

## **Sex Pistols North American Tour 2003 Biog.**

The 'real deal'--a term that sums up the Sex Pistols perfectly. In a time where punk rock has become little more than a fashion statement for 'Sk8er Boys,' the four original Sex Pistols--John 'Rotten' Lydon (vocals), Steve Jones (Guitar), Glen Matlock (bass) and Paul Cook (drums)-will reunite for a North American Tour this August and September, starting at the Boston Fleet Pavilion, August 20th. Those who think Avril Lavigne is 'punk' are in for a shock!

The Sex Pistols first toured America 25 years ago, a tour that ultimately ripped the band apart; they later played over 30 sold-out shows in 1996 as part of their hugely successful "Filthy Lucre" World Tour, and by popular demand they return to the U.S. to show all their imitators how to REALLY do it.

The Sex Pistols are no ordinary band--their story is long and complicated, and not without its casualties. Without them, popular culture in the last 25 years would be very, very different. The Pistols didn't just kick down doors; they kicked them off the wall. For a band who (really) only released one album and four singles, they spawned a sea of imitators, and still do to this day. Not bad for a band that supposedly couldn't play--yeah right! The Sex Pistols could certainly play; one listen to their ferocious slab of raw rock and roll will soon tell you that.

Although back in the late seventies both London and New York had fully fledged punk 'scenes', punk remained largely underground in the States, and never really became a major musical force until the nineties onward, with bands such as Green Day, Offspring and Sum 41 going on to sell millions of records. None of these bands would exist without the Sex Pistols, fact.

Despite claims from New York, the Sex Pistols are the true originators of punk--no one else had their attitude, balls, or honesty. While musically tipping their hat to the likes of the New York Dolls and the Stooges, the Pistols were inspired by anger and poverty, not art and poetry. The Sex Pistols are 'punk'; the rest are 'punk rock'. Big difference...

Although often considered a London band, and an English band, the Pistols' lyrics and attitude have worldwide appeal. Despite their relative lack of commercial success in the States, nowhere in the world has embraced punk like here. Obviously punk bands of the last 25 years owe them a huge debt, but even performers as diverse as Nirvana and Marilyn Manson through to the Beastie Boys and Tupac Shakur have found the Sex Pistols inspirational. The Pistols did more than just influence people musically, they taught them to stand up and be counted.

The band that would become the Sex Pistols originally started in 1972 by Steve Jones and Paul Cook; Glen Matlock later joined them in 1974. Disillusioned by the bloated progressive-rock and hippie music scene of the time, the fledgling Pistols took their musical inspiration from the 60's

mod and rock n roll of The Who and The Small Faces. However, it wouldn't be until 1975 and the arrival of John Lydon that the band took on a whole new level. Steve Jones had spotted someone who looked "a bit different" in Malcolm McLaren's clothes shop. Bernie Rhodes, one of McLaren's associates, spotted the same guy on London's Kings Rd, complete with hacked green hair and a homemade "I **HATE** Pink Floyd" T-shirt. Sacrilege at the time!

Malcolm McLaren—who had become the band's (mis)manager by this time--persuaded the reluctant and cynical John Lydon to audition in his shop. Miming to Alice Cooper's "Eighteen" in front of the jukebox, Lydon launched into a series of self-mocking fits, hunches, and weird dances, while the others fell about laughing. However, deep down they knew they had found their man, someone who could help vocalize their thoughts. Lydon was an individual of the highest order. He looked and sounded like no one else on earth, and due to a childhood bout of meningitis, he had a stare that would kill! The perfect front man, apart from the fact he couldn't sing. But what did that matter, when he had something to say... The Sex Pistols soon started rehearsing, with Lydon (soon to be dubbed Rotten on account of his decaying teeth) providing the lyrics, and Matlock and/or Jones providing the music. One look at this mixture of mad men and working class delinquents told you they weren't going to be just any other band.

In early 1976, the band began to play live regularly, playing *anywhere* that would take them. This was a time where your haircut and clothes could get you into serious trouble. With their unique look and sound, the Sex Pistols were such a bolt out of the blue that they would often find themselves in physical danger. They would regularly have to fight their way to their van after having the plug pulled on them! However, they soon started to attract a following of like-minded souls nicknamed the "Bromley Contingent," who would include the likes of Susan Dallon (aka Siouxsie Sioux) and William Broad (aka Billy Idol). Everywhere the Pistols would play, the majority of the audience just didn't 'get it'. They thought the band couldn't play, John couldn't sing and they looked awful. But there was a small percentage of the crowd they got through to. The Sex Pistols affected everyone they saw, whether it be a positive or negative reaction. They always got a reaction.

It wasn't long before they came to the attention of record companies; the ever-ambitious Sex Pistols together with Malcolm McLaren's entrepreneurial skills had no intention of signing to a small label. They wanted the biggest and best. EMI eventually won the war. The band signed for £40,000 on October 8th 1976. A recent composition penned by Rotten was set to be their debut single, "Anarchy in the UK"! Like his stage presence, Rotten wasn't scared of saying, or doing, anything. He was more than happy to sow seeds of discontent. "Anarchy in the UK" was eventually released November 26, 1976, much to the bewilderment of the mainstream music press.

December 1, 1976 changed the Sex Pistols and the music scene forever. After the group Queen

had to cancel at short notice, EMI booked the Pistols to appear on the 'Today' show, hosted by one Bill Grundy. A notorious drunk, Grundy had no time for these young upstarts. Treating the Pistols and their entourage with nothing short of thinly veiled contempt, he proceeded to goad them into swearing. Steve Jones called his bluff and launched into a stream of F-words. Unbeknownst to the band, the show was being broadcast live throughout London. Not that it would have stopped them anyway. Grundy was one of the first people to learn not to fuck (sorry, rude word) with the Sex Pistols...The following day the Pistols were headline news up and down the country. 'Punk Rock,' as it had been christened, had reached the masses. By early January 1977, EMI had buckled to internal pressure and sacked the Pistols. Honoring their £40,000 contract in full!

Around this time, tensions between Matlock and Rotten came to boiling point. They were the proverbial 'Chalk & Cheese.' Matlock was steeped in rock and roll tradition, while John clearly wasn't. Glen officially left by 'mutual consent' in February, with McLaren then claiming he was sacked because, "*He liked the Beatles.*" Matlock would later team up with the band for the 1996 "Filthy Lucre" World Tour.

Steve and Paul had been friends for years, and John saw his chance to even up the score by bringing in his old friend John Simon Ritchie/Beverley, aka Sid Vicious. Despite being practically unable to play bass, Sid was one of the earliest Pistols fans; he loved the band, and couldn't wait to join.

A&M became the Pistols' new record label, and their next single was to be "God Save the Queen," John's alternative National Anthem. To announce the A&M deal, the band staged a mock signing outside Buckingham Palace. However, after an out-of-control drunken celebration at the A&M offices—and probably another mixture of cold feet—the band soon found themselves without a record deal yet again. Only ten days after they signed to A&M, the Sex Pistols were sacked! Finding them £75,000 richer in the process.

The next record company headhunt ended with them reluctantly signing to Richard Branson's Virgin Records in May 1977. Just in time for the Queen's 25th Silver Jubilee. The nation was gripped by Royal fever. The Queen was a national treasure. Everyone loved her, everyone except the Sex Pistols...

The release of "God Save the Queen" sent shockwaves up and down the country! This was Britain 1977, long before Diana, Fergie, Edward and the likes had exposed the Monarchy for what they were. No one had ever spoken up so publicly about them. The nation was up in arms. Members of Parliament even called for the band to be hung at London's Traitors' Gate, for God's sake!

Since the Bill Grundy controversy, the band had been public enemy #1, but that all paled into

insignificance by the protest that met them after Jubilee week. Even though it technically out-sold the Number 1 record of the week—"The First Cut is the Deepest" by Rod Stewart—"God Save the Queen" only charted at Number 2. This wasn't a conspiracy theory, this was for real.

While many 'punks', and perhaps even the odd journalist, might have supported the Sex Pistols' rallying cry against the Monarchy, only the Sex Pistols themselves had to fight it head on. John Rotten and producer Chris Thomas were violently attacked by 'supporters' of the Queen, with John being slashed several times. Paul Cook was also set upon with an iron bar. It was war!

October 28th 1977 saw the release of the Sex Pistols' one and only true album Never Mind The Bollocks, (that's Bollocks not BULLOCKS guys!). Pre-release orders were so high it immediately charted at Number 1. Now considered one of the greatest rock albums ever, 'NMTB' towered above all the other thinly recorded 'punk' records of the time, the blistering guitars and scathing vocals inspired a generation to 'Do It For Themselves'. A record that would often be imitated but never surpassed... On the album's release, more controversy surrounded the band when police took exception to its title being displayed in a shop window. The band were charged with the obscure 'Indecent Advertising Act of 1889! Bollocks is a slang name for testicles; however, the Pistols' lawyer proved that it was actually derived from a nickname for clergymen! Bollocks was legal!

Internal bickering in and around the band had reached a high point by this time, but rather than dealing with the unrest in the camp, McLaren distanced himself from the band, especially Rotten. However, there was to be one last hurrah in Huddersfield, England on Christmas Day 1977. The Pistols volunteered to play two shows for families of striking firemen: a matinee show for the kids and an evening show for the adults. The kids loved the Pistols--they weren't interested in the media hype; like the band, they only wanted to have fun! The band gave out presents; John was in charge of food duties, ending up in a huge 'Bugsy Malone' style pie-fight with the kids! (It's not quite the band considered "subversive" by British intelligence (MI5) or the picture painted by the tabloid media, is it?).

A U.S. tour was arranged for January 1978. Initially the band were refused entry to the States due to their criminal records, but their visa problems were eventually sorted with the band only having to pull two shows from the tour. The Pistols being the Pistols, they decided not to play big American cities. Instead they opted to play a short series of dates in the Deep South of the country, in a selection of redneck venues throughout the likes of Memphis, Atlanta and Dallas. These shows were probably the straw that broke the camel's back. The pressure of touring, along with the mixture of in-fighting--together with McLaren's unwillingness to deal with the band as human beings--came to a head. Sid's ever-increasing drug problem—and the fact he was the only person on the planet who couldn't see the irony in being called Vicious—didn't help the animosity

between the group either.

The alienation between the Pistols increased by the day, with things finally spiraling out of control at their last gig of the tour at San Francisco's, Winterland Ballroom on January 14, 1978. The band was on its last legs. John was fucked with flu, Sid was fucked with drugs, and Cook and Jones were fucked with Sid and John. John Lydon eventually walked out on the others the following day, after trying in vain to get Jones to dump McLaren, and the Sex Pistols as we knew them were no more...

Sid Vicious' destructive relationship with his junkie girlfriend Nancy Spungen finally hit rock bottom on October 12, 1978, when she was found murdered in their New York hotel room. Sid was the main suspect. Whether he did it or not is still highly debatable. However, Vicious would never get the chance to clear his name as he fatally overdosed on February 2, 1979—most likely by accident—a day after his release on bail from New York's Rikers Island Prison. Unfortunately, aged just 21, Sid Vicious ended up just another sex, drugs and rock and roll cliché. Everything he would have hated...

Post-Winterland, Rotten washed his hands of the Sex Pistols and moved on. Jones, Cook and Vicious kept the Sex Pistols name, releasing a series of singles between 1978-80 for use in McLaren's new 'movie' version of the Pistols story, The Great Rock n Roll Swindle. A story of how he allegedly manufactured the group and manipulated them to his wishes. A story that, somewhat bizarrely, would be wildly believed by large sections of the media. After winning back control of the band from McLaren in a drawn out court case, the band members got their chance to readdress the balance in the acclaimed 2000 Sex Pistols documentary The Filth and the Fury. As John stated, "*Only the fakes survive...*"

After countless rumors, 1996 finally saw the original band reform to play live again on the "Filthy Lucre" World Tour. The Pistols would play almost as many gigs on this tour as they ever played in the seventies. Despite being largely ignored or slighted by the press, the tour was a huge success with the band playing to an audience eager to see a legend that thousands had claimed to have saw, but in truth never had.

With the band's return to the public eye, British TV's bland 'Top of the Tops' show--which had banned the Pistols in the seventies--requested they play on the show. The Pistols duly agreed, always willing to expose hypocrisy while giving themselves a platform to promote themselves. The band always understood the need for promotion; the Pistols never bought into the pointless small-minded punk rock ethic of bands' scared to push themselves in fear of 'selling out'. The Pistols always wanted to be the best at what they did--there's no point in playing to a handful of people if you're capable of playing to thousands...

The 1996 tour wasn't without its controversy either; the band found themselves banned from playing Northern Ireland on grounds of "blasphemous content"! For some, the Sex Pistols were still too close to the bone to take...With the band's unfounded reputation of violence now going before them, John Lydon recently commented, *"We have never had problems with our audience and we play some of the toughest places on earth, with crowds whose violent potential cannot be disputed. They are there for us, and we care for them. So if we see any ignorant bouncer manhandling or abusing anyone we step in firmly... ala, just ask the security in Belgium 1996..."*

Having played a unique Silver Jubilee celebration show in London's Crystal Palace Stadium in 2002, they followed it up in the States by headlining the KROQ Inland Invasion Festival, where the band were supported by the likes of Offspring, Blink 182 and Bad Religion. It spoke volumes that the Sex Pistols would be headlining over such popular acts, while their British contemporaries such as The Damned and Buzzcocks were much further down the bill. They now return to the States for this eagerly anticipated tour. The Sex Pistols live are always an experience, and an experience not to be missed.

Never scared to confront the real issues of the day, the U.S. tour may not be their only live appearance this year... Last year we had 'The Pistols at the Palace'; this year, despite the best efforts of political red tape, we may have 'The Pistols at Saddam's Palace'! The Sex Pistols have pledged themselves ready to play Baghdad in support of the Iraqi people. No, its not the work of Comical Ally, they are SERIOUS, if the Pistols put their mind to something, then we should all know by now they mean it... Never mind torturing the Iraqis with Metallica (Metallica have been torturing us for long enough anyway), it's about time the Iraqis learned just how the Western world REALLY thinks...

*"If the people of Iraq are being offered democracy, then they should understand it to its fullest extent, and that is the Sex Pistols..." - John Lydon*

The Pistols' achievements in their short musical career are vast, but maybe their greatest achievement is they brought an alternative. People didn't realize just how bad things were until the Pistols showed them. How many bands can say they changed the world? The Sex Pistols certainly can... All that and they still get fashionably ignored by the Rock n Roll Hall of Shame. Though why would a band like the Sex Pistols want to be associated with them anyway. As John Lydon says, *"The Rock n Roll Hall of Fame is fast becoming a spectacle. It's just a place for Bruce Springsteen and his pals to jam. They can stick it up their arse!"*

**John (Rotten) Lydon:** (born, 31 January 1956, London, England; vocals) John is continuing progress on his second solo album, where he hopes be working with acclaimed producer Nick Launay. A man of eclectic tastes, the album is set to be as unique as Lydon himself. A film of his best-selling autobiography Rotten: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs, directed by Penelope Spheeris, is currently in the works. He also hopes to resurrect his own TV show "Rotten TV" which was dropped by VH1 due to its outspoken nature. John lives in LA with his long-term wife Mrs. Rotten.  
Further information: [www.fodderstompf.com](http://www.fodderstompf.com)

**Paul Cook:** (born. 20 July 1956, London, England; drums) An in-demand session drummer; Paul is now a content family man who still lives in London. He most recently played with Edwyn Collins.  
Further information: [www.cookandjones.co.uk](http://www.cookandjones.co.uk)

**Glen Matlock:** (born. 27 August 1956, London, England; bass) Glen fronts his own band The Philistines who have just completed their new album On Something, due for release this fall. He is also a member of Dead Men Walking, a 'supergroup' featuring members of The Cult and Stray Cats. He still lives in London, but is currently touring around Europe with the Philistines.  
Further information: [www.glenmatlock.com](http://www.glenmatlock.com)

**Steve Jones:** (born. 3 September 1955, London, England; guitar) Steve is now an in-demand record producer who has worked with the likes of Buckcherry and American Pearl. He has just finished producing Violent Delight, who are beginning to pick up rave reviews on both sides of the Atlantic. He also has plans to begin work on his third solo album in the near future... Outside the 'biz,' Steve helps run his own soccer team in LA, 'Hollywood United.'  
Further information: [www.cookandjones.co.uk](http://www.cookandjones.co.uk)

## **Did You No Wrong - Quotes on the Sex Pistols!**

*"The first time I saw the Sex Pistols was on a poster in my local record store in 1978. I didn't know who they were, but they scared me and intrigued me at the same time. They looked raw, brash, dirty and inexplicably cool all at once. It wasn't until a year later that I heard 'God Save the Queen' blasting out of the speakers of my local skatepark, and I got the same feeling. Except instead of being scared, I was energized to skate even harder. I still get the same feeling over 20 years later anytime 'Never Mind The Bollocks' is on. What other band could claim that kind of power? I'm glad they are back on tour because I never got to see them live in those intimidated days."*

**Tony Hawk, Legendary Skater** (June 2003)

*"The Sex Pistols would be vastly improved by sudden death, they are the antithesis of human kind. I would like to see someone dig a huge hole and bury the lot of them in it"*

**Bernard Brook Partridge, London councilor** (English TV 1977)

*"You know, Never Mind the Bollocks is one of the greatest records of the 20th century."*

**Pete Townshend, The Who** (Q magazine, June 1996)

*"The Sex Pistols were the worst thing ever to happen to rock n roll"*

**Sir Cliff Richard** (Pistols feature, Vox Magazine Sep 1995)

*"All the hype the Sex Pistols had was totally deserved. Johnny Rotten was the one I identified with - he was the sensitive one. Never Mind The Bollocks has the best production of any rock record I have ever heard. It's totally in-your-face and compressed."*

**Kurt Cobain, Nirvana** (Vox Magazine September 1992)

*"The king is gone but he's not forgotten. This is the story of a Johnny Rotten".*

**From the Neil Young song** – "My My, Hey Hey (Out of the Blue)" (Rust Never Sleeps 1979)

*"The Pistols were the boys really. You could put together a 'best of' from the Clash's five albums and it wouldn't be worth a wank next to Never Mind The Bollocks".*

**Noel Gallagher, Oasis** (Hot Press April 1996)

*"The Sex Pistols suck, we're more punk than they ever were."*

**Billy Joe Armstrong, Green Day**

*"I created Punk for this day and age. Do you see Britney walking around wearing ties and singing punk? Hell no. That's what I do. I'm like a Sid Vicious for a new generation."*

**Avril Lavigne** (Seventeen Magazine, 2002)

*"People are like, 'Well, she doesn't know the Sex Pistols.' Why would I know that stuff? Look how young I am. That stuff's old, right?"*

**Avril Lavigne** (Entertainment Weekly, 2002)