

PUNK

*Up-front sex, violence, and exhibitionism –
what's behind the scene?*

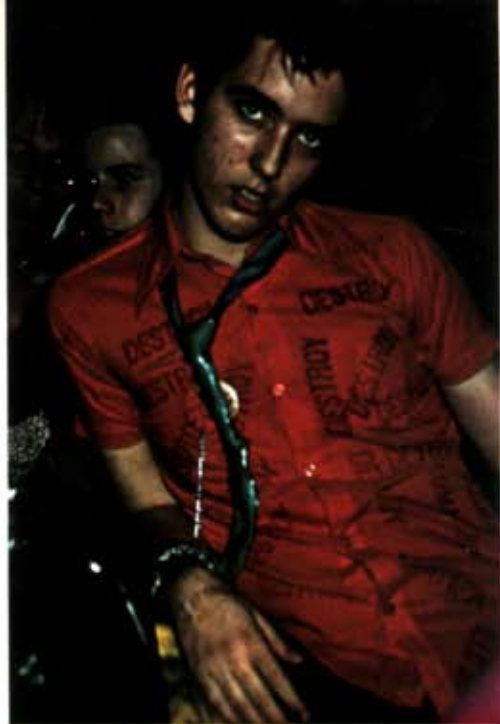
Anton says it all started at the old Max's Kansas City in the late sixties, when Mickey Ruskin owned it. Andy Warhol and the Velvet Underground were in attendance nightly, nourishing their bodies on chick peas and feeding their souls on a new brand of superstardom. Androgynous chic. Indeterminate sexuality. We all wondered where the whole underground scene was going. A lot of us thought Warhol and his groupies would just weird themselves out of the picture. Punk was only just beginning to fester . . . random pockets of infected human energy bubbling and growing beneath the surface, swelling with its unavoidable and incandescent pus, its pathological punk need to be seen and heard.

Huge new sounds were being heard — the primal screech of Punk. Ruskin had moved on to open the Locale, in the West Village; the freaks seemed to be dispersing, but some followed and new ones emerged. Then he went to the fringes of Soho and started the Lower Manhattan Ocean Club on Chambers Street. Velvets like John Cale and Lou Reed performed there, but the sixties heroes came on like seventies establishment. The kids were looking for raunchier digs.

Heavy rumblings of sound and thought were also coming out of the East Village, where slum queens boogied with real-life Fonz-cats. A grimy, smoke-filled Bowery club called CBGB's was attracting the real funky action— noise, glitter, and a fuck-you philosophy. The kids were dressing in black leather, slicking back their hair, and calling Mick Jagger an asshole. It was the birthplace of Punk.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTON PERICH



Pissed off and spiteful, Punk grew up goofing on itself. The bands were putting out a new rock 'n' roll as violent as it was sexual, and the whole thing was a big joke, like life. Ha, ha, suicide'll get ya!

Filth and poverty were glorified as high style to ridicule uptown notions of radical chic. Safety pins were the new royal jewels, and you stuck them through your nose or ear, laughing, between gulps of flat draft at CBGB's. Punk poetess and musician Patti Smith said the guitar was the new weapon, but if you didn't have the bucks to buy strings, you carried a knife. Drags like Wayne County (opposite page, top center) belted out transvestite rock. The bloodier your T-shirt, the hipper you were. Look mean, dress nuts, talk bad. Get your kicks off S & M. Fuck over the suckers. Jerk off the jerk-offs. Life's a shitty party anyhow. Do it before it does you.

Rich folk wanted in on the party, but the Bowery was too fragrant a slice of life for them, and they brought the Punk imperative to their own neighborhood, the East Fifties, Studio 54. Well-heeled pseudo-Punks are the worst sort of lowlife to the kids on the Lower East Side, but if you're not part of the real party, it's hard to tell crashers from initiates. Wanting to be a Punk won't make you one, but dressing Punk and talking, thinking, drinking, and drugging Punk is pretty easy.

Scenes from the old Max's, Studio 54, and CBGB's. Public sexuality, Punk euphoria, blood on white, spiffed-up funky, drag chic. Fashion models with big-time bread hanging in with the real toughs. Outraged and outrageous, Punks are nasty as spit, boozed up or spaced out, lookin' mean, talkin' dirty, pissed off, and fucked over. Red blood scares the bluebloods; so they paint their T-shirts and imitate the other trappings of Punk. Says a CBGB's kid about the Studio 54 scene: "You can look like shit, but you don't smell like shit unless you are shit."



Wayne/ Jayne County





(r.) Nina Blackwood - later became an MTV VJ



Warhol stars at Max's (Nikko and Eric Emerson) were the pre-Punk royalty. Doin' it on the dance floor at Studio 54 is where it's at for sex. At CBGB's it's safety pins through your ears. Rich Punks uptown like to show tits and ass; Bowery kids get off on minor mutilation. It's all the same kind of kicks.



Eric Emerson and Nico



Mink & Wille DeVille



Helen Wheels (*pictured below*) gets into suicide when she performs at CBGB's. Helen makes love to one of her daggers as she sings, the New Wave of sex. Blood and guts are hot. Death's the ultimate orgasm. Murder makes you come. Get off on gore.

Punk music makers Johnny Rotten and Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols in London scream, "I hate you!" at their fans, whipping them into frenzied adoration. The Dead Boys jerk off with vibrators on stage. Some groups fuck chicks as they beat out their Punk tunes.





"Grandma, what were you doing in the '70s?"



There are beauties, like Bianca Jagger (opposite page, at the Leo Castelli Gallery), to be found among the beasts. And, although one Punk credo has it that the lack of beauty is not necessarily corrupt, the marvelous-looking women who are attracted to the scene mystify many people.

If you talk to the inside Punksters, you discover that real, honest-to-goodness, behind-closed-doors fucking is rarely practiced by the habitués. The show's the thing, it seems. Public displays of sexual enticement and abandon replace one-on-one intimacy—perhaps a reflection of the cynical social trend toward general emotional distance.



Punk band Hell on Wheels performs at CBGB's; Johnny Winter arrives at Studio 54; Cirinda Foxe and Angela Bowie cuddle up at the old Max's; a fashion model dances à trois at Studio 54; the writers of the hit musical Hair laid back at Studio 54; a Punkster pair arrive at the opening of Pierre Cardin's ballet-theater production on Broadway.





T-shirt says, "Anarchy Baby Eaters"



There are stars glittering in the squalid ambience of the Punk motto "Greased and ready to kick ass." Sylvia Miles; Debbie Harry of the Punk band Blondie; and disco queen Grace Jones, who belts out the throbbing "I Need a Man" for boogie fans nationwide.



Everyone's a superstar. Fucking and killing are the same. Do it in leathers, in drag. Show tit, bare ass, suck cock, suck blood. Punk is puberty revisited. Beat 'em up or get creamed. Carve a swastika on your chest. As Punk singer Richard Hell belts out: "I was sayin', let me out of here before I was even born, it's such a gamble when you get a face, I belong to the blank generation, and I can take it or leave it each time." The New Wave is crashing onto our shores. Get it on before it gets you. 