

The Damned - Play It At Your Sister.

1. Foreword - By John Peel.

This may be neither the time nor the place to admit that I never got to see the Sex Pistols play. I did drive to Derby one night to catch them on tour but upon arriving at the venue found only a hand-written note stuck to the door announcing that the gig was off. In a strange way, I wasn't disappointed - a cancelled gig seemed decidedly more Punk than one that went ahead. I never saw The Clash either, although I almost saw them at one of those 100 Club gigs on London's Oxford Street but had to leave to do my radio programme before they came on. I did just catch Birmingham's Nightingales though & thought their song, "VD", which consisted of little but a second or two of wild-eyed strumming & the shouted words "I've got VD" - as fine as anything I heard in all of that astonishing Punk year. It remains one of the few songs I can sing in its entirety.

On the plus side, I did see & hear the subjects of this present volume. The first time I caught The Damned in impressively violent action was at an almost formal concert they played at a theatre in Victoria. That's Victoria, London. My memories of the event are hazy now - my memories of this morning aren't too good so bear with me - but I seem to remember the other bands on the bill were Eddie & The Hot Rods & Graham Parker & The Rumour (both these ensembles, but especially the Hot Rods - played their part in unlocking the door that the Punks were about to kick down & they don't get enough credit for it). I had imagined that The Damned would see me, the compere & a man blatantly working for the BBC, as a tool of an oppressive regime & would, more than likely, give me a bit of a well-deserved kicking before running, snarling like wild dogs, to inflict further mayhem elsewhere. In the event - & they may well hate me for saying this - they were quite amiable, hardly spat at me at all, played a blinder & were quickly booked for the first of seven sessions for the programme (They also did two for Mike Read & one apiece for Janice Long & Saturday Live. They did an In Concert too. Blimey).

In a funny way, I thought The Damned caught the true spirit of Punk, as understood by Punks, better than their rivals. They devoted less time to striking attitudes & never forgot, as many historians have, that Punk could be quite

funny as well as exciting. I mean, "Stab Yer Back"? Come on.

As a footnote & by a genuine & astonishing coincidence, this morning's post brought me a CD by a band called Slipper. The EP is called "Earworms" & features, at the drums, Rat Scabies. The beat goes on.

John Peel - 29/05/02.

2.Introducing Loud Guitars.

The Damned were the 1st UK Punk band to release a single, the 1st UK Punk band to release an LP & the 1st UK Punk band to tour the USA. The Damned were not concerned with the Dada Movement, the Lettrist International, the Situationist International or pseudo-political posturing. The Damned did not form because they saw the Sex Pistols - if any one live event inspired them, it was The Ramones at The Roundhouse on 4th July 1976 (2 days before their own stage debut). To The Damned, Punk Rock was all about the music they played & the attitude required to play it. Attitude was what it was all about - there was an old order to overturn. The musical landscape of the mid 70s was bloated, boring & had an overblown sense of its own importance. Punk Rock said: "Look at me - my ideas & performance are as valid as yours - so fuck you." It was time to tear it all down & start again.

3.The British Invasion.

Many have retrospectively laid claim to inventing Punk Rock - very few are qualified to do so. The sound of basic rock & roll played at breakneck speed did not just spontaneously erupt from the grey & dingy streets of the UK in 1976. The real story of the development of Punk Rock, as a genre & an attitude, has roots on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the UK, a complete blueprint is difficult to establish. Something was definitely in the air between 1962 & 64. There were strident hints of a future Punk sound present in the fuzzed up guitars of The Kinks, the pop art presentation & furious riffing of The Who, the delivery & ferocity of The Yardbirds, the anger of the young Them, the genius of The Troggs, the attitude & button-down cool of The Rolling Stones & the dangerous implications of the Pretty Things. These disparate elements provided striking images & challenging new sounds that were soon being recycled by a nascent US Garage Punk scene. The British Invasion began a game of Atlantic ping-pong that is still being played out to this day.

4. The Roots Of US Punk Rock.

In the USA, around 1966, Love's Arthur Lee claimed to have invented Punk Rock single-handedly with "7 & 7 Is". Further analysis reveals he was beaten to the punch around 64/65 by The Sonics & The Monks.

The Sonics were formed in 1962 in Seattle, Northwest USA. Their place in history as one of US Garage Punk's most visceral & influential acts is not in dispute. Discovered by Etiquette Records A&R man, Buck Ormsby, their debut 1965 LP for the label, "Here Are The Sonics", featured a 50/50 mix of rock & roll covers & original compositions written by the band's singer, Gerry Roslie. His manic-scream vocal style defined the band's sound, augmented by distorted guitars, wailing saxophone & tub-thumping drums

The Monks were 5 ex-US servicemen who began making music around 1964 as The 5 Torquays, playing out for US airbase personnel & excited teens in Hamburg, Germany. A fateful meeting with a pair of enigmatic local visionaries named Walter & Karl brought about dramatic changes to their style & sound. The pudding bowl haircuts & regulation issue 60s threads were soon replaced with shaved tonsures, black shirts, cowls & a change of name. With angry self-penned tunes such as "I Hate You" & "Shut Up", fuzz drenched guitars, intentional feedback & a positively Proto-Punk attitude, The Monks were pushing the VU meters well into the red a good 12 months before The Velvet Underground. They only recorded 1 LP for Polydor (Germany) in 1965, "Black Monk Time". Polydor (US) refused to issue the LP in the States or sanction the recording of a follow up unless the band toned down their sound - needless to say The Monks didn't do compromise. It would take the rest of the world some time to catch up with The Monks.

The social & sexually political elements of Punk Rock have a striking precedent in two of the world's first true underground bands; The Fugs & David Peel & The Lower East Side.

The Fugs crawled from the underbelly of the New York beat scene to deliver their self-titled debut LP in 1965. Mixing street folk, Garage Punk & fierce left wing polemic, their strictly limited musical ability provided a clear signpost for all later application over talent theories. As far as The Fugs were concerned, anyone could do it. The Fugs were

a direct connection from The Beats to The Punks - & one of the first groups to describe their sound as 'punk'.

David Peel & The Lower East Side were ostensibly a gang of New York street freaks primarily concerned with their right to smoke copious amounts of marijuana & not be hassled by "the pigs". They busked on the streets of the Lower East Side singing about the many social injustices facing NYC's underclass. They were loved by Lester Bangs, courted by Apple & derided by those outside of the loop. Their "American Revolution" LP is another glorious exhibit in the case to establish antecedents for Punk Rock.

The US Garage Punk explosion of 1964/65 was a direct reaction to the British Invasion & The Rolling Stones 2nd tour of the United States. Thousands of bands formed in the wake of this tour, regional scenes sprung up overnight. Self-financed independent records were quickly recorded, produced & distributed - rarely heard outside of the regions they were created in. The Standells, The Strangeloves, The 13TH Floor Elevators, The Remains, The Chocolate Watch Band, The Seeds, Strawberry Alarm Clock, The Electric Prunes, Count Five, Captain Beefheart & His Magic Band, The Kingsmen & countless others. Many of these bands were famously compiled in the mid 70s by Patti Smith's guitarist, Lenny Kaye, as the "Nuggets" double LP. This in turn spawned further compilation series (Pebbles, Rubble, etc) which helped to re-focus attention on a scene that really only existed for a couple of years but which was to have a massive influence on later Punks.

The Velvet Underground emerged from behind the shadow of Andy Warhol & the avant-garde NYC art scene in 1966. Their groundbreaking debut LP, "The Velvet Underground & Nico", was recorded at Cameo-Parkway Studios on Broadway in April 1966 in 3 days at a cost of \$2,500. Warhol had insisted that his latest starlet, Nico, was installed as the group's singer, much to the band's chagrin. Obviously, as Warhol was picking up the tab, the compromise was begrudgingly accepted by Reed, Cale, Morrison & Tucker (making them, in essence, a manufactured band - a situation that would be echoed 10 years later with formation of the Sex Pistols). Warhol even copped a production credit just for turning up during the sessions. The LP hit the streets on Verve on 15th March 1967, full of songs about sex & drugs & rock & roll. The Velvet Underground would only record one other LP with John Cale before he left the band, taking their

experimental leanings with him. A further two LPs were recorded with Doug Yule before The Velvet Underground broke up in 1970. For a band heard by relatively so few during their actual lifetime, their influence on the future of Punk Rock cannot be understated.

By 1968, Detroit's MC5 had taken the mid 60s Garage Punk template & welded it to a revolutionary mandate. Managed by poet and activist, John Sinclair, the MC5 provided the sounds to match the rhetoric of his White Panther Party. They gave the Situationist International a run for their money when it came to snappy slogans: "Rock & roll, dope & fucking in the streets", "Kick out the jams", "Are you part of the problem or part of the solution?" Their debut 45, a cover of Scott/Coulters' "I Can Only Give You Everything", validated their lineage beyond doubt.

Wayne Kramer (Guitar - MC5) - "More often than not, the (other) bands were really tired. They'd come from San Francisco and play all this kind of electric folk music. I mean they were wimpy, they had no passion, they were posers, slackers, & we were young & aggressive fellows & so we used to harass them."

The MC5's explosive live show proved difficult to capture in the confines of a studio &, desperate to record the levels of intensity they achieved on stage, they recorded a live set as their debut LP, "Kick Out The Jams", at the Grande Ballroom, Detroit, on October 30/31, 1968. The LP was released by Electra in February 1969 & was unfortunately destined to stand alone - the band never managed to express themselves so perfectly again. The moment had passed, the zeitgeist had evaporated - all that was left was the ideal.

If the MC5 failed to realise their initial promise, they were instrumental in shining the spotlight on a band considered by legions to define the birth of Proto-Punk: The Stooges. Iggy Pop, Ron & Scott Asheton & Dave Alexander were 4 Punks from Ann Arbor, Michigan. Electra signed them off the back of The MC5 in 1969. With only a few gigs under their belt & a handful of songs in their limited repertoire, they were dragged into R&B Studios, New York, to record their debut LP under the guidance of ex-Velvet, John Cale. The initial intention was to recreate their live set, a la MC5, but they only really had 4 songs. Elektra's Jac Holzman asked if they had any more lying around, the band replied in the affirmative & hastily retired to the

Chelsea Hotel to knock out 3 more. As soon as recording commenced, Cale was screaming from the control room, telling the band to turn down their amps. Volume was the catalyst that drove The Stooges - if they couldn't do it their way they wouldn't do it at all. They staged a stoner studio strike but eventually turned their Marshall amps down from 10 to 9 as a compromise for Cale. The set was duly recorded with a minimum of fuss but The Stooges were unhappy with Cale's finished mix. Iggy threw a shit fit in Holzman's office & The Stooges were allowed to supervise a final remix. The LP was released in September 1969 & rocketed to 106 on the US charts.

The Stooges were still sticking resolutely to the MC5's "do the set live" script as they made plans to record their second LP. Jac Holzman hired Don Galluci (ex-The Kingsmen) & the band moved into Elektra Sound Recorders, Los Angeles, in May 1970 to commence work. Gallucci in turn brought in British engineer, Brian Ross-Myring, who immediately set about ripping up the studios carpets & sound insulation before setting up the band's gear in gig mode. The band had their set nailed down tight following months of gigging - this time there would be no fucking around. Steve Mackay had recently been recruited to add sax to the brew, this was Punk Free-Jazz Expressionism & the world really wasn't ready yet. The finished LP was released in December 1970 & Creem's Lester Bangs reviewed it over 2 issues, foaming at the pen. "Funhouse" was met by universal ambivalence & failed to chart in either the USA or the UK. The Stooges descended into heroin hell & effectively were never the same band again.

The first evidence of the influential power of the Velvet Underground emerged in Boston as the 70s broke. The Modern Lovers were fronted by Velvets/Stooges obsessive, Jonathan Richman. Richman was notoriously shy & during early recording sessions with LA producer, Kim Fowley, he would insist on a studio blackout & make the engineers hide behind the mixing desk. Richman claims to be unable to listen to these recordings today as he feels he was basically doing an impression of Iggy. These tapes were finally issued by Bomp Records in 1981 & convey the passion & spirit of the original band far better than anything they subsequently recorded for either Warner Brothers (a debut LP reworking many of the tracks from the Fowley sessions with John Cale at the helm that was never released) or Beserkley Records. The Modern Lovers definitive statement,

"Roadrunner", with its dead pan count-in of "1,2,3,4,5,6" would become a major Proto-Punk anthem.

In New York in 1971, a minimalist synth & vocal duo began operating under the moniker, Suicide. They were the first NYC outfit to actively use the word Punk to describe their particular brand of sonic terrorism: naming a performance at a New York art gallery, "A Punk Music Mass". Vocalist, Alan Vega, was prone to whipping the walls of venues with a bike chain during performances whilst keyboardist, Martin Rev, dragged unspeakable electronic noise from his machines. The sense of tension Suicide created, & their ability to confront their audience with naked aggression, was a crucial ingredient in the melting pot of Punk Rock's evolution. Their debut LP, "Suicide", was eventually released on Marty Thau's Red Star label in November 1977.

By the end of 1972, Iggy Pop had decamped to London. Iggy's new best friend, David Bowie, had decided he was going to aid The Iguana save a faltering career by helping him to record a 3rd Stooges LP. Bowie also persuaded him to sign with Mainman Management. Bowie's manager, & Mainman kingpin, Tony DeFries, originally suggested using UK session musicians to create a "Transformer" style LP with crossover market appeal but Iggy was having none of it. He quickly flew the Asheton brothers in from Detroit, along with hotshot guitar-slinger & drug buddy, James Williamson. Entering CBS Studios in September of 1972, Ron was demoted from guitar to bass, the work ethic was strictly non-confrontational & the music they created was more conventional than anything The Stooges had yet put their name to. The original Pop/Williamson mix was rejected by Mainman & the band were forced to hang around until March 1973 when Bowie came back off tour to personally supervise a final mix. "Raw Power" was eventually released by CBS in June 1973 & credited to Iggy Pop & The Stooges. The damage done in that disastrous 36 hour mixing session, however, rendered the LP muted, muddy & compromised. This didn't stop the LP's opening cut, "Search & Destroy", becoming another major Proto-Punk anthem. (The world had to wait until 1997 before Iggy finally got to remix the tapes himself & restore this classic Punk LP to something approximating the overall sound that was originally intended.)

Suicide were not operating alone in New York in 1973. The New York Dolls had been writing & performing their MC5 via the Stones androgynous rough-cut Proto-Punk for 12 months

or so before being picked up by Mercury Records. They entered the Record Plant in NYC in April 1973 with producer, Todd Rundgren, & a sizeable entourage of hangers-on. The resultant LP, "New York Dolls", was another important influence on the development of Punk Rock. Their follow-up LP, 1974's "Too Much Too Soon", improved the formula further, but success still conspired to evade the New York Dolls & they eventually split following a brief managerial liaison with Malcolm McLaren (& an ill-advised flirtation with communist iconography & red patent leather).

The advent of a new club situated on the Bowery in New York City was to provide a spiritual home for an eclectic bunch of NYC performers who had been directly empowered by the antics of Suicide & the New York Dolls. Open for business on the 10th of December 1973, Hilly Kristal's CBGB's (Country, Bluegrass & Blues) stage would witness many intense live performances from Suicide, Patti Smith, Television, the Ramones & Blondie.

Patti Smith had begun working with guitarist Lenny Kaye in the early 70s, welding her sub-beat poetry & love of Arthur Rimbaud to her desire to create Garage Punk. Together they began performing live & released the incendiary 45, "Piss Factory"/"Hey Joe", with pianist Richard Sohl, in 1972. Kaye described the later CBGB's model of the Patti Smith Group as: "5 crazed neo-Punks". Their debut 1975 LP, "Horses", came to symbolise the birth of New York Punk Rock & acted as a further catalyst for the UK Punk Rock explosion.

Patti Smith - "All we were trying to do was to rekindle people's spirit & motivate people to keep going." (Smith would later show absolutely no trace of this motivation when she met The Damned backstage at CBGB's in 1977 - ordering a bemused & insulted Damned the hell out of "her" mother-fucking dressing room)

Television, originally The Neon Boys, featured the mercurial talents of two of the most important players on the New York scene: Tom Verlaine & Richard Hell. Hell left the band long before they recorded their classic 1977 debut, "Marquee Moon", to join ex-New York Dolls, Johnny Thunders & Jerry Nolan, in The Heartbreakers. Hell soon quit this band, too, & eventually found his feet fronting his own band: The Voidoids. Hell not only invented the ripped t-shirt & spikey hair later usurped by the Sex

Pistols & others, he also coined the phrase, "Blank Generation", which summarised the New York scene perfectly.

Richard Hell - "Blank Generation came about because, years earlier, Rod McKuen had recorded a thing called I Belong To The Beat Generation, Blank Generation was our little joke, our take on that. But I did mean it. I wanted to write a song, like 'Blue Suede Shoes' or 'My Generation', that defined the unique style of a generation. Blank stood for whatever you wanted it to stand for - fill in the blank".

If there was one band to emerge from the New York scene that would directly affect the course of UK Punk Rock, it was the Ramones - 4 skinny bowl-haired Punks from Queens - a leather jacketed, ripped jeans street gang.

Joey Ramone - "It (the Ramones) was born out of a chemical imbalance between me, Dee Dee & Johnny. Rock & roll had got so bloated & lost its spirit. We stripped it down & reassembled it under the influence of the MC5, The Beatles & the Stones, Alice Cooper & T-Rex."

With a "Hey, ho, let's go", the Ramones were rapidly signed to Seymour Stein's Sire Records & released their storming self-titled debut LP on 23rd April, 1976. "Blitzkrieg Bop", "Beat On The Brat", "Judy Is A Punk" & "Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue" - "Ramones" was the final clarion call - London's Roundhouse & destiny was waiting.

New York was not the only US city with a Proto-Punk scene developing in the mid 70s: Cleveland, Ohio, had its fair share of bands pushing the sonic envelope too. The Electric Eels, Mirrors & Rocket From The Tombs (eventually to become two bands - Pere Ubu & The Dead Boys), were busy mining similar veins to their New York cousins; mixing audacity, limited musical ability, weapons grade guitar noise & plenty of Proto-Punk attitude.

Australia cannot be left out of the equation either; Radio Birdman, & later, The Saints, somehow managed to capture the same zeitgeist as their US cousins thousands of miles away in virtual cultural isolation. Radio Birdman mixed the MC5's basic Garage blueprint & revolutionary stance with a surf aesthetic. Their dangerous street gang image, black clothes & fearsome reputation made them stand out a mile in the laid-back outback culture of early 70s Australia. The groundwork achieved by Radio Birdman provided ample inspiration, along with imports of "Funhouse", for the

formation of Australia's other vital Proto-Punk outfit; The Saints. Their 1977 debut LP, "I'm Stranded", was quickly picked up by a surprisingly nimble Harvest Records in the UK & was destined to become one of the final pieces in the Punk Rock jigsaw.

5. Boredom.

Back in the UK, the early to mid 70s had been an increasingly desperate time for popular music culture. The continued dominance of dinosaur rock acts such as Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, Genesis, ELP, Rainbow, Yes & their ilk, provided little in the way of inspiration for the younger generation. David Bowie, Roxy Music, T Rex, the Pink Fairies & Mott The Hoople were amongst the few attempting anything remotely interesting in the mainstream, adapting the New York Dolls glamorous image & cleaning it up for mass consumption. The Pink Fairies, in particular, were an extremely dangerous bunch of individuals & their outlook & attitude cannot be ignored.

The British Pub Rock scene also offered some distraction, & a modicum of adrenalin. Dr Feelgood, Kilburn & The Highroads (Johnny Rotten was often spotted down the front at Kilburn's gigs studying Ian Dury's style intently - Dury often claimed to have been the originator of the use of the safety pin in Punk), Graham Parker & The Rumour & Eddie & The Hot Rods were amongst the few bands offering any hope in the UK in 1975 (Dr Feelgood have since been cited by Debbie Harry as having been an influence on Blondie's development - that old ping-pong effect!).

The UK was also in severe economic decline - The Yom Kippur War in 1973 had forced oil prices through the roof resulting in a 10% hike in fuel charges. Spiralling wage demands led to the eventual Winter Of Discontent. Poverty & social unrest were choking the last remnants of the 60s dream - dissatisfaction & disappointment were rife. Boredom was the one unifying factor in Great Britain in the mid 70s.

In London, around 1975, several groups of young musicians with a love of The Stooges, the MC5 & the New York Dolls, began taking the first steps towards forming their own bands & their own brand new sound. One of these musicians was guitarist Brian James, who returned to the UK in December 1975 from Brussels, where he'd been living with his first band, Bastard. Bastard had previously been operating in the Surrey area throughout 1974/75 & had already established a fearsome reputation. James was born in Hammersmith, London, on 18/2/55. He was educated at Hazelwick School, Crawley, & prior to forming Bastard, had worked as a warehouse man & a sweeper-up at Gatwick Airport. James' favourite musicians included: Jimi Hendrix,

James Williamson, Ron Asheton, Wayne Kramer & Syd Barrett - as well as more jazz oriented heroes such as Coltrane & Mingus. His double-jointed toes inwards guitar stance & ability to pivot on one foot before spinning wildly across the stage made him an electrifying performer & a constant source of energy.

James met Tony James (later of Chelsea & Generation X) & Mick Jones (later of The Clash) through a Melody Maker advert in August 1975 when he'd auditioned for their proto-group, London SS. By December 1975 he was rehearsing regularly with them at their Paddington Kitchen rehearsal rooms & they were advertising for singers & drummers.

Chris Millar (aka Rat Scabies), a drummer, turned up to audition for London SS in December 1975. Millar had been playing drums since his early teens with several garage bands & had gained some live experience on the Redhill/Surrey circuit with his pre-Damned band, Tor (a name he hated so much he would often invert to Rot). Millar was born in Kingston-upon-Thames on 30/7/57 & educated at Elliot Comprehensive, Putney. Before embarking on a career in music, he claimed to have had 37 jobs; working as a toilet cleaner, insurance salesman & warehouse man, amongst others.

Scabies - "Mick & Tony both had really long hair & leather trousers & looked like they should have been in Mott The Hoople. They treated me with total disdain. Brian was only like that at the beginning. After a while he made his mind up he liked what I was doing. Me & Brian started driving it forward."

London SS was being loosely "managed" by entrepreneur Bernie Rhodes. Rhodes, & his business partner Malcolm McLaren, were searching for a second group to spearhead a three-pronged attack alongside the Sex Pistols.

Rat Scabies - "Bernie always said that 3 bands were a movement - Malcolm & Bernie were very keen on movements."

By mid-January 1976 Brian James & Rat Scabies had left London SS to form their own band. Around this time, Tony James met Andrew Logan who invited him to a warehouse party at Butler's Wharf on 14th February 1976 where the Sex Pistols were performing - James duly invited Brian James along with him. Logan's annual extravaganzas had a reputation amongst the hip young socialites of London Town

& had always attracted attention in the past - 1976 proved to be no exception. The show ended in chaos with a member of the Pistols entourage, Jordan, dancing on stage naked from the waist up. James talked to the Pistols after the show & was immediately impressed with their attitude, especially that of their singer, Johnny Rotten.

James then met Kid Rogers, a young Scot, who was seriously into US producer, Kim Fowley. James moved into his flat on the Portobello Road. Their local pub, The Lonsdale, became the venue for an ad-hoc social club for lovers of the new vibe. Saturday lunchtime drinking sessions would be followed by opportunist shoplifting sorties & impromptu jamming sessions involving many of the original protagonists of this nascent Proto-Punk scene.

James & Scabies struggled to find a singer or bass player they liked. In the interim, Scabies remembers Malcolm McLaren arriving on his doorstep with Chrissie Hynde & journalist Nick Kent (who James, Scabies & Sensible would later back in the short-lived combo, The Subterraneans).

Scabies - "They asked me to form a new band which eventually became called Masters Of The Backside (aka Mike Hunt's Honourable Discharge). We had two singers, that was Malcolm's big idea, & Chrissie played guitar".

Kent disappeared, & Scabies began jamming with Hynde & Johnny Moped bassist, Ray Burns (aka Captain Sensible), who Scabies knew from their time working together at Croydon's Fairfield Halls. Masters Of The Backside's 2 singers were Dave White (aka Zero) & Dave Lett (aka Dave Vanian).

Vanian - "I remember the first time I met Chrissie. Malcolm had suggested we talked & we spent the evening in a coffee bar talking about 60s US Garage bands & early Alice Cooper."

In reality, The Masters Of The Backside never became more than a diversionary rehearsal band knocking out cover versions for fun & experience. James & Scabies continued their search for a singer.

Scabies - "On the 3rd April 76 me & Brian were in the bar at The Nashville for a Pistols show - hanging out, looking for singers. John Beverley (aka Sid Vicious) came in wearing this amazing gold lame jacket & looking every inch a star.

Brian said, 'He's a singer' - so I went up & asked him to come along & audition for us."

"Twenty minutes later the same night, Dave Lett walked in & Brian said, 'Fuck me, there's another one'. I told Brian I already knew him & we asked him along too. He looked like one of the New York Dolls, a Thunders haircut, back combed & sticky-uppy. He wore a black leather jacket & drainpipe jeans, always a good dresser."

Lett was born on 12/10/58 in Newcastle & was educated at Bourne Valley Secondary Modern in Hemel Hempstead. He was working as a gravedigger during the daylight hours of 1976 & his musical influences included 60s US Garage Punk, Rock & Roll, The Velvet Underground & Iggy Pop. Lett had spent many a youthful hour listening intently to Wolfman Jack broadcasting on US Forces radio, transistor secreted below his pillow so his parents didn't know he was up all night listening to music.

The subsequent auditions took place at a church hall on Lisson Grove, just around the corner from the dole office that served the West London area. James & Scabies had asked Ray Burns of Johnny Moped & The Morons to cover on bass for the auditions. Burns was born in Balham on 25/4/56 & educated at Whitehorse School, Croydon. By 1976 he had spent 2 years on the dole & had worked with Millar as a toilet cleaner at Fairfield Halls. Burns was a Marc Bolan fan with a love of Elton Dean, the saxophonist. He once met Dean at one of his shows whilst sporting a homemade Elton Dean t-shirt. Dean had finished his first set & had headed to the toilets - Burns seized his chance & followed Dean into the conveniences. Dean had just completed his business when Burns asked him to sign his t-shirt - he was promptly told to fuck off.

On the day of the auditions, Beverley was due to show at 2pm but failed to turn up at all. Lett arrived early, at 2.15pm, hoping to catch the competition. The newly convened 4-piece immediately & instinctively knew the chemistry was right. The auditions turned into rehearsals & the band began forge their own sound, as well as other people's signatures. The Damned - named by James in homage to a 1969 movie "Village Of The Damned" (the screen version of John Wyndham's book, "The Midwich Cuckoos", about a village populated by a group of innocent but vaguely threatening alien children) & with a nod to Visconti's, "The Damned" - were born.

James - "I liked that innocence from the children, & the imagery of the Visconti film."

Sensible - "I thought it was pretty good, it sounded right for the 4 people in The Damned. It summed us up."

6. Punk Rock Explosion - 12 Months That Shook The World.

Elvis Costello - "The Damned were the best Punk group, because there was no art behind them; they were just enjoying themselves. There was no art behind them that I could see. They were just nasty. I loved them from the start. I liked the Pistols as well, but you could see the concern behind it. It's dishonest to say, 'Oh, yes, we were just wild'; they weren't just wild. It was considered & calculated. Very Art. The Clash as well." (Quote - Greil Marcus - 1982.)

Lemmy (Motorhead) - "If we had short hair, we would be a punk band, wouldn't we? We do mostly short songs that hit you in the face & run away. I always thought we had a lot in common with The Damned. We didn't know what we were doing, & we'd take our clothes off a lot, like Captain Sensible. Only we didn't do it on stage." (Quote - The Onion - 2000.)

Joey Ramone - "I remember meeting The Damned when I first went to England, they were like the first punk band, you know?" (Quote - Mariano Asch - NeatDamnedNoize - 2000.)

In essence, Punk Rock soon became all things to all Punks: artistic, political (originally in a more personal manner than the later gung-ho rhetoric of The Clash), expressive, anti-establishment, iconoclastic, dangerous, individualistic, & above all, fucking good fun.

Pete Shelley (Buzzcocks) - "I always disagree with Captain Sensible when we talk about this (Punk Rock). He thinks Punk was a working-class movement, but for me it started out like an art thing where you have a manifesto. And the thing about changing your name, it was almost born again fanaticism. You leave behind the life you had before & you become this character you're portraying."

Much has been made of the use of pseudonyms in Punk Rock; the myth states they were used to ward off "dole sniffers". In the case of The Damned, the truth behind their two unconventionally named members was far less sinister.

Chris Millar had been suffering from a skin complaint whilst rehearsing with the London SS - a rat ran across the room towards him, prompting Mick Jones to name him Rat Scabies.

Ray Burns, during high japes at the Mont de Marsan festival, had eggs thrown at him that remained lodged in his hair until the return journey. The predominantly hippy fraternity of the returning festival goers were paranoid about being busted on their passage back through UK customs & anything that was likely to draw attention to anyone was not particularly cool, man. Sean Tyla, a former policeman & leader of The Tyla Gang, had singled Burns's hair out for particular attention & growled:

"Oi, Captain fucking Sensible - get that egg out of your hair before customs, or I'll put your head down the bog & flush it off for you."

Captain Sensible was also affectionately known as "Eats" by his fellow band members:

Vanian - "The Captain always used to say, 'I ain't doing it till I've had something to eat'. He always made me laugh - he was the kind of guy who would walk into a room & start taking something to pieces that obviously wasn't designed to be dismantled. He would look genuinely horrified when it wouldn't go back together again. I remember the first time we went to the States. We got into this lift & he stood against this giant mirror. It fell off the wall & shattered on the floor - he said, 'They'll never believe me'."

Early Damned rehearsals continued to take place at the church hall on Lisson Grove. The band's first managerial assistance came from Andrew Czezowski & The Damned consequently moved their rehearsal base to his boss John Krevine's Deptford warehouse, ACME Attractions, where the band practiced amongst the stock of vintage 60s threads, winkle-pickers & jukeboxes.

Vanian - "Czezowski was another one of those larger than life characters. Pink jackets, pink cars - fine attention to detail."

By now The Damned were rehearsing once a week - this pattern continued for a couple of months as the band prepared for their first gig. During this period the band recorded demos on Matt Dangerfield's (The Boy's) porta-studio at 47 A Warrington Crescent. 3 tracks were laid down:

"See Her Tonight", "Feel The Pain" & "I Fall"

Vanian - "It was an archaic 8-track machine set up in someone's house - not a professional studio. We were in & out in around 2 hours."

July 1976.

In July 1976, the Ramones live UK debut made a massive impact on the fledgling UK Punk scene. Da Brudders played London's Roundhouse on 4th July & Camden's Dingwalls the following night, supporting The Flamin' Groovies. They blew the headliners clean off the stage on both nights. The Ramones were initially confused & upset by the UK audience's habit of gobbing (spitting) at bands.

Johnny Ramone - "They got it on my guitar - they got it on my pick!"

Nearly every London Punk of note was present in the audience at The Dingwalls show - almost anyone who'd ever matter during the ensuing 18 months of madness.

Joey Ramone - "That show was crazy - probably even crazier than The Roundhouse, because it was a club. All the kids were hanging out, the would-be Clash, the Pistols, The Damned, people like that."

6/7/76 - The Damned play their first gig supporting the Sex Pistols at the 100 Club in London. They play the Nag's Head in High Wycombe the following week.

The Damned's 3rd gig, at St Albans art-college, was organised by Shanne Hasler & was notable for being the night the character of Captain Sensible first emerged from Ray Burns. During both the earlier gigs, Burns had remained rooted to his mark studiously playing his Fender copy bass. On stage at St Albans he became the careering out-of-control whirlwind the world would come to know & love as Captain Sensible.

13/7/76 - Seminal fanzine Sniffin' Glue is launched - virtually the lone independent voice of the new sound being branded Punk Rock (Dole Queue Rock). Written by ex-bank clerk, & future leader of Alternative TV, Mark P (aka Mark Perry), it features simple typed text & felt pen written headers. Sniffin' Glue (& Other Rock & Roll Habits) is Mark P's way of getting involved following a severe bout of over-exposure to the 1st Ramones LP. The first issue

features the words; THE DAMNED ARE GREAT, on the back cover.

15/7/76 - The Damned play London's Nashville in an explosive support slot to shabby blues rockers, S.A.L.T. The headliners are not keen on The Damned's sound & bring the curtain down on the band, literally, after only 3 songs. Scabies duly proceeds to hurl his drum-kit through the curtains at a shocked crowd - The Damned's association with infamy has begun. The show is reviewed for Sounds by John Ingham & for Punk fanzine, Sniffin' Glue, by Mark Perry.

24/7/76 - Sounds run John Ingham's review of The Damned's 4th gig at The Nashville; "You remember the end of a Stooges gig, where they just turned everything up full & walked off, leaving the amps to loop out in ultimate white heat feedback? Well, The Damned come on about that strong. They're beyond being good or bad, beyond comparisons, beyond even being ultimately offensive...The Damned just are, & if you don't like it, piss off."

August 1976.

21/8/76 - The Damned play the Mont De Marsan Punk Festival in France. The line-up also includes Eddie & The Hot Rods, the Hammersmith Gorillas, the Pink Fairies, Nick Lowe, the Count Bishops, The Tyla Gang & Roogalator. The Damned headline The 100 Club the night after returning from the festival.

The Mont de Marsan Punk Festival would turn out to be a pivotal moment in the story of The Damned. On the bus en route to the event, they talked to entrepreneur & self-appointed event organiser, Jake Riviera (original event organiser, Mark Zermatti, collapsed in tears under the stress of putting the show together & Riviera took over). Riviera, & partner Dave Robinson, ran a small independent record label called Stiff Records - funded by a £400 loan from Dr Feelgood. After witnessing The Damned's 1st set at Mont De Marsan, Riviera immediately expressed an interest in signing The Damned to Stiff.

Scabies - "The very first time we saw Jake was at Victoria Coach Station waiting to board the bus to Mont De Marsan - he knew who we were & told us which bus to get on. Everyone was talking about this guy who was really changing things."

Vanian - "Jake was very slick - seersucker jacket, drainpipes & black shoes. He looked sharp."

James - "Stiff were the 1st people to express an interest who seemed fun. I'd never met anyone like Jake before."

Dave Robinson - "The idea of Stiff was to be a conduit for people who couldn't find the music business any other way. My theory was that there was an Elvis Presley out there, but that he was working in a factory in Coventry & he didn't know how to get in touch with me."

September 1976.

In September 1976, The Damned scored their first front cover when they appeared as stars of Sniffin' Glue 3. Interviewed inside the magazine over 4 pages, & with manager Czezowski present, this frank exchange offers a real insight into the early Punk scene.

4/9/76 - The Sex Pistols perform live on Granada TV's "So It Goes" - Punk Rock gathers momentum.

13/9/76 - Dave Vanian decides to give up his job as a gravedigger to go fulltime with The Damned.

Vanian - "I was one of the best workers they had. I used to work really hard, get things done & get into London early. When I decided to quit, they didn't want me to leave."

In early September 1976, plans were being made for a Punk Rock festival at The 100 Club. By this time The Damned were experiencing problems with their manager Andy Czezowski & were approached by Ron Watts (manager of the 100 Club & The Nags Head, High Wycombe) who expressed an interest in handling the band's affairs.

Ron Watts - "It was the end of that long, hot summer. A glorious day. I'd been booking the Pistols into The 100 Club for months & people were starting to come from Manchester, Plymouth, Newcastle. The seeds were growing everywhere. A&R men had been down from all the major labels, but they'd turned their noses up. It occurred to me that some sort of event, call it a festival, was needed to put Punk on the map. I was informally managing The Damned

at this point & I got Malcolm McLaren involved because he was in with a lot of other bands, notably the Pistols."

20/9/76 - Although contracts have yet to be signed, The Damned enter Pathway Studios, Islington (Stiff's house studio), & record "New Rose" & a cover of The Beatles "Help" as their first Stiff Records 45. The session is produced by Nick Lowe, engineered by Barry "Bazza" Farmer & nailed down in just under 4 hours.

20/9/76 - Subway Sect, Suzie & The Banshees, The Clash & the Sex Pistols play the 100 Club Punk Festival.

21/9/76 - Stinky Toys, The Damned, the Vibrators, Chris Spedding & the Buzzcocks play the 100 Club Punk Festival.

Sensible - "We really didn't have any money for anything. We could hardly afford to even buy a drink at the bar. If you were really lucky Malcolm would buy you a drink. He was the only one in the whole place with money."

The festival provided some bands their first chance on a real stage, including Suzie & The Banshees (featuring Sid Vicious on drums).

Sensible - "Suzie was utterly useless. Appalling. They didn't deserve to be allowed anywhere near a stage. Most of the bands, even people like the Buzzcocks, knew 3 or 4 chords, but they didn't have a clue. As far as I could make out she was just this kid with loads of dosh from a well-to-do family. She was the only person I knew then who could afford to spend £200 a time on S&M outfits from Malcolm's shop on the King's Road. The Buzzcocks turned up with all their equipment in plastic Tesco bags. They had these Top 20 guitars that were the cheapest thing you could possibly buy. Most of them only had 4 strings & they couldn't even tune them."

Pete Shelly (Buzzcocks) - "There was a lot of talk that afternoon about the possibility that The Damned might get signed to Stiff Records. At one point they were standing together examining the contract Stiff were offering them."

Sensible - "We really couldn't play very well at all, but we were better than any of the others. I spent most of my time standing at the front of the stage shrieking with laughter at the other bands, which didn't amuse them."

Dave Berk (Damned roadie & Johnny Moped drummer) - "The Captain had his hair bright mauve then. He had a habit of standing right at the back of the stage, playing but not moving at all. Then suddenly he would run forward & gob at the punters."

Sensible - "We always tried to upstage each other, so at one point I kicked Vanian & he went hurtling right off the front of the stage. It wasn't as bad as it sounds, because the stage was only 2 ft high, but that meant it was easy for the crowd to climb up & mob you. Anyway, he went off the stage & crashed right into Suzie."

The Damned's performance at The 100 Club Punk Festival of 21/9/76 was marred by a glass-throwing incident that left a girl blinded in one eye. A glass thrown from the crowd smashed against a post sending shards of broken glass into the audience.

Ron Watts - "I'm certain it was Sid (Vicious). He wasn't trying to hit the girl, obviously. He was just pissed off at The Damned, because he saw them as the main rivals to the Pistols, so he threw a pint tankard at the stage."

Vivienne Westwood - "Sid threw that bottle but we pretended to the police that it was someone else."

22/9/76 - The Damned play The Nags Head, High Wycombe.

October 1976.

2/10/76 - The Damned make the front cover of Melody Maker. A report by Caroline Coon features a shot of Dave Vanian (or Vanium, as many mistakenly referred to him in the early days) & a picture of Captain Sensible wearing a T-Rex t-shirt.

8/10/76 - The Damned play the White Swan in Luton.

14/10/76 - The Damned play The Nags Head, High Wycombe. Admission on the night is 60p. Captain Sensible succeeds in driving the entire audience from the venue after only a few songs with his anti-hippy comments regarding hair-length, beards, kaftans & beads. Ron Watts is less than impressed.

Vanian - "At the end of the gig, he was lying in a drunken stupor on the floor like a beached whale, shouting; 'you'll never work in this industry again'."

In the 3rd week of October 1976, The Damned finally signed to Stiff Records. After weeks of contractual hassles, Riviera invited the band into his office and all parties agreed to sign it & stick it in the drawer. Advancedale duly assumed managerial control of The Damned.

21/10/76 - The Damned play the Red Cow, Hammersmith. Marc Bolan (who The Damned had met recently & who was alarmed by their poverty) sends his chauffeur round to the gig with a set of guitar strings.

22/10/76 - "New Rose"/"Help" is released as a single by Stiff Records.

23/10/76 - Sounds news page states; DAMNED:FIRST PUNK ON WAX. John Ingham makes "New Rose" his single of the week; "The product of 4 hours intensive care, this is so hot it's a wonder the vinyl doesn't melt."

James - "I wrote 'New Rose' in a quarter of an hour when I was living in Kilburn. The lyrics seemed to come out perfectly with the riffs. The words have no particular relevance at all. It was a love song."

Vanian - "It's always been lauded as the 1st Punk single. At the time, it was a case of, 'let's do it'. It was all done on the cheap - we didn't even pay for the tape."

Sensible - "I was astonished (on hearing a playback of 'New Rose' for the 1st time) - I thought it was so good."

Scabies - "It was fucking brilliant. I was awed by it, what Nick had done, what it sounded like. I thought; studios are great, you can do anything."

Marc Bolan - "The energy level is dynamite. The attitude is positive rather than moody-positive. It has the same feel as The Stones 'I Wanna Be Your Man' & that made a big impression on me. The sound of the band comes over 100%. You have to sit up & take notice of it - & that's what Rock & Roll's all about."

26/10/76 - The Damned play Victoria Palace, London, with Graham Parker & The Rumour & Eddie & The Hot Rods, & become the first "new wave" band to play a major London venue.

30/10/76 - The Damned play Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre, Leighton Buzzard. The show ends in violence involving a number of disgruntled Hell's Angels.

November 1976.

2/11/76 - The Damned play the Hope & Anchor, London.

6/11/76 - The Damned make the front cover of Sounds - this shot is consequently used to front the band's 1st press pack. NME also features an article describing The Damned as "the first punk rock band to be available on record nationally" following the signing of a distribution deal with United Artists.

The Damned were also featured on the front cover of November's issue of Scotland's premier Punk fanzine, Ripped & Torn. The feature ran a short interview with Vanian.

11/11/76 - The Damned embark on tour supporting the Flamin' Groovies but upstage the headliners on the first night after a particularly explosive performance at The Coatham Bowl in Redcar. The Flamin' Groovies immediately decide to junk the rest of the tour, citing flu as the reason for their rapid departure. The Groovies also famously dub The Damned "the worst band we've ever played with".

Scabies - "I remember the first time we met the Groovies - I'd never seen so many guitars in one room. They tried very hard to ignore us."

Sensible - "One of them was bald as well."

The Damned continued to honour their tour support slot, however, & played Eric's in Liverpool on 12/11/76, Barbarella's, Birmingham, on 13/11/76 & ended the tour at London's Roundhouse on 14/11/76 with The Troggs.

18/11/76 - The Damned play the Lacy Lady in Ilford - the show is stopped after only 1 song by a horrified promoter who pays the band off & asks them to leave.

19/11/76 - The Damned play Manor Hill Upper School, Finchley, with Slaughter & The Dogs & Eater - admission £1 on the door. The show is billed - "Punks At The High School". This day also sees the release of the Sex Pistols debut 45, "Anarchy In The UK".

Sensible - "We sat down to listen to it with bated breath. What are our rivals up to? They were rough & ready on stage all right, but no one knew what they'd sound like on record. When we heard it, we all pissed ourselves with laughter. It sounded like some redundant Bad Company out-take with, like, old man Steptoe singing over the top."

Scabies - "I'd already bought into the Pistols & thought they sounded better on record than they did live."

20/11/76 - The Damned play Friars, Aylesbury. The same day NME run a feature announcing that the Ramones have pulled out of Malcolm McLaren's Anarchy tour. The revised bill features the Sex Pistols, The Damned, The Clash & Johnny Thunders & The Heartbreakers.

Following 3 months of solid gigging, The Damned had established a fervent live following. This fact had not gone un-noticed by McLaren.

Scabies - "Malcolm had been trying to get the Anarchy Tour idea of the ground for a while, but couldn't find the right bands. I'm sure we were only on that tour to put bums on seats"

Vanian - "They (the Sex Pistols) didn't play many shows & they were playing to 30-40 people at the most. We were already out there touring, getting good crowds, so we were put on the tour to bring the people in, as were The Clash." (Quote - NeatDamnedNoize - Issue 16.)

21/11/76 - The Damned play The Croydon Greyhound.

26/11/76 - The Damned play Eric's, Liverpool.

27/11/76 - The Damned play Teeside Polytechnic, Middlesborough. Sounds features a Giovanni D'Adamo interview with The Damned - "In The Pub Across The Road With The Damned" - in which he concludes, "In the winter of 76 in Britain there's fewer rock & roll presents more stimulating than the one being served up by this particular 4 piece."

28/11/76 - The Damned & Slaughter & The Dogs play The Electric Circus, Manchester under the banner Punks At The Circus - admission is 75p on the door.

30/11/76 - The Damned record their 1st John Peel session.

Scabies - "Jake had bought Brian & the Captain brand new High-Watt stacks & the BBC studio engineer walked out of the session on the grounds that the band had amplifiers 6ft tall. We were constantly monitored all day by intrigued BBC employees - they kept walking past, looking in, desperate to check out these Punk rockers. We were not even allowed to eat in the staff canteen in case we disturbed anyone."

December 1976.

In December 1976, The Damned joined the Sex Pistols on the infamous Anarchy Tour as the second band on the bill, along with The Clash & Johnny Thunders & The Heartbreakers. As the tour progressed, fall-out from the Sex Pistol's appearance on the Bill Grundy show led to cancellations & outrage. McLaren, initially gutted by the Grundy incident, attempted to turn adversity to triumph by whipping up local press frenzies. In some cases he even phoned venues with tales of terror, coercing promoters into pulling shows, & creating far more publicity as a result.

The tour arrangements had begun badly - the Sex Pistols & The Clash were relaxing in Holiday Inn style comfort, travelling on nice coaches. The Damned were pissed off in crummy B&B accommodation, slogging it out in a Transit van - tension was mounting.

Scabies - "The Clash & The Heartbreakers were both being looked after by Bernie (Rhodes) & Malcolm, we felt like the outsiders all of a sudden."

Vanian - "We had a mattress in the back of the van on top of the gear & had to lie on that as we drove."

Sensible - "After the show (the Grundy interview), Malcolm really tore into them (the Pistols). He was convinced they'd blown it. He was appalled. 'You fucking idiots, you've ruined everything. We're finished' He was in tears. He thought it was all over."

Eventually, only a handful of the originally planned shows actually went ahead:

6/12/76 - Leeds, Polytechnic.
9/12/76 - Manchester, Electric Circus.
14/12/76 - Caerphilly, Castle Cinema.
19/12/76 - Manchester, Electric Circus.
20/12/76 - Cleethorpes, Winter Gardens.
21&22/12/76 - Plymouth, Woods Centre.

The Damned would only play the 1st show. After the Leeds gig, McLaren, seemingly believing The Damned to be of no further use to him, attempted to demote the band down the bill. The next day, in Derby, McLaren stirred things further.

Sensible - "We were locked in this B&B in Derby & Stiff's press officer, Rick Rogers, went over to meet Rhodes & McLaren & told them we were willing to play for the councillors. No one had asked us. I wouldn't have done it. I always got on well with Mick (Jones) & Johnny (Rotten), but the managers were deadly rivals."

The Damned had taken enough shit & immediately quit the tour & returned to London. The official party line issued by McLaren claimed The Damned had been fired from the tour for a lack of Punk solidarity.

James - "Personally, I was always into it for the fans first & foremost. The buzz of playing live was what it was all about to me. I wasn't going to be told what to do by anyone - especially the manager of some other group."

7/12/76 - The Damned & Eater play The Hope & Anchor, London. The promo-film footage for "New Rose" is shot by Stiff Records at this show. Vanian announces from the stage, "We've just been fired from the tour (Anarchy Tour)".

Vanian - "Personally, I always thought it was bad thing for The Damned in general that the tour didn't work out, but, considering the number of shows that got pulled I suppose it didn't really matter that much in the end."

10/12/76 - The BBC broadcast The Damned's 1st John Peel session featuring 5 songs:

"Stab Your Back"/"Neat Neat Neat"/"New Rose"/"So Messed Up"/"I Fall".

January 1977.

In January 1977, following the debacle of the Anarchy Tour, The Damned began sessions for their debut LP under the guidance of Nick "Basher" Lowe & Barry "Bazza" Farmer at Pathway Studios, London. Recorded & completed in 10 days during a 6 week period on an 8 track desk & a "honkful of toot", Lowe later admitted he did little more than watch the band slam down their live set.

James - "We treated it like a gig - we went in & just bashed it down - I know that was Nick's nickname, Basher Lowe, 'Bash it down & tart it up in the mix' - but that's what we did."

Rat Scabies - "Nobody gave me any drugs"

Vanian - "No-one gave me any drugs either".

Featuring 13 songs & clocking in at 31 minutes 34 seconds, "Damned Damned Damned" was not only the first debut LP by a UK Punk band, it still defines the genre today. Detractors falsely claimed that the tapes had been speeded up in the studio - in comparison to the pedestrian pace of the recorded Sex Pistols, it's not hard to see why. The Damned were a constant threat to the self appointed art-school elite.

31/1/77 - The Damned play London's Roxy Club with Eater as part of a series of shows at the venue intended as a payback to Andy Czezowski, whose car had been badly damaged by Rat Scabies (Scabies had puked down the side of the Pink car in transit - actually brining the paint off - one can only speculate on the contents of his stomach at the time). Julie Burchill reviews the gig for The NME; "Dave Vanium (Vanian) tackles the songs as though he hates them & is attempting to disembowel them on his own tonsils."

February 1977.

14/02/77 - The Damned play St Albans City Hall.

18/02/77 - The Damned play The Penthouse Club, Scarborough.

18/2/77 - "Damned Damned Damned" is released by Stiff Records. The classic cover shot by Peter Kodick follows an impromptu food fight orchestrated by Patti Palladin & Judy Nylon (Snatch) - staged, in grand Damned tradition, totally off the cuff. The 1st 2/3000 copies are issued with a picture of Eddie & The Hot Rods on the sleeve by "mistake".

Vanian - "That was a genuine mistake".

James - "Nick Lowe captured our live sound really well. There's nothing to date it. He captured more of the spirit of the times than Chris Thomas."

Sensible - "It's very much a thing of 1977. I'm proud to have been a part of it."

Scabies - "The 1st LP was a realisation of the power of sound, a noise generated just by us."

The true story behind the Hot Rods sleeve is a fine example of Jake Riviera's style;

Scabies - "Jake had worked out how many LPs we needed to sell to recoup the recording costs. That was the quantity that were pressed with the Hot Rods picture on the back - about 2/3000 only. Jake knew it would appeal to the Collectors market. He was totally hip to all that. The marketing was brilliant."

"Damned Damned Damned" was recorded over a period of 6 weeks using a Bazza special desk, a Brennel 8 track & 2 re-vox machines. No dolbys were used, an AKG D12 bass drum mic was used for Rat's drum sound. Also a pair of UV81 mics were hung 1 & 1/2 metres above the drum kit. The producer says he did not put any instruments into airtight boxes, although at one stage during "Born To Kill" they had to put Captain Sensible in one.

No drugs were used during the recording of the LP.

"Damned Damned Damned" was mastered at The Master Room by George Peckham.

Nick Lowe, the record producer, took time off from his meteoric oblivion to say, "They're damned good eggs".

In early February 1977, Stiff Records announced details of their new distribution deal with Island Records covering all world territories except North America. The Damned also signed to the powerful Derek Block Agency.

19/2/77 - Sounds review "Damned Damned Damned" - Giovanni Dadomo gives it 5 stars; "Come 1983 of course this could sound very silly indeed. Fortunately, it's still today and The Damned are right on the button. White light lives." Melody Maker follow suit & Tony Parsons also decides he's made his mind up in the NME; "They promised, they recorded, they delivered". A double page centre spread advert for the LP also appears in the NME.

19/2/77 - The Damned play Leeds University. The gig is reviewed for the NME by John Hamblett, who finds the experience far less threatening than he'd imagined it would be.

21/2/77 - The Damned & Johnny Moped play The Roxy Club.

22/2/77 - The Damned, The Stranglers & the Count Bishops play The University of Essex, Colchester.

25/2/77 - The Damned play The University Of East Anglia, Norwich. "Neat Neat Neat" is released as a single by Stiff Records. The picture sleeve features a shot of the band with paper bags over their heads.

Vanian - "We were hanging around waiting to have our picture taken & we just decided to wear these paper bags over our heads. Totally spontaneous, like everything we ever did."

Scabies - "I always said real fans could tell who was who from the eyeholes alone."

26/2/77 - A double page centre spread advert for "Neat Neat Neat" is placed in Sounds. NME confirms The Damned have been invited to join Marc Bolan on his March UK tour.

26/2/77 - The Damned & The Cortinas play Bristol University. The gig is reviewed for National Rockstar magazine by John Powell; "It wasn't hard to see why the Pistols were reluctant, & possibly afraid, to have them on tour last year."

28/2/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play The Roxy Club.

30/2/77 - The Damned play The Tufnell Park Halls Of Residence, London.

March 1977.

3/3/77 - The Damned play The Red Deer, Croydon.

4/3/77 - The Damned play The City Of London Polytechnic.

5/3/77 - The Damned play Derby College Of Art & Technology. NME reviews "Neat Neat Neat" on their singles page; "Brilliant Nick Lowe production, more accessible than 'New Rose'."

In March 1977 The Damned set out on tour supporting Marc Bolan. The event made the cover of the NME in an article by Mick Farren & Chalkie Davies entitled; "Old Wave Meats New Wave". Farren offered the following observations on the band's members:

"Scabies is a fuel-injected flailer of the best kind."

"The Captain is unique. People like him show up about once in a generation."

"Vanian begins to look like something that slipped out of the cabinet of Doctor Caligari while no-one was looking."

"Brian James is almost traditional. He's the macho guitar player."

11/3/77 - T-Rex & The Damned tour begins at The Manchester Apollo.

Sensible - "It worked so well. His crowd liked us, & vice versa. He was such a great bloke, always giving us little pep talks on the bus."

Vanian - "To be on a tour of that kind in those days without having to pay our way on was really rare. He (Bolan) was a gentleman."

12/3/77 - T-Rex & The Damned gig at Glasgow Apollo is cancelled after roadies leave essential PA cables behind in Manchester.

13/3/77 - T-Rex & The Damned play Newcastle City Hall - the gig is reviewed in a two-page article by Melody Maker's Alan Jones; "The climax of their (The Damned's) set involves Scabies in pyromaniac mood, setting fire to his cymbals while furiously lashing his kit - & he never misses a beat. Wonderful!"

14/3/77 - T-Rex & The Damned play The Colston Hall, Bristol.

17/3/77 - T-Rex & The Damned play Birmingham Odeon.

18/3/77 - T-Rex & The Damned play London's Rainbow Theatre.

19/3/77 - T-Rex & The Damned play West Runton Pavilion.

20/3/77 - T-Rex & The Damned play Portsmouth Locarno.

21/3/77 - The Damned play Tiffany's, Edinburgh.

26/3/77 - The Damned & The Cortinas play Malvern Winter Gardens.

26/3/77 - The Damned perform "Neat Neat Neat" on the TV show, "Supersonic".

Scabies - "Cliff Richard was also on the show & refused to introduce us. Dennis Weaver stood in with a bemused expression instead."

Vanian - "Cliff believed our name to be blasphemous & refused to introduce us. Weaver introduced us from on top of a horse."

30/3/77 - The Damned & Johnny Moped play London's Royal College Of Art.

April 1977.

2/4/77 - The Damned are forced to abandon a gig at Stirling University after only 20 minutes. 15 minutes into the band's set a shower of beer cans start flying. The Damned leave the stage & appeals are put out for the audience to calm down. The group return to perform for a further 5 minutes before the barrage begins again, forcing them to flee the venue for the safety of their hotel. Melody Maker

announce details of The Damned's forthcoming US tour under the banner; "DAMNED YANKEES".

In April 1977, The Damned became the 1st UK Punk band to visit the USA, playing several shows with Cleveland Punks, the Dead Boys in support. The Damned played the first of four (two sets a night) shows at CBGB's on the 8th of April.

John Holstrom (Punk Magazine) - "I think the best weekend ever at CBGB's was The Damned/Dead Boys double bill. Those two bands played the best live shows in the Punk Rock world back then, & they played "can you top this" all weekend. When they weren't onstage, they'd be heckling or throwing garbage at the other band. Each show was better than the last - it was unbelievable. It was the most fun people had at that crazy dive - & that's the thing that most idiots still don't understand about Punk Rock - it's meant to be FUN. I think that of all the English Punk bands, The Damned understood this the best, since they've never taken themselves too seriously & they're always entertaining."

Roberta Bayley (CBGB's doorman & photographer) - "The Damned came over & did a weekend with the Dead Boys - it was sort of a battle of the bands scenario. The Dead Boys were doing a version of "Anarchy". They were goofing on the English bands & stuff. The Dead Boys were just rock, they weren't really Punk when they came out of Cleveland. They quickly adapted to what the scene needed - which was their own Punk rock band doing Iggy & The Stooges stuff onstage - & would throw themselves & be outrageous & cut themselves. But to me, The Damned were really original. I remember The Damned being manic & out of control. It was total chaos but really fun chaos. It all seemed very spontaneous to me. It seemed like Dave Vanian was walking up the walls & onto the ceiling. The Damned weren't a cliché & pretty soon all new bands seemed to BEGIN as clichés. In New York, we had invented it (it our minds, anyway) & by 1977 it was already beginning to seem old, but The Damned were fresh & funny & original."

Further dates followed at Boston's Rat Club, Los Angeles' Starwood & San Francisco's Mabuhay Gardens.

Jeff Raphael (audience member) - "The Damned were the first English Punk band to tour the US. I thought they were amazing. They were so fast, they were a 100 times faster than the Ramones &, of course, that was the thing at the time, speed."

Jimmy Wisley (audience member) - "The Damned's show at The Mab had everyone from around here who was in a band. They played everything, & everybody was sort of looking at each other with their mouths open, & after that I think the bands started changing a little more. Songs got faster, set lists got tighter."

The Damned had originally been scheduled to perform with Television at The Whiskey A Go-Go but Verlaine & Co were too scared to share a stage with these dangerous UK Punks, & the gig never came off (Sensible & Scabies would later pen the acerbic "Idiot Box" from "Music For Pleasure" in response).

Vanian - "I don't think too much of Tom Verlaine. He just decided he didn't want us on the gig with him. He must have heard how we went down in New York & I expect he couldn't stand the idea of our energy."

19/4/77 - The Damned play Birmingham Barbarella's.

23/4/77 - The Damned feature on the front cover of Record Mirror. The article covers their US jaunt & includes a selection of photos from the CBGB's shows. Sounds cover the shows in an article by Giovanni Dadomo entitled; "Damnation Alley". The photo used for this feature is a shot of the band in front of the World Trade Centre taken by Roberta Bayley.

24/4/77 - The Damned, Motorhead & The Adverts play London's Roundhouse. The Damned perform beneath a banner that claims: TAX EXILES RETURN. April's edition of Ripped & Torn fanzine features The Damned on the cover with a 2-page article, LP review & live review inside.

May 1977.

In May 1977, The Damned began a UK Tour with The Adverts, whom James had been impressed with after catching their Roxy Club debut. The two best Punk bands in the UK on one bill - the tour poster summed it all up:

"The Damned can now play 3 chords, The Adverts can play 1 - hear all 4 of them at;"

The tour ran into problems almost from the off - gigs were cancelled or moved at short notice due to ever growing paranoia on the part of promoters, venue owners & local councillors about the violence associated with Punk Rock.

TV Smith - "I moved to London from Devon in the summer of 1976 & had already heard rumours about some of the new young bands that were starting up there. Shortly afterwards I went to The 100 Club festival & saw some of them, including the Sex Pistols, the Buzzcocks & The Damned. I liked The Damned's energy, liked their songs, & really liked the fact that they were obviously ordinary kids, just like me, who'd managed to form a band & get out & play. The only real reference point we had for Punk in those days, before the UK Punk movement had been established, were people like Iggy & the New York Dolls. The Damned weren't afraid to show their influences in that respect - it was pretty obvious they liked the same kind of bands I did. The Damned/Adverts tour still stands as one of the best tours I've ever been on. We were supporting, but getting great reactions, so every night both bands were pushing each other to be better than the other & giving everything they had. On top of that, the audiences were fascinated by this new thing called Punk & were really up for enjoying themselves. You had to be a bit careful at the time because there was a Teds versus Punks & a Skinhead versus Punks thing going on. Proof that a movement is having an impact is when other social groups start feeling threatened by it. The only real trouble we experienced on the tour, however, was in Lincoln where a bunch of thugs started beating up the kids walking to the gig from the station & then stormed the venue in an attempt to break down the door. It was like a scene out of a Hollywood western. Dave Vanian did dislocate a shoulder after a gig in Cornwall, but that was due to Laurie Driver rolling him down the stairs of a guest-house in a pram after getting wasted on Tequila. The Damned were fast, furious & totally devoid of self-indulgence - everything a good Punk band should be."

10/5/77 - The Damned record their 2nd John Peel session.

13/5/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play the Retford Porterhouse.

14/5/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play Middleton Civic Hall.

16/5/77 - The Damned & The Adverts scheduled gig at the Top Of The World, Stafford, is cancelled at 4 hours notice & moved to North Staffordshire Polytechnic. The Damned's 2nd John Peel session is broadcast featuring 4 songs:

"Sick Of Being Sick"/"Stretcher Case Baby"/"Fan Club"/"Feel The Pain".

17/5/77 - The Damned begin recording with Shel Talmy, the legendary 60s producer of The Who & The Kinks. They record "Stretcher Case Baby" & "Sick Of Being Sick".

James - "The idea was to do something different after the 1st LP. Shel was one of our heroes. It was an experiment that worked."

19/5/77 - The Damned record a Radio 1 In Concert set - broadcast on 21/5/77. The show is a double-header with Graham Parker & The Rumour at Victoria Palace - John Peel DJs.

20/5/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play Southampton University. University bar-staff strike in protest at staging Punk gigs.

21/5/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play Hastings Pier Pavilion.

25/5/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play Sheffield University.

26/5/77 - The Damned & The Adverts gig at Tiffany's, Newcastle-Under-Lyme, is pulled under orders from the Mecca Organisation, who are having problems coming to terms with Punk Rock.

27/5/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play The Cambridge Corn Exchange.

28/5/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play Eric's, Liverpool.

June 1977

2/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play Keynes College, Kent University.

3/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts gig West Runton Pavilion is cancelled with no given reason.

4/6/77 - The Damned, The Adverts & Tanya Hyde & The Tormentors gig at St Albans City Hall is cancelled at short notice when Hertfordshire police refuse to attend. The show is re-scheduled & moved to the California Ballroom, Dunstable.

6/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play a special jubilee show at London's Dingwalls. The 1st 25 people are admitted free - the next 25 people pay 25p - the next 25 pay 50p - the next 25 pay 75p - step by step to a maximum of £3.50.

Riviera - "It was designed so that real Damned fans could get in cheaply, while the liggers arriving after The Ramones gig at The Roundhouse would have to pay more."

9/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play Cleethorpes Winter Gardens.

10/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play Birmingham Barbarella's. The show is reviewed for The NME by Mike Davies, "Returning to their almost second home, Birmingham Barbarella's last week, The Damned once again proved beyond doubt that they are one of the classiest rock bands in the universe as we know it."

11/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play a 2nd Barbarella's gig.

12/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play Maxim's, Barrow-in-Furness

13/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play The Outlook, Doncaster.

14/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play The Drill Hall, Lincoln. A riot ensues - Big Mick saves the day.

15/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play Brighton Polytechnic.

16/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts gig at Cheltenham Town Hall is cancelled after a ruling by the good burghers of Cheltenham Town Council.

17/6/77 - The Damned, The Adverts & XTC play Swindon Brunel Rooms.

18/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts gig at Kursaal, Southend, is switched to The Queens Hotel for the following night (19/6/77).

20/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play London.

22/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play Woods, Plymouth.

23/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play The Garden, Penzance. Dave Vanian dislocates his shoulder.

24/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play Exeter University.

25/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play Wigan Casino.

Scabies - "We were watching the Punks filing out & the Soulboys filing in. It was kicking off everywhere. I remember thinking the promoter could have given it a bit more thought, under the circumstances."

26/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play Manchester's Electric Circus.

27/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play Lancaster University. During The Damned's set, roadie Philip Lloyd is dragged from the stage whilst changing a mic stand & kicked & beaten by 4 men thought to have been part of a coach party from Blackpool.

Scabies - "The only reason it's happening is because The Daily Mirror are putting it on their front page. It horrifies me. It happens all the time to us."

28/6/77 - The Damned & The Adverts play St Georges Hall, Bradford.

29/6/77 - The Damned play The California Ballroom, Dunstable - rescheduled from St Albans City Hall.

The Damned soon appeared on TV again, on a show called "Blast Off", hosted by Michael Aspel. "Blast Off" was a pilot show for Mike Mansfield - the band performed "Stretcher Case Baby" & shared the bill with Sandie Shaw. Aspel introduced The Damned as "high energy dole queue rock" & outro-ed with "muppets, eat your heart out".

Scabies - "We were inevitably banned from returning to the Portsmouth TV studios for fooling around with air pistols - another Damned ban!"

July 1977.

In July 1977, Sniffin' Glue 11 featured The Damned as cover stars, utilising the classic "Neat Neat Neat" bag shot.

The two new songs previously recorded with Shel Talmy, "Stretcher Case Baby" & "Sick Of Being Sick", were pressed as a limited edition 7" (5,000 copies) by Stiff Records. The single was dubbed a "first anniversary gift" to be given away to fans at a series of Marquee shows The Damned had booked to celebrate their 1st year together as a band. The first gig took place on 3/7/77, but following a row between Riviera & the venue's management, only 2 shows out of the scheduled 4 were played. Leftover copies of the single were posted out to Damned Disciples fan-club members & 250 copies became a prize in an NME competition. The single became a collector's item almost immediately.

3/7/77 - The Damned & The Rings play The Marquee.

4/7/77 - The Damned & Johnny Moped play The Marquee.

16/7/77 - Melody Maker prints a letter from Rat Scabies' father, signing himself Mildew Mouse, berating Robert Plant for earlier criticism of his son.

7. To The End At The Rainbow.

As August 1977 began, The Damned were under increasing pressure from Stiff Records who wanted the band to record a 2nd LP while the Punk scene was still hot. The Damned had been struggling to come up with coherent new material for the first time since their inception.

James - "We were touring & touring & the record company was saying 'where's the new LP?' You don't have a lot of time to write (on tour). A lot of people, especially people at Stiff Records, thought 'this thing's not going to last, let's milk it'."

James decided a second guitarist would enable them to expand their sound, partly in homage to the MC5, partly to leave James free to concentrate on guitar solos. Auditions were held & Robert "Lu" Edmunds, a 20-year-old civil engineer with no professional musical experience, was duly drafted into the band. James invited all members of The Damned to contribute to song-writing duties for the second LP.

James - "I like change. I thought we had said it all on the 1st LP. It was my idea to bring in another guitar to make it more exciting. I thought that would be the easiest thing, like the MC5, that twin attack thing. It was an experiment that didn't work."

Sensible - "The auditions were mad, insane. Every quarter of an hour a new person came in. After a while it got really boring, most of them were muso tosspots. We'd just take the piss, stand there with our trousers around our ankles waving our plonkers at them. Not many could take it, except Robert. We named him "Lu", short for lunatic. Get that lunatic back in."

On the 5/8/77 The Damned played the 2nd Mont De Marsan Punk Festival & Lu made his stage debut with the band. The Damned shared the bill with The Clash, The Jam, The Boys, Eddie & The Hot Rods & Dr Feelgood, amongst others. Amphetamines & alcohol were the order of the day. At one stage, Captain Sensible was seen chain-whipping a clump of shrubbery because it was taking the piss out of him.

There was still some animosity between The Damned & The Clash that could be traced back to the Anarchy Tour, &

during The Clash's set The Captain let off some stink bombs that upset some members of The Clash more than others.

Joe Strummer - "They're fucking jealous & they can just fuck right off."

Paul Simonon - "We ain't got no sense of smell."

Sensible - "I hate The Clash. They say they wanna white ryutt ana revolution - but only after everyone's bought their poxy records. You know they only stay in Holiday Inns when they're on tour. You should see some of the places we have to stay in. If they don't get colour TVs in their rooms they move out. Real revolutionaries, uh?"

During this commotion, The Captain was ejected from the stage by over zealous bouncers & ended up straddling scaffolding in obvious pain. He was then dragged towards an ambulance by a French Red Cross team & was lucky to escape with his damaged manhood intact. He lurched off into the night & was later discovered atop an equipment truck, which another French official believed he was about to hijack.

Vanian - "We later discovered the amphetamine had been laced with PCP - that could have had something to do with it."

The Damned were keen to take their new music in a fresh direction. Weak "repeat the 1st LP" efforts by both The Jam & The Stranglers had already been critically panned. A flash US producer to hone The Damned's sound for US college radio was also not on the agenda - instead of turning into The Rolling Stones, The Damned began refer back to 60s Garage Punk & the psychedelic era.

The pressure of relentless touring & personal fatigue were beginning to take their toll on The Damned by this time. The addition of Lu had not suited every band member & he was increasingly seen as James' stooge. Scabies, for one, was becoming disillusioned with life in The Damned.

Scabies - "I'd decided I didn't really want to be in the band any more & I confided in Jake. He advised me to record the LP at least - that way I stood to make some money by being on the album - & I might want to change my mind later. If I'd have left then, it would have fucked the band up, & I didn't want to do that."

By mid-August 1977, The Damned had shelved plans to record their 2nd LP with Shel Talmy due to the producer's rapidly failing eyesight. Instead, recording commenced at Pink Floyd's Britannia Row studios. The band had originally wanted Syd Barrett, the legendary ex-Floyd recluse, to produce the LP but when they arrived at the studio for the first day's session they found Floyd drummer Nick Mason sitting behind the mixing desk.

James - "Nick Mason, we learnt after a couple of days, wasn't really the man for us at all. He just did not know the band, didn't understand the energy we had before"

Sensible - "He (Mason) could talk for hours about his motor bikes & racing cars, but when it came to music I don't know if he was that interested."

The Damned took a break from recording on the 17th & 18th August to headline 2 nights at a new London venue called The Sundown on Charing Cross Road (an ex-disco style nightclub). Support on both nights came from The Adverts & The Fruit Eating Bears. The shows were universally slated by the UK's rock press due to the thuggish actions of the venue's security, the raised disco podium in the middle of the dance floor that restricted most of the audience's view & the appalling sound quality. The Sundown closed its doors to live rock bands shortly afterwards.

By the middle of September 1977, the finished LP had been christened "Music For Pleasure", a reference to EMI's budget easy listening label. Featuring 11 tracks, the band's sound was stretched as far as it could go & even featured slide guitar on "One Way Love" as well as avant-garde jazz saxophonist, Lol Coxhill, on "You Know". The band had met Coxhill at a petrol station & asked him to blow with them. Coxhill, who was used to performing with such jazz luminaries as Evan Parker, Anthony Braxton & Steve Lacy, decided to risk it all & chuck his hand in with The Damned.

In feel & texture, the LP was reminiscent of The Stooges sophomore effort, "Funhouse". "Music For Pleasure" was an ambitious departure, boasting a handful of the best Damned songs ever; "Don't Cry Wolf", "Idiot Box" & "You Know". "You Know", in particular, pushed the genre boundaries way past vanishing point & remains a towering achievement today. The LP's sleeve was another point of contention;

designed by Barney Bubbles in a vaguely cubist style, the artwork was viewed by some as definitely not Punk.

Sensible - "Terrific, isn't it? It was sensational."

Scabies - "Brilliant. We all knew Barney as a friend, he was very observational. He knew us better than most & saw from the inside how disjointed we'd become."

Almost as soon as the LP was in the can, The Damned were added to the bill of the ill-fated City Rock 77 Festival, scheduled to take place at Chelmsford football stadium on 17/10/77. The line up included Eddie & The Hot Rods, Slaughter & The Dogs, Chelsea, Aswad & Lew Lewis, amongst others. Poor ticket sales meant that only a fraction of the expected 15,000 crowd actually attended, plummeting the event into financial difficulties. By the time word had leaked that the event had flopped, security staff staged an impromptu strike. Riggers began dismantling scaffolding while bands were still performing, before eventually being stopped by police. The Damned had been paid £425 upfront for their appearance but tour manager Ron Wolfe refused to allow the band to perform once it became apparent that the rest of the fee would not be forthcoming.

At the end of September 1977, The Damned departed for a French tour. On 1/10/77, two dates into the tour, the tension was such that Scabies decided he could no longer continue.

Scabies - "I sat in a meeting with the band & said, 'I don't want to do this tour'. They asked me to at least give it a try. I felt I couldn't have done it & remained sane."

Scabies was initially replaced with Dave Berk, a close friend of the Captain's who drummed for Johnny Moped. Scabies & Berk shared a flat so Berk knew The Damned's set reasonably well & slotted in just fine - the tour limped to its conclusion & the band returned to London to audition for new drummers.

Sensible - "Most of the people who phoned up were cunts. The first thing we asked them was if they were the best drummer in the world. If they paused, we'd hang up. If they said 'yes' we'd ask them if they were obnoxious. 'Alright', we'd say, 'abuse us'. Most people couldn't handle it."

Jon Moss handled it just right & was immediately drafted into the band. The former London drummer & future Culture Club member promised to continue on a part-time basis with his old band.

28/10/77 - Stiff Records release "Problem Child"/"You Take My Money" as a single.

6/11/77 - The Damned & 999 play a free gig at Chelmsford Chancellor Hall as a consolation for their non-appearance at the Chelmsford Festival.

11/11/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys begin a 24-date tour of the UK at Middlesborough Town Hall. The Damned drag Lol Coxhill along to augment their live sound.

Coxhill - "Some of the time I was just ligging about behind the amps. Usually, I played my soprano & sopranino for the last 20 minutes. Lots of people gobbed on me, so it must have been very popular."

The Middlesborough show formed the basis of a Melody Maker article by Alan Jones; "Predictions on The Damned's future in the context of the disintegration of the momentum that brought them & their new wave contemporaries to the attention of popular audiences, would be premature at best. Let's just conclude by saying that they are, under Brian James direction, seeking an intelligent alternative to the tiresome attitudes assumed of late by most of the bands with whom they have been associated. Certainly, they are to be preferred to the inane rantings of The Clash, the calculated - & laughable - chauvinistic belligerence of the abominable Stranglers, & they are immeasurably more entertaining than the tedious nouveau-pop posturings of such as Generation X."

12/11/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Leeds University.

15/11/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Dublin Trinity College.

16/11/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Belfast Queens University.

18/11/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Cambridge Corn Exchange. Stiff Records release "Music For Pleasure".

19/11/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Hull University.

20/11/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Manchester Elizabethan Ballroom.

21/11/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Birmingham Top Rank.

22/11/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Coventry Locarno.

23/11/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Sheffield Top Rank.

25-27/11/77 - The Damned, The Dead Boys & The Drones play 3 nights at London's Roundhouse. Pete Silverton's review of "Music For Pleasure" in the 26/11/77 edition of Sounds concludes: "6 months ago, The Damned were on a high, the fastest band to get the furthest. Then came the sneers, management problems, mistaken decisions & general uncertainties. They've already been written off by many who should know better but as Mr Vanian shouts on 'Don't Cry Wolf': 'Don't be a fool, don't cry wolf.'"

28/11/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Leicester De Montfort Hall.

30/11/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Brighton Top Rank.

2/12/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Derby Kings Hall.

3/12/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Hastings Pier Pavilion.

5/12/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Southampton Top Rank.

6/12/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Cardiff Top Rank.

7/12/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Liverpool University.

8/12/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Huddersfield Polytechnic.

9/12/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Edinburgh Clouds.

10/12/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Strathclyde University.

11/12/77 - The Damned & The Dead Boys play Newcastle City Hall. Stiff Records release "Don't Cry Wolf"/"One Way Love" as a single (Limited edition on pink vinyl). The Damned part company with Stiff Records & Advancedale Management shortly afterwards.

Vanian - "Jake had a lot of ideas about publicity & things, but he never really shaped the band as such. It was kind of Jake's little brain child from the beginning, but when it got halfway through, he got tired of it, just dropped it, split with Stiff, split with the band, etc, etc. I think from the start he was just caught up in the excitement of something new."

James immediately contacted Alan Edwards who he'd met via The Stranglers manager, Ian Grant, & appointed him to manage The Damned.

The December 24th edition of NME featured Dave Vanian as "Sam Dracula" along with Ian Dury as "Igor" on the cover. Inside Rat Scabies was pictured as "The Zombie Barman" serving cocktails to Phil Lynott of Thin Lizzy. The same week's edition of Sounds featured the sleeve of "Neat Neat Neat" on the cover, along with singles by the Sex Pistols, The Clash, The Stranglers, Jonathan Richman & Ian Dury, & posed the question; "Singles Of The Year - Which One Won?"

In February 1978 James issued a press release via Edwards announcing his intention to quit The Damned: "The split, although sad, was felt to be in the best interests of all concerned. Musical differences of opinion between James & the other members of the group had become increasingly apparent & a break was the only obvious solution."

8/4/78 - The Damned play their farewell gig at London's Rainbow, supported by The Soft Boys, Johnny Moped & Prof & The Profettes (featuring Jon Moss on drums & Damned roadie, Prof, on vocals).

On the night, Scabies sneaked into the venue sporting a flat cap & had made his way to the side of the stage as The Damned commenced their set; "This is the end of Punk", shouted Sensible, as The Damned took to the stage. As the set progressed, Sensible spotted Scabies & gestured him to join the band on stage. For half the set & during the

encore, Scabies & Moss drummed together. The Damned became a 7-piece as Coxhill joined them to blow for all he was worth on an elongated "You Know". The show ended in a gear trashing session & a hail of feedback.

Sensible - "I was really pleased it was the last gig. I'm glad it's all over. It was very funny looking back on it (the gig). My guitar wasn't working but I was really excited about seeing Rat again. It was our idea to smash all the equipment up."

On a cold April night in London, a mere 18 months after they'd been born, The Damned died. Although hardly a happy ending, it was fitting that The Damned ended the way it had begun - with all 4 original members on one stage. Sounds, NME, Melody Maker & Record Mirror all carried obituaries of The Rainbow show in their April 15th editions;

Pete Silverton (Sounds) - "I'll let Sensible provide their own epitaph. As I left, he whispered almost painfully & with not even one eye on giving good copy, 'I'm glad it's all over. That's all I can say'."

Nick Kent (NME) - "It was a good gig - arguably the best I've seen them, in fact."

Rosalind Russell (Record Mirror) - "A typical Damned gig & a fitting farewell. Total chaos was their trademark, so they lived & died by it."

Sifting through the rubble of fallen headlines from 25 years ago for a concluding insight into the rise & demise of The Damned all we are inevitably left with is what we started with; 4 unique individuals with 4 unique perspectives;

James - "The Damned were a good group for a short time, & that time is over & done with now. I think Big Business killed The Damned."

Sensible - "I'm never gonna touch another bass in my life. It's a moronic instrument, anyone can play bass."

Scabies - "The Damned will probably end up like the Pink Fairies - they'll end up having a hundred farewells & reunions."

Vanian - "Getting in another guitarist gave Brian someone to instantly identify with, but it turned out that the other members of the band plus guitarist caused too much friction, it worked out as 2 bands, or 3 bands, in one separate band. It just didn't work out."

Engraved on the run out groove of The Damned's version of "Help" appears the legend: DAMNED BEATLES! It was there for all to see from the off. The Damned were Punk's answer to The Beatles - 4 characters as strong & as fiercely individualistic as John, Paul, George & Ringo - The Damned = The Anti-Beatles.

When we first sat down to discuss this project with David Vanian our meeting concluded outside on the pavement. He shook our hands, wished us luck & explained that only the 4 original members' individual memories of the band could paint the full picture of The Damned. At this point a motorbike sped by drowning his concluding words in a hail of revs & engine noise. He appeared momentarily crestfallen before bidding us farewell - what he failed to add, we may never know.

8. Epilogue.

The legacy of The Damned has survived for over 25 years at the time of writing. Damned fans today are as dedicated & loyal as they were a quarter of a century ago. A network of fanzines & websites continue to track the individual band members' current activities with a passion that has always surrounded The Damned. One such fanzine is Neat Damned Noise, whose editor, Henrik, has been a major source of information in the compilation of this history. Other Damned fanatics such as Dave GinGoblin & Pip Williams also deserve singling out for their invaluable input into the project.

Brian James currently fronts a reformed Lords Of The New Church - www.lordsofthenewchurch.com - as well as recording & gigging with Brighton's Flatpig.

David Vanian & Captain Sensible continue to make records & tour as The Damned. Their latest excellent LP, "Grave Disorder", is available on Nitro Records. Details available - www.officialdamned.com

Rat Scabies occasionally drums for Slipper - www.slipper1.co.uk - & is also involved in several other ongoing projects, including the Global-Audio-Foundation.

The Damned back catalogue is currently available on CD exclusively through Sanctuary Music.

Props - Jean Encoule would like to thank the following for their assistance in the realisation of this project -

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Jean Encoule - trakMARX.com - Nov 04

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