

The night that punk went overground- July 4th 1976- an oral account

Written by [louderthanwar](#) 4 July, 2012

36 years ago on July 4th 1976 there were two key gigs that saw punk move overground. [The Ramones supported the Flaming Groovies at the Roundhouse in a gig that saw nearly every band speed up over night.](#) classic bill that changed everything classic bill that changed everything

Meanwhile the [Sex Pistols](#) and the [Clash](#) played the [Black Swan](#) in Sheffield which was the debut gig by the [Clash](#).

In this excerpt from [John Robb's "ÉPunk Rock- An Oral History"](#) the people who were there explain what happened"À

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4th July: [The Clash](#) played their debut gig supporting the [Sex Pistols](#) at Sheffield's [Black Swan pub](#). [The Black Swan](#) was a regular venue on the pub rock circuit (and still is a regular venue "à now called the [Boardwalk on Sing Hill, Sheffield](#)) with the likes of [Brinsley Schwarz](#), [Ducks Deluxe](#) and the ubiquitous [Dr Feelgood](#) playing there. There was probably only a handful of people present, although some eyewitnesses reported a sizeable crowd in the sweltering venue in the middle of the 1976 summer heatwave.

Mick Jones

We played our first gig at the Black Swan in Sheffield. We went in the back of a removal truck with the gear piled up next to us. We all sat in the back. It had a gate on the back, and it was open like an old army truck, and we put someone's shoes on a string and put them out the back and they bounced along! And the gear was going like this [waves his hand about, laughing] "à it was quite hairy!

It was the back room of a pub. There were fifty people there, a couple of punks"à it was interesting, wherever you went you would see a couple of them in the early times. Then you would see them getting more all the time "à they would tell their friends. It was a big thing.

Very often people got it completely wrong. But in a way you *couldn't* get it wrong, it wasn't formed. We were just starting to find out what it could be. You didn't think about it too much really. When you are young you think about it after in the post-match analysis! By the time everyone had sussed it, it was already over.

We were dressed in black and white. A couple of us had ties on, black and white shirts with suity bits. It was punky style "à not good suits, a bit ripped. Kind of tight suits, slightly different. We were dressed fairly straight and well-behaved in a way "à maybe a rip here and a little splash of colour there. A couple of pin-type things, not safety pins. The look was still formulating.

There was a bit of paint dribbled here and there. It had come off when we had to paint the rehearsal room. We got the paint from the car spray place down the road. Bernie was involved in garages and he used to go down there and get spray. We started painting all the amps pink, and as we were painting everything we were getting covered in paint. I guess that was our first look. Also Glen has a claim to this as well, because he had a pair of trousers that were paint-splattered À † la Pollock, so he should take a bit of credit for it. The style thing came naturally through Paul. We were all into the style, especially Paul and I. Joe not so much, but we would always encourage each other.

Keith Levene

At the Black Swan I remember John sitting miles away from the rest of the band members, looking miserable, and there's me sitting in another corner away from all *my* band members, looking miserable. So I walk over to Lydon and talk to him. We know each other, but we don't *know* each other, because we're the rival bands. We were both in the Black Swan in Sheffield in 1965

the scene at the time. I said, "ÉI'm out of here after this gig.' (It turned out I was out a few gigs later, after the Roundhouse show.) "ÉDo you want to get a band together if the Pistols ever end? Though it doesn't look like it at the moment "à looks like you could be the next Beatles. But if it ever changes... And there's no way I'm going to be in a band with Steve Jones. It's going to be a different band or it's going to be the Sex Pistol with me.'

4th July: *The same night as the Clash's debut up in Sheffield, the Ramones played the Roundhouse in Camden, and nearby Dingwall's the following night, supporting the Flamin' Groovies (DID THEY SUPPORT THE GFOOVIES AT BOTH SHOWS...CHECK). Playing to 2000 people at the Roundhouse was their biggest gig yet, the first time they had played outside small clubs. These were also their first shows in the UK, and proved to be pivotal moments in the early punk scene. Instantly nearly every band speeded up. All the faces from the nascent punk scene were ther... and it ended up in a brawl outside Dingwall's.*

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Marco Pirroni

I went to see the Ramones at Dingwall's. I thought they were great. After that, everybody speeded up. Suddenly its "É1, 2, 3, 4, duh-duh-duh-duh-duh"À' Before that, everyone was quite different.

Rob Lloyd

Before seeing the Pistols I had seen the Ramones play. They came over and played at the Roundhouse supporting the Flamin' Groovies, with the Stranglers third on the bill.[\[1\]](#) Me and Dave Schofield and Graham Blunt, the bass player in the Prefects, hitched down to London to that gig specifically to see the Ramones. When they had finished, the Flamin' Groovies came on "à they were OK but this was the time when they were all wearing Beatles suits and sounding bit ropey. We thought they looked shit and went into the bar area, which was empty because, believe it or not, easily the majority of the crowd had gone to see the Flamin' Groovies.

The Ramones and a few hangers on were in the bar with Danny Fields, who was their legendary manager. He came up to us and started talking, and they couldn't understand that we had actually travelled to see them. They thought that they meant nothing to nobody in the UK, and when we said that we had hitched a few hundred miles to see them they were made up. They said, "ÉDo you know we are going to see the Ramones tomorrow night?' which was Sunday night. Danny Fields said, "ÉAre you coming?' We said, "ÉWe got nowhere to stay, we've got to go back to school in Cannock on Monday.' Danny Fields said, "ÉDo you want to stay at our hotel?' We said, "ÉYeah!' and he booked a room in the same hotel as the Ramones.

The next day we went to dinner with the Ramones and their record company in the UK, and we went to the soundcheck at Dingwall's. Outside Dingwall's was the Pistols and the Clash waiting to meet the Ramones. I remember the Clash had the 101ers' "ÉKeys To Your Heart' to give to the Ramones "à they had nothing else to give them.

There was an air of tension at the gig in general. I don't know what the Ramones thought of the Pistols and the Clash but both bands had turned up to pay homage to them. I think the Ramones were a bit frightened of them. The British bands were sitting on the bonnets of cars that were parked outside. They looked liked they were looking for trouble "à when you look back on it that was a big pose. Apart from one person who was looking for trouble "à J. J. Burnel. I think there might have been a bit of bother between the Stranglers and the Clash.

>J. J. Burnel

There was that [incident with Paul Simonon at Dingwall's](#), which didn't help with us and the punk elite. The other bands were a bit pissed off that we had been chosen to represent London at the July 4th bicentennial gig. We were the first to play with the Ramones and Patti Smith, and that pushed a few people off. We were out of the inner circle after that. That did us immense favours in the long term. We evolved on our own, as if we had been in Australia for millions of years, like weird animals.

Rat Scabies

You *had* to go and see the Ramones. There was no choice. We went to see them at Dingwalls the following night and everyone was there. I remember Paul Simonon fighting with J. J. Burnel. I remember a photograph somewhere of all the bands standing outside with Danny Fields. Chrissie Hynde was there as well. We were all given miniature baseball bats. Mine was a black one with "Éthe Ramones' on the side of it. I lost it years ago.

Gaye Advert

I saw the Ramones at The Roundhouse. I've still got my toy baseball bat. Joey came down the side at the end and of the gig and was handing them out. I'd never heard of the Flamin' Groovies before. It seemed strange that the Ramones were supporting them. The Ramones were amazing. You wouldn't have known the lyrics from the gigs! Thirty seconds into the track and you would realise which song it was, and then the song was over.

Marco Pirroni

The Ramones were the biggest influence. Suddenly everything became like the Ramones. That became the standard style, but no one did it as well as the Ramones. They also had that pop sensibility as well. They were great tunes. They always looked the same. They also clothes were like a Hanna Barbera cartoon "à they always wear the same clothes, they never change, and neither did the Ramones. Initially I hated their long hair but I forgave them because they were so good!

Captain Sensible

When the Ramones came over "à that was a bit of revelation. Everyone sped up after that Dingwalls gig. Everyone in the audience "à you knew most of them. The funny thing was when you did your first gig in those days, like that Ramones gig at Dingwalls, if there was anyone who walked in there who didn't know what it was, they would walk out again.

Rob Lloyd

All kinds of things happened. Danny Fields wanted me to start up a Ramones UK fan club. Legs McNeil's *Punk* magazine had a photo story of the Ramones' first trip to the UK. There was a couple of photos of me with the Ramones "à the caption underneath said, "ÉHere are the Ramones with Robert Lloyd, Europe's Number One Ramones fan.' Danny was in touch with me for some time trying to get me to start a Ramones fan club. Apart from managing the Doors, the Stooges and Nice, Danny also had a hand in the American magazine *Sixteen*. Danny was an old gay geezer and this *Sixteen* magazine had pictures of Bay City Rollers and David Cassidy "à he loved that kind of pop. He wanted the Ramones to be a cartoon pop band rather than an into punk group. That was really keen on the idea of having a fan club because he was into pop bands. By that stage I said, "ÉI love the Ramones, Danny, but the main thing is I want to start my own group now.'

Vic Godard

That was an important gig. I remember Joe Strummer being right down the front. Everyone was there. The Talking Heads were the support band and we were there to see them mainly. McLaren came up and said, "ÉYou look like you are in a band.' We were wearing Oxfam clothes dyed all dark grey to make it all look really drab "à it was our look. We were into films. The big film influence were these British bands that had post-war grimy look about them. We were into the East European group. McLaren told us to form a group at that Ramones Roundhouse gig. We were like a group of people who hung about at college. It was this group that ended up in the band. It was similar to people who went to the Pistols. At first when we got the band together it was like a pistake. It was like we were doing comedy! The drummer was singing, doing impersonations of Johnny Cash, Elvis and Danny La Rue. He was the singer, a real extrovert in the band, and it was fortunate that he was the only one who could play drums so I ended up being the singer. All I could do was play harmonica, so that was all that I did, and a lot of the songs didn't have harmonica on them at all. I just wanted to be part of it, but not the singer.

[\[footnote 1\]](#) The Flamin' Groovies were perhaps the most unlucky band of all time, making a habit of being the wrong band at the wrong time. Formed in San Francisco in 1963, they were initially a beat group influenced by the British Invasion, making great albums like *Supersnazz* (CHECK) and getting ignored by the psychedelic-drenched West Coast scene. Moving into producing. By 1976 it seemed like fate had conspired in their favour with a more back-to-basics flavour in the air. They released the genius *Shake Some Action* album and looked set to break through on the back of punk rock, but it wasn't to be, and the band faded to eternal cult status.

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Love the Groovies, love Ramones. Would have given eye teeth to see that gig, but was only nine or ten at the time and in the States lol [Reply](#)

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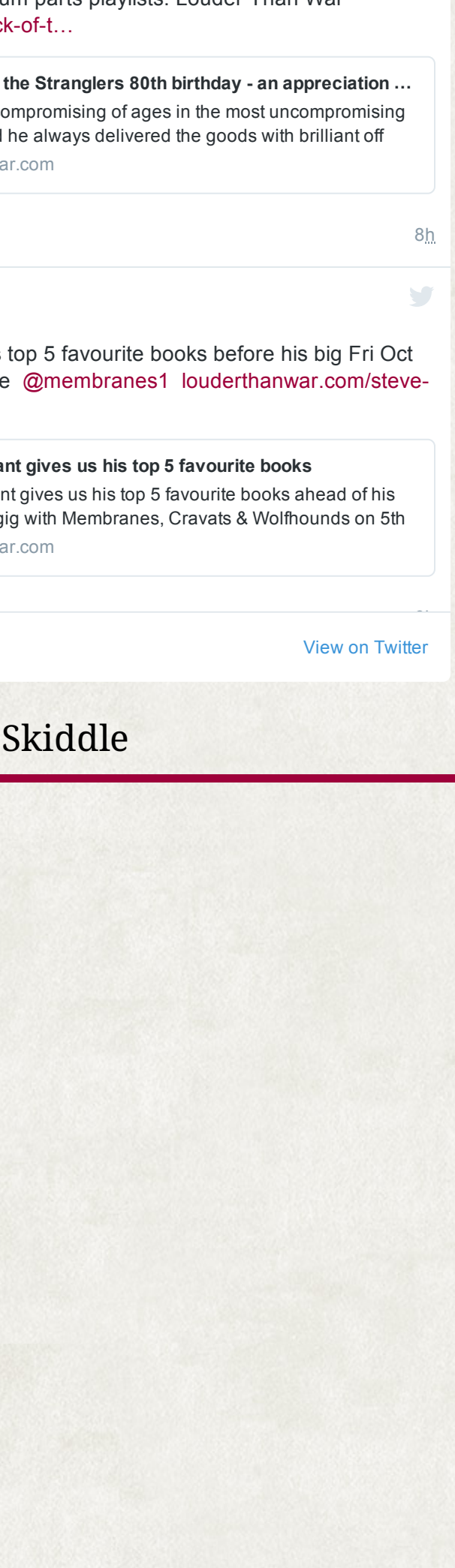
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