

In Defense of the New Wave

The new wave of rock and roll, a portion of which has been labeled "punk", has made many Americans feel threatened. The effect of this has been condemnation and ignorance which has led to the fading of the majority of punk bands from the limelight.

The Sex Pistols, a British punk band, shocked the U.S. in 1977 as they exposed themselves to this country. After the disbanding of the band (for a variety of reasons), the now infamous Sid Vicious, Pistol bass player, was accused of murder. The American society as a whole, which had all along been searching for some reason to condemn punk, now drooled over such a scandal. Newspapers ran feature articles on the death of Nancy Spungen. Many rags such as the Philadelphia Daily News went so far as to connect the whole punk scene to the murder. "Punk Rock Soundly Denounced" ran one headline. Making this connection was not only harmful to a form of music, but utterly absurd.

When Lance Rentzel of the Dallas Cowboys was involved in a sex crime, society did not condemn the whole of pro football; to connect the actions of Rentzel to his profession would have been ridiculous; neither did Vicious' actions have any connection to the new wave. Since pro football is an entrenched part of the American status quo, however, Rentzel's actions went without such vindictive criticism. Because of the public's already adverse opinion of punk, the whole punk scene was condemned.

When nothing drastic occurred after the initial breakthrough of punk, society felt better, hoping the whole thing would fade away. But when one punk musician allegedly committed a felony, society fingered the whole new wave instead of considering the drug scene that Vicious was involved in as a possible cause.

I am not writing in defense of Sid Vicious, but I would just like people to realize that the new wave, which has contributed such original, exciting rock bands as Blondie, the Dictators, and many others, is not to blame for the somewhat mentally ill Vicious' actions. The American music business and society in general has to stop condemning "different" cultural attractions because it feels threatened by nonconformist attitudes.

Seth McKee

Album Reviews

Dictators: "Blood Brothers" (Asylum) - The third and unquestionably the best of their albums, the Dictators have achieved a success. "Blood Brothers" nine cuts are true rockers. "Ross the Boss" and "Top Ten" are perhaps two of the best guitarists in the New York rock scene today. Andy Shernoff's thumping bass lines, combined with Ritchie Teeter's (since departed from the band) form an excellent rhythm section, and Handsome Dick Manitoba's vocals are improving with every album. "Stay", "Slow Death", "Faster and Louder", "What it is" and "I Stand Tall" are five songs to watch. The Dictators are an excellent live band.
RATING: A.

Devo: "Q. Are We Not Men? A. We Are Devo!" (Warner Brothers) - As Kiss is for little kids and Meat Loaf is for older little kids, Devo is for college-aged kids. Devo is for sophisticated rock critics, even though it has no possibilities. Another album would sound exactly the same (i.e. - Boston's). "Satisfaction" is no competition for Mick and Keith's. This Akron, Ohio-based band could have their own comic strip. Isn't this Bob1 and Bob2 thing a little too cute. The songs are undiscernable.
RATING: C.

Blondie: "Parallel Lines" (Chrysalis) - Three seems to be a lucky number. "Parallel Lines" is Blondie's best. Debbie Harry is quickly becoming the new queen of rock and roll. Her recent album justifies this. A definite buy: one of the best albums of 1978.
RATING: A.

Paul Williams