The Last Call to Anarchy
Punk in England, 1976 – 1979

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Punk is dead. In twentieth-century music, punk rock was a manifestation of that intermediary moment during a revolution when old rules have been eliminated and new ones have yet to be written. When it first hit the streets in England in 1975, punk music and culture was the embodiment of anarchy, but by 1979 it had lost its lifeblood. An analysis of the elements of anarchy within punk rock and culture in England form 1976-1979, as well as the movement's incorporation into the broader picture of the socio-economic situation in England at the time is necessary in order to come to the conclusion that punk rock's demise was unavoidable. Punk was a fleeting moment necessary for musical evolution that stumped humanity with its blunt social statements, but due to its anti-dogmatic nature, upon punk's unexpected success, it lost its initial character: anarchy. And so, punk died.

The word "anarchy" derives from the Greek term *anarkhia* in which *an* means "without" and *arkhia* means "ruler."[1] Anarchy is the state of existence where there is no ruler, no authority, no higher power to dictate individuals what to do; it gives absolute freedom to the individual, something which otherwise would be in jeopardy at the supervisory hands of a government. Anarchism is the theory of how anarchy should be, once it is achieved. Ultimately, anarchism is indefinable. According to George Woodcock:

> …its rejection of dogma, its deliberate avoidance of systematic theory, and,
> above all, its stress on extreme freedom of choice and on the primacy of

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[1] Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: Fontana Press, 1993), 3.

individual judgment – creates immediately the possibility of a variety of viewpoints inconceivable in a closely dogmatic system.[2]

As a theory, it is obscure in form, which allows it the leverage to branch off in many directions; yet it possesses a unanimous, ultimate goal of creating a free society, which would allow all human beings to realize their full potential.[3] While there are many different streams in anarchism, anarchists – the theoreticians and believers of anarchist ideas – share certain basic assumptions and criteria of central themes. These criteria include "a particular view of human nature, a critique of existing order, a vision of free society, and a way to achieve it."[4]

There have been many anarchists, but three cannot go unmentioned. Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin left unavoidable marks on anarchist theory. First, it must be noted that anarchism is roughly divided into two categories: social anarchism (The Clash) and individual anarchism (the Sex Pistols). Social anarchism includes mutualism and collectivism and focuses on achieving freedom for society as a unit, while individualism perceives society as a collection of separate sovereign individuals each of which should ultimately possess absolute individual freedom. Mutualism, a theory conceived by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, proposes a cooperative society, comprised of individuals who exchange the necessities of life on the basis of labour value and obtain free credit through a people's bank.[5] Proudhon became famous for his view that the foundation of society should be a voluntary contract between persons. He advocated doing away with the state because he saw the meaning of being ruled by a government as being "spied on…censored…exploited…imprisoned…sacrificed…."[6] Proudhon infamously stated that

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[2] George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2004), 18.
[3] Marshall, 4.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 5.
[6] Edward Hyams, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: His Revolutionary Life, Mind, and Works* (New York: Taplinger Publishing, 1979), 149-150.

"property is theft,"[7] yet argued for the existence of "possessions," which he considered prerequisites to individual liberty. Collectivism, visualized by Bakunin, advocates a dismantling of the state and an economy organized on the basis of common ownership.[8] Mikhail Bakunin, another important anarchist, believed in that annihilation of the old order was necessary for the liberation of the masses. Thus, he was an avid supporter of revolution, which in his view was "essential to negate the authority of the ruling classes and to establish an environment where true freedom might finally prevail."[9] Essentially, Bakunin believed in a state of anarchy that resembled a non-authoritarian communism. Peter Kropotkin, a Russian prince, established anarchist theory's "scientific basis as the natural, positive consequence of humans' interactions when allowed to freely associate and make decisions based on self-interest."[10] For Kropotkin, "anarchism was simply the means of fulfilling the human promise of a better world."[11]

Punk rock and culture never clearly promised a better world. It was an anti-establishment movement – one of many – distinct due to its primeval nature and bursts of violence. Punk did not originate in the United Kingdom, nor was it ever specifically a political movement. Punk began in America, but it "exploded" in Britain.[12] Before England's Sex Pistols – the band of the late 1970s that came to "define punk"[13] – punk existed solely underground. After the Sex Pistols' first tour, the "Anarchy Tour," punk infected the world. Before arriving on the English shores, punk shaped itself in the United States with the influences of innovative bands such as Iggy Pop and the Stooges, The Ramones, and the MC5.[14] These bands were different from the "rock stars" of the time; instead of focusing on

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[7] Ibid., 36.

[8] Marshall, 5.

[9] Kathlyn Gay and Martin K. Gay, *Encyclopedia of Political Anarchy* (California: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 1999), 21.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 122.

[12] Steven Wells, *Punk: Young, Loud, & Snotty* (London: Carlton Books Ltd., 2004), 5.

[13] Ibid., 118.

[14] Stephen Colegrave and Chris Sullivan, *Punk: The Definitive Record of a Revolution* (London: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2005), 47.

"tedious concept albums and wanky guitar solos," they concentrated on just having fun, and chose to go independent from record companies in order to maintain musical freedom.[15] In the early 70s, punk was louder than rock; it was faster, rawer, edgier. Initially, punk owed its existence to the Velvet Underground, a band not acclaimed among mainstreamers, which first appeared around 1965.[16] "It has been said that everyone who listened to the Velvet Underground started a band," and it seemed true.[17] The Velvets, as they were nicknamed by their devotees, influenced all of the early American punk rock bands mentioned above, as well as many others; they were the reason why "punk burst out of the art schools and onto the streets."[18]

The word punk began to be associated with punk rockers in 1975, when *Punk* magazine published its first issue in America. The word was chosen because according to television shows at the time "it meant that you were the lowest."[19] Early American punk had few, if any, elements of anarchy. As it is remembered today from its glory years, punk rock was the genre established by England's Sex Pistols, punk's iconic heroes. Once in England, punk rock took on an entirely new form. It dismissed all rules of musical form, adopted an entirely unconventional new look, and assumed a confrontational, militant attitude that would awe the media and its observers. Musically, English punk rock was a rebellion against the sunny, hippie music of the Beatles and the Bay City Rollers. Socially and politically, on the other hand, it was a manifestation of discontent towards the economic depravity that most of England's youth was faced with, the callous economic conditions of the 1970s, and the growth of the right in English politics. The first time anarchy reared its head in English punk, it was in the form of individualist anarchy, with punk rockers opting for the liberation of the individual from the oppressive masses with their music.

In the beginning, and even partially into its climax, the leaders of the U.K. punk rock movement, the iconic Sex Pistols, were just a bunch of misfits, all "extremely ugly,"

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[15] Wells, 5.
[16] Colegrave & Sullivan, 32.
[17] Ibid., 30.
[18] Wells, 5.
[19] Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming* (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1992), 131.

"outcasts," "the unwanted."[20] The boys were all in their late teens or early twenties; they had barely finished high school, and were struggling through their early years of college. They feared the monotony of life and despised conformity with every fiber of their being. Coming from low-income, working-class families, they did not have much of a future. Their "outlook was bleak"[21] due to several factors. First of all, England was – and still very much is – very static and rigid when it came to its class structure. Constructed of a "strongly defined ruling class and a narrow definition of the acceptable,"[22] English society in the seventies offered few opportunities for social mobility. Thus, the group was caught in an unworkable double blind: "intelligent in a working-class culture which did not value intelligence, yet unable to leave that culture because of lack of opportunity."[23] They would spend the rest of their lives working low-wage jobs, which would award them no pleasure or satisfaction, without the option of higher education, with pubs, cigarettes and alcohol as their only window of happiness. However, rigid class structure and lack of opportunities were not the sole factors holding Britain's youth from achieving their potential in the seventies. England's economy at the time as in a dreadful state, and its chances for growth were very low, which added to the doubt that these young people of very little privilege would ever improve their social position of living standards.

By 1975, twenty-five percent of the population in England was jobless, thirty percent of which owed their unemployment to the public sector.[24] The national debt stemming from the necessary reconstructions after World War II had risen to a whopping £8.4 billion, much higher than the country's revenue.[25] The electricity, coal, and rail industries – the great bulk of which is located in the Northern regions of the country, where much of the wave of U.K. punk bands hailed from in the late seventies – were declining, causing further

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[20] Ibid., 114.
[21] Ivor Richard, We, The British: An Inside Look at Foilables, Customs, Eccentricities, and Institutions (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1938), 69.
[22] Savage, 12.
[23] Ibid., 114.
[24] Peter Pugh and Carl Flint, *Thatcher for Beginners* (Cambridge: Icon Books Ltd., 1997), 16.
[25] Ibid., 17.

unemployment, lower wages, and little chance for job replacement.[26] The workers who had jobs went on strikes in hopes of bettering their situation, while those without employment found themselves "on the dole," frequenting pubs daily.[27] Alongside national debt and low wages, Britain had the lowest growth of productivity of any major industrial economy, which resulted in massive price rises, causing prices of basic commodities to increase; the cost of bread in 1975 was 4200% higher than in 1938. The working classes in Britain had not experienced such a crisis since the Industrial Revolution of about a century before, although not everyone was in such an alarming state. The greater majority of the middle classes pulled through without much difficulty. Since "class has always been a big divide in Britain,"[28] what the middle classes could easily ignore, the working classes could not: "Nowhere was England's 'poverty of desire' more obvious than in youth and culture."[29]

The term "poverty of desire," coined by Jon Savage for his non-fiction book *England's Dreaming*, which depicted a detailed account of the punk movement in England from 1971 to 1979, refers to more than materialistic poverty. Youth from the working classes could not acquire capital, nor afford to desire unattainable objects or experiences. Due to this, they were left with very little to entertain themselves. Since they could not afford to buy the kinds of clothes advertised in fashion magazines, they retreated to the London slums and created a fashion entirely independent of any industry's already established rules, sometimes with fashion magazines to go along.[30] To complete the look, they scribbled on their bodies and messed up their hair in ways that would shock the conventional classes. They also adopted a combative attitude: they were unruly, arrogant, sarcastic and verbally hostile.[31] Since they could not afford to take part in England's cultural world, they created their own: a utopia they were free to run wild in, away from the accusatory eyes of any authorities, a place with no rulers, no laws, where the most mediocre person could become a rock star.

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[26] Ibid.
[27] Richard, 69.
[28] Ibid., 104.
[29] Savage, 112.
[30] Ibid., 53.
[31] Ibid., 114.

Just like anarchists, punk rockers were opposed to domination and sought liberation from any type of governing; it was youth's way of "refusing what future society had planned for you."[32] Punks wanted a haven, a free culture in which they could realize their full potential regardless of what society labeled them as. According to the lead singer of the Sex Pistols, John Lydon (later to be named Johnny Rotten due to the decaying state of his teeth), one of the main philosophies of punk was: "you are what you are from the day you are born: using things as a cultural disguise doesn't hide what you are deep down."[33] They wanted the freedom to be all that they could be and English society refused them that, leaving them feeling helpless and frustrated. This frustration instilled in them the desire to destroy the Establishment – although they knew that in reality all they had power to do was to slightly shake it. Lydon recalls: "The first line I wrote was "I am an Anarchist." And I couldn't think of a damn thing to rhyme with it. 'Anarchist' fitted just nicely."[34] This very line would beget what would be the first-ever punk rock single in the U.K. and, some would argue, in the world.[35]

"Anarchy in the UK," heading the 1976 "Anarchy Tour" that played all over England, spontaneously making its way to Paris, was loud, rude, and scandalous.[36] It called for anarchy, with Johnny Rotten screaming at the top of his voice about his craving: "I wanna be Anarchy! / I use Anarchy!"[37] Upon first encounter, the lyrics can be seen in the negative light that often shines on the concept of anarchy, but at closer inspection the Sex Pistols simply manifested a desperate yearning for change. And as serious as all this sounded to audiences at the time, the astonishing thing was that it was just a "joke."[38] The truth about the Sex Pistols was that they "were the working-class cousins of *Monty Python's Flying*

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[32] Wells, 5.
[33] Savage, 115.
[34] Colegrave & Sullivan, 161.
[35] Wells, 25.
[36] Colegrave & Sullivan, 111.
[37] Cook, Jones, Rotten, and Vicious, *Never Mind The Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols* (Warner Bros. Records Inc., 1977).
[38] Wells, 118.

Circus;"[39] they mocked, snarled at, and were furiously cynical regarding everything. While Rotten, "in his trademark Cockney sneer,"[40] managed to rhyme "anarchist" with "anti-Christ" and pride himself in wanting to "destroy passers-by," he was only being sarcastic.[41] Many Christians at the time "picketed Sex Pistols gigs and demanded that the band be forcibly stopped from corrupting the nation's youth" which made their little jokes even funnier.[42] Even though the song played as a joke, it was not indicative that punks' attitude towards anarchy was in any way sardonic. On the contrary, the Sex Pistols' second single would prove otherwise.

Britain is a constitutional monarchy, meaning that while there is a democratic government ruling the country, the head of state is a king or queen. In 1977, Queen Elizabeth II was celebrating her Silver Jubilee, "25 years on the throne,"[43] a festive event in England. That very same year, the Sex Pistols released their second single, their very own blasphemous appropriation of the national anthem, entitled "God Save the Queen." The song rose shamelessly to Number 1 during the very week of Her Majesty's Jubilee, and the BBC "responded by pretending the record was still stuck in the Number 2 position."[44] Why was the song so offensive? It lacked all the right sentiments of patriotism, turning its fire on the "fascist regime" that made the Queen "a moron" and "no human being."[45] The mention of fascism – which along with racism and homophobia was a popular topic of criticism for punk rockers – was the echo of Margaret Thatcher's growing power in England since her election as the leader of the Conservative Party in 1975.[46] Jon Savage quoted a newspaper from 1976 in *England's Dreaming*: "…fascism here won't be like in Germany. It'll be English: ratty, mean, pinched…."[47] The Sex Pistols captured that sentiment and "God Save the

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[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Cook, Jones, Rotten, and Vicious, *Never Mind The Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols.*
[42] Wells, 118.
[43] Ibid., 119.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Pugh & Flint, 15.
[47] Savage, 110.

Queen" was a reflection of that. While "Anarchy in the UK" called for destruction and (mock) violence, "God Save the Queen" emphasized that there "is no future" and that "England's dreaming."[48] In response to the ignorance of the growing power of the Right in England, the Sex Pistols urged everyone who listened to not "be told what [they wanted]" and not "be told what [they needed]."[49] Johnny Rotten insisted that he had not written it because he hated the English or his country, but because he "[loved] them and [was] fed up with them being mistreated."[50] The song initially rang more of revolt, but ultimately it was about what all their songs were about: liberation, achieving freedom (from fascism and the establishment), and expressing these wishes in emotive, nihilistic ways. Unintentionally, punk had evolved into a collectivist and socialist movement, as opposed to an individualist one fronted by mere self-centered adolescents.

The anarchy in punk rock was not strictly apparent in lyrics, however; that was actually where anarchy subtly lurked. The actual music, the chords, the instrumentations, the harmonies, the rhythms, the organizations, and the performances, had anarchy written all over it. Since punk lacked dogma, it did not require the performer to be musically competent, to know how to play, or even sing. On the contrary, it encouraged the most under-qualified teenager to pick up an instrument and make some noise, which they gladly did. The Adverts, Crass, and the Sex Pistols are perfect examples of this. Neither The Adverts now the Sex Pistols had members who knew how to play any instruments, although some learned in the end. The Adverts were "incompetent, fumbling, unlistenable clowns."[51] Unable to play their instruments, sounding dissonant and disorderly, they were headed by a "deranged guitarist" named Howard Pickup who "stomped mad like [a] monster."[52] Despite this disregard for musical rules, The Adverts were still successful and appreciated because "it wasn't all totally aggressive."[53] "There were loads of eclectic groups about" and "every band

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[48] Cook, Jones, Rotten, and Vicious, *Never Mind The Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols.*
[49] Ibid.
[50] Colegrave & Sullivan, 225.
[51] Wells, 8.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., 9.

sounded different."[54] A disregard for rules is what made punk, punk. The Adverts clearly had anarchy in their music: it lacked rules, refused to obey any authoritative musical structures already established, and yet managed to function without any arbiter's agency.

If The Adverts were not regarded as practicing anarchy musically, then Crass was an absolute exploitation of it. This English band, which emerged as the Sex Pistols were over their peak, was musically appalling. One critic described them of sounding like "two lathes buggering each other on an elevator in an aircraft hangar."[55] Crass disregarded its audiences entirely, storming on stage in a cacophony able to drive someone deaf. They proclaimed that they were "the real anarchists to inherit punk on earth" and invited all U.K. punks to join them, many of which did.[56] They interpreted the Pistols' call to anarchy literally, they were massive Clash fans (The Clash were considered to be the second most influential English punk band, although they generally expressed a more socialist view through their lyrics and statements, and were musically influenced by reggae),[57] and were fuelled by Kerouac, Situationism, and Kropotkin.[58] "Crass were for peace and anarchy"[59] which gave them the prodigious following of "anarcho-punks." Anarcho-punks were easily spotted because they sported black and refused to wear leather, eat meat, or drink milk.[60] Crass fans were so fanatically dedicated to their heroes, they became known as "Crasstafarians."[61] Crass' Penny Rimbaud once said: "We weren't a band for musical or lyrical reasons. We were a band for political reasons…We were interested in making statements."[62] Like the Sex Pistols, Crass' career was short-lived, yet they have remained "inseparable from the entire youth movement."[63] Finally, member Peter Wright best expressed Crass' legacy: "I think that we've

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[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 35.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 33.
[58] Ibid., 35.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., 37.
[63] Ibid.

been largely responsible for restating a set of ideas which have roots way back through history. These are quite simply – sod all authority. I as an individual have something worthwhile about me."[64]

How could the Sex Pistols ever possible outdo Crass? Simple. While Crass professed anarchy and sounded like a version of musical anarchy (for if there ever was such a thing, they created it), the Sex Pistols embodied anarchy. They were anarchy incarnate. They did not acknowledge any anarchist thinkers, as Crass acknowledged Kropotkin, nor was their focus to make statements advocating anarchy as a movement. The Sex Pistols simply existed in a constant state of anarchy, running amok in the most irresponsible ways, and their music reflected that. First, not only could none of the Sex Pistols play musical instruments upon the band's formation, the lead singer Johnny Rotten could not sing and instead chanted hoarsely, which was most unusual.[65] Second, halfway through the band's career they replaced a skilled bass player, Glen Matlock, with an entirely incompetent Sid Vicious, who had only wreaked havoc during their concerts. One critic of the time described them to be disgusting, degrading, even nauseating, and professed that they would be "vastly improved by sudden death."[66]

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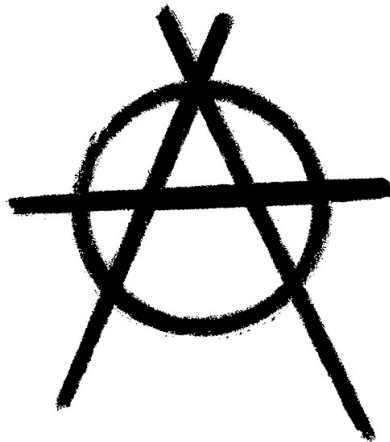
[64] Ibid., 35.
[65] Colegrave & Sullivan, 224.
[66] Ibid., 103.

The punk image in England was born at 430 King's Road, appropriately nicknamed "World's End,"[67] where Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood held shop, and where punk culture originated. The clothing store was called "Sex" and Miss Westwood designed all the items sold inside during the era of the Sex Pistols. By 1977, the inside of the shop was shocking, its walls bedecked with shirts and attire influenced by sadomasochism; there were shirts portraying naked body parts and pornographic images, logos with sexual connotations, such as "Dominator," torn t-shirts, shredded t-shirts, and t-shirts sliced at the breastplate.[68] There were shirts with hand-written pornography on them. Nils Stevenson remembers: "I don't think so much grief was caused to so many people by so few t-shirts before – or since."[69] It was all meant to stun, and it did just that, since the shop was located in a relatively popular shopping area in London.

Miles English, art director of GQ Magazine said, "Original Westwood is art";[70] it now hangs on walls or sells for thousands of dollars. In the late 1970s, however, it was meant for a very different reason. Westwood designed the clothes and created the style for the Sex Pistols and their followers. The idea was to make a clear statement – the very one that has already been mentioned over and over, but which punks wanted to drill into society ad nauseam: they were free, liberated, subjected to no authority. Punks would thus wear anything that would stand out, not because they longed for uniqueness, but to prove that they could. They wore black leather jackets with studding on the back, studded t-shirts, and shirts with the legendary slogan: "Too Fast To Live, Too Young To Die," which was originally thought of by American gangs to commemorate the death of James Dean, but never presented in print until then.[71] "Sex opened a lot of doors for gays, straights, and lesbians. It was very liberated."[72] It was very open and honest. In the 1970s, nothing like this had ever been encountered before. Due to a mere musical movement, because of a single

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[67] Savage, 4.
[68] Ibid., 53.
[69] Colegrave & Sullivan, 145.
[70] Ibid., 141.
[71] Savage, 53.
[72] Colegrave & Sullivan, 130.

band, an entirely new culture and way of life, completely devoid of any constituted authority, was born in England. If that was not enough to prove that punk fashion resonated anarchy, then surely the fact that the circled anarchist "A" laid proudly splattered on endless numbers of shirts and was embedded into countless studded armbands, was sufficient evidence. The anarchist "A" also shone on leather jackets, boots, and even in tattoo form.[73] "There had never been such provocative clothes before – clothes that really changed the way you thought about things."[74] Sex and Vivienne Westwood were not, however, the only creators of the punk image.

Punk, so strongly pertaining to anarchy, could not rest having a single figure dictating a look, and so punk fashion took on a life of its own. As there was no dogma in anarchy, there were no rules in punk. With that attitude, Johnny Rotten picked up a shirt one day, shredded it to bits, and hung it on himself fastened with safety pins.[75] Ultimately, it was Sid Vicious, bassist of the Sex Pistols who joined the band after Glen Matlock of the original line-up left,[76] who embodied the punk image. "Sid had the iconic punk look."[77] Sid Vicious, whose real name was John Simon Ritchie,[78] was named "Sid" after Johnny Rotten's hamster, and "Vicious" after a Lou Reed song.[79] He was tall and skinny, from a broken down, working-class family, and before officially joining the Sex Pistols, had belonged to the inner circle of the band's entourage. Like all punks, he wore tattered clothes, but he was more of an initiator than a follower. Due to his self-destructive nature and the firm belief that his life would be thunderous and brief, Sid suggested the motto "Too Fast To Live, Too Young To Die," found on Westwood's t-shirts. Vicious also invented the "pogo," a dance that mainly consisted of standing straight and jumping up and down.[80] While at first people jumped on

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[73] Ibid., 136.
[74] Ibid., 126.
[75] Ibid., 222.
[76] Ibid., 224.
[77] Ibid., 225.
[78] Alan Parker, *Vicious: Too Fast To Live* (Creation Books, 2004), 4.
[79] Savage, 116.
[80] Colegrave & Sullivan, 222.

the spot, Vicious began bashing into others, creating the first moshpit.[81] The result was the enactment of anarchy in the audience. He also invented the "spikey-hair look," which he first fashioned by lying upside down with his head in an oven, just so he could avoid using hairspray.[82] Of course, he could not play his instrument upon entering the band, although his skill developed rapidly. Despite his skill, he was the only member of the band who refused to play completely, at times purposefully playing a different tune form the rest of the band, eradicating any sense of order from the stage.[83] Upon his involvement, the Sex Pistols rose to their highest peak, although his entry signaled their, and punk rock's, approaching demise. Even so, "Sid, on image alone, is what punk rests on."[84]

Sid Vicious not only represented the punk image, he also reflected the ideal punk behaviour. He was nihilistic and naïve, possessing a unique "innocence."[85] Punk, through all its rioting and controversial statements about fascism, racism, and freedom, acted in the manner of a snotty teenager. This adolescence gave the movement its energy. In the newspaper *The Mirror*, journalist Russell Miller wrote, upon first viewing the Sex Pistols' music video for "Anarchy in the UK," that the "essence of punk [was] anarchy and outrage, so the bands and their followers [dressed] and [behaved] in a manner to shock and disgust."[86] No one shocked the masses more than Jon the Postman. Jon the Postman would often get on stage and scream through whatever song came into his head.[87] Like many other punk rockers, Jon had no talent and yet his audiences loved him. Audience members would leap up and down, hanging on the edge of the stage, banging their limbs about, beer flying out of their cans.[88] This chaotic behaviour was encountered at every punk show. Violence was always present but rarely were there any critical injuries. Like in anarchy, it was about the absolute

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[81] Ibid., 222.
[82] Savage, 116.
[83] Colegrave & Sullivan, 224.
[84] Ibid., 225.
[85] Savage, 116.
[86] Colegrave & Sullivan, 167.
[87] Wells, 73.
[88] Ibid.

state of freedom – in this case freedom *from* rather than freedom *to* – without any authority, such as the police, dictating a code of conduct.

"When the Sex Pistols took the stage, it was cultural year zero."[89] Unfortunately, the movement could not last. At first it had been fresh, untouchable, and incomparable to anything else. By 1978, bands had started to copy each other, and even replicate themselves, with every album sounding the same. Whereas in the beginning there had been no rules in punk, restrictions soon developed. For example, love songs were not written or performed.[90] At first punks had dressed to distinguish themselves from the masses and speak out against conformity and oppression, they later dressed in specific styles in order to *belong* to the punk movement, more often than not treating non-punks in a condescending manner. What the early punks had no foreseen was that in asking others to join with them in a movement, they would no longer be able to stand alone against the establishment; instead, punks began policing themselves, and by labeling some people as punks and some as non-punks, they gave way to conformity. Where punk had been freedom and liberation, it became confining and defining. A dogma was built up and at the moment punk became a label for record companies and marketing. Punk was finished. Anarchy became "a badge of conformity rather than an alternative way of living."[91] With the increase in stereotypes, freedom over punk music, image, and attitude was taken away. Once it became marketable, the rules were written and punks lost their freedom. The date of punk's death coincides closely with that of Sid Vicious – February 2, 1979 – who committed suicide by means of a drug overdose,[92] after the murder of his love, Nancy Sungen. His protracted demise, becoming worldwide news, was the ultimate statement of "Punk's inbuilt drive to failure."[93]

From 1976-1979 punk embodied the anarchy of the fleeting moment during a revolution, when there is no high power, no constitutional rules and principles, since the old ones have been torn and the new ones are yet to be written. Like anarchism, punk was anti-

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[89] Colegrave & Sullivan, 115.
[90] Wells, 21.
[91] Colegrave & Sullivan, 187.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Savage, 530.

dogmatic; there were no rules, to bounds. For four years this genre of music lay in a state of bedlam and disorder from every aspect: musically, through lyrics and music; through its physical aspects; through its attitude and behaviour. The social conditions of the 1970s in England opened a window of opportunity to create this movement, which might have otherwise manifested itself in a different manner, and perhaps even at a different time and location. Punk was not just a musical movement; it was cultural, social, and political. It changed everything from fashion to musical attitudes. It was an obnoxious row that "mushroomed into a worldwide phenomenon that touched the lives of millions."[94] Just as every revolution must come to an end, so too did punk rock's fiery burst. Because punk rock exploded and burned so bright, it ran out of fuel. The state of revolution could not last: as power is snatched from the hands of revolutionaries at the reinstatement of a new government, anarchy in punk rock came to an end with the genre's eventual established rules, guidelines, and marketed image, which created a clear punk stereotype. The state of permanent, unresolved revolution was impossible to sustain. In the end, punk rock grew up and dissipated, its remnants seeping into many genres of music, including alternative, heavy metal, grunge, funk, and goth. It left behind a resplendent legacy of shocks, horrors, and top-notch entertainment.

Punk rock was born like a phoenix out of rock 'n' roll's ashes: rising to flaming glory, only to crumble to dust once more. It shook the world, but punk never came back. Punk in its original state was adolescent, immature, and filled with hormones. "Anarchy was the word really, because it became anarchy, and then there was no answer."[95] The socio-economical and political conditions in England during the mid-1970s set the scene from the birth of punk. Due to its explosive nature, however, it was born to failure. Punk itself could not progress because any change from its anarchical state would mean a move towards indoctrination. Punk's very fear of being labeled drove the movement into classification. Its adolescent character could not avoid growing up and maturing into various types of music that still resonate today. Punk left a great legacy in "fashion, bands, and in people's general

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[94] Wells, 5.
[95] Colegrave & Sullivan, 379.

attitudes towards things."[96] Even though it found its way back to America, instilling the grunge movement headed by Nirvana, paving the way for goth music and heavy metal, fractioning away from big record companies, inspiring the indie movement, and motivating alternative music, it culturally remained anarchy's last post on the bugle. "It's funny now when I meet people who were punks," recalls Madness vocalist Suggs, "it's a bit like they've survived a war, except they survived radical changes in popular culture."[97]

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[96] Ibid., 380.
[97] Ibid.