

NEWS DESK

Chaos on the U.K. tour '76

THE SEX PISTOLS' debut British tour was almost destroyed this week as a result of hostile publicity following their controversial two minute television interview.

Sensational media coverage caused Town Hall, University, and Rank Leisure Group officials to hurriedly ban the four group Punk Package from appearing. At the beginning of the week no less than 12 venues scheduled to present this show refused to do so.

The Pistols' recording future was also uncertain when top EMI directors pledged to investigate the group's reported behaviour, on and off camera.

Unrepentant, the Pistols and the other bands involved were determined to play a national tour, although it is certain they will suffer a large financial loss, and on Monday played their first concert at Leeds Polytechnic, originally scheduled to be the fourth date of the tour.

This was the second major disruption to the itinerary since the Pistols first announced they would co-headline a tour with American group The Ramones, supported by the Vibrators and Talking Head. These bands later withdrew from the package. But with replacements The Damned, Clash, and US outfits The Heartbreakers, a revised and expanded schedule was arranged with the Pistols as bill-toppers.

The cause of the controversy — Bill Grundy's interview with the SPs on Thames TV's "Today" programme — has been reported fully (see Thrills page 5). As a result, Grundy was suspended by the station for a fortnight and reprimanded by the Director of Programmes, Jeremy Isaacs, for "inexcusably sloppy journalism", and the Pistols were condemned by national newspapers as "obnoxious and arrogant."

The station also issued a statement of apology. "Because the programme was live we could not foresee the language that would be used."

But Nigel Watts, a researcher working for London Weekend Television, claimed he had warned the Today team to expect such behaviour from The Pistols. Only days earlier, Mr. Watts had worked on a Punk documentary presented on LWTV's London Weekend Show, where it was necessary to use a bleep to cover

certain words in conversations. He criticised Thames for not doing the same.

Supersonic Director Mike Mansfield, who made a promo film of the band, said: "The Sex Pistols are trying to do what the Stones did, but the Stones did it better. I'd never blow their cover. I know it's a calculated thing they're doing, and it's going to make them very successful. They've achieved a lot in one day."

The Pistols' manager Malcolm McLaren denied the band had staged an outrageous confrontation. He said Grundy provoked the group. Johnny Rotten and the boys, he said, reacted spontaneously, using language "in every day use."

He added, "They are a very honest band and we don't want anybody to feel it was set up."

Repercussions to their TV appearance were widespread. BBC Radio stated they would not play the Pistols' single, "Anarchy In The UK", in its daytime programmes. Aidan Day, controller of London's Capital Radio, said his station would not play the record, "because I don't think it's very good."

The opening night of the tour at East Anglia University, Norwich, was cancelled by their Vice Chancellor Mr. Frank Thistlewaite. He stated that because of recent publicity surrounding the Pistols, he couldn't be satisfied the event would proceed peacefully.



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