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### Peel Session Stories

#### The Clash

The Clash famously recorded only half a session for Peel, or indeed the BBC. There have been a number of interviews in which John spoke about this ill-fated session, one of which resulted in John saying "The Clash did half a session and then wandered off - unbearably pretentious".



But there have been a couple of more detailed explanations since. In an interview for Interzone Magazine in January 1994, John said:

"They (The Clash) did come in actually - they did backing tracks but then said the studios weren't good enough - a very punk attitude - though the story from the studio was that they were too out of their heads to do it."

Finally, perhaps a more plausible explanation for The Clash's walk out is that Joe Strummer once said that "listening to John Peel was like Joe Strummer being sick in your face." (NME, March 1991). Charming.

- :: [theclashonline.com](http://theclashonline.com) - official Sony site
- :: [Wikipedia - The Clash profile](#)

#### Sex Pistols

Considering that the Pistols were regarded by many as the true icons of punk, and that Peel was the one who introduced said musical genre to the masses, its one of life's mysteries as to why they never recorded a session for the BBC. John Walters was producing the show at the time.



In a BBC TV documentary made before Walters' death, and repeated after Peel's, John Walters expressed his regret that he passed over booking the Sex Pistols for a session because - after seeing them play live - he'd spotted the look in Johnny Rotten's eyes that awoke the slumbering arts teacher in him: "That is a boy I wouldn't trust to hand out the scissors."

In another unknown earlier interview, Walters is quoted as saying:

"I made one of the only two mistakes I've ever made...I looked at them, and what with all the spitting and banging and thought, 'I wouldn't like to be in a studio with this lot...I'll postpone it', I thought and by then, of course it was too late."

- :: [sex-pistols.net](http://sex-pistols.net) - fan site
- :: [/music - Pistols profile](#)

#### The Slits

Although it was difficult to pin-down Peel when it came to discussing his favourite session, he has gone on record several times as saying that the first Slits session was just that. They went on to do another two more for Peel. Below are some recollections of that session (Viv Albertine was rhythm guitarist and backing vocalist with the Slits)

"That was the first time we'd ever been in a studio. Lots of people thought the result better than the album. It was absolutely raw, more raw than any boys' band. I almost can't believe we had that much energy. You don't expect girls of that age to have that much energy; Ari was 14, I think, and the rest of us were all under 20. 'Vindictive's' not on any LP, and 'New Town' was very different when re-recorded. It was also the only recording we made with Palmolive, as an all-girl band. It was years before we made an album."

- **Viv Albertine** (In Session Tonight by Ken Garner, 1993 Published by BBC Books)

"It was everyone hitting anything as loudly as possible; vaguely in time, there was a sort of rhythm there, and then this manic shrieking on top. On stage, at that time, it probably sounded quite good, when it was loud, but, when it came out over little speakers, fairly quietly, it just sounded painful. The tuning of the guitars was all over the place. So myself and the other engineer, both guitarists to a certain degree, had to go out and tune them ourselves. Every now and then we'd have to go back and re-tune them, because they didn't have a clue how to. I wonder if we did the right thing."

- **Nick Gomm** (In Session Tonight by Ken Garner, 1993 Published by BBC Books)

- :: [palmolive2day.com](http://palmolive2day.com) - Palmolive's official site
- :: [punk77.co.uk](http://punk77.co.uk) - The Slits profile

#### The Undertones

Much has been said about the Undertones' association with Radio 1, and with Peel in particular. Teenage Kicks was the great man's favourite song after all. They did five sessions for Peel and one for Richard Skinner, all between 1978 and 1982.

"We were a bunch of late teenagers having a good time. By January 1979 we were over supporting the Rezillos so we could do a session at Maida Vale. But the biggest thing that struck me at the time was that John Peel had paid for us to do that first tape the previous autumn out of his own pocket. I don't know of any other DJ that I've met who would care to that extent, show that much drive and commitment to the music."

- **Feargal Sharkey** (In Session Tonight by Ken Garner, 1993 Published by BBC Books)

- :: [theundertones.com](http://theundertones.com) - Official site
- :: [theundertones.net](http://theundertones.net) - Fan site

#### The Damned

Another punk band who made several appearances at Maida Vale studios, doing eleven sessions between 1976 and 1985.



"I think I was apprehensive about it, because I hadn't seen them before or met them; but, in fact, when we got to the studio, I'm not sure who was more apprehensive, them, about being in a BBC studio, or me about working with them."

"The amusing thing was quite a few other people had heard that the Damned were in, and every now and again we got people creeping in through the door, looking in through the window to see if they were being sick all over the place or spitting at us. Which they weren't at all, of course; they were four of the nicest blokes I ever got to work with."

- **Jeff Griffin** (In Session Tonight by Ken Garner, 1993 Published by BBC Books)

"I Just remember it being a very fast session. Five numbers down, and Jeff away back to Radio 1 with the tapes. We finished very early."

- **Mike Robinson** (In Session Tonight by Ken Garner, 1993 Published by BBC Books)

- :: [officialdamned.com](http://officialdamned.com) - Official site

#### Nirvana

Its been said thousands of times, Peel's biggest strength was spotting bands before they went ballistic in terms of their careers, and he managed to get Nirvana three times (1989, 1990, 1991). Mark Goodier also had Nirvana for the old Evening Session, also in 1991, about two weeks after they recorded their last Peel session.



"Nirvana did a few sessions at Maida Vale. I think I did their last one, which was still relatively early in their career. Jeff Smith phoned me and said 'You've got a really hot one this week - Nirvana', and to be honest I hadn't really heard of them. The session went well, and I thought they were good. We recorded it, went to the pub for a couple of drinks, then came back to mix it. It was only when their manager, John Silva, came in to the studio and told them that they'd just gone double-platinum in America (with Nevermind) that I thought, 'hmm, they must be quite famous then'."

I remember that Kurt didn't react much when his manager told him their album was number one in the States. He seemed to be more bothered about that fact that Fender had delivered six white, left-handed Stratocaster guitars to his hotel room. They must've liked the session though, because they later insisted that I do the live recording at Reading. The Foo Fighters have used me ever since, too."

- **Miti Adhikari**

- :: [nirvanaclub.com](http://nirvanaclub.com) - fan site
- :: [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org) - Kurt Cobain profile

#### Other punk acts worth mentioning:

- Buzzcocks (4 Peel sessions, 2 Jensen sessions)**
- The Ramones (1 Kershaw session)**
- Fugazi (1 Peel session)**
- Green Day (2 sessions - unknown shows)**
- Rancid (1 session - unknown show)**

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#### www Links

- [GreenDay.com](#)
- [Wikipedia: Punk Rock](#)
- [punk77.co.uk - fan site](#)
- [punkrock.org - A-Z of punk bands](#)
- [punkmagazine.com](#)
- [ukundercurrent.com](#)

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