

eyewitness

1 - 21 September 1976

100 Club Punk Festival

How The Clash, The Damned, and the Sex Pistols gathered in a London trad-jazz nitespot to start a musical revolution.

1 September 1976

Ron Watts (manager, 100 Club) It was the end of that long, hot summer. I'd been booking the Pistols into the 100 Club for months and people were starting to come from Manchester, Plymouth, Newcastle... A&R men had been down from all the major record labels, but they all turned their noses up. It occurred to me that some sort of event, call it a festival, was needed to put punk on the map. I was informally managing The Damned at that point and I got Malcolm McLaren involved because he was in with a lot of other bands, notably the Pistols.

Caroline Coon (journalist and founder of the drug charity Release) When I heard about the festival I told Melody Maker I'd cover it. They didn't like it. But it was obviously going to establish whether there was something really happening or not. No one even knew if there were enough bands to constitute a real new movement. Remember, there were no punk records in the shops and the Pistols and The Clash hadn't even signed to labels.

Vic Godard (Subway Sect) Malcolm wanted as many groups as he could get for the festival. When he saw us, we'd never played in front of an audience and he thought we were so awful that there was no way we could do it. So he booked us for rehearsals at a place in Chelsea and paid for it. We only had five songs.

Pete Shelley (guitar, Buzzcocks) We'd done the Screen On The Green gig with the Pistols and then Malcolm called and asked if we'd do the festival as well.

Siouxsie Sioux There was a vacant space and Malcolm was saying, "We need another band." I said, "We've got a band." We hadn't. The next day we rehearsed with Sid Vicious on drums, Marco Pirroni and Steven [Severin]. We'd just seen The Cry Of The Banshee on TV and thought 'banshee' was a great word.

Marco Pirroni (guitar, Banshees) We'd had an abortive rehearsal at The Clash's place on Monday. We realised there was no point in trying to learn any songs.

"Sid Vicious took a dislike to Stinky Toys—just because they were French."

THE 100 CLUB'S RON WATTS

20 September 1976

John Ingham (journalist, Sounds) That first afternoon when people were soundchecking, Ron Watts was saying there were going to be hundreds of people that night. People told him he was out of his mind, but he went out, came back and said there were about 500 outside. This was the first time I'd seen a punk I didn't know in the street.

Caroline Coon I talked with the kids in the queue. Not many had the bondage look yet, but they had ripped chinos, brothel creepers, faces scarred with blades. Their look mirrored the despair of the times.

Andy Blade (vocals, Eater) We didn't know at the time, but the queue outside was like a who's who of people who were going to go on to form bands later: Shane MacGowan, Siouxsie, Gaye Advert, TV Smith, Chrissie Hynde.

Ron Watts Malcolm and the Pistols were up to something. They kept getting into huddles and going out to the cafe. I think he was signing them to a contract.

Glen Matlock (bass, Sex Pistols) After Malcolm McLaren showed us the contract, I read through it and took up a point about percentages, but John [Lydon] was really daft about it. John didn't even bother to read the contract. He just said to me, "You read it then?" I said, "Yeah, I read it." He said, "Well, if there's anything wrong with it, it's your fault." And he signed it without even reading it.

COMPILED BY JOHNNY BLACK. PHOTO: BARRY PLUMMER



Nascent new wavers at the 100 Club's punk festival, September 20, 1976.

Andy Blade Ron Watts asked us to play, but on the day he couldn't let us because we were all so young, like 14 and 15.

Ron Watts Even though I'd advertised the order they'd play in, there was jostling for position all day. There was a real rivalry between the Pistols and The Clash. Sid Vicious was the worst problem. He took a dislike to Stinky Toys, purely on the grounds that they were French. He had a knife out and I had to get it away from him.

Caroline Coon Siouxsie and Sid were hanging around all afternoon trying to decide if they had the nerve to go on. Siouxsie was very un-self-confident, asking people what she should sing.

Ron Watts Bernie Rhodes and Malcolm McLaren got into a huge row about Siouxsie wearing a swastika on her arm.

Bernie Rhodes (manager, The Clash) I felt she wasn't aware of what she was letting herself in for. If she used it, we too would be associated with the swastika. I felt she was mucking about with a loaded gun, and we didn't want to have anything to do with it.

"Onstage, the idea was to annoy people so much that they'd chuck us off."

SIOUXSIE SIoux

Siouxsie Sioux I wouldn't apologize for it because it wasn't political at all. I saw it as just the gear that I wore.

Joe Strummer The swastika thing went back at least a year. Bernie and Malcolm had worked together designing clothes. Malcolm had come up with this swastika armband and Bernie hated it. So when Bernie saw Siouxsie wearing it, it brought the old fight to a head again.

Siouxsie Sioux When we went onstage, the idea was to annoy people so much that they'd chuck us off. It was taking the piss out of all the things we hated: Marco with his feedback, me waiving over the top of it singing Knockin' On Heaven's

Door and The Lord's Prayer, Steve trying to turn his bass on, and Sid with his relentless banging.

Captain Sensible (bass, The Damned) Siouxsie was utterly useless. They didn't deserve to be allowed anywhere near a stage. As far as I could make out, she was just this kid with loads of dosh from a well-to-do family. She was the only person I knew then who could afford to spend £200 a time on S&M outfits from Malcolm's shop.

Marco Pirroni We did a Velvet Underground thing for what seemed like hours. It was horrible. I remember me and Sid looking at each other and we were fed up, so we just stopped.

Ron Watts I hardly saw any of the music because there was antagonism the whole day between the London and the Manchester punks. I had to break up at least three fights. It was an elitist thing. The London punks could see that their personal little scene was being invaded and they were losing control. It was awful, because that wasn't what punk was about. The old bands had been elitist. The punks were supposed to be different.

Joe Strummer The Clash were in the middle of this ludicrous Stalinist vibe where we decided it was uncool to talk to the audience. Inevitably, we broke a string, so suddenly there's no music. Luckily, I always used to have a transistor radio with me because there were those cool pirate radio stations. We didn't have spare guitars, so I just switched on the radio and held it up to the mic. At the mixing desk, Dave Goodman was hip enough to put a delay on it and it happened to be a

discussion about the bombs in Northern Ireland. It was pure luck, but it sounded absolutely brilliant. Apocalyptic.

Roger Armstrong (co-owner, Chiswick Records) I vividly remember one typical McLaren-type stunt that night. He had arranged for all his friends to bring along cameras with flashguns. Then, when the Pistols came on, he got them all to run up to the stage and start shooting, so you had all these flashes going off, which made it look very impressive.

Steve Mick (Sniffin' Glue fanzine) The Pistols were fucking brilliant. They were really on form. There were kids on chairs, tables... No one in their right mind could say they couldn't play.

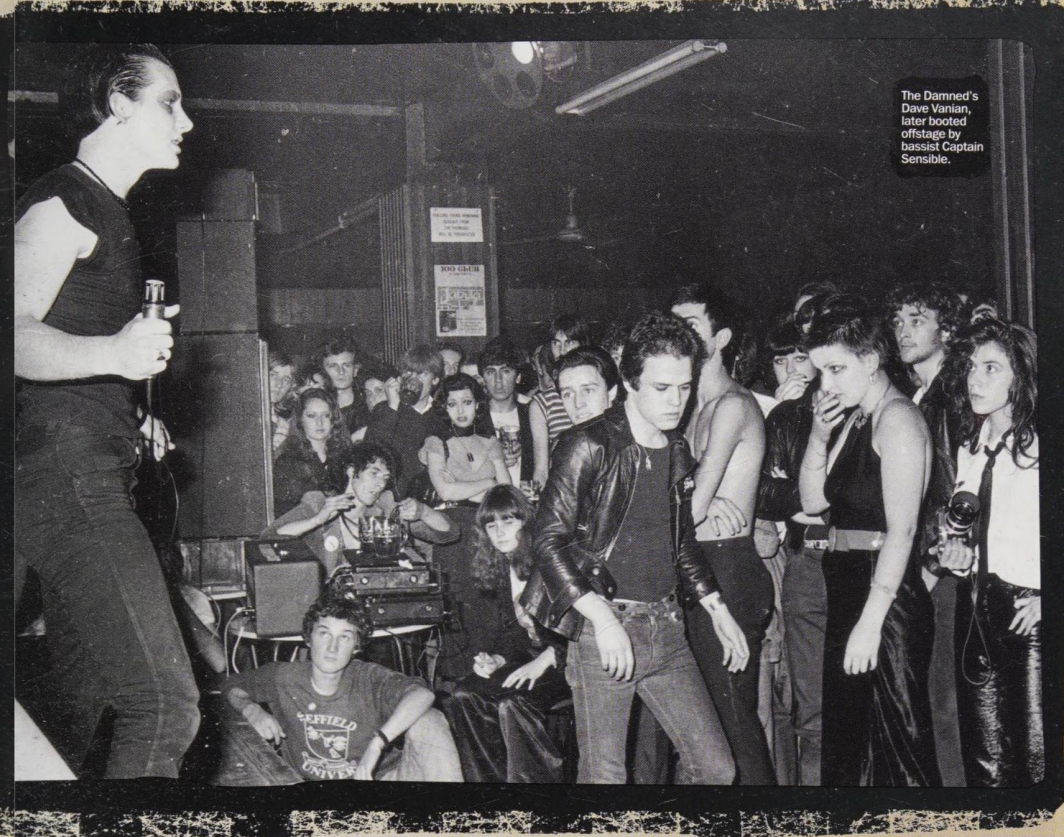
September 21, 1976

Eddie (drums, The Vibrators) When we turned up, there was no PA system. Luckily we'd played a gig up in Holloway Road the night before, so we agreed to let them use our PA system. It was meant for little pub gigs, so it was really useless, too small for the 100 Club.

Ron Watts Chris Spedding [renowned guitarist] had been down the club to see a few punk bands play and he'd really enjoyed it. He sided with them, and asked me if he could be on the bill. He wanted to be associated with it.

Eddie Spedding showed up in the afternoon and said, "Alright, so what's this gig I'm supposed to be playing?" It was like he had seen an advert announcing he was playing but no one had told him anything about it. We spent the rest of the afternoon and the evening in the dressing room learning the chords for his songs.

Captain Sensible The Buzzcocks turned up with all their equipment in Tesco bags. They had these Top 20 guitars which were the cheapest thing you could possibly buy. Most only had four strings and they couldn't even tune them.



The Damned's Dave Vanian, later booted offstage by bassist Captain Sensible.

Pete Shelley People like The Vibrators were already better established than us, so they got the use of a dressing room. We just had to dump our gear in a little alcove with seats that had been cordoned off. There was a lot of talk that afternoon about the possibility that The Damned might get signed to Stiff Records. Stinky Toys were good. Their singer screeched incessantly like Yoko Ono. The more excessive you could be, obviously the more you were on the right track.

Knox (guitar, The Vibrators) I had loaned the Stinky Toys guitarist my amp and speakers, and he played so loud that he blew out the speaker cones. So we went on and sounded crap.

Captain Sensible We really couldn't play very well at all, but we were better than any of the others. I spent most of my time standing at the front of the stage shrieking with laughter at the other bands, which didn't much amuse them.

We always tried to upstage each other, so at one point, I kicked [Damned singer] Dave Vanian and he went hurtling right off the front of the stage. It wasn't as bad as it sounds, because the stage was only two feet high, but that meant it was easy for the crowd to climb up and mob you. Anyway, he went off the stage and crashed right into Siouxsie.

Pete Shelley A friend of ours eventually turned up, so we left him to look after our gear and went out to get a burger. As a result, we missed the famous incident with the smashed glass.

Caroline Coon I was standing up on a chair that I'd dropped against the back wall of the club, so I could see what was going on. I saw things being thrown and there was a commotion and I realized something was happening. I actually saw the glass shatter against the pillar and my impression was that it wasn't Sid who threw it.

Eddie People started coming into the dressing room. There was one guy with his forehead gashed open and pouring blood. All we could do was wrap towels around his head. Then a girl came in with blood coming out of her eye. I thought, Christ, if this is what punk's about, you can shove it.

Caroline Coon The ambulance came first and people were taken away, then the police Gestapo'ed in, mob-handed, and Sid looked the likeliest suspect so they started frogmarching him out.

Ron Watts I'm certain it was Sid. He wasn't trying to hit the girl. He was just pissed off at The Damned, because he saw them as the main rivals to the Pistols, so he threw a pint tankard at the stage. Instead, it shattered on a pillar and glass went into this girl's eye. One of my barmen saw the whole thing. When the police tried to arrest Sid, there was immediately about 30 punks all saying it wasn't him.