

Still, if Southern California doesn't provide the kind of setting in which punks naturally flourish, it does sustain a remarkably hardy strain. About 200 full-time, hard-core punks are now living in Los Angeles. Not only have they survived the Sex Pistol's demise and the subsequent media epitaphs proclaiming with relief that punk is dead, but they have also weathered the shut-down of the only punk club in town, a dank Hollywood Boulevard dive called the Masque. Some of them wonder aloud if their movement peaked last year, but most, expressing

thrown out of the show because Hellin took out a switchblade and

started playing with it when everyone was making fun of us. They

all got scared and shut up.

— April 1977

AT PUNK'S END

*"I belong to the blank generation."
Richard Hell*

Once you've said that, what could be left to say? Often, I find myself re-examining what gave birth to "punk." It has been a baffling accumulation of events. Too many cooks. In retrospect, it is simpler. 1974-1975 New York. I am not a musician or I too would have tried to play something satisfying. There were certainly no records being produced that sparked my interest. For the dissatisfied few, CBGB, the Lower East Side club, was a natural find. At that time it was a very exciting place. Painters, actors, poets, sculptors and, mainly, musicians, all in the same territory trying to fill the respective gaps in their fields. Glitter had become meaningless and had given way to a new conservatism. Finances were unavailable, hence thrift shop clothing, unintentional rips and tears.

We were aware of being at the

beginning of a unique trend.

There, in that filthy, foul-smelling club were at least ten bands, all saying something new. A fools paradise. The ideology that grew out of this was: to create a significant backlash that would ultimately alter the state of radio, of popular music, and to put an end to the monotonously mellow.

The Ramones' first trip to England with their tongue-in-cheek intimations of violence set the wheels in motion of what was an old train of thought for those oppressed by British Rule. It represented — or rather suggested — a way to disrupt a political system which kept its youth victims of menial labor and/or "the Dole." Hence, it presented an ideology, and the opportunity was seized by a certain percentage of these youths. It was their discontent that gave rise to a deadly serious nihilistic approach. They felt they had nothing to lose. The symbols grew out of the violence

and the violence grew out of the symbols and soon there were handfuls of British bands all making the same statement. New "punks."

Since the Beatles, England and America have had a musical exchange program. The punk symbols — razor blades, safety pins, vomit and intentionally abused clothing — made their way across the Atlantic on a wave of three chords. And here the symbols of a political movement that some could understand but few could relate to were illegitimately appropriated by faddists wanting to be fashionable. Nouveau "punks."

I have experienced the last four years as an outsider on the inside. I vaguely remember having an hysterically happy feeling in my job as rock reporter, until the poisons of the monster began to seep through. Now I want to drop out. Hey, ma, like wow, the tone of the era is not conducive to art man. (Bongos.) The individual is ripped off, ravaged, compromised. (More bongos.) The Dervishes are dancing madly through life to somebody else's tastes, and I am insistent upon going through mine in a unique, conscious state, moving to the beat of my self. When

the world blows up, will you disco down? (End bongos.)

I remember at about this same time, all the New York bands (Blondie a case in point) stating in no uncertain terms that they did not stand for the same things as, say, The Sex Pistols, that they were not "punks," did not promote violence, and that they knew more than three chords; only to end up just weeks later, wearing all the accoutrements of the British movement. Ah, the fickleness of Fashion. I remember these same bands expressing a grand distaste for disco. Oh, the zombie-like aspects of that mindless drone. Another year later and several of them have disco hits. Now, I know that compromises must be made on the road to fame and fortune but the original ideologies of two separate movements have not only fallen by the wayside but have been buried by the heroes themselves, leaving nothing but the symbols to hang on to and on only the faddists to hang. So, the end product being exactly what it set out not to be, it must be tough being a "punk" these days. "What will you do? Tomorrow belongs to you."

— Lisa Jane Persky