

The influence of the Punk Movement on the world we live in today.

Whether we accept it or not, the punk movement of the 1970's has changed our lives today. From it's beginnings with social discord and disillusionment with the government following Britain slipping into recession. The British people were suffering on a number of fronts. Terrorist attacks were taking place fairly regularly, with the IRA beginning their campaign of terror. Along with the recession came massive unemployment meaning the school leavers found finding a job hard. Soon from nowhere bands like The Sex Pistols sprang up and made one of the biggest marks on the scene.

John Lydon would later explain the punk scene and explained where the country was at the time. "Early Seventies Britain was a very depressing place. It was completely run-down, there was trash on the streets, total unemployment—just about everybody was on strike. Everybody was brought up with an education system that told you point blank that if you came from the wrong side of the tracks...then you had no hope in hell and no career prospects at all. Out of that came pretentious *moi* and the Sex Pistols and then a whole bunch of copycat wankers after us"

A band called London SS managed by Bernard Rhodes broke up before performing live. The members of which went on to form The Damned and The Clash. Music formed the core of Punk, with it's origins heavily entrenched in the Do It Yourself aspect of music, in fact, knowing how to play an Instrument was a bonus, but not entirely necessary. Although it is a bad example, of how the music inspired bad musicians to make their own music. In 1976, the Sex Pistols played a show in Manchester, around 40 people attended, amongst those were members of the Buzzcocks, Joy Division, The Fall and Steven Morrissey who went onto front The Smiths as Morrissey. In addition to those who received commercial success albeit sometimes severely limited, many more bands were formed and fizzled out before making anything of them-selves.

Punk was the start of modern culture, not only musically though. Fashion and art were both victims of the progression of punk onto the public consciousness. British Punk Fashion was largely based on those sold in SEX the fashion shop run by Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren.

In fact, during the early days of The Sex Pistols there was a search for a front man. Johnny Rotten had met Steve Jones, Paul Cook and Malcolm McLaren whilst wearing a Pink Floyd with the words 'I Hate' written above the name and the eyes scratched out. It was held together with safety pins' that wasn't yet a fashion statement. He later explained how it was because he wasn't too well off and used the safety pins to hold the T-Shirts together. He also had green hair and very bad dental hygiene that led to his eventual renaming as Johnny Rotten.

Whilst Punk officially began in the states, a lot of the music that was produced was largely overlooked with the exception of bands like the Velvet Underground. The result of this is that the influence of the Punk scene from the US is nowhere

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near as pronounced as that of London. However in the late eighties and early nineties another musical offshoot of the rock genre grew and eventually also made it's mark on modern culture. Enter Grunge. Popularised in and around the state of Washington, focussed around Seattle specifically. Grunge can be seen to draw similarities with the Punk movement of ten years previous. Once again there was often a mention of social problems, alienation and general apathy. In fact, music critic Simon Reynolds said the following: "there's a feeling of burnout in the culture at large. Kids are depressed about the future."

The fashion of grunge was in many ways similar to that of Punk, simple clothing and unkempt appearance were the main aspects of the fashion. Generally the clothes were simple, durable and above all else, cheap. Echoing the majority of the performances that the bands provided. There were no complex lighting setups or pyrotechnics. In many respects, the bands restrained themselves to performing as they had when they were performing in the minor venues.

Grunge was largely un-noticed until the late years of the eighties, where bands such as Soundgarden and Alice in Chains were signed to major labels. 1990 saw a band from Aberdeen, Washington called Nirvana join the Geffen Label and in September of 1991 Nirvana released the album 'Nevermind' this was the first signs of Grunge becoming truly mainstream. In January of 1992 Nevermind replaced Michael Jacksons' Dangerous Album at the top of the American Charts.

So, The initial question remains, how exactly do the punk movement and indeed the subsequent grunge movement of the late eighties and early nineties affect our current lifestyles, well again, the grunge movement inspired another genre. Cue Britpop.

Damon Albarn was asked once if Blur were an anti-grunge band. To which he replied, "If punk was about getting rid of hippies, then I'm getting rid of grunge". Britpop was decidedly upbeat and much more optimistic than grunge and punk. Essentially where the former were products of a disenchanted public, Britpop was the sound of an altogether optimistic populace. A young Tony Blair and New Labour had come to power and things were beginning to take shape. Unemployment was shrinking, the British economy was booming and everything was coming up tops for Britain. Life was becoming golden for Brits of all ages and this was showing in the music. Music was becoming optimistic again and above all else, life was good.

So, for all of those nights out where you and your friends have sung along to Wonderwall at the top of your voices, you have Johnny Rotten to thank for it. Imagine a world where every song was cut from the same mould. Although recently it seems as if we have returned to those standards with relentless cover versions and reality TV produced singers, the UK has been hit by a rather large depression, unemployment is on the rise and in addition terrorism has had a rather large effect on London today and the world in general.

Perhaps it's time for a return to the simplistic and basic ideals of the Punk movement.

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