The Melbourne Punk Scene in Australia's Independent Music History

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Abstract

The existence of independent music communities and culture within Australia's major cities today is largely attributed to the introduction of punk in the late 1970s. Among the inner city youth, a tiny subculture emerged around this sprawling, haphazard style of music that was quickly dismissed by the major players in the Australian music industry as bereft of commercial possibilities. Left to its own devices, punk was forced to rely solely on the strength of the independent music network to release some of the most original music of the era and lay the foundations for a celebrated musical culture. This paper examines the factors that contributed to and influenced the early Australian punk scenes, focusing in particular on Melbourne between 1975 and 1981. It shows that the emergence and characteristics of independent music communities within individual cities can be attributed to the existence of certain factors and institutions, both external and internal to the city.

Keywords

Australian music history, subculture, punk, independent music.

Introduction

In 1986, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal published the results of an inquiry into the importance of the broadcasting quota for local music content. Throughout this inquiry, investigations are made into the existence of a distinctly Australian "sound". Turner writes:

> To look for the 'Australian' element is to look for a local inflection, the distinctive modification of an already internationally established musical style. It would not be difficult to argue that the work of The Divinyls, or The Church, or The Saints, or even The Black Sorrows, is distinctive but it would be very difficult to describe that

distinctiveness, or indeed the stylistic conventions which frame their music, as Australian (1992, pp.13).

Australia's demand to be taken seriously in the international music industry is perhaps the predominant force driving this search for an instantly recognisable local sound. It follows hugely successful musical trends that have been associated with particular cities, such as the Liverpool/ Merseyside sound of the 1960s or the Seattle grunge phenomenon of the early 1990s. It becomes problematic to suggest that any Australian city has generated a specific sound, though Homan argues that certain trends in Australian music had stronger followings in some cities than in others (2000). Hayward suggests that the main difference tends to be in the "character of independent music scenes associated with metropolitan centres" rather than a specific musical quality (1992). Brabazon argues that attaching a particular sound to a city functions primarily as a marketing technique. It limits not only the types of music that can generate success from that city but also the time they have to do so, since these "sounds" tend to be viewed as passing trends, and this sets a time limit on industry interest in that particular city (2005).

My paper documents the punk scene as it was emerging in Australia and specifically in Melbourne between the years 1975 and 1981. I suggest that this scene developed separate and largely unhindered by the restraints of the commercial industry, unbeknown to all but a small group of diehard fans. The independent music scene that exists in Australia's capitals today takes its historical and cultural roots from this tiny, underappreciated subculture. I support the argument that there is no conclusive evidence for the supposed existence of an Australian "sound", or any distinctive sound that encompasses an entire city or nation. Instead, following the arguments of Shane Homan and Phillip Hayward, this paper follows the assumption that cities develop music "scenes" that may indeed be unique in the character of the various players, institutions and historical factors that combine to create them. These factors can be specific to the city or common on a national or cultural level.

Kruse uses the word "scene" to imply something "less historically rooted than a community" (1993, pp.38). O'Connor defines the punk scene as the "active creation of infrastructure to support punk bands and other forms of creative activity" (2002, pp.226). This includes performers, fans of performers and institutions involved in the playing, recording, promoting and supporting of independent bands and their music. I refer, for the most part, to alternative media outlets, venues and agencies. The nature of independent music communities suggests that these categories often overlap and many involved in these institutions could also call themselves 'fans'.

I use the term "independent" as it refers to the less-commercial sectors of the music industry. The idea of independence has been romanticized since the first independent rock labels appeared in the 1950s. The myth of honesty and authenticity associated with early rock and punk, is set in opposition to the "plastic", commercial nature of pop music (Frith, 1981), or the "mainstream". In the 1970s in Australia, an independent label was independent in the sense that it was not entirely driven by a desire for profit and chart hits (though few independent labels would deny that some profit was necessary and even desirable), but instead by a desire to support and record the music of artists they admired or were connected with on a social basis. Stafford writes of the independent community:

> Those that didn't form their own bands, or last in them, instead formed record labels, partly to provide an outlet for groups the major labels had no interest in, partly as a way of immortalizing their friends on plastic,   and partly, if they were lucky, to make some pocket money (2006, pp.28).

In this paper I make use of many articles from the Australian rock magazines of the 1970s and 1980s, such as *Juke* and *RAM*, as well as the smaller punk and avant-garde publications such as *Virgin Press* and *Pulp*. I conducted interviews with several key figures within the independent music scene in Melbourne – such as Keith Glass, the first owner of iconic record store and independent label Missing Link Records; Bruce Milne, owner of *Au-Go-Go Records* and regular presenter on Melbourne's independent music station 3RRR; and Clinton Walker, rock journalist who produced one of Australia's first punk fanzines, *Pulp* and has written extensively on Australian independent music history. I also examined much of the recent literature on Australian rock music and culture. I will provide a very brief background into the external factors that influenced Melbourne's independent music culture – particularly the state of the national music industry at the end of the 1970s and how this impacted upon the local scenes – before focusing specifically on the characteristics of the Melbourne scene.

Background: Australian Music in the 1970s

By 1975 it is suggested that Australian rock music had reached a turning point, in that it was no longer as insecure and subservient to US and UK rock fads as it had been in previous decades (Milsom & Thomas, 1986; Zion, 1989; McGregor, 1992). I mark the year 1975 as this turning point for several reasons: It was the year in which, for the first time, two Australian bands sold over one million dollars' worth of records. One of these bands, Skyhooks, was managed by Mushroom Records' founder Michael Gudinski, whose

entrepreneurial skills and ability to predict the "next big thing" was even then becoming legendary. It was the year in which there appeared two national rock magazines – *Juke* and *RAM* – and one highly successful national television show – *Countdown* – whose coverage greatly enhanced the status of the artists they were reporting on. It also marked the birth of several influential public radio stations across Australia, such as 3RRR in Melbourne and 4ZZZ in Brisbane, as well as the government-funded radio station 2JJ in Sydney.

It was during this period of the early to mid 1970s, aligning roughly with the period of the Whitlam Government, that there was increased interest in the arts-cultural industries and a range of inquiries was conducted into ways of encouraging their growth, including the revision of the aforementioned local music quota for radio (Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, 1986). Donald Horne writes of this period as one of renewed cultural nationalism, not simply coinciding with the election of Whitlam, but in the seven years prior to that election (1980).

The music scene in a particular city is differentiated by its assumed sense of historical character and by the nature of institutions and even individuals that emerge to cultivate the developing scene. I will now examine the independent music scene in Melbourne and the internal factors that may have affected or contributed to its emergence. Though this scene very quickly split into unnecessary divisions, it was held together by the institutions that supported it – namely the radio stations, independent press, venues, labels and record stores that allowed a band to enter the independent music scene and gather a following.

Phillips suggests that Melburnians have always had the tendency to view their city as having a "distinctly European culture and sophistication" (2006, pp.20). This may affect the sound a band generates for itself and certainly the art-focused aspects of punk and post-punk music gathered more of a following there than in other capitals. The magazine *Virgin Press*, which began in 1981, indicates the presence of this art-punk following. It contained a roughly even mix of art and popular culture with punk and avant-garde rock. While some punk scenes tended to reject the middle-class, art-school origins of punk music (O'Connor, 2002), Melbourne embraced them, and particularly within the St Kilda venues, local punk culture was tinged with something darker and more sexually ambiguous than the more well-known aspects of the style taken from British punk.

Clinton Walker notes his experience of the punk scene in Melbourne, which differed to that of Brisbane, which at that time struggled under the Bjelke-Petersen Government.

Walker: [The Melbourne scene] was less politicised, for obvious reasons since I come from Brisbane. I was an art school dropout, and so was Nick Cave and that whole scene… Sydney was much more American-style in the music that prevailed there, you had the Radio Birdman scene and that whole Detroit sound, that was really dominant in Sydney. Melbourne was much artier, let's put it that way… One thing that a lot of people did listen to in Melbourne was a lot of that German stuff like Kraftwerk, stuff like Eno, early Roxy Music we all loved. So there was more of a Euro-artistic kind of influence in Melbourne (Personal interview, 13 October, 2008).

Riley suggests that Melbourne punk gathered more of a private school following: "There was even a person who called himself Pierre Voltaire, and some people carried around Dostoevsky and Kafka paperbacks as proof of the depth of their pose" (1992, pp.120). This is not to say Melbourne did not have its British-influenced punk bands, but that it also developed a strong base for darker, avant-garde rock and electronica.

Milne: When the whole punk thing started here, it was really just great interesting young bands who didn't want to sound like Rod Stewart or they didn't want to sound like the big Australian bands… It was mainly after the newspapers, a year or so in to it, got on to it, and would scour the streets of London trying to find outrageous looking kids, that people like that started turning up to gigs in Melbourne (Personal interview, 18 August, 2008).

Walker: A big record for all of us was The Saints' third album, *Prehistoric Sounds*. It was built around horns and acoustic guitars. But I loved that. I don't know if any of us were prepared to wear that label of punk, I certainly never had a safety pin near me, and I had good hair (Personal interview, 13 October, 2008).

A different struggle went on in the smaller state capitals. While Sydney and Melbourne bands struggled for international recognition, many interstate bands aimed for recognition in Sydney and Melbourne. Adelaide-based independent magazine *Roadrunner* took particular issue with the Sydney and Melbourne -centred network. Brian Johnstone wrote in an early issue:

Interstate bands, many who have originated in Adelaide, are demanding and obtaining anywhere from three to ten thousand dollars a week while local bands struggle for a gig and are then paid $100 to $200 between as many as 10 musicians while shoring up memories of broken dreams and promises (1978, pp.10).

Melbourne was, by the late 1970s, a well-established commercial centre of Australian popular music. *RAM* describes the Melbourne pub circuit as "booming" (1975, pp.8), particularly because there were few other places that bands could find work besides pubs. In 1976 Melbourne's Hard Rock Café closed, as did the rock festival, the Reefer Cabaret.

Though all of the major labels were Sydney-based, Melbourne had Michael Gudinski's well-established independent label Mushroom Records. Mushroom had a significant impact on the way the music scene operated in Melbourne. Keith Glass, founder of Melbourne's Missing Link Records complained about the struggle with Mushroom, whose reputation for finding successful artists was so strong that the major labels took little interest in bands that were not signed to Mushroom. "To the Sydney labels, if Mushroom hadn't picked it up, it was useless," he says (Personal interview, 23 September, 2008). Gudinski owned the booking agency Premier Artists, which alongside rival company Nucleus, had a stranglehold on the industry and very much dictated which bands would be able to play enough shows to generate a large following (Hutchison, 1992). He also owned Bombay Rock, which opened in March 1978 and became one of Melbourne's premier rock clubs. Gudinski's empire is important in examining the effect of boutique label Suicide on the punk scene in Melbourne.

The Case of Suicide Records

One anonymous record dealer told *RAM* that Suicide Records was "like trying make General Motors out of a bicycle" (1978, pp.32). It was the earliest case of Australia's major labels attempting to cash in on the independent market, and it struck the market while punk was still very much in its infancy in Australia. Suicide rounded up seven new wave acts: The Boys Next Door, the Negatives and the Teenage Radio Stars from Melbourne, JAB and X-Ray-Z from Adelaide (both of whom relocated to Melbourne during the Suicide period), the Survivors from Brisbane and Wasted Daze from Sydney.

From the beginning, Suicide looked like the antithesis of everything that punk had intended to stand for. Advertisements for the label were slapped all over the rock papers of the time. *Juke* reported that at least $20,000 went into the promotion of the label's first (and only) compilation CD, *Lethal Weapons*, comprising the cost of "three film clips, radio and press ads, promotional devices such as windcheaters, T-shirts, replicas of guns and confectionery" (1978, pp.10). Suicide's first press release announced, "the new wave's attitude is simple: to build a new foundation you first have to destroy the old" (1978, pp.9).

Suicide clearly attempted to establish itself as a brand before any of its talent. The bands were interviewed together as the "Suicide Set", with little reference to their individual sound. Boys Next Door drummer Phill Calvert later told *RAM*, "We lost a lot of our audience because we were thrown in a package deal. People used one band to judge us all" (1978, pp.32). The compilation sold 7,000 copies but was not enough to keep the label going. By the time it collapsed, less than a year after its inception, three of the bands signed to it had disintegrated. Several had undergone massive upheavals in line-up and style. Out of several of the Suicide bands – members of X-Ray-Z, Teenage Radio Stars and JAB - came the Models, who would generate considerable commercial success as a pop outfit.

Of the factors that could have led to Suicide's collapse, Director Barrie Earl blamed the Australian market and the bands themselves. *RAM* writer Miranda Brown compared his attitude to that of the "spurned parent". She suggested that many of the bands had been prematurely thrust into the limelight (of the seven bands, only X-Ray-Z had been together more than a year) and the Suicide attention "stultified, rather than enhanced their development" (1978, pp.32). One punk fan wrote in to *RAM*, "The obvious emphasis was on bands which looked like J. Rotten et al and SFA (sic) was given to musical credibility."(1978, pp.2). The case of Suicide Records shows that the commercial music industry and media in the late 1970s had very little understanding of punk and independent culture. It would take them at least another decade to begin to effectively target the alternative audience (Mathieson, 2000).

Melbourne's Independent Music Scene

Clinton Walker jokes of the Melbourne independent scene in the 1970s, "There was me and about fifty-nine other people". He notes that most of the scene at that time was around the same age – mostly in their early twenties (personal interview, 13 October, 2008). Bruce Milne said of being a part of the independent music scene, "it felt fantastic because if you loved music, you were just so far ahead of the loop" (personal interview, 18 August, 2008).

By 1977, while Australia's national rock press remained oblivious to the wave of younger bands springing up all over the country, Missing Link founder Keith Glass was planning to make his way to Brisbane to see The Saints perform at their private venue and offer to release their material through his label. He never got the chance. The Saints received rave reviews in the English rock press with their first single '(I'm) Stranded', were signed to EMI and left the country almost immediately. Australia's professional music press were left scratching their heads. How could this unknown group from Australia's Deep North make a dent on the

international music scene with a self-released single, no commercial airplay and no more than a handful of gigs in a legitimate venue? *Juke* was completely baffled, suspecting that The Saints were an English or American band pretending to be Australian in the hope of getting publicity. They were less than enthusiastic about the group, almost taking it as a personal insult that The Saints had bypassed all the major checkpoints for success and succeeded where all the bands *they'd* marked for overseas success had failed. *Juke* devoted more of their introductory article on the Saints to grumbling about a lack of cohesion in Australia's national music industry than a report on the band or their music (1977, pp.13).

The commercial media in Sydney, particularly *RAM* and Australian *Rolling Stone* were considerably more open to the new music, willingly accepting articles and reviews of independent bands. Melbourne, however, only had *Juke*, who were largely uninterested in independent music. Walker suggests that "Melbourne started to perceive a gulf there that Sydney media wasn't giving Melbourne all the due coverage it should've got" (personal interview, 13 October, 2008).

Geographically, Melbourne punk developed its strongest followings in St Kilda and among the northern inner city suburbs, particularly in Fitzroy and Carlton. In the early years, punk's tiny following watched live performances at private parties or church halls. Milne was known to hold functions at Swinburne Tech, where he was studying at the time. By around 1978, punk music had several dedicated venues. North of the river, there was the Champion Hotel in Fitzroy and the Tiger Lounge in Richmond. When the Keith Glass Band gained a residency at the Tiger Lounge, Glass was known to have opened up the scene for independent music, offering the supporting slot to various punk and new wave bands.

> Glass: We started to have various groups on each week and within about three months we were just the old guys and all the new crowd was coming along, so we actually did ourselves out of a job but that was okay. That was when bands such as the Boys Next Door and JAB and Young Modern from Adelaide all came over and played, that was their introduction, probably the first real venue that most of those bands played (personal interview, 23 September, 2008).

The scene in St Kilda was focused around the George Hotel, which in 1978 became the Crystal Ballroom, run by Dolores San Miguela and later Laurie Richards, who also ran the Tiger Lounge. The Crystal Ballroom portrayed the gothic, cabaret-influenced, sexually ambiguous character of the Melbourne punk scene. Riley wrote:

> In the early days of new wave in Australia it was not uncommon to hear interstate
> people refer to the (then) Boys Next Door/ Crystal Ballroom scene in Melbourne as a
> 'funeral party' because of the preponderance of black makeup, black clothes, dim
> lighting and morose facial expressions (what is now described as 'gothic') (1992,
> pp.116).

Milne admits that there was "a bit of a uniform" among the inner city scene, often avoiding
blue jeans and other popular fashions of the outer suburbs. "So it was largely that we'd wear
black," he says (personal interview, 18 August, 2008).

During that period from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, independent music would be
contained to the inner city. As in the other major centres of Australia, there was something of
a rift between the inner and outer suburban. Glass suggests that the outer suburban music
tastes were indicative of the more commercial pop and "Pub Rock" sounds of *Countdown* and
the rest of the commercial media.

> Glass: That reflected what was going on in the outer suburban hotels, the 'beer barns'
> as they were called. That's where groups such as TMG or Hush or Sherbet or
> whatever, ruled. But the inner city was always a little bit inclined to want to go with
> something new (personal interview, 23 September, 2008).

> Walker: The inner city bands didn't go and play in the suburbs, and if they did, they
> got bottled (personal interview, 13 October, 2008).

There developed a rivalry between groups on the opposite sides of the Yarra river,
particularly as the independent scene began to expand at the end of the 1970s. Melbourne was
still somewhat divided by Suicide as well. The Suicide period had split the punk scene
between those bands who were signed to Suicide and those who were not. Suicide bands
received the benefits of being part of the Gudinski network – they were part of the Premier
Artists stable and were showcased at Gudinski's Bombay Rock club on 'Punk Nights'. Non-
Suicide bands such as the News and the Young Charlatans struggled to get gigs. Milne wrote
in *Roadrunner* that the label had grave consequences for the Melbourne scene:

> They managed to split the punk scene down the middle. Before Suicide came along
> all the bands used to get on well together because unity was vital if punk – new wave
> was to properly establish itself as a musical alternative. After the arrival of Suicide,
> the two different factions – Suicide and non-Suicide bands – didn't talk to one

another. There was a mutual suspicion and antagonism that didn't exist before (1979, pp.11).

It seems that there existed very little sense of citywide community. Walker notes that the rivalries rarely extended to the media that covered the scene, such as the radio stations, fanzines and labels that supported independent punk and new wave music. "The media was grateful to try and give coverage to this inner city stuff because it was starting to break out. So they were eager to have new content, I think" (personal interview, 18 August, 2008). The rivalry between communities, between cultures and between cities, as documented by Cohen in her ethnography of independent rock bands (1991), is important in establishing a scene's sense of "difference" from the mainstream.

> Walker: Very quickly in that scene, little networks spring up and those networks are due to proximity, people who lived near each other, people who shared the same sort of ideals, and I hate to have to admit, people who wanted to share needles and people who didn't want to share needles (personal interview, 13 October, 2008).

The drug situation in Melbourne had a significant impact on the scene in a short amount of time. Smoking marijuana was strongly associated with hippie culture and hence frowned upon. Heroin and amphetamines were common, particularly heroin and speed taken together in a combination known as a "speedball". Very quickly the scene moved from alcohol to narcotics and amphetamines, which were cheap, strong and readily available.

> Walker: It did start, straight away, really early when we figured, Oh you can just go down to Fitzroy Street and score, and wow. So many people were immediately sucked into it (personal interview, 13 October, 2008).

The Institutions of Melbourne Punk

The emergence of Melbourne's independent music community was driven by several main forces. The most obvious of which was the emergence of community radio, including rock stations 3RRR, 3PBS and 3CR, virtually the only media outlets in the city to include local new wave music. 3RRR in particular, quickly became identifiable with punk and new wave music (Phillips, 2006, pp.16) when considerably little of the station's programming time was actually given to punk music.

> Walker: To myself and the people that I was hanging out with, Triple R was way too
> conservative for our taste anyway. But, in retrospect, I look back and think actually, I
> had a pretty narrow focus on what I wanted to do and what I wanted to hear – and that
> probably fitted in fine to let me do a shift at RRR – but really, RRR needed to be
> playing all different kinds of stuff, which it was doing even then. (personal interview,
> 13 October, 2008).

The station had several regular new wave programs. Martin Armiger of The Bleeding Hearts
hosted the *New Wave Breakfast Show* in 1978, which played music "ranging from Ultravox
and Graham Parker and the Rumour, to the Blue Oyster Cult and Linda Ronstadt" (Phillips,
2006, pp.43). At the same time, former JAB member, Bohdan X began broadcasting his own
show, *Punk With Bohdan X*. His mix of punk and new wave music, along with his
unprofessional, shambolic style of announcing, quickly brought him to cult status among the
station's presenters (pp.39). Bruce Milne, who is referred to in art-punk magazine *The Virgin
Press* as 3RRR's "token punk" (1981, pp.8) created programs that introduced and
contextualised the new music to the Melbourne audience. Milne claims his best show was
done with Clinton Walker, called *Know Your Product* after the brilliant but unsuccessful
Saints single.

> Milne: A lot of people were reading about punk rock in the newspapers as being just
> this loud noisy mess and we were trying to show that it was all part of a musical
> history. So you might play a current release by an American band and then play a
> Sixties record that somehow   referenced it, even if it was just that they were both a
> simple chord progression or something, or a Fifties song. It wasn't just, "these are all
> the new records that have come out around the world this week", it was trying to put
> them into some sort of context so that people could see that, despite what they were
> reading in the newspaper about safety pins and people smashing each other up, that
> there was a musical revolution going on (personal interview, 18 August, 2008).

Keith Glass and Bruce Milne founded the two key labels of the late 1970s Melbourne punk
movement – Missing Link Records and Au Go Go Records respectively. Both were, Walker
notes, the "fulcrum" of the Melbourne scene (personal interview, 13 October, 2008). Glass
and Milne often worked together and released, between the two of them, most of the punk
material from that period in Melbourne. Au Go Go officially began in 1979 as a label that
dealt mostly with 7-inch singles, and would press up a standard 500 copies of most releases.
From the beginning, it was clear that there was little money to be made in the kind of music
he intended to release.

> Milne: There was definitely some profit although because it was 7-inch singles it
> was… you're talking about 20 cents a record or something. But that became
> significant when it became three or four thousand records that you were selling.
> Langdon: Would that happen often?
> Milne: No no, most things were much, much smaller than that. A lot of them didn't
> even sell the 500 (personal interview, 18 August, 2008).

Both labels operated on a small budget, with many financial struggles throughout their
history. The punk scene expanded in the early 1980s and several other labels appeared, such
as Monash Records and MusicLand, which dealt predominantly with importing and
distribution. Missing Link, which also operated as an import record store, was central to
Melbourne's punk and postpunk scene from the late 1970s to the early 1980s. It was one of
the only places to buy new wave imports, as well as releases by local new wave bands,
fanzines and imported punk magazines. Its reputation, and the enthusiasm of founder Keith
Glass for the independent scene, made it a significant force within the community, and the
store is still considered to be Melbourne's premier punk and alternative record store.

The city had several punk fanzines, such as *Pulp* (which became more Melbourne-focused
when Clinton Walker moved there from Brisbane in 1977) and *Alive and Pumping*. Many of
the writers from that wave of fanzines moved to writing articles on independent music for
professional rock magazines such as *RAM* and *Rolling Stone* by the end of the 1970s, and a
new, younger wave of fanzine writers sprung up. In 1980, Bruce Milne and fellow 3RRR
volunteer Andrew Maine used the station's studio to produce the cassette magazine *Fast
Forward*, which contained a mix of spoken word with a playlist of independent demo tapes
they had taken from the program *Demo Derby* (which they both presented at the time), or
records borrowed from Missing Link, where Milne was working. Melbourne magazines in the
early 1980s such as *Vox* and *The Virgin Press* were more focused on the inner city scene,
which began to gather a stronger following and would continue to do so for the rest of the
decade.

The scene was characterised by its closeknit nature, as well as a lack of strong financial
backing. Alternative radio constantly struggled to raise the funds to continue broadcasting,
often relying on donations and benefits (Phillips, 2006). Those who wanted to support the
independent scene would do so with little expectation of making a profit, well aware that
much of the work to be done was unpaid (working a shift at 3RRR) or paid very little (starting
a fanzine or a record label). Milne recalls that his attitude to operating the label was to put out

the records that he believed were important, and "hope that other people agreed. Sometimes they did" (personal interview, 18 August, 2008). Perhaps it could be thought of as a membership fee for joining this elite circle of music lovers, that inevitably to keep the scene going its supporters had to pitch in somehow, whether it was simply buying records, paying a door charge to see live performances, or subscribing to their favourite community station.

Conclusion: The Aftermath of Punk in Australia

Tracee Hutchison writes that internationally, "the music industry had been tipped on its head by the effects of punk, and new musical ethics were now on the agenda." (1992, pp.2). I have argued that these effects were not so visible in Australia, for they remained confined to the few inner city venues that housed punk and post-punk music, the import record stores and the non-commercial or youth-oriented programming of a few alternative stations. By 1978, punk had already been pronounced dead by the commercial media, who had given more attention to Pub Rock – that other offshoot of the growth of the local music industry in the mid-1970s which would come to dominate Australian popular music.

Ideally, the emphasis on low-budget technical facilities and the unrefined sound of punk should have encouraged a burst of new Australian musical talent. Only Missing Link, Au Go Go, and several other independent labels around the country took advantage of this. Perhaps this was the reasoning behind Gudinski and Earl's attempt to harness punk music. *RAM* contributor Stuart Coupe wrote of Suicide's collapse:

> Their major failing was to assume too close a connection between Britain and Australia. What was a widely supported and popular movement overseas was destined to remain an elite fashion in Australia (1978, pp.29).

In a way, Australia's refusal to follow the British punk trend was disastrous for mainstream acceptance of the genre. But it also seems like a step forward for Australia in that audiences (for the most part) did not catch on to punk simply because it was popular overseas. Moreover, had punk taken off the way Gudinski and Earl had predicted, it would quickly have developed into that which it stood against – heavily commercialized, "mainstream" music. The commercial industry's loss of interest in punk music also allowed it to develop without commercial restraints and retain a sense of authenticity in keeping to the values of punk.

Research on the current state of Australian rock often makes quick reference to punk rock's beginnings as being important for independent music, and leaves it at that. Statements such as

Hutchison's claim about the revolutionary effects of punk often fail to mention the specifics: that much of punk and independent music was ignored, sometimes actively stifled by the mainstream industry. And even within the tiny circles of supporters there were unnecessary divisions and rivalry, loosely held together by the institutions of the scene. Many of these institutions were instrumental in catering to a number of 'alternative' social niches. In describing the external and internal influences on Melbourne punk, I have shown that while these alternative communities developed at around the same time throughout Australia, they each developed with a particular "local inflection", to use Turner's term (1992, pp.13) due to the institutions and individuals present within each city. This inflection was not entirely noticeable in the sound that came from these cities but much more so in the character of the scene that emerged and still exists today.

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