

# Ron Watts Interview

[Home](#) >> [Punk Bands](#) >> [Interviews](#) >> [Ron Watts](#) >> [Interview Pt2](#)

## Nov 2006 Part 2

[Ron Watts Interview Part 1](#) | [Ron Watts Interview Part 3](#)

RM) Were the early Punks, like Siouxsie, middle class students? If so, how did they feel when Punk was taken up by the masses?  
 Ron) No. The early Punks were solidly working class. There was the art college mob, they weren't numerically very strong, but they were the most vivid people, because of their appearance. They set the standard, the tone, you know? But immediately behind that, by the time of the punk festival of '76, the bulk of the audience was being formed by young, working class people and they took it to their hearts at once.

RM) Were the movements roots biased towards the fashion element or more towards the music side, or was it one package?  
 Ron) The fashion and art side, you know, was where Siouxsie was coming from. They took it very seriously, it was a new movement and they only had the one band to start with. It was very arty, but it was an art movement that worked. If you'd been there the first night I put the Pistols on, I think it was March 30th 1976, and you saw the Bromley Contingent coming in! They didn't all come at once, they come in dribs and drabs. Each time, it was breathtaking and jaw dropping just to see them walk through that door.



RM) Were contemporary Londoners shocked by the appearance of the early Punks?

Ron) Initially, yeah. They'd got used to it by the end of that year. But initially, like in the early months, absolutely.

RM) The summer of '76 is famous for its heat wave. I bet you've great memories of it?

RW) In that summer, and remember that it was the hottest, the best summer in living memory, it was the summer, people still talking about it now, and nothing was happening, everybody was asleep, you know. Anyway, this New Zealand film crew turned up to capture London. They'd been dispatched from Auckland to film London, in the summer. They were bright enough to cotton on to the movement, and they were haunting me! I mean, they got so many yards, so many miles of film, some of it's not even been seen yet. All the main punk films, like the Rock 'n Roll Swindle, The Filth and the Fury, were relying on their footage. They were amazed when they got their first, full on, Bromley Punk. They could not believe it. They said "You guys are 200 years ahead of New Zealand!"

RM) Were you interested about the politics in Punk?

Ron) I tried to keep it at arms length. I wasn't interested in sub-divisions.

RM) What about The Clash?

Ron) Didn't know that they were! (political). I think they were just trying to make it, I mean, they latched on to it. The Pistols had got a lot of the market wrapped up with their attitudes, so The Clash had to find some attitude, and they probably cooked it up with their manager, I reckon. What attitude can we have? Well, the Pistols have got this, that and the other and they found the one that they could go for.

RM) I've read that the purists hated them, but I loved The Jam. They flirted with politics early on, and then really got involved, with Paul Weller joining Red Wedge later.

Ron) The Jam were some of the biggest winners out of Punk. There was such a lot of talent in that band. That band was so tight.

RM) Did you get more involved with them once they'd started to get bigger?

Ron) They wanted me to help them with their American tour, by going ahead from city to city publicising it. But this was '77, and I was amazed that their manager John Weller had asked me, and I would've

loved to have done it. But, I was at the height of my promoting career, and I realised that. So I said "No, I've got to stick with this."



RM) The Jam always felt like a band that, as a fan, you had a stake in.

Ron) I tell you what, they did a show for me at the 100 Club, when they'd been doing really huge venues like the Hammersmith Odeon. They'd always said, when we get there, we'll come back and do one. They ended up doing three for me. One at Wycombe Town Hall, one at the Nags Head, which is a pub, you know! And, the 100 Club. They were really good like that, and I appreciate what they did for me and I love 'em to bits.

RM) It's weird that there was all that acrimony between those people, and even stranger that Rick, and now Bruce, are playing in a Jam tribute band. (The Gift).

Ron) Good drummer. I think, and this is my opinion, as I've no proof of it, that the girls all used to go for Bruce Foxtan. The band was great, and they knew the band was great and they loved Paul Weller. But, in their hearts they all fancied that they'd get off with Bruce Foxtan. When I did the box office at the 100 Club, there'd be all these girls turning up in school uniforms. I'd be saying "How old are you?" and the answer was always "19!" Am I really going to sell these girls tickets?!

RM) I read somewhere, years ago, that Sid Vicious and Paul Weller had a fight after arguing about the Holidays in the Sun/ In the City riff. Did you hear that one?

Ron) No. I can't see that. Paul Weller was from a tough, working class background. A fight between him and Sid Vicious would have lasted about 8 seconds. He would have dealt with Sid in no time at all. It didn't happen. Sid would need to have been tooled up, and I've had to fight him 3 times when he was. And I'm still here. Sid came at me with a chain, once. I confiscated it, and wish I still had all these weapons, as I could put them up for sale at Christies, couldn't I?! And I saw Sid with a knife, threatening Elle, the singer out the Stinky Toys with it. I took that off him and gave it to Malcolm McLaren. Wish I'd kept it.

RM) Ron, did you have much to do with Rock Against Racism (R.A.R.)?

Ron) Only in as much as I endorsed it. And, I wouldn't have any racist behaviour, as it says in the book, in any of my venues. I just wouldn't. No way, I mean my bouncers were black, a lot of my acts were black, and I wasn't going to have it. There were a few occasions when it surfaced, and I did the natural thing and let the black guys sort it themselves.

RM) Empowerment?

Ron) Yeah. At Wycombe Town Hall, the British movement guys were having a go at my bouncer, Gerry. One black guy against twenty or thirty of them, so I said to him "I'll take your position, don't be long, go down the pubs and get your mates." And he come back in with a dozen big black lads. I said to them, "Look, you're here to look after Gerry, not to kill these white guys." So, Gerry stood in front of them, and there wasn't a word out of them again! They moved out of the way, and went down the other side of the hall, these bullies. They saw the odds evening up a bit, and given the other 8 or 9 bouncers I had stood in the hall, we would've murdered them.

RM) Jimmy Pursey went on-stage with The Clash at R.A.R in Victoria Park. Was this damage limitation on Pursey's behalf? He seemed to get his fingers burned when the Skins affiliated to Sham 69.

Ron) Exactly. And I don't think he liked that one little bit. See, now, Jimmy Pursey is another guy, like Paul Weller and Joe Strummer, probably all of them at that time. Underneath he was a much nicer person than the media, and the world, would realise and portray. He was an alright geezer and he caught the wrong end of the backlash. People were believing what he was portraying and singing about, and that wasn't necessarily him!



RM) Did Sham 69 dance a bit to close the flame? They could be perceived as "rabble rousing", if you like.

Ron) They were looking for something to hang their stick on, if you like. The Pistols found it in one. Joe

Strummer looked around with The Clash and thought about it and did it, you know. The Jam done it through their potent mix of soul and punk, and I think Jimmy Pursey thought he'd go with the hard boys in the East End. The skinheads, and the mobsters and the ruffians, you know.

RM) Musically, Sham 69 were similar to the Pistols...

Ron) Yeah, closer than some. I liked Sham 69, they were alright. I think Pursey is another guy who hung his hat somewhere, and that hat got on the wrong peg.

[Ron Watts Interview Part 1](#) | [Ron Watts Interview Part 3](#)

[Back To Top](#)