

The Baker

Scraps and Glimpses...

The 100 Club Punk Festival 1976 (Revisited)

40 years ago, at the end of a red-hot English summer, a highly significant Festival took place at the 100 Club in Oxford Street. Although only several hundred people were in attendance, it was nevertheless a watershed moment in popular music and culture. The 100 Club Punk Festival was the moment when everything changed in Britain and a new era in popular culture was born. As my own small contribution to the 40th anniversary of 1976 (Year Zero), I have put together a few scraps and glimpses from memory of that momentous gig. Endlessly chronicled and dissected by writers and journalists over the years, this is my own personal view of the show and what was happening then. Being entirely subjective, I'm sure many of you who were around at that time may disagree entirely with the facts I present from memory.



I think what journalists and the media have failed to understand is the precarious state of the nascent punk rock scene back then. The Clash were a tiny troop – just Mick, Joe, Paul, and Terry (to some extent). Bernard Rhodes (the manager) and his 'missus Sheila, Mickey Foote their sound man, and Sebastian Conran flitting in and out of Rehearsal Rehearsals on his Norton Commando. There was no-one printing t-shirts or making clothes, no record company to call on, no tour manager, no wages. The only person with a car was Bernie, so when I showed up with

the Subway Sect having a functioning motor vehicle, I was very quickly co-opted to run errands, pick-up spares, and shuttle back and forth to Bernie's. They were just an idea at the time, fermenting over six months and born from the frustration of the bloated, stagnant music scene. Their existence was balanced on a knife-edge, with success or failure at each show so crucial.

Contrast that with the Pistols who had been gigging for almost a year, had Malcolm and Vivian successful in their own right, the SEX shop supplying their clothes, Boogie, their soundman, Sophie in the office, and the whole Bromley contingent following them around, providing a supportive entourage. What the 100 Club Punk Festival did was to solidify the inner core of the top punk rock bands (Pistols, Clash, Damned, Buzzcocks, Subway Sect), and give the concept an identity and meaning. In the weeks following the show, bandwagon-jumpers like 'The Stranglers' and 'Eddie And The Hotrods' would push their hair behind their ears, place rubber bands around their flared jeans, and try to catch the wave that had been created. It was off to the races after the Festival.

Since arriving at 'Rehearsal Rehearsals' sometime in the first half of August as school friend and roadie with the Subway Sect, a daily schedule between us and The Clash had developed. Depending on how early I could get them to Rehearsals (and if The Clash were still rehearsing), we often strolled down to George's cafe, just over the Camden Lock, for a cuppa' and a sandwich. There was another closer greasy spoon cafe right opposite Rehearsals, but everyone used George's, not just because it was more agreeable but because of the owner's daughter, a doe-eyed teenager, Gabby, who we fantasized over constantly. She worked in the cafe and we would watch her out of the corner of our eye, trying not to make eye contact. A hush would come over the table as she approached and fetched our orders. Sometimes, if any of the Clash were still at Rehearsals, they would wander down for a cuppa' and we would chat about various things that were going on. It was where we got most of our information back then. Occasionally, a journalist or photographer would accompany them and tea and sandwiches would be coaxed out of their expense budget. Even though The Clash were being written up in the music papers, they seemed to be poorer than we were! I occasionally had to stand for a cheese-and-tomato sandwich for Paul or egg-mayonnaise for Mick.

Then it would be the Subway Sect's turn to rehearse in the evening until they'd had enough. Sometimes Sid Vicious, Glen Matlock, or Mad Jane would be hanging around and not much rehearsing would get done. Paul Simonon would often be amusing himself playing with toy guns, practicing his bass lines, or happily breaking something. I busied myself fixing equipment, picking up spares, or popping over to the pub for a pint and a packet of crisps.



The original Subway Sect – Rob Simmons, Paul Myers, Paul Smith, Vic Godard.

As the day of the 100 Club Punk Festival drew closer, rehearsals for both bands noticeably intensified. The Clash had about a ten-song set by then although we only heard snatches of it as we came and went through the studio. Their rehearsals were conducted at a driving pace and there never seemed to be much in the way of inactivity. In contrast, The Subways had put together a short five-number set of manically fast, dissonant, jarring numbers. Being brought up on soul music, I had no ear for loud, inharmonious rock. The high pitched, cacophonous, jangly guitar and very basic drumming was an assault on my ears though I appreciated the creativity and motivation behind it. But all the photographers and journalists that saw and heard them loved it and seemed to construe their eccentric behaviour as a planned, staged anti-rock'n'roll stance, laying their own interpretations on the band's meaning, many of which were maybe unjustified. Much of this was undoubtedly due to Vic Goddard's own character and his pseudo-intellectual lyrics that purveyed this image – but to me personally at that time they were still just school-mates, fucking around with guitars; our shyness and naivety was no act; our introverted nature was just us being ourselves.

The night before the show, Sid Vicious, Steve Havoc (Severin), and Marco Pirroni, the other members of the impromptu band The Flowers of Romance, showed up at Rehearsals for an unplanned rehearsal. Arranged at the last minute with Bernie, we had no idea they would be there and so moved our equipment out of the way while they messed around on the Clash's equipment. Terry had said Sid could use his kit, thinking that Sid would have his own on the night. The rehearsal didn't last very long as Sid just wasn't interested in rehearsing and it soon dissolved into a mere fuck-around. Once they left, we moved the gear away, replacing it with our own and had a short last rehearsal before the Subway Sect's debut gig.

Next day, I drove the Subways' gear down to the 100 Club in my car as the Clash's equipment was being transported along with the PA and the Pistol's gear. We loaded through the back door and down the stairs of the familiar old club. Although I had been there many times as a punter, not so long ago back in our soul dancing days, it had always been dark and hot, throbbing with lights and music. To see it in the cold light of day was a shockingly rude awakening, its beer-soaked floors and filthy sweat-stained walls bore witness to decades of human emotion and exhilaration. The stench of the stinking toilets and the vomit-covered carpets was the first of hundreds of familiar depressive scenes that I would witness in the coming years all over England and Europe's clubs and halls, but like most first experiences, it made a huge and lasting impression. I would never experience the atmosphere of a club in the same way again and the frisson of being a paying dance club customer was shattered forever.

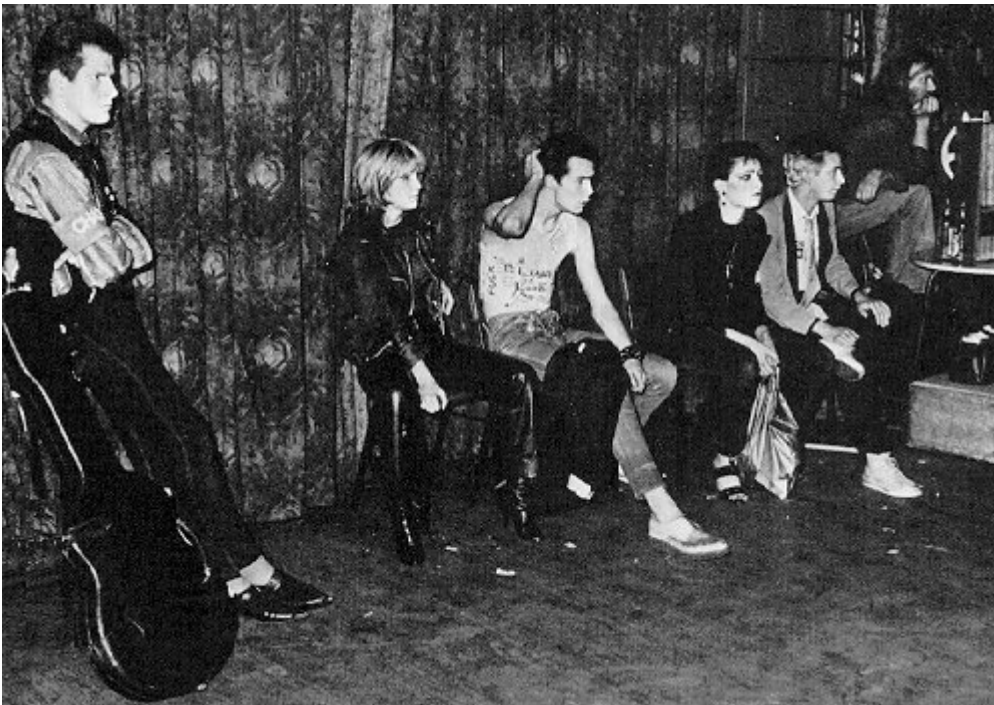


Siouxsie Sioux and Steve Severin outside the club before the sound check.

After we had hauled our equipment in and stacked it in a corner of the room, we sat nervously huddled around a table as the PA and lights were setup. As time passed the club became a hive of activity, with gear being setup and lights pointed. Various band members and friends began arriving and milling around, many of whom we recognized. The Bromley Contingent was again in full force. A few came over and spoke to us, but for the most part we sat there by ourselves. I recall Sid shared a few jokes with us and Johnny Rotten gave a few words of encouragement, as did Steve Jones who Paul Smith seemed to connect with instantly. Mick Jones asked if we needed anything and Paul Simonon would occasionally shoot at us with a small pellet gun he had. We met Boogie, The Pistols' sound man for the first time and he gave out encouraging words

too. Malcolm and Bernie were running back and forth in the club, to busy too even look our way. We were so totally inexperienced we had no idea of what was really going on.

Each band had staked out a table for themselves in the club like small encampments, while we were sitting waiting for sound check. There were a couple of journalists from the music papers doing the rounds and interviewing the bands. One of them eventually came round to the Subway Sect's table and asked, "Have any of you got any musical experience?" Paul Smith said he'd been in the boy scouts. "I've never heard of them," the writer from the NME said, "Who else was in them?" Paul said incredulously, "What you've never heard of the boy scouts? They've been around for years!" The humour of the remark broke the ice for us and we laughed for the first time that day. I'm sure the journalist thought it was all part of their image but it was true, and ironically, it was that kind of comical immaturity that endeared the Subway Sect to mostly everyone.



Band members and friends at the sound check before the show.

As everything began running late with equipment and PA problems, the Pistols decided they wouldn't bother sound checking and so it was decided that there was only time for the Clash to do a sound check. Their gear was setup. They strolled on stage, plugged in and immediately fired straight into 'White Riot' at top volume.

Well! I'd heard of the term 'wall of sound,' but this was like being hit by a sledgehammer over and over again! Played at breakneck speed and full volume it was as if an earthquake had erupted (the emptiness of the club probably contributed to the effect). We sat looking at each other, eyebrows raised, and without a word knew we were all thinking the same thing, "What

Vic Goddard, Paul Smith, and Paul Myers of The Subway Sect.

Then that heart-stopping moment arrived and on they went. Once onstage they displayed such nervousness that the audience must have mistook it for their signature impassionate demeanor, and actually it ended up counting in their favour. Bob Simmons stood riveted to the spot, rigid and tense, Fender Mustang guitar slung high up his chest like a young Wilco Johnson. Paul Myers, curling his lip nervously, stood motionless staring blankly, focusing on his bass-lines. Paul Smith ploughed his way through the five numbers using snare and tom-toms, still unable to incorporate the hi-hat in his playing. Vic Goddard slouched, hanging on the mic, a tortured yet expressionless air, his face highlighted by the white makeup he had applied, ignoring the audience with complete indifference. They got through their set without mishap (much to my relief), and I wasn't called upon to fix anything. The audience reaction was restrained but favorable, seemingly more intrigued than anything else, it not being the mayhem they were expecting. In a sense, the Subway Sect were the perfect warm-up act – just enough to wet an audience appetite, and more than enough to captivate it to want more. When the set finished, the gear was bundled off the stage by the PA crew and it was all I could do to keep it all together in one place by the side of the stage.

Having arranged to use some of the Clash's equipment, The Flowers of Romance started to set-up onstage but on seeing Sid wearing a swastika armband, Bernie Rhodes suddenly refused to let him use the Clash's drum kit. Arguments rang out and accusations were made with Sid calling Bernie "a fucking old Jew!" Sid needed a kit to play and Paul Smith was more than happy to let his hero use the Subways'. So Terry Chime's drum kit had to come off the stage and the Subways' kit brought back on and setup again. It was an absolute shambles with cymbals and tom-toms going back and forth. I remember asking Sid how he wanted the kit setup – he just sneered and said, "However you normally set it." I realised that he still he had no idea how to play the drums.



Siouxsie Sioux and Sid Vicious of The Flowers Of Romance.

After The Flowers or Romance stumbled through their 20-minute version of the 'Lord's Prayer' with Siouxsie Sioux wailing and howling throughout, I was helped off with the Subway's kit again by Mickey Foote, and the other roadcrew. We then brought the Clash's kit back on to be re-miked a second time. By then I had forgotten the crowd with all the chaos ensuing. Suddenly, The Clash came out, plugged in, and launched into their first number at breakneck speed. Watching their set with neck hairs raised and mouth open from the side of the stage I couldn't help being overwhelmed at the blinding, heart-racing spectacle they made. Guitars flashing, colours blurring, speed-crashing deafening punk rock – the Clash gave it to the audience in torrents, number after number. It was total mayhem onstage and chaos from the crowd with sound problems, broken strings, and equipment breakdowns.



The Clash on-stage at the 100 Club.

The Clash finished their set, I helped move their gear off the stage and stored it close by the Subway's backline. Standing on a chair watching the Pistols from out front, I was for the first time, able to detach myself from my previous ambivalence, and became mesmerized by their performance. I remember thinking at the time that this was what it was all about now - the soul scene was dead and gone and for the time being, this was the future. Although I didn't quite comprehend or profess to enjoy the music, it was a turning point for me and I unflinchingly got the message - this was the NEXT BIG THING and more than just a flash in the pan.



The Sex Pistols at The 100 Club.

After the Pistols finished their set and the crowd eventually dispersed a little, we moved our own gear out the back of the club and into my car, then helped move the Clash's equipment. We drove back home to Barnes with a feeling of disbelief at what we had witnessed, and been a part of. At that point we had no idea that we had just participated in would become the foremost legendary punk gig of the time eventually achieving almost mythical status. With our ears still ringing, we sat in my car and speculated until daybreak, on a natural high, unwilling to let go of the night before. In the following days we dissected the music paper reviews which were glowing about the festival and intrigued by the Subway Sect; the Subways' were just grateful that the press hadn't torn them to shreds for their shortcomings! It was a moment of clarity in a sea of confusion. The way seemed clear and all things looked attainable; ambition and success appeared assured. After a brief pause for breath, rehearsals resumed in Camden as before and I became entwined equally in both bands' fortunes, but the passion, ferocity, and intensity of that first show, where it all finally came together, would be hard to surpass in the future.

The Baker. September 2016

Any comments, ideas for future posts, or topic discussion are welcome.

This entry was posted in Uncategorized and tagged Barry Auguste, Bernie Rhodes, Joe Strummer, Malcolm McClaren, Mick Jones, Paul Simonon, punk rock, Subway Sect, The 100 Club Punk Festival, The Baker, The Clash, The Sex Pistols, Vic Godard on September 16, 2016

[<https://thebaker77.wordpress.com/2016/09/16/the-100-club-punk-festival-1976-revisited/>].

142 thoughts on "The 100 Club Punk Festival 1976 (Revisited)"



Mark Refoy

October 14, 2019 at 5:53 am

Baker, I hope this is relevant. In the above blog you talk about Johnny Green and his brilliant book. I remember when I was 17 I saw The Clash for the third time (first was the Anti Nazi League rally, second at the Lyceum) at Birmingham Top Rank Suite, I think it was 1980, there was a tour programme which I think was a copy of the Armagideon Times. Spizz Energi was one of the support bands. Mikey Dread was onstage before The Clash, doing his brilliant toasting. During his set 3 dudes came skanking onstage, grooving away with their profiles concealed by looking down with hats pulled over their foreheads. No one seemed to bat an eyelid. I was pretty near the front and after a while it dawned it me; that's The Clash! I think it was Joe, Paul and either Mick or Topper, I don't think it was all four horsemen. I nudged my mate and said "I think that's The Clash up there, what do you reckon?" He agreed, we thought it was weird that no one said anything. In Johnny's book he said that during the whole tour none of the audience noticed who Mikey Dread's onstage partners were, just want to correct him there! The gig was epic, I'll never forget it. One thing that could've ruined it was the constant gobbing. There was a trail of gob linking Joe to his mic stand just about throughout the whole gig. Utterly fucking disgusting. Why were idiots still doing it well after it had been established that it was the dumbest thing you could do? Anyway, after a song about half way through the gig Mick Jones came off mic and pointed to me and shouted "if you don't stop gobbing someone's gonna come and punch you!" I was utterly mortified, I mouthed back, pleading "it's not me!" Thankfully no one punched me but the spitting didn't abate. I wouldn't have blamed them one bit if they'd pulled the gig and walked offstage for good. But they didn't and they endured that for tour after after tour. Troopers. Many years later I was at a party and Mick and Paul were both there. I plucked up the courage to speak to Mick, introduced myself and told him about the Birmingham gig and he laughed his head off! Boy was I relieved. He then went on to recount a similar tale that happened to him when he used to go and see Mott The Hoople but I couldn't make out exactly what he said due to the loud music so I laughed too, shook his hands and wished him well. All the best Baker, The Clash for life

Mark



thebaker77

Post author

October 14, 2019 at 4:52 pm

Of course it's relevant Mark – it's real, from the mind of a fan, which is always far more relevant than the narrated scribblings of some journalist which is really what my blog is all about! (and I love your Michael Geoffrey story!)

I may even use your post to open another discussion blog if I have your permission...

None of you have had your say....sure, Sandwich and Patsey have done justice in their own way to the history of El Clash Combo, but as I have said before in some of my commentaries:

The music stopped long ago and after the intervening 33 years, just haphazard scenes and random images remain in my memory – the individual minutiae of each gig is now the property of not only the journalists and photographers who chronicled the events, but more importantly, of the fans who were there each night, who made such memories possible, and who remember it incident-by-incident. Every one of them also had a part to play in the journey.

And just as Joe would announce each night onstage **“WE ARE THE CLASH”**....meaning every one of you.

Anyway, back to your question....the Skankers in question were always an eclectic mix of whoever was backstage, whoever could scrounge up some cool-looking gear, and of course the band.

Most often it included:

Jock Scott.

Johnny Green

Mark Dunk. (Kosmo Vinyl)

Joe.

Topper.

Gluggo.

Sometimes Mick or Paul.

Donald from Dundee (That bloke who turned out to be a nazi and looked like Sid James.

There were probably many others at various times. I myself always refused insisting that I would have to be the lone Skanker (but that would ruin the effect).

Johnny told me he first did it “...for the money [Ol’ Bummer bet me £5 I wouldn’t do it] – Also Simmo poured lighter fuel on my black boots then set fire with his Zippo – Probably looked neat from the stalls, the cunt – So then I bet Ol’ Pixie Ears “quid pro quo”....” What larks!

As far as your salient comment regarding the gobbing – well what could you do? It was a purely English punk thing and just had to be endured. [Joe took the brunt of it and many times had to swallow back a huge greeny or miss a line of the song, ending up in Western Hospital with hepatitis.](#) It must have ravaged his liver and who can say what contribution this had to his eventual tragic demise.

Imagine our utter delight and bliss when we went to the US and found to our amazement **NO GOBBING!** The audiences were just as manic and enthusiastic, hyped up on PCP and slam-dancing and doing ‘the worm’ across the stage – but no gobbing!

old school slam dance (another state of mind) 80's punk | ...



Having no explanation I leave you to draw your own conclusions to this strange and disgusting practice but it was part and parcel of what had to be dealt with.

Thanks again for your comment, and to everyone else – keep your memories coming!

The Baker



Laurie Gibson

November 11, 2019 at 7:42 pm

Hello and good wishes from California!

First off, merci beaucoup for taking the time to write about what it was like working with The Clash from nearly Day 1. I really appreciate the chance to learn what both the society and the subculture were like.

I was introduced to the band at age 16 by my pen-pal in Manchester, who sent me newspaper articles and photos. Lucky enough to get the to Hollywood Palladium gig in Oct. '79 to see and hear them in person — one of the best nights of my life.

I'd never experienced that kind of power and intensity!

But with The Clash, it wasn't just raw visceral/emotion... the lyrics made me think, reconsider things. They earned my loyalty because they kicked open a new horizon for me.

Still very proud to be a Clash fan, I've been summoning some of that punk rock energy and spirit to fuel my political action, playing "London Calling" while writing to U.S. senators about impeachment.

Many thanks, Baker, for helping to keep the fire burning!

Laurie
Monterey, Calif.



thebaker77

Post author

November 17, 2019 at 9:14 pm

Thanks for your memories Laurie. All scraps and glimpses are welcome here. You touched on many of the things that made the band so special....they inspired young people to pick up guitars AND books. keep on writing....

Pingback: [20 de septiembre de 1976: el Festival Punk del Club 100 de Londres – Planeta Clash](#)