

BBC Homepage

- BBC Local
- Leeds
- Things to do
- People & Places
- Nature
- History
- Religion & Ethics
- Arts and Culture
- BBC Introducing
- TV & Radio

- Local BBC Sites
- News
- Sport
- Weather
- Travel

- Neighbouring Sites
- Bradford
- Humberside
- North Yorkshire
- South Yorkshire

- Related BBC Sites
- England

Contact Us

Musical history

You are in: Leeds > History > Musical history > The boy looked at Johnny



The Sex Pistols

The boy looked at Johnny

Memories by David Whittaker When the Sex Pistols, Clash, Damned and Heartbreakers played Leeds Polytechnic on December 6 1976 David Whittaker was in the audience. The performance was part of the ill-fated Anarchy in the UK tour.

In 1976 David was 19 years old, and a printer. His firm printed the tickets for the concerts at Leeds Poly and he remembers going to many of the gigs in Leeds. He still goes to see live music in Leeds, including at gigs the New Roscoe.

Little did David know his life was about to change when he saw the concert on a cold winter's night back in 1976. He has even started a Facebook group about that very night.

Here are his memories of the explosive gig...

"I remember the noise, every band counted each song in and out. This was my first taste of punk. I, like most other people there, just stood and gazed in total confusion, at what was happening on the stage."

"I saw a guy with green hair, a loud-mouthed Londoner who, was there as much to be seen as to see. I also remember Johnny Rotten, in an oversized red waistcoat and oversized, baggy black trousers, aiming negative remarks towards some local Leeds MP who had tried to ban the show."

"Johnny Thunders of the Heartbreakers (ex-New York Dolls) stood next to me and my two mates, glaring at us while the Pistols were playing. As soon as the two of us bumped eyes he looked away. Aggressively, I asked him 'Who are you f***** looking at?' I was young and full of false bravado."

"When Thunders was interviewed in Sounds magazine a while later, he described the fans in Leeds as 'they look as though if you bump eyes with them, as though they wouldn't hesitate to put a knife in you'. To this day, I hope he didn't mean me!"

"I remember Captain Sensible of the Damned signing an autograph for a girl, when he had done it and left, I asked the girl if I could see it, she obliged. It read, 'I'm not signing my f***** name on this'. The show did one thing for me, introduced me to The Clash, a love affair that has lasted to this very day."

"I later met Paul Simonon and Mick Jones, although, I never met Joe Strummer, even after a Mescaleros gig at the (then) Leeds Town & Country. I stood outside in the rain waiting to meet Joe, but I should have waited a little longer, now I will never meet him. RIP Joe."

"My stand-out concert of all time was the Clash gig, in May 1982 at Leeds University, I've kept the ticket all this time, it cost £3.50. The more you play the Clash's music the more it grows on you, it will stay with me forever. I've grown up with the Clash's music and other classic punk bands - it's a hard act to follow. There are no good bands around anymore, many younger people are into dance music and it just doesn't have the passion of live music."

David Whittaker

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Your memories:

Fantastic gig! I was 16 at the time and went with my older sister. I think I'd already got The Damned's first single and had read a lot in Melody Maker about the Pistols etc. All the bands on the night were hot and truly inspirational. I put out my own punk classic with my band Psykik Volts in 1979 and recently released a follow-up album (nearly 30 years later - yes, I was Victor Vendetta & I'm still rocking!). I still love the original punk bands and was a huge Clash fan also.

Paul Metcalf - Melbourne, Australia

Hi - yes I was there. I remember while getting ready to go out, the Sex Pistols were on the local TV news. Johnny Rotten came on in an orange/red life jacket that he had on during the news item. My main memory is being surrounded by scary looking punks in the audience, most of whom turned out to be members of the band as they jumped up on stage, one after the other. I seem to remember that much of the audience was made up of the bands and their entourages - and a few scared and bemused looking locals. I would love to see some photos of the night if any emerge.

Ray Fowler



David's pic: Paul Simonon in Leeds 1991

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- Anarchy in Leeds 1976
- Glen Matlock in Leeds
- Musical history
- History

You are in: Leeds > History > Musical history > The boy looked at Johnny

- home
- email
- print
- top
- site contents

SEE ALSO

Musical history

History

- On this site
- Anarchy in Leeds 1976
- Glen Matlock in Leeds
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- The Pistols' last UK gig
- On the rest of the web
- God save the Sex Pistols
- The Clash
- The Damned

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