

THE ROXY CLUB

41-43 Neal Street
Covent Garden,
WC2

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The History of the Roxy Club



Who would have thought that a tiny little gay club called Chagueramas on the skids in the heart of run down Covent Garden London would have such an impact on the London Punk scene but that's just what happened.

What follows is a very vanilla recounting of its history. What it doesn't give you is the atmosphere or the stories of the bands who played and the clubgoers who went there. It doesn't give you a unique and personal insight into the Punk Rock of 1977/78 - the fashion, violence, music, drugs and good and bad times - that's what the book does!

In late 1976 before punk had fully exploded into the general people's consciousness it was confined to a support slot here and there and a gig every now and again. While there was nothing specifically to define Punk rock as yet various ingredients, people and bands were swirling around gay clubs and venues. Bands of people from places such as the Lacey Lady in Ilford were into Bowie and the like, others such as the Bromley Contingent were shoppers on the Kings Road and 'Sex' while others such as the Damned were into the Stooges, MC5 and high octane rock 'n' roll.

The times were changing too. Bands such as Dr Feelgood and Eddie & the Hot Rods were giving music an edge and when the Ramones released their influential first album other bands began picking up speed like the Sex Pistols and Clash, the former



What was needed, as the fanzine Sniffin Glue pointed out, was a place Punk could call its own. Where like people could gather to watch music they liked and where bands could get a chance to play without being subjected to the traditional gig circuit.

And so Barry Jones who lived with Matt Dangerfield, later of the Boys, in Warrington Crescent and in whose studio the Damned recorded their first demos met up with Andy Czezowski one time manager of the Damned and now manager of Chelsea to pawn his guitar to enable the hiring of a gay club called Chaguaramas now in decline. A club found by Chelsea's singer Gene October as a place for his band to rehearse and play some gigs.



By the time the club opened for Chelsea gigs it had been renamed the Roxy, Chelsea had split with members Idol and James and Towe forming Generation X and it was they who played on closely followed by the Heartbreakers fresh off the aborted Anarchy Tour.



The success of the gigs meant Andy Barry and Ralph could make a go at running a club. With that in mind they took on the lease and opened on New Years day with the Clash.



These were closely followed by more gigs featuring more experienced bands like the Damned and newer like there Adverts and Eater given a chance to play in front of a like minded audience. With a place to play established all the faces on the scene like the Bromley lot, Soo Catwoman etc and early punk fans made an appearance.



As new bands played the audience would often comprise members of said bands. Others energised by what they had seen would start bands, fanzines or make clothes. In between bands Don Letts would spin heavy dub grooves and whatever few punk records were about at the time.



From the off the Roxy was in a precarious position and the boys had overcommitted on what they could play in rent. A robbery following the Stranglers gig didn't help either. Also present

was an attempt to wind the club down following from complaints from residents but appeals were keeping it afloat. But the Roxy ploughed on putting on a succession of new and old bands some good and some awful.

In March it held an American week featuring punk stars from across the pond from CBGB's and Max showed put a more professional, showbizzy style of punk in contrast to the UK's more urban politicised style – the Heartbreakers, Wayne County and Cherry Vanilla.



With worries over possible eviction this was quickly followed up with hurried recordings over a couple of weekends of Wire, Adverts, Eater, Johnny Moped, Buzzcocks, Unwanted, X Ray Spex and Slaughter & the Dogs. Other bands recorded but not featured included the Boys, Siouxsie and the Slits. The recordings were financed and to be released by Harvest EMI under guidance of producer Mike Thorne.

The worries came true as following a Siouxsie & the Banshees/Violators gig, Andy Barry and the whole crew were ousted. Legend has this as the golden period as the '100 days' of the Roxy and for many the club closed and they never went back.

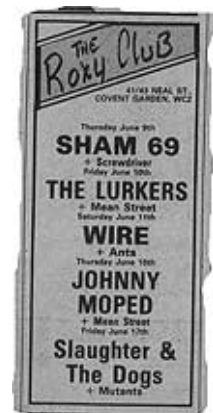
But it didn't close....a misguided attempt to vary the programme in late April early may had rock 'n' roll bands (Teds and Punks were now in open street warfare captured in the media) and

In July the 'Live at the Roxy' album was released and astoundingly made the top 20 the first since the Bangladesh Concert was released.

A new owner was appointed to the Roxy, a certain Kevin St John, a man with a colourful past and at the time a colourful present.



Gigs at the Roxy continued apace with the Saints and the Radiators from Space and even an impromptu appearance by the granddaddy of Punk Iggy Pop. By now a second or even third wave of bands were coming through starting to make waves such as Sham 69, Menace and Killjoys. Along with a deluge of bands hitching a ride on the punk bandwagon or just starting and who needed a place to play. there was a home for them all at the Roxy.





At Christmas a 48 Hour party was held followed by 2 nights of recording for another live album featuring the Jets, UK Subs, Blitz, Crabs, Bears, Plastix, Open Sore, Red Lights and Billy Karlof.

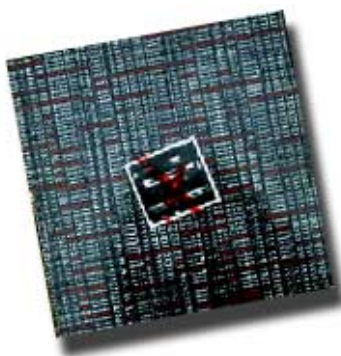


Moving into January bands like Adam & The Ants and The Psychedelic Furs got their first break here. No more big names - more a seedbed for new bands - and another venue on the gig circuit for bands to play. The Roxy also lost its final appeal and was due to close at the end of March/April.



To highlight its plight Jock McDonald was brought in to publicise the closure which included various stunts but to no avail. The gigs began to wind down with more audition nights and even the inclusion of a regular gay night.

Finally in April the Roxy shut its doors for good with a party that involved drinking the rest of the booze there and smashing the place up.



In May the album was released to mainly negative reviews and a short tour of two dates in Scotland to promote the album was arranged by Kevin St John which involved putting the bands up in a YMCA and giving them no money. The final calamity occurred on the last night when bands equipment was mysteriously stolen.



In late 1978 the Roxy was broken into and squatted by Jock McDonald in an effort to get it going again but was forcibly ejected by Police. Eventually the place was gutted, done up and given a change of use.

Today in 2007 its currently a Speedo shop.



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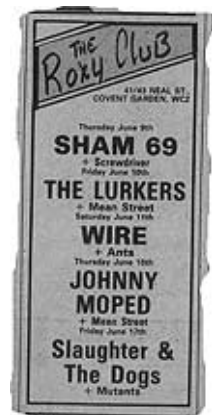
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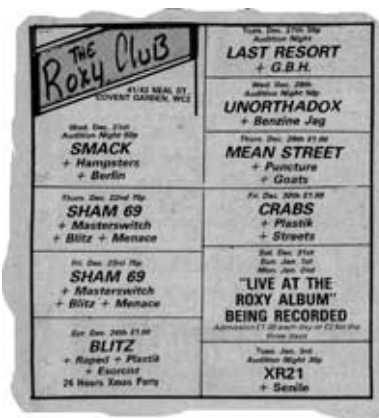
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