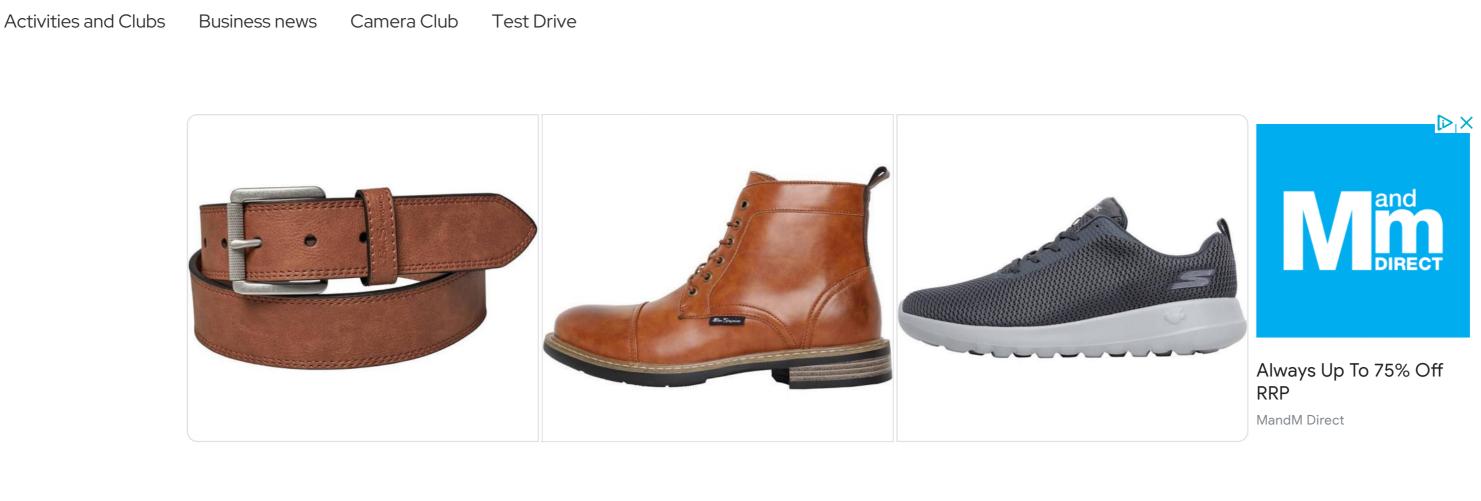
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Remembering when Swindon was centre of a punk explosion

0 3 Share **f 5 Comments** By Barry Leighton

EVERY man has his breaking point – that critical moment when the mark has

been irreversibly overstepped and swift, incisive, perhaps even violent action is the only recourse. Paul Weller's comes about 30 or so minutes into a Jam gig at Swindon. Understandably sickened by a barrage of saliva discharged from a rabble of

pogoing oiks, Weller – whose barbs are usually confined to his songs – unstraps his

Within blinking space, bass player Bruce Foxton is in there with him; fists fly as two-

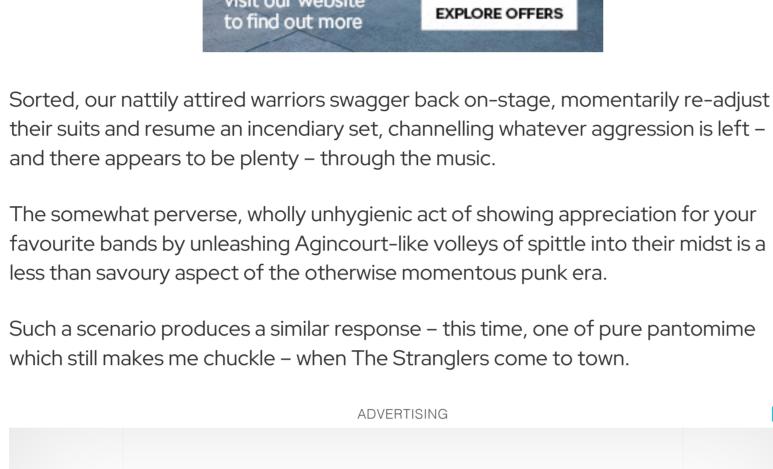
shiny brown and white Rickenbacker and plunges head-first into the throng.

thirds of one of the era's sharpest bands clunk some Wiltshire heads and, one

hopes, bloody a few well deserved noses.

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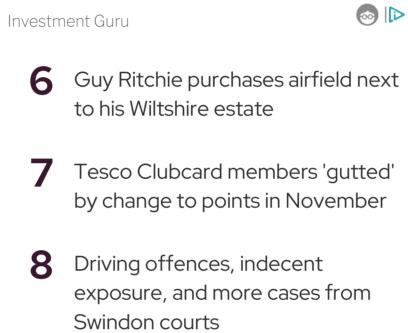
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[Photos] Mark Labbett's

Partner Might Look...



The reason why GINIL's A R.E is so

The best thing about punk? That virtually all of the bands-of-the-moment wowing trendy Londoners soon head for the provinces – and that includes Swindon. It sparks a fierce if undeclared war between Bill Reid and John Norman's Brunel Rooms and Ian Reid's (no relation) The Affair; rival town centre venues locked in

Firing an initial salvo on a bone-chilling December night in 1976, The Affair hosts The

Hardly a safety pin is to be seen as a smattering of intrigued punters observe the

"Hey this is your chance/To do the pogo dance/So get both your feet up off the

group, fresh from supporting the Sex Pistols, perform their new single, Pogo

combat over who can lure the most prestigious bands to Swindon.

And there is only one winner: us, of course, the fans.

Vibrators – Swindon's first punk gig.

Dancing along with similar fast, furious fare.

ground/What goes up - must come down."

Johnny Rotten and Joe Strummer, presumably, are not losing any sleep. But who

Stranglers, too, play The Affair. It is March 1977 and The Stranglers are thrilling – but

To paraphrase one of their songs that night, something better change; at least, if

Swindon is to become a magnet for this exciting crop of new bands.

support slot. A year later they have bleached their hair and are stars.

orange." And I'm pretty sure I never saw change from a fiver.

A few years before their callous debagging of an irksome Swindon punk The

Open > UltimaHair

cares; Swindon is on the punk map.

why aren't there more people here.

Gordon Sumner and drummer Miles Copeland.

A couple of weeks later, a strange one. Andy Warhol actress Cherry Vanilla has reinvented herself as a pouting punkette and plays The Affair. Myself and an Adver colleague are in the dressing room after the gig asking her about Andy. Sitting nearby quietly drinking tea are her backing band including bass player

They are paid £15-a-gig on the condition that their new group The Police take the

Next, The Clash: an apocalyptic night at The Affair involving the fire brigade, the

destruction of the band's equipment and the re-writing of London's Burning to

National Union of Journalists Card from that night, on which is scrawled: "double

brandy and lemonade, double vodka and lime, double whisky, double vodka and

Swindon's Burning (remembered at length in the Adver, 1-5-13.) I still have my

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Time for the Brunel Rooms to enter the fray – and how! Can anyone today imagine

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The Ramones and The Talking Heads on the same bill in Swindon?

we'll get The Ramones."

at the time).

US.

Steve Kelly and his mates are locked out.

Our gritty Wiltshire town, for a few hours at least, is deposited onto the garbage infested streets of downtown Manhattan, somewhere between legendary rock'n'roll dives CBGB's and Max's Kansas City. The Adver's review bellows: "Ramones Smash Sound Barrier."

At this point the feeling at both venues goes something like: "If you get The Clash,

They climb onto the roof and pile in through a sky-light, crashing onto the desk of

assistant manager, amiable Brummie Dennis Detheridge (who luckily, isn't at home

Eschewing the usual pre-gig drink at The Belle Vue in Old Town (now Longs) a

We respect his privacy to enjoy a quiet snifter before going to work. Well, most of

A friend, Pat 'Harold' Harrison shows no such restraint. He feels impelled to accost

the bespectacled star, greeting him like a long lost brother with a hefty thump on

Their drinks are waiting – courtesy of me – lined up at the bar.

the back and a bear hug. "It's Elvis isn't it – Elvis."

that's why he performs such a spiky set.

at The Affair – yes, Aussies can do it too.

management.

song.

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The Buzzcocks play The Affair, generating long queues outside. My colleague

bunch of us from the Adver get to The Affair early for Elvis Costello and The Attractions. It is August '77. Surprisingly Elvis – new hero of the music press – is on his own, perched on a stool at the end of the bar having a beer.

[Photos] The Oldest Stars Who Are Still... **⊗** | **▷** BTRENDING Elvis is appalled. I can still recall his expression; indignation, horror, outrage... maybe

At the Brunel, Bob Geldof is angry, too. He wants to hit someone. But unlike Paul

Weller he doesn't; instead, he storms off-stage and refuses to come back.

His problem? The old one. "Why do they do this," he remonstrates with the

An announcement is made. If the spitting doesn't stop, the Boomtown Rats will.

Jeers, cat-calls, but the future Sir Bob returns and mouth-to-Bob missiles cease.

brilliantly, brutally overhaul Bob Marley's Johnny Was with a furious military beat ("A

single shot rings out in a Belfast town"); The Saints barnstorm through I'm Stranded

The finale of a joyous Tom Robinson Band gig at The Brunel is an absolute peach.

After Power in The Darkness and 2-4-6-8 Motorway we are in the mood for a sing-

There are moments of fleeting glory: At the Brunel, Ulster's Stiff Little Fingers

Such fun to be among several hundred beery Swindonians as we bawl in unison: "Sing if you're glad to be gay/sing if you're happy that way." It's only a guess, but I reckon most of us here are straight: then again, so apparently – is Tom. Share 5 Comments

⊚utbrain **▷**

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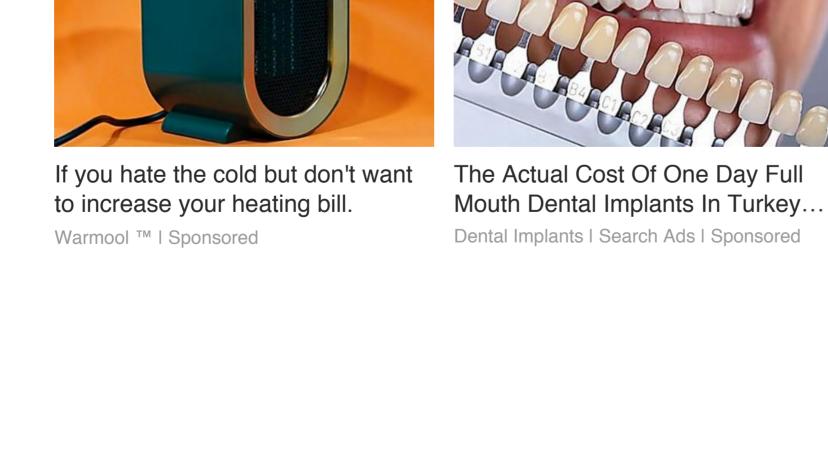
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