

As Glasgow District Council ban The Sex Pistols' concert
ALBERT WATSON has his say

PUNK ROCK

Does it really corrupt youth?

IS Punk Rock the most frightening turn pop music has ever taken? Is it corrupting our youth and ushering in an age of violence and anarchy?

Oh, come on now, you can't really believe that. Anyone with a sense of pop history should be able to get Punk Rock into perspective.

Remember the uproar 12 years ago when The Rolling Stones and The Who caught the imagination of a generation, and frightened the parents of that generation?

Cast your mind back still further to 1956, when the pelvic gyrations of Elvis and the primitive beat of Rock 'n' Roll was supposed to bring out the savage animal in us. That scared the mums and dads too.

It was, for all I know, the same with Rudolf Valentino and Rudy Vallee. Civilization survived them all, and it will survive Punk Rock — if such a thing in fact exists at all.

Every new departure in pop is born of two things — a generation's need to shock its parents, and the willingness of the music industry and the media to exploit that feeling.

The "new wave" of Punk Rock bands like The Sex Pistols, Clash, The Damned and Dogstick are a reaction against the established rock stars who, with their wealth, their bored, seen-it-all attitudes and, above all, their age, live a life to which today's teenagers cannot relate.

So the new bands think they are rejecting all that, and their fans lap it all up. But — and this is the real point — they will eventually be sucked into the system they are rejecting.

Mick Jagger, Pete Townshend, Rod Stewart and even good old Elvis were rebels once.

Now they are just part of the showbiz scene, like Liz Taylor and Robert Redford. It will happen to the Punk Rock stars before too long... if Punk Rock ever catches on.

Musically speaking, these young bands have yet to prove that they have something to offer. Most of the Punk Rock I have heard says little, that wasn't said by the early Stones and Who in the mid-sixties. They look less outrageous than Alice Cooper in his heyday — and look how harmless he is nowadays playing golf with Bob Hope.

In the youth club which I run, the Punk Rock look is just beginning to catch on — torn tee-shirts held together with safety pins, the skirts made out of dustbin-liners — and the "Punks" are about as

threatening to society as a glass of milk.

The well-publicised extremists who go to dances in their underwear, piercing their ears and mouths with pins, are a tiny minority sought out by photographers. They are about as typical of today's scene as Prince Monolulu was to Ascot.

The extensively reported "naughty words" fiasco on London ITV was certainly a sign of degeneration — but not on the part of the youngsters who were interviewed. If a teenager needs to be goaded into swearing by a tired and emotional middle-aged

interviewer, that teenager is a long way from anarchy.

Punk Rock is something which the media is in the process of creating. What is true is that today's teenagers are making a rock scene which is their own, a sign of healthy protest and creativity.

We, the establishment, should be grateful rather than frightened. It is a lively sign in the flagging rock world, and in the end you may be sure that we will sanitise it.

Just ask Mick Jagger or Pete Townshend—they will tell you that "straight" society always wins in the end.

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