

Britain in the Seventies: Class

In this feature, Dave Marples looks at the British youth movements of the 70s.

by Dave Marples

Was there a distinct youth culture of the seventies? My usage of the term "youth" is a somewhat arbitrary one, since I imply anyone between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five. My own recollections run the risk of being both parochial and insular, since they are confined largely to the British Isles. Nevertheless, this can also be seen as advantageous, since the expressions of youth culture in this area of Western Europe were notable for their intensity, in lifestyles, music and rebellion.

The sociologist Brake has divided youth into four distinct categories from the British example, namely respectable or "straight," delinquents, cultural rebels and political militants. The first category is the largest, but may be ignored in this context, since it does not attempt to make holes in, or change, the fabric of society. It is essentially an adherence to the values of the older generation, to tradition and to the values which society uses as a standard of conduct and behavior. My concentration will therefore be on the last three categories.

The "delinquent" stratum were represented at the start of the decade by the "skinheads," who were young, urban and predominantly, although not always, working class kids. The style of dress was aggressive; cropped hair, big boots, "drainpipe" jeans and braces. In some areas, such as London and Birmingham, the skinheads found an ally in West Indian youth. Together, the two groups proved capable of creating occasional havoc on the streets. Minority groups were often harassed and "paki-bashing" became a notorious national pastime.

The skinhead philosophy appeared to be a close affinity to one's home town. Thus soccer games between the home town and teams from other sizeable cities were times of high tension. Scarves were carried on the wrist as tokens of allegiance and to stand at the wrong end of the ground supporting your team's colours was likely to see you in hospital before the end of the game.

From the skinhead evolved the "suede-head," complete with crombie hat and cravate and somewhat more stylish dress. The locale however was unchanged. The soccer ground, the local pub, which also became identified with certain groups — thus to venture into the wrong pub in central Manchester was also to invite trouble — and reggae music. In essence, this was a retreat from the drudgery of urban working class life, from unemployment, from the coal mines and steel mills. The "retreat" scorned authority, admired toughness and cultivated a "macho" image, which was typified by a refrain from the soccer supporters of Manchester:

*"Stretford boys, they are here,
Shag your women and drink your beer."*

In one sense, this was somewhat traditional. After all, the song hails a hero figure, strong, heavy-drinking and womanizing, qualities which might be found in the average John Wayne movie.

The excitement was a substitute for a bleak future, but it did not attempt to change that future. In 1973-4, most employed urban youth were only working for three days a week whilst the Heath government and the miners fought to a standstill over governmental pay policy. The election of another Wilson government in 1974, brought back the five-day week, but did little to ease the problems of low pay and unemployment.

Punk arrives

In 1976, "punk" arrived. The initial effect was one of shock. The media greeted the new cult in the same way it had once greeted the Hell's Angels. It was disgusting, perverted, obscene. In this year, every major concert hall in Britain banned the Sex Pistols. Unabashed Rotten, Vicious and company produced a single to coincide with the Queen's Silver Jubilee celebrations of 1977. The opening lines tell the story:

*"God save the Queen,
A Fascist regime
Made you a moron,"*

The single went to number one and the public was faced with the ludicrous situation, whereby record stores would omit the number one slot from their billboards showing the Top 40 singles. The Sex Pistols were only the most notorious and hardly the most inventive of the new groups.

Punk achieved two things which had a strong influence on working class culture. First it brought about an astonishing movement away from the "hero" to the "anti-hero." Elton John and Rod Stewart, as two proletarians who had "sold out" their own kind, were natural victims of the new wave. More surprising was the undisguised antagonism towards Mick Jagger and Freddy Mercury of Queen, who had some claims themselves to be regarded as rebels. Punk concerts were fast, violent affairs, but there was often real rapport between the group and the audience. Those who couldn't play a guitar joined a punk band, whilst those who could, tried their utmost to look as though they couldn't.

Working class heroes

The second result of the arrival of punk rock was the politicization of working-class music. The Clash, who in 1976 were barely recognizable as the commercial outfit they are today, brought out an influential first album, *Side Two* of which began with a song entitled "Career Opportunities," a bitter indictment of unemployment. Alongside the Tom Robinson Band, they played a "Rock against Racism" concert, organized by the Anti-Nazi League against an emergent National Front Party. Whereas their skinhead predecessors had indulged in "paki-bashing," punks were encouraged to become politically aware and to combat racism.

More recently the wheel has turned full circle. Punk merged with reggae and the "mods" of the sixties have resurfaced. Punk became commercialized and most of its diverse messages were



The clenched fist and "Power In The Darkness" slogan from the Tom Robinson Band album and subsequently became the movement. The Tom Robinson Band broke up after

 **MAPLE LEAF**
(FUNG LIM) RESTAURANT
466-7259 9206-95th Avenue 466-7256

Combination Dinner

For 1 Person - Only

(A)..... \$5.00

Chicken Chow Mein Chicken Balls
Sweet and Sour Ribs Fried Rice

(B)..... \$5.00

Chicken Chow Mein Deep Fried Shrimps
Sweet and Sour Ribs Fried Rice

DINNER FOR 2..... \$12.00

Egg Rolls (2) Chicken Chop Suey
Special Fried Rice Pineapple Chicken Balls

DINNER FOR 4..... \$25.00

Egg Rolls (4)
Beef Chop Suey
Pineapple Chicken Balls
Special Fried Rice
Deep Fried Prawns

BUSINESS HOURS

Mon. - Sat.5 PM-1 AM
Sun. - Holidays4:30 PM-11:30 PM

AUTHENTIC CHINESE CUISINE Dine In or Take Out

FREE DELIVERY ON ORDERS OVER \$10
PICK-UP ORDERS 10% OFF

DEN of HAIR DESIGN
WISHES TO ANNOUNCE HAIR STYLIST
DEBRA MELIN



DEBRA IS DELIGHTED TO BE BACK
IN THE UNIVERSITY AREA. SHE EXTENDS
A WARM WELCOME TO ALL HER CLIENTELE:

FOR APPOINTMENTS PHONE:

433-1371
10924-88 AVENUE.

SKYDIVERS: NOTICE

Applications and \$25 deposits for First Jump Training in May and June are now due by April 11, 1980. FMI contact Darrell c/o Box 95, The Students' Union, U of A, T6G 2J7 or ph. 437-3893.

FITZGERALDS, an exciting new restaurant, is opening soon. Service will be similar to Keg, Mother Tuckers, The Cooks, Brew & Co. We are currently seeking full & part-time staff for lunch and evening work. To be part of this exciting new dining experience, contact Mr. Ian Anderson at the Renford Inn on phone 433-9411 for an appointment.



Renford Inn

Tired of Co

TRY GOOD HOME
AWAY FROM

MY SECOND
8215-112 S
439-004



Underground Pa
Informal Dress