

THE BLACK SWAN- Legendary Punk Pub

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This pub can be seen where the people are standing. It was disrespectfully known as "The Mucky Duck" by Sheffielders. It survived in place until recent times, latterly moving to the corner of Bank Street before finally giving up the ghost. Notice on the right the old "Grand" theatre. The date around 1918.

The Black Swan, Snig Hill

THE BLACK SWAN**Legendary Punk Pub**

The Black Swan pub. If you're familiar with British pubs you know it's a pretty common name for some pretty standard pubs. If you are familiar to Sheffield you may know it under its nickname, the Mucky Duck. If you are young and familiar to Sheffield, you may not it as one of its more contemporary names: the Boardwalk, Compleat Anger, Fuel and Twist. But if you are familiar with the OG Punk scene, you know that the Black Swan pub in Sheffield is one of the most legendary Punk venues to have existed.

The Black Swan is most famous for being the venue of The Clash's first show. On the 4th July 1976 they supported the Sex Pistols, and the gig has since made its way into the history books. That day saw a blistering heat wave, and reports are conflicting, but it's generally accepted that only a handful of fellow Punks actually turned up to the show- with the majority of the room not being Punks at all. Hard to believe, but that was the reality of Punk in it's summer premiere. Technical Prog Rock and flower power Hippies were at a mainstream apex.



Though the performance was stricken with the usual tuning f*** ups you might expect from band hitting the stage for the first time- Paul Simonon had never even performed live before- the members were struck with a sense of familiarity and comfort. In other words, its sounds like they finally discovered who they were and what they were meant to do. Joe and Paul describe the show in a later interview with the Guardian in 2008:

Joe: The first gig we ever played was at what we used to call the Mucky Duck (actually called the Black Swan) in Sheffield. We had a song we did called "Listen", which had a bassline that went up in a scale and then down a note to start, and Paul was so nervous that he just kept going up the scale, and we all fell over laughing 'cos we didn't know when to come in.

Paul: The day The Clash started really was when we played the Mucky Duck with the Pistols, which was great.

It was the first time that I had ever played on stage. The night before it felt frightening but once we were on the way there then I began larking about. I tied one of Keith's shoes to a piece of string and hung it out of the back of the van – the door had to be open anyway so we could breathe. So there we were sitting with all the amps and luggage with a plimsoll bouncing around behind us and all the cars behind us slowing down to avoid it. But the moment that we walked out on stage it was like I was in my own living room. I felt really comfortable. Things went wrong during the evening, and Mick had to come over and tune my guitar, but it didn't bother me. I just wanted to jump around, but Mick wanted it to be in tune.

The following day, it seems they impressed. Sounds magazine described the band:

...the first band to come along who'll really frighten the Sex Pistols...what hits first is the gut-curdling power of them. It's like the gleaming and totally unstoppable bastard son of the Pistols and the Ramones with the firepower of Status Quo. I think a hell of a lot of people are going to be knocked out by them. Exciting isn't the word for it.



But it certainly didn't stop there for the Black Swan/Boardwalk. A regular barfly in later years was Jarvis Cocker, who went on to found seminal Brit Pop band Pulp. They played the Black Swan a number of times. This was also the spot that Human League was formed, when Phil Oakey recruited Susan and Joanne, which you can read more about [HERE](#) in a past post of ours. Then even more recently, an ex-employee of the venue started his own band, and wrote an EP called 'Beneath the Boardwalk'. They turned out to be the Arctic Monkeys, and played a number of their early shows at the same history laden venue on top of Snig Hill.

To end, rumour has it that the Black Swan might be resurrected from the Punk crypt. The venue has been listed as up for sale since 2016, and locals are more than little pleased at the idea of having this legendary venue re-open its doors once again.

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