

School of Media, Culture and Creative Arts

**New Frequencies From Planet Perth: Punk Rock And Western
Australia's Sesquicentenary Celebrations**

Julian G. Tompkin

**This thesis is presented for the Degree of
Master of Creative Arts (Media Arts)
of
Curtin University**

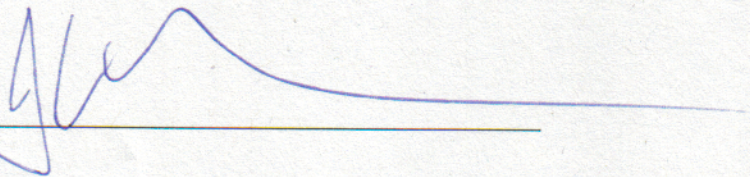
October 2012

Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Signature: _____

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Date: October 17, 2012

Abstract

Dislocated by both land and sea, Perth's punk scene would nonetheless play a pivotal role in the development and global dissemination of punk rock in the 1970s. Although lasting less than two years, the West Australian punk scene would not only tackle the prevailing symbols of ennui and apathy in the State, but also empower the next generation of "alternative" musicians to up the ante – with significant cultural ramifications for WA.

Set against the traditionalist context of Western Australia's 150th anniversary celebrations in 1979, "New Frequencies From Planet Perth: Punk Rock and Western Australia's Sesquicentenary Celebrations" readdresses the birth of WA's alternative music scene in charting the ascent of the local punk counterculture from 1976 and its uneasy relationship with the State's mainstream cultural identity, as well as the genre's integral place in the global punk movement and its lasting cultural legacy in Western Australia. "New Frequencies From Planet Perth: Punk Rock and Western Australia's Sesquicentenary Celebrations" includes revealing firsthand interviews with the punk scene's chief protagonists, including Kim Salmon, James Baker, Dave Faulkner, Ross Buncle and Ray Purvis.

The study is composed in two parts – one critical and one creative. The critical exegesis examines the global ascent of the punk counterculture, aggregating existing critical theory, firsthand interviews and popular media in identifying the significance of "place" and "narrativisation" in the musical discipline. With its focus on Perth, Western Australia, this work examines the prevailing conservative cultural narrative of mid-to-late 1970s Perth – largely through historical analysis and the detailed example of the sesquicentenary – drawing significant conclusions on the reason for punk's foundation in WA and evidencing its lasting legacy.

The creative work is a less-formal, journalistic feature article examining WA's punk scene. Largely made up of primary interviews, the piece is composed

in the expressive, entertaining and creative lexicon of journalistic feature writing and modelled on the content and style of music magazines such as *Mojo*, *Uncut* and *The Word* - also reflected in the work's feature style layout.

Contents

Preface	1
When Worlds Collide	2
Place In The Sun	5
It's Not The Wind You Hear	7
Living In WA	12
There Is No Way Out	17
Perth Is A Culture Shock	24
Arsehole Of The Universe	30
Young And Restless	40
Makin' A Scene	45
Notes	48
Works Cited	58
Creative Work: New Frequencies From Planet Perth	65

PREFACE

It is usually only through the telescopic lens of history that a musical movement can be genuinely assessed for its cultural impact or, indeed, its evanescence.

When punk rock arrived globally, and en masse, in 1976 it was widely considered a brief sonic aberration. However, by 1977 it was evident that punk – with its countercultural discourse – was not only here to stay but would go on to dislodge and repave the trajectory of both contemporary music and popular culture.

The warning signs of punk's imminent crash-landing had been evident as early as the late-1960s. However, it was in 1972 that The Modern Lovers – one of the first groups to be branded "punk" – would commit one of the genre's first and defining anthems to acetate, sounding the symbolic death knell to the "Old World":

I see the '50s apartment house
It's bleak in the 1970s' sun
But I still love the '50s
And I still love the old world
I wanna keep my place in this old world
Keep my place in the arcane knowledge
And I still love the '50s
And I still love the old world
Alright, now we say bye bye old world
Gotta help the new world
Oh bye bye, I say bye bye
Bye bye old world

By 1976 punk's battle cry had become far less forgiving to what it perceived as the "arcane" conservative mainstream. Punk had by now distilled down into

something much more antagonistic and threatening, and Perth would not be spared from the aural shrapnel. By 1976 a loose collective of local musicians had established a recognisable punk “scene” and in it a new and significant cultural narrative in Western Australia, and one that would irreversibly alter the State’s cultural landscape.

Thus, in researching what appears on the surface a singular musical movement we reveal something much more profound: a wider and significant cultural study of Western Australia. For to make sense of the music one must shed light on its origins: the Perth from which punk so abruptly emerged in the 1970s, culminating with the State’s sesquicentenary. It is here we reveal a defining, and largely untold, cultural history of Perth, Western Australia.

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

By the end of 1978 the musical form categorised as punk rock had reached its apogee globally and was beginning to fissure into numerous sub-genres. Many, such as the new wave movement, would go on to achieve commercial success internationally through artists such as Elvis Costello, Talking Heads and Blondie. Perth would also proffer numerous successful and/or influential groups during this period; the majority with their aural and cultural ancestry in punk – amongst them The Triffids and The Scientists. Both the Hoodoo Gurus (known as Le Hoodoo Gurus in the group’s original incarnation) and INXS (born out of The Farris Brothers) would also claim definitive links to Perth, with various key members spending their formative years in the city, heavily influenced by its punk and post-punk scene.

However, as Western Australia prepared to commemorate its sesquicentenary in 1979 with a yearlong program of events intended to both reflect and celebrate the State’s cultural uniqueness, most of its inhabitants were unaware of the pivotal role Perth had played in punk music’s global configuration. As such, The Cheap Nasties, The Geeks, The Victims and The

Manikins remain largely uncelebrated to this day (although The Victims do enjoy a modest cult status as evidenced by the recent reissue of their recorded material by Japanese independent record label 1977). Yet each of these groups would – through both demonstration and influence – play a significant role in the subculture’s foundation and broad cultural impact. In turn, these bands would inspire subsequent generations of local “alternative” and “indie” musicians and formally establish what former EMI Managing Director John O’Donnell in 2003 described as “perhaps the most fertile and exciting music scene in Australia” (O’Donnell, personal interview).

As the confluence of musicology and critical theory becomes more entrenched in the study of music (Williams, *Constructing Musicology*, vii-xi), so has an appreciation of the value of place in constructing a comprehensive thesis of the composer and composition in question. Similarly, as Andy Bennett argues in *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity*, not only does the pursuit of social and cultural meaning in the musical discipline draw research into the physical environment, it also reveals great detail about the experiential backdrop in which the music was both created and consumed in that it applies narrative to place.

Both as a creative practice and as a form of consumption, music plays an important role in the narrativization of place, that is, in the way in which people define their relationship to local, everyday surroundings. Such is the story of contemporary western popular musics, such as punk...The significance of space and place in relation to the musicalization of everyday life has been dramatically illustrated in relation to issues as varied as the construction of national identity, the development of local cultural industries, the trans-local cultural exchanges occurring between displaced peoples of the world’s many diasporas and the gendering of space and place. (*Music, Space and Place*, 2)

In his essay "Systems of Articulation, Logics of Change: Communities and Scenes in Popular Music" Will Straw argues that it is at this cultural level that music fractures into two branches: one that wills for the "stabilization of local historical continuities" and one which "works to disrupt such continuities, to cosmopolitanize and relativize them" (373). The latter branch constitutes what sociologist Milton Gordon identified in 1947 as a subculture, being "a sub-division of a national culture, composed of a combination of factorable social situations such as class status, ethnic background, regional and rural or urban residences" ("The Concept of the Sub-Culture", 41). Music is, thus, a reliable instrument in measuring both compliance and dissonance – or mainstream culture and affiliated or oppositional subcultures, or countercultures – within a society, in that it is a universal cultural practice (albeit, including many different styles) and "the very medium in which individual intentions can be built up since it forms an identity within which they can be anchored and understood" (Kögler, "Music and Identity", 1).

While sociomusicologist Simon Frith contends that identity is often little more than a personal construction, or "make-believe", he none-the-less argues that music offers an immediate experience of collective identity ("Music and Identity", 121-122). Frith also notes that dominant forms of contemporary music, such as punk, are always formed at the social margins "among the poor, the migrant, the rootless, the 'queer'" ("Music and Identity", 123). He continues: "Musical pleasure is not derived from fantasy. It is not mediated by daydreams – but is experienced directly: music gives us a real experience of what the ideal could be" ("Music and Identity", 123).

From its beginnings on Perth's social margins in 1976, Perth's punk scene attempted to both disrupt and reorient the city's prevailing cultural narrative with its own ideals. Utilising a number of firsthand interviews and eyewitness accounts, this study charts the creation of the punk subculture in Western Australia and its uneasy relationship with the State's mainstream cultural

identity, as well as the genre's integral place in the global punk movement and its lasting cultural legacy in Western Australia.

PLACE IN THE SUN

As one cannot fully realise the music of Dmitri Shostakovich without understanding the experiential conditions of Soviet Russia, or wholly comprehend The Sex Pistols song "Anarchy in the UK" outside the context of mid-1970s London, rationalising Perth's punk scene equally demands an understanding of the cultural and physical circumstances from which the subculture emerged. In the sesquicentenary we are gifted a comprehensive portrait of the mainstream cultural image of 1970s Western Australia – the "ordinary" experience from which punk would germinate.

In 1978, the year British punk group The Sex Pistols disbanded – marking a clear historical turning point for the genre – WA was preparing to celebrate its 150th anniversary, under the official title WAY '79 (an abbreviation for Western Australia Year 1979). WAY '79 commenced on the final day of 1978 with a free public concert on the Perth Esplanade, attended by 60,000 people. Premier Sir Charles Court would proclaim the tone of the celebrations in his official sesquicentenary speech:

Western Australians of all generations have done a mighty job in a short time. We came to a very ancient land and made it young again. We made the soil productive and unlocked minerals for a thousand uses. We have got land, sea and air networks where once there were no charts at all. We have built nearly 500 cities, suburbs, towns and settlements where none existed. We have done it by work and enterprise and by backing ourselves to win against all odds. (Gregory, *City of Light*, 220)

According to West Australian historian Geoffrey Bolton, Court was extolling a unilateral version of history without conflict or guilt – a history, Bolton argues, that propagated the pioneer myth, regarded progress in terms merely of wealth and prosperity, and failed to remember the dispossession of Aboriginal lands, violent labour struggles, class warfare, deep ethnic tensions and convict labour. “Nobody tried to replicate the heat, the insects, the dysentery, the alcoholism, the boredom and the discomfort which were so intimate a part of daily life in the Swan River Colony” (Bolton, “WAY 1979”, 16).

The homogenous portrayal of WA as suggested by Premier Court was reinforced by the two major State newspapers – *The West Australian* and *Sunday Times* – in their respective New Year editions, each with detailed coverage of WA’s achievements. *The Sunday Times* offered extensive reportage into WA’s successes in mining, the timber industry, farming, football, horse racing and its burgeoning wine industry (*The Sunday Times*, “Editorial”). *The West Australian*, while praising the State’s achievements, also predicted a forthcoming era of significant economic growth, driven by the resources industry – most notably the anticipated approval for development of the large natural gas reserves on the North West Shelf in 1981 (*West Australian*, “Editorial”).

Featuring WA entertainment identities Fat Cat, Percy Penguin and Rolf Harris, the WAY ‘79 New Year’s Eve concert would inaugurate the year’s calendar of events designed, as Premier Court outlined, to reflect and in turn celebrate the State’s identity and achievements. As well as hosting the Miss Universe Pageant in March,¹ 1979’s sesquicentenary program included a re-enactment of Captain James Stirling’s landing in the Swan River (attended by Charles, Prince Of Wales),² the laying of 150 bronze inlaid tiles of notable West Australians on St Georges Terrace, plus numerous sporting and public events.³

Perth’s contemporary music scene – including punk, and its derivatives – would play no significant role in WAY ‘79. Nor would it be afforded recognition of its contribution to the State’s collective cultural identity. In contrast, under the “highlights” section of the half-year *Official Programme of Events January 1-June 30*

the music listings featured performances by The Regimental Band of Her Majesty's Scots Guards, and performances from the State Opera of South Australia, Orchestre de Chambre Jean-Francois Paillard and The London Early Music Group.⁴ In prefacing the second edition of the sesquicentenary program – covering July 1-December 31 – Premier Court gave insight into his own traditionalist preferences in the various manifestations of WAY '79:

Whatever form the spirit of the anniversary has found expression in – a colonial ball, sporting events, pioneers' day, national conference or street parties where neighbours get to know each other a little better – there has been an over-riding sense of heritage, history and achievement as well as confidence in the future. (WAY '79 Jul-Dec 2)

IT'S NOT THE WIND YOU HEAR

In featuring children's television icons Fat Cat and Percy Penguin, plus popular entertainer Rolf Harris, the New Year's Eve concert would be revealing of the city's communal perception of its own cultural characteristics, and its preference for music and entertainment at the "lighter" end of the spectrum – in adherence to "local historical continuities" (Straw, "Systems of Articulation", 373). In reference to his musical output alone, not to mention his bloke-next-door demeanour, Rolf Harris certainly fell into the "light" or "general" entertainment category. Released in 1960, "Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport" was Harris's first commercial recording and would also become his first number one single in Australia.⁵ Best described as a novelty song, "Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport" would launch Harris's musical career – one that would largely be defined by his preference for composing and performing on an instrument he termed the "wobble board".

While Harris's single was borne of a quasi-folk music or bush ballad tradition, by 1960 rock'n'roll had become a significant popular musical form in

Western Australia. Colin Nichol was the most prominent and influential radio DJ in Perth during the latter days of the 1950s, broadcasting for 6PM, and witnessed firsthand the arrival of rock'n'roll to the State between 1957 and 1960, and the social changes it brought:

It was a transition period. It set us up sociologically for what followed. More than chronology, the development from 'no jiving in the Ballroom', to the extremes of dance and behaviour we see today, began in that period and permeated to every home in WA. From the music point of view, it put a lot of performers on their feet, and gave them a start, and an artistic outlet they had not had before. The constrained atmosphere in which people lived in the '50s was a shell, they had to crack it, and break out. It was a very confining atmosphere. There were lots of conventions that were unrealistic and governed our lives. These had to be swept away. (Nichol, "History of Rock'n'Roll")

Elvis Presley is widely credited for bringing this new form of music into Australian households through landmark recordings such as "Heartbreak Hotel", "Hound Dog", "All Shook Up" and "Jailhouse Rock". With its far-reaching success, rock'n'roll would eventually be absorbed into Australia's mainstream cultural narrative. Subsequently the country would produce its own practitioners of the new musical form, most notably Johnny O'Keefe. O'Keefe's 1958 song "Wild One" remains a highly respected contribution to the genre, and in 1986 would be covered by punk iconoclast Iggy Pop and become a top ten chart hit in the UK.

A singer named Col Joye offered a less abrasive counterpoint to O'Keefe's slightly more rebellious persona, and together the two would dominate the music scene of late 1950s and early 1960s Australia. According to Hans-Herbert Kögler in his essay "Music and Identity: Adorno and the Promise of Popular Culture", rock'n'roll would become the dominant popular musical form across

the Western world from the late-1950s due to its simplicity, predictability and ability to provide “answers to the social-psychological need of agents for whom this medium creates a chance to establish their own situated identities”:

The rhythmically ordered space of Rock enables the formation of a surrogate identity, an alternative to the established modes and practices of self-understandings precisely through its aesthetically organized and organizing nature. (“Music and Identity”)

Through this engagement and subsequent cultural discovery within rock’n’roll, Kögler argues that both the participant and observer can extract “far-reaching cultural meanings regarding identity, sexuality, and existing power structures in general” (“Music and Identity”).

With the growing influence of rock’n’roll in the 1960s each Australian capital city would produce its very own performers influenced by O’Keefe and/or Joye. Perth had The Saints (no relation to the punk band to emerge from suburban Brisbane nearly two decades later) and The Zodiacs, playing popular 1960s venues The Snake Pit in Scarborough, Rick’s Barn and Canterbury Court in the city, Bamboo in Bentley and the annual Royal Show in Claremont.

When The Beatles landed in Adelaide in 1964 to commence the band’s first and only tour of Australia they brought with them an influential new take on rock’n’roll that would redefine Australia’s popular music scene – as it did in much of the Western world and beyond.⁶ Widely referred to as beat music,⁷ the style was typified by its economical format and its greater references to blues over jazz; typically featuring rhythm and lead guitar, bass, percussion and vocals. Demonstrating The Beatles’ extensive cultural influence, more than 30,000 fans greeted the group on their arrival at Adelaide airport on 12 June 1964 (see Moore, “The Beatles’ Australian Tour”, 1).

While The Beatles would not visit Perth, the group’s influence would transform the local music scene, as well as that of their fellow Mersey Beat acts

such as Gerry and the Pacemakers. Gerry and the Pacemakers would, however, tour Perth in 1963 as part of the Wild "Liverpool Sound" Show, with Brian Poole and the Tremeloes – leaving an immense impression on the local music scene, as documented by Jon Stratton in his combined essays "Do You Want to Know a Secret?": Popular Music in Perth in the Early 1960s" and "Brian Poole and The Tremeloes or The Yardbirds: Comparing Popular Music in Perth and Adelaide in the Early 1960s".

Stratton suggests that Perth's close relationship with the "British invasion" of the 1960s – with a particular preference for Cliff Richard – over American rock'n'roll was more pronounced than in its fellow capital cities, largely due to its having the highest per capita British population in the country – 17 percent by 1971 ("Do You Want to Know a Secret", 4):

With the greater success of Richard in Perth than in Adelaide and nationally we can begin to see a pattern that becomes more obvious over the next decade. It seems that the record buyers of Perth were more attuned to English music, and to English music more at the entertainment end of the spectrum, than audiences elsewhere in Australia. ("Do You Want to Know a Secret", 3)

What also demarcated Perth from its fellow capitals, Stratton suggests, was the city's largely middle class demographic which, coupled with its Mediterranean climate, was a recipe for a more light-hearted and conformist local popular music scene:

This preference in Perth for the lighter, pop end of the beat sound spectrum is more clearly demonstrated in the reception of the other group of the 'Liverpool Sound' tour, Brian Poole and the Tremeloes. Roslyn Owen, who reviewed the show for *The West Australian*, commented that 'Jerry [sic] Marsden, backed by his Pacemakers, had tremendous attack, a

wide grin and a loud presentation.’ However, Owen preferred Brian Poole and the Tremeloes: ‘Why Gerry and the pacemakers [sic] topped the bill is a mystery. The group was outshone by Brian Poole and the Tremeloes and the professional polish and charm of Miss Dusty Springfield.’ Owen had her finger on the pulse of Perth record buyers’ tastes. (Stratton, ““Do You Want to Know a Secret”, 11)

The most successful West Australian pop star of the decade was Johnny Young. Charming, endearing and commercially palatable, Young’s breakthrough single “Step Back” – originally written by The Easybeats, and recorded by Young for Perth’s Clarion Records⁸ – would reach number one on the *Go-Set* national pop charts.⁹ In explaining the song’s attraction for West Australian record buyers, Stratton describes the single as similar in style to Cliff Richard and “a catchy piece of likeable pop” (“Do You Want to Know a Secret”, 16). Young’s musical preferences would also have further influence through the popular Port Beach dances he promoted, plus his hosting of TVW-7’s pop music television show *Club Seventeen*. Popular 1960s groups The Times and The Mixtures also enjoyed success with a similar “light” musical style to that of Young. However, by the 1970s the covers music scene (that is, songs not composed by the live performer) had begun to overtake the popular original music scene (that is, songs both written and performed by the composers) in popularity. As Perth music journalist Ray Purvis notes:

Perth always had a thriving pub scene, but by the mid ‘70s it had very much become cover band city. The time was right for a reaction against faded hippies, Queen-like glam rock and warmed-over glam rockers playing imported pop hits. FM radio was remorselessly churning out soft West Coast American pop along with Skyhooks, Sherbet, Daddy Cool and Billy Thorpe. (Personal interview)

The most successful cover bands of the period were The Frames and The Elks. Both acts played popular hits of the day, as reflected by Perth's most successful local radio station of the period 6PM.¹⁰ By the mid 1970s 6PM's playlist regularly featured acts broadly referred to as commercial pop and rock, fitting comfortably into the "top 40" format, including The Little River Band, Smokie, The Eagles, Chicago, Three Dog Night and Electric Light Orchestra. In turn, the local cover bands would bring songs by such artists to the stages of the city's most popular live venues, including The Herdsman Tavern, The Raffles Hotel, The Sandgroper Hotel, The White Sands Hotel and The Cloverdale. As Purvis notes, the original live music scene in Perth was significantly less popular than the covers' scene by the mid-1970s, with the latter emerging as the predominant mainstream musical medium.

LIVING IN WA

From its inception in the 1950s, various sub-cultural strains of rock'n'roll have habitually attracted rebels and fringe-dwellers with their countercultural zeitgeist. Indeed, after his landmark television appearance on The Milton Berle Show on June 5 1956 – where he performed his single "Hound Dog" – even Elvis Presley faced criticism from religious groups, parent associations and members of the media, including journalist John Crosby of the *New York Herald Tribune* who described Presley's performance as "unspeakably untalented" and labelled his performance "vulgar" (ctd in Henderson, "Flashpoint of Fame", 19).

The relationship between rock'n'roll and rebellion – even at the musical form's most conventional extremity – has been widely deliberated, and epitomised in such controversial documentaries as 1989's *Hell's Bells: The Dangers of Rock 'N' Roll* (Holmberg). Pope Benedict XVI – the spiritual leader of more than one billion Catholics worldwide – would further argue this point when he was still known as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and the Vatican's Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, describing rock music as "a form of

worship, in fact, in opposition to Christian worship” (Ratzinger, “Spirit of Liturgy”, 148).

Kögler argues that agents looking to create rebellious identities predominantly turn to rock’n’roll as a result of the prevalent cultural “myth” that rock is in itself a rebellious medium and subsequently finding it conducive to their needs, largely because of the form’s capabilities for offering refuge and allowing for the distillation of an active counterculture:

The schematic rhythms and recognizable guitar riffs, the repetitive and standardized nature of its song structure, and the social-cultural construction of an identifiable world of classic songs, master performers, and crucial events coalesce into a cultural form in which a disoriented individual can find symbolic refuge. The ordered nature of Rock and Pop thus makes possible an internalized identity-formation that can function as the ground for a subversive, challenging, or critical attitude. It can enable such a critical attitude since critique, as we have shown before, always requires a background identity from which to launch its intentional rebellion. (“Music and Identity”)

As Geoffrey Bolton notes in his essay “WAY 1979: Whose Celebration?”, WAY ’79 would not reveal the whole truth about WA’s history and character. From renowned bushranger Moondyne Joe to the State’s notorious outlaw motorcycle gangs, WA is historically not without its radicals, raconteurs and fringe-dwellers. Although somewhat egalitarian in perception in the 1970s, Perth had long harboured a counterculture – that is, a subculture whose values are in contrast or often direct contradiction to mainstream cultural customs – that would naturally manifest itself in the rebellious fringes of rock’n’roll. Albert Cohen writes in his “General Theory of Subcultures” that cultural subgroups are formed out of necessity. In dissenting from the national cultural consensus, likeminded partisans are forced to create a new “frame of reference” which becomes their

subculture (47-48). Indeed, while Johnny Young was reflecting the city's mainstream ideals, down in working class Fremantle a very different type of rock'n'roll band with an alternative "frame of reference" was forming – a group that would come to be known as The Spektors, featuring one Ronald Scott; widely known as Bon Scott.¹¹

Whilst still largely influenced by the "British invasion", The Spektors referenced the grittier end of the broad rock'n'roll genre, including working class rhythm and blues bands such as Them, The Yardbirds and The Small Faces. Evolving from The Spektors would come Perth's most popular band of the late 1960s, The Valentines.¹² However, largely conformist to the pop aesthetics of the majority, The Valentines would ultimately disband, freeing Scott to join what would become one of Australia's most raucous, confronting and successful rock'n'roll enterprises: AC/DC.

It is in music that one can find both self and collective definition and – as Simon Frith writes – it is also in music that we can identify styles of music and individuals that appear incompatible with our own values, as identified by our chosen frame of reference ("Towards and Aesthetic of Popular Music", 38). Accordingly, Scott's musical fate reveals much more of his musical roots than his work in The Spektors and The Valentines would suggest. Idealising contentious rock'n'roll identities such as Little Richard,¹³ Scott (who was born in Scotland, and migrated to Australia in 1952 at the age of six) would not be the only West Australian looking for something a little riskier in his record collection. By the late 1960s Perth had a well-established sub-cultural blues scene, including King Biscuit Co (featuring Ivan Zar), The Beagle Boys (featuring future punk leader Dave "Flick" Faulkner) and The Beaten Tracks (featuring future members of Chain and internationally acclaimed Australian blues guitarist Dave Hole). Perth music journalist Ray Purvis argues: "Not for nothing did bands like Ray Hoff And The Offbeats, The Beaten Tracks and The Valentines originate in Perth. We had loud music in our DNA long before 1975" (personal interview).

Perth's blues scene – which thrives to this day, largely through the Perth Blues Club¹⁴ – spawned another musical offshoot: a high octane rock'n'roll subculture that would, in turn, come to be known as pub rock, and pioneered nationally throughout the 1970s and 1980s by AC/DC with Bon Scott, Adelaide's Cold Chisel and Sydney's Rose Tattoo.¹⁵ The foundation stone to WA's own pub rock credentials would be laid in 1972 by a laconic songwriter named Dave Warner, and his band Pus.

Although the word “punk” was not to be widely used as a definition for a specific musical genre until 1974, Pus and Warner are considered the local prototypes of the genre. With original songs “Hot Crutch” and “Girls Wank”, Pus was threatening moral order in WA four years before The Sex Pistols. Pus would take its influence directly from US garage rock bands such as The Fugs, art-school noise band The Velvet Underground and the volatile rock'n'roll sound of Britain's The Who. After being omitted from WA music history in the 2009 documentary *Something in the Water*, Warner would write: “If you want to talk about punk then my band Pus was at The Governor Broome Hotel back in 1974, playing our version of punk before The Saints, or even The Sex Pistols” (“Something Fishy”).

With Perth's mainstream music fans unprepared for such an abrasive musical assault, Pus was ultimately unsuccessful and short-lived. However, Warner would return with a new band named From The Suburbs, brandishing a more palatable style of music he defined as “suburban rock”. With songs like “Suburban Boy”, “Revenge of the Lawn”, “Bicton Breezes”, “Old Stock Road”, “Half-Time at the Football”, “Bicton Vs Brooklyn” and “Living in WA”, Warner gave sonority to the suburban West Australian existence.¹⁶ For Warner, Bicton may have been part of metropolitan Perth but was far from cosmopolitan. As he would sing in “Suburban Boy”:

I wake up every morning with no-one beside me

I wake up every morning and my mother will chide me

I'm just a Suburban Boy, just a Suburban Boy
Saturday night, no subway station
Saturday night just changing TV stations
I'm just a Suburban Boy, just a Suburban Boy
And I know what it's like
To be rejected every night
And I'm sure it must be
Easier for boys from the city

It is in Warner that we can begin to identify the cultural counterpoint to artists such as Johnny Young and, as such, a vastly different perception of Perth and Western Australia. Warner's 1978 album *Mug's Game* would finally bring him national acclaim and *RAM Magazine's* award for songwriter of the year. He would go on to become an award-winning crime novelist and still performs to this day.¹⁷ Local punk pioneer and creator of Perthpunk.com, Ross Buncle argues that Warner's influence on the first wave of Perth punks is indisputable:

Warner distanced himself from the punks because, I think, he felt they had usurped his territory. But his was an original band that had the biggest following of any in Perth, including The Victims. Further, his songs were all about Perth and specifically suburban youth culture and tribalism in Perth. For some strange reason, he seems to have been left out of histories of the evolving Perth original music scene in the '70s, but he and his band was one of the most significant of all in terms of their reach, influence and success. The punks like to promote themselves as the first torchbearers of original music in Perth, but Warner has to be given due credit in any fair and balanced history. (Personal interview)

A Perth-based music journalist since the 1970s, originally writing for the now defunct *Sunday Independent* and *The Daily News*, as well as hosting the "Shake

Some Action” radio program on 6NR (reportedly the only radio station in Perth to play punk in the 1970s, besides Chris Winter’s Monday night ABC program “Room to Move”), Ray Purvis was the foremost commentator on the emerging WA punk scene. Purvis concludes that Perth’s egalitarian existence would inadvertently provide the fuel for both Warner and the punks:

Perth had a sort of staid utopian existence in the 1970s. But it was a sterile one. Like paradise had begun to fade on the Hill’s Hoist. You couldn’t fault it. Life was largely easy, and unquestionably good. But a good life didn’t necessarily mean an interesting one. Perth was uncomplicated. And many – especially the emerging punk vanguard – translated that as dead boring, and fought it with all their middle class, snotty-nose rage.
(Personal interview)

THERE IS NO WAY OUT

As noted by punk rock historian and journalist Jon Savage, the etymology of the word “punk” can be traced back to William Shakespeare’s *Measure For Measure* in 1603: “‘Why you are nothing then: neither maid, widow, nor wife?’ ‘My lord, she may be a punk, for many of them are neither maid, widow, nor wife’” (“Punk Etymology”). Savage notes that by the late 1800s the word had been assigned to depictions of people of questionable character before finally being adopted by US music journalist Lester Bangs in 1969 to describe Detroit garage rock band The MC5. However, as the direct designation of a musical movement, the term would not gain wide critical acceptance until the founding of Legs McNeil’s *Punk Magazine* in the United States in 1975.¹⁸ In the introductory essay to his edited work *Punk Rock: So What?: The Cultural Legacy of Punk*, Roger Sabin writes:

At a very basic level, we can say that punk was/is a subculture best characterised as being part youth rebellion, part artistic statement. It had

its high point from 1976-1979, and was most visible in Britain and America. It had its primary manifestation in music – and specifically in the disaffected rock and roll of bands like the Sex Pistols and the Clash. Philosophically it had no ‘set agenda’ like the hippy movement that preceded it, but nevertheless stood for identifiable attitudes, amongst them: an emphasis on negationism (rather than nihilism); a consciousness of class-based politics (with a stress on ‘workingclass credibility’); and a belief in spontaneity and ‘doing it yourself’. (*Punk Rock*, 2).

Punk, as a distinct musical genre and subculture, can trace its lineage back to the aforementioned garage rock scene centred in the MC5’s native Detroit, Michigan. From the Detroit garage rock scene would also emerge the man who would become known as “the Godfather of Punk”, Iggy Pop, and his band The Stooges. Both of these groups can best be characterised by their loud, brash and frenetic musical style. The expression “garage band”, by its literal rendering, insinuates a discernable lack of musical proficiency and/or commercial appeal: musicians confined to their garages. However, with The Stooges and The MC5 garage rock experienced notable acclaim and wide influence, with genre-defining albums *The Stooges* (1969) and *Raw Power* (1973) from The Stooges and *Kick out the Jams* (1969) and *Back in the USA* (1970) from The MC5. In describing garage rock, journalist Lester Bangs would write of The MC5 in *Rolling Stone*: “Musically the group is intentionally crude and aggressively raw” (Bangs).

Punk would have another integral genetic link in its development, to late 1960s New York and the experimental rock scene centred on a venue called Max’s Kansas City; namely its resident band The Velvet Underground. Although markedly different in style to The Stooges and The MC5 – notably more rhetorical in form, and subsequently championed by avant-garde pop art icon Andy Warhol – The Velvet Underground was no less frantic in its musical delivery. In describing the band’s live sound for *Creem Magazine*, future punk figurehead Patti Smith wrote in steam-of-consciousness: “It goes beyond risk and

hovers like an electric moth. There is no question no apologizing...the head cracks like intellectual egg spewing liquid gold" (Smith).

The band's frontman, Lou Reed would become a chief reference point and example for the punk rock movement. The final link in punk's aural composition would arrive in 1971, and the formation of the glam rock band The New York Dolls - a group retrospectively categorised by music critics as "proto punk". The New York Dolls' eponymous debut album of 1973 is listed in *Rolling Stone's* "The 500 Greatest Albums of all Time" and proved hugely pivotal for the New York punk rock vanguard, which by now had begun to congregate at Mercer Arts Centre in Greenwich Village.

The first artists to specifically be categorised as punk emerged in 1974 and included Patti Smith, Television, The Ramones and The Modern Lovers. Later that year the scene relocated to a Lower Manhattan bar named CBGB and expanded to include acts as diverse as Blondie and Talking Heads.¹⁹ An analogous and largely independent scene was by now also thriving in Britain, where The Sex Pistols had formed in mid-1975, and were closely followed by The Clash, The Damned and The Buzzcocks, amongst others. Employing both the "aggression" and "rawness" of the garage rock scene, the "riskiness" of The Velvet Underground and the flamboyance of The New York Dolls, punk rock would arrive on a global scale with the release of The Sex Pistols' debut single "Anarchy in the UK" in November 1976.

While there are great - and seemingly incompatible - differences between Patti Smith and The Sex Pistols, The Clash and The Modern Lovers, these acts loosely shared a common antiestablishment and countercultural worldview. As The Sex Pistols would decree in the band's debut single:

Anarchy in the UK
Is coming some time maybe...
They made you a moron
A potential H-bomb

The Clash seconded this polemic in that band's own single "London's Burning". Back in New York the world did not appear any less dystopian in Patti Smith's "Rock N Roll Nigger" and Johnny Thunders' "Born too Loose (aka Born to Lose)". Less an exact sonic template and more a countercultural decree, the first punks were united in a philosophy of rebellion against what they perceived as the conservative mainstream. Both the US and Britain would be under conservative rule throughout punk's embryonic years and both countries were in the midst of economic crises.²⁰

In his book *England's Dreaming*, Jon Savage notes that, as England headed towards its "winter of discontent", the July 1975 unemployment figures were Britain's highest since World War II (106). In his essay "Postmodernism and Punk Subculture: Cultures of Authenticity and Deconstruction", Ryan Moore writes:

The history of punk subculture also takes us through a tumultuous period of social, cultural, and political restructuring in the United States and Britain, including economic crisis and deindustrialization, the abatement of 1960s movements for social change, and the growth of ultraconservative political forces, culminating in the elections of Thatcher and Reagan. (309)

Similarly, The Sex Pistols' frontman John Lydon – widely know by his stage-name Johnny Rotten – describes the environment from which The Sex Pistols would emerge:

Early Seventies Britain was a very depressing place. It was completely run-down, there was trash on the streets, total unemployment – just about everybody was on strike. Everybody was brought up with an education system that told you point blank that if you came from the wrong side of

the tracks...then you had no hope in hell and no career prospects at all.
(ctd in Robb, *Punk Rock*, 97)

Rising from a sense of hopelessness and ennui – what Richard Hell coined “the Blank Generation”²¹ – punk was also a direct affront to the last main global music based, countercultural movement: the hippy generation. In contrast to the latter’s slogans of peace, love and understanding, the punks’ *raison d’être* – according to Sex Pistols bassist Sid Vicious – was outright war, abhorrence and violence: “Undermine their pompous authority, reject their moral standards, make anarchy and disorder your trademarks. Cause as much chaos and disruption as possible but don’t let them take you alive” (*Sid Vicious*). Vicious would get his wish and die, in February 1979, a poster-child of anti-establishment rebellion.²²

On the hippies, The Clash’s Joe Strummer told journalist Caroline Coon in 1976: “The hippy movement was a failure. All hippies around now just represent complete apathy” (ctd in Rombes, “The Blank Spectacle”). However, Roger Sabin argues that – while generally dismissive of the hippies – the punks would procure many of the former’s antiestablishment traits, including its DIY ideology and tactics for undermining mainstream culture (*Punk Rock*, 2). The Sex Pistols’ guitarist Steve Jones would offer the mass media an irresistible sound bite on punk rock’s mandate when he declared: “actually, we’re not into music – we’re into chaos” (ctd in “Sex Pistols Biography”). It was this nihilistic interpretation of punk that would be broadcast to the world through the media – widely interpreted as an affront to the civilised world. The Sex Pistols would ensure a public scandal when Jones swore on Bill Grundy’s *Today* program, prompting Britain’s biggest-selling daily newspaper *Daily Mirror* to run a front-page story the following day entitled “The Filth and the Fury!”. Subheadings included “Uproar as viewers jam phones”, “When the air turned blue” and “Who are these punks?”.

As Moore notes: “the mass media furnished the main stage for new kinds of symbolic warfare” (“Postmodernism”, 309). The Sex Pistols’ manager and greatly influential figure in popular culture as both entrepreneur and provocateur, Malcolm McLaren remarked: “The media was our helper and our lover and that in effect was the Sex Pistols’ success...as today to control our media is to have the power of government, God or both” (Savage, *England’s Dreaming*, 165-66).

The Sex Pistols’ immense coverage across the media took punk’s message and sound to the young and disaffected, globally. However, Patti Smith would offer a more optimistic interpretation of the genre when proclaiming: “Punk rock is just another word for freedom” (Grigoriadis, “Remembrances”). Joe Strummer, speaking on screen in the Don Letts-directed documentary *The Last Testament*, seconded that: “Punk rock is meant to be our freedom. We’re meant to be able to do what we want to do.”²³

The anti-establishment philosophy carried over to fashion, with ripped shirts and safety pins becoming totems of revolt against the anachronistic establishment, even if they were quickly commodified by the fashion industry. Joe Strummer defined the importance of fashion in identifying one’s tribe when he told the *Sniffin’ Glue* fanzine: “like trousers, like brain” (ctd in Salewicz, *Redemption Song*, 167).²⁴ Ryan Moore writes:

Punks presented themselves as catatonic street urchins through intentionally ripped and torn clothing, displays of self mutilation, and an affected stare of vacancy and blankness...These styles were designed to represent the darkness and impending disintegration of British society. (“Postmodernism”, 311)

In his seminal but controversial 1981 study *Subcultures: The Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebdige goes into extensive detail in describing the semiotic importance of punk

attire in differentiating its agents from the mainstream, as well as other subcultures:

Objects borrowed from the most sordid of contexts found a place in the punks' ensembles: lavatory chains were draped in graceful arcs across chests encased in plastic bin-liners. Safety pins were taken out of their domestic 'utility' context and worn as gruesome ornaments through the cheek, ear or lip. 'Cheap' trashy fabrics (PVC, plastic, lurex, etc.) in vulgar designs (e.g. mock leopard skin) and 'nasty' colours, long discarded by the quality end of the fashion industry as obsolete kitsch, were salvaged by the punks and turned into garments (fly boy drainpipes, 'common' miniskirts) which offered self-conscious commentaries on the notions of modernity and taste. Conventional ideas of prettiness were jettisoned along with the traditional feminine lore of cosmetics. Contrary to the advice of every woman's magazine, make-up for both boys and girls was worn to be seen. Faces became abstract portraits: sharply observed and meticulously executed studies in alienation. Hair was obviously dyed (hay yellow, jet black, or bright orange with tufts of green or bleached in question marks), and T-shirts and trousers told the story of their own construction with multiple zips and outside seams clearly displayed. Similarly, fragments of school uniform (white brinylon shirts, school ties) were symbolically defiled (the shirts covered in graffiti, or fake blood; the ties left undone) and juxtaposed against leather drains or shocking pink mohair tops. The perverse and the abnormal were valued intrinsically.

(107)

Ultimately, as John Lydon articulated, by 1978 punk rock – including its eccentric fashion sense – had become a victim of its own irony: “Punk became a circus, didn't it? Everybody got it wrong. The message was supposed to be: Don't follow us, do what you want” (Lydon, “What is Punk”). Nonetheless, the effect

and influence of the genre was such that in 1991 author and journalist Jon Savage stated: "Many of the people whose lives were touched by punk talk of being in a state of shock ever since" (ctd in Sabin, *Punk Rock*, 1).

PERTH IS A CULTURE SHOCK

By 1976 this countercultural artform had arrived in Perth, championed by a self-taught musician named James Baker. Born in 1954, Baker started his rock'n'roll career, like most local rock musicians, in the cover band scene. However, a series of pivotal album releases dramatically altered his creative direction – The Stooges' eponymous debut (1969) and The MC5's *Back in the USA* (1970). The release of the New York Dolls' self-titled debut proved even more affecting on Baker, prompting him to form his inaugural original band in 1973, Black Sun. Styling his group directly on the New York Dolls, Baker would soon rebrand his band The Slick City Boys. The band, however, was short lived, ending within 12 months in 1974.

A heavy consumer of the US and UK music press – including *Creem*, *Rock Scene*, *Circus Magazine*, *American Rolling Stone* and *The New Musical Express* – Baker was by now becoming aware of an embryonic music scene taking shape in New York. Directly inspired by his idols The New York Dolls, Iggy Pop and The Velvet Underground, these new bands – as we have learnt – included The Ramones, Television and The Modern Lovers. Baker resigned from his job as a clerk at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in late 1976 and travelled to New York and CBGB to witness the punk phenomenon. He then travelled to London where he would meet Sid Vicious, unsuccessfully audition for The Clash and witness an early performance by The Sex Pistols. In 1977 Baker returned to Perth with eyewitness accounts of what had by now alchemised globally into punk rock. Dave Faulkner recalls Baker's return to Perth, and the influence of his firsthand experience with punk:

James was definitely like Marco Polo or something. He had eyewitness accounts; he hung out with Sid Vicious and seen The Flamin' Groovies. He just knew these people. He'd been to these cool clubs we'd only seen in magazines. (Personal interview)

Baker returned to Perth determined to found the city's first punk group. However, two groups had by now already formed either side of the Swan River - The Cheap Nasties and The Geeks. The Cheap Nasties were formed by fine art student Kim Salmon after reading an article in *NME* in 1975 by journalist Charles Shaar Murray, entitled "Are you Alive to the Jive of Seventy Five" (5-6). The article was the first extensive account of the New York punk scene available in Perth, and a major catalyst in the foundation of the city's native punk scene.

Featuring Mark Betts on drums, Ken Seymour on bass and Salmon on guitar and vocals, The Cheap Nasties would officially form in August 1976. Neil Fernandes (soon to be a significant identity in Perth's punk movement with The Manikins) joined on guitar in late 1976 - in time for the arrival of The Ramones' eponymous debut album. The Cheap Nasties now had a genuine reference point.²⁵

The Cheap Nasties played their first official show in mid-1977 (there is no record of the precise date, and the interviewees for this project were unable to agree on when, exactly, they first performed) at The Rivervale Hotel in front of a large portrait of popular Greek singer Nana Mouskouri - an ironic gesture signifying the band's intent on attacking the cultural mainstream. Witnessing the band's debut would be Mark Demetrius (later of The Exterminators), Rod Radalj and Boris Sudjovic (who would eventually form the core rhythm section of The Scientists), Dave Faulkner (The Victims' future singer) and James Baker; who by now had joined The Geeks.

Perth's "other" first punk band, The Geeks, were formed when, on returning to Perth, Baker answered an advertisement in *The Sunday Times'* classifieds section looking for a singer for a "blasting band - must love punk

Ramones, Iggy Pop. Exp not nec" (Buncle, *Perth Punk*). It was 27 March 1977 and the advertisement's source was Ross Buncle, who had formed his own punk band – featuring a singer who went by the singular name Lloyd and bass player Dave Cardwell – after reading of the New York scene in the very same music press as Kim Salmon. An audition was arranged and Baker was accepted into the band; albeit on percussion, with Lloyd retaining vocal duties. Baker would become the band's co-songwriter, with Buncle.

Rehearsing each Sunday at Buncle's rented house in Scarborough, the group wrote a collection of original songs including "I Like Iggy Pop", "There is No Way Out", "I'm Flipped Out Over You", "I Wanna be Slick and Pick Up Chicks Like You" and "I'm a TV Freak", readying themselves for what Buncle believed would be Perth's inaugural punk performance. However, The Cheap Nasties would beat The Geeks to the stage. Of the Cheap Nasties performance, Lloyd recalls:

We rolled up to the Nasties' debut gig at The Rivervale Hotel with a – let's say – rather negative attitude to the proceedings. And we weren't disappointed. They were all decked out in regulation punk uniforms – leather jackets, shades, jeans, and sneers. (ctd in Buncle, *Perth Punk*)

As it transpired, The Geeks would never perform live on stage. At The Cheap Nasties' debut concert James Baker befriended Dave Faulkner and together they decided to form a new group, along with Dave Cardwell. A professional musician, playing keyboards in Perth's most celebrated blues band at the time The Beagle Boys, Dave Faulkner had been brought to punk music, like the majority of the city's punk movement, through The Velvet Underground, Iggy Pop and The MC5, plus the articles he had read in the foreign music papers. With Baker on drums, Cardwell – who renamed himself Rudolph V – on bass, and Faulkner on guitars and vocals, Perth's most acclaimed punk band, The Victims, was born.

In a matter of weeks The Victims had secured the band's first public performance, playing Dave Warner's former residency at The Governor Broome Hotel. A "derelict" and "seedy" Northbridge pub, according to Ray Purvis, on the corner of William and Roe Streets, The Governor Broome would inadvertently become punk headquarters thanks to Baker's securing of a weekly performance for the band. The Victims' debut public performance was a double bill with The Cheap Nasties, and would prove a pivotal point in WA music history. It was late 1977 and, with the release of the Sex Pistols' debut LP *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols* in October, punk music was now experiencing worldwide notoriety. Ross Buncle recalls the dramatic effect The Victims' debut had on Perth's music scene:

At the first Victims gig at The Governor Broome I overheard at least two spontaneous 'wanna form a punk band?' invitations being issued between punters during the night. This was rebellious in the context of the Perth music scene of the time, because all the cover bands comprised musos who were reasonably competent at their instruments, and the punks assigned musical proficiency a very low priority. If you wanted to form a band, you didn't need to know how to play! This was both liberating, and limiting, but whatever way you looked at it, it was rebellious! (Personal interview)

The Victims were unquestionably the most influential local punk band of the 1970s, and would inspire Perth's first wave of punk artists – amongst them The Exterminators, Blök Musik, The Hitler Youth, The Marilyn's, The Susans and Sad Sack & The Bags. Of the band's debut performance, James Baker recounts: "It was the first time I experienced the real power of music. The power you can have over other people" (Baker, personal interview). With a repertoire that included punk standards of the day, ex-Geeks material and original compositions such as "Open Your Eyes", The Victims developed their repertoire at a rental house in

East Perth, across the road from Claisebrook train station. The property became known as Victims Manor. Kim Salmon explains the significance of the property, and its place in Perth punk's development:

I remember helping The Victims clean out Victims Manor before anyone moved in. I remember doing this with Television's *Marquee Moon* playing on a record player and thinking this is a new era and feeling part of something. We cleaned out all the hippie dirt with disgust. It was the venue for much drunken revelry and debauchery. It ended up being far filthier than the earlier hippie residents had left it. (Personal interview)

It was during this period, late in 1977, that The Victims wrote "Television Addict". Underwritten by a menacing bass line, ominous percussion and an anthemic refrain, the song would become Perth's most enduring contribution to punk's global canon. Co-written by Baker and Faulkner, "Television Addict" has been widely covered by subsequent artists both in Australia and abroad.²⁶ It would be released as a single in late 1977 (there is no record of the precise date), with "I'm Flipped Out Over You" – a Geeks original – as the b-side. One thousand copies were pressed and all sold. Interestingly, the single was re-released in 2012 by Japanese label 1977 Records, demonstrating the continued reach and influence of the song. Perth officially had its first punk rock stars.

By the end of 1977 The Victims were looking to expand their audience numbers. With mainstream pubs and venues uninterested in hosting punk bands, Baker approached the manager of an Italian restaurant and cabaret bar in East Perth, named Hernando's Hideaway,²⁷ suggesting a weekly performance. It was agreed, and The Victims had a new Thursday night residency. As Buncle recalls: "now we had our very own CBGB's" (*Perth Punk*). In February 1978 *The Sunday Independent* thought the local punk scene newsworthy enough to run a double page spread on The Victims and the wider Hernando's Hideaway-

centred movement, authored by Ray Purvis.²⁸ For most WA residents, this would be their introduction to the local punk scene.

However, the group that had inaugurated the local punk scene, The Cheap Nasties had by now terminated. Salmon left the band in December 1977 to join The Invaders (formerly The Exterminators) and was interested in branching away from purest punk (Salmon, personal interview). Replaced by Robbie Porritt on vocals, The Cheap Nasties evolved into Veneers and finally The Manikins. The Manikins would become second only to The Victims in terms of local popularity. On The Manikins' challenge to The Victims, guitarist Neil Fernandes recounts: "I never wanted that crown...of thorns. Yes we thought we were breaking new ground because, at the time, the bands that we all went to hear were blues bands. We could hardly play. We had no pedigree" (personal interview).

In early 1978 and at the pinnacle of the band's fame, The Victims released their 7" EP commonly known as *No Thanks to the Human Turd*. A collection of three Geeks songs and two Faulkner/Baker co-writes, 500 copies were pressed. On Friday, April 21, 1978 The Victims staged WA's largest punk show yet: The Leederville Punk Festival, at the Leederville Town Hall (advertised as the New Wave Festival). Doors opened at 7.30pm, entry was \$2 and the line-up featured The Exterminators, The Orphans (Buncle's new project following The Hitler Youth), Sad Sack & The Bags (featuring future music journalist Mark Demetrius), the debut of Blök Musik (fronted by David McComb, future leader of The Triffids) and The Victims. The show would be The Victims' last. The band would reform briefly in 1979; however Dave Faulkner's interests in music had by now shifted away from "pure" punk to a more traditional form of rock'n'roll - manifesting in the formation of Le Hoodoo Gurus (later, simply Hoodoo Gurus) with James Baker in 1981 (Faulkner, personal interview). With both The Cheap Nasties and The Victims now disbanded, Perth's first wave of punk rock had come to an abrupt conclusion.

ARSEHOLE OF THE UNIVERSE

It is time here to pose the question: why did such a countercultural movement take root in Perth? When The Cheap Nasties inaugurated the local scene at The Rivervale Hotel in 1977, Perth was a city enjoying the rewards of a resources boom which, according to a report published by WA's Department of Treasury and Finance, caused average household income to "more than double" from 1960-61 figures (which the Treasury notes had remained largely unchanged from as far back as 1948-49) (22). Unlike the dramatic economic and social upheaval in the US and UK, Western Australia was largely middle class, egalitarian and enjoying envious unemployment figures of five per cent; a low that would not be achieved again until April 2004 (Gallop, "Unemployment"). As Ross Buncle notes:

The Perth punk scene was essentially a middle class avant-garde arts movement. There was little of that working class anti-government stance that was an essential part of the UK scene. A large proportion of the prominent musicians came from private school backgrounds. (Personal interview)²⁹

For Perth's first punks, what was there to bemoan and rally against? The answer is revealed in the city's first consciously penned punk song of the era, The Geeks' "I Like Iggy Pop" with lyrics by James Baker:³⁰

I hate, I hate, I hate, I hate
I hate marijuana pendants
I hate disco junkies
I hate *Cosmopolitan*
I like Iggy Pop...
I hate the radio

I hate ELO

I like Iggy Pop

This was not revilement against inequity, or some artistic précis of a hopeless and blank generation. Instead, Perth punk's quarrel would be with ennui and the city's conservative and providential existence – and the things that symbolised that existence, including (for Baker at least) Electric Light Orchestra, disco and commercial radio. The city's physical and cultural isolation, combined with an apathetic sense of self, would, as Ray Purvis suggests, offer fertile ground for punk to seed amidst the disaffected urban minority. Finally, this minority had a sound and attitude that could exemplify and espouse their feelings of alienation, however trivial.

Perhaps most liberating of all, according to Ross Buncle, was that you did not even need to be musically endowed to take part (personal interview). Kim Salmon explains: "The counterculture of the time was really born out of comfort, wealth and complacency and a desire to act out things that people in other places were forced to do" (personal interview). Salmon's first countercultural punk song would be the one from which his band would take its name, "Cheap 'N' Nasty":³¹

I don't want to be a nice boy
I won't come to the party
We're made for each other
Cheap 'n' nasty

The Victims, too, made their dissatisfaction with their hometown sonic with the group's composition "Perth is a Culture Shock":

Perth is a culture shock
Perth is a culture shock

Perth is a culture shock
And this is where I'm born
Perth is a culture shock
Perth is a culture shock
Perth is a culture shock
It is a real bore

The punks were clearly singing from a different score to Rolf Harris, who had penned his own dedication expressly for the sesquicentenary celebrations, entitled "Back to WA".

I wanna go back to WA
That's the only place for me
I've been to Honolulu and I've seen Hong Kong
Took the tourist bus to Europe
And I've seen the Tagalong
They're quite delightful places
But they're hardly worth the song
I wanna go back...To WA!

With nine thousand miles between him and home, Harris's nostalgic song embodied the celebratory and self-congratulatory spirit of WAY '79 and prevailing idyllic image of Western Australia. The author of "Perth is a Culture Shock", Dave Faulkner, argues that Perth, in his reality at least, was completely contrary to the city Harris immortalised.

The punks really were very negative about Perth and we felt like, basically, we were in prison. We just felt we had to get out because this place is suffocating us, because we're surrounded by all these cover bands and things that to us were despicable. (Personal interview)

While this unreserved verbal and musical assault on Perth was of itself rebellious, when coupled with punk's vehement disdain for the establishment music scene, its melodious affront to the light pop preferences of the masses, as well as its clear departure from the traditional British-centric musical influences of the past, punk's objective was nothing short of radical in its local context.³²

Ross Buncle:

Perth was a sort of negative inspiration for us. We got off on dissing the place. Much of our discontent stemmed from the musical milieu: the established blues scene, which I found boring, self-important, closed and elitist, and irrelevant; the shit-boring cover band scene and, of course, fucking disco! We felt that we were the only sane people in the place, the only ones who had any taste and knew what was going on, on the frontline of rock'n'roll. In a sense, Perth's backwater status gave us a foothold – an extra motivation to form the only punk band in the land, as far as we knew! We felt as if we were the only true punk initiates in the city, bravely going where no one had gone before! And it felt great.

(Personal interview)

Australian punk was not exclusive to Perth. Brisbane would also play a major role in forming a global punk scene, providing Australia's most renowned punk band of the era in The Saints. Formed in 1974, The Saints are typically credited as the country's epitome of the genre, with the contribution of the anthemic "(I'm) Stranded" to the canon.³³ The Saints, however, would be borne of a very different political climate; from a state governed by ultra-conservative Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Historically a divisive Premier, Bjelke-Petersen would call a state of emergency after widespread protests in 1971, keep detailed dossiers on student and union protesters and in 1977 effectively ban public protest in refusing

permits (Stratton, "Pissed On Another Planet", 11). As David Nichols writes in his book on Brisbane post-punk group The Go-Betweens:

To follow the kind of lifestyle that people in other Australian cities took for granted – going out for the night, hearing a few rock bands who played music relevant to your world, drinking – was infused, in Brisbane, with a special kind of danger. The police could arrest you at any time, and effectively they could do what they wanted with you. (*The Go-Betweens*, 31)

Like The Clash and Sex Pistols, The Saints had reason to channel anger through the band's music. Western Australia, too, was governed by a conservative Premier for much of the 1970s.³⁴ However, with controversy largely manifested in Indigenous land rights issues in the State's distant north,³⁵ politics was largely not of concern for Perth punks – at least not consciously, according to Blök Musik/The Triffids' David McComb:

The Triffids were born to two teenagers in the Perth of the late 70's (sic) – a weird little historical and geographical interstice if ever there was one. This was Perth of Norman Gunston, clear blue skies, watersports, all-night TV horrorthons, Hungry Jacks, the WAFL, the P76, the Noonkanbah episode [a reference to a land rights dispute in the far north of the State], and more watersports. Politics was a distant rumble. There were slim pickings for precocious Stooges/Velvets/Eno fans. But anything was fair game to escape the heat and boredom of the world's most isolated capital city perched on a thin strip of arable coast between the desert and the Indian Ocean. ("Triffids Biography")

Nevertheless, the wider community was not without its anxieties concerning punk, heeded by the infamy of The Sex Pistols and the band's apparent

propagation of immorality in Britain. As late as 1981 the WA media was running reports on punk's imminent threat, including the popular ABC current affairs program *Nationwide*, which ran a feature profiling "skinhead" punk band Quick and the Dead.³⁶ Reporting on violent crowd behaviour at a Tuesday night performance at Adrian's Nightclub, journalist John Mills narrates:

Violence isn't part of the lifestyle of most people in Perth. It's an ugly, unnecessary and usually unlawful deviation from the easygoing, good-natured living that most people prefer. But these aren't most people - they are loosely called punks or punk rockers and to them violence is simply part of their lifestyle.

Mills maintains that the "good-natured" people of Perth have "so far failed to give the cult an accepted place in Perth's night-time scene", however "while there may now be only a few hundred, and while media attention may only encourage them, there is a thought that they could be the beginning of something bigger and something less easier to live with". Ray Purvis agrees:

There may not have been absolute fear of punk in Perth, but there was most certainly an almost universal apprehension towards the punks - a suspicion of these misfits who looked and sounded so very different to anything else. The punks were clearly not conforming to mainstream expectations, and no one on the outside really knew or understood what they were capable of. Little did they know the punks were more often than not genial, well-educated, middle class boys. Punk's battle against Perth was less physical and abrasive than in Britain, but no less subversive. (Personal interview)

In his work "Pissed on Another Planet: The Perth Sounds of the 1970s and 1980s", Jon Stratton suggests the political response to punk's threat in WA was more subtle than in Queensland:

In Perth, Court's government took a different tack from Bjelke-Petersen's in dealing with the 'punk' manifestation of inner city life. While it did closely police punk gigs, the government was in the position to more or less destroy what little inner city Perth had under the guise of slum clearance and urban renewal, an extension of the rebuilding of Perth city. Post-1980s Northbridge is the result of this. (12)

Sydney would also proffer numerous punk acts. As well as The Coloured Balls and Purple Hearts, Radio Birdman would come second to The Saints in global recognition, writing the widely acclaimed "New Race" and "Aloha Steve and Danno". Melbourne also developed a fertile punk scene with Boys Next Door, fronted by the singer and songwriter Nick Cave.

Back in Perth the punks were largely oblivious to The Saints, Radio Birdman and Boys Next Door – entrapped by the city's complete physical and cultural isolation (a fact which would underwrite Perth's unique and independent music scene, as argued by the 2009 documentary *Something in the Water*, produced and directed by Aidan O'Bryan). Besides the limited import recordings stocked at 78 Records, Dada's and the since-closed White Rider Records on William Street, Perth had no way of gauging what was happening on the east coast beyond word-of-mouth.

Five years before the music video format was popularised by MTV in 1981 and more than two decades before Internet sites such as Napster made possible the instant dissemination of music files, 1970s Perth – including its punk music scene – was hermetically sealed.³⁷ Besides Ray Purvis's niche-audience "Shake Some Action" radio program on 6NR, punk received little or no radio airtime in Perth – least of all from leading commercial broadcaster, 6PM. As such, east coast

groups like Boys Next Door, The Saints and Radio Birdman would prove little more than retrospective curiosities for most West Australian punks and punk music fans, having no significant influence on the West Australian scene in the 1970s.

Only with the arrival of the 1980s and Perth's first dedicated alternative music venues – including Adrian's and The Red Parrot nightclubs, both situated in the suburb of Northbridge – were such groups able to consider travelling to Perth to perform. However, few would actually make the journey, considering the prohibitive costs of travel at the time for such bands of limited commercial viability. As Kim Salmon writes in the liner notes accompanying The Scientists' compilation album *Pissed on Another Planet*: "Getting to the Eastern States meant a three day drive across the desert or forking out for an airfare comparable to an overseas flight – and that was just to get to Adelaide".

Independent community radio would not arrive in Perth until April of 1977 (6UVS-FM, the genesis of today's RTR-FM), and Double J (soon-to-be Triple J) was more than a decade from broadcasting into Perth. Ross Buncle argues the lack of east coast influence over Perth's punk scene made for an indigenous and unified punk sound.

There was zero national cross-pollination in Perth. Due to the isolation of Perth and its initially small punk scene, the potential for prominent individuals to influence others and other bands was greater than it might have been in bigger cities. (Personal interview)

It was from this cultural biosphere that a uniquely West Australian brand of punk had formed. In naively endeavouring to recreate the fragments of sound and sight sampled from import LPs and magazines, Salmon, Faulkner, Buncle, Fernandes and Baker were – in Patti Smith and Joe Strummer's rendering of the genre as an expression of "freedom" – inadvertently inventing punk. Journalist

Keith Cameron argued this point in an article on punk rock's origins for Britain's *The Guardian Newspaper* in 2007:

Unlike the UK and US scenes, which were concentrated in London and New York, where musicians could feed off each other, Australian punks were scattered across the vastness of the country, and had only the flimsiest idea of what punk even meant. ("Come the Revolution")

Perth's punks – along with their audience – were compelled to manufacture what would become a uniquely West Australian genome in the DNA of punk rock. It was a sound that owed as much to the sardonic larrikinism of Dave Warner as to the frantic riffs of The Ramones. The official media release accompanying *The Scientists' Pissed on Another Planet* compilation of 2004 would endeavour to capture this sentiment:

New York, London, Sex Pistols, The Clash, The Ramones, 1977 this is what pops into most people's heads when the subject of 'Punk Rock' is brought up. First you have these, then you have rock as we know it now, with Nirvana and Seattle somewhere in between. If only anything was that simple! Take for instance Perth, Western Australia a place known for being the most isolated capital city in the world as much as it is for anything else. In the late '70s Perth actually had a thriving punk rock scene of its own, developing independently of what was going on elsewhere in the country. From that scene was spawned The Scientists.

The Perth scene grew independent of, and in tandem with, analogous scenes in the UK, US and the east coast of Australia, and its hallmark became a somewhat sarcastic assault on a city that the genre's proponents perceived as a cultural wasteland. That, and lamentations on juvenile love: "I Wanna be Slick and Pick Up Chicks Like You" and "Epileptic Love" (The Geeks), "High School Girls" and

“(I’m) Flipped Out Over You” (The Geeks and The Victims), “Love at Second Sight” and “Mean to Me” (The Manikins), and “Frantic Romantic” (The Scientists) being noteworthy examples.

By 1978, and with the beginning of WA’s sesquicentenary rapidly approaching, the punk scene was propagating, culminating in the aforementioned Leederville Punk Festival. The Orphans – formed in 1978 from the remnants of The Geeks and The Hitler Youth (a band that authored its own anti-Perth dedication in “Nothin’ to Do”) – adopted the prevalent sentiment of the local punk scene with their song “Bored”:

Well you get up in the morning and there’s nothin’ to do
I’m bored, I’m bored
You find no fun in the night time too
I’m bored, I’m bored

The Exterminators, featuring Mark Demetrius, also composed a tribute to Perth entitled “Arsehole of the Universe” – although the song would never be recorded. Ray Purvis argues that, until The Leederville Punk Festival and the sudden dissolution of The Victims, Perth’s punk scene remained truly unique:

Until it became just another fashion, these were middle class kids from good backgrounds playing punk as they knew it – informed by the trade papers, but otherwise completely insulated from the global movement. In this way the Perth punk scene was completely unique. It had its own flavour – a distinctly West Australian outlook, which was “I am sick and tired of the mediocrity and sheer boredom of life in this town – so let’s make a hell of a racket, and give the establishment the middle finger”.
(Personal interview)

YOUNG AND RESTLESS

We can roughly date Perth's first punk scene from the formation of The Cheap Nasties in August 1976 to the demise of The Victims in April 1978 - less than two years in total. Although the most popular of the local punk groups, The Victims experienced great resistance from the wider community, according to James Baker. Dave Faulkner recalls the power source being disconnected by venue management at both The Waverley and The Kewdale hotels in protest at the band's performance, appearance and sound. Frustrated, Faulkner decided to leave the band to pursue new opportunities, thus ending the brief existence of The Victims. The Orphans would take over residency of Hernando's Hideaway and The Manikins stepped forward as the symbolic leaders of the local punk scene.³⁸ However, by the end of 1978 The Manikins had become a widely popular group in Perth, having crossed over into mainstream venues such as The Shenton Park Hotel and Broadway Tavern in Nedlands with an updated and less abrasive sound, by now categorised as new wave. Neil Fernandes believes The Manikins always had commercial potential beyond punk:

I always thought the Manikins were a pop band, unashamedly. I always thought we should have been played on radio, like ABBA. I'd begun, by that time, to resent all that inner city clique that the punk scene had become. I wanted to play the 'burbs and have 'ordinary' people to come along and hear us play, and dance. I thought that if you took the songs out of the scene they'd stand up on their own. We did and they did. (Personal interview)

By late 1978 the global punk scene had evolved beyond its purest tradition, and Perth's practitioners of the genre mirrored this trend. New wave, skinhead, mod-revivalism, hardcore and power pop would all emerge as integral genres in the local live music scene. Ross Buncle argues: "Punk was all over as far as I was

concerned. Very disillusioned at the path punk had taken – usurped by the music industry moneymen and fashionistas – I turned my back on it completely” (personal interview).

In May of 1978 James Baker joined Kim Salmon in The Invaders, however the band would not last. Meeting on the veranda of Victims Manor they decided to relaunch as The Scientists, and commenced rehearsing a style of music that would polarise the local punk community and be largely ignored by the mainstream. As Kim Salmon recounts:

The Scientists were scorned in Perth. There was no initial success. We weren’t English enough and we had elements of pop in our sound, which was frowned upon. We were too loud and were criticised for our bad sound. People didn’t get our image either. We had to travel to the eastern states to get any recognition. (Personal interview)

The Scientists went on to influence alternative rock globally with albums such as 1983’s mini LP *Blood Red River* and 1984’s complete album *This Heart Doesn’t Run on Blood, This Heart Doesn’t Run on Love*, and a sound Jon Stratton refers to in “The Scientists and Grunge: Influence and Globalised Flows” as “radical” (1). While the Scientists’ new “swamp rock” sound would experience limited commercial success, the band would have a significant influence on the future “grunge” movement, including bands such as Mudhoney and Nirvana (Stratton, “Scientists and Grunge”, 2). Salmon has also played a part in numerous other noteworthy Australian rock bands, including Beasts Of Bourbon, The Surrealists and (with Dave Faulkner) Antenna. Faulkner went on to establish one of Australia’s most successful rock bands in the Hoodoo Gurus, and achieved numerous chart hits throughout the 1980s and 1990s with singles “What’s My Scene”, “Bittersweet”, “Come Anytime” and “Miss Freeloove ’69”.³⁹

James Baker played a role in both The Scientists and Le Hoodoo Gurus (as the band was named originally), as well as Beasts of Bourbon – and is still

committed to alternative music today with his band The Painkillers. The little-known Blök Musik, who debuted at The Leederville Punk Festival, would re-emerge in 1979 as The Triffids, with a unique new sound (broadly categorised as post punk, but with a distinctly Australian resonance) with which the group would experience international acclaim.⁴⁰ In acknowledging the influence Perth's punk rock scene had on The Triffids singer and leading songwriter, David McComb, wrote: "Although ostensibly gawky, underage misfits, we immersed ourselves in the Perth Punk scene dominated by the Victims and the Scientists nee the Cheap Nasties" ("Triffids Biography"). Reflecting on the evolution of Perth punk, Mark Demetrius writes:

Punk rock never changed the world. But then some of us never expected it to; it was great as an end in itself. Any movement celebrating minimalism has its limits, by definition...But for music which set out to be ephemeral, an amazing amount of 'punk' has stood the test of time. Considering that Perth is the most isolated city of its size on the planet - maybe partly because of that fact - it produced a particularly healthy and inventive punk/new wave scene. And from that small core of Perth 'pioneers' evolved a surprising number of important, creative and very successful bands in other parts of the country. (ctd in Buncle, *Perth Punk*)

By the beginning of the 1980s Perth's original music scene had finally begun to court national, and international, attention as global interest in alternative music grew. The Scientists were invited to play live on the most popular Australian music television program of the day *Countdown*, The Triffids had relocated to London to record their defining album *Born Sandy Devotional* and The Manikins and Dave Warner's From The Suburbs had emerged as two of the most successful live bands in WA, challenging the dominance of the covers scene. New wave group The Dugites would achieve success on the national singles chart with "In Your Car" and "Juno and Me", and Quick and the Dead, The

Rockets, The Stems and Chad's Tree were evolving punk's sound in vastly different directions – into what is today broadly categorised as “alternative” (meaning non-mainstream) or “indie” (meaning independent, or non-commercial).⁴¹

From the UK and Ireland bands such as New Order, U2 and The Cure would emerge from the embers of the punk scene, while in the US The Pixies, REM and Minor Threat were utilising their punk education to create some of the most significant, diverse and influential music of the 1980s and 1990s. Interviewed for the accompanying DVD to Jacob McMurray's book *Taking Punk to the Masses: From Nowhere to Nevermind* – which charts the rise of grunge and the Seattle scene – on the hegemonic influence of punk over subsequent generations of alternative musicians, Minor Threat's Ian MacKaye commented:

It was outside of the industry – it was true rock'n'roll. It was underground, and out of state, government or corporate sponsorship. It was just done on the energy of these kids alone. It kicked open doors...later on it became okay for anyone to play music; it was part of a process of reclaiming culture for young people.

In 1982 Perth's first alternative music magazine, *The 5 O'Clock News*, began publishing – relaunched in 1985 by publisher Joe Cipriani as *X-Press Magazine*. *X-Press* remains the longest running street press in Australia and one of the most popular, printing 38,000 editions weekly.⁴² Alternative inner-city music venues such as Adrian's Nightclub, The Red Parrot and The Cat & Fiddle would also emerge amidst established cover band venues, offering a stage to live original music and a home to Perth's wider counterculture. Ray Purvis believes the arrival of *X-Press* and the alternative clubs to be monumental:

It was during this period Perth's alternative music scene truly began to find its footing. Punk made it all possible, but the '80s consolidated it into

a more formal – and somewhat professional – original music scene. The covers scene still maintained a stranglehold on the city but, thanks to clubs like Adrian's, alternative musicians and fans finally had somewhere to go to share the music, ideas and – of course – a few drinks. From this period, and in the wake of punk, came many of WA's defining acts, including The Triffids and The Scientists. (Personal interview)

In 1989 youth radio broadcaster Triple J finally crossed the State's frontier, uniting Perth with the rest of the continent's alternative musical output for good. Then, in 1991, US alternative/grunge band Nirvana released *Nevermind* – a recording that would go on to sell more than 30 million copies worldwide and prove one of the most pivotal in the history of popular music. As Jon Stratton noted, the band's frontman Kurt Cobain had cited Kim Salmon as a defining influence on his music. Thus, as *Nevermind* crossed over into a commercial realm – peaking at number two on Australia's album charts – record label scouts, including Sony Music's John O'Donnell, began searching for new talent within the alternative music genre.

From Perth, Sony Music signed Jebediah, Ammonia and Beeverloop, while Effigy signed to Roadrunner, Allegiance to Polygram and Eskimo Joe to Universal, through the Modular label. The Big Day Out alternative music festival would add Perth to its itinerary in 1993, and go on to become one of the most popular events on the global music calendar, as reported by *The Australian Newspaper* (Shedden, "Rocking"). In later years the festival promoters would give main-stage spots to a significant number of West Australian alternative acts, including Eskimo Joe, Jebediah, Birds Of Tokyo, The John Butler Trio, The Waifs and Drapht. As Jebediah's 1997 debut single put it so succinctly, the sounds of Perth's underground were finally "Leaving Home".⁴³

MAKIN' A SCENE

As Australia's fourth largest city – and one of its most homogenous and unassuming – Perth seems an unlikely source for such innovative, idiosyncratic and far-reaching groups as Empire Of The Sun, Tame Impala, The John Butler Trio, Pond and The Panics. As it did for the punks, the city's remoteness has undoubtedly played a dominant role in casting such a unique and self-sustainable alternative music scene – an argument explored in the 2009 documentary *Something in the Water*. Neil Fernandes believes there to be a direct link between the city's remoteness and the calibre of its fertile music scene: "It did strike me, when the Manikins first toured east in 1979, that our isolation could be an advantage. I thought that we were genuinely original. I didn't hear another band like us" (personal interview).

It was from what Kim Salmon describes as a "hopeless void" (personal interview) – both physical and cultural – that a small group of musicians and their audience would stage Western Australia's first, albeit haphazard, musically-based countercultural assault. Channelling the aural dissidence of the rock'n'roll rebels who had come before them – including progenitors Bon Scott and Dave Warner (but without direct reference to either) – the punks united en masse at The Governor Broome, Hernando's Hideaway and The Leederville Punk Festival to issue a genuine challenge to the hegemony of inertia and boredom that – as Geoffrey Bolton writes (see his "WAY 1979: Whose Celebration?") – had beleaguered the Swan River Colony since its inception. In doing so they would engineer, with their global counterparts, an enduring form of musical and countercultural expression, ensuring Perth's place alongside New York, London, Manchester, Detroit and Brisbane as a birthplace of the global punk rock movement.

Ross Buncle argues that punk gave the culturally disaffected a voice and ownership of a global totem of revolt, which they rendered into their own. "There probably was a feeling of all being part of something greater – a musical

revolution, if you like" (personal interview). This is a sentiment seconded by Dave Cardwell, bassist for both The Geeks and The Victims:

What no one understood back then was we were all contributing to history in the city of Perth, even if we were only part of a very small group of people doing what we were doing. (ctd in Buncle, *Perth Punk*).

In his essay "Too Low to be Low: Art Pop and the Sex Pistols", Robert Garnett argues that, whilst there is no single means to explain the emergence and lingering effects of the movement, the punks were clearly "singing from somewhere else, someplace that hadn't existed before and that only existed for a brief moment in time. It was a zone that was neither high nor low; it was a space between art and pop" (17). Unlike other popular music subcultures (including the hippie movement), punk rock – according to writer Frank Cartledge – was not absorbed by popular culture. Rather, punk forced mainstream popular culture to shift its own paradigms by dismantling pre-existing symbolic hierarchies and expanding the palette of cultural goods available, right down to dress and behaviour. Cartledge continues:

Whilst punk's cultural identity can be interpreted as resistance, it can also be regarded as an assertion of difference, implying not only an antagonistic relationship to a broader culture, but an internal construction of an identity that could also be termed pro-active as opposed to reactive. ("Distress to Impress", 151).

More than three decades after punk rock first issued its aural challenge, Perth's alternative music scene has become something to celebrate. In 2004 the Western Australian Museum launched "Spin", an extensive exhibition of WA's rich musical heritage. In 2011 the Museum furthered its interest in the city's less salubrious musical history with one of the institution's most successful

exhibitions, “Family Jewels”, on the life of Bon Scott and AC/DC – attracting more than 50,000 visitors (*Western Australian Museum Annual Report*, 9). Each year since 1989 the State Government has provided funding to The West Australian Music Association, which since 1994 has run the WAMi Awards and Festival, celebrating and showcasing WA’s independent music scene.⁴⁴

Bob Gordon – formerly Managing Editor of *X-Press Magazine* and curator of “Spin” – is certain of the foundational role the punk music scene has played in Perth’s enduring alternative music industry:

To my mind, there is no question that the punk scene kicked open the door for the wider indie music scene in Perth. Without the pioneering work of people like Kim Salmon, Dave Faulkner and James Baker, and a little later Dave McComb, Perth would never be what it is today – an exciting, emerging metropolis with arguably the strongest, and most creative music scene in the country. Their dogged assault on the establishment laid the foundation for the enlightened city we celebrate today. (Personal interview)

With the band’s 2004 album *A Song Is A City*, popular West Australian group Eskimo Joe articulated the intrinsic link between song and place.⁴⁵ Similarly, in his study on urban development, *The Fourth Pillar Of Sustainability: Culture’s Essential Role In Public Planning*, cultural theorist Jon Hawkes notes:

Before art became an industry manufacturing commodities or an economic development strategy, before it was used as a band-aid to disguise social inequity, before it became a badge of superiority, before it became a decorative embellishment, it was (and remains) the paramount symbolic language through which shifting meanings are presented...No attempt to characterise the temper of a time can be meaningful without

referring to the arts of that time. After the fact, the arts of an era remain its most accurate reflection. (23)

Punk's "accurate reflection" of Perth may not have been flattering, but would prove critical in that – as demonstrated in this work – it confronted what it saw as the city's parochial roots and traditionalist cultural narrative. Although the punk scene would last less than two years, its influence empowered subsequent generations of alternative musicians with the capacity to maintain and fortify the challenge, and eventually shift the cultural paradigms – thus becoming an integral facet of the city's unique contemporary cultural identity.

Nearly four decades on from penning his first major act of sonic dissidence in "I Like Iggy Pop", James Baker is adamant that punk's effect on West Australian culture and identity was both radical and permanent: "We were fighting a musical cause. It was 'get fucked' to everything! It was great. We were fighting everything that was Perth in the '70s. And – take a look around – we won" (personal interview).

NOTES

¹ Miss Universe 1979 would make international headlines for a stage collapse in which a number of contestants and journalists were injured. For further details see Gregory, Jenny. *City of Light*.

² Charles, Prince of Wales' visit to Perth would also make global headlines for reasons other than his official function in WAY '79 – namely a photograph of him being kissed by bikini-clad model Jane Priest in the swell at Cottesloe Beach in March, 1979. See Gregory, Jenny. *City of Light*, for further details.

³ Outlined "highlights" of the *WAY '79 Official Programme of Events January 1-June 30* included the Royal visit of Charles, Prince of Wales; a Sound and Light Pageant; motor racing; an agricultural convention; hockey tournament; Philatelic

Exhibition; Miss Universe; an international film festival; and numerous “Family Fiestas”, including steam train excursions and a rural celebration entitled “Hay Fever and Forrest Frolics Festivities”. The “highlights” *July 1-December 31* included the Parmelia Yacht Race; a football tournament; National Eisteddfod; Colonial Ball; Bibbulmun Walk; a golfing tournament; a jazz convention; Indian Ocean Arts Festival (covering music, dance, drama, folk theatre, pictorial arts, puppetry and crafts from “about 30 nations”); and a Scout Jamboree. Sesquicentenary sporting activities were so numerous that a separate, exclusive program was printed.

⁴ Further music events featured in both editions of the *Official Programme of Events* included a National Eisteddfod (which covered music, dance, speech and drama), a jazz convention, opening and closing concerts, folk performances, brass band recitals, Opera Viva, old time music hall and community singing.

⁵ After the original recording peaked at the top of the Australian charts and went top ten in the UK in 1960, “Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport” was rerecorded by Rolf Harris under the production of George Martin in 1962, and became a top ten hit on the US Billboard Hot 100 charts in 1963, reaching number three.

⁶ For further reading on The Beatles’ influence on Australian music see Zion, “The Impact of the Beatles”.

⁷ For further reading on the Mersey Beat scene see Leigh, *Twist and Shout!*.

⁸ Clarion was founded by Martin Clarke and Keith MacGowan in 1962, and was dedicated to recording and releasing WA-based acts. Acts released on Clarion include The Times, Russ Kennedy & The Little Wheels, Roy Hoff & The Off Beats, Glen Ingram, Clem Croft, The Times, The Valentines and Johnny Young &

Kompany. After releasing 120 singles, 20 EPs and 20 LPs the label closed in 1978. The significance of the boutique label's impact can be measured by the number of national Top 40 singles it released, totalling more than 40.

⁹ *Go-Set* was Australia's first pop music-focussed magazine, commencing publication on 2 February 1966. The magazine was published weekly until 24 August 1974, and was a leading influence on the Australian contemporary music scene. *Go-Set* published the country's first Top 40 singles chart, following with a Top 40 weekly albums chart from 23 May 1970. In 1974 the charts would re-emerge as the Kent Music Report, which would evolve into Australia's official national albums and singles charts – today known as the ARIA Charts.

¹⁰ 6PM commenced broadcasting on the AM band on 22 April, 1937. By the 1960s the station was broadcasting a "Top 40" format. In December 1990 the station received a license to convert to the FM band, rebranding itself 92.9 6PM-FM and later PMFM. In the 2000s the station underwent another rebranding, this time to 92.9.

¹¹ For further reading on Bon Scott see: Walker, *Highway to Hell*. For further reading on WA's original bands of the 1950s and 1960s see Mills and Gracie, *Jive, Twist and Stomp*.

¹² The Valentines were formed in late 1966 by members of The Spektors and The Winstons. The band was notable for employing two lead singers – Bon Scott and Vince Lovegrove. By 1968 the band was enjoying success around Australia playing a form of light pop commonly known as "bubblegum". Losing much of its core rock'n'roll fan base, the group disbanded in Perth in August 1970. Bon Scott would go on to join Adelaide-based progressive rock group Fraternity later that year, before joining AC/DC as lead singer on 24 October 1974. Following

The Valentines, Vince Lovegrove became a music writer for *Go-Set* and moved into television production and journalism. In the 1980s he managed Australian rock group The Divinyls. Lovegrove would also author several rock biographies, including the unauthorised *Michael Hutchence: A Tragic Rock'n'Roll Story* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000).

¹³ Born Richard Wayne Penniman, the official Rock'n'Roll Hall of Fame biography describes Little Richard as following: "The flamboyant, screeching rocker Little Richard is one of the genre's true originals. His pounding rock songs, crazy piano playing, and wild, sexual personality cut an indelible image in the early days of rock'n'roll and continue to inspire artists today." For further reading on Little Richard see White, *The Life and Times of Little Richard*.

¹⁴ Founded in 1992, the Perth Blues Club maintains regular nights, and a history and regular updates can be found at www.perthbluesclub.com.

¹⁵ For further reading on pub rock see: Stratton, "Pub Rock and the Ballad Tradition".

¹⁶ A collection of Dave Warner's material from the 1970s can be found on the live collection *Suburbs in the '70s* (Independent, 1999).

¹⁷ Dave Warner's debut novel, *City of Light* (Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 1995) was awarded the prize for Best Fiction Work at the WA Premier's Book Awards in 1996.

¹⁸ *Punk Magazine* was a collaboration between journalist Legs McNeil, cartoonist John Holmstrom and publisher Ged Dunn. The magazine published 15 issues between 1976 and 1979. The magazine was the first publication dedicated to

punk music, as well as other related underground music genres. Magazine covers featured The Ramones, Lou Reed, Iggy Pop, Blondie, Patti Smith and the Sex Pistols.

¹⁹ CBGB was a New York bar founded in 1973. Located in the borough of Manhattan, the name was an acronym of the musical genres country, blue grass and blues. The bar's complete title was CBGB & OMFUG; the latter half an acronym for Other Music for Uplifting Gormandizers. For further reading see: Kristal, *CBGB & OMFUG*.

²⁰ In the UK the Conservative Party, lead by Prime Minister Edward Heath, would govern between 1970-74 and in the US Republican Richard Nixon would preside as President from 1969-74. The first artists to specifically be categorised as punk would emerge from both countries in 1974, having formed their worldview under conservative rule.

²¹ Born Richard Lester Meyers, Richard Hell was a founding member of Television with Tom Verlaine. Hell departed Television in early 1975 to form The Heartbreakers with Jerry Nolan and Johnny Thunders of The New York Dolls. In 1976 Hell left The Heartbreakers to form Richard Hell & the Voidoids, and released the band's debut album *Blank Generation* in September 1977. The album's title track has become a punk standard of the era. Richard Hell & the Voidoids. *Blank Generation* (Sire, 1977).

²² Sid Vicious – born John Simon Ritchie – would die on 2 February 1979 from a heroin overdose. He was on bail at the time, charged with the murder of long-time girlfriend Nancy Spungen. For further reading see: Parker, Alan. *Vicious: Too Fast to Live* (Clerkenwell: Creation Books, 2004).

²³ Although the romantic perception of punk remains one of an insurrection resulting in a cultural revolution, the genre was not without irony and a sense of humour. In his book *Please Kill Me* Legs McNeil describes punk as the following: “It was about advocating kids to not wait to be told what to do, but make life up for themselves, it was about trying to get people to use their imaginations again, it was about not being perfect, it was about saying it was okay to be amateurish and funny, that real creativity came out of making a mess, it was about working with what you got in front of you and turning everything embarrassing, awful, and stupid in your life to your advantage” (334).

²⁴ *Sniffin’ Glue* was a British fanzine founded by Mark Perry in July 1976, and was named in tribute to The Ramones song “Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue”. The magazine ceased publication in 1977.

²⁵ Kim Salmon describes hearing The Ramones’ song “Blitzkrieg Bop” for the very first time as “one of the perfect moments of my life”. (Kim Salmon, “Cheap Nasties”).

²⁶ The Victims’ song “Television Addict” has been covered by Hoodoo Gurus, Sweden’s The Hellcopters, Japan’s Teengenerate, US band Ex-Human and Australian group You Am I. You Am I’s version of the song appeared on the soundtrack to David Caesar’s 1996 film *Idiot Box*.

²⁷ Recordings of The Victims playing Hernando’s Hideaway are available on the band’s retrospective compilation *All Loud on the Western Front* (Timberyard Records, 2005).

²⁸ *The Sunday Independent* (also known as *The Independent*) was a newspaper published by mining entrepreneurs Lang Hancock and Peter Wright from April,

1969 until May, 1986. The newspaper was established in direct competition to *The Sunday Times*, however would eventually be purchased by *The Sunday Times'* publisher News Corporation in 1984 and subsequently closed in 1986. Ray Purvis was its chief music writer.

²⁹ While, in contradiction to the dominant perception of punk, Perth's punk scene was almost exclusively a middle class phenomenon, foreign scenes were not exclusively working class. In response to the myth that punk was strictly the domain of the working class, in November 1977 Pete Price – the editor of the *Heat* fanzine, which was based in Dublin – wrote (spelling and grammar in this quote are sic erat scriptum): “One subject I’ve been thinking about for some time and arguin’ about too is this “punk” elitism thing...All the crap about being unemployed, unable to play, ignorant, cliche, stuff like that. How did it all begin? Why are people hiding their social backgrounds pretending they’re from poor families almost ashamed of their education, qualifications...IT’S HARD TO BE MIDDLE-CLASS AND BE A PUNK it’s a contradiction - right? Wrong. Being in my position, like most of my friends, it's really tough trying to explain to people – morons – that being middle-class; just ordinary salt-of-the-earth sort, and being, into punk-rock as well, is not a contradiction, it’s a reaction against this middle-class ordinary life I lead. It’s being different from the general morass of people...if I were poor, homeless and unemployed, sleeping in hovels & begging to survive, would I be a better “punk” then?” (ctd in Marchetto, Sean. “Tune In, Turn On, Go Punk: American Punk Counterculture 1968-1985”. July. 2001: www.dspace.ucalgary.ca).

³⁰ A recorded version of “I Like Iggy Pop” is available on The Geeks’ retrospective recording *Burned* (Independent, n.d.).

³¹ The Cheap Nasties never recorded or released any music during the band's lifetime, however Kim Salmon (with his band Precious Jules) would record the song "Cheap 'N' Nasty" and release it on the band's 2011 self-titled debut album. *Precious Jules* (Battle Music, 2011).

³² Extrapolating from the primary interviews for this project, it is evident that the US punk bands had a much greater influence on Perth's embryonic punk scene than their UK counterparts. The leading influences on Perth punk were Iggy Pop, The MC5, New York Dolls, The Ramones, Television and The Modern Lovers. This preference for US-originated music might be interpreted as a reaction to the city's traditional, mainstream preference for British music.

³³ Nicholas Rombes' *A Cultural Dictionary of Punk: 1974-1982* describes The Saints as: "Almost too good to be punk." He continues: "There is a radicalness in the anti-performance of it all, as if to underscore the fact that the music is fierce enough: Why create a spectacle on stage when the music is spectacle enough?" (237).

³⁴ Sir Charles Court was elected leader of the Liberal Party in 1973 and would lead the party to victory in Western Australia's State elections of 1974 – when he would assume the role of Premier. Court held the position of Premier until 1982, when he retired from office.

³⁵ Noonkanbah Station would be the battleground for a land rights dispute between the government of Premier Charles Court and the traditional owners of the station, the Yungngora people. The dispute commenced in 1971 with Yungngora employees protesting over pay and conditions, but later became a more public protest in opposition to the government's decision to allow drilling and exploration on the station for oil. The Yungngora people argued the site was

sacred and should not be drilled, however exploration commenced in 1980. Native title of the station was formally recognised in April 2007.

³⁶ Quick and the Dead formed in 1979, originally named Audio Damage. The band was notorious for its live shows, which often erupted in crowd violence. Heavily influenced by “white power” British band Skrewdriver (bass player and founder Murray Holmes joined Skrewdriver briefly in 1984), the band was generally perceived as a “skinhead” punk band with nationalistic sympathies – a perception encouraged by the band’s use of Nazi regalia. The band later evolved into groups named Final Solution and White Noise, further implying its members’ rightwing political beliefs. Quick and the Dead disbanded in 1983, however have reformed intermittently since.

³⁷ Napster – a peer-to-peer file sharing service – was launched in June 1999, enabling users to share MP3 files. The site would close in July 2001 after a legal challenge from American band Metallica over copyright infringement, in which the latter would be successful. Napster filed for bankruptcy in 2002, and would later relaunch as a paid subscription service under new ownership.

³⁸ Live recordings of Orphans playing Hernando’s Hideaway are available on the band’s CD, *Exposed* (Independent, n.d.).

³⁹ A collection of Hoodoo Gurus singles can be found on the band’s 2000 compilation *Ampology* (EMI, 2000)

⁴⁰ For further reading on The Triffids see Coughran and Lucy, eds, *Vagabond Holes*.

⁴¹ As with the punks, to be “independent” would become a badge of honour for many alternative bands – in being non-aligned to the global major record labels that, for the most part, represented everything to which the alternative bands were opposed; including the business relationships between labels such as EMI and Decca with weapons manufacturers (Craig O’Hara, *Philosophy of Punk*, 133).

⁴² Source: CAB Audits April-September 2011.

⁴³ A recorded version of “Leaving Home” is available on Jebediah’s album *Slightly Odway* (Murmur Records, 1997).

⁴⁴ The following information on WAM’s funding was taken from the organisation’s website, www.wam.asn.au (12 May 2012): “In 2002 WAM developed a comprehensive business plan (relating to the period 03 - 05) and as a result became an agency funded on a triennial basis through the Department of Culture and the Arts (formerly ArtsWA).”

⁴⁵ *A Song is a City* (Warner Music, 2004).

WORKS CITED

- Baker, James. Personal interview, 9 Nov 2011.
- Bangs, Lester. Album review: "MC5, *Kick Out The Jams*." *Rolling Stone Magazine*, 5 April. 1969: www.rollingstone.com.
- Bennett, Andy. "Introduction: Music, Space and Place". *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity*, eds Sheila Whiteley, Andy Bennett and Stan Hawkins. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2005, pp. 2-7.
- Bolton, Geoffrey. "WAY 1979: Whose Celebration?" *Celebrations in Western Australian History: Studies in Western Australian History X* (1989): pp. 14-20.
- Buncle, Ross. Personal interview, 22 Aug 2011.
- Cameron, Keith. "Come the Revolution." *The Guardian*, 20 Jul 2007: www.guardian.co.uk.
- Cartledge, Frank. "Distress to Impress?: Local Punk Fashion and Commodity Exchange". *Punk Rock: So What?: The Cultural Legacy of Punk*. Abingdon: Routledge, 1999, pp. 143-153.
- Cohen, Albert. "A General Theory of Subcultures". *The Subcultures Reader*, eds. Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton. Abingdon: Routledge, 1997, pp. 44-54.
- Coughran, Chris and Niall Lucy, eds. *Vagabond Holes: David McComb & The Triffids*. Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2009.
- Department of Treasury and Finance. *An Economic History of Western Australia Since Colonial Settlement*. Perth: Department of Treasury and Finance, 2004.
- Editor. "The Filth And The Fury!" *Daily Mirror*, 2 Dec 1976: pp. 1.

- Editor. "New WAY '79". *The West Australian*, 1 Jan 1979: pp. 1-60.
- Editor." *The Sunday Times*, 31 Dec 1978: pp. 1-22.
- Faulkner, Dave. Personal interview, 7 Sept 2011.
- Fernandes, Neil. Personal interview, 3 Mar 2012.
- Frith, Simon. "Music and Identity". *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay. London: Sage Publications, 2003, pp. 108-127.
- Frith, Simon. "Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music". *Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, ed. Simon Frith. Abingdon: Routledge, 2004, pp. 36-47.
- Gallop, Geoff. "WA's unemployment rate at record low." Government of Western Australia: Ministerial Media Statements, 13 May. 2004: www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au.
- Garnett, Robert. "Too Low to be Low: Art Pop and the Sex Pistols". *Punk Rock: So What?: The Cultural Legacy of Punk*. Abingdon: Routledge, 1999, pp. 17-30.
- Gordon, Bob. Personal interview, 9 Mar 2012.
- Gordon, Milton. "The Concept of the Sub-Culture and its Application". *The Subcultures Reader*, eds. Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton. Abingdon: Routledge, 1997, pp. 40-43.
- Gregory, Jenny. *City of Light: A History of Perth Since the 1950s*. Perth: City of Perth, 2003.
- Grigoriadis, Vanessa. "Remembrances of the Punk Prose Poetess." *New York Magazine*. 10 Jan. 2010: www.nymag.com.

- Hawkes, Jon. *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability: Culture's Essential Role in Public Planning*. Melbourne: Common Ground Publishing, 2001.
- Hebdige, Dick. *Subcultures: The Meaning of Style*. Abingdon: Routledge, 1981.
- Henderson, Amy. "The Flashpoint of Fame". *Elvis 1956*, ed. Alfred Wertheimar. New York: Welcome Books, 2009, pp. 18-19.
- Holmberg, Eric. Dir. *Hell's Bells: The Dangers of Rock'n'Roll*. American Portrait Films, 1989.
- Kristal, Hilly. *CBGB & OMFUG: Thirty Years from the Home of Underground Rock*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2005.
- Kögler, Hans-Herbert. "Music and Identity: Adorno and the Promise of Popular Culture". *Philosophy of Culture*, 2006: www.philosophyofculture.org.
- Letts, Don. Dir. *The Last Testament: The Making of London Calling*. Sony Music, 2004.
- Lydon, John. "What is Punk?". *Flavorwire*, 21 Jun. 2010: www.flavorwire.com.
- McComb, David. "Triffids Biography" Mushroom Music, 1994: www.mushroommusic.com.au.
- McMurray, Jacob. *Taking Punk to the Masses: From Nowhere to Nevermind*. Seattle: Fantagraphics, 2011.
- Mills, John. "Quick and the Dead". *Nationwide*. Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Jun 26 1981.
- Mills, John and Murray Gracie. *Jive, Twist and Stomp: WA Rock & Roll Bands of the 50s and 60s*. Perth: Fremantle Press, 2010.

- Moore, Keith. "The Beatles' Australian Tour". *Social Change in the 21st Century Conference*, eds Barbara Hanna, Laurie Buys, Jennifer Summerville and Emma Woodley. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology, 2002, pp. 1-19.
- Moore, Ryan. "Postmodernism and Punk Subculture: Cultures of Authenticity and Deconstruction". *The Communication Review* 7.3 (2004): 305-327.
- Murray, Charles Shaar. "Are you Alive to the Jive of '75". *New Musical Express*, 8 Nov. 1975: pp. 5-6.
- Nichol, Colin. "History of Rock'n'Roll in Western Australia". *Perth Rocks*, 11 Aug. 2009: www.members.optusnet.com.au/perthrocks.
- Nichols, David. *The Go-Betweens*. Portland: Verse Chorus, 2003.
- O'Bryan, Aidan. Dir. *Something In The Water*. WBMC, 2009.
- O'Donnell, John. Personal interview, 5 Jan 2003.
- O'Hara, Craig. *Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise*. Oakland: AK Press, 2001.
- Buncle, Ross. *Perth Punk*. n.d.: www.perthpunk.com.
- Purvis, Ray. Personal interview, 1 Sep 2011.
- Ratzinger, Cardinal Joseph. *The Spirit Of Liturgy*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000.
- Robb, John. *Punk Rock: An Oral History*. London: Ebury Press, 2006.
- Anonymous. "Sex Pistols Biography". *Rock'n'Roll Hall Of Fame*. n.d.: www.rockhall.com.
- Rombes, Nicholas. *A Cultural Dictionary of Punk: 1974-1982*. New York:

- Continuum, 2009.
- Rombes, Nicholas. "Blank Spectacle: The Long Shadow of the '60s on Punk".
Berfrios, 19 Mar 2012: www.berfrois.com.
- Sabin, Roger. *Punk Rock: So What?: The Cultural Legacy of Punk*. Abingdon:
Routledge, 1999.
- Salewicz, Chris. *Redemption Song: The Ballad of Joe Strummer*. New York: Farrar,
Straus and Giroux, 2007.
- Salmon, Kim. Personal interview, 28 Jul 2011.
- Salmon, Kim. "The Cheap Nasties". *MySpace*, 3 Dec 2008:
www.myspace.com/kimlsalmon.
- Savage, Jon. *England's Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock and Beyond*. New
York: St. Martin's Press, 1991.
- Savage, Jon. "Punk Etymology". *Jon Savage*, 23 Sept 2008: www.jonsavage.com.
- Anonymous. "The Scientists: *Pissed on Another Planet*". *Citadel Records*.
2004.
- Shedden, Iain. "Rocking around the clock and the nation". *The Australian*, 15 Jan
2010: www.theaustralian.com.au.
- Smith, Patti. Album Review: "The Velvet Underground, 1969 *Live*". *Creem
Magazine*: www.oceanstar.com/patti.
- Stratton, Jon. "Brian Poole And The Tremeloes Or The Yardbirds: Comparing

- Popular Music In Perth And Adelaide In The Early 1960s". *Perfect Beat: The Pacific Journal for Research into Contemporary Music and Popular Culture*. 9.1 (2008): pp. 60-77.
- Stratton, Jon. "Do You Want To Know A Secret?: Popular Music In Perth In The Early 1960s". *Illumina: An Academic Journal for Performance, Visual Arts, Communication & Interactive Multimedia*. 1 (2007): www.illumina.sca.ecu.edu.au.
- Stratton, Jon. "Pissed On Another Planet: The Perth Sound of the 1970s and 1980s". *Perfect Beat: The Pacific Journal of Research into Contemporary Music and Popular Culture*. 7.2 (2005): pp. 36-60.
- Stratton, Jon. "Pub Rock and the Ballad Tradition in Australian Popular Music". *Perfect Beat: The Pacific Journal for Research into Contemporary Music and Popular Culture*. 6.4. (2004): pp. 28-54.
- Stratton, Jon. "The Scientists and Grunge: Influence and Globalised Flows". *Australian Rock: Essays on Popular Music*, ed. Jon Stratton. Perth, Network Books, 2007: pp. 1-42.
- Straw, Will. "Systems of Articulation, Logics of Change: Communities and Scenes in Popular Music". *Cultural Studies*. 5.3. (1991): pp. 368-388.
- Vicious, Sid. "Sid Vicious Quotes". *Sid Vicious*: www.sidvicious.co.uk.
- Walker, Clinton. *Highway to Hell: The Life and Times of AC/DC Legend Bon Scott*. Portland: Verse Chorus, 2001.
- Warner, Dave. "Something fishy in the water". *Dave Warner*:

www.davewarner.com.au.

WAY '79. *Official Programme of Events January 1-June 30 1979*. Perth, Government of Western Australia, 1979.

WAY '79. *Official Programme of Events July 1-December 31 1979*. Perth, Government of Western Australia, 1979.

Western Australian Museum. *Annual Report 2010/2011*. Perth: Government of Western Australia: Tabled Papers, 2011.

White, Charles. *The Life and Times of Little Richard*. Boston: Da Capo Press, 1994.

Williams, Alastair. *Constructing Musicology*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2001.

Zion, Lawrence. "The Impact of the Beatles on Pop Music in Australia: 1963-1966". *Popular Music* 6.3 (1987) pp. 291-311.

Every reasonable effort has been made to acknowledge the owners of copyright material. I would be pleased to hear from any copyright owner who has been omitted or incorrectly acknowledged.

NEW FREQUENCIES

FROM PLANET PERTH

Although the most unlikely of sources, Perth would prove pivotal in punk rock's revolution – alongside New York and London. JULIAN TOMPKIN drops the needle on Western Australia's noisy awakening.

The unrelenting scorch had finally eased up, giving fallacious respite to what, until 2011, would remain Perth's most scalding year on record. If the cool change wasn't omen enough, things were severely awry in the self-proclaimed 'most isolated capital city in the world'. Otherwise desolate city streets were frantic; Falcons and Kingswoods sparring for parking spaces in desiccated city backstreets, as bodies scurried down to the otherwise notoriously barren Esplanade lawns – a portent for a city with far too much space and too little to do with it.



Johnny Young

But in the spirit of the night's uncharacteristic upheaval, the seagulls would need to find somewhere else to forage for stale chips, for The Esplanade would tonight play host to the largest public event Western Australia had witnessed since the British Empire And Commonwealth Games rolled into town in 1962. And whilst the record attendance would be trumped only a few months later by The Fabulous Flintstones On Parade, tonight Perth – and WA as a whole – would unite in celebrating the end of 1978 and the beginning of 1979; the year the state would commemorate 150 years of survival.

“Perth had a sort of staid utopian existence in the 1970s. But it was a sterile one. Like paradise had begun to fade on the Hill's Hoist.” RAY PURVIS

The government, under conservative Premier Sir Charles Court, had pulled in the showbiz big guns, determined not to skimp on the festivities. Channel Seven's Fat Cat gave it his all. As did Fat's colleague Percy Penguin, who put on a rip-roaring performance. And newly minted Officer Of The British Empire, Rolf Harris was back

from Old Blighty with a freshly tailored dedication to his hometown inventively entitled 'Back To WA'.

Harris would wobble-board the sixty thousand revellers into a riotous frenzy, so much so that *The West Australian Newspaper* would report the following day “several times the concert compare (sic) had to ask people to sit down instead so that those behind could see”. Unruly behaviour aside, the ubiquitous daily went on to proclaim the event an unmitigated triumph, reporting: “Channel Seven's Fat Cat and Percy Penguin was followed by the girls in the WA Calisthenics Association... a remarkable spectacle in the mild night air.”

The West, however, failed to report on another landmark commemoration taking place a mere 20 kilometres down the highway, at the butt of the railway line in the decaying port suburb of Fremantle. Indeed, there are very few corresponding accounts of the happenings in Fremantle that night but, nonetheless, witnesses all agree December, 31, 1978 to be one of the most significant events in WA cultural history – for it would be the night punk rock would be read its last rites.



Bon Scott in *The Valentines*

By daybreak of its 150th year of existence, Perth – and the state it represented, Western Australia – had long cemented its enduring reputation as a city that encouraged you, as the 1971 hit by US West Coast rockers The Eagles prescribed, to 'take it easy'. The song may have immortalised another west coast city half a world away, but nonetheless it could hardly have surmised the prevailing West Australian experience more aptly had it been written with Perth expressly in mind: “Lighten up while you still can/ Don't even try to understand/ Just find a place to make your stand/ And take it easy.” Perhaps not so coincidentally, Perth's Australian Football League team would later adopt that very band's moniker (The West Coast Eagles).

“With original numbers such as 'Hot Crutch' and 'Girls Wank', Pus was putting the fear into its hometown four years before The Sex Pistols would threaten moral order in the Western world.”

The 'City Of Lights' may have seemed brilliantly illuminated to US astronaut John Glenn from the confines of his space shuttle Friendship 7, but back on 'Planet Perth' the city was a metonym for docility. A city that, although about to spill over the one million-population barrier, proudly maintained its village atmosphere. Workers clocked off at 5pm on the whistle, the sale of grog was forbidden on the day of Our Lord and sesquicentenary star Fat Cat put everyone to bed safe and sound after the 6pm television news each night.

As well as hosting the Miss Universe Pageant in March – which would be remembered largely for a spectacular catwalk collapse in which eight contestants and two members of the media would be maimed – 1979 would see a yearlong program that, according to the ferociously parochial Premier, would celebrate the “unique” identity of the state, including its cultural diversity (abridged in folk nostalgia), pioneer mythology and countless sporting and recreational events.

A perfunctory indigenous showcase – a didgeridoo 'introduction' by local Aboriginal leader Ken Colbung at the New Year's Eve concert – earned the ire of the Premier when Colbung unexpectedly issued the Governor, Sir Wallace Kyle, with an eviction notice on behalf of all West Australian Aborigines. Premier Court derided the act “a cheap and ill conceived stunt”. Nonetheless, it would prove a minor blemish in an otherwise faultless campaign in spruiking the perception of ultimate homogeneity; plus tens-of-thousands of tea towels, beer coasters and ashtrays in the process.

WAY '79 – as the official yearlong celebration was branded – was about celebrating the WA idyll as the middle class utopia: a land of jobs, sunshine, recreation and opportunity. Even Prince Charles would join in the blithe frivolities, ensuring one of the most sensational, sun-stroked news stories of the year when he was accosted in the swell at Cottesloe by the wayward lips of bronzed, bikini-clad model Jane Priest. Premier Court encapsulated

the sentiment of the celebrations in his formal sesquicentenary speech as “a pretext to have a good time” and commemorate a state which “had done a mighty job in a short time”, and “done it by work and enterprise and by backing ourselves to win against all odds”.

Court was unashamedly extolling a version of a history without conflict or guilt – one that failed to remember the dispossession of Aboriginal lands and grizzly massacres, of violent labour struggles, class warfare, convict labour and a brewing artistic counter-culture. Perth was, unto the doctrine of WAY '79, an unblemished picture of unbridled homogeneity, prosperity and consensus. Renowned West Australian historian and commentator Geoffrey Bolton wouldn't be the only one who'd notice a glaring omission in the Premier's speech and broader sesquicentennial dogma, noting in his essay 'WAY 1979: Whose Celebration?': “Nobody tried to replicate the heat, the insects, the dysentery, the alcoholism, the boredom and the discomfort which were so intimate a part of daily life in the Swan River Colony.”

Nevertheless, this “mighty job” was faithfully reinforced by the three major state newspapers of the day, each with extravagant diatribes on WA's achievements. The now defunct evening daily, *The Daily News*, while lamenting on the traffic problems caused by the New Year's Eve concert and an inconsiderate scuffle between two male spectators, would endeavour to distil the jovial mood in reporting “a boy rode through city streets on a bicycle equipped with a horn, which made crowds laugh”.

The West was looking firmly to the future and a new, mighty epoch of unhinged economic expansion, driven by another resource boom fuelled by unmitigated Japanese growth. An article detailing a new mining project on the north-west shelf would run adjacent an advertisement from leading retailer Boans, heralding a new and exciting era of fashion with “Show The Way '79 – famous brands in pretty pastels and cool shades to make heads turn in your direction – sizes 10-16”. *The Sunday Times* would offer extensive reportage into WA's successes in mining, the timber industry, farming, football, horse racing and a burgeoning wine industry.

Besides gig listing for “Sophisticated Disco” at the Old Melbourne with “strict dress requirements” and “Australia's New 'Mr Personality' Patrick McMahon” playing at The Cinecellars Tavern, music and the wider arts industries unsurprisingly didn't rate even a second thought. One only

had to flick to the entertainment section of *The Daily News* for an insight into the city's dreary aural landscape: from The Hare & The Hound to The Chelsea Tavern, The North Perth Hotel to Tuart Hill Tavern it was a veritable cover band paradise.

And, of course, in the clubs it was a flashy parade of flares, mirror balls and dinky disco beats. WA was unequivocally 'Stayin' Alive'. The city's music scene wholeheartedly complemented the popular image of the West Australian capital city propagated in WY '79 as the quintessential easygoing city. No nonsense, ebullient and proudly frumpish.

Flagship West Australian company The Swan Brewery nailed the popular sentiment with an advertisement in the New Year edition of *The West Australian* congratulating the state on 150 years, cheering the mood with the slogan: "You're fit, healthy and bold and that's the way you want to stay. Now you've earned a Gold." But all was not so quiet on the western front.

"Perth had a sort of staid utopian existence in the 1970s," Ray Purvis recalls. A pioneering music journalist during the 1970s and '80s, writing for the now defunct *Sunday Independent* and *The Daily News*, as well as hosting the seminal – but slightly obscure – Shake Some Action radio program on 6NR (the only station in Perth that would touch punk, save for Chris Winter's Monday night ABC program Room To Move), Purvis was the foremost commentator on the WA punk scene. "But it was a sterile one. Like paradise had begun to fade on the Hill's Hoist. You couldn't fault it. Life was largely easy, and unquestionably good. But a good life didn't necessarily mean an interesting one. Perth was uncomplicated. And many – especially the emerging punk vanguard – translated that as dead boring, and fought it with all their middle-class, snotty-nose rage."



Dave Warner's Mug's Game

Pinpointing the genesis of Perth's punk scene is a hazardous business. Much blood has been spilled – literally – in sparring over the patent rights to the title of the city's first punk act. But while many in and familiar with the scene claim the nascent movement was completely independent of – and in reaction to – Perth's wider music establishment, the truth – often ignored in the sepia hue of rock'n'roll reflection – suggests otherwise.

If rock'n'roll as a global force was born with Chuck Berry and commodified by Elvis Presley in the 1950s, Australia would proffer its very own hip-shaking rock renegade in Johnny O'Keefe. The slightly more wholesome Col Joye would offer a sentimental showbiz counterpoint to O'Keefe's high-octane

drive, and together the two would rule the music scene of 1950s Australia, with each city sporting its very own JO'K and CJ imitators.

"A series of pivotal album releases would entirely reprogram his rock'n'roll DNA, transforming Baker – from all accounts a genial middle class suburban chap – into a rebellious rocker with a fishbowl mop, hell-bent on blasting Perth's indifference into oblivion."

Perth had The Saints (no relation to the punk band who'd explode from suburban Brisbane two decades later) and The Zodiacs, treading the boards somewhere between rock and cabaret at popular 1960s haunts such as The Snake Pit in Scarborough, Rick's Barn and Canterbury Court in the city, Bamboo in Bentley and, if they hit the big time, the annual Royal Show in Claremont.

When The Beatles landed in Adelaide in 1964 they brought with them a revolutionary new sound that would redefine Australia's aural plane. Widely referred to as beat music, it was typified by its more economical format compared with the big bands of old, sporting rhythm and lead guitar, bass, percussion and vocals. Gone were the strings and brass – replaced by bucket loads of sexual innuendo, and the wailing of hysterical female fans.

While the Fab Four wouldn't make it to the quaint colonial outpost of Perth, their influence would soon rattle from bars and community halls the city over, as well as that of their fellow Mersey Beat stars such as Gerry And The Pacemakers. Gerry And The Pacemakers would make it to Perth, in 1963 as part of the Wild "Liverpool Sound" Show, with comrades such as Brian Poole And The Tremeloes – leaving an immense impression on the local music scene.

Leading WA cultural commentator Jon Stratton suggests that Perth's close relationship with the British invasion of the 1960s – with a particular fondness for Cliff Richard, and fellow artists at the more chaste end of the rock'n'roll genre – was more pronounced than its fellow capital cities, largely due to its having the highest per capita British population in the country. What also separated Perth from its fellow capitals, as Stratton opines in his essay 'Do You Want To Know A Secret?: Popular Music In Perth In The Early 1960s', was the city's largely middle class demographic which, coupled with its idyllic Mediterranean climate, was a recipe for a sun-gilded, light-hearted local music scene.

By far the biggest home-reared musical star of the decade would be Johnny Young. Charming, endearing and unquestionably conformant, Young's breakthrough single 'Step Back' – originally written by The Easybeats, and recorded by Young for Perth's original record label, Clarion – couldn't be more revealing of the city it emerged from: light, sweet and endearing to the status quo. From *The Times* to *The Mixtures*, Perth was well and truly swinging to a salubrious beat. But down in the grotty

working class docks of Fremantle a very different type of band was forming – a rabble that would come to be known as The Spektors, featuring one Ronald Scott; aka Bon.

While still largely influenced by the British invasion, The Spektors referenced the grittier end of the spectrum, including working class rhythm and blues bands such as Them, The Yardbirds and The Faces. And from the ashes of The Spektors would come Perth's most popular band of the late 1960s The Valentines, who ultimately would come unstuck from in their bubblegum pop pursuits, freeing Scott to join what would become Australia's most successful rock'n'roll enterprise, AC/DC.

Scott – himself a Scottish émigré – had already acquired a reputation as a veritable ratbag by the time he joined The Spektors. Reputedly mistrusted by Johnny Young – who had a virtual monopoly on Perth's live music scene by the mid-60s, running the dances at Port Beach where The Spektors got their break – Scott was ready and willing to play the pop game to achieve the success that would free him from a life of hard labour. But his hard rock fate would reveal much more of Scott's musical roots than his work in The Spektors and The Valentines would initially suggest.

Idealising rock'n'roll raconteurs such as Little Richard, Scott epitomised a tradition of rebellious rock stars emerging from cultural backwaters – amongst them Roy Orbison (Vernon, Texas), Johnny Cash (Kingsland, Arkansas), Kurt Cobain (Aberdeen, Washington) and Johnny Rotten (Finsbury Park, London). And Scott wasn't the only WA native looking for something a little more combusive in his record collection.

Indeed, by the late 1960s Perth had a well-established blues scene, channelling both Chicago licks and gritty British R&B through the rattly PA systems of any bar that would let them play. From this scene would come King Biscuit Co (featuring respected bluesman Ivan Zar), The Beagle Boys (featuring future punk-in-arms Dave 'Flick' Faulkner) and The Beaten Tracks (featuring future members of Chain, and Australian blues acolyte Dave Hole). "Not for nothing did bands like Ray Hoff And The Offbeats, The Beaten Tracks and The Valentines originate in Perth," Purvis says. "We had loud music in our DNA long before 1975."

Perth's cliquy but fertile blues scene – which thrives to this day, namely through the Perth Blues Club – would inadvertently spawn another offshoot; a high octane rock'n'roll movement that would, in turn, come to be known as pub rock, and pioneered by AC/DC, Adelaide's Cold Chisel and Sydney's Rose Tattoo. And the foundation stone to WA's own enduring pub rock credentials would officially be laid by a laconic upstart called Dave Warner in 1972, and a band he'd christened Pus. If there was to be a home grown prototype with claims to WA's punk crown it rests here.

Although the word 'punk' wasn't to be widely used to define a specific musical genre until 1974 (although it made its first public appearance a few centuries before in Shakespeare's *Measure For Measure* in 1603: "My lord, she may be a punk, for many of them are neither maid, widow, nor wife"), Pus was everything that movement stood for short of an idiom.

With original numbers such as 'Hot Crutch' and 'Girls Wank', Pus was putting the fear into its hometown four years before The Sex Pistols would threaten moral order in the Western world. And Pus wasn't alone in defying the status quo, with Bakery, Sid Rumpo and Fatty Lumpkin lobbing aural missiles from Perth's subterranean – albeit with differing paradigms.

Pus would take its cues from US garage bands such as The Fugs, art-school noise-mongers The Velvet Underground and the volatile rock'n'roll antics of The Who. "If you want to talk about punk then my band Pus was at The Governor Broome Hotel back in 1974, playing our version of punk before The Saints, or even The Sex Pistols," Warner fumed after being cut from WA music history in the 2009 documentary *Something In The Water*.

With Perth hardly ready for such an abrasive, dishevelled and antagonistic rock assault, Pus would be short-lived. But Warner would rise again with From The Suburbs, brandishing a style of music he'd label suburban rock. With songs like 'Suburban Boy', 'Revenge Of The Lawn', 'Bicton Breezes', 'Old Stock Road', 'Half-Time At The Football', 'Bicton Vs Brooklyn' and 'Living In WA' Warner – tongue firmly in cheek – gave sonority to the suburban dream (aka nightmare).

By the mid 1970s Perth had gobbled up forty thousand hectares of loam – an ominous conurbation of desolate house-and-land-packaged dreams grafted onto the once nomadic sands of the Indian Ocean. Save for a few diffident skyscrapers, Perth was one vast, low-slung suburb – a blameless eiderdown of quarter acres, woven either side of a gracefully serpentine Swan River. For Warner, Bicton may have been part of metropolitan Perth but the word cosmopolitan was scant more than a magazine for pubescent girls.

As he'd sing in his colloquial canticle 'Suburban Boy': "I wake up every morning with no-one beside me/I wake up every morning and my mother will chide me/I'm just a Suburban Boy, just a Suburban Boy/Saturday night, no subway station/Saturday night just changing TV stations/I'm just a Suburban Boy, just a Suburban Boy/And I know what it's like/To be rejected every night/And I'm sure it must be, easier for boys from the city." His 1978 album *Mug's Game* would finally bring Warner national acclaim, and even *RAM Magazine's* songwriter of the year. Warner would go on to become an award-winning crime novelist and professional larrikin.

"Warner distanced himself from the punks because, I think, he felt they had usurped his territory," Ross Buncle of The Geeks and Orphans tells me of Perth punk's elder statesman. "But his was an original band that had the biggest following of any in Perth, including The Victims. Further, his songs were all about Perth and specifically suburban youth culture and tribalism in Perth. For some strange reason, he seems to have been left out of histories of the evolving Perth original music scene in the '70s, but he and his band was one of the most significant of all in terms of their reach, influence and success. The punks like to promote themselves as the first torchbearers of original music in Perth, but Warner *has* to be given due credit in any fair and balanced history."

If Warner was the patron of Perth punk, then his first partisan was unquestionably rock'n'roll faddist James Baker. Born in 1954 – the year Elvis Presley cut his first commercial recording – Baker started his rock'n'roll career mimicking Ringo Star and Ronnie Bond from The Troggs in a series of long forgotten cover bands (with a healthy dose of rock'n'roll amnesia, Baker hardly recalls this period – or perhaps chooses to forget). But a series of pivotal album releases would entirely reprogram his rock'n'roll DNA, transforming Baker – from all accounts a genial middle class suburban chap – into a rebellious rocker with a fishbowl mop, hell-bent on blasting Perth's indifference into oblivion.

“James was definitely like Marco Polo or something. He had eyewitness accounts; he hung out with Sid Vicious and seen The Flamin’ Groovies. He just knew these people. He’d been to these cool clubs we’d only seen in magazines.” DAVE FAULKNER

Those albums would, of course, be The Stooges' eponymous debut (1969) and The MC5's second offering *Back In The USA* (1970) – both from garage rock HQ, Detroit, and both deliciously cacophonous. By 1973 the next link in the genetic chain arrived with the New York Dolls' grotty self-titled debut. Baker pilfered his mum's lipstick and Johnny Thunders' ragged bouffant hairdo, slipped into some heels and in 1974 Black Sun was born – soon to be rebadged, with a fresh lick of lippie, The Slick City Boys.

Brash, ironic and perilously androgynous (this was 1970s Perth, after all), the career of WA's first hard rocking glam band would prove truncated, wilting like cheap mascara within 12 months. But by that time Baker had tuned into something new. An almost mythical sound he could hardly believe as he tore through his latest stash of import mags from 78 Records; *Creem*, *Rock Scene*, *Circus Magazine*, *American Rolling Stone* and *The New Musical Express*. The names and places read like they were from some other solar system: The Ramones and Television and The Modern Lovers and some New York club called CBGB's, where things went down he could barely fathom.

Baker quit his job as a clerk at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, withdrew his life savings and boarded an airplane in late 1976. He'd soon arrive on the doorstep of CBGB's where he'd witness firsthand bands he only knew from account and fantasy – Blondie, Television, Richard Hell and his all-time hero Johnny Thunders. He'd later meet a chap named Sid Vicious on a bus in London, would audition unsuccessfully for a new punk band soon to be named The Clash and witness an early gig from a group that went by the name The Sex Pistols. In 1977 he'd return home wielding the rubric for what had by now alchemised into a phenomenon known as punk rock.

“James was definitely like Marco Polo or something,” Dave ‘Flick’ Faulkner says of his contemporary. “He had eyewitness accounts; he hung out with Sid Vicious and seen The Flamin’ Groovies. He just knew these people. He'd been to these cool clubs we'd only seen in magazines.” Baker had returned home determined to open his own battlefield in punk's global campaign. Little did he know, he wasn't alone. By the time Baker landed at Perth International Airport two tribes of punks had already formed, oblivious to each other's raucous pursuits. And those tribes would soon become known as The Cheap Nasties and The Geeks.

The seeds of The Cheap Nasties were sown when fine art student and Morley suburbanite Kim Salmon – disillusioned with everything he heard in Perth, including his own cabaret cover band Troubled Waters – stumbled upon an article in *NME* in 1975 by journalist Charles Shaar Murray, entitled ‘Are You Alive To The Jive Of Seventy Five?’. The article was pockmarked with peculiar monikers like Blondie, Television and The Ramones, and centred on some joint called CBGB's – about as far away as you could get from Perth.

Sharr described the music as punk rock, and drew heredity to The New York Dolls, The Velvet Underground and The Stooges – bands Salmon idolised. Without even hearing a note Salmon was born again. Ringing in a couple of unsuspecting mates (Mark Betts on drums and Ken Seymour on bass), he bought a leather jacket (mandatory to the crusade according to Sharr) and christened his rather unholy group The Cheap Nasties. Perth had its first genuine punk band, fashioned directly from the pages of *NME*.

But in truth The Cheap Nasties were little but a name. Neil Fernandes (soon to be a leader in Perth's punk fraternity, with The Manikins) eventually joined on guitar to complete the rabble – just in time for the arrival of The Ramones' eponymous debut album, which Salmon had ordered from 78 Records after devouring Sharr's article. Although Salmon had already begun blasting out original riffs in an aggressive fashion he assumed to be punk, the band now had a genuine reference point in The Ramones. Punk was no longer a total mystery. Salmon explains dropping the needle onto the groove and hearing ‘Blitzkrieg Bop’ ignite from the stereo as “one of the perfect moments of my life”.

Ripping off The Ramones' trademark buzz-saw guitar style, pilfering The New York Dolls' rousing choruses and tossing in some Modern Lovers kookiness, an inchoate Cheap Nasties would play their first official show in mid-1977 (no one can recall the precise date) at The Rivervale Hotel in front of a large portrait of Nana Mouskouri – totally convinced that they were changing the course of history.

Witnessing the band frantically crash through self-penned numbers such as ‘Cheap ‘N’ Nasty’ – as well as prêt-à-porter punk staples like ‘Sister Ray’, ‘Roadrunner’ and ‘Personality Crisis’ – was Perth's entire punk fraternity, including Mark Demetrius (later of The Exterminators), “Slavic yobbo” Rod Radalj and Boris Sudjovic (who would eventually form the core rhythm section of punk turncoats The Scientists), Dave

‘Flick’ Faulkner (The Victims' frontman-in-waiting) and, of course, James Baker; who had by now formed his own punk band called The Geeks.

Perth's ‘other’ first punk band, The Geeks were formed when, on returning to Perth, Baker answered an ad in *The Sunday Times*' classifieds section looking for a singer for a “blasting band – must love punk Ramones, Iggy Pop, Exp not nec”. It was March 27, 1977, and the advertisement's author was one Ross Buncle who, along with fellow self-proclaimed degenerate and mono-monikered frontman Lloyd, and bass player Dave Cardwell, had cloned their own punk image and sound direct from the very same US and UK music papers as Salmon. An audition was arranged, and with a single rendition of ‘Blitzkrieg Bop’ – which Buncle recalls as “stunning... utterly, piercingly, almost unfathomably tuneless” – Baker was in; albeit back on the drum stool with Lloyd up front on vocals and Buncle on guitar. Baker would take up co-songwriting duties with Buncle.



**James Baker in
The Slick City Boys**

Rehearsing each and every Sunday at Buncle's rented house in Scarborough, they quickly honed (in regulation shabby punk fashion) songs that would become known as ‘I Like Iggy Pop’, ‘There Is No Way Out’, ‘I’m Flipped Out Over You’, ‘I Wanna Be Slick And Pick Up Chicks Like You’ and ‘I’m A TV Freak’, readying themselves for their groundbreaking debut. But the only invitations to arrive in the post would be one from the proprietor of the house asking them to vacate, and another from the Health Department inviting them to turn down the racket, or cop a fine.

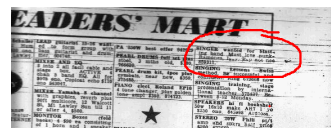
And so some band from the other side of the river called The Cheap Nasties would beat The Geeks to the stage. “We rolled up to the Nasties' debut gig at The Rivervale Hotel,” Lloyd ruminates, “with a – let's say – rather negative attitude to the proceedings. And we weren't disappointed. They were all decked out in regulation punk uniforms – leather jackets, shades, jeans, and sneers.”

As history decreed, The Geeks – for good or worse, depending on whom you ask – would never perform a genuine live gig. While their rehearsals remain legendary amongst the misfits who regularly attended, The Geeks' claims to the title of Perth's first punk band would become defunct that seminal night at The Rivervale. And the band's demise would be assured no thanks to one such band rehearsal invitee; a bloke Baker had met at The Rivervale that fateful night who went by the name of Flick.

Dave ‘Flick’ Faulkner had been flirting with punk for some time. A professional musician (an anathema to the most radical punks), plying the keys in Perth's biggest blues band at the time The Beagle Boys, Faulkner had come to

the genre like the majority of Perth's punk vanguard – through Iggy Pop, The Velvet Underground, The MC5 and fuzzed-out, cult proto punks The Flamin’ Groovies.

Baker had invited Faulkner to the rehearsal under the pretence of joining The Geeks, but – depending on who you believe – had already covertly stitched a deal with Faulkner at The Cheap Nasties' gig to form their own punk band. Filching bassist Dave Cardwell – who'd soon adopt the aptly punk moniker Rudolph V – Perth's most legendary, and enduring, punk outfit would breathe life. Enter The Victims! The Geeks were through.



The Birth of The Geeks

In only a matter of weeks The Victims were a real band with a real gig, playing Dave Warner's old stomping ground at The Governor Broome. A derelict and “seedy” Northbridge pub on the corner of William and Roe Streets, The Governor Broome would inadvertently become punk HQ thanks to Baker's smooth talking the publican into giving the band a regular gig. Having appropriated much of The Geeks' repertoire, The Victims' debut public performance would become that of fable – a double bill with Perth's other pillar of punk, The Cheap Nasties.

It was late 1977 and, with punk now part of the international vernacular – no thanks to the release of the Sex Pistols' debut longplayer *Never Mind The Bollocks* in October – the show would leave a deep impression on the 40-or-so revellers who attended. Within days the local classifieds would be full of adverts seeking musicians with “no experience necessary”.

“By the time Baker landed at Perth International Airport two tribes of punks had already formed, oblivious to each other's raucous pursuits. And those tribes would soon become known as The Cheap Nasties and The Geeks.”

“At the first Victims gig at The Governor Broome,” Buncle recalls with discernable acrimony, “I overheard at least two spontaneous ‘wanna form a punk band?’ invitations being issued between punters during the night. This was rebellious in the context of the Perth music scene of the time, because all the cover bands comprised musos who were reasonably competent at their instruments, and the punks assigned musical proficiency a very low priority. If you wanted to form a band, you didn't need to know how to play! This was both liberating, and limiting, but whatever you looked at it, it was rebellious!”

Like The Sex Pistols' Manchester debut in 1976 at Free Trade Hall (whose 40-or-so punters included future members of Joy Division, The Happy Mondays, The Smiths and The

Fall) and The Velvet Underground's Max's Kansas City residency (which legend has it nigh on everyone who ever attended would go on to form bands), from that decisive night at The Governor Broome would come Perth's first genuine punk wave.



The Victims

Almost overnight bands sprung up in garages citywide with venomous names and regaled in full totemic punk garb (short hair, dog collars and herds of leather) including The Exterminators, Blök Musik and less enduring names such as The Hitler Youth, The Marilyns, The Susans and Sad Sack & The Bags. "It was the first time I experienced the real power of music," Baker tells me of the landmark performance. "The power you can have over other people."

With a repertoire that included de rigueur punk standards of the day, ex-Geeks material and new originals such as 'Open Your Eyes', The Victims developed their breakneck punk anthems at an ex-hippie rental they'd leased in East Perth, across the road from Claisebrook train station. The property would soon be baptised Victims Manor and become the command centre of Perth's now fully-fledged punk movement.

"I remember helping The Victims clean out Victims Manor before anyone moved in," Kim Salmon tells me. "I remember doing this with Television's *Marquee Moon* playing on a record player and thinking this is a new era and feeling part of something. We cleaned out all the hippie dirt with disgust. It was the venue for much drunken revelry and debauchery. It ended up being far filthier than the earlier hippie residents had left it."

It was during this fecund period, late in 1977, that The Victims would pen the song that would certify their place in punk rock's pantheon; an anthemic and frantic tune, underwritten with a menacing bass line and ominous percussion. That song would become known as 'Television Addict'. Co-written by Baker and Faulkner, 'Television Addict' has been widely lauded as a genuine punk anthem from the genre's defining era, and been covered widely ever since. It would be released as a single in late '77, with 'I'm Flipped Out Over You' – a Geeks original – as the b-side. Thanks to the subvention of an eager Victims' fan, the band pressed 1,000 copies and rapidly sold out. Significantly, the single was repressed by Japanese label 1977 Records in 2012 – demonstrating the seismic impact of the band. Perth had its first punk stars...and every reason to

be afraid.

Tiring of the elitist punk omertá, by the end of '77 The Victims were looking to conquer new territory and fans. Baker approached the manager of a struggling Italian restaurant and cabaret bar in East Perth called Hernando's Hideaway, suggesting his band could help fill otherwise empty midweek seats. Hands were shaken and The Victims had a new Thursday night residency. As Buncle recalls, "now we had our very own CBGB's".

If The Victims' gigs at The Governor Broome had unified the urban disaffected it was the band's residency at Hernando's that proclaimed it to the masses. As punk broke on a global scale it was no longer the exclusive domain of a maligned (or privileged) few.

A lawyer by training but punk rocker at heart, Ray Purvis had defined himself early on as Perth's exclusive punk rock biographer. And in February 1978 he'd invite Perth's unsuspecting masses for a peek inside the shredded curtains with a double page spread in *The Sunday Independent* on The Victims, and the Hernando's Hideaway underground punk movement. And with a 'one, two, three, four' the gates had been ripped open.

Little did Purvis' readers know that The Cheap Nasties – the band that started it all – were now through. Disillusioned, Salmon had jumped ship in December 1977 to join The Invaders (formerly The Exterminators) in the hope of exploring a new hi-fi way. And with Robbie Porritt on vocals The Cheap Nasties would evolve into Veneers and finally The Manikins – the only band to truly challenge the punk hegemony of The Victims throughout 1978.

"I never wanted that crown... of thorns," The Manikins' Neil Fernandes tells me of a title that would in time prove more an albatross than an iron cross. "Yes we thought we were breaking new ground because, at the time, the bands that we all went to hear were blues bands. We could hardly play. We had no pedigree."



The Victims' Television Addict

In early 1978 and at the peak of their blistering prowess, The Victims released a 7" EP – entitled, in perfectly impudent style, *No Thanks To The Human Turd*. A collection of three Geeks songs and two Faulkner/Baker co-writes, 500 copies were pressed. With Hernando's Hideaway at capacity, and there being no shortage of punk bands to join the bill, on Friday, April 21, 1978 The Victims would excoriate the mob at WA's biggest punk gig yet: The Leederville Punk Festival, at the Leederville Town Hall (advertised as the New Wave Festival).

Doors opened at 7.30pm, entry was \$2 and the bill boasted the

city's finest punk hoodlums, including The Exterminators, The Orphans (Buncle's new project following The Hitler Youth, who had imploded after just one gig), Sad Sack & The Bags (featuring future music journalist Mark Demetrius), punk upstarts Blök Musik (fronted by a fresh-faced David McComb) and, of course, punk paragons The Victims. The show proved a triumph. And it would also be The Victims' last.

After having one plug too many pulled on his musical career (including notoriously riotous shows in front of credulous audiences at The Waverley and The Kewdale Hotels), Faulkner – a habitual musical polymath – had already emotionally moved on from The Victims, and purest punk. Cardwell was furious, and Baker was characteristically nonplussed enough to start engineering his next move with his old rival Kim Salmon.

The Orphans would take over residency of Hernando's Hideaway and The Manikins stepped up as Perth's doyens of punk. By the end of 1978 The Manikins were a truly bankable entity, having crossed over into mainstream venues such as The Shenton Park and Broadway Tavern in Nedlands with a more histrionic brand of by-numbers punk and new wave (punk's saccharine offspring).

"I always thought the Manikins were a pop band, unashamedly," Neil Fernandes explains. "I always thought we should have been played on radio, like ABBA. I'd begun, by that time, to resent all that inner city clique that the punk scene had become. I wanted to play the 'burbs and have 'ordinary' people to come along and hear us play, and dance. I thought that if you took the songs out of the scene they'd stand up on their own. We did and they did."

Back at Hernando's punters started turning up to Orphans shows with raw lamb chops safety-pinned to their clothes without a skerrick of irony. And by late '78 Perth punk had been hijacked, and was being held for ransom by a clique of inner city fashionistas on one flank and deranged, indiscriminate skinhead thugs on the other. The scene had turned toxic and, for its original skippers, it was time to abandon the smouldering ship.

"I remember helping The Victims clean out Victims Manor before anyone moved in. I remember doing this with Television's Marquee Moon playing on a record player and thinking this is a new era and feeling part of something."
KIM SALMON

James Baker would, in May '78, join Kim Salmon in The Invaders but the project met a dead end. Going back to the drawing board – on the porch of the property formerly known as Victims Manor – the band recalibrated the vision, renamed themselves The Scientists and started rehearsing a perfidious brand of swampy pop music that would have the punk Gestapo crying foul. And they would finally get their chance in Fremantle on December 31, 1978 – the night WA punk music died.

Although somewhat unified by aural intent, the global music movement now defined as punk was born of two opposing factions on either side of the Atlantic. The original New York punk scene – centred around CBGB's, as well as Max's Kansas City and Mercer Arts Centre in Greenwich Village – was largely an art-school phenomenon; educated, middle class creative-types looking for a new form of expression for their disillusionment with mainstream, conservative America at a time of immense global upheaval. This was, of course, paranoid Cold War America.

"At the first Victims gig at The Governor Broome I overheard at least two spontaneous 'wanna form a punk band?' invitations being issued between punters during the night."
ROSS BUNCLE

Whether it was the jarring riffs of Television, the primordial feminist rants of Patti Smith, the whimsical odes to nothingness of The Modern Lovers or the obtuse catch-cry anthems of The Ramones, the New York punk scene was largely unified in its counter-cultural assault on the mainstream, to a backdrop of the social decay that was besetting New York. And in the spirit of that city's Beat literary scene of the 1950s (and New York's long historic association with pioneering art), the art itself was of equal importance to the anti-establishment doctrine.

On the other side of the pond, however, punk dressed – and sounded – a universe apart. If New York's punk scene was born out of desire, London's was born out of necessity. Whist in part 'manufactured' by entrepreneur and habitual provocateur Malcolm McLaren after returning with the prototype from New York – where he informally managed the New York Dolls – punk kicked off largely as a working class phenomenon in Britain. In exploiting the rancour of an unholy union of misfits, drug addicts and hopeless art school dropouts, McLaren would lay the foundation stone for a movement Sex Pistols guitarist Steve Jones would define when he declared: "actually, we're not into music – we're into chaos."

Although somewhat contrived, punk became an allegory of decay – a soundtrack for the hopeless in a country nosediving towards civil meltdown and the 'winter of discontent'. As such, bands like The Sex Pistols and The Clash had a much more fatalistic agenda than their esoteric New York counterparts: complete social upheaval.

Music wasn't art but a weapon, and brandished even when guitars were out of tune and missing strings. As The Pistols' debut single decreed: "Anarchy in the UK/Is coming some time maybe.../They made you a moron/A potential H-bomb." A polemic The Clash would second in the riotous 'London's Burning'. This wasn't artistic fare – it was warfare. That was until the cash registers started chiming and punk became a fatal victim of its own irony.

So how did the punk scourge

infect Perth? When The Cheap Nasties officially dug punk's first local trenches at The Rivervale Hotel in '77, Perth was hardly an enlightened city at the coalface of a global artistic revolution. Nor was it a dystopian megalopolis inhabited by drooling degenerates gunning for revolt. Indeed – at least according to the engineers of WAY '79 – Perth was little more than a sleepy sun-bleached paradise. A land of opportunity, where jobs were plentiful and the beer always on ice. And just to throw yet another golden spanner in the works, the state was boasting its lowest unemployment figures...ever.



James Baker in *The Victims*

What was a punk to do? Perth was hardly inspiration for a social revolution or, heaven forbid, outright anarchy. The city was firmly stuck in the middle – middle class, middle of the road and in the middle of nowhere. What place did such a gloomy musical diatribe have on cloud nine? The answer lay in Perth's first consciously-penned song of the punk era, James Baker's 'I Like Iggy Pop'; 'I hate/I hate/I hate/I hate/I hate marijuana pendants/I hate disco junkies/I hate *Cosmopolitan*/I like Iggy Pop.../I hate the radio/I hate ELO.../I like Iggy Pop.'

This wasn't revilement against inequity, or some artistic précis of a hopeless generation. Instead, Perth punk's quarrel would be with downright ennui. An all-out assault on the very monotony of a providential existence and – for James Baker at least – the very things that'd come to symbolise this dire state of affairs, including disco, *Cosmopolitan*, the radio and ELO. The omnipotent cultural isolation – fanned by unmitigated boredom – would brew the perfect storm of fury for the disaffected urban minority. Finally, the outcasts had a sound and attitude that could exemplify and espouse their feeling of utter alienation...and sunburn. And, perhaps most liberating of all, one didn't even need to be musically endowed to sign up. The right garb, hairdo and snarl and you were in the band!

"The counter culture of the time was really born out of comfort, wealth and complacency and a desire to act out things that people in other places were forced to do," Kim Salmon reveals. He would offer up his debut middle-class renegade rant in The Cheap Nasties with the seething song from which the band would take its name, 'Cheap 'N' Nasty': 'I don't want to be a nice boy/I won't come to the party/We're made for each other/

Cheap 'N' Nasty."

The Victims would soon follow with their very own paean to anomie 'Perth Is A Culture Shock', with its throttling refrain: "Perth is a culture shock/Perth is a culture shock/Perth is a culture shock/And this is where I'm born/Perth is a culture shock/Perth is a culture shock/Perth is a culture shock/It is a real bore."

These young renegades were clearly singing from a different song sheet to the 'boy from Basso', Rolf Harris. In his own elegy to WA as part of the sesquicentenary carousing, Harris would chortle: "I wanna go back to WA/That's the only place for me/I've been to Honolulu and I've seen Hong Kong/Took the tourist bus to Europe/And I've seen the Tagalong/They're quite delightful places/But they're hardly worth the song/I wanna go back...to WA!"

Either someone was telling porkies, or Harris and the punks were immortalising diametrically opposed Perths. With nine thousand miles between him and home, Harris' rose-tinted nostalgia was the apotheosis of WAY '79. On the other side of the penny, the punks were hankering to check out from the very cultural backwater Harris epitomised.

"The punks really were very negative about Perth and we felt like, basically, we were in prison," the author of 'Perth Is A Culture Shock', Dave 'Flick' Faulkner explains. "We just felt we had to get out because this place is suffocating us, because we're surrounded by all these cover bands and things that to us were despicable."

When punk finally cracked through Perth's subterranean in 1977 the city's music scene couldn't have been less sympathetic. Live music was big business in Perth in the 1970s. And while the original scene was dominated by the blues, the majority of the city's beer barns – The Herdsman, Raffles, Sandgroper, White Sands and Cloverdale – were the exclusive domain of cover bands. And it would be the anachronistic covers scene the punks would take it upon themselves to sonically (and sometimes physically) assault with snotty-nosed glee.

The biggest cover acts of the day – namely The Frames and The Elks – commanded audiences in their thousands, and strutted the stage with a set-list pilfered straight from the 'top 40' playlist of the day's 'hottest' local radio station, 6PM (now 92.9). From The Little River Band to Smoke, The Eagles to Chicago, and Three Dog Night to Electric Light Orchestra, 1977 couldn't have sounded more Perth. The music was feel-good and serenely temperate – complementing the zeitgeist, like it was actually written for Perth. And there was inevitably a noodling 'Stairway To Heaven' solo to whip the masses into a frenzy as last drinks were called. Then there was disco; the archenemy of Perth punk (namely, as Baker confessed in 'Disco Junkies', because they scored all the drugs and hot chicks).

Watching the infinitesimal movement take root, Ray Purvis recalls the immaculate climate for the punk scourge to infest: "Perth always had a thriving pub scene but by the mid '70s it had very much become cover band city. The time was right for a reaction against faded hippies, Queen-like glam rock and warmed-over glam rockers playing imported pop hits. FM radio was remorselessly churning out soft West



The Manikins

Coast American pop along with Skyhooks, Sherbet, Daddy Cool and Billy Thorpe."

"Perth was a sort of negative inspiration for us," Buncle seconds. "We got off on dissing the place. Much of our discontent stemmed from the musical milieu: the established blues scene, which I found boring, self-important, closed and elitist, and irrelevant; the shit-boring cover band scene and, of course, fucking disco!

"We felt that we were the only sane people in the place," he continues, "the only ones who had any taste and knew what was going on, on the frontline of rock'n'roll. In a sense, Perth's backwater status gave us a foothold – an extra motivation to form the only punk band in the land, as far as we knew! We felt as if we were the only true punk initiates in the city, bravely going where no one had gone before! And it felt great."

Widely considered punk rock's third global pillar, Aussie punk was not exclusive to Perth. Brisbane would dish up its own noisy revolution with Australia's most successful punk band of the era, The Saints. Formed in 1974, The Saints are usually credited as the country's epitome of punk – and its most successful act of the genre, with the contribution of the perfectly egregious 'I'm Stranded' to the canon.

But The Saints would be borne of a very different climate; a state run by the ultra-conservative and divisive Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen, who ruled Queensland like a fiefdom. He would even go so far as to call a state of emergency after widespread protests in 1971, keep detailed dossiers on student and union protesters and in 1977 effectively ban public protest in refusing permits. In Bjelke-Petersen's contorted mind, dissidents were all communist traitors and treated with contempt.

"It was the first time I experienced the real power of music. The power you can have over other people." JAMES BAKER

As David Nichols writes in his book *The Go-Betweens*: "To follow the kind of lifestyle that people in other Australian cities took for granted – going out for the night, hearing a few rock bands who played music relevant to your world, drinking – was infused, in Brisbane, with a special kind of danger."

Like The Clash and Sex Pistols, The Saints had reason to be furious and found their artillery in punk. Perth too would be governed by a conservative Premier for much of the 1970s, but with controversy capped at Indigenous land rights issues in the state's distant north west and the closing of a mental institution in a blue-ribbon suburb, Sir Charles was a lightweight when compared with the rancour Bjelke-Petersen could inspire. As such, Perth's disaffected urban youth were much more ignorant of politics than their east coast compatriots.

"This was Perth of Norman Gunston, clear blue skies, watersports, all-night TV horrors, Hungry Jacks, the WAFL, the P76, the Noonkanbah episode [a reference to the land rights dispute in the far north of the state], and more watersports," frontman for punk upstarts Blök Musik David McComb would recount. "Politics was a distant rumble. There were slim pickings for precocious Stooges/Velvets/Eno fans."

Sydney too wasn't to miss out on the burgeoning punk epoch. As well as The Coloured Balls and Purple Hearts, Radio Birdman would come a close second to The Saints in global recognition, supplanting nuggets such as 'New Race' and 'Aloha Steve And Danno' (an ode to *Hawaii Five-O*) into the global lexicon of the genre.

“Yes we thought we were breaking new ground because, at the time, the bands that we all went to hear were blues bands. We could hardly play. We had no pedigree.” NEIL FER-NANDES

But with a US-born medical doctor as the band's leading songwriter, Radio Birdman has been censured for having more guile than bile – Dave Warner foremost amongst the accusers. Nevertheless, Radio Birdman would become one of the most influential bands of the 1970s in Australia. And Melbourne's bleak punk upstarts Boys Next Door would pronounce one of the country's most enduring counter cultural mavericks in Nick Cave.

Back in Perth the punks were oblivious to The Saints, Radio Birdman and Boys Next Door – entrapped by the city's complete physical and cultural isolation (a fact which would perennially underwrite the city's unique and independent music scene). Besides the limited US and UK punk record imports stocked at 78 Records, Dada's and the long-since closed White Rider Records on William Street, Perth had no way of knowing what was happening on the east coast beyond word-of-mouth.

Independent community radio wouldn't arrive until April of 1977



Mark Demetrius in Circumcised Bags

(6UVS-FM, the genesis of today's RTR-FM) and Double J (soon-to-be Triple J) was more than a decade from beaming its counter cultural signal into WA bedrooms. Indeed, most Perth punk fans would first hear of a band called The Saints from the imported British music press. “There was zero national cross-pollination in Perth,” Buncle says. “Due to the isolation of Perth and its initially small punk scene, the potential for prominent individuals to influence others and other bands was greater than it might have been in bigger cities.”

Perth was so disconnected from the rest of the country, and the world, even trans-continental train travel remained impossible until the '70s, as WA used completely incompatible rail gauges with that of the eastern states. And with pricey airplane tickets well out of reach from your average juvenile delinquent, the punks were well and truly trapped between the sea and a sunny place.

As Kim Salmon deadpanned in the liner notes accompanying The Scientists' compilation album *Pissed On Another Planet*: “Getting to the Eastern States meant a three day drive across the desert or forking out for an airfare comparable to an overseas flight—and that was just to get to Adelaide.”

It was from this cultural biosphere a uniquely West Australian brand of sweaty punk was incubating, informed by its fearless leaders. In naively endeavouring to recreate the fragments of sound and sight described in the black ink of magazine pages, pioneers like Salmon, Faulkner, Buncle, Fernandes and Baker were inadvertently *inventing* punk.

Four decades before the internet made possible the instant dissemination of music files and endless dossiers of cultural thought and criticism, Perth's punks – along with their audiences – were completely forsaken; left to manufacture what would become a uniquely West Australian genome in the DNA of punk rock. A cocktail that owed as much to the ironic larrikiness of Dave Warner as to the breakneck riffage of The Ramones.

It was a scene that grew independent of, and in tandem with, analogous scenes in the UK, US and the east coast of Australia, and whose hallmark would become a frantic, uninhibited sonic assault on the cultural wasteland they called home. That, and lamentations on (too often unrequited) juvenile punk love: ‘I Wanna Be Slick And Pick Up Chicks Like You,’ ‘Flipped Out Over You,’ ‘Love At Second Sight,’ ‘Mean To Me,’ ‘Epileptic Love’ and ‘Frantic Romantic’ being examples, amongst countless others. Not only were kicks hard to find for Perth's punks, apparently chicks were too.

Nevertheless, the punk endemic was propagating. With the beginning of WA's 150th anniversary creeping ever closer the scene found more defectors; wayward youth disaffected by widespread tedium and apathy, ready to take up arms in the struggle for relevance – if only in their own lives.

The Orphans – formed in 1978 from the ashes of The Geeks and The Hitler Youth (a band that had penned its own sentimental dedication, ‘Nothin’ To Do’) – would soon lob their own smouldering effusion with ‘Bored’, rallying the troops in wailing: “Well you get up in the morning and there's nothin’ to do/I'm bored, I'm bored/You find no fun in the night time too/I'm bored, I'm bored.” And the Orphans were hardly alone. The Exterminators would proffer their own pejorative ode in '78, with ‘Arsehole Of The Universe’ (from all reports an exercise in the diatonic that would never be committed to tape).

For some The Leederville Punk Festival was the beginning, and for others it was the end. Punk – the ultimate counter-cultural diatribe – had crossed over into another realm; no longer the sole property of the vanguard who would discover it in the pages of the international music press, and reinterpret as their own.

Purvis recounts: “Until it became just another fashion, these were middle-class kids from good backgrounds playing punk as they knew it – informed by the trade papers, but otherwise completely insulated from the global movement. In this way the Perth punk scene was completely unique. It had its own flavour – a distinctly West Australian outlook, which was ‘I am sick and tired of the mediocrity and sheer boredom of life in this town – so let's make a hell of a racket, and give the establishment the middle finger.’”

For two explosive years punk would raise its middle finger to the myopic masses, and the very things that symbolised them – cover bands and conventionalism. While inspired by a vision and frantic sound half a world away, punk gave the culturally disaffected a license to walk on the wild side. To take ownership of a global totem of revolt, and carve it into something they could call their own. “There probably was a feeling of all being part of something greater – a musical revolution, if you like,” Buncle says.

“Co-written by Baker and Faulkner, ‘Television Addict’ has been widely lauded as a genuine punk anthem from the genre's defining era, and been covered widely ever since. Perth had its first punk stars...and every reason to be afraid.”

Following the band's decisive show on the final day of 1978 in which Kim Salmon and James Baker would sound Perth punk's swansong, The Scientists would go on to revolutionise alternative rock with landmark albums like *The Pink Album* and 1984's *This Heart Doesn't Run On Blood, This Heart Doesn't Run On Love* – wielding a sound Australia had never heard or imagined. Although The Scientists had limited commercial success, bands to the calibre of Nirvana and Mudhoney would later cite Salmon as a pioneer of modern alternative and grunge. Salmon would also play a part in other seminal Australian rock acts, including Beasts Of Bourbon, The Surrealists and Antenna; the latter with his old comrade Dave Faulkner.

Faulkner would drop the ‘Flick’ and go on to establish one of Australia's most successful rock bands in The Hoodoo Gurus, and assault the national album and singles charts through much of the '80s and '90s with hits including ‘What's My Scene,’ ‘Bittersweet,’ ‘Come Anytime’ and ‘Miss Freeloze '69’. In dutiful polygamous fashion, James Baker played a bit part in both The Scientists and The Hoodoo Gurus, as well as Beasts Of Bourbon – and is still committed to alternative music today with his band The Painkillers.

And the little known Blök

Musik, who debuted at The Leederville Punk Festival, would re-surface in 1979 as The Triffids, brandishing an innovative catalogue of songs heralding a uniquely West Australian sound, bringing them notable international acclaim. “After leaving our hometown we're learning, not learning to love it or anything, but learning to realise what was there, in what seemed like an emptiness,” David McComb would later tell the short-lived *Snipe Fanzine*. He'd go some way to expressing that very sentiment in song with the 1982 single ‘Spanish Blue’: “Nothing happens here/Nothing gets done/... The washing of the sun.”

“Punk rock never changed the world,” Mark Demetrius concludes. “But then some of us never expected it to; it was great as an end in itself. Any movement celebrating minimalism has its limits, by definition... But for music which set out to be ephemeral, an amazing amount of ‘punk’ has stood the test of time. Considering that Perth is the most isolated city of its size on the planet – maybe partly because of that fact – it produced a particularly healthy and inventive punk/new wave scene. And from that small core of Perth ‘pioneers’ evolved a surprising number of important, creative and very successful bands in other parts of the country.”

By the dawn of the 1980s Perth had finally ‘arrived’. The Scientists were invited to play live on *Countdown*, The Triffids had moved to London to record their masterwork *Born Sandy Devotional* and The Manikins and Dave Warner's *From The Suburbs* were ferociously battling it out for the title of the leading original band in the state. New wave groups such as The Dugites were crashing into the national charts, and The Quick And The Dead, The Rockets, The Stems and Chad's Tree were dragging punk's carcass in vastly different directions – from hard core to power pop, and every arpeggio in between. The movement's legacy was inescapable.

The global punk scene, similarly, had begun to mutate from 1978. On the collapse of The Sex Pistols in the January of that year, frontman John Lydon would enunciate an experimental new post punk genre in Public Image Ltd, whilst with the band's '79 album *London Calling* The Clash would employ reggae in fashioning a landmark new sound. Similarly, New York punk pioneers Blondie had begun to meddle with elements of disco and hip hop with the group's top-selling '78 album *Parallel Lines*, whilst punk matriarch Patti Smith was boastfully



The Scientists



The Triffids

flirting with a more commercially palatable sound on 1978's *Radio Ethiopia*. And artists as diverse as Elvis Costello and Talking Heads were not-so-quietly propelling punk's bastard offspring, new wave, into the global pop vernacular.

In 1982 Perth would get its very own alternative music magazine, *The 5 O'Clock News*, which in 1985 would metamorphose into *X-Press Magazine* – the longest running street press in the country. Perth's musically maligned now had a voice. Clubs such as Adrian's, The Red Parrot and The Cat & Fiddle would soon shoulder in amongst the established cover band venues and become sanctums of alternative music and a wider counter cultural movement.

“What was a punk to do? Perth was hardly inspiration for a social revolution or, heaven forbid, outright anarchy. The city was firmly stuck in the middle – middle class, middle of the road and in the middle of nowhere.”

“It was during this period Perth's alternative music scene truly began to find its footing,” Ray Purvis says. “Punk made it all possible, but the '80s consolidated it into a more formal – and somewhat professional – original music scene. The covers scene still maintained a stranglehold on the city, but thanks to clubs like Adrian's alternative musicians and fans finally had somewhere to go to share the music, ideas and – of course – a few drinks. From this period, and in the wake of punk, came many of WA's defining acts, including The Triffids and The Scientists.”

In 1989 youth radio broadcaster Triple J would finally crash across the state's wild frontier, plugging WA's underground music scene into the

rest of the country for good. Just in time, as it so happens, for a global epidemic that'd throttle the planet in 1991 – a virus called *Nevermind*. Also borne of a cultural backwater, in Washington's austere northwest, Nirvana unintentionally rewired the popular music format with a new punk rock convulsion that'd be coined grunge.

The band's frontman, Kurt Cobain would directly cite Kim Salmon a defining influence on his music, and soon every major record company in the land was signing blank cheques in a frantic attempt to secure WA's next generation of underground rock'n'roll renegades. They would find them in Jebediah, Ammonia, Effigy, Beaverloop, Allegiance and Eskimo Joe. Dank garages were usurped by main-stages. The rusty lock had been picked, and Perth's celestial subterranean finally shrouded in brilliant stage-light for the whole world to see. As Jebediah's 1997 debut single would proclaim; the sounds of Perth's underground were finally 'Leaving Home'.

Perth's uncanny and prodigious alternative/indie music output continues to confound many outsiders. As Australia's fourth largest city – and one of its most homogenous and unassuming – it seems an unlikely source for such innovative, idiosyncratic and far-reaching groups as Empire Of The Sun, Tame Impala, The John Butler Trio and The Pantics. The city's remoteness has undoubtedly played a dominant role in casting such a unique and self-sustainable alternative music scene – an argument explored in the 2009 documentary, *Something In The Water*.

“It did strike me, when the Manikins first toured east in 1979, that our isolation could be an advantage,” Neil Fernandes says. “I thought that we were genuinely original. I didn't hear another band like us.”

It was from this hopeless void – both physical and cultural – that a small clan of restive and pioneering renegades would stage Western Australia's first

methodical counter-cultural revolt, armed with guitars, rancour and moxie. Channelling the aural dissidence of the colourful rabble of ratbags, rascals and rebels who had come before them – including Bon Scott and Dave Warner – the punks would unite en masse at The Governor Broome, Hernando's Hideaway and The Leederville Punk Festival to issue a genuine contest to the suffocating hegemony of inertia and boredom that had beleaguered the Swan River Colony since its inception. And in doing so they would engineer a groundbreaking form of musical and cultural expression, ensuring Perth's place alongside New York, London, Manchester, Detroit and Brisbane as a spiritual birthplace of the global punk movement.

“This wasn't revilement against inequity, or some artistic précis of a hopeless generation. Instead, Perth punk's quarrel would be with downright ennui. An all-out assault on the very monotony of a providential existence.”

While the suburban sprawl still creeps like a latent rash and the city continues to wrestle with its conservative manacles, Perth is now a city in transformation. Where the ancient walls of The Governor Broome once shuddered at the mercy of distortion pedals a genuine world-class State Theatre now stands. Just down the road from the “flea pit” otherwise known as Victims Manor and Hernando's Hideaway you'll find the city's proudest example of dense modern apartment living, in East Perth. And you can hardly flick the dial without stumbling upon a radio station that doesn't feature at least some of the more popular local indie acts on their playlists – from The Sleepy Jackson to San Cisco; Gyroscope to The Waifs.

Nearly four decades after the repugnant scourge of punk rock first challenged the city's status quo, Perth's alternative music scene has become something to celebrate. Indeed, perhaps to the chagrin of its pioneering protagonists, it even became part of the establishment when in 2004 the Western Australian Museum launched Spin – an extensive exhibition on WA's rich musical heritage. And in 2011 the Museum would have Bon Scott rock'n'roll in his grave at Fremantle Cemetery when it staged one of the institution's most successful exhibitions, Family Jewels, on the life of AC/DC.

Not only does the State Government partly fund an annual local

music festival and awards ceremony in the WAMis, but the city also managed to attract extensive worldwide interest with the partly state funded One Movement For Music – until its untimely end, the largest music conference and industry event in the southern hemisphere, putting Perth in a league with global music epicentres like Manchester, New York, Brighton and Austin. Once derided as the 'Arsehole Of The Universe', today Perth not so much inspires vex as veneration – with some of the most consummate alternative bands on the planet having penned dedications to the city; amongst them US acts Pavement and Bon Iver. Perth, it would appear, is a culture shock no more.

“To my mind, there is no question that the punk scene kicked open the door for the wider indie music scene in Perth,” Bob Gordon – former Managing Editor of *X-Press* and curator of Spin – argues. “Without the pioneering work of people like Kim Salmon, Dave Faulkner and James Baker, and a little later Dave McComb, Perth would never be what it is today – an exciting, emerging metropolis with arguably the strongest, and most creative music scene in the country. Their dogged assault on the establishment laid the foundation for the enlightened city we celebrate today.”

In the band's 2004 album *A Song Is A City*, popular West Australian band Eskimo Joe would articulate the inexorable link between culture and identity – a proposition comprehensively explored in cultural theorist Jon Hawkes' benchmark study on urban development, *The Fourth Pillar Of Sustainability: Culture's Essential Role In Public Planning*.

Hawkes notes: “Before art became an industry manufacturing commodities or an economic development strategy, before it was used as a band-aid to disguise social inequity, before it became a badge of superiority, before it became a decorative embellishment, it was (and remains) the paramount symbolic language through which shifting meanings are presented... No attempt to characterise the temper of a time can be meaningful without referring to the arts of that time. After the fact, the arts of an era remain its most accurate reflection.”

Punk's 'accurate reflection' of Perth was hardly flattering. But what it lacked in obsequiousness punk made up for in a glorious sonic boom that left a city forever altered. Nearly four decades on from scribbling his first major act of aural dissidence in 'I Like Iggy Pop', James Baker takes a moment to ponder the implications of punk, and the legacy of his generation. “We were fighting a musical cause,” he excites. “It was 'get fucked' to everything! It was great. We were fighting everything that was Perth in the '70s. And – take a look around – we won.”

NEW FREQUENCIES FROM PLANET PERTH