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Updated Jan 2010- under some more minor construction as well as heavy manners and behaviour

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The Anti Nazi League/Rock Against Racism Rallies .

1978.

*"all you Fascists bound to lose, I said, all of you fascists bound to lose:
Yes sir, all of you fascists bound to lose:
You're bound to lose ! You fascists:
Bound to lose ! "*

Woody Guthrie

Carnival Against the Nazis Anti Nazi League Rally Victoria Park . London

30th April 1978

Patrick Fitzgerald, X-Ray-Spex,
The Clash ,Tom Robinson Band,
Steel Pulse



The Clash onstage at Victoria Park 1978. © [David Newton](#)

[Northern Rock Against Racism 1978](#)

[Brockwell Park ANL Rally Sept 1978](#)

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The March.

We're not here to detail the Rock Against Racism and Anti Nazi League movement , indeed, that has been well documented on many other sites of a more political orientation. However, a quick resume is probably worth while for those whose memory had gone on the blink, or younger viewers who were not around when these events took place .



The March departs from Trafalgar Square © Richard Arridge

Briefly, following Eric Clapton's drunken outburst onstage in favour of Enoch Powell's anti migrant stance and the rise of those sons of fun, the odious National Front (short for "bloody stupid ignorant fascist scum"), who were firebombing Asian shops, beating up blacks and generally being complete wallies , certain elements within the musical community decided to mobilise and act against the Front.

The concerts in the Parks were the most obvious manifestation of this activity , bringing black and white bands together on stage , demonstrating unity in the face of prejudice and hate and generally giving a two fingered salute in the face of fascism - which is always a good thing in our book !

At first there were small scale concerts featuring bands who were prepared to make a stand against prejudice. Its notable that most of these bands were the upcoming wave of Punk, Ska and reggae bands, not many of the old school hippie bands and certainly none of the superstar or big groups were prepared to put their hands up and volunteer their services to play at the events.

However , human nature being what is, the unfortunate fact was that it wasn't entirely altruism that was firing the cylinders of some of these bands. They got paid for their services , but we won't embarrass them by mentioning their names here. It is fair to say though, that whether they got paid or not , the vast number of them would have been opposed to racism and some , like Jimmy Pursey, showed considerable courage in standing up for their beliefs against a section of their audience that was openly racist and proud of it



An unknown band entertains the marchers enroute © Richard Arridge



© Richard Arridge



Head of the March © Richard Arridge



Brown and white folks marched together in solidarity against the threat of the front © Richard Arridge

The concert.

"I was there, down the front. The crush was the worst I've ever experienced at a gig. Nonetheless, one of the most memorable gigs I've ever been to."



X-Ray-Spex onstage Victoria Park 1978- photo Andy Wilson - gratefully used under creative commons licence

"Spot on concert. There was a bunch of dick-head NF and British Movement skinhead wankers trying to pick on people. The ones we ran into got a right kicking. The Clash were great (as ever) and Steel Pulse, even though there were some sound issues"



plod patrolling the streets during the march photo Andy Wilson - gratefully used under creative commons licence

The first large scale Rock Against Racism/Anti Nazi League carnival held in Victoria Park Hackney , was a huge success in most ways. It drew far more people than expected , but its very success exposed its only real flaw.

As the organisers had only expected a crowd of 20,000 at the most , they had hired a PA that was capable of delivering sound to that many. When around 80,000 showed up, they were treated to less than optimal sound .

The Clash in particular suffered from the poor mix , punk bands never really sounded all that great with a sub standard PA and this one seemed to treat them more roughly compared to the smoother sounds that emanated from the other artistes on the bill. Perhaps the sound men just tried to drive the system too hard in order to get the maximum volume to give the Clash some clout . Now't worse than the combo of a distorting POA system with a rock band we say ---- and we've heard a few in our time....



The Clash onstage 30-4-78 © David Newton

"I was there. So were Steel Pulse. Patrick Fitzgerald (punk poet) "If you hate my set as much as the nazis, you're well away"



Probably the Clash yet again © Ian Wilson

"This is the first one on the 30th April 1978 in Victoria Park. all the way from Wales by coach and a first taste of Macdonalds....how exotic it all seemed back then. I remember it well as it was there I met my wife. The line ups hazy but it might have been Steel Pulse at some point, X-Ray Spex, The Clash, Tom Robinson while Patrick Fitzgerald took a canning. "

Punk poet Mr Fitzgerald is supposed to have said " if you hate the NF as much as you do me , then we're already half way there"



Organisers stage crew not impressed, whilst Jimmy Pursey lurks in background



Mick Green ensures there's enough fuckin' power, he had to pull the long haired roadie back off the cables to ensure there was an encore.

Meanwhile backstage, there was a minor furore going on, with expletives peppering the air as the Clash management and roadies ran hither and thither at the end of the Clash's set. As the band (with Sham 69s Jimmy Pursey joining them on vocals) were about to launch into White Riot , they found that some one had turned off the power to the PA (the band were running overtime) .The Clash were not amused " turn the fuckin' power on" was the cry . The Clash prevailed, and the reception by the crowd was glorious, the audience transforming into a seething mass , all pogoing in time to the Clash's paean to freedom .



Naff view of the stage from the back © Richard Arridge

Whilst it was very nice to see the Clash prevail, there were several more bands to come on and play (and we imagine , a curfew to take into account) , so after White Riot the band dutifully left the stage, but roadie Ray Gange (who was not really a roadie at all, just a friend of the band who had been recruited to act the part of a roadie for the film, "Rude Boy") , completely ignoring the fact that the organisers were already keen to get the next band onstage (the Carnival had been held up for hours as there were so many marchers) , commandeered the microphone and began to exhort the crowd to bring the Clash back on " Der ya wanna MORE Claaaaaaash " he screamed into the mic " MORE Claaaaaash " . He was unceremoniously hustled off stage amidst scenes of acrimony .

"I was there about 50 yards from the stage, one of the little beige blurs that are faces. But we were not faceless that day, Rock Against Racism was so strong, and we marched, and the Clash carried the day, along with Poly Styrene of X-Ray Spex who proved she wouldn't be a sex symbol by pulling off

her hat to show her shaved head. Another revolution derailed? Maybe this generation will take up the challenge and change the world... I fucking hope so"



A hapless crowd "controller " attempts to wave back the crowd as they surge against the barriers



Jimmy Pursey joins the band



The crowd goes ape



The late great Joe S



Ray Gange has "words" with an organiser



But ultimately backs off after he gets "the look"



"Ladies and gentlemen, the Clash have now left the building "



Aswad delivered a great set, well received by most of the audience



But wait , theres more ! The Tom Robinson Band



Finally- The All Star Jam , including Robinson , Pursey and Aswad !



© Scarcely



© Scarcely



© Richard Arridge



The carnival atmosphere prevailed with fun stuff for the kids as well as entertainment for the grown ups © Richard Arridge



© Richard Arridge

[Photogallery](#)

We will add more soon , meanwhile [here's a link to a page](#) that covers the festival from the Clash's perspective .

