

THE

THE BOOK OF NEW ETIQUETTE

'THE NOW CROWD'



BOOK

'PEACOCK PUNK'

'THE BLITZ KIDS'



WITH

THE LOOK BOOK

NO

NAME

'THE NEW ROMANTICS'



THE BOOK OF NEW ETIQUETTE

STYLE FILE



THE BOOK WITH NO NAME

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This book grew out of a feature published by London's 'Time Out' magazine.

The article looked at youth's latest obsession with style from as many angles as possible. It was a collection of pictures, quotes and idiosyncratic essays by several writers. The idea was not only to document but also to provoke and, as a result, individual interpretations sometimes clashed.

Here the aim is the same. There is no attempt at one definitive statement and, once again, different viewpoints lock horns.



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CABARET FUTURA RICHARD STRANGE

Richard Strange used to be in the Doctors of Madness until he discovered mobility. He went to New York armed with a tape recorder, movie screen, Super 8 projector and battered Trilby only to find a brave new world of clubs. When he returned to London, he decided to start a multi-media riot of his own. He called it Cabaret Futura.



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IN THE BEGINNING IAN BIRCH

How did it all start? Did Steve Strange stay too long at the dressing-up chest? Was Midge Ure's pencil moustache the result of too many Clark Gable movies?

Ian Birch goes in search of the roots and nightclubs through the Seventies with Steve Dagger, manager of Spandau Ballet.

Worried about what hat to buy? Terrified of mistaking James Chance for a broken belt drive? Frantic about using the wrong words at parties? Relax. Paul Tickell gives twenty-four handy hints on what to say, like, think and wear. Be a success at your nightclub.



THE NEW HIPPIES JON SAVAGE

But what does it all mean? Why is the youth of today involved in such tribal rites? Are they the harbingers of the Apocalypse? Is it really the end of Western Civilisation? Jon Savage sifts through the entrails and prognosticates.

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A CONSUMER'S GUIDE PAUL TICKELL



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"I have seen the future of rock 'n' roll and it doesn't look much different to now" (1956).







See, one thing leads inexorably, but not always obviously, to another.

Me, I'd had my fill of the endless Rock and Roll Schlapp, the predictability of exhaustion, the tedium of the touring routine and, above all, the narrowness of the whole approach; the attitude that it had to be done this way, four people living in each other's pockets long after the thrill has gone.

So, kiss goodbye The Doctors of Madness, 1978.

It was a desire to play publicly again, but without the emotional and financial responsibility to a band (surrogate family) that led me to embark on a one-man performance show, using pre-recorded studio-quality backing tapes, a tape recorder, a movie screen and Super 8 projector.

Mobile, flexible and potent, I was able to work without consultation of a committee of 12, without going into massive debt to undertake interminable tours of dubious merit and suddenly, most important, without being stuck exclusively on the Rockbiz conveyor belt.

And so, in January 1980, my friend Andy Czewowski and I decided to attempt something that hadn't been done before. We booked a run-down Covent Garden gay club, Hell, for a regular, once-a-week spot, with a view to playing music in a non-music club.

I performed with the tapes

and films every Wednesday night for 6 weeks. We did no advertising, just word-of-mouth information. We deliberately didn't inform the Music Press, as we wanted them to find out about it in the same way as everybody else, thus ensuring that the majority of the audience there on any one night had come because they wanted to be there—not because of any media hype.

Over the course of those 6 weeks, the attendance rose from 40 on the first night to 250 (capacity), at which point the doors had to be shut. There was a fabulous party-like atmosphere at Hell, aided immeasurably by the close proximity of audience to performer, the lack of a stage and the absence of all the dreadful trimmings of Rock and Roll—deafening volume, interminable soundchecks, star-system nonsense and the ubiquitous guest-list syndrome.

It was at Hell that I got the first inkling of how thoroughly enjoyable (yes)



live performance can be both for audience AND performer. Usually only one party can actually enjoy—either the audience is treated as a commodity or the performer as a product to be consumed.

The successes of Hell led to me being offered a 2 month tour of the United States, due to another performer's inability to sort out the logistics of taking himself and the inevitable band over.

I was contacted 10 days before the first scheduled date and was able to accept without hesitation because there were no other people's considerations to take into account. No drummers with domestic trouble, bass players with a fear of flying or mountains of equipment.

This was the test of my theory and I was proved right. Mobile, flexible and potent. The tour was a great success on every level. In New York (my first visit) I was most immediately impressed by that city's

'As for the boys and girls, the dear young absolute beginners, I sometimes feel that if they only knew this fact, this very simple fact, namely how powerful they really are, then they could rise up overnight and enslave the old tax-payers, the whole damn lot of them . . .'
Colin McInnes 'Absolute Beginners' 1959.

ability to function (after a fashion) on a 24 hour cycle as opposed to the 16 hour cycle in London. I especially liked the clubs where, on the same night, you could see a New York band, a poet, video, dance and performance art, all taking place in the same club to the same, albeit transient, audience.

On returning to London in October, I decided to look into the possibilities of starting a mixed media, cabaret-type night in London, for no other reason than that I thought it the sort of place I would enjoy to play and also go to watch others perform.

So combining the two, I set about finding a venue. After two solid days of phoning round London's gay clubs, I finally managed to convince an owner that it was worthwhile for him to let me use his space and facilities on what was for him a dead night.

And so on December 14 1980 Cabaret Futura was



born. Again, no advertising, no press releases, just word-of-mouth. The first evening was fraught and featured myself, a synthesiser band called Blancmange and a mime artist, Philip Jap. The ambience was very European, but not essentially 'decadent' Berlin.

The whole point became clear that first night. The most important thing is to create an atmosphere where people can come and meet, talk and exchange ideas, with an entertainment that is both interesting and yet not the sole reason for being there.

Some performers recoil from the idea of not being the sole focus while they are working but at Cabaret Futura the whole thing is bigger than any one performer. Because of this there are no headline acts or support acts, just a continuously balanced programme, featuring an average of eight acts, running a total of four hours. The audience attracted is a

very wide cross-section. I wouldn't start to classify them. There is a great deal of participation: this week's spectator is next week's performer. The drawbacks of fashionability are so far not too extreme. The danger of it becoming this week's musicbiz hang-out is very real and worrying. It's hard to find a way round that, short of imposing some bizarre restrictions on the door which would probably end up being self-defeating anyway.

The solutions are probably the same as those mentioned



in connection with rock music—to stay flexible, to move on from time to time, to discourage pecking orders, to retain an element of surprise and spontaneity and to encourage participation.

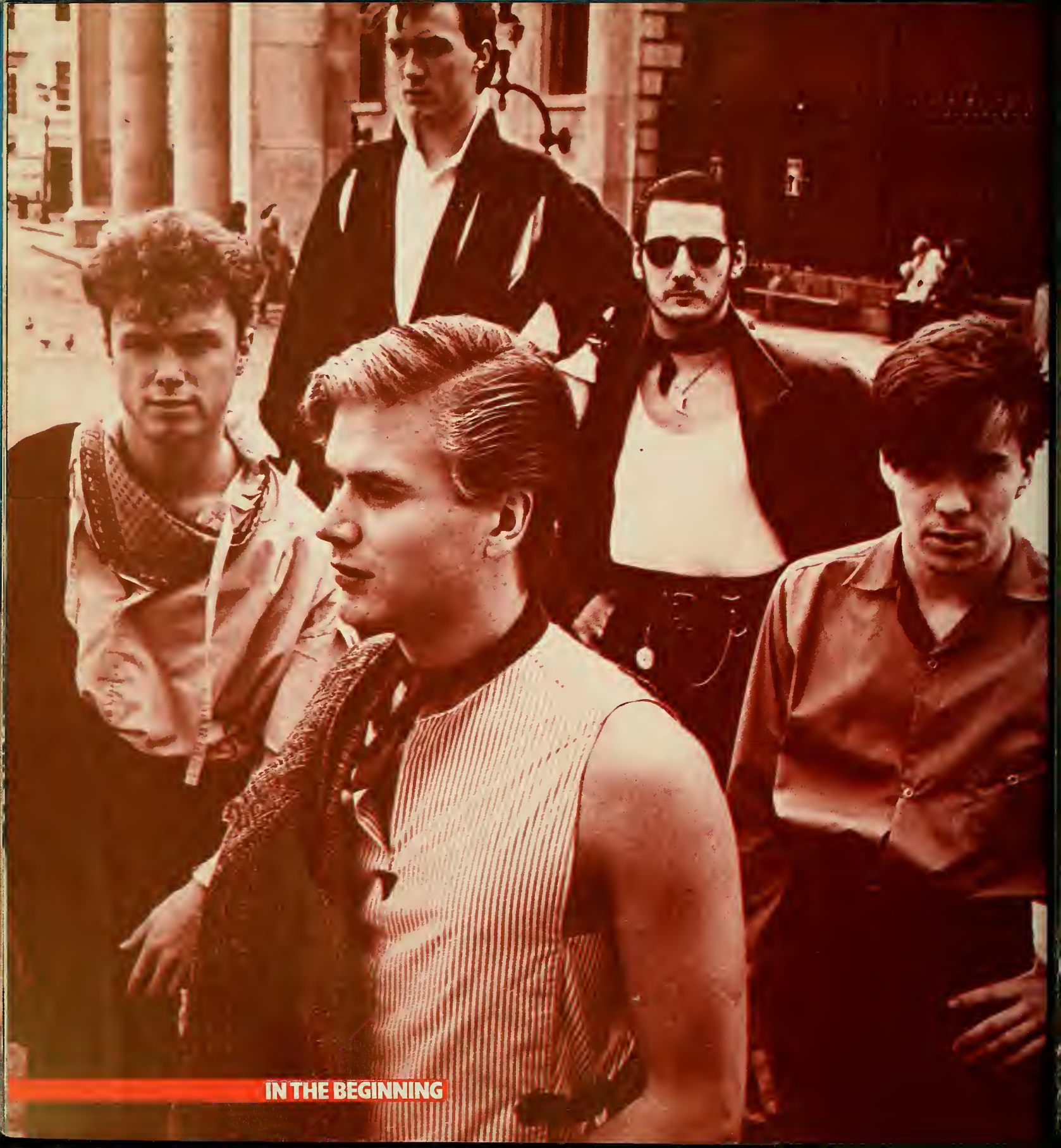
I urge you to open your Cabaret, now. In Leeds, Luton or Llandudno. It can be done by amateurs (me) and is essential if any challenge to the conveyor belt of the Music Industry is to be mounted.

'But once radical chic became fashionable, it took on its own momentum. It had the power to create political change on its own—ie many influential people who had been generally apolitical began to express support for groups like the Panthers. Was the process that brought them to that point really any different from the process that a few years before might have induced them to choose a new skirt length or a narrower waist silhouette?'

Tom Wolfe quote in intro to Rene König's 'A La Mode' 1973.







IN THE BEGINNING



At last there is some controversy in the youth market place again. It's been a long time since the Sex Pistols invaded rock'n'roll back in 1976 and, funny though it might have been, Grace Jones bopping Russell Harty on TV hardly compensates.

The latest flashpoint has been a subculture that, despite an avalanche of publicity, still doesn't have a handy name. There have been plenty of contenders like 'The New Dandies', 'The New Romantics', 'The Futurists', 'The Blitz Kids', 'The Now Crowd', 'Peacock Punk', 'The Look Bands' and even 'The Cult With No Name'. But none of them has been sprightly enough to catch the popular imagination.

This lack of agreement mirrors the endless squabbling about the genesis, nature and value of the movement. Everyone has been up in arms and reactions have been as fulsome as they have been diverse.

In one of her unfailingly provocative columns in the monthly magazine 'The Face', Julie Burchill commented: 'This new rave—Spandau Ballet, Steve Strange—is nothing more or less than Glam Rock that's opened the dictionary by chance at "romantic" rather than "bisexual".'

On the other hand Robert Elms, the journalist and deejay who was an original

participant in the cult, has been a spirited propagandist. He wrote a kind of prose-poem of praise for the sleeve of Spandau Ballet's first LP, 'Journeys To Glory'.

'Picture angular glimpses of sharp youth/cutting strident shapes through the curling grey of 3am./Hear the soaring joy of immaculate rhythms,/the sublime glow of music for heroes/driving straight to the heart of the dance./Follow the stirring vision and the rousing sound/on the path towards journeys to glory.'

This ditty prompted other critics to accuse both him and his cronies of dangerously Fascist tendencies. The letters' pages in the music weeklies resounded for weeks afterwards.

'The Sun' ran a centre spread on the latest silly antics that divert kids at the moment whereas Molly Parkin in the 'Sunday Times' was keen to know Steve



'The clothes of gentility do not say "I am a man—and how!" but "I am a gentleman, and I hope to attract women not by asserting my masculinity but by demonstrating my membership of a social class"'. James Laver 'Dandies' 1970.

Strange's sartorial secrets. She was a great admirer: 'This larger-than-life attitude has been the secret of the Strange success. At a time when the British economy is suffocating, Steve Strange is firing on all creative cylinders, an example of superb self-promotion. Now our youngest eccentric is about to be launched into the States where his impact will equal that of the Beatles and David Bowie, a prestigious British export.'

Yet, in many ways, what you say is less important than the fact that you say something. Punk, in particular, left a lot of egg on a lot of faces, and that plays havoc with image. It took a lot of stylists by surprise and when they did finally cotton on, they made hapless statements that only alienated them even more. They don't want that to happen again.

It's important then to sift back through the major catalysts of the movement. To know isn't necessarily to



'... Ian Holton, who is also 19, is dancing by himself too, and god, this green suit he has on, it messes your mind up, this waistcoat with the six buttons grouped in groups of two, great green groupy work by the great Jackson, like, one means, you know, the girls are all down here, too, but so what, the point is not making it with the girls, there are plenty of girls out here dancing by themselves, too, the point is simply immersing yourself for one hour in The Life, every lunch hour.'

Tom Wolfe 'The Noonday Underground', collected in 'The Pump House Gang' 1968.



Spandau Ballet looking statuesque, 1980







love but it helps understanding. Steve Dagger, the manager of Spandau Ballet, an emerging 'personality' in the business tradition of Malcolm McLaren and at 23 the oldest in their coterie, will contribute to the guided tour.

Any hep teenager at school in 1969/70 was faced with a decision. There was either 'progressive rock' or the black axis of soul and ska. Dagger chose the latter.



'I think the only group to bridge the gap was the Faces. You could like Rod Stewart then.'

The Faces' diet of flashy threads, populist appeal and goodtime camaraderie which placed sensation over significance had much in common with what's happening in 1981. But more crucial was the soul obsession.

For the 'soul boy', rock spelt passive acceptance at gigs where the band always lorded over its audience. Soul, however, was consumed in clubs and that

meant intimacy, freedom, self-expression. Because there was only a deejay with a turntable, the spotlight fell on the dancefloor and the kids became the stars.

Soul offered smart dancing, visual dazzle and disciplined sophistication —another echo of the present trend. Although there is a cock-eyed belief that music during the early Seventies went through a barren patch, the opposite is, in fact, the case. Soul was a crucible of creativity.

Giants like Sly Stone and the Isley Brothers were hugely influential: 'street funk' bands like the Ohio Players and Kool and the Gang reintroduced rock's version of black traditions back into the R&B current, adding some jazz and Afro textures for good measure:



Isaac Hayes whipped up a wave of successful black movie scores: James Brown, a big hero for the New Swells, produced some of his strongest work: and Philadelphia International

Records unleashed scores of acts that ranged from the silky Stylistics to the tougher O'Jays.

Dagger became an avid soul fan and by the middle Seventies he would dart between London clubs like Crackers, the Global Village, the Countdown Club and the Lacey Lady where leading deejay, Chris Hill, used to rule the roost. But there were drawbacks.

The big difference between the clubs then and now is that those original clubs weren't designed for people into clothes. They were just discos. The kids found a corner in them but they didn't run them. The deejay was probably ten years older and the management twenty years older than them and they were in no way in charge of their environment.

There was a great sense of helplessness in that whatever you did, there wasn't much you could achieve. You couldn't make records, you couldn't open clubs, you couldn't open clothes shops, you couldn't make clothes. You had to carve your identity out of what was there. Still, there was the odd Roxy Music gig every two years.'

Once again Bryan Ferry/Roxy Music and David Bowie showed how they fashioned the Seventies sensibility. They were the only white performers acceptable to the soul boy and the reasons why were

'The Ferry style is none of them. It lies in a joke called Master of Disguise. This trick of perspective was caught in a brilliantly conceived and executed profile of Ferry written by Idris Walters in the now defunct magazine 'Street Life' . . . Walters described Ferry, set against the background of his elegant house like a Hockney drawing, speculating, while the light faded, whether he could make movies, describing himself as the 'mock balladeer' . . . He should hang in the Tate, with David Bowie.'

Peter York 'Style Wars' 1980.

'In Disneyland you forget about the outside world. When you walk down Main Street, you see the castle and then you see the times of the '20s, and how do those two times fit? But they feel so good together. You walk down that street and you feel, "This is it. I'm gonna have a good time." This is escapism.'

Michael Jackson to 'Melody Maker' 1980.

'I come from suburbia, Dan, personally, I don't ever want to go back. It's the one place in the world that's further away from anywhere else.'

Frederick Raphael 'The Glittering Prizes' 1977.



Brian Eno and Andy Mackay of Roxy Music, paving the way for the Star Trek satin and studs look of the early seventies.





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obvious. Both had discovered the variety of soul (from disco to funk rhythms) and were incorporating it into their music. Both, in Dagger's words, 'were unashamedly into their own appearance which was an integral part of what they were doing.'

By now the clubs had become platforms for experimenting with 'looks'. Styles came and went like polaroid flashes (which frequently recorded them). Ferry's 'wedge cut' adorned many a barnet. Films like 'Badlands' and 'The Last Picture Show' fired off a Fifties binge which has since re-surfaced in the rockabilly revival and the Mac Curtis fin-and-flattop cut.

There was the Old Man's look which necessitated billowing bags, braces and a bowler hat. A Forties swing fling was accompanied by the sweet sounds of Glen Miller, gabardine coats and trilbies. But no matter how many costume changes there were, the unifying soundtrack was soul.

A succession of London clubs became chosen sites and, more often than not, they were already established meeting places for gays—like Bangs, Louise's and Chaguarama's (which closed to become the infamous Roxy in December 1976). This overlap was nothing new: gay culture has been linked to rock'n'roll since the middle Fifties.

The early 'discotheques' in

the Sixties, for example, had been championed by blacks, the jet set who relished the exclusivity and gays who could use them to escape social stigmatisation. What's more, the Seventies added an extra ingredient to the alliance. Whereas Sixties longhairs used 'pot' to revolt against suburban authority, the Seventies switched to ambivalent sexuality and loads of make-up. The logical extension of this is today's mannequin parade.

Come 1977 the punk explosion was everywhere and, at first, the soul set were excited. True to form, it wasn't McLaren's socio-political shenanigans that attracted them but the Sex Pistols' youth and uniforms. Johnny Rotten wasn't an ideological iconoclast as much as a clothes horse for his interpretation of McLaren and Vivienne Westwood's togs, sold at the newly christened 'Seditionaries'. But disillusionment soon set in when the toffs realised that they were just another

'rock'n'roll group'. 'The Sex Pistols were the biggest mystification of the lot. They rarely played anywhere—forty gigs or something. A lot of people really thought they were doing something almost on a religious level. They just made records in the end and people have been doing that for years. It wasn't anything more than people expressing themselves through music.'

I'm not saying that what's going on now is any different but to claim that they had any political significance is stupid. If they did anything, they made a lot of people content with being nothing. They certainly didn't inspire the working classes.

'What did they do? All their management companies were thirty to thirty-five year olds. I'm not even a professional manager. I'm very unprofessional. They signed to CBS, EMI, Virgin... Barbara Streisand probably has a similar deal to the Clash with CBS.'

'Which kids got up? People might have formed bands but the successful ones were those who had been playing for years and had been unsuccessful. The Clash, the Stranglers... Mott the Hoople impersonators and God knows what else. I object to the idea that a load of people were inspired to play who couldn't play before.'

By 1978 London had an

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Mac Curtis in his 1956 fin and flat top. A case of the haircut being remembered more than the hits.



beyond the voluntary abandonment of social obligation and community life, and beyond the corresponding habitability of what is left of a public realm dominated by bureaucracy and time, there is a pattern of private withdrawal which is as obscure in its psychology as it is apparently transparent in its external shape. This is something I have termed secondary reality—a kind of wilful deception about the nature of events which is adopted as a survival strategy at all levels of society.

John Martin Pawley 'The Private Future'

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... meanwhile, the British are in danger of losing their individuality completely as they succumbed not only to the Americans but also to continental mass-fashion as the hideous visions of Euro-style penetrate our shops and magazines. To add to this deplorable state of affairs there has been twenty years of "youth culture" based on simple, recognisable identities, and consequently easily reproducible "looks" engineered and exploited by big business.
A Rebours in 'I-D' 1980.



isolated community of around two hundred members. Rusty Egan, a veteran of the music scene and at that time the drummer in the ailing Rich Kids, hit on a solution. He would become an entrepreneur and create that environment the soul set had wanted for so long. He found another gay club, 'Billy's', and inaugurated 'Bowie Night', printing up cards that read 'Fame, Fame, Fame, What's Your Name, A Club For Heroes'.

Egan had a massive record collection and would deejay the kind of music that was tailor-made for his in-crowd. In addition to the obvious Bowie tracks, he'd play samples of the new electronic dance music that was becoming chic. The result was a self-consciously exclusive and futuristic party ambience every Tuesday night.

It became so popular that Egan appointed Steve Strange as doorman to vet the clientèle. Their reasoning was simple: if you want to be part of the action, you have to put some effort into it and dress 'creatively'. Anyway, at a party, who wants nasty gatecrashers? The Billy's experience prided itself on its civilising effect.

Strange, who has since been called everything from 'The Cecil Beaton of Punk' to 'The Pied Piper of the Counter Culture', had moved from Newport to London as punk took off. He

immersed himself in the social whirl in order to make the vital contacts that would help him to become a multi-media figure.

He partied with early punk bands like Generation X and Siouxsie and the Banshees: he sang with an unsavoury outfit called the Moors Murderers who included Chrissie Hynde from the Pretenders and had a song called 'Free Hindley': he cleaned the toilets at the Roxy; he administered in the Rich Kids' office; and he served in the flamboyant clothes shop, PX.



The campaign worked. Strange has had hit singles with Visage, the jigsaw unit made up from members of Ultravox and Magazine together with well-heeled freelancers. He has appeared in Bowie's video for 'Ashes to Ashes', the concept for which, Strange claims, originated from evenings at the Blitz. He has been sent film scripts and had offers of backing for new clubs. He has been

commissioned by Polaroid to compile a diary of his home snaps. He has hit the international market by appearing in such taste-making volumes as Germany's 'Stern', Holland's 'Avenue', Paris 'Vogue', Italy's 'Donna' and America's 'Time'.

The Billy's experiment snowballed over the next three years. As the phenomenon became more widely known, so the original crew made the pace more frenetic than ever. The turnover of clubs and looks induced vertigo.

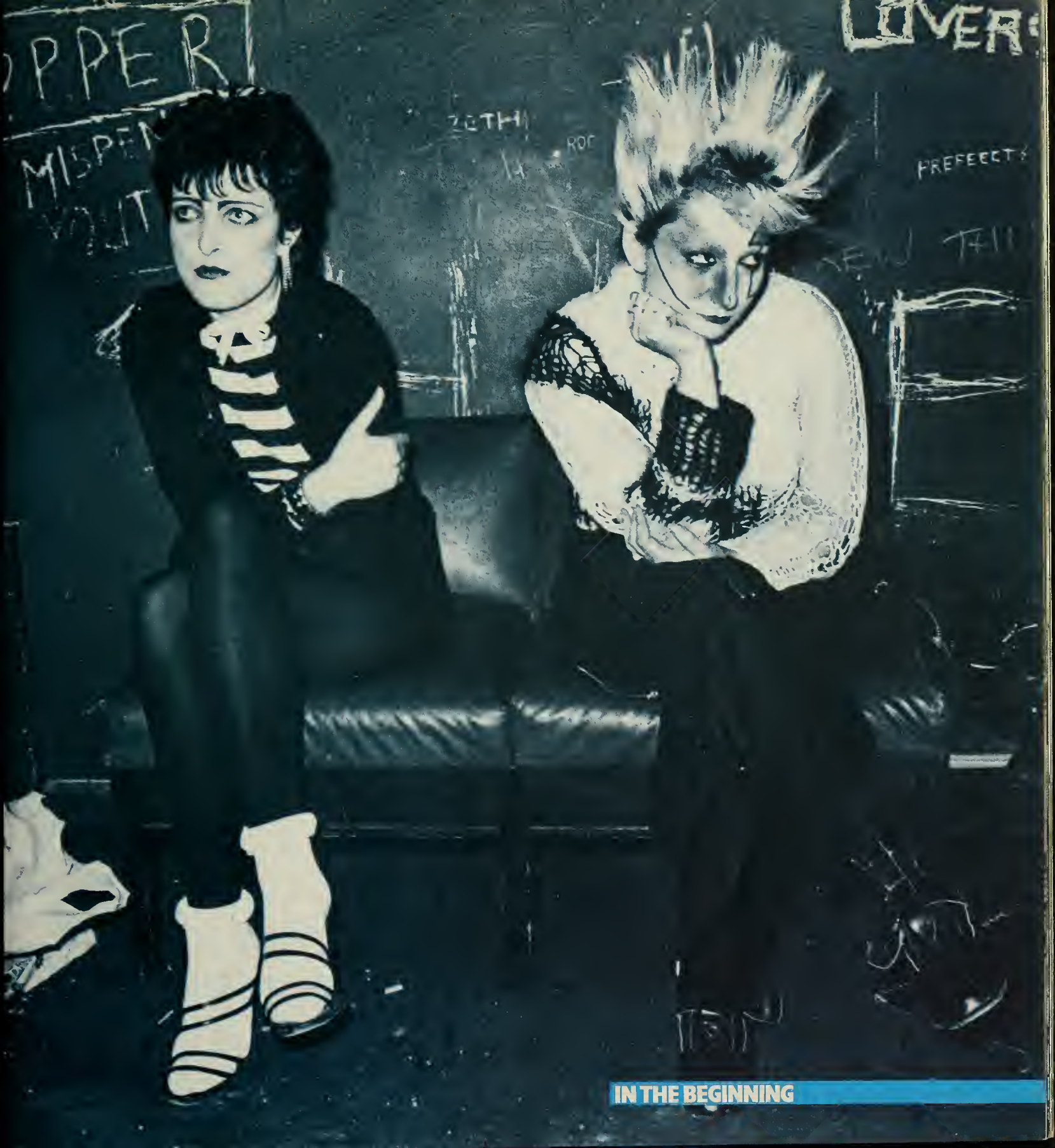
Styles included the toy soldier, the pierrot, the Edwardian rake, the space cadet in geometric slashes and the outlaw in fringed leather. Clubs included the Blitz wine bar (probably the most celebrated), the St Moritz, Hell, Le Kilt and Le Beat Route. While London hogged the increasing headlines, provincial centres were quietly consolidating—like Pips in Manchester, the Rum Runner in Birmingham



Siouxsie Banshee and Jordan display their early punk credentials.



'I feel that everything could be very healthy and I want to hammer the nails into the coffin of grey austerity that was taking over, and the violence that was coming with it and the political extremes of it. I want to bring showbiz back.'
Adam Ant to 'Record Mirror', March 1981.



IN THE BEGINNING

Le Rilt







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Hair isn't cut today; it's sculpted. Ollie displays a recent scissor and snip art form.



'It's funny how the colours of the real world only seem real when you viddy them on the screen.'

Alex in Stanley Kubrick's 'A Clockwork Orange' 1972.

and the Tanzschau, a sort of portable style show that toured South Wales. Decentralisation has now become de rigueur and, appropriately, Rusty Egan has taken his turntable to Flicks in Dartford. His slogan runs: 'From the Blitz to the Sticks—Mondays at Flicks'.

The mutual admiration society developed a practical dynamic. Duran Duran came out of the Rum Rummer: Landscape, a former jazz rock combo, re-invented themselves through computerised technology: Ultravox capitalised on 'ambience' and the cult's fascination with a European consciousness: and, of course, there was Visage.

But the big boys were Spandau Ballet. Five regular habitués of the scene, they made their first appearance before an invited audience of fifty cohorts in November 1979. Future dates refined the formula. Rather than advertise in the pop press, they relied on London's grapevine. Rather than play traditional venues, they went for the 'unusual' London setting which would complement the exotic nature of the events.

A checklist of venues includes the Blitz: Mayhem, the Battersea arts lab owned by Toyah; the Scala cinema where they were filmed as part of a prescient documentary on the movement made by London Weekend Television; the Papagayo club in St Tropez



which gave them all a sun tan: the battleship HMS Belfast; and the Botanical Gardens in Birmingham. The strategy was cunning and the record companies rapidly formed a queue.

The dancefloor mix began to change. It not only grew bigger but also diversified beyond Dagger's description of 'working class soul freaks plus an injection of art school people'. Would-be and already famous photographers, musicians, graphic designers, dress designers, impresarios, professional socialites and record company magnates turned up.

The result was a finely meshed network of supply and demand—the complete stylist's kit. There were hairdressers like Keith and Ollie who both cut their teeth at the 'Smile' salon. There was a milliner in Stephen Jones. There were clothes consultants and designers like Melissa Caplan, Simon Withers, Willie Brown and Chris Sullivan. There were



deejays like Elms, Egan and Radio One's prime time mover, Peter Powell. There were clothes emporia like John Baker's Axiom, PX, Modern Classics and the entire first floor of Kensington Market. There were magazines like 'The Face' and 'I-D'.

The burgeoning exposure convinced Egan and Strange that it was high time the hoopla went officially 'public' and as a statement



of this intent, they earlier this year staged the biggest fashion display yet at London's Rainbow theatre, which was transformed into 'The People's Palace' for the night.

The cards were on the table. The event was either a death-knell or an inauguration. It will either enter the nation's bloodstream (as the new rockabilly is doing) or wilt like a hothouse flower exposed to our harsh climate.

You won't have to wait long for the outcome.

'Fashion does not and cannot exist in seclusion; it wants the world for its stage. It needs to see and be seen: it has an indisputable trait of exhibitionism . . . in short, fashion disports itself in public to the maximum extent, and accordingly makes very early and direct use of all the mass media (daily papers, journals, illustrated weeklies, film, television) to parade before the eyes of the whole country and ultimately the whole world.'

Rene King 'A la Mode' 1973.

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Clothes Shopping List
 'The Zoot Suit': Andrews Sisters 1943.
 'A Sky Blue Shirt And A Rainbow Tie':
 Norman Brooks 1954.
 'Black Denim Trousers and
 Motorcycle Boots': The Cheers 1955
 (also versions by Edith Piaf, Joan
 Morris—soprano and William
 Bolcom—pianoforte).
 'Blue Suede Shoes': Elvis Presley 1956.
 'Pinkpeg Slacks': Eddie Cochran 1957.
 'Shoppin' For Clothes': The Coasters
 1960.
 'Venus In Blue Jeans': Mark Wynter
 1962.
 'Dedicated Follower of Fashion': The
 Kinks 1966.
 'Leopard-skin Pill-box Hat': Bob Dylan
 1966.
 'Venus In Furs': Velvet Underground
 1967.
 'Jeans On': David Dundas 1976.
 'Baggy Trousers': Madness 1980.
 'Tribal Look': Toyah 1980.

Spandau Ballet were on Top Of The Pops recently. I was expecting them, so I videoed it.

On playback, I was surprised. What had seemed fresh enough on their first single (at least to begin justifying the ballyhoo) was now tired and very assembled. A stilted performance, belying their lack of stagecraft; a song, 'Musclebound', the lyrics of which appear as fusty homoerotic rumblings without the courage of their convictions (and great, if they had); and perhaps worst of all for obsessives, shirts that were floppy and huge, just like Chelsea 1966.

To cap it all, the guitarist was wearing a plaid in some approximation of ethnic costume—the last refuge of dilettante filigree fancy. He was so laden up that no kid in his or her right mind would step out of the house like that, especially in summer. It was back to the softness of early 'Hippie'. And this from the only



'Fashion conscious/she follows the trends/Where will it all end? Trousers that flare/people that stare/Military store/jackets galore/Cos she's a short-skirted/fashion-conscious/long-haired girl...
 The Fresh Windows 'Fashion Conscious' '45 circa 1967.

'action' in the nation's weekly shopping basket? So this is pop?

Seemingly so. Week after week, different faces with a similar come-on have been popping up: Landscape, Duran Duran, Visage, Ultravox, Adam and the Ants, the Polecats, even Bow Wow Wow. It may not have stopped the constant flow of disco records that, thankfully, just function. But it has meant a slew of magazines, articles, proselytisers—the panoply of phenomena that populate a pop movement. Clearly, something is happening. But is it really?

Pop and style have always been about money: you spending it, people making it. The concept 'teenager' (of whom we are all the children) arose in Fifties America, whose economy had risen out of the Thirties' slump by becoming the armaments factory of the free world—virtually a monopoly, in fact.

This developed the technique devised by Henry Ford in the car industry. He also said history was bunk, so you can discard this. When the war ended, the car industry resumed. With the baby boom, the greater illusion of security in the Fifties plus prosperity, young people found that their status had changed.

Instead of becoming instant adults, they were shielded and they had money in their pocket.



'I am well aware that an addiction to silk underwear does not necessarily imply that one's feet are dirty. Nonetheless, style, like sheer silk, too often hides eczema.'
 Albert Camus 'The Fall'.

Suddenly, like gays in the Seventies, they were an entity with civic respect. They could spend: they were a market. While one company cut off Elvis at the waist on TV and parents fumed, another was coining it out of his records—rebellion simultaneously inflamed and contained, a difficult juggling act. Just to make sure, the hero of untamed youth everywhere went into the army and that was that.

There's little point in getting snotty about pop's hands being tainted by filthy lucre per se. However, it's as well to be realistic about what it is that pop does and what it can do. Overt rebellion might be a magnificent gesture but, in reality, it's absurd.

The Beatles might have turned on the world (or even produced wonderful art) but they made millions for EM... to squander. The Rolling Stones might have played at street fighting men but the profits from their hits went



'Top British TV show 'The 6.5 Special' invited the top people to the studio. And Britain's Debs clad in the latest fashion—sacks, chemises—went along and rocked and rocked and rocked...'



'Clothes are never a frivolity. They are always an expression of the fundamental social and economic pressures of the time.'
 James Laver 'Dandies' 1968.



THE NEW HIPPIES







THE NEW HIPPIES

'When I buy a new suit,' he said, 'it's almost like getting promotion.'
Nik Cohn 'Today there are no gentlemen' 1971.

into Decca research. Between them they turned pop into a multi-million dollar, megabuck industry with the pursuant follies. They also made pop into a culture, a 'lifestyle', a way of knowledge.

Pop's function is seen mainly as entertainment with small elements of mass art. Occasionally records, individuals and groups will produce resonances that transcend mere entertainment, and begin to set other things in motion. More importantly, it has been something to do. You may wonder why they don't bother with pop in France or Italy. They're too busy with politics. Here, there's virtually nil political expression. That's why politics and pop have been so intertwined, often with disastrous results.

The Sex Pistols played 'Anarchy in the UK' outside the Houses of Parliament on Jubilee Day in a moment of peerless but apparently pointless pop theatre—except that theirs was the only protest at all. None of the lefty groups could even get it up. Meanwhile, the money from their records went to Virgin, to squander again, and their received legacy has been a particularly hideous and neo-Fascist 'punk' rock (aka 'Oi') which, being the amphetamine-dream of one journalist and one only, hasn't grabbed 'the kids' by the goolies.

'At the moment they're wearing blue beat hats (small brims, in blue with pale blue ribbon), Ivy League-style suits with three buttons on the jacket and narrow lapels and two vents at the back. Trousers have seventeen inch bottoms, boots have round toes and are in imitation crocodile or python. Blue suits and blue shirts with peg collars—giraffe collars three inches high—they're very uncomfortable and crease up.'
Mod anon quoted in 'Generation X' 1964.

What pop can express is the state of youth, um, consciousness, and that's worth looking at.

Its current state is best described in terms of an ad in the back of one of the trades, inserted and presumably paid for by a firm called Christopher Robin (a perpetually youthful note). They sell gear and here's the crunch. On offer are the following modes—Bowie (with two new additions), Ballet, Mod, Ska, Vox, Ant (a new addition), 2001 (also new), Teds (revived), Rock'a'Billy (quite wrong), Skin & Punk. Here you have the full confusion. Not the reinforcement of existing pop modes but, I still insist, if not its dissolution, then its seeds.

Somehow during the last few years, a cycle has passed. In becoming sanctified as big business and culture, pop has passed into a concept, merely a way of marketing an idea. In so becoming, I suspect, it's losing its potency and is beginning to bore people stiff. It's very hard to avoid an all pervasive sense at present of the faked orgasm.

The lack of cultural consensus reflected all over pop at the moment is another manifestation of our sleep-walking culture where a B-movie actor becomes president and gives his greatest performance on TV while being shot by an assassin love with a film . . .

The ironies are circular. A

THE NEW HIPPIES



'I look pretty young but I'm just backdated.'
The Who, 'Substitute', 1967.

return to conservatism, both here and in the States, is a logical—if depressing and dangerous—response to a society spinning out of control. Its reflection can be seen in youth cult as well. There's a simultaneous sense of loss—particularly on the part of the Sixties generation so in love with youth and community—and revivalist confusion coupled with faked trends. Why even Adam Ant looks like something out of Sgt Pepper, an amped-up Kings Road Flower Child, while Spandau Ballet belong to some free festival.

Any coherent philosophy that is to be extracted is mainly self-seeking, certainly inward-looking and narcissistic. I quite like most of the records but the whole doesn't stand up as a movement.

Punk did actually ruin quite a lot of things. Less perhaps than has been made out, but enough. It was a proper assimilation of the lessons of the Sixties and



'In the banquet hall, a falcon sat in his shoulder, cobwebs covered the windows and he dined on artichoke, iced avocado soup, salmon en croute with ginger, roast piglet with spiced cherries and fresh wild strawberries, washed down with a bottle of Chateau Y'Quem '45. And when he was quite satisfied, only then, he rose up and dressed himself all in black leather, a reminder of Heartbreak Hotel, and high black boots, tight black gloves, a low-slung gunbelt with holsters on both sides.'
Nik Cohn: 'I am still the greatest says Johnny Angelo' 1967.







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'To me style is just the outside of content, and content the inside of style, like the outside and inside of the human body—both go together, they can't be separated.'

Jean-Luc Godard, quoted in Richard Roud's 'Godard', 1967.



New York scene punk), massive pin-stripe pegs (modernist) a pin-collar Wemblex (mod) customised into an Anarchy shirt (punk) and brothel-creepers (ted).

The teds might have bitched like hell but the sharp kids—many of whom slipped into the Blitz when punk got taken over by the Socialist Workers' Party and the NME's boy's club socialism—took to it like a duck to water.

Early punk wasn't proletarian or even protesting. It was an art movement, reminiscent of nothing so much as an English version of the Factory, Andy Warhol's Sixties forcing house. There was the same drug (amphetamine), the same self-obsession and the same distance. Like the Warhol figures Ingrid Superstar and Candy Darling, early punks gave themselves noms-de-plume. From superstardom to chaos, now: Johnny Rotten, Sid Vicious, Dee Generate, Steve Havoc and, just to

reinforce it all, someone who didn't get it right, Billy Idol.

The Clash followed, neatly dovetailing into the Sex Pistols' wake. They were turned by manager Bernie Rhodes from a speedy pop/mod band into a socio-political concept. Great songs like 'How Can I Understand The Flies' were junked in favour of 'Career Opportunities' and the newwavetowerblockhighrise bullshit was born.



apotheosised in the dreadful 'Rude Boy' movie. The Clash opted for the mod/ted mix in the clothes, but went one stage further. They turned themselves into Art Objects. In October 1976 they appeared with the 'Jackson Pollock' look: spray your jumble-sale threads with flecks of paint, and you too can customise yourself.

This was confusing enough. What McLaren did next, or at least set in motion, charged the whole thing with some real power. In the first quarter of 1977, the Sex Pistols worried the music

Seventies. Although typified as a grim decade, as a 'reaction' against the 'swinging' Sixties, the Seventies saw an explosion of fantasy and self-consciousness. The three most important stars (and their influences is manifest now) were Marc Bolan, David Bowie and Bryan Ferry.

They encouraged the fantasy of dressing up and, Bowie particularly, the idea that you could shed identities, chameleon like, with changes of clothes and of attitude. Ferry actually went the whole way by displaying the ease with which he turned into an Art Object—perhaps the most influential stroke.

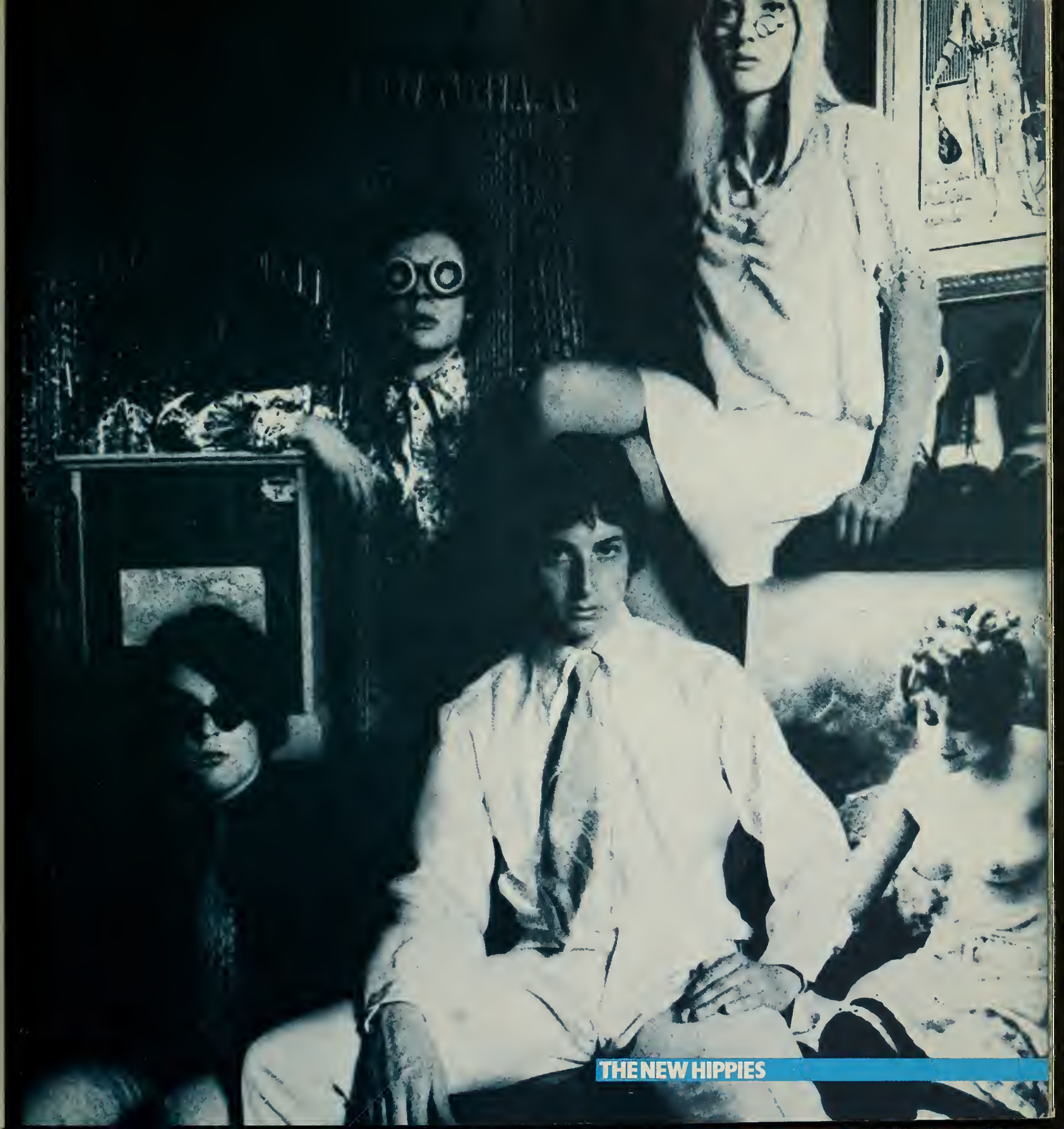
With 1976 came Malcolm McLaren, always a preternatural stylist to whom clothes were everything. He affirmed the art school, Warhol self-consciousness of Bowie and Ferry with a new ingredient—the play politics of situationism, the Politics of Play.

Into the Sex Pistols went unacknowledged fashion and political theory. The band started as hangers for the clothes which, designed by McLaren and Vivienne Westwood, mixed sex and shock with stylistic cut-ups of most youth styles since the war. In a perfect, paradigmatic pose, Johnny Rotten would wear a velvet-collared drape jacket (ted) festooned with safety-pins (Jackie Curtis through the



Psychedelic Swells from 1966 at the King's Road boutique, 'Granny Takes a Trip'.





THE NEW HIPPIES





THE NEW HIPPIES



Granddaddy David Bowie returned to the roar of the greasypaint just in time. The 'Pierrot', poised came with 'Scary Monsters... Super Creeps'—a package that revitalised his bank account.

business quite badly through the twin scandals of the EMI and A&M sackings.

Directors' houses suddenly appeared in the press, linked with those 'foul-mouthed yobs'. The workings of the music industry were suddenly made apparent. McLaren turned it into a parable of how to deal with the business while the 'Rock'n'Roll Swindle' film reduced it further into the form of 'The Ten Lessons'.

The only problem was that those who took heed of the lessons didn't have McLaren's trouble-making fervour. And in rediscovering the generation gap, McLaren sowed the seed for his and the band's destruction. Quickly the Sex Pistols were outmoded, a concept past their prime, a part of the very Spectacle they'd appeared to rail against.

Too quickly punk had set up something that really resonated and then dashed it down. The come-down had several effects: a hardening of punk's nihilism on one hand; a lack of faith in 'pop stars' because they weren't what they seemed and they let you down; and a complete breakdown of style codes following the dismembering of punk's cut-ups.

As the ripples spread out to the edge of the pool, mistakes became careers. Sham 69 made a series of albums out of one Clash

chorus. Groups ripped single ideas off and plugged them ad nauseam with the dedication of the truly untalented.

Worst, the Glitterbest court case paralleled exactly the Beatles' dissolution in the early Seventies. Things were so accelerated both because of the amphetamine and our speeding culture that a whole generational cycle had been completed in eighteen months instead of seven years. It was so fast that most people haven't realised and are still trying to whip it up.

The final part of the picture is the clothes. As with the music, the strands of punk rock fashion very slowly but surely unravelled. We had Mod revivals, Ska revivals and Ted revivals.



Later we had Heavy Metal revivals. Even later we had a Rockabilly revival which plundered Fifties Americana as opposed to the clumpy, totally debased ted look.

Meantime the Blitz Kids took punk's ironies, art

object, magpie sensibility to its extreme. Plunder not merely post-war fashion but the whole of history and do it perfectly for a month at a time. So we saw the pierrot, the squire, the toy soldier PX look, the ghoul, the lampshade—done magnificently, switching through some sharp, internal logic.

After the various revivals had been exhausted by the mass media (hyped up by punk into a state of excitement that never has flagged), this is discovered and the overkill treatment begins. We have a movement.

This last point is worth investigating. The music press—or, at least 'Sounds' and Caroline Coon on the 'Melody Maker'—went overboard on punk rock in 1976. They hammered every last sunglass, every bit of Sniffin' Glue right up people's noses. 'NME', true to prejudice, waited until punk became a youth community and plugged some of the worst, most social workerish aspects.

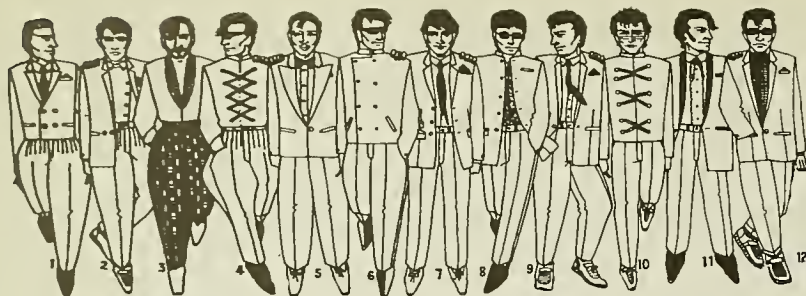
The most accurate, alert and unscrupulous weekly paper was 'Sounds'. ('NME' has vestiges of 'morality'.) Since 1976 it's jumped headfirst into every fad going, ensuring permanent sales because those still interested in pop aren't interested in it as a community but as a novelty. This attitude causes a febrile state of confusion and a false

'As far as I can see the only celebration of youth left to kids today is war.'

Kirk Brandon from Theatre of Hate in 'New Musical Express' 1981.







'... as Duggie Fields has said, "nobody knows exactly what the past is". When all the immediate past—like computerised information—can easily be retrieved on film and tape, with video discs in production by mid-80 and hologram-movies-in-the-round on the way, the past looks different. In London, in youth culture particularly, the time frames are utterly scrambled, the past is all around: in that world the notions of either rejecting or embracing the past look irrelevant. Post-Modernism, which deals with the past like one huge antique supermarket, looks very relevant indeed.'

Peter York 'Style Wars 1980.

excitement.

All this is harmless (or damaging) enough whichever way you look at it. The press, as it hates to be reminded, has a limited power. What happened though, was that it upped the ante on punk and kept the throttle in overdrive. This worried professional trend-setters and full-time ghouls like Radio One disc-jockeys and Top Of The Pops producers.

Their time-honoured function as arbiters of popular taste had been usurped by upstarts.



Quickly, they looked for a riot of their own. The twists of post-punk fashion kept them confused until the end of 1978. You couldn't exactly make a trend out of the Buzzcocks, Devo or the Pop Group. But they found something in 1979. 2 Tone.

When that was hammered into the ground before it had a chance, the ghouls hunted for a new sensation, flushed with success. They found it, fast. Janet Street-Porter's

'20th Century Box' carried a report on Spandau Ballet in April 1980 with part of the programme given over to Peter Powell. The group went public before they'd ever had a chance to be private.

Hence the problems. Spandau learnt from 'The Ten Lessons' and went multinational straightaway. They signed to Chrysalis, the company with a finger in every pie and set to go at the moment with the excellent Lynx. No token resistance, just go.

This has fostered a climate that can be seen, at worst, as unbelievably selfish and elitist. In such a climate the ideas of McLaren and Westwood are inverted. Vivienne's splash of 'World's End' colour becomes a rich hippie diversion, restricted rather than universal, while Bow Wow Wow become part of the Spectacle even before they've put them on. They've dovetailed with Spandau Ballet and Adam and the Ants before assuming an



'Accordingly, clothes were no longer expressions of stability. Once they had spoken of acceptance, of knowing one's place; in 1970, they spoke mostly of self-improvement.'
Nik Cohn 'Today there are no more gentlemen' 1970.

identity of their own. That's meant a dragging down for all rather than an elevation of the few.

I'm forced to agree with Fred Vermorel's wise article in the April 11 Sounds: '... it is more plausible to see all these gladrags as simple reflections of who is in power. When Labour and the Unions were hanging on in Number 10 everyone was tied up in knots and zips with a distinctly proletarian look. Now the right is enthroned and we have Thatcher-Reagan flash, the glam and swish of ostentatious celebrity. The new look, whether arrived at with a £350 gown or from jumble sales, is the look of the rich and the powerful—suddenly public schoolboys, their haircuts, their swagger and even their uniforms look 'in'. This is not so much a "subculture" (overworked term) as a vivid acting out of power politics.'

There is no longer a youth community, only markets. The concept 'teenager' may be becoming obsolete. While this is quite healthy, it's leaving a vacuum which is being filled by false consciousness. What scares me is that the same techniques which are being used to sell things—albeit randomly and fairly harmlessly at present—could be harnessed for another artificial need. The one on which we started, the need for war. It's in the air and should be resisted.



'Adam and the Ants' The Red Indian/Pirate/Highwaymen or, more importantly, the saviour of teenybop.







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'Already the idea of "teenager" tends to define the buyer in conformity with the product he buys, to reduce his variety to a varied but limited range of objects in the shops. (Records, guitars, Levis . . .) You are no longer as old as you feel or as old as you look, but as old as what you buy.' Raoul Vaneigem 'The Revolution of Everyday Life' 1963/5. Reprinted by 'Rising Free' 1979.



Adonis (Body Culture)
 Regard the neo-classical artwork on Spandau Ballet's album cover: the Grecian torso in athletic pose.

In 'I-D' magazine a graduate in sculpture from St Martins School of Art says that his favourite film is 'Triumph Of The Will'; during it director Leni Reifenstahl lingers over the bodies gorgeous at the '36 Olympics in Hitler's Germany and sees the Olympic ideal as that of the Superman who dominates through will and muscle.

Nobody is calling Spandau fascist, but just let's say that, like The Skids on 'Days In Europa', their predilection for neo-classicism (the official artistic and architectural style of Nazi Germany) makes the band's perfectly innocent pronouncement that they want to play 'white European dance music' sound a little ominous—more so, given the combative pose of themselves and other bands as highland chiefs, pirates,

warriors etc.

Mind, the pugnacity is pretty soppy: check the words of 'Glow' and 'Musclebound' and the accompanying video with Spandau around the camp fire, boy scouts in fancy dress. In a different idiom Echo and The Bunnymen (guerilla rabbits in a psychedelic 'Watership Down?') have also opted for juvenile militarism.

A band could always kill two birds—neo-classicism and fighting talk—with one stone and dress up like the body-conscious Roman soldiers and gladiators in Derek Jarman's film 'Sebastiane'. In the meantime, there are battle cries aplenty, like Adam's 'Dog Eat Dog': he may not be referring to the Dogs of War, but it's still a mercenary old world . . .



Crooners Sinatra is the favourite singer of Spandau's 'Tony Hadley. Ol' Blue Eyes is meant to represent the

ultimate in cool and affluence: pure class in performance. But that smokey relaxed style does have a contents—very white, in spite of the jazz influence, and the antithesis of rock'n'roll.

Take it away, Frank; sing a song of six pence and dedicate it to the Mafia . . .

Detail Jewellery and trinket shop in Covent Garden which recently opened a branch in New York. Bowie buys there: say no more . . .

DJs Rusty Egan set the pace at Billy's and then Blitz by playing Bowie, Kraftwerk etc. He refurbished electro- and Euro-funk records by adding his own tapes and synth drum, dubbing on a beefed up beat. In his wake and less inventively came Robert Elms and Ollie. In theirs came downmarket Stevo, compiler of the 'Sounds' futurist chart and the 'Some Bizarre' album. After the lot came Peter Powell of Radio 1, enthusing on Roundtable about fantastic wow! new stuff and even being spotted at the odd gig, like Richard Strange's at the Scala cinema.

Duran Duran Support on a recent Hazel O'Connor tour, they probably want to be the Queen of the '80s. They're from Birmingham and are

Martin Kemps, bass player with Spandau Ballet cuts another dash.



'Flight into future through flight into the past, reformation through nostalgia—in the end, such thinking amounted to nothing more than the decision to make adolescence itself into an ideology.' Peter Gay 'Weimar Culture' 1968.

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'I have come to know many kinds of arrogance, in myself and in others. Yet there is no more consuming, more impudent, more disdainful, more diabolical arrogance than that of the avant-garde artists and radical intellectuals, bursting with the vain passion to be profound and obscure and difficult, and to cause pain: all this I can affirm, since in my youth I was of that company for a while. Mocked in amused indignation by a few philistines, we inconsiderable men were the first to bring fuel to the hell-fire in which mankind is now roasting.' Frank Werfel: written in 1945, quoted in J P Stern's 'Hitler—the Fuhrer and the People'.





'In the grand salon of the Arethusa Club only the waiters wear white shirts and black ties. The clientèle sit there roaring and gurgling and flashing fireproof grins in a rout of leather jerkins, Hindu tunics, buckskin shirts, deerslayer boots, duelling shirts, bandannas knotted at the Adam's apple, love beads dangling to the belly, turtle-necks reaching up to meet the muttonchops at mid-jowl. Indian blouses worn thin and raggy to reveal the jutting nipples and crimson aureolae underneath . . .'

Tom Wolfe Introduction to Rene King's 'The Restless Image', quoted in Ted Pohlemus & Lynn Proctor 'Fashion and Anti-fashion'.

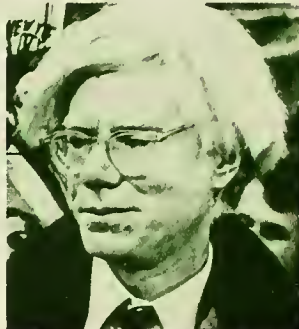


adduced as evidence that there's A Lot Happening Outside London. However, the clientèle of provincial clubs like the Rum Runner in Birmingham and Pips in Manchester always look incredibly dowdy in photos. There's nothing wrong with that, but that surely can't be the intention if you're a style bore . . .

Duran themselves are well turned out, as Perry Haines—one of the editors of 'I-D'—is their 'consultant'. Rusty Egan, as usual, invented this function: not only did he tell The Skids what to do, but pre-punk he can be seen in Nick May's National Film School documentary 'Invaders' generally advising a dope-smoking hippy band on strategy.

Egan has recently opened Flicks in Dartford. Like all other provincial clubs it'll probably be soon saying with great insecurity that it's 'ahead of London'.

Europe The attempt to give black and American music a strong European identity started, in fact, on the other side of the Atlantic in New York with The Velvet Underground ('European Son', 'Venus In Furs' etc).



Euro-centrics regard NY, with its boho lofts, art scene and cosmopolitanism as Paris with skyscrapers, a sort of safe European home. The ideas of Andy Warhol, its most style-conscious citizen, not only influenced The Velvet but Bryan Ferry and Roxy.

Ultravox—whose first line-up dates back to '76—can be seen as a continuation of the Ferry and Bowie spirit of Euro-artiness. Ultravox, though, add futuristic knobs (like Gary 'He ripped us off' Numan) while doing their best to empty their Euro-tech of any contents: Vienna—and its famous son Freud?—means bugger all to them . . .

Films By taking the social



and political significance out of punk, 'Jubilee' prophesied the current craze of style for style's sake. Real punks groaned at director Derek Jarman's camp cloned versions, but some of these have since gone on to greater things—Toyah, Adam . . .

'The Tempest' also shows that Jarman has his finger on the feeble pulse. Toyah plays Miranda, innocent and exotically plaited. Inject her with some little savage chic and pre-pubescent naughtiness, and she could be a model in Vivienne Westwood's Spring/Summer collection.

Hairstylists They haven't been so famous since the '60s. But Swinging London was the product of vitality in the provinces (Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle etc) and it all came about through a mass of beat groups and the mass public buying them: demand. The current scene—take Ollie at

'I smiled at Mr W: "Well, take it easy, son." I said, "Because a sixteen year old sperm like you has still got a lot of teenage living still to do. As for me, eighteen summers, rising nineteen, I'll very soon be out there among the oldies."

'The Wizard eyed me with his Somerset Maugham appearance. "Me, boy," he said, "I'll tell you. As things are, I won't regret it when the teenage labels are torn off the arse pockets of my drip-dry sky-blue jeans." Colin MacInnes 'Absolute Beginners' 1959.

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'Dandyism is the last splendour of heroism in decadence . . . Dandyism is a setting sun: like the star in its decline, it is superb, but without heat and full of melancholy.'

Charles Baudelaire quoted in James Laver's 'Dandies', 1970.



Axion and Keith at Smile—is based more on supply: all the DJs, consultants, hair-dressers, designers and hangers-on were around a long while before Visage or Spandau hit the charts. It's the difference between riding the crest of a wave and making your own.

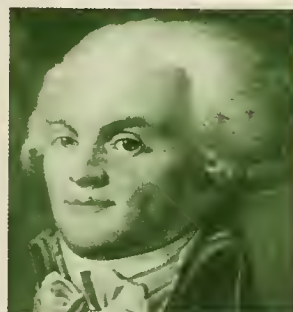


Hats Cover your coiffure with designs by Stephen Jones of PX in Covent Garden. But at prices ranging from £12 to £180 are they hats or crowns?

Landscape have gone

from jazz funk to futurist funk in three easy changes of clothes. Drummer Richard Burgess, an apologist for electronics and digital recording, is Spandau's producer and was Egan's first drum teacher. Hes a New Zealander who timed his foppery with more precision (digital intuition?) than fellow compatriots Split Enz who were experimenting with baroque quiffs while everyone else was in '77 bondage.

Make-up Like dressing up, it's meant to be harmless.



Maybe . . . Before the French Revolution aristos used tons of flour on their hair and face, giving the lower classes food for thought: 'Let them eat cake—or lick my locks . . .'

The Steve Stranges of this world aren't aristos: they just like imitating them. This could be quite subversive, both a parody of consumerism and a way of saying, at the height of an

economic crisis, that everyone deserves their fair share. Unfortunately, Steve and Co would rather escape economic austerity and greyness than comment on it. They also seem little inclined to make sure that their fanciness gets on that puritanical nerve in British cultural life. Fade to garishness in Merrie Old England with Steve as Robin Hood . . . Little Lord Fautleroy . . . Lord Byron . . . etcetera . . .



Midge Ure Now in Ultravox he started life as a progressive Bay City Roller with Slik.

Naked Lunch Part of the 'Some Bizarre' package and an attempt to get away from the elitism and exclusivity of the London scene. But what should be democratic turns out to be cheap and derivative. Naked Lunch are only noteworthy for the hoary old ploy of taking your



'There were many clubs in London at that time (c 1725). There were the Mohawks who specialised in "tipping the lion"—crushing the noses of people who they met on the streets and gouging out their eyes. There were the Blasters who showed themselves naked to passing girls. There were the Mollies who dressed as women and sang to each other, "Tell me, gentle hobbledehoy art thou girl or art thou boy?" . . . Then there were the Hectors, who specialised in sheer vandalism . . . The members of these clubs were all wealthy young noblemen and so were virtually immune from arrest.' Daniel P Mannix 'The Hell Fire Club' 1961.







name from a William Burroughs novel; punks did so with Dead Fingers Talk, and before them hippies with Steely Dan and Soft Machine.



Press Officer Music journalists were slow to pick up on the New Romantics, barely managing a comment, snide or otherwise, before the end of '80. Glossy go-ahead monthly 'The Face' was an exception. Thank heaven it was prepared to say something about what was going on, even if

sometimes it was through ex-LSE student Robert Elms.

Elms writes more like a fawning fan than a critic and has, in fact, written sleeve notes for Spandau. Like a lot of PR people his favourite word is 'creative'. He never defines what he means by it, but it's probably meant, like 'vibrant youth', to refer to something quite superior and be the opposite of that nasty punk 'destructive'.

Rag Trade Melissa Caplan (through Axiom on the Kings Rd) can do you a creative sack. Willie Brown (Modern Classics, EC2) can make you look like Colonial Man. Martin Degville's clothes for the Second Coming (Kensington Market) can give you Christ-Appeal. All these people design costumes, not clothes; and aim for the ballroom, not the street. At least Phrantik Psycho (Ken Mkt) make some witty comment on the theatricality of it all.

But why not short-circuit



the lot of them and go straight to a company like Bermans and Nathans in Leicester Square who hire out costumes to TV and Film companies and the theatre?

Simon Withers (via Axiom) is the only newly touted designer to make his clothes suit the street as well as the ballroom. He's done some of Spandau's sharper, cleaner outfits, and he actually has things to say: 'Every last Crombie is a piece of theatre.'



Street Theatre (Newburgh St) does a fair bit of that tatty Regency stuff. If you're dressing up circa this period, remember that the bucks looked shocking because they adopted what were thought of at the time as the styles of the lower classes. French dandy bucks called Muscadins had a rather different approach: their speciality was going around beating up poor plebeians rather than imitating them!



Steve Strange after an overdose of Turkish Delight.

'To some, fashion is a manifestation of evil, it represents everything that is damnable. To others it opens up, with all its new developments, new horizons, enriches and diversifies life and makes it more attractive; it also acts as a powerful stimulus to the economy, which to its opponents seems only an inducement to luxury and the soft life and eventually to moral decay.'

Rene King 'A La Mode' 1973.





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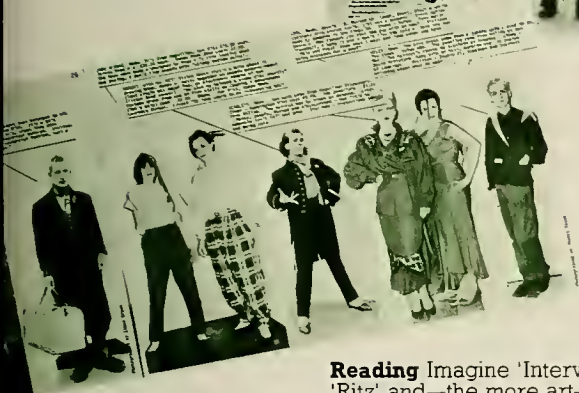


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'The Dandy is the "child of his age", and his best work must be produced in accord with the age's natural influence. The true dandy must always love contemporary costume.' Max Beerbohm quoted in James Laver's 'Dandies' 1970.



Reading Imagine 'Interview', 'Ritz' and—the more art-orientated, less gossipy—'Viz' moved downmarket and rolled into one in a fanzine format, and you have 'I-D'. In the mag every look is presented as a piece of haute couture: any tribe is as valid as the next, from teds to headbangers to hippies to—'Viz's' phrase from '80—the Covent Garden Now Crowd.



Individualism, which transcends style, is the thing. Like Elms's 'creative',

though, 'I-D's' individualism remains an abstraction. It's there because it's there—rather like the notion of success in the '60s which covered Mick Jagger as well as Ronnie Kray and ensured that both of them were in David Bailey's Box of Pinups—'I-D's' glossy precursor?

If it's a critique of current fashion you're after, there's always 'ZG'. It has an incestuous 'deja vu' ring to it, rather as if its editor Rosetta Brooks—a lecturer in fashion at St Martins—had taught her students how to dress and then proceeded to write about them: dog watch dog...

Revolt The New Romantics conjure up the idea of costume drama, not the mythical social riot of punks and teds etc. The rebellion of these latter may be a packaged product, but better the image of revolt than its complete absence.



Steve Strange Quentin Crisp

minus the sexual politics, he fronts Visage, a session band drawn from The Banshees, Ultravox and Magazine.

Toyah Jordan plus a bit of voice and acting ability, she's one of Melissa Caplan's clothes horses.

2002 Review A more successful attempt than 'Some Bizarre' at cashing in



on current fads, the tour included Classix Nouveaux who are basically old-fashioned early '70s rock theatrics. One of the support acts, Theatre of Hate, look backward more healthily by drawing on punk. They're also genuinely worried: they see fading-to-greyness as the colour of World War 3—a nuclear cloud.

Upward Mobility If they have them, New Romantics like flashing their street credentials. Eg: Spandau's

Birmingham bred Duran Duran prove that glamour isn't restricted to London





manager Steve Dagger says that he's no stranger to council houses. But this doesn't make him any the less elitist—just as working-class members of the NF are no less fascist for living in council houses.



Dagger is McLaren's non-controversial heir. He applies the swindling lessons of the master but with little of McLaren's relish for being a media guerilla. Dagger's idea of kicks is probably the Savoy Grill.



Wild Nobility Noble savages



have been hip for a long time. Nineteenth Century French aristo dandies liked to imitate the poise and pose



MS. 21. 1881. WEAR TO HAIR LONG

which they saw in engravings of Red Indians. Lower class types imitated the dandies imitating the Indians, and you got the Parisian 'apache'. White redskins and white negroes: why have westerners persistently copied other races and ethnic minorities through fashion?

Steve New, guitarist, in 'I-D': 'I wish I was a Red Indian . . . I am sorry for the Indians for being white.'



ZE A New York based label, owned by Michael Zilkha, heir to Mothercare and relative of Lord Lever. Acts include Kid Creole, a very superior crooner, and James Chance whose soul-less funk soundtracks are best listened to while gazing at Helmut Newton's coldly erotic, high-class S/M fashion photos.

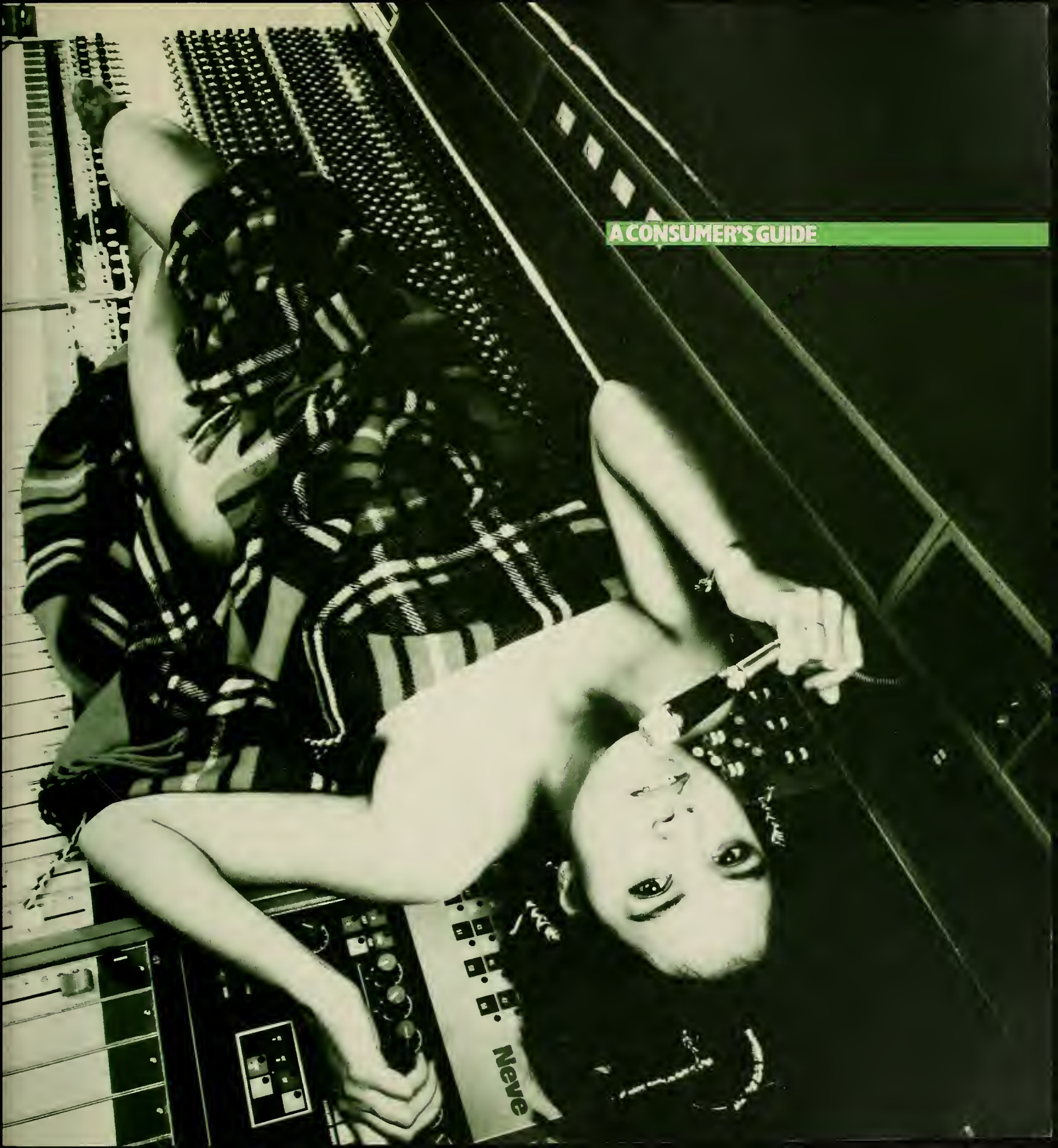
' . . . less obvious, but equally important among American adults, is a fear of aging. European and especially Asiatic critics of our culture marvel at our addiction to youthfulness and our denial of the reality of death . . . Part of the American dream, after all, is to live long and die young.'
Edgar Z Friedenberg 'The Vanishing Adolescent' 1959.

The Art of Manipulation. Bow Wow Wow's Annabella sells sex, the ideology of the new technology and, of course, Bow Wow Wow.



(Page 72) Could it be Howard Devoto sifting through the storeroom at Selfridges? No, still life from 1936.

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