

ENOUGH OF BAD INFINITIES! What we need here is a clear distinction between mythology and historiography. Mythologically, punk might be linked to anything and everything, and many of those nostalgic for their lost youth are desperate to pretend that punk was somehow radical. I can remember this Trotskyist tosser who was a fully paid up member of the Socialist Youth League telling me in 1978 that when he heard "Anarchy In The UK" he expected there to be a revolution. I thought I'd never hear anything so ridiculous ever again, especially as tomorrow was the first day of the rest of my life. Unfortunately, I was to be proved wrong about this. Most of the writing I encounter about punk these days is mythological, and it tends to ignore the fact that for people like me going to gigs was a form of entertainment. I went to plenty of Rock Against Racism meets, but I didn't take the popular frontism I encountered there seriously. For more stimulating debate I'd go to meetings of the London Workers' Group, which is where I had my first "live" encounters with the ultra-left.

Since the overwhelming majority of "critical" writing about punk is more mythological than historical, just about anyone who was doing

couldn't believe that this was happening in the same country that I was living in. It bore no relation to my knowledge of Britain as a place. Living in London you just couldn't imagine anything like that happening. "Deller grew up in Dulwich, a half-brick's job from Britton, where ongoing police violence and repression led to simmering unrest and riots throughout the eighties and beyond. "Motown Junk"? More like unprecedented stupidity. Just like The Manic Street Preachers, Deller might be into radical poses, but his lack of analysis and understanding mark his pontifications as obnoxious.

All of which probably explains why I'm not really interested in delivering my intended lecture, as well as bringing me rather neatly back to The Trogs. Instead of doing a punk on punk, having announced that this is what I intended to do at the "No Future, Punk Rock 2001" conference, it is obviously EVEN MORE PUNK not to do so - especially if I justify my change of plan on the utterly spurious grounds that I CAN'T BE FUCKING BOTHERED. In other words, punk replicates the cultural logic of late-capitalism, because it is (dis)organised around undialectical and tediously repetitive besting gestures.

Let's jump straight into it, since in my philosophy - and especially when I'm trapped inside a tailor's dummy shouting "come, come, feel my love muscled" at some mini-skirted "dolly bird" (sic) who is young enough to be my daughter - the cultural logic of punk and late-capitalism are pretty much the same thing. I've been mooching about trying to work up ideas for a lecture called "Bigotry, Tantrums And Other Punk Junk: From the MCS to the Manics and back again (via the pub)". The idea of expending any mental energy on this is utterly ridiculous, since I'd get a bigger intellectual reward if I wearied myself reskimming the Dracula comics issued by New English Library in the 1970s (okay, so I never read this horror publication that attentively, but I could stare for hours at those psychédélic colours splattered over somewhat stiff human figures that were alluring precisely because of their poor draughtsmanship, particularly if I was simultaneously sniffing glue or knocking back cans of super strength lager, and preferably both). Indeed, I've just spent the past couple of hours dribbling sweet red wine onto my copy of "The Ethics" by Benedict "Dutch" Spinoza - and now the pages of this bona-fide punk classic boast a plethora of fantastic stains that the

**A Journey To  
The Far Side Of  
Solipsism: I've  
no idea why I  
agreed to do  
yet another  
talk about  
punk rock**

Stewart Home

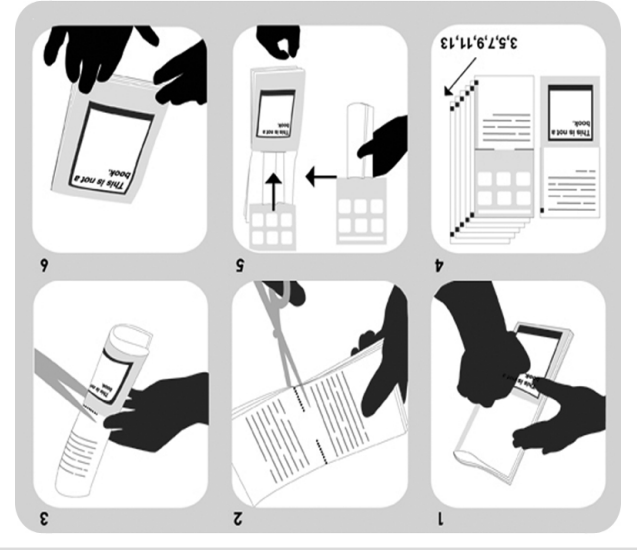
had a few ideas for Cranked, one being the totally obvious wheeze of taking genre theory from film criticism and applying it to music, which enabled me to talk about the shifting parameters of punk. As a result, I was able to use both genre theory and musicological analysis to prove that the Sex Pistols weren't punk shakers, but instead tired hard rock retreads. I'd have thought it was obvious even to casual listeners that the Sex Pistols were bad boogie swains, like the Blue Cheer did it better, or Grand Funk Railroad, or Iron Butterfly ad nauseam. Anyone with any sense would rather have a complete collection of Cream albums than subject themselves to overproduced bilge by the Sex Pistols. But then anyone with any sense would forget about Cream and instead make sure they had a copy of Willie Mitchell's cover of "Sunshine Of Your Love", which pisses on the original by adding soul to acid rock. While we're on the subject, The Incredible Bongo Band's cover of "In A Gadda Da Vida" is a whole lot better than the original too.

Punk is a receding object, it's all about obscurity, novelty and surprise - or at least that's what I thought when I wrote "Cranked". However, the thing that probably surprised me most was how

average wino or cultural studies enthusiast is gonna find a lot more enticing than the text. Likewise, I wrote my book on punk rock "Cranked Up Really High: Genre Theory & Punk Rock" way back when in 1994 in three short weeks - short, because I got so blotto during the second week that I passed out for the best part of it.

It should hardly need stating that it helps to be drunk when you listen to punk. Being legless improves the quality of your idiot dancing, and allows you to overlook the fact that the tunes you're hearing suck like an infant of two months that's just gone all night without a milk feed. These days my musical tastes have changed. Listening to a lot of contemporary dance music got me wondering about the stuff being sampled on it, to the point where I went back and investigated this older material, and I now spend inordinate amounts of time spinning jazz funk classics by the likes of Eddie Harris (I'm even considering writing a biography of Steady Eddie, which I'd call Eddie Harris: Godfather Of Funk, and the fact that I don't even feel inclined to wolf down whole bottles of cough medicine when platters like I Need Some Money are blasting from my hi fi is a sure sign I've been growing up). So I

can't arrest me, I'm a rock and roll star!" And that, my friends, is why it is in your own interests to accept my argument that the Sex Pistols weren't really a punk band - if you really want to persist in attempting to pass off "subcultural" phenomenon of this type as being in some way radical. Me? I always thought Sid Vicious was a fucked-up scumbag who couldn't play the bass. Likewise, I've always (always?) despised people who said they'd never change, since this is clearly a conservative - and very often a reactionary - stance. There's nothing wrong with being teenage, but then there's nothing particularly heroic about it either. Being young can be fun, and so can growing up. And while we're on the subject, it's amazing what drinking can do for your dialectics (like really fuck them up). And as my chum Sammy The Cat always says when pressed on these matters - MIAOW! THAT'S WHY I'M OVERWEIGHT.



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**Stewart Home**

**A Journey To The Far Side Of Solipsism: I've no**

pop hack these days, an article of epic proportions would be five thousand words long. Rock journalism doesn't get much more expansive than that, but I've still got a few hundred more words to go before I get there. Which is, I guess, why I should conclude by saying that I've just opened another bottle of sweet red wine and I'm in the process of drinking a toast to the effervescence of both Lester Bangs and the times in which a piece of rock journalism might run to twenty or even thirty thousand words.

Do not ask what you can do for punk rock, ask what punk rock can do for you. Why, even if you can't land a column in a national newspaper like Tony Burchill, you could probably get yourself an academic job somewhere, and all that jive you're always tossing off about the things you did in your youth might be earning academic points - and points is prizes - if you can get it published in "The City University Of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Journal Of Rock Aesthetics, Herring Gutting & Bread Doll Fancying" (where it is guaranteed that your work will be read by the three people who referee it, and possibly a typesetter as well). As Sid Vicious so aptly put it only hours after murdering his girlfriend Nancy Spungen: "You

repetitive it all became - and the fact that there didn't seem to be a punk band in existence that created a loud enough racket to give me a headache, even when I was hung over. Certain readers suspected that I'd made up some of the groups featured in "Cranked", although I hadn't. That said, I figured the best way of keeping my interlocutors bamboozled was by shifting gears into rare groove. What's more, to get myself in the mood to work on "Bigotry, Tantrums And Other Punk Junk", I had to riffle through my CD collection to find the most totally fucking punk rock release of all time, which I had no doubt was sequestered amongst all those early-seventies James Brown workouts I dig so much. Hell, I pretty much gave up with "Hell", stick with "The Payback", it will grove you. The only killer track on "Hell" is "Papa Don't Take No Mess", and more than one commentator has suggested it sounds like it was leftover from "The Payback" sessions. However, I was looking for the ultimate punk platter, so what I came up with was the reissue of the first two Troggs albums - "From Nowhere" and "Trogglodynamite" - on a single CD. The Troggs did some crazy shit way back when in the sick-sick-sixties, not just your overexposed "Wild Things", but a great duh-duh-duh version of

Another thing Lester Bangs never realised about Reg Presley was how his work with The Troggs was rooted in an Afrocentric vision of world culture, and an unshakable belief in the African origin of his Celtic forebears. A lot of jazz musicians adopted regal names - like King Curtis or Duke Ellington - and Reg Presley hijacked the name of the so-called King Of Rock & Roll to burlesque white values he rejected and despised. Likewise, Reg Presley's use of crop circle and UFO iconography in recent years emerges from the same cultural matrix as the imagery associated with everyone from George Clinton to Tangierine Dream, from Sun Ra to Hawkwind, from Earth, Wind & Fire to AMM - and in terms of notions of The Mothership, this has many affinities with Nation Of Islam ideology. Given all these and many other oversights in "James Taylor Marked For Death", it is hardly surprising that Reg Presley claims never to have read Lester Bangs' opus about The Troggs - he wouldn't want to acknowledge anything so badly flawed. And as Reg Presley has no doubt already noted, the problem with rock journalism is not that it is subjective, but rather that it is not subjective enough to connect up again with the social. This is what makes my hair curl like spaniels. For a

Chicago's Little Boy Blues.  
every bit as good as the freaky version by  
of Them's "I Can Only Give You Everything" that  
"Louie Louie" and an even more wigned-out cover  
So once I've refilled my glass, let's look at how I  
got my initial idea for this talk. In "Bigotry,  
Tantrums And Other Punk Junk", I was going to  
do a punk on punk. This was not exactly an  
original idea, Burchill and Parsons did it their  
late-seventies paperback "The Boy Looked At  
Johnny". However, I wasn't planning on just  
following in their footsteps by championing Tom  
Robinson and then allowing my prose and  
options to be blanded out by Fleet Street.  
Actually, my focus would have been a little  
different to Burchill and Parsons. Rather than  
praising Tom Robinson, I'd have buried him, bad  
romanticism maaaaaan, and not only that, there  
is the "Winter Of 79" bullshit about how "we"  
were the weak side in the struggle, which was  
plainly reactionary. There was also TRB's "music"  
to consider, and that matched the conservatism  
of their politics. Robinson's thud wasn't baaaaad, it  
was crap. No, I never had a brother like "Martin",  
thank fuck (in fact, I wouldn't even know whether

Moreover, Patti Smith somewhat redeemed herself because she hilariously seemed to believe that people would accept her own estimation of her minuscule "talents" being the stuff of "great art". I really pissed myself laughing the first time I heard all that stuff on the track "Land" about Arthur Rimbaud (like Patti hadn't even reached a level of sophistication where she was able to rant about Villon as the ultimate French gutter poet, and I considered that pretty gauche when I first heard the "Horses" album at the age of fourteen). Patti Smith is pretentious in the original sense of the word, rather than in the way I somewhat casually toss the term about to mean dressed in a plum smoking jacket and pea-green trousers. There are some Patti Smith Group tunes I rather like because they are played very badly but with enthusiasm, and her lyrics are always so asinine that they regularly rival the work of William McGonagall for my attention. In Smith's case I don't think her pretensions are a put on, she really is dumb. Likewise, she must have been pretty desperate to marry an alcoholic loser like former MC5 jerk-off Fred "Sonic" Smith. A perfect instance of dumb meeting stupid, which is why the couple were such a perfect match.

or not I had a brother at all, and that's not just because of all the drinking I've done to prepare myself for this speech). Returning to Burchill and Parsons, it is obvious enough that they've never encountered left-communism in all its originality, nor understood the nature of its break with the Third International. If you mentioned Bordiga to them, they'd probably think you were talking about a Spanish-style bar in Soho. Moving on, I have this thing called The Project, which is pretty much everything "Stewart Home" (not my "real" name) does that is in some way publicly accessible. The idea being that a body of work (note the use of a "materialist" metaphor, ha ha) is being continually recreated because every piece effects every other piece - so hopefully the two people who've encountered a variety of "Stewart Home" outpourings and interventions, but in different orders, now perceive The Project in ways that are at odds with each other. However, while it's well known that sometimes it becomes necessary to overstate an argument in order to make a point, I didn't particularly see yet another straightforward trawl through some of the reactionary elements of punk as contributing that much to The Project. Which is why I abandoned my initial conception of what I was doing with

away with calling your band The Fuckers? The fact that Bangs doesn't appreciate this shows that his knowledge of pre-twentieth-century literature and the development of the English language in its numerous dialects is more than a little defective (but then I'd expect such oversights from a rock critic). The point of Bangs-style journalism is to come on like a thug, while simultaneously demonstrating that one is erudite. Quite frankly, Bangs rarely lived up to his own self-image - but then it hardly needs stating such strategic failures of nerve and intellect are pretty standard behaviour for a lush.

Worse yet, Bangs never examined the full ramifications of the troglodyte end of things either. Neolithic man is, in the minds of many, associated with diffusionist notions of the origins of the human species. The idea being that we all originated in Africa, and most likely Egypt or Ethiopia. This also accounts for the title of the second Patti Smith album "Radio Ethiopia". Now Patti Smith was closely associated with Lester Bangs, and she had some rather obnoxious and elitist notions about the role of the artist. That said, her one time boyfriend and hack photographer Robert Mapplethorpe is even more problematic.

"Bigotry, Tantrums And Other Punk Junk" - which when you look back at the top of this, you'll see I've retitled it.

I certainly didn't want to do something as naff as dismissing punk in its entirety (when it is a contradictory, but not necessarily a complex, phenomenon). Among the great things punk achieved were... hell, I can't actually think of anything great punk achieved, but it does provide the missing link between "Johnny Reggae" by The Figlettes (I'll let that reference stand since the record's producer Jonathan King was done for child abuse after this talk was delivered) and "The Trip" by Kim Foley - albeit in a metaphorical, non-linear, unhistorical, sort of way (and only if you rank poetics over critique - although personally, I've abandoned both these practices in favour of popular story telling in the Afro-Celtic idiom). I guess my focus here is on the music more than the subculture - my take being basically that the worthy bands beloved by critics (or at least fanzine editors) were just junk, while the groups that pop hacks dismissed as hopeless like The Pork Dukes or The Depressions, were the ones that actually rocked and did something that grabbed my crotch (admittedly this was because

"James Taylor Marked For Death". Now in this piece Bangs did a lot of things, like fantasised about assassinating wimp rocker James Taylor, addressing his taste for bigotry, and unpacking some of the sexual innuendo in Troggs' song lyrics. However, Bangs singularly failed to get to the meat of the matter when it came to The Troggs. For a start, the band name isn't only an abbreviation of troglodyte, which seems to be all Bangs knows about it. In Scots dialect a trogger is a peddler, but this wasn't how Robert Burns intended the word to be understood when he used it in his book of dirty rhymes "The Merry Muses Of Caledonia". Anyone who cares to consult a dictionary of Scots dialect will see that trogger is usually grouped with other terms such as troke, truck, trock, troch, trouk and - indeed - trog. Now these expressions mean to have nefarious or intimate dealings with, or to be on friendly terms with. In Scots dialect, as in Elizabethan English, trogs and trugs are used as oaths or expletives. Likewise, in his Elizabethan cony-catching pamphlets, Robert Greene used the term trugging-house for a brothel. So the very name The Troggs is an example of lead singer Reg Presley's rudery. What could be more punk fucking rock than using Elizabethan slang to get

in the late-seventies I was a young drag queen with the best ass in London, and inebriated macho bores often mistook me for an easy and groovy underage "chick"). That said, can you imagine having an orgasm to a tune by the Au Pairs or The Crass? No way! I'd rather fuck to the UK Subs (although I wouldn't shag to Charlie Harper's mob either, since I prefer the accompaniment to my frolics to be hotter and feature more syncopation than is found in punk). Once I'd used jazz funketeers like Pleasure as a soundtrack to sexual activity, I discovered there was a material basis for my rating of monster beats over distorted guitars (i.e. you haven't lived until you've made the beast with two backs to tracks like "Joyous" and "Bouncy Lady"). These days I'm unwilling to play even punk music that I once liked, because it cuts down the time I can devote to phat funk or spooky Lee Perry organ-led instrumentals from the early seventies. Given this state of affairs, I'm hardly gonna "get down" to shit that doesn't even rock, like the MC5 or The Manic Street Preachers.

All of which probably explains why I never wrote a book I'd planned and partially researched that would have been called "Freak Power: Rock & Roll

he championed - all it takes is the help of a secretary to open the post. The literary technique Bangs adopted was elementary, he combined a wide range of pop music references with a few simple literary and philosophical ones, and kept banging on about himself and how outrageous his opinions were. Appropriating this methodology is what made Tony Burchill and Julie Parsons primo punk hacks. At this point I should also say that Julie got it wrong when she outrageously claimed in the pre-launch issue of the revived "Modern Review" that P. J. Proby was the first punk rocker. I'M NOT JUST SPLITTING TROUSERS HERE. Anybody who knows anything about subculture will realise that Benedict "Dutch" Spinoza was the first punk, since he made his living polishing lenses, and believed that a personal misfortune was not a misfortune to the universe. These days none dare call that nihilism, but back in "Dutch" Spinoza's time people with orthodox religious views were more than happy to condemn and curse him.

Which as I said earlier, brings us back to The Troggs. For thirty years now Lester Bangs has been notorious for contributing a long essay about The Troggs to "Who Put The Bomp" entitled

Reactionaries from The MC5 to the Manic Street Preachers". It is easy enough to explain that while the Black Panthers were organising food programmes in the ghettos, the MC5 considered the White Panthers to be their fan club, and when their record advance came through they bought themselves flash motors. Delineating the political ambiguities of the MC5 wasn't a problem, but explaining why they couldn't arrange a song necessitated repeated plays of their records, a torture I wasn't prepared to subject on myself. There was plenty I could have covered in the book, and I'd have started by slating The Fugs as a bunch of beatniks whose politics were even more of a drag than their music. Moving back to Detroit, I also planned to denounce The Up and Iggy and the Stooges. Once again, the music was too tiresome to contemplate, but I did do some work on Iggy's stage poses, which were clearly modelled on toddler tantrums. I've nothing against infantism, it can even be productive, my problem with Iggy Pop was that he couldn't do anything else - his infantism wasn't deployed tactically. There aren't many rock fans who'd defend The Ig's solo output, which is almost universally perceived as wall to wall crap, but the idea that the Stooges three studio albums are

not wisely but too well" - and when I get around to doing a piece on The Bard, I'm gonna correct it so that "but" is replaced by the conjunction "nor", which is considerably more punk fucking rock; so stay tuned, because anything could happen in the next half hour...).

That was a kind of contrapuntal break, but to get back on the beat - unfortunately most punkers are unable to get off it, being utterly unable to play either behind or in front of it - Lester Bangs was hugely influential on music journalism, and particularly punk journalism. Please note, I can't be bothered to substantiate this claim, since to do so would require me to look at three or possibly four books of collected rock hackery - no doubt including, horror of horrors, Nick Kent's "The Dark Stuff". Indeed, I view Bangs as a kind of low-rent Iain Sinclair. For a start, instead of writing about wilfully obscure writers and artists (Sinclair actually wrote as much about me as he did anyone else in his book "Lights Out For The Territory"), Bangs was forever going on about whatever had come through the mail from a record company publicist. Any idiot who like Bangs happened to be an editor at the rock magazine "Creem" could have got into the stuff

rock classics was something I wanted to demolish (the screams on the "Fun House" platter must be the most contrived moment in the history of popular culture - Neil Diamond "rocks" harder, he also wrote much better songs, I'm not being ironic here, just check out "Cherry Cherry" and you'll see what I mean). I also planned a section on English cop outs, that would have dissed stalwarts of the hippie festival scene - such as The Pink Fairies, The Edgar Broughton Band, Third World War, The Deviants and The Crass - both for their dire music, and their moribund anarchism. As Mustapha Khayati put it so well back in 1966, since the anarchists will tolerate each other, they will tolerate anything. I also got distracted by the work I was doing on another "critical" book entitled "Postman Pat: Class Collaborator Or Proletarian Post-Modernist?" My own view is that Pat's subservience is a Baudrillardian "fatal strategy".

Fast forwarding through the intended content of "Freak Power", it might have climaxed with me taking my booty down to pub rock venue The Richmond in Brighton to see the Manic Street Preachers ten years ago. The hype back then was that seeing the Manics was like seeing The Clash

scene. One might say that Bangs was a complex and contradictory character, and that his ideological vicissitudes are typical of punk taken in its entirety (regardless of whether one considers Bangs a punk, a punk progenitor, or a punk fellow-traveller - and equally heedless of whether one views punk as beginning with Benedict "Dutch" Spinoza, The Fabulous Wailers, The Swamp Rats, or most unlikely of all to me, The Sex Pistols). Likewise, because I'm taking a phenomenological approach here, I'll have to take a short break so that I can open a fresh bottle of sweet red wine. My justification, of course, being that I'm getting inside my subject, so that I may correct a dead hack's faults. It's probably unnecessary to add that phenomenology means never having to say you've sorry, let alone admit that you've run out of ideas, or that you've never really been either a medium or a necromancer (and are actually the illegitimate offspring of a liaison between a washerwoman and a defrocked Jesuit priest). Indeed, in this instance, like that line in "Othello" that ran "one who loved for work done not wisely nor too well" (I never did in order to fill my word count and collect payment type out the first thing that comes into my head phenomenonology means I'm quite at liberty to just Jesuit priest). Indeed, in this instance, liaison between a washerwoman and a defrocked Jesuit priest). Indeed, in this instance, like that line in "Othello" that ran "one who loved for work done not wisely nor too well" (I never did in order to fill my word count and collect payment type out the first thing that comes into my head phenomenonology means I'm quite at liberty to just

again for the first time - and it was. The first Clash album just about cuts it as a rock platter (except for the turgid cover of "Police & Thieves") but that comes down to all the guitar fills Mick Jones overdudded in the studio. Anyone whose memory isn't clouded by nostalgia, and mine isn't, and who was dumb enough to go and see the Clash perform in the late-seventies, can tell you they were lousy as a live band. The Clash were complete prats and rather than kicking ass, their act kicked the bucket. However, that isn't really the point, the early hype around The Manics wasn't about The Clash being crap. In music journalismese metaphors going to see The Manics was more like going to see 999 for the fifteenth time, if - and it's a big if - Nick Cash and company hadn't been competent musicians. Let's face it, let's face it now, The Manics couldn't make the three chord trick. Richard Edwards bouncing about the stage of The Richmond like a retarded three year-old attempting to play air guitar (Richie couldn't even hold down a chord on his "axe"), is one the most pathetic sights I have ever had the misfortune to witness. Fortunately, I wasn't present when this wearisome jerk-off went in for some thoroughly exploitative sex tourism in Thailand (and that, it appears, is the stuff of

bands, Lou Reed and The Stooges - and he wrote extensively on these, ahem, subjects. For these reasons, and many others which mainly have to do with the career interests of the self-selected parties promoting him, Bangs is now being flaunted as a key figure in the development of a punk sensibility. Among the innumerable objections to such revisionism is that it works retroactively, and tends to locate punk far too firmly as a late-seventies phenomenon, with fixed rather than shifting boundaries as a genre of music.

Lester Bangs was more than capable of being a reactionary pig, and examples of this could be pulled from his writing. What's more interesting is the way in which shifts in his positions are also mirrored by changes in his compositional techniques. Towards the end of his life, Bangs stopped whacking out unrevised first-word-is-the-best-word-stream-of-consciousness-bollocks and instead through rewrites and editorial revisions began producing sharper and more focused journalism. A prime example being "The White Noise Supremacists", which was first published in the "Village Voice" on 30 April 1979, and unflinchingly attacks racism on the punk

anything in public prior to last week might be labelled "The Godfather Of Punk." Given that much of what now passes as debate about punk emerged out of music journalism, it is hardly surprising that these days even rock hack Lester Bangs is being pushed forward as a key figure in the creation of late-seventies super-dumb sleaze-bag thud. Bangs, of course, had a talent - and that talent was for banging out sub-beat stream-of-consciousness pseudo-critical garbage about music. He was also a sad fuck-up who died young and had a body odour problem, which probably explains why "Let It Blurt: The Life And Times Of Lester Bangs", a biography by Jim DeRogatis, is floating around remainder shops even as I write this. DeRogatis is not only a professional music hack, he is also a fan of Lester Bangs. His book is heavily researched, indeed it is obviously the work of a fan, since the financial remuneration on this project could never repay the time and effort ploughed into it. Unfortunately, like all fans, DeRogatis also makes his subject appear boring, when there is actually much of interest that might be found in it. Bangs is famous for having stated the MCS in his first published review, and subsequently championing them. He was also obsessed with sixties garage

themselves was the imposition of capitalism on yet to be fully industrialised nations. After the fact, the band claimed "Motown Junk" wasn't intended to be racist, but it is difficult to see how else it was going to be interpreted. It fitted perfectly with punk "anti-disco" rhetoric in which "disco" became a synonym for "black". The Manics probably don't even know anything of Jr. Walker or Edwin Starr beyond a couple of hits, and clearly have no appreciation of Norman Whitfield's Temptations productions. This is ignorance, which is pretty much what you'd expect from people who give the term bland a bad name, while making a corpse like Phil Ochs look like he had integrity and edge. The Plonkers even inspired "artist" Jeremy Deller (who has also made - with the aid of individuals who possess the requisite technical and "creative" skills - promotional videos for the band) to stage a historical re-enactment of The Battle Of Orgreave, the 1984 clash with the cops that is perhaps the most widely known and remembered incident of a long and drawn out miners' strike. In the August/September 2001 issue of Manchester based style-magazine "Flux", Deller opines about Orgreave: "It made a lasting impression on me. I

which cults are made). However, I was already eating a fry-up in the all-night caff down the road from The Richmond when the Manics trooped in after their "show". At that precise moment, I was holding forth about how the band struck me as the sort of people who probably sat around listening to Nick Drake albums while taking pseudie music hacks like Greil Marcus and Robert Christgau seriously. The Manics heard what I was saying, but didn't have the bottle to come over and argue with me about it. Indeed, they couldn't have contested my disinterested observations, since it's blatantly obvious that they do take the likes of Greil Marcus seriously.

The plastic logic of what the Manics did was implacable, the move from "Motown Junk" to stadium rock was seamless, and you just know it made a perverse kind of sense to those responsible for some of the worst "music" and most moronic "statements" this side of U2. Hardly surprising then that these bozos should also become the first rock act from the overdeveloped world to play Cuba, since no one could expect The Manic Street Plonkers to understand that once you've seen through their pseudo-communist rhetoric, the task the Leninist parties set