3. 1970s Punk
Lecture Outline

• Proto-punk
• New York Punk
• UK Punk
• Hardcore
• New Wave/Post Punk

• In the 1950s, rock represented a challenge to the establishment; in the 1970s, rock IS the establishment. Punk rock is a challenge to mainstream rock.
The Historical Phases of Punk

1. Pre/Proto Punk
   – before there was the term “punk”
2. NYC Punk, 1974-1975
4. US Indie network, late 1970s-1980s, California
5. Pop punk, 1990s-present

• As with many genres, the term “punk” has been used to describe music that varies widely in sound and social outlook
General Features of Punk

• Musical simplicity; easy to play
  – Sometimes sloppy, definitely not polished; may be amateur-sounding
  – Simple structures; opposite of prog or psychedelia
    • In this sense, more like 1950s rock and roll, or folk
• Aggression, loud
• DIY: from clothes to recording, album art, production, touring
• Fashion: ripped clothes, safety pins
• Many different sounds, but in general, in opposition to mainstream corporate rock (especially in the 1970s and 1980s)
1960s Garage Rock

• More enthusiasm than skill/musical training
• Lo-fi local recordings, inexpensive equipment

Ex: The Kingsmen – “Louie Louie” (1963)
• First important garage band hit (#2 Pop)
• Amateurish performance, rough vocals and instruments, vocals start at wrong time at one point
  – after guitar solo... then waits two bars

• FCC investigation into possible “pornographic” lyrics
1960s Garage Rock (cont.)

• The unexpected success of “Louie Louie” led to more amateurish local bands being signed

Ex: Sam the Sham & the Pharaohs
  – “Wooly Bully” (1965)

• Another good garage rock example:
  ? and the Mysterians
  – “96 Tears” (1966)
The Roots of Punk

- US underground rock in the 1960s
  - Garage Rock, early-to-mid 1960s
  - NYC underground rock scene of the mid-to-late 1960s
  - Underground rock scenes in other smaller cities, notably Detroit

Proto-Punk groups:

- The Velvet Underground
- MC5
- Iggy and the Stooges
- Patti Smith
The Velvet Underground

- Underground style: didn’t fit 1960s styles of psychedelia or mainstream rock
- Lou Reed: edgy literature, poet, TPA style songwriter (song mill in NJ)
- John Cale: avant-garde classical viola, minimalism
- Challenged sexual stereotypes
- Andy Warhol connection (next slide)
Andy Warhol

• Experimental visual artist
• Pop art, reimagining everyday items as art
• How does this relate to punk?
• EPI (Exploding Plastic Inevitable)
  – Multimedia events, dark themes
  – VU were house band at EPI, 1966-7
  – Clear connection with the avant-garde art world
• Produced The Velvet Underground’s first album (cover on previous slide)
Ex: Velvet Underground – “I’m Waiting For The Man” (1967)

- Minimalism, easy to play
  - Extreme simplicity
- Dark themes: heroin
- How does this song and VU in general resemble what would later be called punk? Think about lyrical themes, musical sound...
MC5

Ex: MC5 – “Kick Out the Jams” (1969)

• Recorded live in Detroit, late 1968
• Swearing anticipates later punk
  – Vulgar, obscene!
• Confrontational, new level of aggression in music
Iggy and the Stooges

- Detroit underground rock scene
- No art world connections
  - Presented as straight up rock band
- Changing the rules of performance
- Extreme unpredictability

Ex: Iggy and the Stooges
  - “Search and Destroy” (1973)
  - Very loud: sonic assault
  - Lyrics: destruction, despair
New York Dolls

- Proto-punk and Glam
- Played in the early punk and proto-punk NYC scene

Ex: New York Dolls
- “Trash” (1973)
- Described as “semi-professional at best”
NYC mid-1970s Punk Scene

• The term wasn’t used until around 1974
• Scene was centered around a few key clubs, i.e. CBGB
  – Country, Bluegrass and Blues (and Other Music for Uplifting Gormandizers)
  – Home of NY punk scene by 1974
• Continuing Warhol/EPI style art and music scene
• Bands with nowhere else to play
  – The Ramones, Television, Patti Smith, etc.
• Also, Max’s Kansas City
CBGB, New York City
Patti Smith

- First band from emerging NY punk scene signed to a major label

Ex: Patti Smith – “Gloria” (1975)
- Song originally by Them (1964)
- Song builds in intensity
- Repetitive three chord pattern
- Describe Smith’s vocal delivery/style
The Sound of Punk

• Noise, fast, hard, aggressive, loud
• Stripped down instrumentation
  – 2 guitars, bass, drums (i.e. no keys or winds)
• Short tracks, repetition, simple structures
• No displays of virtuosity
• In some ways recaptures the early rock “authenticity”
  – How?
The Ramones

• First real punk band stylistically
  – Drew attention to the fact that they “can’t play”
• Lyrics: often negative, but funny
• Chart success in UK
  – Underground success in US at the time

Ex: The Ramones
  – “Blitzkrieg Bop” (1975)

• Pop-like: catchy melodies, pop form
• Short, simple, fast songs
• Not aggressive compared to the Stooges
• Portrayed a semi-suburban, street-thug kind of image
  – Contrasts with Manhattan sophistication of other CBGB acts
• Visual image not “punk” by current standards
  – But still, a rejection of “polish”

Video Ex: The Ramones
  – “I Wanna Be Sedated” (live, 1978)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x09XSa1X1eU
UK Punk, 1976-1977

• The London scene began at almost exactly the same time as the US scene, but was quite different in at least three crucial ways:

1. UK punk was usually political and working-class in nature
   – Whereas the CBGBs bands were generally apolitical
2. Punk fashion has UK roots
3. A general feeling of contempt for 1960s and early 1970s rock culture

• Also, rooted in pub rock (vs. US, art music)
The Sex Pistols

- Malcolm McLaren, manager (anti-management):
  - Did what he could to make the group controversial and hated by the general public
  - Group was banned from many venues because of reports of violence (exaggerated)
  - Dropped by two record labels in about five months (1976-1977)

- Band exists from late 1975 to early 1978

- First album, late 1977: #1 in UK
  - The band had gotten paid advances from 3 record companies
Ex: Sex Pistols – “God Save the Queen” (1977)

- Sarcastic vocals, snarl
- More angry that NYC punk
  - closer to the Stooges, but directed, politically
- “Chuck Berry on speed”

Provocation tactics

- Releasing “God Save the Queen” in Jubilee Year
- 1977 US tour
  - Deep south, not liberal northern college towns
• Johnny Rotten: Disaster image
  – Totally fucked up

• Sid Vicious (on right)
  – Bass
  – “Keeping it real”
Early Punk Fashion

- McLaren and Vivien Westwood often get credit – SEX boutique/clothes store
- Johnny Rotten claims this style was common among his crowd growing up
The Clash

• Clearer political protest in their music

Ex: The Clash – “White Riot” (1977)

Lyrics:
White riot - I want to riot
White riot - a riot of my own (repeat)
  Black people gotta lot a problems
  But they don't mind throwing a brick
White people go to school
  Where they teach you how to be thick
The Clash (cont.)

- By *London Calling*, the band plays a wider range of musical styles: reggae, pop, rock, etc.
- This album is in *Rolling Stone*’s Top 10 albums of all time

Ex: The Clash – “Revolution Rock” (1979)

- Reggae and punk connections
Punk’s influence on non-punk acts

Ex: The Rolling Stones – “Lies” (1978)

- Out-punking the punks
  - We can actually play our instruments
Hardcore

• In the late 1970s there is a split in the next phase of punk:
  – New Wave (to be discussed later)
  – Hardcore

• First distinctly US punk style, developed late 1970s

• Militaristic elements:
  – Muscles, shaved head, hyper masculinity
  – Sometimes fascist

• Crowd surfing, moshing

Video Ex: Bad Brains
  – “Big Take Over” (Live, 1982)
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=62&v=5NAPYIMMbwQ
US Indie Network aka Amerindie Network

• A continuation of UK punk, but with some differences:

1. The idea of **DIY** (do it yourself) becomes all-important
   – Lack of trust in music industry, try to do as much as possible yourself

2. For a time, there was an entire **parallel/independent music industry**
   – Indie music culture, self-sufficient in everything
   – Record stores, radio, fanzines, all independent
   – Coordinated elements of the music industry, all indie
     • Even crash pads for bands to sleep while on tour
Black Flag

• Amerindie Network
  – Toured relentlessly, helped build a national network of contacts/venues that other bands followed
• Helped pioneer the hardcore sound/look
• In 1978, they formed their own record label (SST records)
• Expressed frustrations and boredom of everyday suburban/small city life

• Compare hardcore with earlier punk
Hüsker Dü

• Diversity within the Amerindie scene
• Hardcore sound carried to ridiculous extremes:

Ex: Hüsker Dü
  – “Sunshine Superman” (1982)
• Other, more pop-like influences

• Crossover in the Amerindie networks became more common, most famously with grunge in the late 1980s (more later)
New Wave

• Mainstream marketing and a new genre label
• Less aggressive than punk, more accessible
  – But still fairly simple and quite different from psychedelia and other 70s rock
• More synthesizers added
  – Leads to synth pop in the 1980s
• Visually like earlier rock styles
  – Short hair, tight pants (as opposed to 1970s bellbottoms and long hair)
• Blondie and the Talking Heads (both CBGB regulars)
The Cars


- In some ways a throwback to earlier rock styles
  - Hand claps in intro (girl groups)
  - Rockabilly guitar riffs (linking chorus to verse and guitar solo)
  - Organ in second verse like garage rock of 1960s
  - Vocal hiccups like Buddy Holly
The Specials

• Self-consciously political
  – Musical and racial integration

• 2 Tone Records
  – This also became the name of a movement
    (featuring elements punk, ska/reggae, mod [esp. fashion], skinhead)

Ex: The Specials – “Do The Dog” (1979)

• Crossover between punk and ska/reggae communities

• This is all generally regarded as second-wave ska
  – With the first being 1950s/1960s Jamaica
  – And the third being the 1990s ska revival
The B-52s


• Self-consciously “retro” as an aesthetic and marketing strategy
  – Have we seen it before this? What are some later examples?

• “New Wave” category:
  – How were these not just “punk” bands or “pop” bands or “rock” bands?
  – What elements are from each style, and what prevents them from fitting into each style?