



FOR the past year every move the Sex Pistols have made seems to have caused an uproar. For the man behind Britain's top punk rock band it has been twelve months of almost non-stop controversy. Here we examine how he put them where they are now.

THE PUNKS'

WITHOUT 29-year-old Malcolm McLaren there would be no Sex Pistols. It was Malcolm who found the band members and moulded them into a dynamic, abrasive unit.

True, they didn't take a lot of finding—they used to hang out at his shop in London's King's Road.

But it was McLaren who channelled their music into what the Black Generation needed, a generation on the move, much recognisable future.

McLaren told me: "Punk means believing in yourself and your own abilities. Don't think the punk doesn't care. He cares a lot. And he'll kick like hell to get it all changed."

"Punk is the great enemy of apathy. The Sex Pistols created a spark of life and energy which has now turned into a forest fire. The everyday lives of the street kids were poverty-stricken in garbage—financially and spiritually."

"Punk action then turns into an outright frontal attack on the system."

System

"Don't forget this was a generation brought up on distant pop-stars who sang about sex and love from their tax havens. When they went to gigs they turned up in big limousines."

"Under the old system bands couldn't make out without £10,000-worth of equipment, which inevitably made gigs expensive. The punk wants to be in touch with the

by GLORIA STEWART

band, not standing miles away with yards of bouncers in between. So gigs are small and cheap.

"That's why the record companies have been having poppulations lately."

"Long-established stars are frightened. We constitute a basic challenge to the whole way the record business is organised."

"After the advent of the Sex Pistols some 200 bands have been inspired to try their hands regardless of whether they play in tune or not."

"Without having what the street kids needed and wanted, we would have been nothing."

Having established the fundamentals, McLaren started wheeling and dealing. Business meetings on behalf of the band occupy almost every waking minute of his life.

First he got a recording contract from EMI. "We couldn't believe our luck," said McLaren.

"It was not to last long. Then came our confrontation with Bill Grundy on Thames TV. EMI died a thousand deaths and, finally,

pulled out after two and a half months. The band and I waited an interview with Sir John Reed, the chairman. We were in Holland at the time.

"The message came back. No interview. No reasons. Just tell them they can have the money. That was £50,000."

EMI refute this, saying we mutually agreed to terminate the contract.

Scrap

"Our next recording company was A and M. That was even shorter lived—seven days in all," McLaren recalled.

"We seem to have been fired by A and M after a fracas at the Speakeasy in Margaret Street. Sid Vicious and the Sex Pistols got into a scarp with Bob Harris from BBC's 'Old Grey Whistle Test'."

Derek Green of A and M records said: "The Sex Pistols were the quickest success I ever had. But I changed my mind. I did not want to be involved in what they did outside their music."

Perform

McLaren went on: "This time we left with £75,000. For months I couldn't even get through the door of any record company. Finally Virgin took us in."

"While all this was going on we could get no gigs in Britain whatsoever. That was why we decided that, if we couldn't perform to live

Mr FIX-IT



PARTNERS: Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood. Picture: BILL KENNEDY

audiences, at least we'd get the power of the band on film. We brought in American director Russ Meyer.

"Warnera put up £200,000 for pre-production. And the UK end of Twentieth Century-Fox wrote saying they were very interested indeed."

But, at the eleventh hour, Grace Kelly and Alan Ladd Jr. the major shareholders of this part of the company, decided not to proceed.

"The Russ Meyer script didn't really work out so we are now pro-

ceeding with Peter Walker, an English director. On tour McLaren continues with the hard work. We'd be dining and the cry would go up. 'Paris for Mr. McLaren, Los Angeles for Mr. McLaren.'

TV men, photographers, the promoters, the crowd: they were all important. No one's ideas were discarded.

At home in London, as well as running the Sex Pistols, he contributes ideas to Seditionaries, the punk outfit for London, a shop run by McLaren's lady, Vivienne Westwood.

And meanwhile he is preparing a tour of America.

group or having an intense sales conversation with a Dutch record company man he would be working like mad.

Off he would lope in his black leather trousers, long aquamarine coat and Fifties-style creepers. Beneath the tousled mop of red hair his brain would be ticking away.

Whether he was seeing to the lighting for the

IN the pecking order of punk there is a definite hierarchy.

After the Pistols come The Clash and The Stranglers, two groups who have been variously banned or not allowed to play—part of a punk pedigree.

But The Clash seem to have neglected their humble origins lately and were rumoured to have caned tied gigs in Ireland to go away to Jamaica: very "non punk".

The Jam were seen riding round in a Rolls-Royce, so that disposed of them.

After these more famous bands comes the Irish Brixton axis, places where it is good to have come from.

At least with Brixton or Ireland as a background there is less chance of being considered a poseur, or fake, the worst crime in the book.

I had a closer look at two more bands: X-Ray Specs and Radiators from Space.

Power

X-Ray's lead singer, Poly Styrene, is a diminutive girl with a silver brace around her teeth. Her band has strength and power.

Poly has successfully bridged the gap between black and white. She has a black father, but has a black father.

Poly sets out almost deliberately to be the very opposite of the traditional pop star sex symbol.

She wears a man's jacket, winkle-pickers and vividly unattractive bright pinks and greens. Her lyrics, like the Pistols, are full of lobs at society. My mind is like a plastic bag.

I never knew what I wanted to do when I left school.

"They always used to say work hard at school and you'll get a good job. But all the jobs were the same—just boring."

Then I started getting a band together. That gave me a purpose in life."

Poly is the only girl singer I have heard among punk bands whose voice is strong enough to soar above the massive noise and keep its character.

Another interesting band with plenty to say about society is Radiators from Space.

Their 20-year-old lead



POWER PACK: punk singer Poly Styrene.

'Now I've got a purpose in life'

singer, Phil Chevron, who sports a silver tooth in the front of his mouth said:

"Our theme is: Re-evaluate your whole life. Don't follow leaders. Think for yourself. You must find your personal solution."

In a way, society has died. It is very difficult to know what's wrong.

Tough

"We take an aggressive stance — it is quite the reverse of the hippie world of the Sixties with Love and Peace."

"We are hard, tough and aggressive, because

we think that is the only way to effect any change.

"Everyone outside punk thinks pugging [the leaping up and down punk dance] is dangerous. People are just enjoying themselves."

With their record "TV Tube Hearts", Radiators from Space attack TV and the way it stops the younger generation from thinking for itself.

That goes down well with the crowd. And perhaps explains why few punk bands choose to go on "Top of the Pops," considered by punk groups to be an artificial substitute for music.

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Bovver in black leather

IN London's King's Road one afternoon I spoke to three punks from Erith.

All were wearing silver-studded black leather jackets, trousers with zips up the back, and chains.

All three said they were under constant police surveillance whenever they went out in their punk gear.

Jean Mahoney told me: "If I'm out with them (the boys) we are always getting 'pulled' by the police. If we're in a car it has to be searched."

Studs

"It's just our clothes. Nothing else. The other day a copper told me my dog collar with studs on was an offensive weapon."

Nineteen-year-old Jean is an office worker, but she doesn't wear her gear to work.

Little Doug Stow, a 19-year-old printing worker, said: "I got interested in punk because it was outrageous. It shocked all people. It makes you think—something I never got taught at school."

"The fights got started by the Teds. The National Front have got well into them and have set the Teds on to us."

"Don't think just because you might see a punk wearing a swastika he supports Hitler. He's probably wearing it for no reason at all."

"The Teds all hang out at the main line stations late at night, waiting for any punks to show up."

Or they go down to our gigs just to smash the place up."

"The black greasers are all right. Got nuffin' against them. Punk's really good for people. After a gig you are so exhausted you just want to go straight home."

"Those Teds don't half slam into the punk girls sometimes. One girl got put through a plate glass window in Oxford Street."

"I'm interested in the words of the songs. They really get into your head."

DISCIPLES: Jean Mahoney and Doug Stow. Picture: PETER STONE

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