

Many a bar fight has broken out over punk rock's birth. Fans tend to split into two camps: those who credit the Ramones' first appearance at CBGB in New York City circa 1974 and those who point to the early galvanizing Sex Pistols shows in London around 1975–76. It's probably more accurate to say the New York and London scenes are two sides of the same coin; each inspired the other with a rivalry of one-upmanship. The New York stirrings came first, but it was the younger, more fashion-conscious London movement that captured the attention and outrage of the world.

One point is indisputable: punk rock lives. Often fast and always loud and adventurous, it started as a crucial strike against an increasingly bloated music industry and a strip-

nate public and academic library-friendly output, and while the likes of Bangs and Perry turned out insightful anthologies that drop readers into the eye of the punk storm, they tended to marginalize women rockers who held their own amidst all that testosterone.

Deborah Harry (Blondie) and Patti Smith rightly garner a lot of the glory for their striking visual aesthetics and gender-bending, though Siouxsie Sioux (Siouxsie and the Banshees), Poly Styrene (X-Ray Spex), Gaye Advert (the Adverts), and Ari Up (the Slits) deserve much more examination. Now that punk is 30 and counting, look for this inequality, as well as the role of minorities, to be redressed by a new generation of punk-weaned writers.

THE FILTH AND

ping-down of rock music to its barest essentials—three chords and the truth, indeed; it has survived three decades of rabid co-opting by Madison Avenue owing to the startling simplicity, innovation, and nerve of its discography. Several generations of rebellion-seeking teenagers have learned to play guitar, bass, and drums with the Ramones, the Sex Pistols, and the Clash—punk's most recognizable exponents—and many have gone on to form influential contemporary groups of their own (e.g., Nirvana, Rancid, Green Day).

This youthful rite of passage will only continue. A serious look at punk, then, is in order, and for the purposes of this article, we will examine only its initial explosion, 1974–78, in New York and London, which had the clubs and media to foster indelible movements. Important, though more diffuse, scenes also popped up in Australia (the Saints, Radio Birdman), Ohio (Pere Ubu, Devo), and Los Angeles (X, the Germs), but there's no space to cover them here.

God save the print

One could argue that serious writing on punk rock began with late rock critic Lester Bangs's rants in *Rolling Stone* and *Creem* or even the performer interviews in 'zines like Mark Perry's *Sniffin' Glue* and John Holmstrom's *Punk*. If we're talking about traditional books, however, the prize goes to Dick Hebdige's highly influential *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979), a sociological exploration of punk's roots. The popular press took longer to wrap its mind around the subject, but Greil Marcus's *Lipstick Traces* (1990), Jon Savage's *England's Dreaming* (1991), and Clinton Heylin's *From the Velvets to the Voidoids* (1993) have become classics.

In general, American and British music journalists domi-

On the other hand, watch out for quickie biography cash-ins of poor Sid Vicious and picture-heavy hack jobs showcasing the usual safety pins and leather—these anniversary tie-ins are easy to spot, with their small page counts and shoddy cover designs. In terms of names to trust in punk photography, see Bob Gruen, Pennie Smith, Mick Rock, Caroline Coon, and Jim Jacoy. As long as you steer clear of the schlock, weeding shouldn't be much of an issue considering punk's relative youth.

Never mind Sum 41, buy the Sex Pistols!

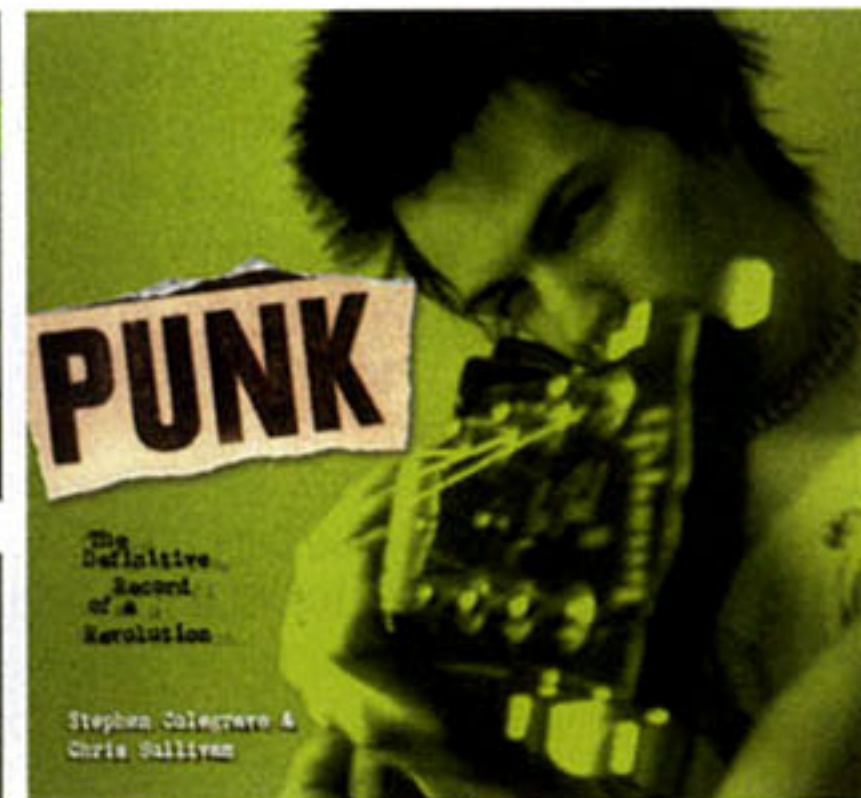
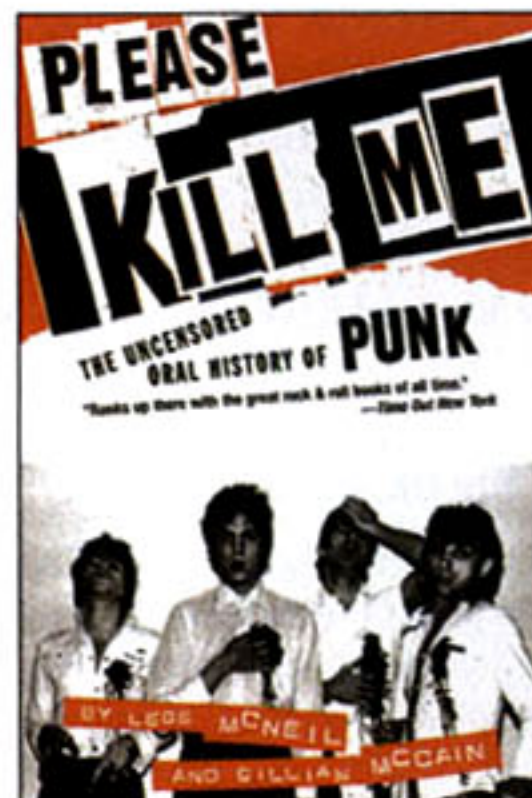
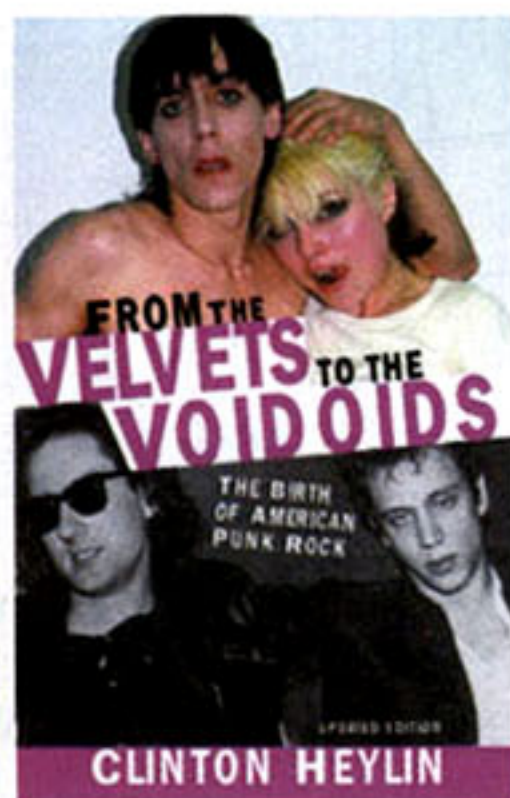
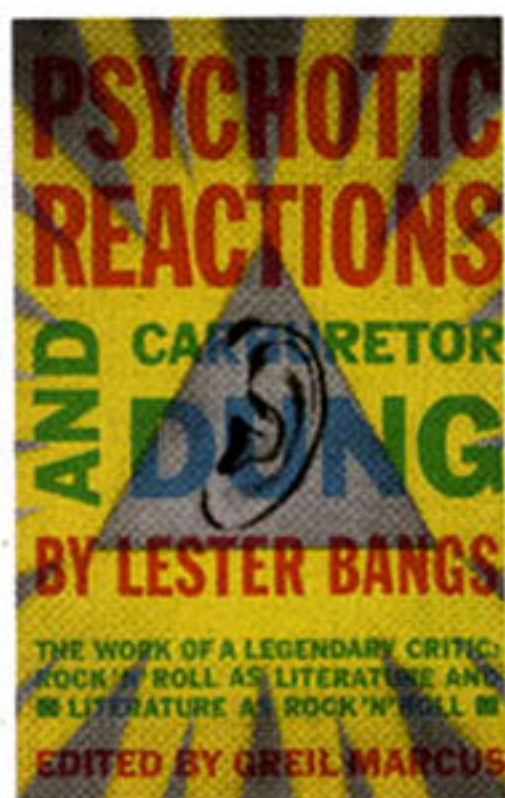
Certainly, the young people who swarm the Warped Tour music festival every summer would go to great lengths to identify the featured bands as "punk," and who are we to argue? Yet libraries would be wise to build a core audio collection that establishes the *lineage* behind the latest, made-for-MTV pop-punk confections (hello, Avril LaVigne!). Thankfully, there are reliable music selection guides from Backbeat Press (i.e., the "All Music" series and its free, helpful companion web site, www.allmusic.com) and Rough Guides.

The CD reissue review sections of magazines like *MOJO*, *Uncut*, and *Rolling Stone* will also keep you au courant on the latest news of the old guard. Note that with the recent inductions of punk groups like the Pistols, the Clash, and Blondie into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, reissues abound, and they often feature unearthed "lost" tracks that could generate patron interest. Inductions sometimes lead to reunion tours, even reunion albums.

Many of the history titles in the bibliography below contain excellent discographies, and ambitious collection development librarians are also encouraged to surf the web for die-hard fans' lists and time lines. While many punk performances can be found on YouTube, because of copyright issues, you may prefer to steer your patrons to the selected DVDs.

Starred titles [★] are essential for all collections.

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THE FURY 101

By Matthew Moyer

REFERENCE

★ Spicer, Al. **The Rough Guide to Punk: The Filth, the Fury, the Fashion.** Rough Guides, dist. by Penguin Group (USA). 2006. 378p. photogs. bibliog. index. ISBN 978-1-84353-473-0. pap. \$24.99.

One of two reference guides on punk in print, this A-to-Zer is the must-have. Neophytes and grizzled experts alike will find all that punk has to offer. (LJ 10/1/06)

HISTORY

★ Bangs, Lester. **Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung: The Work of a Legendary Critic; Rock 'n' Roll as Literature and Literature as Rock 'n' Roll.** Anchor: Knopf. 1998. 416p. index. ISBN 978-0-679-72045-4. pap. \$16.

First-generation rock critic Bangs took punk to heart and championed it personally and professionally. His seminal essays on the Clash thrill to this day. (LJ 9/1/87)

Crimlis, Roger & Alwyn W. Turner. **Cult Rock Posters: Ten Years of Classic Posters from the Punk, New Wave and Glam Era.** Billboard. 2006. 192p. illus. bibliog. index. ISBN 978-0-8230-7779-3. pap. \$29.95.

The thing about punk was, sometimes the poster on your wall could be as important as the record. This visual survey showcases the DIY collaging of punk to stunning effect.

Heylin, Clinton. **Babylon's Burning: From Punk to Grunge.** Canongate. 2007. 672p.

photogs. discog. bibliog. index. ISBN 978-1-84195-879-8. \$25.

Heylin expands on his seminal *From the Velvets to the Voidoids* (see below) with an ambitious history that traces a punk lineage from the MC5 and the Sex Pistols to the Germs and Nirvana. (LJ 1/07)

★ Heylin, Clinton. **From the Velvets to the Voidoids: The Birth of American Punk Rock.** Chicago Review. 2005. 432p. photogs. discog. bibliog. index. ISBN 978-1-55652-575-9. pap. \$16.95.

Heylin hits the mean streets of New York City and finds the roots of punk in figures like Patti Smith, the Ramones, and the Velvet Underground. One of the first detailed histories of New York's arty punk scene. (LJ 5/15/93)

★ McNeil, Legs & Gillian McCain. **Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk.** Grove. 2006. 488p. photogs. bibliog. ISBN 978-0-8021-4264-1. pap. \$16.

The "resident Punk" of the now-defunct *Punk* zine, McNeil corralled the surviving members of the class of 1974 and let them tell their stories. A surprisingly cohesive narrative. (LJ 5/15/96)

Marcus, Greil. **Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century.** Harvard Univ. 1990. 512p. illus. bibliog. index. ISBN 978-0-674-53581-7. pap. \$25.50.

When punk broke, seasoned critic Marcus was on the outside looking in, yet something seemed familiar. Here, he establishes a con-

nection between punk and other aesthetic upheavals of the 20th century like Dadaism. Heady and heavy stuff. (LJ 4/15/89)

Punk: The Whole Story. DK. 2006. 288p. illus. index. ISBN 978-0-7566-2359-3. \$35.

An oversized, glossy collection of articles on punk rock in all its forms and mutations, originally published in England's venerable *MOJO* music magazine. Veteran writers hold forth on the bands they love, with an embarrassment of photographic riches. More accessible for novices than the tomes by Heylin, Marcus, and Savage.

★ Savage, Jon. **England's Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock, and Beyond.** St. Martin's. 2002. 656p. photogs. discog. bibliog. index. ISBN 978-0-312-28822-8. pap. \$19.95.

Music journalist Savage, a fanzine writer during punk's heyday, writes a passionate history, though UK-centric, beginning with Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren's setting up shop on King's Road in London and ending with the acrimonious court case that disbanded the group for decades. (LJ 1/92)

BIOGRAPHY

Antonia, Nina. **Johnny Thunders: In Cold Blood.** Cherry Red. 2003. 300p. photogs. discog. ISBN 978-1-901447-15-6. pap. \$27.50.

Antonia traces the fast life and violent death of a punk innovator, through all the makeup, drugs, great riffs, and broken promises.

★ Gilbert, Pat. **Passion Is a Fashion: The Real Story of The Clash**. Da Capo. 2005. 404p. photogs. discog. bibliog. index. ISBN 978-0-306-81434-1. pap. \$18.95.

A riveting read, this is the complete story, in all its chaos and contradictions, of punk's own "last gang in town." (*LJ* 5/15/05)

Harry, Debbie & others. **Making Tracks: The Rise of Blondie**. Da Capo. 1998. 192p. photogs. ISBN 978-0-306-80858-6. pap. \$22. As with much of the music, this volume is a collaboration between Blondie mainstays Chris Stein (photographs) and Harry (words). The result is skewed, charming, and way better than it should be.

★ Lydon, John with Kent & Keith Zimmerman. **Rotten: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs: The Authorized Autobiography**. Picador. 1995. 352p. photogs. ISBN 978-0-312-11883-9. pap. \$15.

The former Johnny Rotten looks back on the Sex Pistols, punk, and his role in a "musical revolution" with refreshing honesty and an acerbic bite. (*LJ* 3/1/94)

Paytress, Mark. **Siouxsie and the Banshees: The Authorized Biography**. Sanctuary. 2003. 277p. photogs. discog. index. ISBN 978-1-86074-375-7. pap. \$13.95.

An excellent oral history—style bio of one of punk's most memorable female performers. The essential players give their take.

Smith, Patti. **Patti Smith Complete 1975–2006: Lyrics, Reflections & Notes for the Future**. Perennial: HarperCollins. 2006. 336p. photogs. index. ISBN 978-0-06-084971-9. pap. \$25.95.

This collection of Smith's lyrics, along with a wealth of iconic photographs and her own artwork, illuminates her life and work more effectively than a potted bio.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Chernikowski, Stephanie. **Dream Baby Dream: Images from the Blank Generation**. 2.13.61 Pubns. 1996. 112p. photogs. ISBN 978-1-880985-27-4. pap. \$25.

Chernikowski faithfully chronicled the CBGB New York scene for years. Alongside pictures of all the worthies on stage or "in character" are plenty of casual shots of legendary acts rubbing shoulders like ordinary clubbers.

★ Colegrave, Stephen & Chris Sullivan. **Punk: The Definitive Record of a Revolution**. Thunder's Mouth. 2001. 399p. photogs. bibliog. index. ISBN 978-1-56025-369-3. pap. \$35.

If you can buy only one punk photo album, make it this oversized, coffee-table volume featuring black-and-white shots of the most influential parties in their most iconic poses.

Gruen, Bob. **The Clash**. Vision On. 2004. 320p. photogs. ISBN 978-1-903399-34-7. \$29.95.

Gruen followed the Clash from the early days to the bitter end, capturing every dynamic detail: the anger, the sweat, the battered guitars, and wild-eyed passion.

AUDIO CDS

Adverts. **Anthology**. Fire UK. 2003. 2 discs. ASIN B00008WG4C. \$16.98.

The early UK punk quartet fronted by couple TV Smith and Gaye Advert took punk's enlightened amateurism to new heights with songs like "One Chord Wonders" and "Gary Gilmore's Eyes."

★ Blondie. **Parallel Lines**. Capitol. 2001. 1 disc. ASIN B00005MNP8. \$11.98.

As the initial fervor of punk wound down, Blondie came out with their breakthrough record. You and your mom know "Heart of Glass."

★ Buzzcocks. **Singles Going Steady**. Capitol. 1992. 1 disc. ASIN B000000QGE. \$11.98.

No matter how much distortion and enthusiastic amateurism the Buzzcocks buried their songs in, the gleaming pop heart couldn't help but shine through. Every song here is undeniably catchy.

★ The Clash. **The Clash**. Sony. 2000. 1 disc. ASIN B00004BZ05. \$11.98.

★ The Clash. **London Calling**. Sony. 2000. 1 disc. ASIN B00004BZ0N. \$11.98.

Though *London Calling* is their best-known work for its expert commingling of genres, the Clash's debut catches them in white-hot, primal form. Iconic in every way.

★ Damned. **Damned Damned Damned**. Castle US. 2005. 1 disc. ASIN B0007SL2X0. \$13.98.

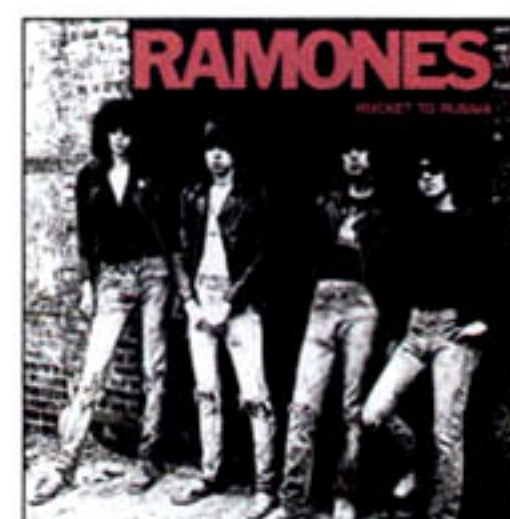
Crazy, ghoulish fun from a group too often overlooked for their broad influence on the punk landscape. And they're still kicking around today.

★ Dead Boys. **Younger, Louder & Snottier (The Rough Mixes)**. Bomp. 1997. 1 disc. ASIN B000005X0Z. \$15.98.

Ohio's Dead Boys found that they finally had spiritual brethren for their violent, swaggering rock and swiftly relocated to New York, becoming CBGB fixtures.

★ Richard Hell and the Voidoids. **Blank Generation**. Sire/London/Rhino. 1990. 1 disc. ASIN B000005JB1. \$11.98.

Though it's a hotly contested issue, one has to assume that Hell's spiked hair, safety pins, and tortured stance were at least an unconscious influence on the UK punk "look"—to say nothing of this angular, almost jazzy music.



The Jam. **In the City**. Uma Imports. 2004. 1 disc. ASIN B000006TZ9. \$12.98.

Angry young man Paul Weller worshipped the Who and the Kinks more than the Ramones—and it shows. The Jam stood out for their sharp suits and sharper songwriting, flirting with commercial success before dissolving.

★ New York Dolls. **New York Dolls**. Island/Mercury. 1990. 1 disc. ASIN B000001FMX. \$9.98.

This glammed-out New York prepunk quintet were too busy preening in the mirror to learn to play their instruments properly. But who needed to when they had songs as primally brilliant as "Jet Boy"?

★ Ramones. **Ramones**. Rhino/WEA. 2001. 1 disc. ASIN B00005JGAB. \$11.98.

★ Ramones. **Rocket to Russia**. Rhino/WEA. 2001. 1 disc. ASIN B00005JGAF. \$11.98.

The first blast of pop brilliance from Queens's best was the musical shot heard round the world. UK youth especially took note. Their third effort's diamond-perfect singles (e.g., "Sheena Is a Punk Rocker") rank up there with the genius of the Beach Boys.

★ Sex Pistols. **Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols**. WEA. 1990. 1 disc. ASIN B000002KIE. \$11.98.

Alongside the first Ramones album, this is the Rosetta stone of UK punk rock. Hasn't aged a day—their act is still being ripped off by newer bands like Green Day.

★ Siouxsie and the Banshees. **The Scream**. Geffen. 1992. 1 disc. ASIN B0000000PH. \$11.98.

Here we have icy, mournful music conjured up by early Pistols fans who took their DIY message to heart. Siouxsie and her Banshees would go on to provide the aesthetic template for gothic rock.

★ Slits. **Cut**. Koch. 2005. 1 disc. ASIN B0006UEVEU. \$17.98.

The Slits delivered all the ecstatic freedom that punk promised (before you realized most punk was just blues chords again). This all-girl, reggae-inspired trio still sounds utterly alien today.



★ **Patti Smith. *Horses*.** Arista. 1996. 1 disc. ASIN B000002VQQ. \$11.98.

Smith and her band forcefully combined poetry with angry, basic rock on their most influential set. Cited by everyone from R.E.M. to Sonic Youth as life-changing.

★ **Suicide. *Suicide (First Album)*.** Mute. 2000. 2 discs. ASIN B0000400BS. \$17.98.

This still-undervalued prepunk duo consisted of Martin Rev's keyboard-and-drum machine bashings and Alan Vega's tortured dead-Elvis howls. Their sound would have an incredible influence on the next three decades of music.

Talking Heads. *Talking Heads: 77*. Warner Bros./WEA. 1991. 1 disc. ASIN B000002KNU. \$11.98.

Fast and furious, they were not, but David Byrne and company's debut has a nervy nerdiness that qualifies it as punk. With the underground anthem "Psycho Killer."

★ **Television. *Marquee Moon*.** Elektra/WEA. 2003. 1 disc. ASIN B0000AI45P. \$18.98.

Tom Verlaine and associates, the first "punk" band to play CBGB, were light years from punk's stereotypical mohawks and rage, instead cultivating an air of effortless mystery, combined with surprisingly virtuosic guitar work.

Johnny Thunders and the Heartbreakers. *L.A.M.F.: The Lost '77 Mixes*. Freud-Jungle Full. 2003. 2 discs. ASIN B00007MFGI. \$19.98.

Former New York Doll Thunders and his Heartbreakers were clearly more in thrall to early doo-wop and rock'n'roll than any punk clatter, and yet punks on both sides of the Atlantic worship this drugged-out, soulful noise.

★ **Wire. *Pink Flag*.** Pink Flag. 2006. 1 disc. ASIN B000ENC7KY. \$15.98.

Take rock music, strip it of harmony, virtuosity, all blues influence; heck, take away the choruses, too. Leave only naked terror and the barest skeletons of songs. This is Wire.

★ **X-Ray Spex. *Germ Free Adolescents*.** Castle US. 2005. 1 disc. ASIN B0009HLCGA. \$13.98.

Another band that didn't last nearly long enough, led by Poly Styrene's wail and Lora Logic's primal saxophone, the Spex left us with this one essential album, full of promise.

Various Artists. *No Thanks! The '70s Punk Rebellion*. Rhino/WEA. 2003. 4 discs. ASIN B0000DD539. \$64.98.

This boxed set covers most of the highlights of the first wave of New York and London punk, along with some influences and other lesser-known acts.

DVDs

***The Clash—Westway to the World*.** color. 107 min. Don Letts, Sony, www.sony.com. 2002. DVD ISBN 978-0-7806-3220-2. \$14.98.

From squats to stadiums, Clash confidante and punk documentarian Letts tells the complete story of punk's most soulful, with band interviews and ancient footage.

***End of the Century: The Story of the Ramones*.** color. 150 min. Jim Fields, Rhino/WEA, www.rhino.com. 2005. DVD \$19.98.

"The Bruddahs" from Queens fell on the opposite side of the burnout/fadeaway divide and stuck it out nearly 20 years after their landmark debut album, fighting every step of the way. This bittersweet documentary reunites the surviving members and their extended family of managers and crew.

★ ***The Filth and the Fury*.** color. 103 min. Julien Temple, New Line Home Video, www.newline.com. 2000. DVD ISBN 978-0-7806-3220-2. \$19.98.

Longtime Pistols associate and filmmaker Temple made the first Pistols' movie (*The Great Rock 'N' Roll Swindle*) according to the vision of Svengali Malcolm McLaren. This time around, he lets the band tell their story in their own words, with a ton of previously unseen archival footage.

***New York Doll*.** color. 78 min. Greg Whiteley, First Independent, 2999 Overland Ave., Suite #218, Los Angeles, CA 90064; 310-838-6555; www.firstindependentpictures.com. 2005. DVD \$19.98.

A touching story of rock'n'roll redemption, this catches up with former New York Doll bassist Arthur "Killer" Kane. A librarian living in L.A., he has his spartan daily life turned upside down when he reunites with the other surviving Dolls for a series of triumphant shows in London in 2004. His own death soon after adds poignancy.

***Punk: Attitude*.** 2 vols. color & b/w. 270 min. Don Letts, Capital Entertainment, 202-636-7028; www.capitalentertainment.com. 2005. DVD \$29.98.

Compiling this eminently watchable documentary from archival footage and new interviews, Letts (*The Clash—Westway to the World*) presents a credible time line and definition of the punk phenomenon.

WEB SITES

Punknews.org

www.punknews.org

More of a web log-style news hub for all the latest industry/band chatter. Coverage often crosses over into indie rock and left-field metal, with a softer touch, but it is a good assessment of the hydra-headed state of modern "punk."

PUNK77—A History of UK Punk Rock from 1976–79

punk77.co.uk

Devoted to the purple period of UK punk, this opinionated and informative web zine is packed with period photos and has subsections on U.S. punk and women in punk.

SEARCH AND DESTROY! Punk Rock N' Roll Search Engine

www.trashsurfin.de

A freewheeling web portal devoted to early punk, garage rock, mod, and all things trashy with loud guitars. Upside: access to scores of web zines and archives that would otherwise be difficult to find through Google. Downside: hasn't been updated in years, so many links are dead.

We Created It; Let's Take It Over!

www.inch.com/~jessamin

An impressive series of essays on all aspects of early New York punk written by fan Jessamin Swearingen. Coverage extends to the New York Dolls, the Velvet Underground, the tight-knit community at CBGB, and, crucially, New York punk/London punk comparisons. ■

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