

**"The Only Band That Matters": An Analysis of the Relationship  
Between Punk Rock and Culture**

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At some point in our lives, we have all used music as a mechanism to cope, excite, or calm. Every football team has a “pump-up” jam. Married couples have their first dance to that one special song. Music is even played at funerals when we bury our loved ones. The late great musician Bob Marley went so far as to say, “The one good thing about music, when it hits – you feel no pain.<sup>i</sup>” Music is a medium through which people can express their inner feelings and show off a side of themselves that most people would never see. Some people enjoy meaningful lyrics, while others wait in suspense for that one epic jam at a live concert. Rather than just listen, some of us even pick up an instrument and attempt to create a new, unique sound. Our culture’s connection to music is evident by the number of people each year who flock to concerts, buy CDs, and learn to play musical instruments. Even the great German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said, “Without music, life would be a mistake...I would only believe in a God who knew how to dance.<sup>ii</sup>” As we can see, every one of us has some type of connection to the music of our culture—whether it is good or bad.

Besides our individual experiences, music is also intertwined in our collective culture. During the 1960’s, music was used as a mechanism for protesting political issues. Bands like The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, and Janis Joplin wrote songs about peace and love. The hippie culture taught us to, “make love, not war.” If we fast-forward to the present generation, music is now used to send even stronger political messages. Presidential candidates have campaign theme songs to rally the crowds and gain votes, while the music of our country’s national anthem is used to unite citizens of the United States with feelings of pride and patriotism. Each day around the country, people place their hands over their hearts and sing praise to America. Through these examples and countless others, it becomes clear that music is an integral part of our daily lives. With all this said, our strong individual and collective connections to music establishes a need to

take music seriously. Our music is a direct reflection of our culture's values, and should be studied from a scholarly perspective.

Why is music so important for us to study from a communication studies perspective?

First of all, music is a form of communication. While there are numerous definitions, in its basic sense, communication is a process of transferring information from one person or group to another. Communication can take place in the form of a speech, song, tone of voice, or numerous other channels. Communication also involves non-verbal cues such as body language, patterns, eye contact, and style. Communication has a broad spectrum for music to fit into. In general, music coincides with the auditory and vocal elements. The message that is being communicated is in the form of noises and words. However, music videos, onstage antics, band style, and even album artwork are all forms of communication that can be studied and interpreted along with the lyrics and instruments.

As I mentioned above, music is a medium that can be used to express our feelings, send political messages, and spark social change. Music is important for us to study because we can learn so much about human communication styles, patterns, and tendencies through the analysis of lyrics mixed with instrumentation. Second, music also allows scholars to study music and its relationship to culture. In *The Origins of Music*, Steven Brown says that, "The real point is that music is so ubiquitous and so important that human culture just would not be human culture without it. This seems like a safe conclusion. And so we have no choice but to listen to music; not simply to listen to music but to *listen* to music, to what it is telling us about ourselves" (Brown et al 2000). The music created by members of our culture is a direct reflection of our collective values, beliefs, and traditions. As our culture's beliefs change, so does our music. Lastly, as communication studies scholars it is also important for us to examine the symbiotic

relationship between music and culture. Music creates culture, and culture creates music. This evolving and cyclical relationship needs to be studied from a communication perspective so we can learn from our culture's previous successes and failures. We can study the change in our music's content and style as an indicator of how our collective culture has evolved. The music we study can also teach us a tremendous amount about other people and their cultures. This study can help us to eliminate barriers such as stereotypes, discrimination, and other factors that hinder effective intercultural communication. In a world that is becoming more connected, communication will be vital for our culture's success as global citizens. The study of music from a communication perspective will give us the tools and knowledge we need to understand the dynamics at work in intercultural interaction.

This paper is focused on the relationship between music and culture. However, these topics are quite broad and would require a lifetime's worth of work to study in depth. I have thus decided to study a specific culture and category within the wide spectrum of musical genres. I will analyze youth counterculture and the punk rock musical genre, making the case that the two are intertwined in interesting ways.

The concept of punk arose in England during the late 1970's in the midst of a terrible recession. The allied forces had recently withdrawn from the controversial Vietnam War, which ended a ten-year occupation that cost Britain millions of dollars and thousands of young men. Because of the continuing oil crisis, gas became unavailable, and by the late 1970's, high unemployment rates and inflation began to tear the nation apart. Punk rock is rooted in the proletariat and working class youths of the United Kingdom at this particular time. To them, the recession represented the failure of the British socio-economic system (Bindas 69). The youth felt that they were being used during Vietnam and then neglected by the same regime when the

war was over. Rather than limit themselves to passive forms of protest, much like the hippie generation, punks created music and an entire new counterculture revolving around rebellion and discontent.

Historically, countercultures have had a negative connotation in our society. Civil Rights, Women's Liberation, and even the Hippies are different examples of countercultures that were initially denounced by society, but were still able to invoke powerful cultural change. Punk counterculture is no different. Rather than fight the system from within, punks rebelled against the status quo. The viewpoints were nihilistic, anarchistic, and full of pessimism. The punk rock counterculture saw no future for England if the current state of political and economic affairs were going to continue.

This paper will investigate the cultural and ideological aspects of punk rock counterculture and its relationship to mainstream mass culture. I will first establish my connection to punk rock—how I discovered punk, and my personal connections to its ideological values. Next, I will review the literature of classical and contemporary scholars on the concepts of culture, ideology, critical theory, media criticism, counterculture, and communication since it is essential to understand their ideas when analyzing the punk counterculture. From there, I will dissect punk rock as a music genre and style—the characteristics that make it so unique and rebellious. To apply the research I have conducted, I will analyze punk rock icons The Clash and their critically acclaimed album, *London Calling*. Through the use of rhetorical criticism I will flush out the punk ideologies in their music. The culmination of my research will describe the status of punk rock today, and its current relationship with popular culture.

Ultimately, through my research and writing process, I propose that perhaps our society may benefit from a deeper understanding of punk rock counterculture ideology. Punk culture and punk music had a message that demanded listeners. They tackled sensitive issues such as gender, race, and politics; punk was not afraid to take a stance—no matter how perverse or controversial. Specifically, we might look to punk to become more interculturally sensitive and global citizens in a world that is in desperate need of new political, economic, and social leaders.

## I'm A Punk!

The research process would not be complete if I did not examine my personal ties to punk rock music. I first experienced punk rock music during my awkward teen years in middle school. I can vividly remember sitting in a friend's garage as he popped a mix-tape of the latest jams into the cassette player. Out of the speakers came a rough, distorted guitar tone. I could feel my ears pulsating with each pick stroke played. The song was called "The Kids Aren't Alright," sung by a popular band named The Offspring. Even though this was only my first punk song, I was hooked. The fast pace of the music mirrored the sense of urgency that I felt my life needed. Being an athletic person involved in many activities, the music pumped me up—I felt alive. With that said, I was still more of a loner in my teen years. Other than my small group of friends, I kept to myself. I was able to identify with the punk lyrics that dealt with girls, daily life, and the confusion of being a teenager. Punk rock was truly meant for the youth, which is evident in the number of teenagers dancing at concerts throughout the world.

The late 1990's and early 2000's featured *Billboard* charts topped by bubblegum pop stars and talentless boy bands. After the death of Nirvana's Kurt Cobain, the once popular

grunge genre had gone by the wayside. During this time, a genre known as alternative punk began to surface. The music contained the traditional punk attitude and sound, but added satirical lyrics and catchy choruses. While punk purists may question the authenticity of alternative punk artists, they were the jolt the music industry needed. I found my way to this genre through pure curiosity. As I discovered and listened to more bands, punk music and I began to form a relationship. I listened to bands such as Green Day, Blink 182, and Bad Religion. As I grew older, I expanded my music repertoire to include rock n' roll greats: Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, and The Who. While these bands broadened my musical tastes, I never lost my connection with punk rock. I started listening to harder bands such as Pennywise, Minor Threat, and Rancid. Each of these bands took punk rock in a different direction, which I found fascinating. Some bands stuck to the traditional power chord ensemble while others played with reggae, ska, and dub. I began to see the collaboration between many different musical genres—something I previously missed. Being the curious music fan that I am, I began to dig deeper into the music archives. I collected classic vinyl and proudly displayed them around my room. One day, while thumbing through the stacks of records at Amoeba Music in Berkeley, California, I found the punk pioneers The Clash and The Sex Pistols. To my surprise, punk rock was more than just a 1990's fad. The more bands I discovered—circa 1970's—the more I was able to learn about and listen to the evolution of punk rock, from British pubs to mainstream America.

Through the course of my schooling in the Communication Studies Department at Cal Poly, I have been able to apply a scholarly paradigm to the music that I love. Instead of just lyrics and bass lines, I see culture, values, ideology, and a message that aims to reach as many youths as possible. Contrary to common belief, there is more to punk music than ripped clothes

and tight pants. Punk symbolizes the rebellious teenager and their quest to find a place in the world. Punk symbolizes me.

The following scholars have written on important topics related to punk rock and counterculture. Through their theories and concepts, we can begin to label and dissect punk counterculture to understand the ideology and how we might apply it to our own lives.

## Literature Review

For most people, our daily rituals are entrenched in the values of popular culture. Each day, the common American adult wakes-up, makes breakfast, takes the kids to schools, and goes to work. We do this because it is what everyone else we know is doing, and it seems to be the expected and respectable thing to do. Popular culture does not just control our daily rituals; it influences the movies we see, the cars we drive, and even the people who we find attractive. One reason that popular culture is so dominating is its connection to mass media. Everyday we are overloaded with information sent to us through email, television, the Internet, and the radio. With the amount of bombardment we face, it is easy to follow along with cultural norms and standards. While most people do conform to popular culture without hesitation, there are still people who prefer to pave their own paths.

Before we can address popular culture, we must decide on a working definition for culture. What is culture? Who is a part of our culture? Culture is a rather complex and debatable term. If someone were to ask a group of scholars for their definition of culture, they would most likely have various answers. Among the many definitions, The Oxford English Dictionary defines culture as,

“The arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively. A refined understanding or appreciation of this. The customs, institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or group. The cultivation of plants, breeding of animals, or production of cells or tissues. The cultivating or development (of the mind, faculties, manner)”(The Oxford English Dictionary).

As we can see, culture is a rather ambiguous concept. Communication scholars Judith Martin and Thomas Nakayama describe culture as, “learned patterns of behavior and attitudes shared by a group of people”(Martin and Nakayama 84). Culture also extends past the textbook definition. In T.S. Eliot’s words, culture is, “...all the characteristic activities and interests of a people. Derby day, Henley Regatta, Cowpers, the 12<sup>th</sup> of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dartboard, Wensleydale...”(Hebdige 7). Here, Eliot describes very specific events in his life that are meaningful to him. Our culture is made up of all the little things—like dartboards—that truly make our culture and us unique. While this may not describe your culture or my culture, we can obviously see how important culture is to our daily lives. For each individual, culture gives us an identity – something to belong to. Martin and Nakayama refer to this as embodied ethnocentrism, a notion that when we are in our own cultural settings, we feel a sense of familiarity and comfort. The cultures we are a part of structure our belief system; tell us what is socially acceptable, and what is considered taboo. To me, culture makes up everything we see and feel, and is influenced by our identity, language, and nonverbal communication.

With that said, “culture” is still an intricate concept. Our culture is not innate, but it is learned over time. Some cultures stress the concepts of family and the idea that the group is more important than the individual. These cultures would be considered collectivistic in nature,

and include countries similar to Japan. Other countries—like the United States—are individualistic in nature. While family values still exist, there is an emphasis placed on competition, success, and individual achievement. “Culture”, contrary to common belief, is not black and white in its definition, but a variety of grays that change depending on the type of culture.

Now that we have a general understanding of the term “culture”, we can begin to fill in the areas of gray. Every culture has a majority opinion. This cultural majority in terms of values and beliefs is called “popular culture”. In his essay, “Popular Culture”, John Fiske writes that the term “popular” can be even more elusive than the term “culture”. Fiske argues that popular culture serves the interests of the people: “‘The people’ as we use the term here, is not a class or social category, but rather a shifting set of social interests and positions that are defined by their subordinate relations to the dominant society” (Fiske 44). In Fiske’s view, the industrialization of culture and the development of the mass media have destroyed all traces of authentic popular culture. He says that, “The culture industries ensured that capitalism could colonize people’s leisure time as fully as their work time” (44). As the paper progresses, we will see that capitalism in popular culture is created by the culture industries and is something that punk rock aims to destroy. Fiske shows the transformation of “popular culture” to a “mass culture” to depict the mass media or culture industry influence. Because of our culture’s bond to the capitalistic mentality, scholars like Dick Hebdige—mentioned later—now simply refer to mass culture as popular culture. In the mind of Hebdige, “counterculture” or “subculture” is now the true representation of the people.

One of Fiske’s next arguments is to prove how our popular culture has fallen into the hands of capitalism. Like Fiske, Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, in their mid-1940s

piece *The Culture Industry*, blame the mass media for enabling capitalism to saturate people's experiences and consciousnesses. These culture industries are so completely in control that they do not allow for social change to happen. Adorno and Horkheimer also address the topic of capitalism in the media industries and how they have affected our cultures. They say, "Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just businesses made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce" (30). As in our present society—and 1970's Britain—movies, music, and other forms of media no longer focused on individual artistic expression. These mediums still communicate a message to the audience, but the message simply promotes record sales and concert tickets rather than a message of substance.

As I am further investigating each of these important arguments, we can begin to see how this relates to punk rock and counterculture. One of punk rock's firm beliefs is the anti-capitalistic view of music and art. Bands are considered sell-outs if they sign with a major "culture industry" record label. Even though many of them are simply starving musicians, the punk rock community would most likely expel the band from their CD collection. Punk rock is based around a "Do It Yourself" (DIY) ethos. From this, authenticity was based on a band working with an indie label, and writing music that "stuck it to the man."

Each of the following scholars offers interesting insights into analyzing the punk rock counterculture. As I continue to discuss their theories and apply them in my case study, I will relate these theories to the ideological views of punk music. If we want to learn from the message presented in punk counterculture, we need to see the link to academic theories.

Adorno and Horkheimer also address how the media and culture are intertwined into one large system. They point out that, "Now culture impresses the same stamp on everything. Films,

radio, and magazines make up a system, which is uniform as a whole and in every part. Even the aesthetic activities of political opposites are one in their enthusiastic obedience to the rhythm of the iron system" (Adorno and Horkheimer 34). In other words, modern culture industries produce safe, standardized products geared to the larger demands of capitalism. As I have said, the capitalistic goal of the culture industry is to make money. Once a certain style of music becomes popular, the music industry standardizes the style and churns out numerous copycats to audiences. Punk, once again, fought this trend through the DIY mentality. Most punk rock groups could not afford to produce quality albums, nor did they usually have the musical talent to sign with an acceptable indie label. Bands constantly played gigs in order to develop a following. Often times, shows were free so young punks would be able to attend. The focus of the music and counterculture was on the community it created rather than just record sales. Punk culture is also deeply rooted in individual artistic expression. Punk has a unique style, sound, lyrics, and followers; all of these facets clash with the standards set up by the culture industry for "popular" music.

Adorno and Horkheimer also note that many media outputs falsely depict 'average' life. While most people do not, and will not lead a life as displayed in the movies, the two are often represented as indistinguishable. This void, created by the culture industries, between media life and real life, is another point of contestation for punks. As I mentioned earlier, the status of Britain in the 1970's was very dismal. Compared to the life portrayed by the popular culture, the working class youths did not lead the plush life that the media portrayed. Many youths were unemployed and felt neglected by the government that abused their services in Vietnam. Punks and the working-class wanted music and art that reflected their true conditions and their daily lives. People did not want to listen to bands created by the culture industry; they wanted music

that spoke their language. Because of its working-class roots, punk fits in perfectly. Punk questioned serious issues rather than just “peace and love.” Punk music was the voice of the working class people who were willing to take a good, hard look at what was going on.

Now that we have distinguished the differences between popular mainstream culture and counter culture, it is time to discover what makes them tick. In *Street Smarts and Critical Theory*, Thomas McLaughlin writes that one of the most critical aspects of culture is the power of ideology. The ideology of punk rock and punk counterculture is what gave punks their hardcore credibility. Punk counterculture was in many ways a reaction to the trying economic times. A newspaper in Britain—The *New Statesmen*—estimated that in 1975, 35 percent of those under twenty-five years of age were unemployed (Bindas 69).

Punk’s ideology can be seen in the lyrics of some of its famous songs. The Sex Pistols<sup>iii</sup> Johnny Rotten sang in early 1976, “There’s no future, no future for you” (*Never Mind The Bollocks, Here’s The Sex Pistols*). While not all bands reflected The Sex Pistols’ nihilistic viewpoint, they were all united on their pessimism towards the future of Britain. Even The Clash illustrate the conflicting ideology of punks, who believed, “on the one hand that state and corporate control had created a new dark age, while on the other that human beings could prevail and create a more open and egalitarian society” (Bindas 73).

Like “culture”, “ideology” is a complex term. Ideology is similar to culture in that it provides comfort in the everyday. McLaughlin attributed ideology to our social assumptions and definitions. He saw ideology as a prepackaged experience, which allows us to make the world meaningful. Similar to culture, without an ideology, we have nothing to identify with. McLaughlin writes that, “Ideology is a difficult critical target because it is not a free standing,

rational system to dismantle, but rather the matrix for our mundane practices, or subtlest feelings” (McLaughlin 3). In short, an ideology is, “a pattern of beliefs that determines a group’s interpretations of some aspect(s) of the world” (Foss 212). Punk’s interpretation of the world was that capitalism and the corporations had driven Britain into the ground. Punk’s anti-capitalist mentality is evident in the DIY style, musicianship, and indie record labels. Any self-proclaimed punk who did not adhere to these guidelines was considered a sellout. Many original countercultural musicians had abandoned their punk convictions in favor of private jets, lavish parties, and millionaire trappings of extravagant consumption and display. These sellouts were called hippies by punks like The Clash’s Joe Strummer; in Strummers words, “the hippies around now just represent apathy” (Bindas 75). To punks, the hippies represented a culture that failed to fix England’s economic and political problems. Bands that profited within the confines of the culture industry were labeled “hippies” because they failed to address the issues that desperately needed attention.

One of the last important concepts that McLaughlin highlights is hegemony. Hegemony occurs when one ideology has significant power and control over another ideology. While this definition seems particularly simple, hegemony is anything but simple. Most of the time, we are unaware that another cultural ideology is expressing power over us. Often times we can find ourselves in a vicious cycle created by the hegemonic ideology that we are unable to escape from. McLaughlin describes the cycle of hegemony in that, “How difficult it is to think one’s way out of a system that makes experience possible and that is in turn confirmed by every moment’s experience” (4). In relation to 1970’s British culture, the mainstream popular culture had hegemony over other countercultures—punk or not. Punk reacted to the hegemony from popular culture through music and style. By deliberately clashing with societal norms, punks

were displaying their power to resist corporate elitists. Through its music, punk was able to raise important questions about the premises that guided popular culture practice. Punk was able to target racism because of its connection to reggae, dub, and Rastafarian culture. Many bands—including The Clash—participated in a Rock Against Racism tour. Punk also attacked hegemonic gender norms. Men dressed like women and women dressed like men; make-up and clothing barriers were completely disregarded. The purpose of the punk was to give popular culture the middle finger.

While Adorno, Horkheimer, McLaughlin and the rest of the reviewed scholars give us individual pieces to the puzzle, we need to combine their theories to test for overlap. In *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebdige is able to combine these important theories to define counterculture, its functions, and its relationships to mainstream culture. Hebdige is an expatriate British scholar with a focus on media theories and sociology. He primarily uses his talents to study subcultures, and their continued resistance to the mainstream society. In *Subculture*, Hebdige offers us a deep analysis of the roots of counter/subculture ideology. Some of his theories and concepts can be directly related to British counterculture of the 1970's, the topic for this study.

One of Hebdige's main topics is the function of subculture. Often times, scholars can become confused with how subculture relates to the larger main culture. Most of us would jump to the conclusion that counterculture is something completely different than main culture. Hebdige says, "In such accounts, the subculture tends to be presented as an independent organism, functioning outside the larger social, political, and economic contexts" (Hebdige 79). Hebdige argues that although the counterculture is rebelling against traditional culture, it is the traditional culture that allows the counterculture to thrive. "In the gang, the core values of the

straight world – sobriety, ambition, conformity, etc. – were replaced by their opposites: hedonism, defiance of authority and the quest for kicks” (qtd. in Hebdige 78). Cohen, though, also highlighted how the gang reiterated the values of the parent culture, only with some distortion. With that said, subculture can be defined as a, “...comprise solution between two contradictory needs: the needs to create and express autonomy and difference from parents...and the need to maintain the parental identifications” (qtd. in Hebdige 79). We can attribute both Hebdige’s and Cohen’s arguments to 1970’s British counterculture. The working class youth were rebelling against the government, the lack of economic responsibility, and the failed hippie generation. The punks wanted to tear down the establishment. They had strong pessimistic views towards the future for Britain if things were going to continue as they were. Many punks turned to music, new styles, and harder drugs to make a statement. Even though they felt hate towards the traditional culture, they still embraced the cultural perspective that change can occur. Punks never gave up hope in their abilities; they saw it as their responsibility to strengthen Britain’s political and economic climates. Bands like The Clash used their music as a medium to relay their message. Touring and radio play were an integral part in spreading the punk ideology for change.

## Punk Rock As A Music Genre

Rock n’ roll is divided into numerous different sub-genres. As years pass, more and more bands develop a sound that demands a new label. Punk rock began as a reaction to what cultural studies scholars call ‘Art Rock’. Art Rock produced an intricate style of music that featured crafty guitar riffs<sup>iv</sup> and progressive tones. Musicians and audiences were concerned

with intelligent lyrics and pushing the boundaries of clothing norms (Borthwick and Moy 211).

‘Art Rock’ refers to bands like Pink Floyd and Genesis. These groups are from an era that focused on the creation of new sounds and played around with exotic instruments. In many cases, this music could be considered psychedelic. Art Rock bands saw their music as an escape from daily life struggles. Drugs like LSD were commonly consumed to emphasize the escapist mentality. Art rock also describes a group of artists that pushed sexual and gender norms. Artists like Elton John and David Bowie wore extravagant outfits and heavy amounts of makeup. These elaborate compositions aimed to dazzle audiences. While many artists became famous from the Art school of rock, punks viewed this genre as ridiculous. Punks saw escapism as a failure of British culture and the apathy represented by the hippies. Punk culture believed that issues had to be dealt with, not pushed aside.

Punk rock can also be known as ‘plebian’ or ‘social realist’. Stuart Borthwick and Ron Moy write that punk, “places a lyrical emphasis on exposing working-class dissatisfaction with ‘normal’ society, and frequently focuses upon concerns that are particular to young people”(212). We can see how punk derived the ‘plebian’ label because of its anti-capitalistic nature. Punk rebelled against the pretentiousness of the Art rock bands, and their high-minded lyrics. Musically, the plebian style was aggressive in feel and musicians played in a seemingly untutored style. Since punk rock stemmed from working class roots, escapism was never an option. Instead of LSD, bands used heavier drugs such as heroine. Lyrics directly addressed the issues that the people were facing and the contempt for high society. Punk rock is based on authenticity—staying true to your roots.

## Punk Rock Style

The style created by the punk counterculture is even more recognizable than the music itself. The punks appropriated, “the rhetoric of crisis, which had filled the airwaves and the editorials throughout the period and translated it into tangible (and visible) terms” (Hedige 84). In the gloomy ambience during the 1970’s in Britain, it was fitting for punks to present themselves as degenerates; as signs of the highly publicized decay which perfectly represented the culture at the time. These stylistic ensembles expressed genuine aggression, frustration, and anxiety. Punk rock style tore down sex, gender, and race barriers. Men dressed as women, and women dressed as men. Both men and women wore makeup and maintained frail body types. Clothes were typically grungy—punks wore leather jackets, boots, ripped shirts. Punks like The New York Dolls followed the glamour approach with clothing that dazzled. Hebdige says that, “Although it was often directly offensive (T-Shirts covered in swear words) and threatening (terrorist/guerilla outfits) punk style was defined principally through the violence of its ‘cut ups’… a pin, a plastic peg, a television component, a razor blade, a tampon – could be brought within the province of punk (un)fashion” (110).

Punks would borrow any object to include in their ensemble. One could have lived by the rules, “if the cap doesn’t fit, wear it” (110). The punk community placed a high value on perversion and abnormality. They saw this crude style as a form of protest against the clothing produced by the culture industry. Punks would rather design and make their own clothes than support large corporations run by cultural elitist.

Punk style does not just refer to the clothing. It also includes their mannerisms, charisma, and overall character. Concerts featured a new style of dancing—the pogo. Fans would bounce

up and down to the fast paced music. Concerts could even quickly turn into a riot depending on the music played. During The Clash's "White Riot", fans tore seats from the bleachers and threw them onstage. As Johnny Rotten said, "We're into chaos not music." Punk fans even started magazine and newspapers to chart the growing counterculture. Fanzines like *Sniffin' Glue* and *Ripped and Torn* published articles that targeted working class youth. From their poor editing to their overall unprofessional quality, fanzines upheld the Do It Yourself ethos of punk authenticity. *Sniffin' Glue* used a picture to sum up the punk DIY mentality; a picture of a guitar neck and the line, "Here's one chord, here's two more, now form your own band" (Hebdige 122).

Bands also used variations of punk style to promote their messages. The Sex Pistols' famous *God Save the Queen* album cover with the ransom note letter and bars through her mouth show the unique typography used. The Clash's *London Calling* borrows from Elvis Presley, yet maintains punk features by showing the smashing of a guitar. All of these facets of punk style show the immediacy and aggression in the punk ideology.

Punk style is probably the most unique and noticeable characteristic of the counterculture. Along with their music, punks used style as a form of protest against the status quo. Punk style shocks the average person and demands attention. This counterculture was able to turn a mass produced piece of fabric, tear it apart, and turn it into a political statement. The most important aspect of punk style—and perhaps all of punk culture—is the DIY mentality. This mentality gives punks a sense of authenticity, which many working class people were longing to have. With the creation of punk literature, we can see a true community developing within the punk culture, and style provided punks with a tool for identifying each other. Punks needed to unite in order for change occur.

## The Only Band That Matters

As stated, the economic and political failures that had been plaguing Britain became the fuel for punk music. In May 1976, Paul Simonon, Mick Jones, and Terry Chimes invited Joe Strummer to join them in a new band. The four members, who had various degrees of musical experience, all hailed from working-class families in the restrictive British class structure (Bindas 70). Simonon (bass), Jones (guitar), and Chimes (drums) were influenced by the musical rage of The Sex Pistols and formed a band to lash out against authority. Joe Strummer, one of the band's guitarists and lead singers, was the son of a British diplomat who grew up attending a prestigious boarding school. He would later drop out to form a band called the 101'ers, which helped pioneer the start of British punk rock. After Strummer joined the group, the band coined their name, The Clash, after numerous news headlines used the word (Simon and Schuster). The combination of the band's working class roots, and Strummer's contempt for high society, gave The Clash perfect punk chemistry. This chemistry allowed the band to create music that attacked and poked fun at the traditional way of living.

Shortly after their formation, the band recorded their first album, *The Clash*. The album quickly earned the band the reputation as being one of the most politically oriented of the new punks and struck a responsive chord among the critics (Bindas 73). As their following grew, management cheekily gave them the title, "the only band that matters," and for a while, this phrase seemed true. With early songs like 'White Riot' and 'I Fought the Law', The Clash created an outlaw ethos that could turn the audience into a weapon. Throughout the early stages of the band, Strummer and Jones were frequently in and out of jail for indiscretions like vandalism and rioting. These events only added to their ethos, and helped promote their message of striking back against injustice and police brutality. In 1978, the band also branched out into

social activism when they headlined the Rock Against Racism Tour. They combined genres such as reggae, dub, and rockabilly to form a punk fusion that attacked the British hierarchy. The song “Police and Thieves” noted the police brutality that commonly took place throughout the country, and “Complete Control” represented the power of the music industry over the artist. Bindas writes that, “when *Melody Maker* chose the ten best albums of the 1970’s, *The Clash* came in second to David Bowie’s *Ziggy Stardust* and ahead of albums by The Sex Pistols, Bruce Springsteen, and Led Zeppelin” (73). The Clash had officially arrived.

In late 1979, The Clash released *London Calling*. *Rolling Stone Magazine* called *London Calling*, “nineteen songs of apocalypse fueled by an unbending in rock & roll to beat back the darkness”(Zandt). The album cover features Paul Simonon smashing his bass along with typography borrowed from an Elvis Presley record. The album features the title track, “London Calling”, which predicts an apocalyptic doom for England if the current economic status is not fixed. The album also contains more eccentric songs like “Lost in the Supermarket”, that portray the feelings of the neglected youth. It is no surprise that in 2004, *Rolling Stone* ranked *London Calling* number eight in its list of the *Top 500 Albums of All Time*. Although members of The Clash were already considered rock stars within the punk rock community, *London Calling* skyrocketed them to the status of cultural icons. The album gained mainstream credibility, sold over two million copies, and was ranked 27<sup>th</sup> on *Billboard*. *London Calling* represented the anger and emotional unrest of the British working class—even more so than *The Clash*. To this day, people continue to enjoy losing themselves in the fast paced rock n’ roll that represented an entire culture. The music grasps the heart and soul of every aspiring punk, and continues to transcend through the decades.

After the release of *London Calling*, critics considered The Clash as saviors of the punk rock genre. Bands like The Sex Pistols had broken up due to drug abuse and disagreement about musical direction, and punks desperately needed an album to cling to. In late 1980, the band release *Sandinista*, an album that attacked British imperialism and the United States' intervention in Central and South America (Bindas 80). Although they maintained their outlaw ethos and contempt for capitalism, The Clash, like most bands, were starting to fall victim to the system they sought to destroy. By 1981, punk was starting to become accepted as a respectable music genre and culture. In other words, punk had lost its shock value. By early 1982, the band had fired then drummer Topper Headon and released their last studio album *Combat Rock*. Just like *London Calling* and *The Clash*, *Combat Rock* was a hit—only not from the punk perspective. The album featured licks such as “Rock the Casbah” and “Should I Stay or Should I Go” that promoted dancing and record sales as compared to the band’s original radical ideals. Popular culture had begun to adopt the punk look but not the ideals, so by the end of 1982 The Clash called it quits. While The Clash and punk did not tear down the system, the message within the music is something we can all study and learn from. The Clash’s lyrics and music told listeners that they could rebuild a stronger England. Unlike many punk bands, The Clash felt optimistic about England’s future for the coming generations. The Clash taught us to ask questions and resist temptation from the culture industry. In order for England and the world to rebuild, the people needed to be in control.

Now that we have a firm knowledge of the relevant theories and concepts, and an overview of the band’s history, we can begin to dissect their music to better understand the punk ideology. I have selected two tracks from their *London Calling* album because these songs truly

represent The Clash's message and overall best musicianship. I will first analyze the hit song "London Calling" and then follow with Spanish Civil War narrative "Spanish Bombs".

### **"London Calling To The Faraway Towns..."**

While *London Calling* features an entire album of tracks that contain the punk rock ideology, "London Calling" is probably the most well known. Like most punk songs, "London Calling" comes charging through the speakers in an urgent manner. The lead and rhythm guitars alternate on direct down strokes to suggest a sense of urgency in the listener. This type of fast-paced play is synonymous with the punk rock genre. Guitars are generally played, "in a somewhat simplistic manner with few chords. These chords that are used often 'bleed' into each other, giving the suggestion of a 'buzz saw' or drone, where individual notes or chords are barely distinguishable" (Borthwick and Moy 211). As the bass line enters the ensemble, the audience begins to feel each chord resonating throughout their bodies. This dark, ominous tone implies something evil looming on the horizon—it adds a suspenseful twist before Joe Strummer begins the opening lyrics. When you combine the up-beat drum line with the strings, you are left with a villainous sounding melody that tears through each verse and chorus with force. Unlike other music genres, punk music and ideology are connected in that the,

"Unsyncopated nature of drumming and bass playing combines with punk rock's relatively fast tempo to give the impression of both relentless energy and a form of insurgent urgency. This is perfectly in tune with the ideology of punk. Punk rock's fast tempo combines with its monadic march emphasis to suggest that time is literally

running out, and that the quicker the punk rocker's message is delivered to his or her audience the better" (Borthwick and Moy 214).

Along with Borthwick and Moy's analysis of punk music as a whole, we can connect this style to the apocalyptic motif playing throughout the song. In the late 1970's, the "old order" of the postwar sentiments was coming to a speedy end. People were left in alienation by the government and felt hopeless about Britain's future. This song is The Clash's way to voice punk culture's contempt for the status quo.

Twenty-two seconds into the track we hear the first sign of lyrics as Strummer bellows, "London calling to the faraway towns." The title and starting lyrics refer to the British Broadcasting Station's (BBC) radio station identification during the Vietnam War. (Simon and Schuster). The radio disc jockey would say, "This is London calling," each time the news was about to be announced. This type of introduction at the beginning of each line's lyrics gives the audience the sense that they are listening to a radio broadcast. The Clash make use of an allusion to Vietnam to portray the feeling that although the war may be over, people still have not recovered.

Throughout the song, Strummer uses words like "underworld," and "zombies of death." These terms can obviously be related to a theme of death that is interwoven throughout the song. Strummer also uses the line, "Come out of the cupboard, all you boys and girls. This line of lyrics ties beautifully within the themes of war and death. "'Come out of the cupboard' drives home youth's sense of being kept in storage—out of sight, out of mind—till they're wanted for service to others. Possibly worse than neglected, they've been treated as criminals" (Cantor). The service Cantor is referring to is the service of one's country. The youth were entirely

neglected by the government, until soldiers were needed for the Vietnam War, and after the war was over, the alienation resumed.

The presented elements in the chorus truly give the critic a glimpse of The Clash's feelings about the future of the United Kingdom. The chorus starts, "The ice age is coming, the sun is zooming in. Engines stop running and the wheat is growing thin." These lines obviously spell out an apocalyptic doom for the United Kingdom. The song had original influences from the March 1979 accident at the nuclear reactor at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania. Strummer saw this as an example of what would start to happen throughout the United Kingdom as this technological age developed. Nuclear winter, global warming, nuclear-reactor meltdown, drought or depleted topsoil and water, the end of oil with which to make gasoline for automobiles—or perhaps of all of the fuels that runs the 'engines of capitalism'. Strummer finishes the stanza of lyrics saying, "London is drowning—and I live by the river." Strummer is putting himself, and the band, right in the middle of the source. He is the voice of the working class youth who feel entrapped in a system that seems to be causing the destruction of the United Kingdom.

As the song progresses, the lyrics begin to shy away from the apocalyptic doom, and towards references of disgruntled youths. The song alludes to the drug and alcohol abuse within the punk rock community. "London calling, see we ain't got no highs. Except for that one with the yellowy eyes." As a way to escape the struggles in their lives, young punks, and average people turned to drugs. The government offered no "highs" for the people to recover after the long Vietnam War, so the youth were left to fend for themselves, which is why substance abuse became prevalent. The term "yellowy eyes" refers specifically to the heroin addicts, many of

who were veterans still needed pain medication but were unable to receive it (Simon and Schuster).

After the last chorus, the song starts to wind down. The audience expects a last reprise of the chorus, however, a final stanza of verses surprises us. Strummer chimes in, “London calling, yeah, I was there, too. An’ you know what they said? Well, some of it was true!” Strummers voice in the last stanza is sarcastic with a witty tone. He is playing with the concept that he—along with other punks—is right in the middle of the issue surrounding Britain. The Clash are reaffirming that the problems are true and that if a course of action is not taken, Britain will meet its doom. The song finishes with the echoing line, “I never felt so much a’ like.” As the last line echoes into silence, we hear what sounds like a Morse Code Telegraph beeping a message. This last message ties together the death, war, and change motifs. Morse code is most commonly remembered as being used during wartime to relay messages regarding military victories and defeats. This dying Morse Code echo combined with the ending of the song draws a reference to another war and the apocalyptic theme that filled the song. The audience is left with the feeling of something dark looming on the horizon, just as the bass-line entered us into the song. The track ends with the perfect reminder, that if England does not invoke change to its policies, the end is near.

### **“Spanish Songs In Andalucia...”**

Similar to “London Calling”, “Spanish Bombs” begins in a rather up beat fashion. The audience feels as though they are listening to a popular rock song not punk. Joe Stummer leads the vocals with Mick Jones echoing choruses behind him. The song is about the Spanish Civil

War, a major conflict that destroyed Spain from 1936 to 1939. “Spanish Bombs” praises the heroism of the Republicans, anarchists, and communists as they fought the nationalist party and General Francisco Franco. Ultimately, Franco defeats the Republicans and rules Spain for the next 35 years. As we will see, the track features direct references to people, places, and events that occurred during the war. The song fits into the punk ideology since it praises Republicans for standing up for their beliefs and fighting for a unified Spain.

As the verse music begins, Strummer and Jones sing, “Spanish songs in Andalucia, The shooting sites in the days of ’39.” Andalucia was one of the first regions of Spain to be overtaken by the Fascists in 1936 during the beginning of the war. From a performance studies perspective, we can see how The Clash are setting the locus for audience. We feel as though we are living in Spain and feeling the effects of the war. The song also has allusions to Spanish people. The line, “Fredrico Lorca is dead and gone,” refers to the death of the Andalucian poet. After Franco conquered Andalucia, he started to cleanse the area of political foes—including Lorca. The allusions continue with lines like “The black cars of the Guardia Civil” that refer to the Spanish Civil Guard that attempted to protect Spain from the fascists.

When the audience hears the chorus for the first time, we begin to see the true locus of the song. The Spanish words laid throughout the English reminds us that we are back in Spain after the war. The song’s rhythm and overall beat maintains an optimistic feeling, but the harsh lyrics show the tragedies that have occurred. We feel as though the song is, perhaps, a grand narrative of the Civil War itself told from a Spanish perspective. In broken Spanish, Strummer sings, “Spanish bombs, yo te quiero y finito, Yo te querda, oh mi corazon. After translating the words, they say,” Spanish bombs oh I want them to end, oh my heart.” Again, we can tell from the lyrics that the story is told from a Spanish perspective. The Clash and punk in general could

empathize with Spaniards' circumstances. The theme of the song is a hegemonic culture exercising its power over another. Whether it was dealing with the corporate capitalism of the culture industries in Britain or Fascism in Spain, punk music raised questions and attacked hegemony to bring the true cultural values to the people.

In the second verse, the audience hears lyrics of unity. Strummer's lines, "They sang the red flag, they wore the black one," refers to the mixture of communists and anarchists and the colors of their respective flags. Just like war, punk rock did not care about your political affiliation as long as you were united for a common cause. Just like the communist and anarchist's unity, the punks united in their activism against racism and their style choices to attack gender norms. Punk's ideology was to tear down the wall of corporate-controlled culture and rebuild a world of equality and unity.

One of the last important references in the song is the description of the army itself. The song goes, "The ragged army, fixin' bayonets to fight the other line." Just like the people's militia in Spain, punks were also fighting a "Do it Yourself" battle against popular culture. Instead of fixing guns, punks changed their clothing and joined bands. The point The Clash is making is that, like the Spaniards, punks were left to fight an uphill battle against a hegemony with no aid from their own government.

As the final chorus and the reprise finish out the song, we are reminded that we are back in Spain after the war. The song finishes on an upbeat note, but the powerful lyrics remind us of the atrocities that have occurred. One could argue that we can over analyze the song to draw conclusions, but there is still a resemblance between the Spanish militia in the song and punks in Britain.

## Where Did All The Punks Go?

Thirty-five years after its grand entrance into the music scene, people are starting to wonder, “Where did all the punks go?” Is punk rock still the same as when it began? The answer to these questions is complicated. As I hinted earlier, as punk rock matured it slowly became accepted by popular culture. Once this acceptance occurred, punk rock no longer was considered a rebellion; it was considered cool. Since its inception in the late 1970’s, punk has grown into its own, and maintains a place in our society. In *The Post Subcultures Reader*, Dylan Clark writes that, “Punk had to die so that it could live” (223). These classical subcultures had gained their potency partly through the ability to shock and dismay. However, punk became an acceptable part of the social landscape. Sadly, Clark tells us that, “The image of rebellion has become one of the most dominant narratives of the corporate capitalist landscape: ‘the bad boy’ has been reconfigured as a prototypical consumer” (224). The true subculture died once the marketers started using the message as vehicles for selling music, cars, and clothing. The concept of punk is now just another part of the established discourse relating to culture. Scholars such as Hebdige would also argue from Clark’s perspective. Hebdige saw that popular culture allows the subculture to function and rebel within the confines of the traditional culture. Rather than punk being its own counterculture, scholars like Clark and Hebdige view it as merely a small part in the larger culture.

Currently, punk rock could be classified into two categories: popular culture punk (pop punk) and the traditional underground punk. Even though punk rock has become incorporated into mainstream popular culture, there are still bands that carry on its traditional values. Bands like Rancid still wear traditional punk clothing and mix loud distorted tones with reggae and dub. Songs such as “Time Bomb” bring back sounds of punk founders The Clash and The Sex Pistols.

Minor Threat still maintains the traditional punk ethos by playing free shows and allowing fans to download their music at will. While the majority of punk groups embrace the culture industry, there are still the few that uphold the traditional values.

As we move from the underground, we start to see popular culture grab a hold of punk rock. Bands in this stage usually sign with major labels in order to sell records and make a living as musicians. Although their goal is to sell records, they still have not lost touch with their fans. About 15 years ago, music producer and punk fan Kevin Lyman coordinated the first Vans Warped Tour. Since its inception, Warped Tour has annually traveled across the United States and Canada to bring young punk rockers their favorite bands. The tour is set up like a festival; bands have booths so they are able to sign autographs and interact with the fans. Popular bands like NOFX, Paramore, Less Than Jake, and Against Me! tour each summer with Warped. Although Warped Tour may be supporting the capitalistic corporations that punk rock originally aimed to tear down, it still maintains the most important connection there is—a connection to the fans. The greatest thrill for a punk fan is to see their favorite band performing live on stage.

After a band has performed on the Warped Tour circuit for a while, a decision must be made. Do we continue as we are, or do we make the jump into mainstream music? This crossing of the threshold is where many punk fans sever their relationships with bands. Bands are expected to maintain authenticity within the punk community; anything less and they are considered sellouts. The best example of this broken relationship is the popular punk band Green Day. In 1994, Green Day struck gold with their hit album *Dookie*. The song “Basketcase” topped the charts and put punk rock back on the map. The only problem was that the punk community disowned the band. Green Day’s early years featured the band playing gig after gig in local underground clubs in San Francisco, California. Shortly before the album’s release, the

band signed with a major label, which completely shattered their underground following. *Dookie* launched the band to playing sold out arenas and even the 1994 Woodstock revival concert. Green Day has never been able to regain much of its original fan base, but the band has adapted its punk message to address a worldwide audience. Green Day has showed punks that authenticity is about staying true to you. Currently, the band is gearing up for a tour to promote their latest album *21<sup>st</sup> Century Breakdown* and their previous album, *American Idiot*, will be debuting as a musical on Broadway. In their 20 years together, Green Day is presently the most political and punk they have ever been.

With the exception of Green Day, bands that take the step into the spotlight usually become the pawns of the culture industry. They become featured acts on shows such as MTV's *Total Request Live* and VH1. Bands typically soften their punk sound and lyrics to accommodate a wider audience and appeal to producers. Concerts turn from mosh pits to screaming teenage girls and traditional punk clothing turns into makeup and glamour. Punk's arrival into mainstream popular culture, it could be argued, signifies the end of an ideology and an acceptance of victory for the culture industry.

Although we see the demise of punk's popularity once it gains mainstream exposure, what many punk rockers fail to realize is the opportunity of playing music on such a big stage. When a band receives mainstream exposure, mass media networks all over the world broadcast their music. Bands who prefer to stay underground limit their ability to communicate the punk message because they are restricting themselves to indie labels and small concert venues. Mainstream punk credibility can be earned through strong political and social messages that question the very system that plays the music. Green Day uses this model to perfection; the more mainstream exposure they receive, the stronger their message to the listeners, at least

potentially. Punk's necessary next step is to eliminate the constant struggle between fans and band's authenticity. A conclusion on this issue could allow punk to reach new audiences, and spread the important ideology across the globe. Punk has the ability to use the system it ultimately aims to breakdown.

## **How Can We Learn From Punk?**

Now that we have arrived at the end of our research and analysis, how can we learn from punk? First, punk offers us another paradigm to view our culture. Although we need to feel centered in our own culture, this can quickly turn to negative ethnocentrism. This leads us to a worldview that is based solely on our culture's beliefs, and feelings of hate towards cultures that are different. Punk teaches us to adopt a dialectical perspective of our worldview. A dialectical perspective teaches us that each idea generates an opposite idea, which leads to a reconciliation of the opposites. This proves that no matter how we view an event, according to the dialectical perspective, there is always another opposing viewpoint. Communication is the backbone of our human species. A dialectical perspective allows us to be more interculturally sensitive when communicating with other people. Although punk is not the only paradigm we can adopt, it reminds us to be more aware of our surroundings. There are many different cultures right outside our front door, and if we do not interact with them appropriately, we will severely hinder our chances for success in the future. Punk's direct ties to reggae and black culture give us an example of how two cultures can coexist while attempting to achieve completely different goals.

Punk is based on contempt for capitalism and a government system that fails to benefit the people. Punk's style and unique music is used to shock and scare people into paying

attention; to force people to open their eyes, to ask question, and breakdown barriers. Punk also challenges others to fight back against their oppressors. To this day, our world is still full of hate, contempt, and fear for other nations and cultures. Too often, we are quick to make broad generalizations and stereotype others. Punk's goal is to find a common ground and set rules for everyone to live by. Corporations should not be allowed to exploit human life for profit, and governments should be held accountable for their actions. Punk compels us to ask the right questions, and to tear down a system that only benefits a select group of cultural elites. Punk can help us build a better world based on trust, education, and communication.

Punk's ideology also gives us the responsibility of action. We need to acknowledge that troubles exist. Many people are the victims of oppression, and we need to use our communication skills to relieve them of their struggles. As competent intercultural communicators, we also have a responsibility to pay attention to when, how, and why injustices occur. McLaughlin challenges us to become what he calls vernacular theorists. He says that punks are, "individuals who do *not* come out of a tradition of philosophical critique are capable of raising questions about the dominant cultural assumptions" (5). The more we pay attention to the privilege and injustices that occur, we will see more chances to ask questions and take action. There are many different ways we can get involved to fight intercultural injustices. We can stand up, volunteer, sign petitions, and communicate the important of this topic to others. Oppressive systems such as the Culture Industry feed off the silence.

Punk not only encourages us to speak out, but to establish new intercultural relationships. Once again, punk's connection to reggae provides us with a great example of forming intercultural alliances. When we create intercultural alliances, we allow ourselves to view culture through an entirely new lens. New alliances create a dialectical approach, which leads to

overall group cohesion and more effective cross culture communication. By increasing group cohesion, we will enhance our views of multiculturalism and cultural diversity. These alliances help us see the complex nature of intercultural communication and the best course of action to become competent communicators and human beings.

Although we do not have to listen to The Clash or Green Day, we should still heed some of their warnings. If we do not become more interculturally sensitive communicators, we are walking a dangerous course. Punk did not just push feelings aside; it fought each issue head on. Punk tackled controversial topics such as race and sexuality. As I finish this paper, I want to leave the readers with a challenge. Start asking questions. Take a stance on a social issue and fight for it. The world will not change if we are stagnant. Let us use the punk ideology to take control of our culture, and invoke lasting change.

“It’s something unpredictable, but in the end it’s right. I hope you had the time of your life.”

(Billy Joel Armstrong, Green Day).

<sup>i</sup> Robert Nesta "Bob" Marley (February 6, 1945 – May 11, 1981) was a Jamaican singer-songwriter and musician. He was the lead singer and guitarist for The Wailers (1964-1974) and Bob Marley & The Wailers (1974-1981). Marley infused other musical styles such as ska and rocksteady into traditional Jamaican reggae. He remains the most widely known and revered for his musical performances and his lyrics of peace, love, and Rastafarianism. I chose this quote because it not only symbolizes the importance of music as a whole, but also because of punk's connection to reggae. During the 1970's, racism was a controversial issue in the United Kingdom and throughout the world. Punk music and culture joined the Jamaicans in their fight for equality by raising awareness and incorporating reggae into punk music. Some examples of this are The Rock Against Racism Tour and The Clash song “Police and Thieves.”

<sup>ii</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (October 15, 1844 – August 25, 1900) was a 19th-century German philosopher and classical philologist. He wrote critical texts on religion, morality, contemporary culture, philosophy and science, using a distinctive style and displaying a fondness for metaphor, irony and aphorism.

<sup>iii</sup> The Sex Pistols are an English punk rock band that formed in London in 1975. They are responsible for initiating the punk movement in the United Kingdom and inspiring many later

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punk and alternative rock musicians. Although their initial career lasted just two-and-a-half years and produced only four singles and one studio album, *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols*, reached audiences around the world. Lead by lead singer Johnny Rotten and bassist Sid Vicious, the band wrote songs that expressed nihilistic world views, and pessimism toward the English government. The Sex Pistols are regarded as one of the most influential acts in the history of rock n' roll music.

<sup>iv</sup> A Guitar riff can be defined as a simple or melodic chord progression, pattern, or figure that is played by the rhythm guitar in a repeated fashion. Typical punk rock riffs are simple and involve few chords (power chords).

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