

Punk

Period Punk lasts only from 1975-78

- A British phenomena with American influences
- 1. Collapse in cultural and political institutions in 70s
- 2. Trade Union power, striking miners, car workers, seamen, etc
- 3. Arabs and oil
- 4. Northern Ireland and the troubles
- 5. Education system malaise - the implosion of the grammar school system and disillusionment with comprehensive



Context Continued

- 1. Successive weak governments produce a stalemate in government –
- 2. Heath/Wilson/Callaghan governments all tiny majorities – or minority governments
- 3. America still recovering from defeat of Vietnam and Nixon and Watergate
- 4. Ford and Carter both weak presidents – Carter destroyed by Iran Hostage Crisis

Punk 3

Book and Sources:

- Dick Hebdige – Subcultures
- Frith and Horn – Art in Pop
- Grail Marcus – Lipstick Traces

- **Films** – The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle, The Filth and the Fury, Jubilee, The Punk Rock Movie
- The Face Magazine
- 'Opened up the space between high art and realm of pop culture'

Art/Art School Connection

- 1. More acute sense of meanings and functions in pop
- 2. Punk seen as a critique of pop culture industry
- 3. James Reid's agit-prop inspired visual imagery
- 4. Warhol and pop art

Authenticity/Authority

- Punk 5
 1. Ethos of 'do it yourself'
 2. Culture of Factory Records
 -
- 3. Anti-complexity; e.g. Kraftwerk and early techo bands/progressive rock
- 4. Tax exile status of late 60s stars – Mick Jagger, Rod Stewart, etc

Situationist Past

- **Punk 6**
- - birth of agit prop
- - Punk as solution to Art School
- **Theories**
- - Situationists – attempted to breakdown barriers between art and life
- - To encourage demonstrations and tensions by validating them as aesthetic acts

Punk 7 - Gender

Female/Gender element – in era before aids

- 1. Much of shock of punk was sexual
- 2. Clothing of deviance – fetish wear – SEX (Maclaren and Westwood)
- 3. Sexual experimentation
- 4. Start of all girl groups (instrumental and vocal), Stiletto, Slits, Modettes,
- 5. Many groups fronted by female lead singer - Siouxsie, Patti Smith Band, Pretenders, X-ray Spex, Blondie

Punk 8 – New York Connection

- Background of musical experimentalism in New York – going back to 60s with Velvet Underground, Lou Reed, Yoko Ono, etc and Beat Poets before that (Ginsberg, Burroughs and Karouac). Warhol and The Factory. Early 70s bands – The Stooges – New York Club Scene (Max’s Kansas City, CBGBs)
- 1. New York Dolls (demystifying the notion of the rock star). McLaren manager for a while
- 2. Richard Hell – The Neon Boys
- 3. S and M scene in New York
- 4. Ramones – very short songs played very loud and fast
- McLaren’s experience of the New York scene fuelled his conception of punk as an extension of fashion
-

Punk 9 – Sex Pistols 1



- 1. Situationist and King Mob rhetoric
- 2. Glam's superficiality and androgyny
- 3. Kenneth Anger's Scorpio Rising iconography
- 4. Michael Hell's image
- 5. S & M fetish wear provided by McLaren and Westwood
- 6. Warhol's decadence of the Factory

Pistols 2

- Put together by McClaren as an extension of his fashion ideas and the King's Road Shop SEX.
- Made national headlines with their appearance on Bill Grundy's Today Programme. Dec 1 1976
- Signed by EMI in 1976 – then dropped and signed by Virgin.



Pistols 3

- Anarchy in the U.K. tour – 19 original dates – in the end 23 cancellations and 5 played.
- 1977 – Jubilee Year – last year Pistols played live in UK.
- God Save the Queen – banned in BBC but remained top the charts.
- Pistols – died in American misadventure



Punk as Style

- 1. Hebdige – idea of style as a form of refusal – safety pins as stigmata – tokens of self-imposed exile
- 2. Style elements signal Refusal – gestures have a meaning
- 3. Breakdown of consenses in society in post war period – challenge to this consensus expressed obliquely in style
- 4. Summer of 76 – dry hot summer – Drought by August – Notting Hill Carnival Violence – constant connections with raggae and young black experience

Rasta Connection 1

- 1. History of Post War British Youth culture reinterpreted as a succession of responses to the black immigrant presence in Britain from the 1950s onward
-
- 2. Increasing gulf between black youths and white after 1970 – expressed in music
-
- 3. Many in working class youth alienated by what was available in music in mid 70s – Glam rock/tinny boppers/glitter bands or esoteric artists (foppishness) of progressive rock who were serious about music and required pious listening
-
- 4. Punks aimed at self alienation and to emulate Rastas
-

Rasta Connection 2

- 5. It seemed that black youth had found meaning and identity through Rastafarianism and Reggae
-
- 6. Whites were condemned to act out alienation – hopelessness and no future
-
- 7. Punks identified with Black British West Indian Culture – seen to be 'authentic'
-
- 8. Although audibly opposed punk and reggae were politically and ideologically aligned
-
- 9. Marley's Punky Reggae party

Aftermath

- 1. After initial London phase punk took off in local cities – Manchester, Sheffield, Belfast, etc.
- 2. Many groups burned out quickly and punk was really over by 1980 however its legacy is huge.
- 3. The last genuine youth counter culture?

