

Vicious incident

by William Dodge

Is the outrageous "punk" rock cult in its death throes? Has the "new wave" finally eaten one of its own children?

London punk rock idol Sid Vicious reportedly screamed "I want to die, I want to join Nancy," as he inflicted a deep cut the length of his right forearm in a New York hotel recently.

Vicious, a bass player for the now defunct British punk group the "Sex Pistols" was taken by ambulance to New York's Bellvue Hospital where he was later listed in satisfactory condition.

Free on bail after his arrest for the stabbing death of his American girlfriend Nancy Spungen, the punk rock star was going to appear for preliminary hearing in a New York court at the end of October.

According to his testimony, Vicious awoke October 14 in New York's Chelsea Hotel to the sight of a trail of blood. He followed it into the bathroom and saw his 20-year-old girlfriend slumped underneath the wash basin with a hunting knife stuck in her belly.

Police said Vicious was "10 feet off the ground" when arrested and charged with the murder.

A recent London Sunday Times article on the Vicious

incident said, "the penniless, unremarkable and musically talentless 19-year-old Londoner has been courted—and indeed made—by a multi-million dollar entertainment industry with a relentless publicity machine."

"In 18 traumatic months, Vicious had been caught up in a series of myths he himself had not created, and which in the end, he was unable to control. Left alone, he would have remained an unknown, unpleasant youth."

A macabre taste for New York's raw underground music—featuring luminaries like Lou Reed, Patti Smith, Television, the Ramones—was imported to London by Malcolm McLaren.

McLaren, a Croydon Art School student who first went to New York as manager of the transvestite rock group "The Dolls", returned to his London "Sex" shop full of punk fever. He chose four likely candidates from the restless, unemployed, working-class teenagers hanging around his shop and formed the Sex Pistols.

Early performances by the Sex Pistols in London clubs and art colleges often turned into futuristic revivals of the "Teddy-Boy" gang violence that film director Stanley Kubrick portrayed so well in



AP photos

Spungen and Ritchie: Off-stage violence

"A Clockwork Orange."

A recording contract was forthcoming and the Sex Pistols' first record 'Anarchy in the U.K.' was released in November 1976 with lead singer Johnny Rotten's profound opening scream: "I am the anti-Christ."

The group acquired a new bass player, John Ritchie, and manager McLaren changed Ritchie's name to Sid Vicious.

Consistent in tone, the London Sunday Times article said, "the fact that Vicious could not play bass hardly seemed to matter. McLaren believed Ritchie's brash nature would be a strong commercial factor. . . ."

The Sex Pistols' spitting, stamping, brand of exhibitionism—McLaren's commercial success formula—could rely on the publicity machine only so long.

On the flip-side of things, the "new-wave's" latest find, TRB (Tom Robinson Band) has found something loud and clear to say over the din of punk nihilism.

"Politics isn't party broadcasts and general elections," says Tom Robinson in New Musical Express.

"It's yer kid sister who can't get an abortion, yer best mate getting paki-bashed, or sent down for possessing one joint of marijuana, the GLC deciding which bands we can't see . . . it's everyday life for rock fans, for everyone who hasn't got a cushy job or rich parents."

"I got no illusions about the
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