crossed paths with Rod Stewart. Charlie deserves your full respect, and this DVD does the man justice.

Peter And The Test Tube Babies - Keep Britain Untidy. On Stage At The Coronet (Secret Films

SMADVD 220X)

Shooting to punk infamy with an appearance on Oi! - the Album in 1980, quickly followed by the singles Banned From The Pubs and Up Yer Bum, PATTTB set their stall out as a humorous antidote to the serious and doom laden obsessions of many other punk bands of the early 1980s. It's a formula they've stuck to and that's served them well. The old favourites are all here, and it's a testimony to their popularity that they are still knocking them out, tongue in cheek, to such an appreciative audience. More power to them. An informative 40 minute interview with Peter and Del is a welcome extra. Put this on, sink a few beers, and enjoy.

Charged G.B.H. - City Baby Attacked By Rats (Secret Films SMADVD 219X)

One of the chief exponents of the aural assault, G.B.H. emerged, along with the wonderful Discharge, on Stoke-On-Trent's Clay label. Their influence has proved far more widespread than the band themselves could have imagined, especially on the US thrash metal scene. Captured live in a full-on performance at The Coronet in 2004, the power rips out of the TV at a phenomenal pace, begging the question, how do you play that fast?! City Baby Attacked By Rats is a fine example of their punk peak, with Gunned Down showing a more metal leaning. G.B.H. are the perfect embodiment of 80s second wave Hardcore. Professionally filmed with a crystal clear sound the original records would have killed for.

The Toy Dolls - Our Last DVD? (Secret Films SMADVD 225X)

Playing in front of a packed crowd in Holland in November 2004, The Toy Dolls perform their set of good natured crowd pleasers. What's more, the enthusiastic audience know all the words to all the songs, turning this into a party sing-a-long. Having never seen the band live myself, I was impressed at the entertainment! They intersperse their own songs with well known instrumentals, such as Tocatta, Sabre Dance, Wipe Out, and fittingly, The Entertainer, proving that they can play. Favourite cuts from this show: Fisticuffs..., Yul Brynner..., and I've Got Asthma. And yes, Nellie The Elephant is here. As with all the recent Secret Films releases, the gig is expertly filmed. A 40 minute interview with Olga and lots of rehearsal and tour footage make this a worthy value package.

For further details on Secret Films DVD releases, visit www.secretrecordslimited.com

Reviews by Phil Singleton (July 2005)

X Live In Los Angeles (Shout Factory 30162)

Although often overlooked in the UK in favour of the New York scene, the West Coast spawned a number of outstanding bands during the late '70s. X are one such band. Caught live last November to commemorate their 25th Anniversary, this 21 song DVD is superb.

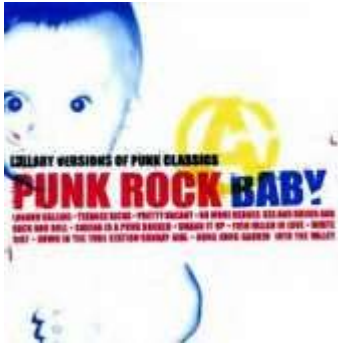
As you would expect with such a highly acclaimed band, there is not a duff song in sight. Exene Cervenka's haunting vocals remain as distinctive as ever, and blend in slickly with bassist John Doe's complementary singing. A group of their stature knows how to deliver the goods, and do so with timeless enthusiasm. "We're Desperate, get used to it!" they demand as though it was still 1978. While John throws himself around, guitarist Billy Zoom coolly knocks out some of the most exciting licks to emerge from LA. All done with a knowing smile on his face. D.J. Bonebrake is solid on the kit, without being too flashy.

Like all outstanding bands, X have more to offer than punk-by-numbers, with folk and traditional rockabilly seeping into their sound, all wrapped in punk energy. Choice cuts include: Los Angeles, Johnny Hit And Run Paulene, Motel Room In My Bed, and Year 1. The DVD extras are two Exene / John acoustic duets illustrating their bohemian roots. Billy Zoom's own photos of the crowd taken at X shows

complete the package.

I was amazed at how much I enjoyed this DVD. Tremendous!

Review by Phil Singleton (July 2005)



Punk Rock Baby (Punk Rock Baby Ltd PR001)

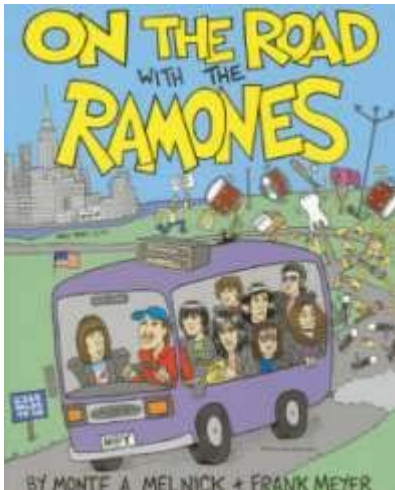
This release has been around for a couple of years, but has recently undergone a renaissance, buoyed by plays on BBC radio. 'Soothing sounds for the nursery...a collection of 13 punk rock classics in a lullaby style' boasts the sleeve, and it's spot on. It's hilarious, good fun and strangely...well, relaxing! I first listened to the disc without looking at the track listing, playing 'guess the song'. Whereas Teenage Kicks and Pretty Vacant were instantly recognisable, London Calling proved more of a challenge. The keyboard led Smash It Up makes the switch to lullaby effortlessly, and seems somewhat apt for a nursery. Down In The Tube Station At Midnight is also a highlight as it manages to retain a

feeling of menace.

The chaos caused by a baby seems to lend itself perfectly to the idea of the punk lullaby. This collection is not just for getting your annoying brat to shut up and go to sleep, but is also a relaxing way for a weary adult to unwind. Be brave, and relive those days when you really did create anarchy and chaos... in the nursery!

www.punkrockbaby.com

Review by Phil Singleton (July 2004)



On The Road With The Ramones Monte A Melnick and Frank Meyer Sanctuary Publishing £14.99 Released January 2004.

2,263 shows in 22 years. So opens **On The Road With The Ramones**. Following on from Everett True's excellent, if very opinionated, biography *Hey Ho Let's Go*, comes another superb Ramones' book. Monte Melnick was the Ramones' tour manager throughout the band's 22 years, so it's written by someone who genuinely 'was there'. The book is assembled via interviews with all the key figures (dead or alive) including Monte himself. A varied and impressive list of contributors give a balanced perspective, from other musicians, via fans, promoters, friends, spouses, and media. Little is left untouched.

Rather than being simply a chronology, it's divided loosely into different topics, covering everything from the band on the road, to the changes of drummers. It's a true insider's perspective. Clearly Monte has a love for the band, so he isn't out to savage them (read Dee Dee's or Everett's books for the 'warts and all' versions). He does not, however, shy away from the uncomfortable issues: the erratic behaviour of Dee Dee, Joey's illness, the abortive use of Clem Burke, it's all here. Also appreciated is the coverage given to the contribution made by Richie Ramone, who I

always believed to be their best drummer (I recall the band's embarrassing 1985 Whistle Test performance. Richie held it together).

What really makes this book is the unbelievable wealth of unseen visual material. Monte has gathered an incredible array of photographs, posters, passes, call sheets, rooming lists, stage 'set ups', the list goes on. The early snaps are a delight, as the band found themselves in locations as diverse as Disneyland and Stonehenge.

If you're still reeling from the dreadful biography, *An American Band*, this time you won't be disappointed. **On The Road With The Ramones** is light years apart. If you are a fan, you **need** this book.

Review by Phil Singleton (January 2004)

Waking Up In London
Robert Ashton
Sanctuary £9.99 / \$13.95

Just released is this fabulous look at the musical locations of London. Far more than merely a traveller's guide, it's aimed at the music fan looking for some history in amongst the contemporary atmosphere. Of course, any look at London worth its salt is going to include punk & the Pistols. Punk is at the core of *Waking Up*, taking the funeral of Joe Strummer as the initial point of reference and inspiration.

The clubs which paid a pivotal part in the formative years of punk and which still survive today, are revisited. A chapter, *Punk Rockers at the 100 Club*, tells the story of the Sex Pistols' association with the venue, drawing on an interview conducted with Glen Matlock earlier this year. Author Robert Ashton uses this technique throughout the book. Speaking to personalities ranging from musicians, club owners, producers, even traders at Camden market, he paints a picture of an evolving scene, which is both reflective and up-to-date. He also makes sure we know what these very same people are up to in modern day London.

All musical genres are covered, taking the reader on a comprehensive tour of the city. Travel information, maps, guides to music venues, restaurants, markets, key tourist highlights and hotels, are included. If you are planning a trip to London, whether to merely sample, or conversely, totally immerse yourself in the music it has to offer, buy this book.

Review by Phil Singleton (November 2003)

Up Yours! A Guide To UK Punk, New-Wave And Early Post-Punk.
Vernon Joynson
Borderline Productions. £29.50

Music fans enjoy nothing more than absorbing themselves in facts, figures, and discographies. Compiling such information is, however, one of the most unenviable and daunting tasks to undertake.

It has of course being done in fine style by the likes of Martin Strong, whose 'Great Alternative And Indie Discography' tome addresses some of the artists that fall within the 'Up Yours!' remit. 'Up Yours!' has a far narrower focus, concentrating on a particular country (UK), a particular period (1976-82), with a strong emphasis on punk rock. Vernon Joynson's intention is to give fans of early UK punk rock, a book packed full of information that is likely to be of specific interest to them. Not since the 'International Discography Of The New Wave' was published in 1982, has there been a book with such an aim (albeit 'Up Yours!' does not have an international brief).

Many artists, especially punk groups that formed in the early Eighties, have discographies in print for the first time. This will be of particular use to collectors of Punk /Oi! from this era. For bands that formed during 76-82 who continued to make records beyond this period, Vernon Joynson follows their progress until the mid-Eighties. If artists have carried on beyond 1985/6, readers will have to go elsewhere for further information.

A particular strength of the book is that it goes to great lengths to list subsequent re-releases of the material. CD reissues, compilations, inclusions on various artists albums and CDs, they're all included, making the task of tracking down a lot of the recordings far easier. The value of this aspect of the book cannot be overstated. Also welcome is the inclusion of important record company release indexes. Again this is not restricted to labels formed during 76-82, but also includes labels currently specialising in the re-release of this material.

The book is illustrated throughout with pictures of record sleeves plus previously unseen pictures by photographer Stephen Richards, taken at venues such as the Roundhouse and Electric Ballroom 78-79.

With sections devoted specifically to both vinyl and CD compilations, as well as biographies of the groups covered, it is a mine of information. It would be easy to nit pick at minor errors that are inevitable in any work of this type, but that would be grossly unfair. This is a huge and unenviable undertaking, which deserves your support. The perfect solution to occupy those long winter nights.

Review by Phil Singleton

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[God Save the Sex Pistols](#)