

## 6 THE SOUND OF THE WESTWAY



'When I think of the punk years, particularly 1977, I always think of one particular spot, just at the point where the elevated Westway diverges from Harrow Road and pursues the line of the Hammersmith and City tube tracks to Westbourne Park Station. From the end of 1976, one of the stanchions holding up the Westway was emblazoned with large graffiti which said simply, 'The Clash'. When first sprayed the graffiti laid a psychic boundary marker for the group – This was their manor, this was how they saw London.' Jon Savage 'Punk London' *Evening Standard* 1991

*'All across the town, all across the night, everybody's driving with full head lights, black or white turn it on face the new religion, everybody's sitting round watching television, London's burning with boredom now, London's burning dial 999, Up and down the Westway, in and out the lights, what a great traffic system, it's so bright, I can't think of a better way to spend the night than speeding around underneath the yellow lights.'* The Clash 'London's Burning' 1976

**The Clash: From the Westway to the World** As Colin Maclnnes, the author of *Absolute Beginners*, died in 1976, the next great Notting Hill pop phenomenon was happening. Of all the groups associated with the area – from Pink Floyd to Gorillaz, the Clash have the best street credibility, and represent North Kensington/Ladbroke Grove (W10, rather than 11), in most of the area's conflicting psychogeographical aspects, with the Sound of the Westway.

**Punk Rock Crash** In early 1976, the local rock routes of the 101'ers and London SS merged in the fusion of squat pub rock and decadent glam rock that would become the Clash. After one of the last 101'ers gigs in Hammersmith, Billy Idol (later of the group Chelsea and Generation X) drove his father's new car into the back of Glen Matlock of the Pistols' motor at the Great Western Road bridge. The 101'ers' final residency was at the Nashville Rooms in West Kensington, where they were supported by Ted Carroll's Rock On Disco and the Sex Pistols.

**The Derelicts: Portobello Road W10!** Down Portobello Road, there was a 101'ers and Derelicts benefit gig for the unsuccessful campaign to save the Point café on Tavistock Road. The Derelicts' set is said to have contained 'Portobello' and 'Westway' songs; the former apparently consisting of the proto-punk chant: *'Portobello Road! Portobello Road! W10!'*

**London SS: Portobello Reds** Before the London SS practise group split into the Clash, the Damned and Generation X, they paraded through the market in different coloured day-glo leather coats, and had a song entitled 'Portobello Reds' (possibly referring to contraceptives or pills). In Marcus Gray's unofficial biography, *Last Gang In Town: The Story and Myth of The Clash*, the mythical track; accredited to Brian James (later of the Damned) and the unrelated Tony James (later of Chelsea and Generation X with Billy Idol, and Sigue Sigue Sputnik); becomes 'Fish' on the first Damned album. Although this theory has been dismissed by Brian James, the Damned guitarist does have a later Portobello song with his goth group, Lords of the New Church (see chapter 8).

**Sex Pistols: Anarchy on Lansdowne Road** When the Sex Pistols were in Lansdowne Studios on Lansdowne Road, first recording 'Anarchy in the UK' (not the single version) and composing 'Pretty Vacant', the Earl of Lonsdale pub, then Henekey's, on Westbourne Grove, became the punk local.

During a Henekey's session in the '76 punk summer of hate, the Flowers of Romance punk supergroup was formed by the future Pistol Sid Vicious and Viv Albertine (later of the Slits). Chrissie Hynde (later of the Pretenders) oversaw proto-punk proceedings, most importantly cutting Mick Jones' freak hairdo. As Mick Farren was inseminating Julie Burchill with pop vitriol along Westbourne Grove, whilst still sporting his.

As punk rock was happening on Portobello, across Westbourne Grove from Henekey's, the Virgin offices in Vernon Yard were occupied by followers of the cosmic hippy group Gong; regarding a dispute over the rights to the name. After the sit-in was resolved, as Mick Brown puts it, Richard Branson ushered the 'gypsy-like throng' of 'refugees from Gandalf's Garden' off the premises, frisking them for records and tapes concealed under kaftans, Afghan coats and pet goats.

**Virgin Frontline Reggae Rockers: The Pop War of Jenkins' Ear** Soon after he docked on Portobello, Branson had set sail for the Caribbean as the pop Admiral Vernon, to plunder Chris Blackwell's hitherto exclusive reggae domain and start the pop 'war of Jenkins' ear'. At the 1976 Reading festival, as well as 'the ineffable Gong', Mallard, and Supercharge, Virgin were promoting 'the Frontline in Jamaican music; U-Roy, the original Jamican toaster's 'Natty Rebel' and 'Dread Inna Babylon', and the Mighty Diamonds' 'Right Time'. They also signed Peter Tosh, the most militant Wailer, for 'Legalise It', and a distribution deal was struck with the dub producer Keith Hudson's Atra label.

Richard Branson's open-door hippy ethos came to an end in 1976, after the pop admiral's quarters at 19 Denbigh Terrace were stormed by the disaffected Atra crew; inquiring, in the time honoured tradition, after their share of the treasure. After the intervention of a window cleaner, Branson managed to escape to Vernon Yard in his underpants. Then a wiretapped meeting between the labels in Back-a-Yard, the Caribbean café at 301/3 Portobello Road, was raided by police *Keystone kops*-style. This resulted in another local court case, but, in the end, Branson failed to identify the accused. While he was still involved in everyday market life, the Virgin boss met his current wife, Joan (of the Templeman market trader family), when she was working in the Westbourne Grove antique sign shop Dodo.

**Escape from Planet Gong** In the prog rock years, when a Talibanesque convention about facial hair held sway, the King's Road punk rock entrepreneur Malcolm McLaren was unsurprisingly overlooked by Virgin when he did the record company rounds with the next big thing that Branson was looking for. However, although Branson agreed with his A&R man Simon Draper's opinion that punk was an 'indescribable noise', he became more and more interested in the pop phenomenon. As the punk movement evolved from underground cult into tabloid sensation, it began to appeal to his innate sense of pop pranksterism, as well as to his business sense.

**State of Independents: Rough Trade at 202 Kensington Park Road** The origin of independent (indy or indie) music, as we know it today, can be traced back to early 1976, when Geoff Travis returned from a record collecting tour of the States to set up his stall in Notting Hill (just down the hill from Vernon Yard, over the road from the Virgin restaurant Duveens). After his first shop in Harlesden fell through, the Rough Trade state of independents was founded when Travis moved into the hippy headshop at 202 Kensington Park Road (currently Cheeky Monkeys toyshop, between the clothes shops Sub Couture and Dispensary – run by JC of the former Virgin act, the Members).

Travis has recalled that this was the closest he could get in London to the bohemian atmosphere of the East Village and Haight Ashbury, as a suitable spot to listen to US punk and reggae all day. But Kensington Park Road's gentrification was still some way off; when Rough Trade arrived the area hadn't changed much since the 50s. As the punky reggae journalist Viv Goldman reminisced in the Rough Trade 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue of *Art Rocker* fanzine:

"That street was not a trendy street, it was a shabby block, a lot of old dears, and a grocery next door, probably an art gallery now, where people would get sarnies. It was more old style England, so Rough

Trade coming in there was quite a shock, like a new generation coming up. They had hi-tech files and it was like the future had arrived in a street which practically could be in an Ealing comedy.”

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Kensington Park Road was in the local Jewish quarter; and consequently hosted Oswald Mosley's fascist party's election office in 1959. During the 1976 Carnival riot, the Supersonic Hi-fi sound system was situated outside the new Rough Trade shop. In 2000, in spite of the road's girlpower gastro-fashion makeover, the northern end turned into a Carnival steaming murder scene.

Geoff Travis added that the old hippy headshop/printshop had “a good history of subculture and bohemianism”, when he began its punk takeover. Appropriately enough, 202 Kensington Park Road had been an S&M brothel that figured in the early 60s Jack the Stripper case; and, in Victorian times, the north end of Kensington Park Road was renowned for ‘a very undesirable music palace.’

The world's premier punk record shop and label are said to have been named, by the legendary co-founder Dutch Ken, either after the term for blue collar male prostitutes (closely aligned to the US definition of punk), a pulp novel, or a Canadian prog rock group associated with Dusty Springfield. In the 1977 hippy Portobello guide, it's explained as ‘an allusion to the predilections of punk lovers.’

The same source has 202 as the first British headshop, dating back to 1966. The headshop's Wild West 11 wagon wheel still adorned the front, and sandal and moccasin makers were operating on the premises in 1976 when Rough Trade ‘step forward with new wave and reggae’, ‘punk magazoons’, and their pre-punk logo.

**The 202'ers** Once inaugurated by a visit from the Ramones (pictures of which are by the counter in the new shop), at the time of their US independence day 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary gig at the Roundhouse, the shopfront became the hub hangout of the punk and reggae scene. Most, if not all, of the first Rough Trade customers were either starting a punk band or fanzine, or a reggae sound-system.

Other early celeb customers were Mick Jones of the Clash, the Pistols' Steve Jones, Johnny Rotten and his intimidating Rasta mates, the music journalists; Nick Kent (in his intimidating leather trousers), Viv Goldman (then the Island press officer and Geoff Travis's Ladbroke Grove flatmate), Caroline Coon (of Release and *Melody Maker*), John Ingham (who edited the first *Rough Trade Info* newsletter, as well as the Clash fanzine, and managed Generation X), Mark P (of *Sniffin' Glue*), Jon Savage (of *London's Outrage* fanzine and *Sounds*) and Jane Suck (also of *Sounds*). The latter has recalled being in the shop when Daniel Miller of Mute Records came in with his first DIY tape.

**The Clash: Hanging about down the market street** In punk psychogeography, if not in reality, the Clash formed in Portobello market, when Mick Jones, Paul Simonon and Glen Matlock of the Pistols bumped into Joe Strummer and told him they didn't think much of the '101'ers but thought he had punk potential. As recounted by Joe on the second Clash album ‘Give ‘Em Enough Rope’, in the Mott the Hoople homage ‘All The Young Punks’, he was: *‘hanging about down the market street... when I met some passing yobbos and we did chance to speak, I knew how to sing and they knew how to pose....’*

In other versions that came out over the years in interviews, the pivotal meeting took place on Ladbroke Grove, Ladbroke Road, Westbourne Grove, Golborne Road, in Shepherd's Bush, the Lisson Grove dole office, or it was a total fabrication to cover up the premeditated poaching of Strummer. By then, the hereditary punk rock local, Glen Matlock (whose mother hailed from Kensal New Town) had endorsed the proto-Clash as ‘4 square Portobello Road boys.’

**Passion is a Fashion: Against the tide of Denim** In Pat Gilbert's *Passion is a Fashion* Clash book, Paul Simonon recalls Joe and Mick being laughed at by rudeboys on Golborne Road, as they modelled his paint-splattered Jackson Pollock look. At the time of punk, according to the '77 hippy Portobello guide, ‘everywhere, like a blue tide, there is Denim.’ This was not only in the usual trouser form, but also shirts, coats, curtains and furniture. Around the Blenheim Crescent junction there were half a dozen denim shops, and the site of the Mau-mau bar was occupied by the Motor City jeans store. However, the hippies underestimated the threat posed to flares' domination by ‘last year's tight drainpipe fashion’.

**The Evening Standard Clash** As well as embodying the original post-skinhead/suedehead Clash image, Paul Simonon came up with the name, by flicking through the *Evening Standard* and finding the word ‘clash’ cropping up repeatedly in headlines (after they had toyed with the Phones, Mirrors, Outsiders, Psychotic Negatives, and the Weak Heartdrops). The first single artwork features 1964 mods and rockers reports, comparing the ‘clash of generations’ with the ‘clash of the rulers and ruled.’

The bass player also had the best local street cred of the group: Having attended Oxford Gardens infant school, when the Westway was under construction; Isaac Newton School on Lancaster Road (now a business course centre) and Wornington Road (now Kensington College), as Trellick Tower was being

built; and holding down a Saturday job on the market; he went to Byam Shaw art school on Campden Hill, and painted the first North Kensington car dump Clash backdrop.

The Clash first practised in Shepherd's Bush at 22 Davis Road, the squat of the future Slit Viv Albertine, then Bernie Rhodes installed them in their 'Rehearsal Rehearsals' studio in Camden. But the centre of the group's universe remained Ladbroke Grove. In the summer of '76, the last 101'ers residence, 42 Orsett Terrace, near Royal Oak, became the most celebrated/notorious punk squat when Joe and Palmolive were joined by Paul, Sid Vicious and Keith Levene (then of the Clash, later Public Image Limited). As living conditions at Orsett Terrace, in the record-breaking hot summer, inspired the early Clash number 'How Can I Understand the Flies?', Joe (as 'Albert Transom') recalled a visit:

'They led me down a steep stone stairway into the basement of an old Victorian ruin in west London. If there were 50 flies in there, there were a hundred, they walked across the room stooping to avoid the dense cloud... It was disgusting. I left before they could offer me some of the filth they were cooking up, some of which I had seen them picking up out of the road after the veg market closed up. When one of the marketers saw the lads sifting the rubbish they deliberately stamped on any whole fruits that they were leaving behind... I remember the Olympics were on and they had 8 televisions going because on one the picture worked but the sound didn't and vice versa.'

As Bernie Rhodes steered Mick Jones out of 60s punk garageland on to the streets, Mick wrote 'Janie Jones' whilst taking the rock'n'roll 31 bus, under the Westway, past the Chippenham, across Abbey Road and round the Roundhouse, to punk rock stardom. The inspiration for the 'Protex Blue' track is said to come from the condom machine in the Harrow Road Windsor Castle pub.

**London's Burning: 18 Flight Rock and the Sound of the Westway** *'Now I'm in the subway looking for the flat, this one leads to this block this one leads to that, the wind howls through the empty blocks looking for a home, but I run through the empty stone because I'm all alone.'* Joe wrote 'London's Burning', on his return to 42 Orsett Terrace, after watching the traffic from Mick's towerblock. The definitive North Kensington Clash anthem is also said to be influenced by the MC5's 'Motor City is Burning' (about the 1967 Detroit riots), the 1666 Great Fire of London, the Situationist 'Same Thing Day After Day' graffiti under the Westway, JG Ballard's *Crash* and *High Rise* novels, and speed.

Mick Jones has recently said; "The music came from the sound of the streets and the Westway." At the time, Joe summed up their ambivalent view of the psychogeography in the *NME* with: "We'd take amphetamines and storm round the bleak streets where there was nothing to do but watch the traffic lights. That's what 'London's Burning' is about." The group first promoted themselves with a graffiti campaign, featuring 'The Clash', 'Sign the Clash', and 'White Riot', on such London landmarks as the Westway, the BBC and Capital Radio buildings. The prime Clash pose location was under the Westway; where they were photographed by Pennie Smith and Adrian Boot on Acklam Road by the Free Shop, Ladbroke Grove, and the Westbourne Park footbridge.

After the '18 Flight Rock and the Sound of the Westway' *NME* feature by Barry Miles (of Pink Floyd previous), derived from 'The Sound of Young America' slogan of the Detroit Motor City Motown label, the Clash speed history was told by Tony Parsons in such speedy punk prose as:

'White Riot and the Sound of the Westway, the giant inner-city flyover and the futuristic backdrop for this country's first major race riot since 1959 (sic)... played with the speed of the Westway, a GBH treble that is as impossible to ignore as the police siren that opens the single or the alarm bell that closes it... a regulation of energy exerting a razor-sharp adrenalin control over their primal amphetaminated rush. It created a new air of tension added to the ever-present manic drive that has always existed in their music, the Sound of the Westway.'

**Towerblock Syndrome** In Tim Lott's 'Head On Clash' *Record Mirror* report, Paul reminisced about high-rise hooligan activity and being evacuated from the Wornington Road school (Kensington College), "because the top of Trellick Tower was crumbling." Lott adds: 'That was in North Kensington, Westway-land. Simonon went to school in the miserable shadow of Trellick Tower, the ugliest building in London. When will it fall?'

Mick Jones painted an even grimmer picture in the *NME*, telling Tony Parsons: "Each of these high-rise estates has got those places where kids wear soldiers' uniforms and get army drill. Indoctrination to keep them off the streets... and they got an artist to paint pictures of happy workers on the side of the Westway. Labour liberates and don't forget your place." In 'Up in Heaven' on 'Sandinista', Mick laments *'the towers of London, these crumbling blocks'*, asking *'how can anyone exist in such misery?'*

**This is the Modern World: The Punk Wastelandscape** Trellick Tower, the Westway and the surrounding urban wastelandscape were duly immortalised as punk London iconography in *Don Letts' Punk Rock Movie* Notting Hill Film Production, and Lech Kowalski's *DOA* Pistols film. As the Jam posed

on the cover of 'This Is The Modern World' under the Westway roundabout on Bramley Road, in mod homage to Colin MacInnes.

**The Squeeze (nothing to do with the Jools Holland group)** In the punk period Notting Hill film, *The Squeeze* (nothing to do with the Jools Holland group), Stacy Keech, as an alcoholic detective, and Freddie Starr, as his sidekick, search the area for a kidnapped girl. This turns into an extended pub crawl, featuring the militant reggae Apollo on All Saints Road, the Bevington Arms on Bevington Road (another pub rock venue; now the Carnival Films production office), the Bramley Arms on Freston Road (which is also in *The Lavender Hill Mob*, *Sid and Nancy*, etc; now part of the Chrysalis Building) – outside of which the shoot-out finalé takes place – and the early stages of the Carnival.

**West 10 Garageland** After a press preview gig in their Camden rehearsal studio, in front of Paul Simonon's West 10-land mural, the Clash made their London debut supporting the Pistols at the Screen on the Green in Islington. Charles Shaar Murray wrote of it: 'They are the kind of garage band who should be speedily returned to their garage, preferably with the motor running.' The next afternoon Joe, Paul and Bernie were on Ladbroke Grove for the start of the '76 Carnival riot.

**The 1976 Carnival Riot: Police and Thieves in the Street Scaring the Nation** In 1976, as Darcus Howe's militant Carnival committee and the Golborne 100 group (led by George Clark, the 1967 Summer Project saint-turned-anti-Carnival sinner) joined the fray, as well as the Clash, there were another 1,500 white men in uniform in Notting Hill. As the temperature rose, tempers were lost at what was then seen as an excessive police presence.

After an attempted arrest under the Westway, the inevitable clash of police and youths came to a soundtrack of the '76 Carnival hit, Junior Murvin's 'Police and Thieves' – *'in the streets, scaring the nation with their guns and ammunition'*; echoing the near civil war situation in Jamaica at the time, and homegrown football hooliganism. In *The Story of the Clash* in *The Armagideon Times* fanzine, Joe Strummer (as 'Albert Transom') recalled getting caught up in the first incident under the Westway, by Ladbroke Grove along Thorpe Close/Malton Mews. After a group of 'blue helmets sticking up like a conga line' went through the crowd, one was hit by a can, immediately followed by a hail of cans:

'The crowd drew back suddenly and the Notting Hill riot of 1976 was sparked. We were thrown back, women and children too, against a fence which sagged back dangerously over a drop. I can clearly see Bernie Rhodes, even now, frozen at the centre of a massive painting by Rabelais or Michelangelo... as around him a full riot breaks out and 200 screaming people running in every direction. The screaming started it all. Those fat black ladies started screaming the minute it broke out, soon there was fighting 10 blocks in every direction.'

As police charged across Ladbroke Grove, up Westbourne Park Road, Joe is said to have dived in to the Elgin pub (where he had recently been in residence with the 101'ers) for a few swift pints. Then he and Paul attempted to join in, but they ended up in a shot by both sides situation; hassled by police and hustled by black youths. As Joe told Janet Street-Porter on the *London Weekend Show*: "We got searched by policemen looking for bricks, and later on we got searched by Rasta looking for pound notes in our pockets." Joe later recalled failing to set a car alight with a box of matches.

**Don Letts' Wild West 10 Walk** Meanwhile, on Portobello Road, Don Letts (the future Clash associate film director) was walking into pop history towards Acklam Road – passing the Black People's Information Centre sound-system/disco unit, the site of Lord Kitchener's Valet and *Frendz*, hippies looking out of the upstairs windows of 305-9, and a line of policemen – as Rocco Macaulay began taking his famous series of pictures of the next charge.

**Rocco Macaulay's History of England** Macaulay's shot of police reaching the Westway (at the site of the Portobello Green arcade) duly became the back cover of 'The Clash' album, the 'White Riot' tour backdrop projection, a badge and enduring shirt design. Don Letts' Wild West 10 walk first appeared on the sleeve of the 'Black Market Clash' mini-LP in 1980, and most recently to promote 'Dread Meets Punk Rockers Uptown' (Don's compilation of the militant reggae he played at the Roxy punk club in Covent Garden), and on the cover of his autobiography.

The reggae promoter Wilf Walker remembers Acklam Road in '76, as a spiritual awakening of black Britain: "It was incredible in those days to be in a sea of black faces. As a black person, that kind of solidarity we don't experience anymore... We described it as a demo of solidarity and peace within the black community. I can't imagine what it would have been like for white people... '76 showed the strength of feeling, reggae was raging in those days, young blacks weren't into being happy natives, putting on a silly costume and dancing in the street, in the same street where we were getting done for sus every day."

**Dread Meets Punk Rockers Uptown Top Ranking** As the riot raged under the Westway, alongside the hoardings sprayed with 'Same thing day after day – Tube – Work... How much more can you take', with black youths being driven towards All Saints Road, George Butler recalls seeing a drunk stagger between the police and youth lines on Tavistock Road (now the pedestrianised square) and hostilities temporarily ceasing until he staggered off. That night, Joe, Paul and Sid Vicious were warned off by a black woman when they tried to enter the Metro youth club on Tavistock Road.

After John Firth, the *Sun* 'man on the spot' in the riot, described 'how I was kicked at black disco', Wilf Walker's Acklam Hall punky reggae party began with a Black Defence Committee benefit, 'in aid of Carnival defendants'; featuring Spartacus R, the Sukuya steel band, and 'Clash' were billed (with no 'The') but didn't actually play. As Joe told Tony Parsons: "It wasn't our riot, though we felt like one."

**White Riot, I wanna riot, a riot of my own** Inspired by black anarchy in the UK, as much as by the Sex Pistols, Joe wrote the lyrics of the first Clash single: '*White riot, I wanna riot, white riot, a riot of my own, black man gotta lot of problems but they don't mind throwing a brick, white people go to school where they teach you how to be thick, and everybody's doing just what they're told to, and nobody wants to go to jail.*' Quite clearly, meaning that he felt excluded from the black riot, but, at the same time, empathy with the cause. Nevertheless, the song was misinterpreted as a call for whites to riot against blacks 1958 style, by a students union; on the whole, white hooligan youth got the intended meaning.

'White Riot' is also thought to have been influenced by the *Revolutionary Songbook* of the Weathermen US hippy terrorist group, via Bernie Rhodes. But, as Joe explained his consumer society critique to the *NME*: "The only thing we're saying about blacks is that they've got their problems and they're prepared to deal with them, but white men, they just ain't... they've got stereos, drugs, hi-fis, cars."

**Under Heavy Manners: Militant Tendency** Although the Clash already existed, it can be argued that they were a pop culture echo of the 1976 riot, like *Absolute Beginners* was of 1958. Marcus Gray calls it 'the catalyst that brought to the surface a lot of disparate elements already present.' Not least, they got into reggae, feeding dub effects, 'heavy manners' stencil graffiti and the apocalyptic rhetoric – if not the hairstyle – into the mix. As the new militant reggae tendency of Prince Far-I's 'Under Heavy Manners', Tapper Zukie's 'Rockers', Culture, Mighty Diamonds, Joe Gibbs, Big Youth and Ras Michael, complemented punk rock, the Clash made the punk/reggae crossover – to varying degrees of success.

After their version of 'Police and Thieves' turned lovers rock into punk dub, Lee Perry produced the original version of 'Complete Control', the football chant dub third single which appeared in a sound-system sleeve. They also covered Toots and the Maytals' 'Pressure Drop', Willie Williams' 'Armageddon Time', and Eddy Grant's 'Police on my Back'. But most pundits agree that the best Clash reggae track is the original 5<sup>th</sup> single, 'White Man in Hammersmith Palais' – although the lyrics recount a lack of racial harmony at the west London punky reggae party.

**Police and Youth in the Grove** The *NME*'s reggae buff Penny Reel cites Dennis Brown's 'Wolf and Leopard', 'Whip them Jah' and 'Have No Fear' as portents of 'War inna Babylon', played by Lloyd Coxsone under the Westway and Observer Hi-fi on Kensington Park Road during the '76 Carnival. The reggae riot response saw the Pioneers lament the 'Riot in Notting Hill' on Trojan, while the Trenchtown label came up with 'Police Try Fe Mash Up Jah Jah Children' by Mike Durane. The Morpheus label had their own militant take on 'Police and Thieves', 'Police and Youth in the Grove'/'Babylon A Button Ladbroke Dub' by Have Sound Will Travel, promoted with a punky riot headline flyer.

**Three Babylon tried to make I and I run** Aswad had already recorded 'Three Babylon' – '*Three Babylon tried to make I and I run, they come to have fun with their long truncheons*', about a police incident under the Westway before the '76 riot. Delroy Washington's 'The Streets of Ladbroke Grove' was described by the Situationist Wise brothers as 'a Rasta Jarrow march set to music'.

**Let's Loot the Supermarket Again like we did last summer** At the time of a late 70s Carnival (probably '76), Mick Farren (of the Deviants and *IT*) told *Zigzag* he was in America, "sitting in Lake Tahoe", thinking of covering Frank Zappa's 'Trouble Coming Every Day', "and somebody turned on the 10 O'clock news, and there was my local liquor store getting looted, and there was the local tube station with a police car burning outside."

Farren's cover of the Zappa track, about the 1965 Watts riots, appeared on 'Vampires Stole My Lunch Money', featuring Chrissie Hynde of the Pretenders (who was then the flatmate of Farren's ex wife and fellow *International Times* writer, Joy, on Ledbury Road). The Notting Hill riot inspired 'Let's Loot the Supermarket Again (like we did last summer)' on his 'Screwed Up' Stiff EP, after Farren had predicted/called for punk rock in the *NME*.

The freak scene was generally enthused with an un-commercial anti-pop proto-punk ethic, and the first art school punks were originally referred to as freaks. In drug culture, freak and punk were much the

same thing – mostly beer and speed. The only differences were generational, style cultural and musical. Or freak was anti-pop rock while punk was anti-rock pop.

Back in 1972, Charles Shaar Murray described the Pink Fairies as 'classic British punk rock', and their 1973 album 'City Kids' has a punky graffiti and ephemera-strewn sleeve by Boss Goodman. Often compared with the New York Dolls, and cited by Johnny Thunders and co as a major influence, the Fairies' thrashing riffs and shambolic disregard of musical convention still lives up to its legend of 'hideous primitive energy'. I saw the last incarnation of the Fairies, but can only remember it being a pub rock experience.

The Fairies were on the bus to the 1976 Mont de Marsan punk rock festival. However, they were described by Caroline Coon (of Release and Oz previous, then of *Melody Maker*) as 'a laid-back mass of tangled, flowing locks, a knitted hat and faded denim', still retaining 'their flower child aroma.' After the Clash pulled out, in solidarity with the Pistols who were banned for beating up Nick Kent, the French festival was more pub than punk rock anyway. And it was left to Nick Lowe to act as pub/punk rock intermediary, ripping T-shirts with Rat Scabies of the Damned.

**The End of the Time of the Hawklords** In *The Time of the Hawklords* sci-fantasy novel, by Michael Moorcock and Michael Butterworth (disowned by the former), Hawkwind's post-apocalypse HQ was 'the yellow van commune' at 271 Portobello Road (which still has a large hippy-style number; now the Portobello Hot Food takeaway). It was described as: 'adjacent to the burnt-out shell of the legendary Mountain Grill restaurant – the supplier of good, plentiful food to many a starving freak who roamed the inhuman streets of the period.' The previous tenants of 271, who painted the front in geometric hippy designs, were 'outlaw publishers of underground pamphlets, friends of Hawkwind who had been hideously killed by marauding gangs of puritan vigilantes.'

Back in 1968, Mellissa's café, on the old corner of Tavistock Crescent and Portobello, was sprayed with the proto-punk anti-Beatles graffiti 'All You Need Is Dynamite'. In the Hawklords book, the post-apocalypse kids gather outside 271, at the Tavistock/Portobello junction (now a pedestrianised square), to remind Hawkwind to play for their sonic healing. Whereas in rock real-time, when the book came out in 1976, the kids were telling them to stop.

Nevertheless, Hawkwind carry on prog rocking regardless into our own time. As they performed space rituals at Stonehenge and Glastonbury, they took punk and acidhouse on board, like rock morlocks in HG Wells' timemachine. And many punk rockers, most notably Johnny Rotten, have since admitted to being Hawkwind fans. In 2006, they reappeared in a prog rock time warp under the Westway, as Space Ritual (without Dave Brock) at the Inn on the Green.

**The Punk Portobello Hotel** During the Portobello Hotel's punk period, Patti Smith, Nico, the Sex Pistols and Jean Rhys held court at 22 Stanley Gardens, as staff dressed in original Viv Westwood outfits. The punk Portobello Hotel porter Allan Jones, who also worked at McLaren and Westwood's King's Road Sex shop, was famously arrested for wearing a Sex Cowboys T-shirt. Diana Athill described him as 'a faun-like being', in a pink Sex T-shirt with swansdown round the sleeves and un-zipped slits across the chest, when she visited the novelist Jean Rhys during her late Portobello Hotel punk phase.

The Acklam Hall reggae promoter Wilf Walker, who also had a stint as the Portobello Hotel night manager, recalls his time there less fondly: "They treated you, I won't say as an equal, relatively like an equal. The thing about the Portobello Hotel was everyone thought it was their home. The staff were people who weren't just normal hotel types, and there was a 24 hour bar restaurant."

**Portobello Patti Smith** Patti Smith posed in her room at the Portobello in a Clash Carnival riot T-shirt, for Pennie Smith; as she appeared on stage with the Clash at the ICA and took Paul Simon on tour with her. Byron Rogers, of the *Telegraph*, wrote of his audience there with the New York romantic punk poet: 'here the pop press sits at the feet its visionary.' As recounted by Byron, 'there had been many hotels. But this one, behind Notting Hill Gate, was her favourite.' Steve Lake's critical *Melody Maker* interview with the Patti Smith Group in the hotel begins with the guitarist Lenny Kaye threatening: "You'll make a big splash down on Portobello Road." In 'Looking For You', Patti makes a local shout-out with the line '*from the Portobello Road to the Port of Marseilles.*'

**Sniffin' Glue: Despatches from the Punk Frontline** When Patti Smith played Hammersmith Odeon, accompanied by the reggae toaster Tapper Zukie, the Rough Trade stall in the foyer sold the New York photo-strip comic-fanzine *Punk*. The Rough Trade shop duly became the mailing address/office of London's photocopied answer, *Sniffin' Glue*; after the first punk fanzine's original west London base was the Rock On stall on Golborne Road.

The dispatches from the punk frontline of the Deptford bank clerk Mark P (Perry) inspired hundreds of Xeroxed titles produced by punk fans; as opposed to uncritical fan newsletters (although it was a thin

line that we all crossed). At best punk fanzines were in the tradition of radical pamphlets, at worst DIY style mags or *Big Issue* prototypes.

**The Anarchy in the UK Christmas Party** The Christmas party at the end of the Pistols' 'Anarchy tour' (thrown by Caroline Coon and John Ingham) was on Cambridge Gardens; where the Situationist Chris Gray had come up with the 'unpleasant pop group' idea back in 1968. Jon Savage described the Pistols, Johnny Thunders' Heartbreakers, the Clash and Damned drawing up sofa battlelines, 'staring at each other with barely veiled hostility', and the Clash roadie Roadent as 'the living embodiment of obnoxiousness.' The Heartbreakers manager Lee Childers recalled finding Sid Vicious at the party, crying over a Jim Reeves record, as he was about to replace Glen Matlock as the Pistols' bass player.

**1977: The Punky Reggae Party** *'The Wailers will be there, the Slits, the Feelgoods, the Clash... rejected by society, treated with impunity, protected by their dignity... It's a punky reggae party, we hope it will be hearty.'* Bob Marley and the Wailers 'Punky Reggae Party 1977

**Bob Marley and the Wailers' Babylondon Exile** After Bob Marley was shot in the run up to the December '76 'Smile Jamaica' concert (probably by a supporter of the Jamaican Labour Party, as the gig was promoted by the rival People's National Party), the Wailers came to England for the punky reggae party. During their Babylondon exile they recorded their most commercial, chart breakthrough album 'Exodus', in the Island Studios on Basing Street.

By all accounts, Bob Marley was initially sceptical of punk rock, and more inclined towards prog: In his exile on King's Road, at the height of punk, as Chris Salewicz puts it in *Songs of Freedom*, 'at first Bob strongly resisted what he perceived to be simply another manifestation of Babylon.' Don Letts recalls being chastised for wearing bondage trousers, when he was managing the King's Road punk shop Boy, with Bob asking him: "What yuh wan' look like all them nasty punk people feh?"

However, in Notting Hill, during the 'Exodus' sessions, he was won over to the cause. Don says he assured him that the Clash were reggae fans, not 'crazy baldheads', and the Island press officer Viv Goldman lent him 'The Clash' album, featuring Junior Murvin's 'Police and Thieves' produced by Lee Perry. This resulted in Bob, Lee Perry and Aswad recording 'Punky Reggae Party' as the flipside of 'Jamming', the Wailers' first top 10 single.

Over the years, 'Punky Reggae Party' has stirred up mixed feelings in the media: Whereas, Chris Salewicz cites it as 'the definitive celebration of the punk-reggae fusion', Lloyd Bradley dismisses the whole concept. In *Bass Culture*, the former *NME* reggae reporter doesn't hold back any punches out of respect for Bob, deriding the lyrics as lamentable, trite and vapid, and putting it down as a cynical cash-in by Island and a prime example of the phoney alliance epitomised by the Notting Hill scene. Having sided with the latter take, it sounded alright to me on Portobello the other day, relatively speaking.

In spite of his righteous reputation, Bob Marley had a humorous side; on Basing Street he's recalled playing practical jokes on Aswad, like hiding table-footballs and encouraging them to believe it was Chris Blackwell persecuting them.

**Notting Hill Babylon Exodus: Traffic Jamming** On April 6 1977, Bob and the Wailers bassist Aston 'Family Man' Barrett were returning to the King's Road BMW HQ, after a Basing Street 'Jamming' session, when they found themselves held up in traffic on Ladbroke Grove, outside 101 Ladbroke Road – Notting Hill police station. Bob and Family Man were inevitably found to be in possession of Cannabis, and interviewed for the Notting Hill Babylon files.

**Bob Marley Dread Zone** Other Bob Marley associated sites in the area are numbers 8 and 18 on the old reggae frontline, All Saints Road, the Mangrove restaurant (now Ruby & Sequoia) and the Apollo pub (now studios, where All Saints the group formed); the Globe bar and the house of the Wailer chef Trevor Bow on Talbot Road; the legendary House of Dread Rasta centre on Lancaster Road (and/or bordering George Melly's garden on St Lawrence Terrace, according to *West 10* magazine); Portobello Green – where he was in attendance during the '77 Carnival; his wife Rita, of the I-Threes, lived on Basing Street, his son Julian also lives locally, and he played football on Wormwood Scrubs.

Trevor Bow was described in the music press as the Sons of Jah 'guitarist/percussionist/lead singer/songwriter', and 'close Marley confidant.' Sons of Jah also featured the Wailers' Aston 'Family Man' and Carlton Barrett. (Aston currently has over 50 children, and has been pursuing a £60 million royalties claim against Island and the Marley estate to support them.) The closely related King Sounds and the Israelites rivalled Sons of Jah as the Carnival stalwart All Saints/Ladbroke Grove reggae group. In recent years, various tenuous Wailers/Sons of Jah could be found manning Red's Rasta stall/cab office at 253 Portobello Road (opposite the Market Bar), on the corner of Lancaster Road.



**Sex Pistols: God save history, god save your mad parade... 'cause tourists are money** ('God Save The Queen' 1977) After Richard Branson's first attempt to sign the Sex Pistols in late '76 was rebuffed by EMI, who then regarded Virgin as unprofessional 'Earl's Court hippies', he kept trying. There then followed much frigg'in in the riggin', as Branson became increasingly desperate to get the Pistols on board and they, or at least Malcolm McLaren, avoided the hippy press gangs.

Punk, of course, originated on King's Road but, like the swinging 60s, maybe everything, it ended up on Portobello Road; in the uneasy late 70s alliance of Branson's hippy entrepreneurship and McLaren's pop Situationism, that became the blueprint of 80s pop culture. In the run-up to the Queen's silver jubilee, McLaren turned up at 19 Denbigh Terrace, to sign the Sex Pistols to Virgin. As, by then, Branson was the only record company boss left prepared to promote their certain number 1 second single, 'God Save The Queen', in time for jubilee day.

**Pistols on Portobello** In the first Virgin publicity stunt for the single (which they re-released after A&M withdrew the original), on May 24 1977 Branson sent the group out of Vernon Yard to the off-license. John, Paul, Steve and Sid duly posed for Barry Plummer under a 'Long Live The Queen' banner, outside the Finch's or F-wine shop at 120 Kensington Park Road.

In pop psychogeographical coincidence, these premises, currently a Paul Smith clothes shop, are next door to the west London Agent Provocateur lingerie shop of Joe Corre, the son of McLaren and Viv Westwood. (This corner gained further pop notoriety from Robbie Williams' millennium stay round the back in Grove House.) On the way back to Vernon Yard, along Westbourne Grove, the Pistols were photographed being questioned by a suspiciously longhaired policeman; as featured on the 'Never Mind the Bollocks – You're Rotten' badge.

**The Jubilee Boat Trip** Virgin's next punk promo prank was the Sex Pistols' Thames boat trip on the Queen's silver jubilee day, June 7 1977. John Varnom, who jumped ship from Virgin to the Pistols, managed to hire the boat by saying it was for one of their German electronic groups. On the voyage, launched from Vernon Yard on Portobello, in the defining moment of the punk rock revolution, Branson stood next to McLaren at the helm as the band played 'God Save The Queen' and 'Anarchy In The UK' alongside the Houses of Parliament, after a militant reggae disco.

In *The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle* novelisation of the Pistols film, Michael Moorcock re-enacted the jubilee boat-trip as a sci-fantasy terrorist attack on London; with his 'musician-assassin' character augmenting the Pistols on rocket-launcher. Although Branson's commitment to the punk cause fell short of getting arrested with McLaren and co, he turned up at Bow Street as a character witness for the Pistols manager. 9 years later, he took another Thames boat-trip, on his record-breaking speedboat, the Virgin Atlantic Challenger 2, standing next to Margaret Thatcher.

**The Punky Rockabilly Party** In the silver jubilee patriotic backlash against punk, the Pistols were thrown out of the previously pro-punk Portobello Hotel on Stanley Gardens. As punks replaced West Indian hustlers as the object of the Teds' wrath in the '77 rock'n'roll revival, the Pistols drummer Paul Cook was attacked in Shepherd's Bush. In another '58 riot echo, King's Road hosted a series of punks v Teds football-style mini-riots. The rock'n'roll strands were rejoined in the punky rockabilly party, as Johnny Rotten modelled McLaren and Westwood's Let It Rock Ted look, featuring drape coat and brothel creepers, whilst listening to reggae.

**Pretty Vacant: We're so pretty... you'll always find us out to lunch** The third Pistols single, 'Pretty Vacant'; which was composed by the original bassist Glen Matlock in Lansdowne Studios during the 'Anarchy' session; was released in July '77, in a smashed empty picture frame sleeve. The Pistols designer Jamie Reid says, that with a few hours notice from McLaren to get the artwork to Virgin, he bought the frame in the art shop round the corner of Portobello and Westbourne Grove, and smashed the glass as he went into Vernon Yard.

The Situationist 'Nowhere buses', from the back cover of the sleeve, recently reappeared on Portobello, on the Oxford Gardens corner, to promote a jeans store. Although the lyrics, '*We're so pretty, oh so pretty, vacant, and we don't care, got no reason, it's all too much, you'll always find us out to lunch*', come from the King's Road Pistols period, they've since taken on more psychogeographical significance to Portobello Road.

Jamie Reid (who had been in the pro-Situationist *Suburban Press*) always addressed the Virgin boss as Mr Branson, rather than Richard as hippy etiquette required, while the equally radical Pistols PA Sophie Richmond wrote gleefully of 'Mr Pickle in a panic' and complained about the others 'going over to Virgin'. By then, 'Roadent' (Steve Connolly) and 'Boogie' (John Tiberi), from the Clash/101'ers crew, had boarded McLaren's doomed Portobello pirate vessel.

Malcolm McLaren is said to have become a near permanent fixture at Vernon Yard; waiting outside Branson's first floor office, ready to argue about royalties, royalty, artwork, his film ideas, or whatever had come into his head at the time; being over-friendly with staff, and snubbing Virgin directors. Branson, however, claims not to have disliked the Pistols manager and, more believably, that he enjoyed the challenge of not being ripped off by him. Sid Vicious also frequented Branson's Vernon Yard office, to hustle money for drugs.

**Sid and Nancy: The punk house of horrors** The punk house of horrors, 8 Pindock Mews, off Sutherland and Warwick Avenues in Maida Vale (under the page 59 number in the *A to Z*), was acquired for Sid Vicious by the secretary of Russ Meyer (who was then working on the Pistols film), the week of the '77 Carnival riot. Malcolm McLaren reputedly okayed taking up the 7 year lease, to 1984, saying Sid would be dead by then.

In Alex Cox's 1986 film *Sid And Nancy: Love Kills*, Gary Oldman as Sid headbutts what is now the Chrysalis/Heart fm Building on Freston Road. 'The Old Mahon' pub scenes in the Bramley Arms on the corner (also now part of the Chrysalis Building), recreated the punk Earl of Lonsdale/Henekey's, while Malcolm McLaren's Oxford Street office was above the pub.

**Never Mind the Bollocks Here's the Sex Pistols at Notting Hill Gate** In his most controversial punk prank, Richard Branson posed with a 'Cold Sex Pistols Ice Cream' placard, to promote the 'Never Mind The Bollocks Here's The Sex Pistols' album, in the Virgin shop at 130 Notting Hill Gate. After which, the premises were raided by police regarding his 'Bollocks' display. Branson won the subsequent court case, brought against the Nottingham Virgin shop under the Indecent Advertisements Act, after John Mortimer (from the trials of Oz and Branson's *Student* magazine) called an English professor to define what the police were talking.

**Sniffin' Glue and Spiral Scratch** As the Clash appeared on the cover of the first *Sniffin' Glue* of '77, in front of a 'Parents Warned Over Glue Sniffing' *West London Evening News* billboard, Mark P founded the independent punk label Step Forward with the Pistols' promoter Miles Copeland. After the release of the Buzzcocks' 'Spiral Scratch' and the Desperate Bicycles' EPs on their own labels, the backyard extension of the Rough Trade shop at 202 Kensington Park Road (formerly a sandal workshop) became the world distribution centre of independent punk labels, fanzines, and reggae pre releases.

**Alternative TV** As the Clash signed to CBS, Mark Perry formed his own band, Alternative TV, after meeting Alex Ferguson (the then more famous punk guitarist, who was also in Psychic TV) in the Rough Trade shop. ATV (later the Good Missionaries) were the first post-punk DIY avant-garde indie band, at times merging into the indie/Industrial records of Genesis P Orridge's Throbbing Gristle (TG, later PTV), and, with Here & Now, often making undisguised street hippy/freak echoes.

**Ripped & Torn** Tony D (Drayton), of Glasgow's *Ripped & Torn* fanzine, wrote of visiting the shop with Sandy Robertson (of *White Stuff* fanzine and *Sounds*) to listen to 'The Ramones' album, before going to see Generation X and Sham 69 at the Roxy in Covent Garden. When *Ripped & Torn* relocated to London soon after, Tony used 202 Kensington Park Road as his postal address, as he took up the mantle from Mark P and set the pattern for a lot of the 80s music press.

**Acklam Hall: The Neighbourhood Punk Youth Club** In a *Ripped & Torn* review of a punk gig under the Westway at Acklam Hall (on the site of Neighbourhood nightclub), featuring Sham 69, Chelsea, the Lurkers and the Cortinas, the venue was described as 'functional and dull, and slightly oppressive in its size and stark design, with only a '1977' in cut-out red paper stuck up behind the stage to show that this was a punk concert and not some youth club meeting.'

**In 1977 Knives in West 11** 'In 1977', the Clash's answer to Culture's 'Two Sevens Clash', there are 'Knives in West 11, it ain't so lucky to be rich, stenguns in Knightsbridge... No Elvis, Beatles or the Rolling Stones in 1977... 1978', up to '1984.' The most important literary influence on the Clash has to be George Orwell, who like them set out from Portobello to go *Down and Out*. From the 101'ers, and the early boiler-suited prole rebel Clash look, through the '1977' countdown to 1984, and the Orwellian imagery of 'City of the Dead', 'Remote Control' and 'Working for the Clampdown'.

**Two Sevens Clash: Black Anarchy in the UK** In 1977, the reality, as the Clash and Slits' 'White Riot' tour took the '76 riot backdrop projection around the country; causing a series of Ted echo mini-riots; there was another real Carnival riot in Notting Hill. This one was attended by Bob Marley, who was on Acklam Road at Lloyd Coxson's sound-system. And reporters from the underground paper *International Times* (which was then briefly revived at 118 Talbot Road) were there, to record the end of peace and love in their 'Fear and Loathing in W11' riot special:

'But through it all, slicing through the crowds like shoals of baby sharks, came the kids, came the kids, the forgotten ones, using their irrelevance to maximum effect, moving in packs of up to a hundred, fast

and determined, grabbing everything they passed, snapping camera straps from clenched fists, handbags, pockets, jackets, ornaments, vanishing into the solid mass of the throng... Karma. The dark side of anarchy, mutant children generating panic for the hell of it and sharing the same mind-blistering sweetness in the results. Some of them were only 10 years old. It was the revolution. Unplanned, uncaring and without generals, the black kids were having a revolution. No surprise. In the towerblock prisoncamps of the working-class, white punks are Xeroxing nihilism with their 'No Future' muzak turned up full blast. In the ghetto, when the Carnival slips the leash, black punks tear up the present.'

Along Portobello Road on the first night, *IT* reported on the scene outside the hippy pub, Finch's (the Duke of Wellington at 179): 'Kids were kicking in the shutters of the pawnbrokers, across the road, outside the pub, a hundred tipling hippies watched with nervous interest. The kids ripped down the shutters, and smashed the glass until the shop hung open like an empty chocolate box and rings and bracelets disappeared into the night. There was a long lull as the crowd gathered round the broken theatre waiting for the next act. And then it came. To the derisory applause of the mob the police arrived under the glare of NBC TV lights to take their positions like an amateur chorus.'

On the second day, trouble flared up again after the procession finished, outside the 253 hippy market at the junction of Portobello and Lancaster Road. Meanwhile, under the Westway, the *Kensington Post* reporter at the scene Neil Sargent wrote: 'As reggae music belted out from speakers stacked on the north side of Acklam Road, the latest punch up began to move underneath the flyover to a patch of land which usually houses a happy hippy market.' Then Sargent was attacked by a black youth, and rescued by the Clash photographer Rocco Macaulay.

In the *IT* report: 'The kids had gathered at the Westway, scene of last year's victorious battle and by 9 o'clock it had become a maelstrom, sucking in curious whites and spitting them out, robbed and battered. Darkness fell and roaming camera lights turned the packed heads into a macabre spot-dance competition in the ballroom of violence. Police blocked all but one exit road and lined the motorway and railroad that swung overhead. Wall-flowers at the dance of death. By the time the PA system shut down the screaming roar of the riot had made it irrelevant.'

In *The Clash Songbook*, the backdrop of 'White Riot' is a picture of the Lewisham anti-NF riot that happened just before the '77 Carnival. 'Police and Thieves' got the '76 Notting Hill riot picture; 'London's Burning' a towerblock-fence/1666 Great Fire painting montage; and 'City of the Dead' was illustrated by a grainy shot of the Warwick estate across the Westway.

The post '77 riot issue of *Zigzag* featured a right-on anti-NF rant by Tony Parsons, Danny Baker on Sham 69, the Clash in Belgium, the *Zigzag* founder Peter Frame's punk rock family tree, Robin Banks on Steel Pulse, and Motörhead interviewed by Kris Needs.

**The Slits: Anarchy at Holland Park School** After supporting the Pistols and Clash, the Slits ended '77 playing an anarchic Christmas party at Holland Park School, where the singer Ari was officially still a pupil, filmed by Don Letts, their onetime manager. Arianna Up is the daughter of Nora Springer, the German publishing heiress, ex of Hendrix and Chris 'Motorbikin' Spedding, currently Mrs Johnny Rotten.

The first Slits guitarist Kate Korus went on to the Raincoats and the Mo-dettes, and was succeeded by Viv Albertine (formerly of Sid Vicious's Flowers of Romance); the bassist Tessa Pollit had previously been in the Castrators; the drummer Palmolive (Joe Strummer's ex) also went on to the Raincoats and was succeeded by Budgie (later of the Banshees), and Bruce Smith (of the Pop Group).

**The Raincoats: Post-punk Girlpower** As the independent, political/arty, anti-rock side of punk rock became focused at Rough Trade, it was most definitively represented by the Raincoats. Like ATV, the mostly female anti-dirty mac brigade formed in the shop in '77, when the singer/bassist Gina Birch (from Nottingham) and singer/guitarist/shop worker Ana de Silva recruited the guitarist, Ross Crichton (previously of Harrow Road's Lightning Records, and the husband of the current shop manager Jude), and the drummer, Nick Turner; for a benefit gig at the Tabernacle in Powis Square. Then they merged with the Slits, as Kate Korus and Palmolive were both briefly members.

**Rough Trade US Reggae Round-up** As Steve Montgomery, another original Rough Trader and Freston Road squatter, founded Rough Trade San Francisco, one of his first tasks was to introduce the US punk scene to reggae in *Search & Destroy* fanzine (which became *Re/Search*). From the Rough Trade reggae mail-order catalogue, he recommended Tapper Zukie's 'Man Ah Warrior' (on Patti Smith's label) and 'New Star' (pressed by Rough Trade), Dr Alimantado's 'Slavery Let I Go' and 'Born For A Purpose' (the first release of the Greensleeves label, then on Uxbridge Road, later Goldhawk Road; also recommended by Johnny Rotten, and Joe Strummer in 'Rudie Can't Fail').

Montgomery predicted the decline of star DJs like Dillinger and Big Youth, and the rise of groups such as Aswad, Matumbi and Merger, whilst also pointing US punks in the direction of Joe Gibbs' 'Africa Dub

Volumes', Augustus Pablo's 'King Tubby Meets the Rockers Uptown', Blackbeard's 'Strictly Dubwise', 'Forward Onto Zion' by the Abyssinians (from Blenheim Crescent), Reggae Regulars, Dennis Brown, Sly Dunbar, Tradition, Ras Michael and the Sons of Negus, the Ethiopians and Birmingham's Steel Pulse.

**Motörhead: No Sleep Till Hammersmith** Off the reggae Frontline, All Saints Road, was then the unlikely residence of Lemmy of Motörhead, the heavy punk rocker previously of Hawkwind. After Motörhead's regular Hammersmith Odeon gigs, Lemmy occasionally slept in St Luke's Mews; where his neighbours included Joan Armatrading, Chet Baker, Richie Havens and Marsha Hunt. His Portobello roadcrew featured DikMik of Hawkwind, a biker called Goat, and Mikkelson, the legendary black All Saints hells angel who died in a police related incident. Miranda Davies, who moved into the Motörhead squat, recalls the estate agent being too frightened to show anyone around before 3pm. In '77, Lemmy told *Zigzag's* Kris Needs of a typical day in the life of the king of speed:

"I don't know if you've had experience of these people, they come round, 'I wanna buy some speed', and you say, 'I haven't got any', so he sits there for 4 hours in your sitting room saying nothing, just mumbling at yer. After a while we said, 'Listen, man, why don't you leave', and he said, 'No, man, you don't understand the cosmicness of it', and we said, 'No, man, you should leave! Yeah, leave! Get out man!' And he says, 'Now don't get uptight', so we called Phil (the second Motörhead drummer, 'Philthy Animal' Taylor) and he grabs him and drags him to the door and flings him out. Then the guy kicks the door down. Phil beats me to it. We raced to the door, kicked him all the way down the mews and left him in a pool of water. He came up 2 weeks later and apologised for hurting Phil's hand." Philthy Animal Taylor duly completed Motörhead's 1977 tour, in spite of breaking his hand in this incident.

**Lemmy: Ice Cold in the Alex** Usually, when off the road, Lemmy could be found on the fruit machine of the Princess Alexandra pub at 95 Portobello Road – now the Portobello Gold bar. Then more commonly renowned as the Alex, the bikers and National Front pub-cum-speed dispensary, this was a market local founded as a rock hangout in the early 70s by Mick Farren, Boss Goodman, Lemmy and Steve Took, that was also resorted to by other members of Hawkwind, Pink Fairies, Thin Lizzy, the Pistols, Clash, Damned, Ramones and Stray Cats.

**Status Quo: Rock Antiques Portobello Roadshow** After appearing in *Beachboys in London* in 1966, the Alex acquired the less cool distinction of being in Status Quo's 'Rockin' All Over The World' video in 1977. As they surfed through market on a tide of denim, pretending to play on the back of a truck, George Butler recalls narrowly avoiding being in it as he left the Alex. Quo also appeared in Powis Square, and I'm afraid this wasn't just a one-off Portobello headbanging connection, as their frontman Francis Rossi was another local; they were also in attendance on Basing Street in 1984 for the recording of Band Aid's 'Do they know it's Christmas?'

**Acid-Punk Lightning Raiders** Having recorded the second Stiff single, 'Between the Lines', the Pink Fairies came to some sort of conclusion as Twink and the Fairies at the second Mont de Marsan punk festival. Twink released a solo single entitled 'The Psychedelic Punkaroo', and Duncan Sanderson formed the 'acid-punk' Lightning Raiders; with Liz Taylor's son Michael Wilding on sax, Andy Allen (of the post-Pistols Professionals), and George Butler. The latter local pub rock stalwart has, at one time or another, drummed with most local bands from the Deviants to the Clash, and beyond.

The reggae promoter Wilf Walker remembers becoming friends with the heavy metal group UFO (who had included Larry Wallis of the Pink Fairies and Motörhead), when they stayed at the Portobello Hotel. But his multicultural musical tolerance was stretched when they invited him to a gig, and he had to admit, "I just couldn't get a vibe, I just couldn't."

**271 Portobello Road: The Motörhead/Joy Division Link** In the later 70s, 271 Portobello Road, Hawkwind's HQ in *The Time of the Hawklords*, was occupied by Warsaw Pact, who were described by the *NME's* Neil Spencer as 'hard-nosed old time Ladbroke Grove rockers, reactivated by current groundswell of energy.' As well as featuring Lucas Fox, the original Motörhead drummer, they are notable for bringing about the namechange of the Manchester post-punk band Warsaw, to Joy Division.

**Macrobiotic Punk** As the first macrobiotic punk Marc Bolan died in a car crash, the Seed publishing wing of the Sams' Ceres healthfood store at 269 brought out *The Portobello Guide* booklet (typeset by Caroline McKechnie of *International Times* previous, and Grass Roots). The macrobiotic Sams family also produced the *Harmony* mag, *Seed: The Journal of Organic Living*, and Gideon Sams' *The Punk* pulp novel. The latter was filmed as *The Punk and the Princess* in the 90s by Mike Sarne (of previous notoriety from *Myra Breckinridge* and his 'Come Outside' duet with Wendy Richard of *Eastenders*). The Sams' local empire also featured a Ceres Bakery on Freston Road, and a store at 74 Tavistock Road.

*The Portobello guide* features the Portobello Breeze hippy clothes shop at 27 Pembridge Road, associated with the Dog Shop at 2 Blenheim Crescent, the gay bookshop next to the Sun In Splendour pub, Baku Beads at 80 Portobello Road, Henekey's and the Obelix pancake shop on Westbourne

Grove, Finch's, Mr Christian's deli, the Electric cinema (and the Electric 2 in the west end), Rough Trade, the Hindukush tribal clothes shop at 231 (now Intoxica), Etcetera, the Normandy Stores at 243, All Ears reggae record shop at 245, Lee Harris's Alchemy in the 253 hippy indoor market, the Motor City jeans store, Rock On and the Grass Roots black bookshop at 61 Golborne Road.

The Sams called the Lancaster Road to Oxford Gardens section of the road 'the Portobello Village'; the alternative market of 'reggae music, soul food, underground newspapers, wholewheat bread, Bedouin dresses, art deco objects, natural shoes, herbal medicines, a free shop, brown rice, and a gypsy fortune teller' (the long bearded Romany Gypsy Petulengro Lee). The Free Shop hand sign, sprayed with 'It's Only Rock'n'Roll', is pictured pointing to the hippy recycling centre, on the site of Makan and the Sausage & Mash mod revival café.

Stalls under the Westway featured Grass Roots, Retreat From Moscow greatcoats, 40s rayon dresses, 50s mohair jumpers, Beatle and baseball jackets. Acme Sur+, on the site of Honest Jon's record shop, dealt in 'punk clothes, many secondhand, many imported from the States, where punk clothing was standard high school clothing in the 50s.'

According to Heathcote Williams' graffiti article, by then the area under the Westway also featured 'Come back Rachman, all is forgiven' outside the North Kensington Amenity Trust office; 'Crime is the highest form of sensuality' was sprayed along Portobello by Colville School; 'A woman without a man is like a banana without a bicycle', and 'Remember the Truth Dentist' on Blenheim Crescent.

As the site of the *Friends* office appeared on the cover of 'The Clash' album, number 305 was still very much under hippy occupation. As Ross Grainger's Sunflower, according to Seed guide, it was 'one of Portobello's original headshops', a spiritual self-development healthfood bookshop and alternative market of Tarot cards, perfume, oils, candles, joss-sticks and Tibetan clothes, but also of 'new wave records from the small companies.' 297, formerly Simon's Stable headshop, had become Golden Oldies, the rock'n'roll and country specialist record shop; in the 80s it was Redhouse Records, and in the 90s Shakedown/Youngblood 60s and 70s punk record shop.

**Johnny Curious and the Strangers** John Phillips of Johnny Curious and the Strangers, who ended up on Miles Copeland's Illegal Records on Blenheim Crescent, recalls their first foray into the music business: 'Klick Records, a Jamaican reggae distribution company licensed by RCA, signed us up and made us full-time wage earners. Every Friday we would go up to collect £35 each from their office above a record shop in Portobello Road (All Ears?), pounding out the latest Bob Marley or Burning Spear – I still own a valued Klick edition of 'MPLA', a Tapper Zukie dub masterpiece of that year.'

**The Free Republic of Frestonia: Napoleon of Notting Hill Revisited** Along the Westway, after Latimer Road was cut in half by the Westway roundabout, the southern end became a squatted bohemian enclave. In 1977, as the GLC planned a mass eviction before building an industrial estate, the hippy and punk squatters declared themselves independent of Britain, as the Free Republic of Frestonia, and appealed to the UN for assistance. As they set up border controls and embassies, all the citizens double-barrelled their names with Bramley from the adjacent road.

**Passport to Pimlico Time Bandits** Part William Blake Albion Free State, part Marx brothers' 'Freedonia', with some Chestertonesque whimsy and Orwellian nightmare thrown in, the Republic of Frestonia was founded by Nick Albery and Heathcote Williams (of beatnik poetry and graffiti previous, and the Ruff Tuff Cream Puff squatting agency).

The National Film Theatre of Frestonia, in the People's Hall on Olaf Street (now design studios), presented *Passport to Pimlico* and film of the Sex Pistols by Julien Temple and John Tiberi, the Passions played their first gig here as the Youngsters, and Here & Now appeared at the Freston Road Ceres bakery. The Passions formed out of the radical pre-punk Derelicts and the 101'ers, the other side of the Westway roundabout, where they were squatting on Latimer Road.

Steve Montgomery of Rough Trade, who managed the other half of the Derelicts in their post-punk incarnation of prag VEC, was a leading citizen of Frestonia. As was Tony D, of *Ripped & Torn* fanzine, who inhabited a Scottish punk enclave of the republic with Alex Ferguson of Alternative TV, and Sandy Robertson of *White Stuff* and *Sounds*. Jon Savage's *London's Outrage* fanzine featured a Frestonia photo collage with the 'Same thing day after day' Westway graffiti. Tony D recalled hanging around the Portobello Hotel bar most nights, because it was too dangerous to travel through Notting Dale with spiky hair before daybreak.

As Frestonia became the Bramley housing co-op development in the early 90s, the squatting pioneer Scottish Jack told Jim White of the *Independent*: "It was tough here. The locals didn't like us, criminal families, they used to come round mob-handed with pick-axe handles for some fun after closing time. Irish tinkers would come to your door and tell you that they were taking over your house. The black kids

would nick anything you had. You felt vulnerable. The police? Well, the drug squad used to use us for practise raids; 30 of them would turn up, plus vans and dogs, break down your door, and you'd be sitting there with one solitary spliff."

When the actor David Rappaport, who meets Napoleon as the *Time Bandits* leader 'Randle', was Frestonia's minister for foreign affairs, the Tory MP Geoffrey Howe (the future foreign secretary) wrote whilst in opposition, in support of the squatted republic and Chesterton's 'small is beautiful' principle: 'As one who had childhood enthusiasm for *Napoleon of Notting Hill*, I can hardly fail to be moved by your aspirations.'