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## biography

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If impact and influence are true measures of a band's lasting greatness, Manchester's legendary Buzzcocks should already be in the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame.

Three bands from the now mythical 1976/77 British punk explosion set the benchmarks for everything that was to follow - Sex Pistols, the Clash and Buzzcocks. Practically inventing the independent record scene with their seminal self-financed EP *Spiral Scratch*, Buzzcocks instantly forged a unique relationship with their public. The band went on to break away from the Pistols' anarchy and the Clash's overt politicism, signing to United Artists on the day Elvis died and producing a string of hit singles that welded high-octane guitar, bass and drum power with heartrending personal statements of love won and lost or dismay at the modern world.

Three classic albums - *Another Music in a Different Kitchen*, *Love Bites*, and *A Different Kind of Tension* - were released in '78/79, charting the progress of a band on top form and not afraid to mix the experimental with the instant or of being constrained by their punk rock roots. In 1981, in the process of preparing their fourth studio album, the Buzzcocks machine went off the rails. The band split.

Throughout the 80s rumours that Buzzcocks were to reform were common. In 1989, these rumours became fact. The band reformed for a world tour. The public - or in Buzzcocks lore, the Secret Public - were still waiting. In 1993, a new line-up, fronted by original songwriters Pete Shelley and Steve Diggle and joined by new rhythm section Tony Barber (bass) and Phil Barker (drums), produced the critically acclaimed *Trade Test Transmissions* album and the game was on again. In the meantime, waves of musicians had tried the Buzzcocks methodology and made their own variations of it. Most were generous in their thanks to the band who started it all. *All Set* (1996) and *Modern* (1999) reaffirmed Buzzcocks' position as a band deeply loved and revered by a global audience, simultaneously true to their original ideals and open to new ideas.

Those impressed by the current generation of 'punk' bands would do well to spend an afternoon with Buzzcocks' seminal pop treasure *Singles Going Steady*. This 1979 compilation on IRS of their first UK Top 40 hits is a classic album in every sense, an astounding collection of stunning moments such as "Orgasm Addict," "What Do I Get?," and the anthemic "Harmony In My Head." These songs have been covered by dozens of groups in many styles, a testament to the originals' strengths not as slices of punk rock history but as examples of songwriting craft. In recent times The Offspring, Anti-Flag and Ash have all covered Buzzcocks songs.

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Buzzcocks are the true godfathers of punk-pop, having laid down an infinitely superior archetype. The band is unfazed by their explosive impact on younger bands, both famous and underground, from pop to punk and all in between.

In September, 2002, at KROQ/Levi's Inland Invasion 2, Buzzcocks played a blistering set in front of 60,000 fans who were there to see them and headliners Sex Pistols along with The Damned, The Offspring, X, The Distillers, and many more. Their new album promises to provide a learning experience yet again for many a would-be punk-pop outfit. With superlative production by Tony Barber, the band has a recorded product that matches their live prowess. Songs such as "Keep On," "Friends," "Sick City Sometimes," and "Useless" demonstrate unparalleled passion and power framed in typically catchy pop melodies.

Buzzcocks are a group with a past, present, and future. It is a history the group's members could never have imagined back in the hot punk rock summer of '76. Says Pete Shelley: "Looking back on it now, what's going on is like echoes of the Big Bang. You look around you in society and the culture; so many things would not have been the same if there never was punk rock. It's strange; it's like a science fiction novel. But to us at the time, it just sprung naturally."

They're still doing it, better than anyone. Sometimes the archetype is clearly the best.