

VOICES

FROM THE

VOID

**AN INSIGHT INTO PUNK ROCK PASSION
FROM THE OVERLOOKED PLAYERS
LEFT OUT IN THE COLD**



BY

RAY N BOW

THE MAN FROM NOWHERE

INTRO:

Punk is a genuine paradox that appeared out of nowhere with great ideals and a rule not to follow rules and then decried all forms of uniformity and became nothing less than a fashion. The original players were a tight knit clique who came from suburbia and wanted to play that age old teenage game of 'shock the elders' - hardly outrageous was it? Well in fact it was - for some unknown reason the public were shocked, the resistance to this new form of rebellion was monumental and the music scene and society would never be the same again. Despite all the hypocrisy and vagueness within the punk scene one thing it has proven is that it is a survivor and along the way has dragged along many a misfit/outsider and in many respects has saved their potentially lost asses. The scene now is a multi-layered beast with each level having its own regulations/disciplines and identifiable noise thus making a somewhat divided arena for those who like to play big fish in small polluted ponds but providing a wonderful eclectic soundscape for those who like to vary their listening matter and partake of some real raw overlooked talent.

This electronic tome is aimed at highlighting the emotions of punk, the pride, the spirit, the stubborn passion that will not be doused by the weak waters of authority and tradition as well as bringing to the fore the voices of those who have stuck at it, ground it out in the face of the doubters, took up the essential ethos of 'anyone can do it' and absolutely ran with it. There are many personal opinions on what punk is but perhaps if we looked at what it shouldn't be then things would be more focussed and capable of creating more unity. Punk should never be a routine, punk should never be a compromise, punk should never be without a point, punk should never lack vitality and punk should certainly never be a hobby. For me, experience creates an insight where one can see the people who are using the scene as a social pastime, using it as a place to gain a slice of the popularity pie, using it as a place to sell themselves short just to be a 'somebody'. Over the years I have seen much and enjoyed the major part of it but alas scratching to deeply can be disappointing and as is the norm with people controlled environments there is always plenty of underhand self-gain behaviour occurring. Let's forget all that though and remain positive and take this opportunity to let some real 'faces' say their piece and give you a flavour of how this wonderful genre operates. It still has that welcoming ideal and anyone with an urge to contribute to the overall flow can do so with little effort even though many just choose not to. The DIY attitude can still be found and for a paltry sum a band can be formed, play a few gigs and release a CD showcasing their very own racket. At one time the thought of releasing anything was deemed a miracle - now - no problem at all. Isn't that just amazing!

So here we are - 2012 - and the cacophonous community isn't so chaotic anymore but is a place to take pride in and more importantly enjoy. There is much to do, much to catch up with and all out there for you if only you can make the effort. Punk will never die but will mutate and become something less obvious instead - it is natural progression I suppose - but in there are some real 'erberts trying their utmost to keep things 'back to basics', as they want them to be and still with music and individuality at the fore. The main message is to never forget what punk has given you - untold pleasure and a life with meaning. Think about it - many don't and that is one helluva serious crime.

Ray N Bow - one small shade in a vast spectrum - it all contributes to the final picture

MENTAL ANARCHY

CONTENTS

PAGE 3: Interview with Richie Rocker

PAGE 9: Interview with Ian McLennan

RITCHIE ROCKER



GREATEST PUNK MEMORY:

I was lucky before punk, my family were well into music, first stuff I remember my mum playing was Elvis and Johnny Cash, not a bad start! Also my uncle used to do discos and stuff so I would get to hear all the great glam stuff at an early age, by the time I was 10 or 11 I was well into Bolan and Sweet etc.

However as my teens approached I was aware that music had become very stale, Top Of The Pops had become a haven for novelty acts or insipid disco music. I wasn't aware of 'the music press' so didn't really know what was going on. Then Grundy happened and The Sex Pistols were thrown into the spotlight. They were in the news everyday, but I still had no chance of hearing em'. They were thrown off labels, had records banned and I still couldn't hear em''. Then finally a couple of days after my 13th birthday the papers were full of The Pistols appearing on TOTP. This was it, I will be honest I think I watched cos I thought they would swear or something. C'mon I was 13! Anyway that appearance changed my life, the song was 'Pretty Vacant', and it blew me away. Not that the band looked strange, or Rotten was shouting, but THAT guitar, fuck me the power, it went right through me. I realised quickly, they weren't monsters sent to destroy us, they were a rock n roll band playing to our generation, just like Elvis in the 50's and the Stones in the 60's. We now had our own bands, and I had to find more. This I did and my life was never the same.

DATE OF BIRTH:

6th July 1964

PUNK CAREER THUS FAR:

Been into punk since 1977, played in bands since the 80's. The Go Heads, MDM, Instant Agony, a stint with The UK SUBS, a gig for The Business plus session work. Recorded 4 albums with MDM, 1 for Agony, plus a few 7 inch singles . Now playing guitar for BITEBACK.

Look at the date I got into this stuff. How do you just pick one special moment? Could be my first gig in 79, or seeing The Clash in 81. Meeting Steve Jones at his house in LA would be up and also counting most of my heroes as friends, when I was watching them at gigs or seeing them on TV - I never thought that would be possible.

INFLUENCES:

My influences would be varied, 50's Rock 'n' Roll, Bolan, Slade, through to the great early punk bands. Clash, Ramones, Ruts, Sparrer. Also love Social Distortion and Argy Bargo, Rancid. And I love Reggae.

BIGGEST PUNK REGRET:

You should always have some, otherwise you just become a machine or a robot. Turning down the offer of a guest list for the Stray Cats at Brady's in 1980 would be one and deffo never seeing The Banshees and The Ruts.

PUNK ROCK MISSION STATEMENT:

My goal is just to keep doing this stuff, enjoy it and keep the memory of the great Joe Strummer alive. I love The Clash.

DISCOVERING THAT INITIAL POWER AND SPITE WAS INDEED QUITE AN EXPERIENCE AND SOMETHING I FEEL MANY MUSIC FANS JUST MISS OUT ON. CAN YOU PUT INTO WORDS HOW PUNK MADE YOU FEEL AND HOW THAT FEELING HAS CHANGED OVER THE YEARS! YOU KNOW THE KIND OF SENSATION SUCH AS STRUTTING DOWN THE STREET FULL OF THE SWAGGER THAT THE PUNK POISON INTOXICATED YOU WITH OR THE 'I DON'T GIVE A FUCK' EMOTION THAT CAN TRULY BEAT THE WORLD. GREAT DAYS INDEED!

This is a difficult one as really for me it was all about the music and dressing up. I know a lot of people were inspired by the DIY aspect of it and rightly so. Knowing that you can say 'no' to people and go your own way is a very powerful thing as a teenager, but to me and my mates punk was just part of us being teenagers. No agenda, no politics, just music and fun. Yes we made our own clothes by just throwing paint etc. at em'', and yes we certainly questioned certain things, but we felt life was too short to get caught up being too serious at 13/14. Also were I lived it was difficult to swagger anywhere knowing every fucker wanted to kick fuck out of you just for being a punk. Don't forget this was late 77/78 when even straight jeans would get you a kicking.

Being a teenager doesn't last forever, but my involvement with punk has, simply because I still love the music, even as I write this I'm on e-bay buying vinyl. I still get that excitement when I see a new band. Just recently I saw The Cyanide Pills for the first time, quality stuff. Those of us who loved it then have never gone away, also most of the friends I still have are from that era, we all met at the same time/same places, we knew it was special and it will stay that way. We travel all over the country/world to watch bands and long may it continue.

CONTINUING WITH THE CLOTHES - A CERTAIN MR LYDON DECRIED ALL MIMICRY AND DESPISED ALL FORMS OF UNIFORM BUT FOR ME THE UNITY WAS THERE IN GREATER QUANTITY BACK IN THE OLD DAYS WHEN BONDAGE, STUDS, SPIKES ETC. WERE ALL THE RAGE WHEREAS NOW THE QUOTE 'PUNK IS NOT ABOUT WHAT YOU WEAR' IS ON EVERYONE'S LIPS AND THE SCENE SEEMS TO HAVE BECOME SOMEWHAT FRACTURED. WHAT DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS?

I must admit I loved the clothes, was it a uniform? I suppose in a way it was, but I did have my own take on things for a while. I tried to wear brighter clothes than my mates, leopard skin stuff like that. I did buy Clash jeans a lot though from Xtreames in Liverpool, £19.99 if memory serves me right. I admit to falling in line with everyone else in 82 when the studs and spike thing was at it's height, and this is the only time I've regretted my dress sense during the punk era. I did become the same as everyone else, it did become a uniform, all of a sudden you could be an off the peg punk rocker, the clothes were no longer fun, it was almost like you were told what to wear and how to wear it. Crass/Discharge/Dead Kennedys T shirt, leather covered in studs, Doc's and black pants, mohican of course, which I didn't have - I kept to regulation spike, I think it was around 86 I became interested in the new glam thing out of LA, and that was fun!

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS REGARDING THE PUNKS OF TODAY? DO YOU THINK THE ONES WHO STILL DRESS IN THE OLD GEAR ARE OUTDATED, DO YOU THINK THE ONES WHO JUST WEAR A PAIR OF BAGGY JEANS ARE MISSING THE POINT? ALSO DO YOU THINK THE SCENE IS VERY SEGREGATED AS A RESULT!

Punks of today? Glad some of us are still here, lost too many down the years. As for the way they/I still dress then no, I don't think it's outdated, it was about doing what you wanted anyway and fuck fashion. Plus I still wear creepers, jackets, just the classic Rock n Roll look, that is never outdated. Had many debates about the baggy jeans brigade down the years, I don't think they miss the point, lets face it they can't help when they were born, and I would rather they were into decent music than pre packed shite like X fuckter!!

As for the scene being segregated, mate it has always been that way, don't let anyone tell you different. Even back in the late 70's early 80's I used to get asked are you a Crass punk or an Oi punk, or are you Anarcho, or a 77 punk. It was just punk/new wave and there was so much to explore. This is were people missed the point, we were young, we had so much music to choose from, why the fuck limit yourself to one? I recall just one week in 82, I went to see Poison Girls one night, Killing Joke the next, then The Business the night after, all different all punk!! When any scene fragments it dies, and that's what happened. It's getting better, many younger kids are open minded to what's out there, and to what went before. At the end of the day, listen to real music, whether it's 50's rock 'n' roll or some of the so called punk bands of today, it has to be better than the alternative.

KEEPING WITH THE MODERN ERA - DO YOU THINK SOME BANDS HAVE SOLD OUT OR HAVE JUST LOST IT AND BECOME DISTRACTED BY THE MONEY ANGLE. I SEE MANY BANDS REFORMING LIVING ON THE PAST BUT SURELY PUNK IS ABOUT MOVING FORWARD AND PROGRESSING, AND YET WHEN THESE BANDS REFORM THEY COMMAND THE ATTENTION OF THE MASSES WHO ARE USUALLY ABSENT WHEN THE LESS WELL KNOWN (AND USUALLY HARDER WORKING BANDS) ARE OVERLOOKED.

First off I hate the phrase 'sold out'. It's usually issued by so called punks who begrudge anyone making a living out of music. I think it's great when so called big bands reform, apart from the fact there were a couple I missed first time round, it also gives the younger punks a chance to see bands they were too young to see at the time. People get paid vast amounts of cash in all walks of life, so I don't begrudge any of the bands a penny. And I'll tell you this the punks that shout 'sell out' at these bands are standing there in £80 doc martins, waving their fuckin iphones and playing on their fuckin' Xbox. Yeah we don't want punk bands earning money but we will pay hundreds of pounds to big corporations!! Fuck em''!

Yes it would be nice if some people who only went to see big bands made the effort to see the smaller bands on the scene, but guy's its not 1982 anymore and there is only so much cash about, we have families and responsibilities now. I'm lucky I get out often and see many bands young and old, other people are not so lucky, some people need to get out of their punkier than thou pulpit and get in the real world.



AS YOU SAY - IT ISN'T 1982 ANYMORE AND THERE ARE A FEW CONTRADICTIONS IN THE SCENE. DID YOU EVER THINK THE BANDS OF YESTERYEAR WOULD BE GETTING SO MUCH ATTENTION THESE DAYS AND WHAT WOULD BE YOUR ADVICE TO A YOUNG KEEN, ALIVE AND KICKIN' UNIT WHO WANNA MAKE A BREAKTHROUGH AND ARE JUST GETTING FRUSTRATED AND ANNOYED. I HAVE SEEN A FEW GOOD BANDS GOES DOWN THE SHITTER OVER THE YEARS BASICALLY BECAUSE OF THE ATTENTION ALL POINTED TO THE TOP BANDS AND NOT THEIR WAY. SURELY YOU MUST HAVE FELT THIS ALONG THE JOURNEY? IS IT A QUESTION OF DOWNRIGHT DETERMINATION, STUBBORN MINDEDNESS AND SHEER BELIEF?

Like I said in an earlier answer, there has always been contradictions in the scene, as there are in all walks of life. Sorry to be blunt here but I will not quote from the punk handbook just to be one of the crowd, I've been doing this shit too long and seen too much.

I still find it funny that there is interest in the bigger bands, you have to remember the fuss that was caused when these bands started, to some people they were about as appealing as smallpox. Remember the famous quote about The Clash should be returned to the garage with the motor still running? The guy who wrote that ended up one of their biggest fans. Those bands are still popular because they were fuckin good, saw The Damned in November playing 'The Black Album', forgot how great that was, place was packed, people still wanna see em'. People still talk about The Clash with tears in their eyes. myself included, they were special, if they had ever reformed it would have been the biggest selling tour ever, why should bands apologise for being popular?

Advice to younger bands? If you want fame and fortune you are in the wrong scene, by that I mean we are not trendy, Simon Cowell won't like you, you won't be the X Factor Christmas number 1. However, if you see success as playing gigs, being able to put out cd's against all the odds, and just having a fuckin good time, then the advice is simple. **STICK WITH IT!!** The thing about the punk scene is people will help you, it don't matter where you are from, or what you sound like, someone will like you and want to help. Don't let your head drop after the first setback, as that will be the first of many, your career in punk will not be smooth, but it will be fun. As for the bigger bands getting all the attention and not putting anything back, well a few years ago Cock Sparrer took Middle Finger Salute under their wing, they were just kids from Blackburn, last we heard of them they were playing The Warped Tour! You see it can happen and some bands do practice what they preach, there is room for everyone in the scene, big or small, like I said before some people just need to realise that.

THE REALISATION YOU MENTION - YES GOTTA AGREE SOME PUNKS SEEM A BIT IN 'LA, LA LAND' AS REGARDS HOW THINGS OPERATE AND HOW THINGS WORK OUT. I DO LIKE THE 'STICK WITH IT ATTITUDE' AND REMEMBER THE UK SUBS PLAYING TO HARDLY ANYONE AND NOW ARE ENJOYING A REAL RENAISSANCE. DO YOU THINK THE SCENE DOES ENOUGH THOUGH TO KEEP THE YOUNG WHIPPER SNAPPERS HUNGRY OR DO YOU THINK WE DO TOO MUCH AND SO ARE OVER-SATURATED? THAT BALANCE THING IS A HARD ONE FOR SURE!

I don't think we do that much at all, and quite frankly why should we? By that I don't mean let them go to the wall, I mean give em'' credit for being able to do it themselves. They got their band together, decided to play punk, got on the scene. Kids are capable of a lot more than they are given credit for, and I don't think the older guys giving them help will make any difference, if they wanna be in this scene they will stay in it regardless, those who just wanna pose and slum it for a couple of years will leave no matter how much help they get.

Also like you mention, The Subs went thru the 90's playing to no one, look at them now. If you want help and inspiration look no further than Charlie Harper, MDM played with The Subs a lot, and he never stopped encouraging us, helping us with gigs etc. That man stuck with it when all around him people were telling us punk was dead. Even 20 years after that, and 35 years after it all began he is still here, and so are we. Thanks Chas!

YEAH CHARLIE HAS BEEN AND STILL IS A REAL FLAG BEARER - THE FACT THAT HE HAS KEPT THINGS SO APPROACHABLE FOR ME IS THE ESSENTIAL FACTOR - ARE THERE ANY OTHER BANDS OUT THERE WHO YOU FEEL DESERVE A MENTION HERE?

Ok, let me try and deal with this one — Charlie will never be any other way, the man is a legend, pure and simple. It may come as a shock to people that there are other so called big bands who keep their connections to the fans, it's just some people are too busy slagging them off to realise it. GBH will never be found hiding in a dressing room, you will always see Cock Sparrer at the bar talking to fans, John Robb also deserves a mention here, The Exploited also. Just because a band don't shout the latest Anarcho trendy slogan don't mean they are a sell-out.

WHICH BANDS DO YOU FEEL HAVE LOST THE PUNK ROCK X FACTOR AND HOW DOES ANYONE TRY TO KEEP THINGS AS 'ACCEPTABLE' TO THE CROWDS AS POSSIBLE. A REAL POSER!

Which brings me to point 2. Guys, read between the lines, I will not mention any names here, but a lot of the bands who are held up as the pure principle of punk are the biggest fuckin hypocrites on the scene, I have seen so much shit at the hands of these Paragons of Virtue that you would not believe, if certain people saw it too then their illusions would be shattered forever, I'm lucky to have a bigger insight than most into what goes on with the so called real punk bands, and quite frankly they make me fuckin' sick. Some people need to take off the rose tinted specs.

ONE OF THE THINGS I DO NOTE IN THE SCENE IS THE OVERLOAD OF SELF-APPOINTED CRITIQUES WHO SEEM TO TAKE GREAT PLEASURE IN HOLDING PEOPLE BACK AND DEFLECTING FROM THE FACT THEY ARE FREE-LOADING AND ACTUALLY CONTRIBUTING NOTHING THEMSELVES AND YET SOME DO ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF PUNK. ADD TO THIS THE LITTLE INNER CIRCLES THAT SEEM TO JUST BE HAPPY PLAYING BIG FISH IN LITTLE PONDS RATHER THAN SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE AND SPREAD EVERYONE'S WORD. IT IS A SHAME I FEEL AND TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE SCENES PROGRESS. HAVE YOU EVER ENCOUNTERED THIS BLINKERED AND BEWILDERING BEHAVIOUR AND ANY THOUGHTS ON HOW TO COMBAT IT?

I tend to avoid the guardians of the nations punk morals, it's usually some prick who has been around for 5 mins and thinks he knows the fuckin' lot. I mentioned in a earlier answer how I turned towards the LA Glam bands around 85/86. I did this cos some wanker who turned up on the scene in about 84 told me I wasn't a real punk, cos although I had studs in my jacket I didn't have a mohawk! Would love to know where that cunt is now, but I'm still here! My music and dress sense is about fun, not politics, the only world I wanna change is mine. As for people who go above and beyond, well there are a few who do it for love, first off (and this will surprise a few people) Daz Russell, and before you all start shout money making rip off merchant, well come on people you put yourself on the line the way he does, everyone is quick to judge, but Rebellion is still one of the best value for

money festivals out there. Also a lot of bands who have slogged away for years get to play to bigger crowds. On a smaller scale, I feel Dave Fungal deserves a medal. How he does everything he does in only a 24 hour day baffles me, also from the same neck of the woods Jason Carroll, and lets not forget Oi The Dennis. LEGEND!! There are so many people who deserve a mention from around the country, Drongos For Europe from Birmingham who always keep it real, the list is endless, and while people still wanna protest and stay on the outside, then punk will always be with us. Like Charlie Harper says, 'it's like the white blues, it will always carry on', and so with any luck shall we. PUNKS NOT DEAD!!



FINALLY LEAVE US WITH A MOTTO THAT YOU HAVE TRIED TO LIVE BY AND WOULD ENCOURAGE ANY OTHER PUNK ROCK MANIAC TO FOLLOW.

That's just it mate. I wouldn't encourage anyone to do anything. DO IT YOURSELF. There is a big world out there. Go and find your own place in it.



NEIL MCKENNA



DATE OF BIRTH:

17th February 1959

PUNK CAREER THUS FAR:

Bass player with Blitz, Guitarist with Epic Problem—simple really.

INFLUENCES:

Joe Strummer, Ian Mackaye, Dan Yemin, The Clash, Minor Threat, Black Flag, The Ruts, Paint It Black, Leatherface and Off With Their Heads.

BIGGEST PUNK REGRET:

Fucking my ears up. No earplugs back in the day.

PUNK ROCK MISSION STATEMENT:

Play generally loud aggressive music with a message, awareness, togetherness, great music.

GREATEST PUNK MEMORY:

Seeing The Clash at Belle Vue, Manchester (filmed for So It Goes?) with the then unsigned Banshees and Subway Sect.

GIVE US YOUR ANGLE ON WHAT PUNK WAS LIKE BACK IN THE DAY WHEN THE SECOND WAVE WAS BURSTING THROUGH AND RECORD LABELS LIKE NO FUTURE WERE RE-SHAKING UP THE SCENE.

After the initial punk bands had split/gone to the states/evolved, Blitz and bands like us decided to carry the torch on for punk music. It seemed more of a grass roots scene then and it really was the start of indie labels like No Future, Secret and Crass type bands showing that we didn't need the major labels to get our stuff in the shops or even heard on the radio or released on indie labels. As long as you had decent distribution like Rough Trade and shops like that stocking the new punk stuff we could make some headway. Even bands who were the bridge between The Clash/Pistols etc. bands like Stiff Little Fingers, The Ruts and Angelic Upstarts seemed more 'real' than the first wave. We began playing small gigs with mates bands to like-minded people and it just snowballed from there really. No Future were great for us and vice versa, they made our stuff available, it sold, they made money, released more bands stuff, they sold and on it went.

THOSE EARLY LABELS WERE VITAL IN KEEPING THE PUNK GENRE ROLLING AND IN TRUTH I THOUGHT BROUGHT MORE VARIATION TO THE SCENE THAN GIVEN CREDIT FOR. WHAT WAS THE 'FEEL' OF THOSE TIMES THAT YOU WERE PICKING UP ON AND HOW DID IT PERSONALLY FEEL TO BE AN ACTIVE PUNK IN THOSE EXCITING DAYS.

Really after the initial punk bands people saw that they could do it by themselves, so labels like No Future, Clay, Riot City, and the Crass stuff as well as the American stuff SST, Discord, Alternative Tentacles, all these people decided you didn't have to go with a major label, Rough Trade would do your distribution for you, and you really could do it for yourselves. They were great times looking back, checking the music press and fanzines for news of bands you'd heard of but not yet heard.

ONE OF THE MAIN THRILLS FOR ME WAS BEING ABLE TO WALK INTO AN ALTERNATIVE RECORD SHOP AND JUST TAKE POT LUCK WITH MANY SINGLES AND COME AWAY WITH A 99% SUCCESS RATE. MANY USED TO ADOPT THIS GAMBLING TECHNIQUE WHEREAS THESE DAYS EVERYONE SEEMS RATHER PICKY ABOUT WHAT THEY LISTEN TO. DO YOU THINK THINGS HAVE BECOME A LITTLE TOO SAFE THESE DAYS AND IF SO WHY?

This follows on nicely from the previous question. We would go to our local independent record shop and just ask what was new in, or just check through the racks, there was always something interesting and like you say take pot luck and unearth a gem like The Wall 'Ghetto' or the Outcasts stuff. You would never get to hear some of this stuff without taking a punt. It was great taking it home, examining every inch of the sleeve and label, putting it on and almost instantly discovering your new favourite band.

Nowadays music is so disposable, MP3's I mean there is nothing there! No actual thing like a single/album, cassette or even CD, tiny artwork, its just another example of today's throwaway culture. People don't care about an MP3 on their Ipod like you would with an album.

HOW DO YOU FEEL WE COULD COMBAT THE LETHARGY AND THROW-AWAY MENTALITY AND GET PEOPLE EXCITED ABOUT THEIR MUSIC AND HAVE A DESIRE TO DISCOVER NEW AND EXCITING STUFF.

It's sad to say but I don't think that will ever happen, there are too many distractions nowadays, it is a case of information overload and things that seemed so important to us like a new single or album coming out is just not that exciting to today's generation. Today its leaked on the net and given away free - I know this is a massive generalisation but what I see and hear this is very much fact.

I am not looking back through rose tinted spectacles but the late seventies and early eighties were the best of times but I hope I am proved wrong and people will start to care about their music, and scene, again!



HAVING BEEN INVOLVED 'THEN' AND BEING INVOLVED 'NOW' WHAT POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE COMPARISONS CAN YOU DRAW AND IS THERE ANYTHING ORIGINAL GOING ON AT THE MOMENT THAT MANY OF US ARE MISSING OUT ON? I VERY MUCH DOUBTED THE 'ORIGINALITY FACTOR' OF PUNK IN THE FIRST PLACE SO YOU HAVE GOT TO CONVINCE A NON-CONFORMIST HERE!

The positive things were the anticipation of seeing new bands, hearing new stuff, DIY, creativity, Rock Against Racism, etc. The only negatives back then were the knuckleheads, the splits in the scene, Crass and streetpunk. Overall it did feel a whole lot better than it does now.

Nowadays the positives are many. It is far easier to get your stuff heard and so simple to get contacts for gigs and stuff. The punk scene at the mo, well at least the people I have met in it, are all helpful. The flip side is that there is too much stuff out there. As for 'originality' - there is nothing original in the punk scene and it hasn't got any brilliant bands. The Stooges, Clash, Ramones all started it, streetpunk and hardcore ran with it, Fugazi, Killing Joke, Joy Division, Gang Of Four, Magazine all twisted it but a spark was retained. Its all been done before and I doubt you'll hear anything new.

THE NEGATIVES YOU SPEAK OF 'CRASS' AND 'STREETPUNK' COVERS A BROAD SPECTRUM. WHAT ARE YOUR GRIPES WITH THESE TWO OPPOSING SONIC POLES. TOO DIVISIVE MAYBE?

No mate, I have no gripes with either of the types of bands i.e. , Crass bands or streetpunk bands, I was meaning the war of words between the two punk factions, they generally didn't get on 'bloody hippes' or 'just hooligans/ bootboys with guitars'. It seems now you are free to like all aspects of punk music or music in general, it seemed to me that back in the day you were divided into who you could like and who you couldn't.

THE FACT THAT PUNK HAS NOW APPARENTLY BECOME MORE LIBERATED HAS UNDOUBTEDLY LED TO MANY FRACTURES WITHIN THE SCENE AND IT SEEMS PEOPLE ARE LESS FOCUSED. THE LARGER THE SCENE, THE LARGER THE COMPETITION - SO HOW DO YOU RISE ABOVE AND STAND OUT? PERHAPS YOU ARE LIKE ME AND FEEL THAT THERE IS NO NEED TO MAKE A BREAK AND SUCCESS IS JUST IN THE DOING?

Yes, I agree with your statement its hard to stand out, and maybe its not important to be different or groundbreaking, just making the music you want and like is enough for me anyway.

HOW DO YOU THINK THE BANDS OF YESTERYEAR WOULD COMPARE IN TODAY'S FIELD. PERSONALLY I FEEL MANY WOULDN'T EVEN GET A SNIFF AS THE QUALITY OUT THERE (AND DIVERSITY) IS JUST TOO HIGH AND ALL CONSUMING!

I think from the first wave The Clash, The Ramones, The Banshees etc. set the blueprint for a lot of today's bands. A lot of the second and third wave outfits pushed the boundaries both politically and streetwise and if you listen to stuff like The Sex Pistols it seems so slow by comparison. American Hardcore do it all but how much can you take before you need something different?

It is probably rose coloured glasses time again but for me the newer bands can't compete with the old stuff. I am sure if I was coming at this from a 20/30 year olds point of view I would prefer the newer stuff, its just what you are brought up with. It shapes your mindset, and although there are many bands to choose from I prefer the originals.

AND LASTLY - CAN'T RESIST THIS - HOW DO YOU THINK EPIC PROBLEM WOULD HAVE FARED BACK IN THE 80'S AND HOW DO YOU THINK BLITZ WOULD HAVE GONE ON IF THEY WERE A NEW BAND TODAY - BE TOTALLY TRUTHFUL NOW.

Now this has got me thinking, I think we (Epic Problem) would have done ok in the 80s, what we sound like (to me anyway) is catchy melodic punk rock, Leatherface/Off With Their Heads type stuff, good choruses and hooks, lyrics that deal with personal and political issues, we just sort of evolved into this, its not a preconceived sound its just us.

As for Blitz today, I think a lot of the bands who were around at the same time, as they improved in playing and gigging sort of evolved and took a more rock/metal route just because they probably got bored with playing in the recognized punk style, but most of them from that era came back round to the music they loved at the start. Just because you can play faster riffs and more intricate stuff - solos etc. doesn't necessarily mean the songs you are writing are going to be better - a lot of bands first albums are the best.

So in summary Blitz would have got better, gone metal/rock, been ridiculed for it, reverted back to the basic 3 chord sing-a-long punk which they started with and played Rebellion every year.

