



● THE STONES

WHATSOEVER happened to the pop scene's Mr Nice Guy during 1977?

It was a year when wholesome, clean-cut artists very much played second fiddle in the popularity stakes to the outrageous Punks.

Rebellion became a key word during '77 as the race to out-stock and out-swear hotbed up. But haven't we seen it all before?

Since the day Bill Haley first rocked around the clock, youth has been flooding in music a way of hitting out at the Establishment, authority, society and the elder generation.

Today's Punk heroes, Johnny Rotten and his Sex Pistols, The Stranglers, Richard Hell, Billy Idol, **The Clash** and the Boomtown Rats have chosen names calculated to outrage.

So what's new? British rock 20 years ago brought us the likes of Billy Fury, Marty Wilde and Vince Eager. Their manager, Larry Parnes, did his best to simulate parental ridicule, thus ensuring that his stars had an identity with youth.



● THE WHO

# So what's new about Punk?

STEVE EVANS

has seen it all before

by renaming them with emotional surnames.

Even Elvis Presley, destined to become the King of rock 'n roll, with prim and proper mums and gran-nies among his millions of admirers, was considered a corrupting influence.

An early television appearance on a coast-to-coast show saw the host, Ed Sullivan, instruct his cameramen to film him from the waist up — to prevent Elvis' grating hips from giving the virgin daughters of America naughty ideas.

Teds, mods, rockers, the youngsters who wore flowers in their hair and spoke of peace, and the teenagers who showered them-

selves in glitter — each cult, in turn, provoked condemnation.

Britain's pop revolution didn't come to a head until the early Sixties. The Beatles blew the lid and started a gold rush.

While youth flocked to their banner, they kept the mums happy by singing about holding hands. . . . No group could rival them . . . but rebellious rock wasn't taking it lying down.

The only way to compete with the Beatles was to go the "opposite way". And the Rolling Stones, under the shrewd guidance of manager Andrew Oldham, did just that.



● THE STRANGLERS

Ed Sullivan (that man again) banned them from his show and the Stones, aggressive and arrogant, became anti-heroes. The fact that they were prosecuted for urinating against a wall only added to their image as the Mr Nasties of the pop scene.

Then came The Who. Their vocalist, Roger Daltrey, spat out lyrics about "My Generation" and the rest of the band smashed their equipment on stage. The race to encourage the very latest in shock tactics had hotbed up again.

Alice Cooper joined the race and gave it a bizarre twist. It was pretty mundane stuff until he introduced mock hangings, stab-bings and other ugly deaths to his stage act.

Parents were shocked, the kids loved it . . . and Cooper cried all the way to the bank.

All this merely illustrates that there is nothing new or, as Tony Blackburn would have us believe, dangerous about Punk Rock.

Instead of flowers, long hair, Parka jackets, leathers, glitter and LSD, the "uniform" of the youth of '77 turned out to be safety pins, razors and blacker-than-black mascara.

Looked at in the context of what has gone before, Punk Rock is nothing more than an extension of rock paraphernalia. It is no more violent and corrupting than the methods used by earlier bands and individuals to get the wagon rolling.

Psychologists have kept a low profile throughout the great Punk debate. Clearly, they see nothing unhealthy or permanently injurious in the cult or they would have sought to speak out for the sake of society.

Towards the end of 1977, in Coventry, we were given a glimpse of the shape of things to come . . .

The Sex Pistols, for one performance in the city during December, earned £1,500. That pay cheque will get bigger as the months go by until the Pistols and other Punk bands, rich and contented, no longer have a common identity with the frustrated, unemployed youngsters they claim to represent.

Put another way: How can you possibly sing about dole queues with any sincerity when the system you are knocking has put a fat wad of notes in your pocket?

1978 will surely see the embittered youngsters desert the Punk cult, anxiously looking around for a new banner to stand beneath.

It's the music and not the message that will win in the end. It always does. Rock thrives on rebels and lost causes.