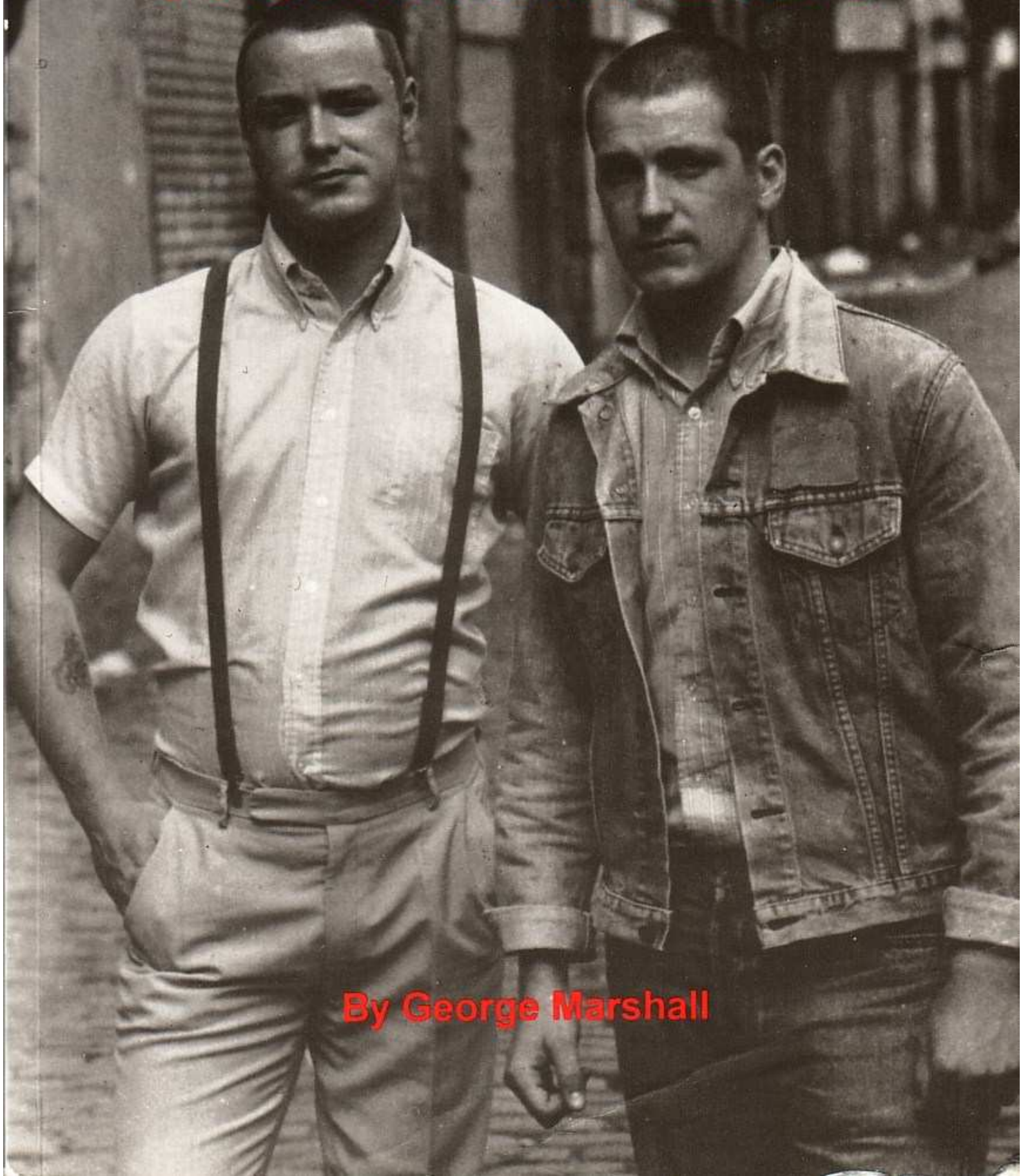


SPIRIT OF '69

A Skinhead Bible



By George Marshall

SPIRIT OF '69

A Skinhead Bible

George Marshall

***"Skinhead, skinhead, over there,
What's it like to have no hair?
Is it hot or is it cold?
What's it like to - BE BALD!"***

Playground chant from the early Seventies.

S.T. Publishing · Scotland
The original skinhead publisher - accept no substitutes

This book is dedicated to the Glasgow Spy Kids skinhead crew

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Also by the same author:

The Two Tone Story (1990)

Total Madness (1993)

Bad Manners (1993)

Skinhead Nation (1996)

This book was written by George Marshall, a skinhead, with the help of hundreds of other skinheads around the world. He was the editor of the skinhead newspaper, Skinhead Times from its birth in 1991 to its demise in 1995. *Spirit Of '69 - A Skinhead Bible* has also been published in German and Portuguese and will soon be available in both French and Polish.

For a free book catalogue, please write to
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SPIRIT OF '69

A Skinhead Bible

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INTRODUCTION

"Saturday night fear strikes scores of European cities - even behind the Iron Curtain - every week. It's the night when the packs of ultra-racist ultra-fascist skinheads take to the streets, ready to kick, bash, knife and shoot kids, families and pensioners."

People Magazine, 1986.

I remember reading once that the old Soviet Union newspapers, knowing that the word "skinhead" would mean nothing to their readers, wrote that "bald people" were causing havoc and mayhem at British football grounds. Capitalism was obviously so rotten to the core that even those who suffered from hair loss had got together to protest about it.

Here in Britain, the skinhead cult has fared little better. We are slotted in nicely somewhere between devil dogs, lager louts and serial killers in the tabloid scare story stakes, and things aren't much different for skinheads in other parts of the world either.

Don't get me wrong. Nobody in their right mind would claim that skinheads are angels, and aggro could easily be our middle name. But the constant portrayal of us all as nothing more than brainless thugs does nobody any favours. I mean, I don't know where Australia's *People* magazine gets its information, but unbelievable though it may be, there aren't that many skinheads out there looking to gun down your old granny come the weekend. Not in this neck of the woods anyway.

All the bullshit used to get right up my nose, but now it's just water off a duck's back. Another cutting for the scrapbook and that's about it. You can't help but laugh really because if you start to take any of it seriously, you are giving ignorant journalists far more credibility than their drivel deserves.

To misquote my old mate Oscar Wilde, there are lies, damned lies and skinhead stories. But there is a sad side to what the media has been doing to the skinhead cult for what is now 25 years. By not letting reality get in the way of a good story, they have buried the greatest of all British youth cults under reams of sensationalised bullshit. But again why worry? At the end of the day, it's their loss. At its best, the skinhead cult is the best British youth cult of all time. Bar none. We know that and that's all that matters.

There's so much pride and passion wrapped up in being a skinhead. The same sort of pride and passion that filled the now rapidly disappearing football terraces every Saturday. There's a real sense of belonging, of being someone special and of being with your own kind. Anyone who has ever had a crop and pulled on a pair of boots can tell you story after story about why being a skinhead made them feel ten foot tall when they were really five foot nothing.

We've got our faults, just like anyone else, but there's a lot more to being a skinhead than smacking someone in the gob. And when Judgement Day comes,

there'll be countless boots and braces merchants climbing over the pearly gates. Just you wait and see.

Hopefully this book will go some way towards putting the record straight about the skinhead cult. Not because we want to go down in history as wronged innocents, and certainly not to impress some twat of a Sociology professor. This book has been written for no other reason than to give skinhead themselves a written history of the cult, but I'm no expert on anything. Just a skinhead trying to provide other skins with as truthful account of our history as I can. No punches are pulled and no issues are dodged, but by the same token, this book is a celebration of the skinhead way of life.

A few pointers before I send you on your way into chapter one. The skinhead cult has come a long way from the glory days of 1969, when every street corner was home to a skinhead gang in Britain. It is easy to get nostalgic about days gone by, but the original skinhead era represented the cult at its peak, and everything that has followed must be judged against it. Too many so-called skinheads have ignored the cult's traditions and history in recent years. There's never been any pride in hearing that a glue-sniffing skinhead has mugged an old lady and anyone in that category is scum.

Some critics have said that this book is nothing more than a glorification of violence. It isn't that at all. When skinheads wrecked Sham gigs and caused trouble on the 2 Tone tour, the only people they were hurting were their own. There's nothing clever about that. That said, the law of the concrete jungle doesn't see anything wrong with rival gangs doing battle with one another or football firms clashing at games. And most skinheads accept that as part of the territory. That doesn't make it right or wrong, but as you'll soon see from these pages, it's a fact of life, and one that you can't walk away from too easily.

Politics is a bigger burden to the cult. It is like a maggot that has eaten its way to the core, leaving the cult in the tatters it now finds itself in. Today's cult has been ripped apart by tinpot politicians from both the left and right. I haven't a clue who the winners are, but it's bloody obvious who the losers are. Us. Fortunately, the skinhead cult doesn't stand or fall on one rotten pillar, and more and more skinheads are beginning to see no politics as good politics.

This edition contains information that has turned up in the three years since *Spirit Of '69* was first published, and is hopefully a better book for it too. I really wanted to bring the last chapter bang up to date, but with so much going on at the moment, it is probably better to wait for the dust to settle and then write about it. Anyway, I hope this book gives you as much pleasure as the skinhead cult has given me over the years.

Skinhead's a way of life and more importantly it's your way of life. Make the most of it, enjoy yourself, and no doubt I'll see you one day in that great pub in the sky where we can trade tales over a pint or three.

George Marshall.

October, 1994.



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CHAPTER ONE

SPIRIT OF '69

"The sight of cropped heads and the sound of heavy boots entering the midnight Wimpy bar or dance hall is the real cause for sinking feelings in the pit of the stomach."

Chris Welch, Melody Maker, 1969.

As Bob Dylan would have had it, times were definitely a-changing come closing time on the Swinging Sixties. Long gone were the original teenage tearaways, the cosh boys and the seat slashing teds with their devil's music, and even the mods and rockers had seen better days. Once sawdust Caesars to a man with their Bank Holiday get-togethers, both cults had entered near fatal decline shortly after those heady summer months of '64.

For one horrible moment it looked like the best British youth could come up with was hippy communes and student marches. 1967 had given us the Summer Of Love, and middle class youngsters everywhere said goodbye to the real world and started turning on, tuning in and dropping out (man). Well, at least until Daddy found them a plum job at the office anyway.

Hippies really took the biscuit, with their flares and flowers manifesto for a bright new future. Everything was now going to be love and peace and painted in a kaleidoscope of psychedelia and wild Paisley patterns. Idealism has always been part and parcel of growing up, but sitting in a field in St. Ives with long greasy hair, a dirty caftan, an ounce of hash and back copies of Oz was hardly the makings of a brave new world. Cloud Cuckooland maybe, but Utopia never. Dropping out really meant copping out. No more, no less. Just watch a few old Jethro Tull videos and you'll see how bloody stupid it all was. And if dopeheads weren't enough, students were trying to get in on the let's change the world act too. Usually the duffel coat brigade were written off by street corner kids as swots and even hated by the hippies for being square. But there they were in 1968, marching here, there and everywhere. Not quite manning the barricades à la gay Paris, but revolutionary stuff nonetheless. Or so we were assured anyway.

Life wasn't so sweet on the large council estates that were thrown up after the war in the land fit for heroes caper. Going home to your Dad in Bethnal Green to tell him you wanted to live in a wigwam was never really on the

cards. True, a few more working class children were finding their way into higher education and the odd one or two did slope off in an Afghan coat to try their luck as heads - hippies into the drugs and free love bit, but not always clued up on the peace and new world angle. But the vast majority couldn't leave school quick enough to start life on the treadmill that menial jobs had in store for them. Still, it put a bit of money in their pockets and gave them something to moan about come Monday morning.

Calls for the workers to join their student comrades in overthrowing the capitalist pigs tended to fall on very deaf ears. Very few people wanted to give the students and hippies a helping hand, or even a gentle "time to wake up" tap on the shoulder. More like a good kick up the arse and what better to deliver it than a size ten bovver boot. The writing was on the wall when student placards screamed, SMASH THE STATE! and VICTORY TO VIETNAM!, and Chelsea's Shed sang, "Students, students, ha, ha, ha!".

It wasn't until the Great Vietnam Solidarity March of October 1968, that Tariq Ali and his weekend revolutionaries finally got the message. Factories and football grounds had been leafleted in a bid to get the ordinary working man on to the streets, but come the big day all you had were 30,000 students and related lazy bastards swanning around London with nothing more than traffic jams to show for it. Oh yes, and a few sore heads courtesy of 200 shaven-headed bootboys in Millwall colours, running along behind chanting, "Enoch! Enoch!", and generally causing enough trouble to make the 'papers the next day. Forget your wars in South-East Asia and your acid trips to nowhere. Skinheads had arrived!

Mind you, it would be a big mistake to equate the arrival of skinheads in the headlines with the birth of the cult. Fleet Street is not exactly renowned for being on the ball and this was certainly no exception to the rule. What's more, a 1968 birthdate would only add fuel to the lie that the rise of skinheads was nothing more than a reaction to the growth of the hippy movement and indeed hair in general. And we wouldn't want to do that now would we?

The word skinhead didn't come into general circulation until 1969, but kids wearing boots and sporting crops were seen in mod circles as early as 1964. They were the forerunners of the skinhead cult, which was to slowly develop from the ranks of mod from that year onwards. All the love and peace bollocks didn't come along until three years later so to argue that skinheads were somehow a reaction against hippydom is to firmly put the cart before the horse. Rejection maybe, but a reaction never.

In 1965 The Who released *My Generation*, but by then the day of the mod was numbered. All the media attention that surrounded the bank holiday riots of '63 and '64 caused mod to suffer something of an identity crisis. Before, it had always been about cool, stylish kids who were one step ahead of the pack. But now you had a massive influx of young mods who were often looked down on as "states" because they didn't have the faintest idea about class or style, and had to rely on the High Street to tell them what to wear.

And of course the idea of cracking a deckchair over someone's head attracted unsavoury characters who further soiled what mod had once symbolised. Mod was on a collision course with itself and it not surprisingly splintered on impact. Large numbers of mods had been to college and university and were influenced by the new sights and sounds around them. They joined the rag-tag army of students and hippies on the path to soft drugs, progressive rock, flowery shirts and pop art.



Thankfully, that recipe for the advancement of the cult was not everyone's cup of tea. In the north of England, for example, things were very different. Mod had begun its existence towards the end of the Fifties in the clubs and cafes of London's Soho, but had taken a lot longer to catch on in the sticks north of the Watford Gap. However, the northern scene was to survive a lot longer too, centred as it was around fanatical scooter clubs and later the all-night soul dances at venues like Wigan's famous Casino Club and The Torch at Stoke.

Most importantly for the skinhead cult though, was the rise in numbers of the gang mods who stalked the urban jungles of Britain's towns and cities. Also known as hard mods, they revelled in the violent and aggressive image of post-'64 modernism and began to dress accordingly. Smart suits were put away for nights on the town and fighting was done in shirt and jeans. Similarly, expensive shoes were replaced by boots which were all the better for cracking heads. And hair became shorter and shorter, as the French crew-cut came into fashion and then proceeded to go down the barber's razor scale from four to one.



London's East End was home to numerous gangs of such mods, many of whom were involved in organised crime and ended up on the wrong side of prison bars. It was certainly no coincidence that the well-dressed hoods of the London underworld were fathers, uncles, brothers or simply idols to many a mod. And those not involved liked to pretend they were anyway because it



Above: Scooters remained popular with skinheads, just as they had with mods. However, there was little room for Christmas tree lights and fox tails. Skins tended to keep them bog standard or cut them right down to the bare frame, more for go than show.

was all part of the glamour that comes from that fave mod pastime of watching too many gangster films.

In, *Youth! Youth! Youth!*, Garry Bushell talks of mods known as suits who represented, "a spartan branch of mod first spotted on the London club scene around 1965 and very much a smart, working class alternative to the dubious lure of psychedelia", and who he sees as direct ancestors of the skinhead cult. Indeed, skinheads who dressed up for a night out at the local Mecca dancehall were often called suits when the cult was at its peak in 1969 and 1970. And not just in London either.

Other cities like Liverpool, Birmingham and Newcastle boasted large numbers of hard mods, but by far the biggest concentration was to be found in Glasgow, that no mean city where gangs had been a part of growing up for every street-wise kid since the razor gangs of the Thirties and before. Glasgow's mods had always had a reputation for violence, forming themselves into Fleets and Teams (names still used by the casual gangs of today) to defend their patch of the city. Areas made infamous by these mods - Maryhill's Valley, Barnes Road at Possilpark and others - are now part of Glasgow folklore and are still given a wide berth by those of nervous

disposition. In James Patrick's book, *A Glasgow Gang Observed*, one leading member of the Maryhill Young Team has a shaved head. This is 1966 and the young mod describes his haircut as "the real style", implying that it was becoming the height of gang fashion in Glasgow.

Music still played a part in the gang mods' life, but not as much as it had in the early years of the cult. There was little interest in searching out exciting new forms of music, and American soul and Jamaican ska became the staple diet for most.

Jamaican music was given a helping hand to develop in the U.K. thanks to the support of the large West Indian communities now settled here. Young white mods soon became regular visitors to the blues parties and illegal drinking holes that could be found in North Kent, Sheffield, Birmingham, Bristol and areas of London like Notting Hill and Brixton. It gave them a chance to hear the very latest sounds and this in turn brought them into regular contact with black youths. Many of these black kids had their own style of dress based on the rude boy gangs of Kingston, who had a reputation for violent clashes on the streets of their hometown. The rude boy look centred around smart suits with the trousers shortened to just above the ankle and the sleeve length to just above the wrist. This was then topped off with highly polished shoes, and often a trilby and wraparound shades.

Both mods and later skinheads were to draw on the rude boy look for style and inspiration. There is even a nice story about the Jamaican singer, Desmond Dekker, and the birth of the skinhead cult, as told by Tony Cousins. Tony ran the Creole booking agency in the late Sixties which was later to foster the successful record label of the same name.

"When we brought Desmond Dekker over we gave him a suit, but he insisted that the bottom six inches of the trousers should be cut off. Then the kids began to follow him, they rolled up their trousers and had their hair cut short." Dekker was brought to the U.K. by Creole in 1967 to promote the single, *007 (Shanty Town)*, which was a Top Twenty hit here on the Pyramid label. The Ethiopians' *Train To Skaville (Rio)*, The Skatalites' *Guns Of Navarone (Island)* and Prince Buster's *Al Capone (Blue Beat)* also permeated the charts that year, thanks to the massive underground support that Jamaican music was beginning to pick up at the time.

Certainly the appearance of the likes of Desmond Dekker would have helped the rude boy look travel well beyond the West Indian communities and into the wardrobes of part of this new found white audience, but there was an even bigger factor in the development of the skinhead cult besides music. And one that is often overlooked by self-styled experts on youth. Football.

England's World Cup success in 1966 had the punters flocking back to the terraces and attendance figures for all four divisions rose dramatically. Far more youngsters were attracted to the game than ever before and for the first time they went to football with their mates instead of their dads and uncles, as had been the tradition for decades before. With money in their pockets thanks to the abundance of jobs at the time, they were also able to travel to

MY SON THE SKIN HEAD

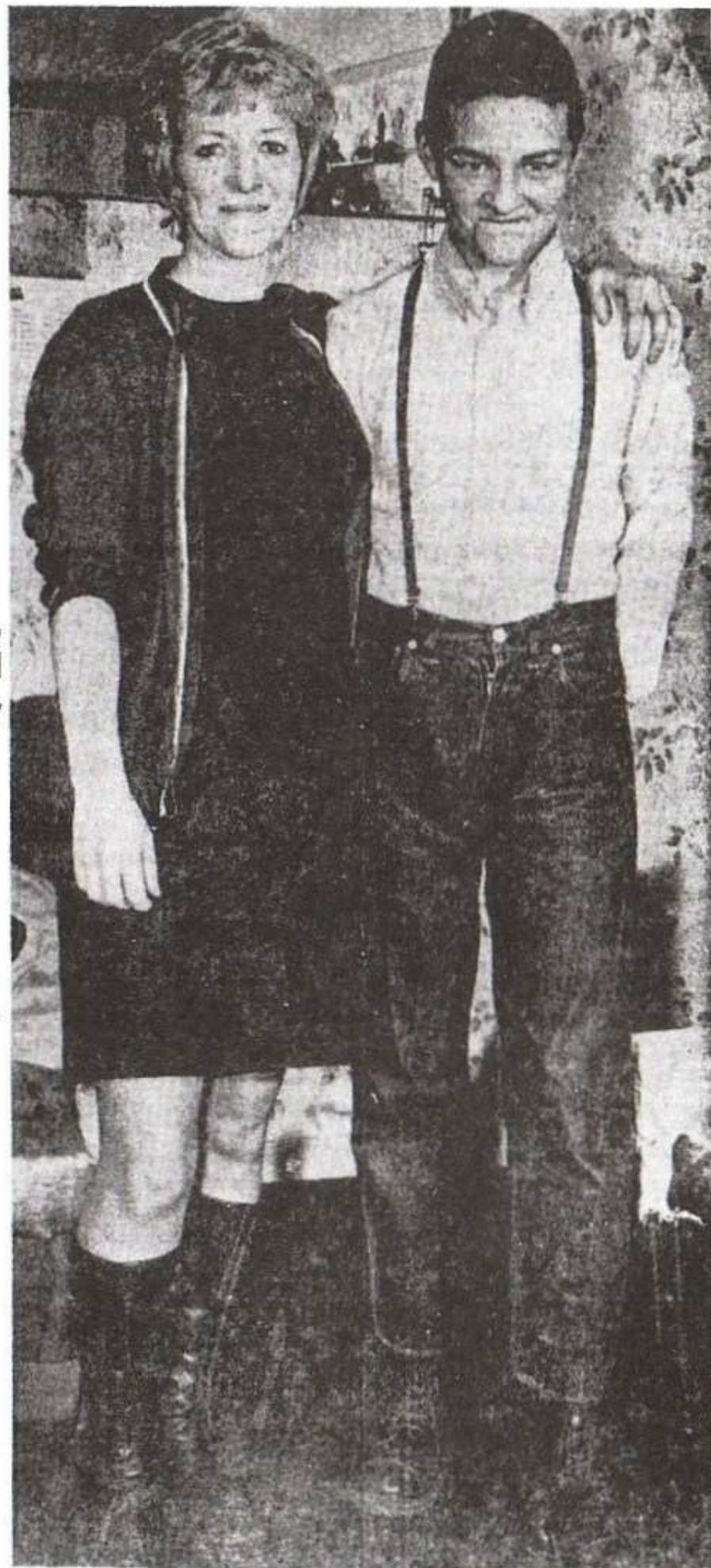
"I've been in fights,
put in the boot and
been gone over by
the coppers."

Chris Harward, 15
year old Streatham
skinhead, 1969.

"My son has never
been in any trouble."
Mrs. Harward, 1969.

Right: Chris Harward
with his mother, Mrs.
Harward.

Photo: Bill Rowntree.



away games too - again a change to the old tradition of only going to home games.

The day of the travelling supporter had arrived in earnest and with it the opportunity to demonstrate that you were better than your opponents both on and off the pitch. Football violence had been part of the game for literally centuries, but by the late Sixties it was becoming more and more organised, as rival ends went into battle on a regular basis. The terrace hooligans took on a cult status of their own, dressed as they were in heavy boots, jeans and shirt - much like the hard mod of the day who was himself no stranger to the turnstile. These were the football boot boys from whose ranks many of the first skinheads were to emerge in 1967 and 1968, and who themselves were to rise again when the skinhead cult had had its day.

From the gang mod on the street, the boot boy on the terraces and the rude boy at the dances, the skinhead cult emerged. What was at first a vague cult was given different names in different areas. Noheads, baldheads, cropheads, suedeheads, lemons, prickles, spy kids, boiled eggs, mates and even peanuts (supposedly because a scooter's engine sounds like peanuts rattling in a tin according to some observers). As late as 1969, when the skinhead had become a separate entity away from its forefathers, they were still even called mods.

Indeed anyone who doubts the mod begat skinhead story should note that Chris Welch's classic skinhead quote about, "the sight of cropped heads and heavy boots entering the midnight Wimpy bar", was actually from an article on "mods", published by *Melody Maker* in February, 1969.

By then, however, one name to describe this violent "new" youth cult was more or less beginning to stick. And the word on everybody's lips by that summer was skinhead. Even the country's Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, tipped his pipe in recognition when he called certain rank and file Tories "the skinheads of Surbiton". And in no less a place than the House of Commons.

Every youth cult can be identified by the style and fashion that accompanies it, and skinhead was to prove no different. By the close of '69 a definite uniform had developed and was on display through these fair isles, but in the early days anything went that looked okay. Just as long as you had the boots you could call yourself a skinhead. And that was true of virtually every working class teenager of the day.

Perhaps surprisingly, the length of your hair wasn't as all-important as it is today. By 1969, most kids were making regular trips to the barbers and living up to the name skinhead, but throughout the cult's reign you could get away with having a simple short, back and sides and even longer hair. And that's why skinhead moved into its suedehead and smooth phases with such ease. Even so, the conscript-cum-convict look of a crop had a definite edge in the mean look stakes, hence its mass popularity. It didn't raise many an eyebrow either. In fact its short, neat appearance was welcomed by parents and

employers alike, and kids tended to like it because it rarely needed to see a comb.

The word skinhead comes from the fact that you can see the scalp, or skin, through very short hair. Crew cuts themselves were nothing new, but it was the combination of the crop and boots on so many kids that demanded a suitable label. Some say that the cut and name was derived from the American crew-cut, popular with the U.S. armed forces, but it's a totally different style to the skinhead crew-cut. The yank version calls for almost no hair at the back and sides and a shaven, but longer top - as modelled by

Below: Pauline and Joan, two skinhead girls from Stretford, Lancashire, 1970.



Richard Gere in *An Officer And A Gentleman*. Funnily enough though, the U.S.A.'s military top brass were so concerned that servicemen posted in the U.K. might be mistaken for skinheads, that they allowed them to wear wigs and hairpieces when off duty for the first time in 1969!

Most electric razors have settings known by their numbers, with number one giving the shortest crop and four, or sometimes five, the longest. Settings chosen depended on the time and varied from area to area. Someone would turn up at school looking the business with a number two and within a few days everyone else was following suit. Some skinheads even ventured as far as a "dark shadow", a razor cut without any of the attachments and therefore shorter than even a grade one, but baldness was never the vogue. The idea was to look hard and smart, not like a prick with ears. Barbers must have loved the sound of the till ringing courtesy of the skinhead's regular visits, especially at a time when a lot of drop-outs didn't even wash their hair, let alone get it cut. Not all hairdressers used razors though, with some preferring to use scissors. Done properly it looked just as smart.

There aren't many opportunities for self-expression with a crop, but variations did occur. The back for example could follow the hairline, be rounded, or squared off Boston style. All three had their devotees. Another variation was a shaved in parting (pencil thin and not a bloody



The Paint House

Words from an East End Gang

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Whether or not the first skinheads came from the East End of London is open to debate, but it's as good a place as any to claim as a birthplace.

In 1972, Penguin published a book called *The Painthouse* which was about a skinhead gang from Bethnal Green. Skins were on their way out by then of course, but the book wasn't really aimed at the cult anyway. More your Sociology set. Even so, it was one of the few decent records of original skinheads preserved on paper, and is well worth plodding through when you've a few hours to spare.

The book is largely based on the thoughts and actions of a skinhead mob called the Collinwood, after the estate they used to hang around on. The Painthouse was a youth club-cum-community centre, which was first wrecked by and then turned into a second home by the Collinwood skins.

They wore the basic skinhead uniform of boots, jeans, Bens, tank tops and crombies as early as 1968, and as such were one of the first skinhead mobs. Not the first though as the two authors claim, because even the lads themselves admit that they copied the style from older boys.

The book looks at different aspects of the gang's life, from school to football, and from aggro to their views on immigration. In doing so it dispels many a myth about skinheads, not least that they've been racist from day one. Paki-bashing went on just like it did in other areas, but there were also blacks in the gang. Sadly though, it also creates a number of myths, particularly in the eyes of those who see it as some sort of definitive study on skinheads.

It never pretends to be that, and the opinions of the gang are no different to those shared by generations of street corner kids. You don't need a crop to be bored at school or to nut someone at football. At the end of the day, the Collinwood were just working class youngsters growing up and having a laugh with their mates. And just because they followed Spurs and had little interest in reggae, it doesn't mean the same was true for skinheads everywhere. Not by a long chalk.

motorway thank you very much), which ran from the front to the crown and traditionally only on the left-hand side of the head. Partings added a touch of class to what was a very basic cut, with the idea coming from West Indian kids whose own version of a crop was called a skiffle.

Sideburns were very fashionable at the time with Arsenal's Charlie George leading the way with a pair of beltlers. Mutton chops were adopted by those skinheads who could grow them since they made you look older and all that more street-wise. They were perhaps the most prized possession a skinhead could have.

Add a pair of boots to your crop and you'd arrived. Again any pair of lace-up leather boots would do as long as they looked the part. And the heavier the better. Lots of skins even wore boots a size or two too big for added bovver appeal. Steel toe-capped boots were most popular with the metal bit exposed or painted white or in football colours to give an added air of menace.

You could even get industrial work boots with the caps already painted. National Coal Board miners boots, army boots and their ilk were also in wide circulation. Eight or ten hole boots were standard and there was none of this boots up to your armpits nonsense that caught on after punk. And

having a decent make of boots that nobody else had was guaranteed to win you quite a few Brownie points off your mates too.

The now virtually universal Doctor Marten boot didn't really come into its own until after steelies were classed as an offensive weapon by the Old Bill and banned at football matches. Docs had the added advantage of polishing up better than most other makes and were really comfortable to wear, making them the number one choice ever since.

Trousers ranged from army greens to corduroys, but as with all kids, jeans were by far the most popular in skinhead circles. They were either turned up or shortened to show off a gleaming pair of boots that had taken the best part of two hours to polish (so you told your mates anyway). Sometimes the whole boot would be exposed, but more often than not the trouser bottom came to just above the ankle.

The jeans to be seen in were Levi's red tags. They had been popular with mods earlier in the decade because they were more expensive than your average pair of jeans and therefore more exclusive. Skinheads liked them for much the same reason. Button flies were in vogue at the time, just like today, but genuine original 501s were made from a far heavier denim than what's on offer in the High Street twenty odd years on.

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The heavier denim made the jeans last for ages. More often than not the red tag 501s came in a shrink to fit format. The idea was that you bought a pair a



size or two too big, jumped in the bath and they would shrink to be a perfect fit. It sounds a good laugh, but sometimes they'd shrink again when you put them in for a wash, leaving you to wriggle about on your bed trying to pull them on. Not only that, the blue dye that came off a new pair of jeans was a real bastard to get off your legs and the sides of the bath at times. No wonder Levi's eventually had the sense to sell pre-shrunk 501s.

Another thing about Levi's was that they were meant to be worn on the hip, but everyone pulled them up to the waist - hence the need for something to hold them up and the addition of braces to the skinhead wardrobe.

Lee and Wrangler were two other jeans manufacturers popular with skinheads, particularly outside of London where Levi's were often a bit thin on the ground. They were very similar in style, maybe a bit baggier, and had the added advantage of being pre-shrunk.

The high quality of jeans in those days did have its drawbacks. The heavier material took a bit of getting used to and it took bloody ages for your jeans to fade. And everybody likes to give the impression that they've been wearing denim for donkey's years and not just since last Saturday. Your Mum's household bleach was a common answer. You could put your indigo blue jeans in a bucket of bleach solution one minute and pull out a faded pair the next. Or you could splash bleach on to them to create a unique and stylish pair of bleached jeans. Of course the same treatment could be given to jean jackets too, but the magic of bleach did have its drawbacks. It had a nasty habit of rotting the stitches and so a bleached pair of jeans would never give a lifetime of service. Still, not that anyone cared if it saved them from a showing up.

Shirts added the final touch to the emerging skinhead uniform come 1969. Flowery patterns were definitely a no-no, but otherwise any shirt would do in the early days.

Soon however two styles had emerged as definite favourites. One was the collarless union shirt in plain colours or occasionally in stripes. And the other was the classic American button-down, as championed by the mods in the mid-Sixties.

The most popular make of button-down shirt was Ben Sherman. They were made originally from a very comfortable Oxford woven cloth, and with a button at the back of the collar, a back pleat and a back hoop for hanging the shirt up (usually on the floor as it happens). You couldn't beat them for style. Collars were up to four inches wide and they came in a wide range of stripes and plain colours, with checked Bennies not appearing until early 1970. In fact Ben Sherman followed other shirt manufacturers into checked designs and some of its earliest efforts were nothing short of awful.

One point that certainly needs clearing up is this business about white Ben Shermans. Most research into the original skinheads goes no further than a quick flick through a copy of *The Painthouse*, a book about a small gang of young skinheads from London's East End. Now it just so happened that they didn't wear white Bennies and this has now been translated by all and sundry

to mean that skinheads full stop never wore them. The truth is that white Ben Shermans were popular with skinheads throughout the country at various times and were as smart as any other shirt, particularly with tonics. End of story.

Ben Sherman might have been the most popular brand of shirt, but they certainly weren't the only ones worn by the skinhead faithful. Brutus for example made a decent range of shirts and for tartan you couldn't buy better. Jaytex were another favourite and arguably offered the best checked shirts on the market. Permanent Press made some decent shirts too and their button down blouses were cherished by the fairer sex. Even Arnold Palmer, the golfer, added his name to a range of excellent button downs. In fact, such was the demand for decent shirts that local tailors often produced their own version to sell to their skinhead customers.

The other type of shirt sported by skinheads was the good old Fred Perry short-sleeved tennis shirt. The advertising boards used to read, "Shirt by Fred. 'Nuff Said.", and that was your guarantee that you were getting a top quality garment. The Fred of old was a heavier, three and sometimes four button affair, and the most popular ones had piping on the collar and sleeves and seemed to follow football colours. White and navy blue for Spurs, claret and blue for West Ham and so on.

And that was you. Dressed in the height of working class fashion and ready to take on the world. All you had to do then was to tap the old man for a few bob and it was off down the road to meet your mates. Most skinheads though were in their teens and so only the older ones could enjoy the full benefits of a night on the town.

Every area had at least one boozier where skinheads would knock back a few pints and play billiards, before either calling it a night or moving on to the local dancehall or cinema. As the juke box belted out the latest and greatest in reggae and soul, tall tales about women and aggro would be traded, with each additional pint bringing forth even greater stories of courage and stamina. This was usually a time for wearing your best gear, when the cream of the crop could give any mod or city gent a run for their money in the smartness stakes. While the tabloid headlines were full of boots and braces, they were totally oblivious to the fact that skinheads represented some of the most style conscious kids ever.

Jeans and boots were put away for the football and out came the Levi's sta-press, the mohair suits, highly polished brogues and equally impressive gear. And all topped off with a meticulous attention to detail that was once described as being aggressively mod neat. Blokes mouthing off in three button suits, bottom button always left undone. The number of ticket pockets and sleeve buttons, and the size of a vent, representing the difference between the envied and the also-rans. The perfectly folded pocket hanky, held in place by a gold pocket stud. The decorated tobacco tin. And the girls, with their feathercuts, looking absolutely stunning with skirts and stockings instead of trousers, and their jackets that much longer. Or failing that,



Above: At the beginning of 1970, what was billed as "The Biggest Reggae Package Tour In The World" began a four week tour of the UK. On the bill were The Upsetters, The Pioneers (both pictured arriving in London), Jimmy Cliff, Harry J All Stars, Desmond Dekker, Max Romeo and other Jamaican stars.

keyhole backed mohair mini-dresses or something equally appealing. We are talking skinhead heaven here!

All dressed up and somewhere to go. The local Mecca Ballroom, the Palais, the Locarno, or wherever you could be guaranteed a good time, drinking and dancing the night away. The dancehalls were packed with skinheads, all there to hear the boss sounds of reggae, soul and ska.

Reggae in particular was beginning to make its mark on the British music scene and this can be directly attributed to the skinheads' love of the music. The music press and the radio stations certainly gave it very little support, dismissing it as "crude" and simple". It was even called "yobbo music" because of its ties with the skinhead cult.

It was a vicious circle because without press coverage and radio airplay, most record shops wouldn't stock it and so it didn't chart. And since radio stations, and particularly Radio One, have always placed far too much emphasis on chart placings to reflect popular taste, it rarely turned up on the playlists. BBC Radio London's *Reggae Time* and Radio Birmingham's *Reggae Reggae* were the only two shows dedicated to the music. Minority programming they called it, and at a time when reggae singles were regularly selling tens of thousands of copies without so much as a whiff of a chart place.

This made dances and the specialist reggae stockist (often no more than a market stall) all the more important for hearing the latest sounds. Even those records that did make the charts, including Dekker's number one smash

Israelites, only did so after months of exposure in the clubs and pubs. But such was the underground support for the music by 1969, that small venues were no longer sufficient to hold the swelling numbers who would turn out for a reggae dance. It wasn't long before town halls and public baths were being turned into shrines to reggae at the weekends, and top night clubs like London's Flamingo and The Roaring Twenties were catering for its fans.

The big name in skinhead reggae was Trojan, a record label started by Island Records and the Beat & Commercial Company in 1968. Island had long been involved in promoting Jamaican music in the U.K. and had had a number two hit with Millie's *My Boy Lollipop* back in 1964. But by 1968, label owner Chris Blackwell was more interested in making Island big as a rock label with a roster of bands like Free, Fairport Convention and King Crimson. To do this, Island had to shake off its image as a specialist minority label and so dropped all of its reggae artists with the exception of Jimmy Cliff. The Beat & Commercial Company was owned by Lee Gopthal, an accountant by trade,

THE GREAT REGGAE WARS

Reggae owed much of its success in Britain to the skinhead faithful who adopted it as their own music. Big sellers like Max Romeo's *Wet Dream* were smash hits in the clubs and pubs months before they even got a whiff of national chart success.

Sound systems, run by the likes of Duke Vin and Neville The Enchanter, soon began to play outside of the West Indian community, and often went to what were almost exclusively white youth clubs to spin their discs. Naturally, they took a following with them, and for a time white and black kids danced the night away together with very little trouble.

The peace didn't last long though. In 1970, a so-called "great reggae war" raged for nine months over the control of certain clubs, and of course the young ladies that went with them.

In one South London youth club, the skinheads' answer to Bob And Marcia's *Young Gifted And Black* was to cut the wires to the speakers and kick off a ruck to the chant of "Young, gifted and white".

By 1971, reggae was losing some of its charm for white kids anyway. The change of direction towards singing about Babylon, Jah and all things African, left most skinheads out in the cold. And once again, the sounds of JA were virtually confined to the West Indian communities with the notable exception being the rise and rise of one Bob Marley.



Above: Max Romeo

MAX ROMEO'S
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MINI SKIRT VISION



UNITY UN-532
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HIS FOLLOW UP HIT TO
WET DREAM

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LUGTON, KEITH PROWSE AND PAMA
PAMA RECORDS LIMITED
78 CRAVEN PARK ROAD

UPSETTERS

THE UPSETTERS, a Jamaican group who've entered the MM chart with "Return To Django," are to tour Britain for a month starting on November 29.

Dates set for the group include: Manchester (November 29), Nottingham (30), Dunstable (December 6), Kensal Rise (7), Orchid, Purley and London Bag O'Nails (8), Southampton (10), Ruislip and Golden Star, London (13), Oval (14), Streatham (15), Bookham (17), Margate (20), Dalston (27) and Crystal Palace (28).

Bluebeat

"A Live Injection" by the Upsetters (Upsetters) sounds very much like their current hit, but obviously is a contender on the strength of the name; the same applies to "Paper Bamboo" by the Pioneers (Trajan). Prince Of Darkness has a very commercial sounding record with "Headin' Over Your Head" (Down Town), and Andy Capp comes up with a very different bluesy record guaranteed to drive you mad — "Papa's" (Trajan's label). Most notable of all is "Tara On The Headlines" by Sugar Minott (Up Front), very soulful, and Sugar has a great voice. Others on the week: "Sound Of Silence" — St. Andrew's Girls Choir (Trajan); "Children Get Ready" — The Bristol Harpists (Bassline); "Pair Of Wings" — Sir Collins and The Earthtones (Duke); "Why Did You" — Suzanne Cole and Paul (Epic); "Sensational Bristol Harpist" — Laurel and Gail (The Beat); and "Greatest Smasher" — C. G. Brown (Crab).

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REGGAE
HOT 20

- | THIS LAST WEEK | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 (2) | HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE | Pat Kelly GAS-115 |
| 2 (1) | MY WHOLE WORLD IS FALLING DOWN | Ken Parker BAMBOO |
| 3 (3) | WET DREAM | Mrs. Romeo PART 103 |
| 4 (9) | STRANGE | Bobby Dobson PUNCH-4 |
| 5 (5) | IF IT DON'T WORK OUT | Pat Kelly GAS-125 |
| 6 (4) | BAFF BOOM | The Tenors CRAB-24 |
| 7 (6) | HISTORY | Harry & Roddick Comet-28 |
| 8 (10) | THROW ME CORN (Instrumental) | Ronny Williams GAS-170 |
| 9 (8) | SOCK IT TO ME SOUL BROTHER | Bill Moss PAMA-765 |
| 10 (7) | MAN ON MOON | Derrick Morgan CRAB-30 |
| 11 (11) | SAVE THE LAST DANCE | General Atkins FEU BEAT-629 |
| 12 (12) | SUNNYSIDE OF THE SEA | Slim Smith Unity-574 |
| 13 (14) | GIRL WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME | Owen Gray CAMEL-75 |
| 14 (16) | WHAT AM I TO DO | Tony Scott ESCORT-805 |
| 15 (20) | THROW ME CORN | Winston Stan BULLET-799 |
| 16 (17) | TOO EXPERIENCE | Winston Francis PRIMO-5 |
| 17 (13) | SEND ME SOME LOVING | Derrick Morgan CRAB-23 |
| 18 (18) | A BROKEN HEART | Bobby Brown PUNCH-10 |
| 19 (1) | TOO PROUD TO BEG | The Unique GAS-117 |
| 20 (15) | DOCTOR ZAPPA (OC) | Sound Dimension BAMBOO-1 |

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plus the Fantastic

SIR WASHINGTON

with his new records released
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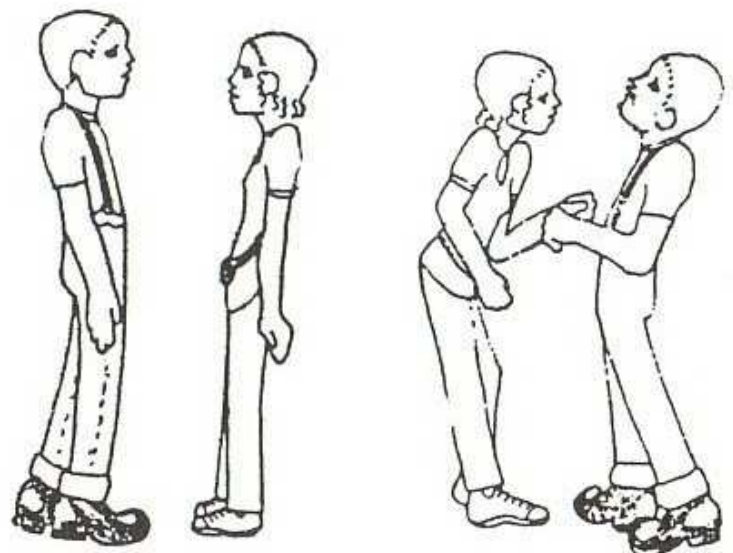
who was becoming increasingly involved in Jamaican music. B & C were primarily involved in distributing records through its chain of Musicland and Music City shops and stalls in areas of London like Stoke Newington, Brixton and Shepherd's Bush.

The establishment of Trojan Records was an ideal way for both to progress. It continued Island's policy of concentrating on pop reggae releases in a bid to take Jamaican music beyond the West Indian communities. Rough edges on cheaply produced Jamaican cuts were smoothed away, strings were added and occasionally whole choirs were brought in to make them more palatable for the British market. Gimmicky singles, ballads, and cover versions of pop and soul hits flooded the market on Trojan's behalf, eventually gaining some radio play for the label and its subsidiaries, and giving them 17 Top 20 hits between 1969 and 1972.

Trojan was also one of the first labels to sell budget price albums in a bid to reach a wider market. Compilations like the *Tighten Up* and *Reggae Chartbusters* series sold for 14\6d and later for 99p, and regularly clocked up sales of 60,000 a piece in an album market otherwise dominated by dinosaur rock.

Together with its 40 plus subsidiaries, Trojan controlled up to 80% of the reggae market and this at a time when as many as 180 reggae records were released in a week. In reggae terms, it couldn't be matched in the chart stakes, but despite this success for a handful of its top artists, the sound of Jamaica remained very much part of an underground scene. What's more the tastes of serious skinhead reggae lovers didn't necessarily coincide with that of the casual buyer, and massive club hits would often go totally unnoticed by the general public and music media. To a skinhead, names like Derrick Morgan and Pat Kelly meant just as much, if not more, as those of say Desmond Dekker and Jimmy Cliff.

TO DO THE
REGGAE,
FOLLOW
THESE
SIMPLE
INSTRUCTIONS

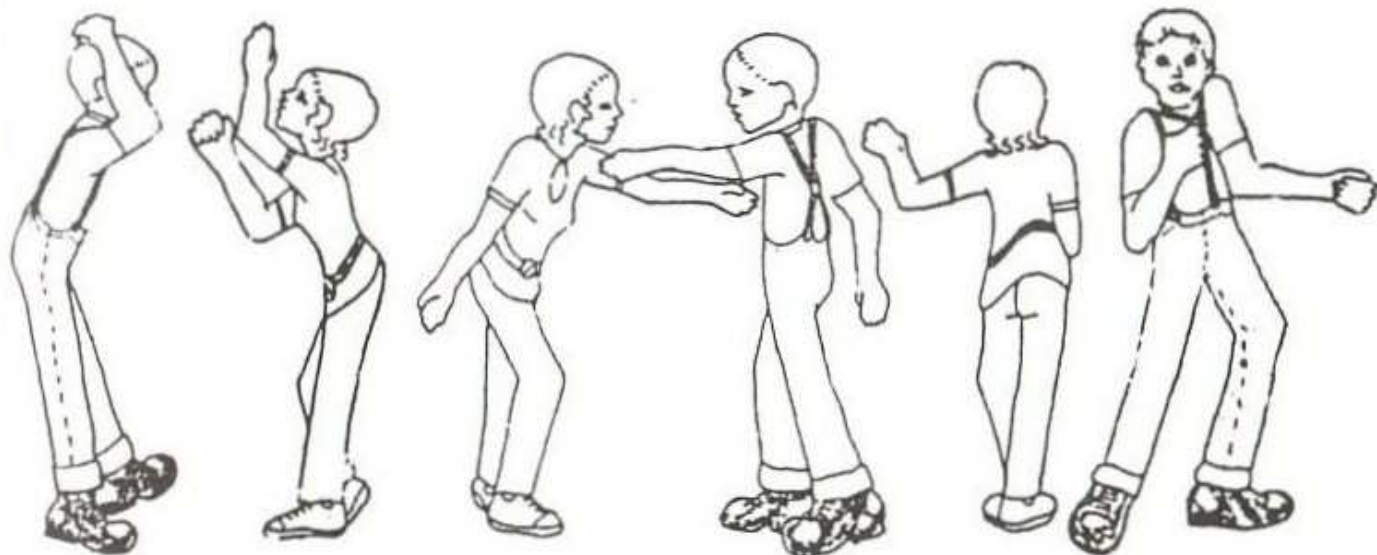


Trojan's only real competitor was Pama Records and its dozen subsidiary labels. Formed in 1967 at the height of rock steady by the three Palmer brothers, it

went on to give skinhead reggae some of its top sounds and revelled in its boss sound reputation. More so than Trojan, Pama aimed its releases at the ethnic market and particularly at the skinhead cult.

Jamaican producers, who weren't known for their honesty at the best of times, happily exploited the rivalry between the big two reggae houses. They would often fly into London and sign a deal with Trojan and Pama, and indeed anyone else interested, for the same releases. This inevitably resulted in friction and came to a head at the end of 1969 when Trojan released Symarip's *Skinhead Moonstomp* (Treasure Isle) to scupper Derrick Morgan's chart-bound *Moonhop* which came out on Pama's Crab label.

Trouble had started when Bunny Lee licensed the Derrick Morgan track, *Seven Letters*, to both Trojan for release on the newly formed Jackpot subsidiary, and to Pama for release on Crab. So when it looked like Pama would score their biggest hit to date with *Moonhop*, Trojan rush released an uncredited version of it as *Skinhead Moonstomp*, by The Pyramids under the



guise of Symarip, to take sales away from it. Ironically, *Skinhead Moonstomp* is now regarded as a skinhead reggae standard, while the original *Moonhop* is all but forgotten. What makes it worse is that Bunny Lee was Derrick's brother-in-law!

Such stories litter Jamaican music. In fact Derrick Morgan's *Moonhop* was based on a song called *I Thank You*, which was released by the Memphis soul duo, Sam & Dave. And The Pyramids, being very much a jack of all trades studio band, regularly recorded under aliases. Around the same time, records had been released by them as The Alterations, The Bed Bugs and The Rough Riders.

Both Trojan and Pama eventually produced a lot of the stuff themselves in the U.K., often using white session musicians and Jamaican vocalists who either had settled in this country or who were over on tour. Laurel Aitken, one of Pama's top recording artists, has been quoted as saying he was often the only black person in the studio when a reggae track was being laid down. Of course *Skinhead Moonstomp* wasn't the first or last reggae record to celebrate the skinheads who were its most fervent fans. The Pyramids themselves cashed in by releasing other songs as Symarip like the classic *Skinhead Girl* and *Skinhead Jamboree* and there were numerous others, some of which were excellent while others were bloody awful. Out came The Mohawks with *Skinhead Shuffle* on Pama, Laurel Aitken's *Skinhead Train* (Nu Beat), *Skinheads Don't Fear* and *Skinhead Moondust* by the Hot Rod Allstars on Torpedo, Joe The Boss with *Skinhead Revolt* (Joe), Desmond Riley with *Skinhead, A Message To You* (Downtown) and so the list goes on. The attraction of reggae for skinheads was the music's infectious dance beat. The lyrics were never quite as important, not least because very few people

could make out the words or understand the Jamaican slang. Desmond Dekker's *Israelites* might have sold eight million copies worldwide, but ask a dozen people what the lyrics are and you'll get a dozen different answers. Instrumental cuts and versions of vocal numbers were often just as popular because they had the all-important catchy tune.

Naturally, ska and rock steady blasts from the past were dusted down and spun by DJs at dances, but there really were so many current stormers to get through that reggae was always going to be the skinhead's number one sound.

Another favourite though was American soul which was primarily found on the Tamla Motown, Stax and Atlantic labels. It had already taken the British Isles by storm earlier in the Sixties, with the late great Otis Redding even having a whole episode of the TV pop show, *Ready, Steady, Go!*, devoted to him. And come the end of the Sixties, soul acts were big news again with all the top artists visiting these shores and their records, including re-issues, clogging up the charts.

Unlike reggae, soul was given full credit by the media for being the class music that it was. The 'papers regularly ran features on artists like Aretha Franklin, Smokey Robinson & The Miracles and Booker T & The MGs, and regular radio play was assured because of soul's chart success. Jamaican artists also played soul, with The Mohawks and Jimmy Cliff leading the way.

Reggae and soul nights were regular events, with the better skinhead

SWEET SOUL MUSIC

During the original skinhead era, black American soul artists competed with the Jamaican reggae stars for the hearts and dancing feet of skinheads. Soul and reggae nights were held all over the country, and a lot of Jamaicans covered soul standards both live on stage and on vinyl. In fact, by 1969, Jimmy Cliff considered himself a soul singer, and passed on most of the reggae tunes he wrote to Desmond Dekker and others at Trojan.

Soul and reggae have a lot in common, not least because they have both developed out of the old rhythm and blues. When rock n' roll went centre stage, Jamaican music developed into ska, while American R&B begat sweet soul music.

The big cities of North America could each boast their own unique sound. From Detroit came Tamla Motown, a label that enjoyed great success in the mid-Sixties and was putting on a repeat performance for the end of the decade. From Memphis came the brassier sound of Stax, home to the late great Otis Redding and Booker T & The MGs.

Massive soul reviews toured the U.K. in the early Seventies, and for a time the charts were full of soul classics.

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dancers coming into their own with some of the soul cuts. Everyone could get up and stomp around to reggae, and usually boys danced with boys and girls with their handbags, but the slower soul numbers at the end of the night kept the birds and the bees in business. Most of the decent dancers were girls anyway and blokes who tried to be too flash usually ended up on their arses.

Best of all though were the gigs. The success of reggae in the U.K. brought all the big guns over from Jamaica and many were to eventually stay on. In London you could go to a reggae gig virtually every night of the week with smoke-filled clubs like The Ska Bar, The Ram Jam Club, the Golden Star Club, and the Cue Club regularly having top Jamaican artists performing.

Even Wembley succumbed and played host to the 9,000 sell-out crowd who turned out for the 1970 Caribbean

Music Festival. The whole event was filmed by director Horace Ové and put out for limited cinema release, complete with footage of skinheads, under the imaginative title, *Reggae*.

Out in the sticks, gigs were few and far between so when the likes of Derrick Morgan played somewhere like Bristol they were guaranteed a fanatical welcome from the local skinheads and a definite return booking. Quite often a reggae package would tour the big towns and cities, and so in one night you might catch five or six Jamaican greats with a sound system spinning the platters in between artists.

A lot of skinheads became serious collectors of Jamaican music and would spend every spare minute, not to mention every spare penny, checking out the latest releases down at the local reggae store. Everyone knew what day of the week fresh stocks arrived and that would be the day to pick up new discs to impress your mates with. Jamaican imports were usually most cherished because until they were released in the U.K. they wouldn't be widely available. Skinhead hero Judge Dread even used to go down to the docks with other sound system operators to buy records straight off the boats in a bid to keep ahead of the competition. So much pride was placed in a record collection, that scratching the name of the song and artist off a single was common practice so that your mates couldn't easily get hold of your top



sounds. An old trick borrowed from the sound system wars of Sixties Jamaica.

Some skinheads even started their own sound systems to compete with more established black ones and other skinhead outfits. The reggae bass line would boom out of bigger and bigger speakers as rival sounds battled it out for the attention of the dancers.

Younger skinheads, and that generally meant most skinheads, had to make do with listening to records 'round at a mate's house or at the local youth club. Some sound systems even played school dances. Otherwise, they'd hang about outside gigs, listening to the music and generally doing their best to look as tough as the older skinheads. If nothing much was happening, the street corner was more often than not as good as anywhere to hang about. Until some old bastard 'phoned the police to move you on that is.

Another thing the younger skinheads missed out on was a decent wardrobe. Not many of the older skins had the money to buy a drawful of Ben Shermans, but if you were still at school it was especially hard. Still, there was always birthdays and Christmas to look forward to. And come Saturday all you needed was a pair of boots and the money to get into football. Or the bottle to sneak under a turnstile.

Football was one of the few times when all the skinheads from a town or area would stand as one. Every other day of the week, the chances are you'd kick about with your own local gang, only meeting others at dances or to settle a score. But come Saturday, any local differences were temporarily pushed to one side as the strength of your football team and town was put to the test by visiting fans.

Below: Skins on duty at Stamford Bridge during a derby game between Chelsea and Arsenal, 1969.



The first skinhead mobs went into action during the 1968-69 football season when Leeds United, Liverpool and Everton were the teams to beat. Nothing did more to spread the skinhead style than travelling mobs who would go into action before, during and after a game. By the start of the following season even pre-season friendlies went off and trouble spanned all four divisions in England and the Scottish game too.

Every southern team had a skinhead football crew by then and so did the bigger northern teams. Portsmouth claimed the first spoils of the season by chasing Manchester City's neanderthal long-haired mob all over Fratton Park in a friendly, and then following it up by rioting at Blackpool on the opening day of the season. Within weeks, *The Football Mail* was running front page reports on the "skinhead menace", and the level of violence was soon scaring the shingles out of society's armchair moral guardians.

Teams like Manchester United, with their infamous Red Army, and the big London teams, could count their skinhead support in thousands, and even smaller clubs like Crystal Palace would regularly have a few hundred down at the Holmesdale End. In the north, football was far more important to the skinhead cult than music, and so the terrace look of shirt, jeans and boots became standard issue even of a night. Teams like Sunderland and Newcastle United were big rivals and both had anything up to 2,000 skins on duty for derby game aggro.

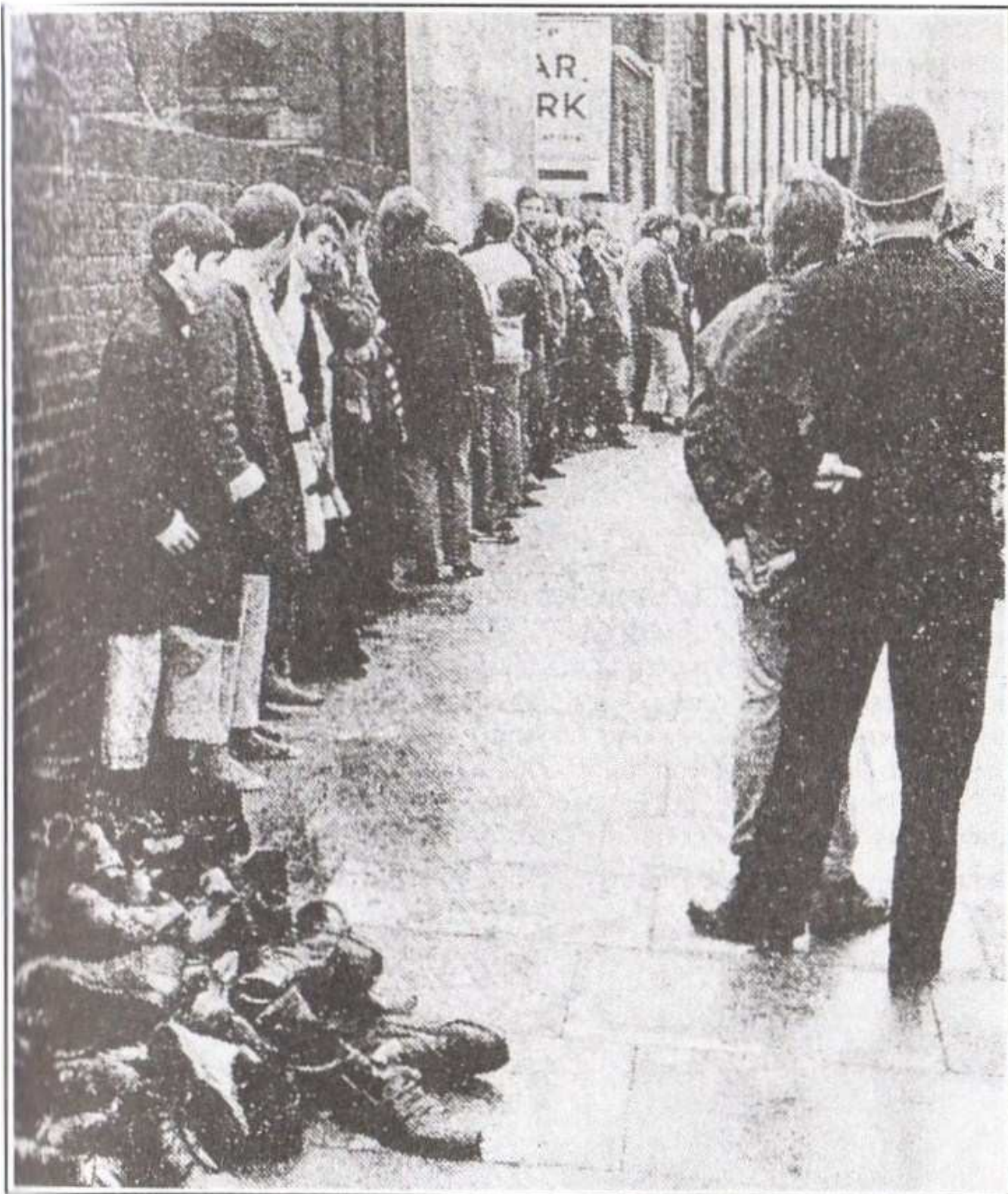
The trouble originally centred around taking the home team's end or by starting a pitch invasion in the hope that the opposition's fans would want to join you. Taking an end either depended on getting there before the home mob, thereby forcing them to stand elsewhere in the ground. Or by chasing them out during the game, usually in response to a goal being scored.

The police, although a little slow off the mark, became increasingly better at separating rival fans inside the ground, and so began organised aggro outside the ground. Ambushes at railway stations, trashing pubs, home fans without colours in the away end and vice versa, and so it went on.

Weapons were regularly used at football. Bottles, half-bricks, darts, razor blades in oranges, throwing stars, lead piping and other assorted tools that would do a game of *Cluedo* proud all saw their day. Even the odd shotgun and air rifle was used. The most common weapon of them all was a pair of steel toe-capped boots, but they were soon classed as offensive weapons by the plods and had to be reluctantly left at home.

Boots in general came in for a lot of police attention, and laces were confiscated on a regular basis, making it harder for you to run and fight. It became a cat and mouse game, with the skinheads replacing laces with thin wire or a spare pair kept in a pocket, or even bought from a nearby shoe shop. Then the police would often ban the sale of boot laces around football grounds and empty your pockets of spares.

Then came the ultimate deterrent. As skinheads left the ground, they would be lined up and told to take their boots off. The boots would be thrown into a



big pile and the skinheads would stand there in their socks, until rival fans had been escorted a safe distance away from the ground.

Of course this did give the quicker skinheads a chance to pick up a better pair of boots in the free-for-all when you were allowed to go, but worst of all was the amazing washing machine effect a pile of boots had. It's annoying enough when you put a pair of socks in the wash and only one comes out, but hopping home from the game minus a boot just wasn't in the least bit funny.

Police searches at the turnstiles became the norm and that's where girl supporters came into their own. They could carry weapons into grounds with

relative ease because they were rarely searched, not least because of the lack of female police officers on duty at a game. Only WPCs could properly search a girl and it was easy enough to avoid them by going to a different turnstile.

Not that a lot of girls went to football anyway. Most went to be with their boyfriends or in the hope of finding a new one. Others went because they genuinely enjoyed the game or just fancied one of the players. But the best stories you heard were about the all-girl football gangs who would steam in with the best of them. Certainly, there were enough girls game enough to help out a boyfriend in trouble and some packed a better punch than most of the blokes. But as for Amazon-like firms, let's just say everybody knew of one, but nobody had actually seen them in action for themselves. Mind you, there were plenty of firms that ran like women so maybe that explains it.

As it became harder to get weapons into the ground, all those years of watching *Blue Peter* finally paid off. Newspapers were rolled up tightly to form the so-called Millwall Brick and another trick was to make a knuckleduster out of pennies held in place by a wrapped around 'paper. You could hardly be pulled up for having a bit of loose change in your pocket and a *Daily Mirror* under your arm.

Going to away games gave you the biggest buzz. Boarding a football special to uncharted lands, throwing insults at rival fans as you made your way to the ground, and hopefully shaking off any police escort, so that you could do battle with them. Mind you, often a battle involved nothing more than hurling the odd bottle, a chase and loads of verbal. Saying that, some of the rucks at football were nothing short of a full-scale riot. On September 20th, 1969, 500

Below: Skinheads give chase to a lone hairy at a CND rally.





Above: Skinheads noising up a couple of grease.

Tottenham fans, a lot of whom were skinheads, were thrown off a train on their way home from a game at Derby County because of their rowdy behaviour. It left them stranded in a Bedfordshire village called Flitwick where they rioted, causing villagers to rush home from a local function to protect their houses from vandalism and burglary.

Smashing up trains on the way home became standard practise, which if nothing else, forced British Rail to update their rolling stock as more and more old carriages were put out of action. Skinhead aggro at football made the 'papers on a weekly basis, and while condemning it, all the publicity only served to spread its reputation. All the usual ten-a-penny theories about broken homes, poor schooling and deprived areas were wheeled out, and maybe there was some truth in them, but the main reason kids got involved in football hooliganism and still do is because they enjoy it. Simple as that.

Most of the answers to the trouble at football from a supposedly caring society were more violent than the problem itself. Whip them on the pitch at half-time. Birch them. Bring back National Service, get some discipline back into their lives. Great stuff. Not on the terraces please boys. Save it for the trenches. Ipswich Town's Bobby Robson even went so far as advocating the use of flame-throwers on visiting Millwall rowdies! And they made him England manager!

Noddy sociologists who claimed that skinheads weren't even interested in football were well off the mark. They can say what they like about them not

being real fans, but few are more loyal home and away followers of a team than the football hooligans.

Constant television coverage has turned football into a game of action replays, where every move is broken down and analysed. If that was what football was really all about, who the hell would want to watch crap like Northampton Town week in, week out? Maybe those safely tucked up in their executive boxes have the time to passively follow each move, but life on the terraces is a different story. One where the game isn't just about passes, throw-ins and shots, but where passion, involvement and bias are equally important. And there's always some big bastard who stands right in front of you so that you can't see all of the action anyway.

Skinhead aggro wasn't confined to the terraces though. Not by a long chalk. Most of it was related to the locally based skinhead gangs who came from a certain part of town, a housing estate or village. Sometimes gangs would even come from a certain street or consist of those who regularly used a certain pub, cafe or chippy. Territory was what it was all about.

Skinhead gear represented the ultimate gang uniform. It was stylised hardness and blatantly working class, but not every kid had a philosophy



behind becoming a skinhead. For some it was a style, for most just a fashion, but you couldn't have a crop, pull on a pair of boots and join the skinhead army without taking on board some of its values. Being part of a gang gave a tremendous feeling of belonging and from it stemmed the pride, respect and loyalty you had for your mates and your gang's reputation. The law of the jungle meets honour among thieves. And if you weren't a skinhead and weren't part of a gang you felt very left out.

In every outfit you always get your leaders, your fighters, your Romeos, your clowns and your whipping boy of a village idiot. The gang's hardcore was always made up of those who were always looking for a fight and those who were good at it. A boot squad who went in first and came out best. Mates who would stand by you through thick and thin. Of course everybody knew their gang was the business. If you took a kicking it was because you were outnumbered, outwitted or taken by surprise. Never because you were beaten fair and square. Even taking a good kicking can turn into some sort of victory as you hurry home to lick your wounds. Two broken ribs and a broken nose maybe, but you had the last laugh as you ran away muttering "Bastards!" under your breath. And of course there was always the next time.

Skinhead gangs seemed to find trouble wherever they went. Down the park after school, in the amusement arcades, outside a chip shop, the visiting fairground. And if it didn't find you, the obvious answer was to go looking for it. Going into another gang's territory or pulling one of their birds put you on a virtual banker for aggro. Either that, or you could just pick on someone who looked like they deserved a kicking.

Anyone who didn't belong on your patch was pencilled in as a legitimate target for skinhead aggro. And that meant everyone from rival gangs on your turf right down to a hapless soul who was in the right place at the wrong time. Such targets varied from area to area. In barrack towns, squaddie-bashing was a favourite, even though loads of skinheads themselves signed up. In a university town, students would get it. And so it went on.

Queers and anyone who looked remotely like one were usually easy and regular targets in most areas, especially when there was one of them and ten little aggro merchants eager to wade in. The local 'papers were once full of the story of a toilet attendant who was beaten up by a skinhead gang because they thought he was a dirty old man up to no good in the gents.

Hippies were another soft touch. They were seen as nothing more than dirty, unkempt scroungers, rebels without a clue, and at total odds with the down to earth traditional values of the communities skinheads hailed from. Not that many wandered through skinhead territory by choice anyway, but even those who didn't were often the target of a skinhead seek and destroy mission. It wasn't particularly hard to track them down. Find your local squat or pop festival and Bob's your uncle.

In fact aggro against hippies did a lot to put skinheads in the 'papers. The hippy takeover of a London mansion was big news in September, 1969, and outside crowds of onlookers mingled with the police and skinhead gangs, who

for once had a common purpose in ending the squat. In fact only the presence of Hells Angels at 144 Piccadilly stopped the skinheads from attacking the building.

At pop festivals, you couldn't move for hippies, especially when you didn't have to pay to get in. The big one of '69 was The Rolling Stones at Hyde Park in July which attracted 250,000 people. Again Hell's Angels were paid to keep the peace, but they didn't stop skinhead gatecrashers from turning over a good few hippies that day. By the following year, free pop festivals were taking place everywhere, with Hyde Park again, the Isle Of Wight and Bath all having to put up with an invasion of hippies. Of course local skinheads tried to keep the streets clean and tidy, but it was a thankless task. Even pop critic Jonathan King, himself no friend of the skinhead, called the crowd at Bath "grey, dirty, moody and frowning", and said it "reeked of smelly socks and unwashed underwear". It was also plain for all to see that the skinheads had God on their side because the long-haired bastards got quite a few soakings when it rained at such events.

There was often talk about peace pacts between skinheads and hippies, but it went no further than an irregular page in *International Times*. And as most skinheads didn't read hippy nonsense, that's all it usually boiled down to. Talk.

There was no love lost between skinheads and Hell's Angels even when the hippies weren't around. Frequent clashes took place at seaside resorts and in towns which boasted an Angels' chapter or a similar biker gang. Toyah Wilcox, she of pop star and acting fame, tells a good story about skinhead-Angel rivalry in the West Country which apparently came to an abrupt end when a decapitated shaved head was found on a zebra crossing one morning. No wonder she went off sheep farming in Barnet. In Whitby, Yorkshire, a Hell's Angel was stabbed to death by a skinhead for taking his girlfriend. One each.

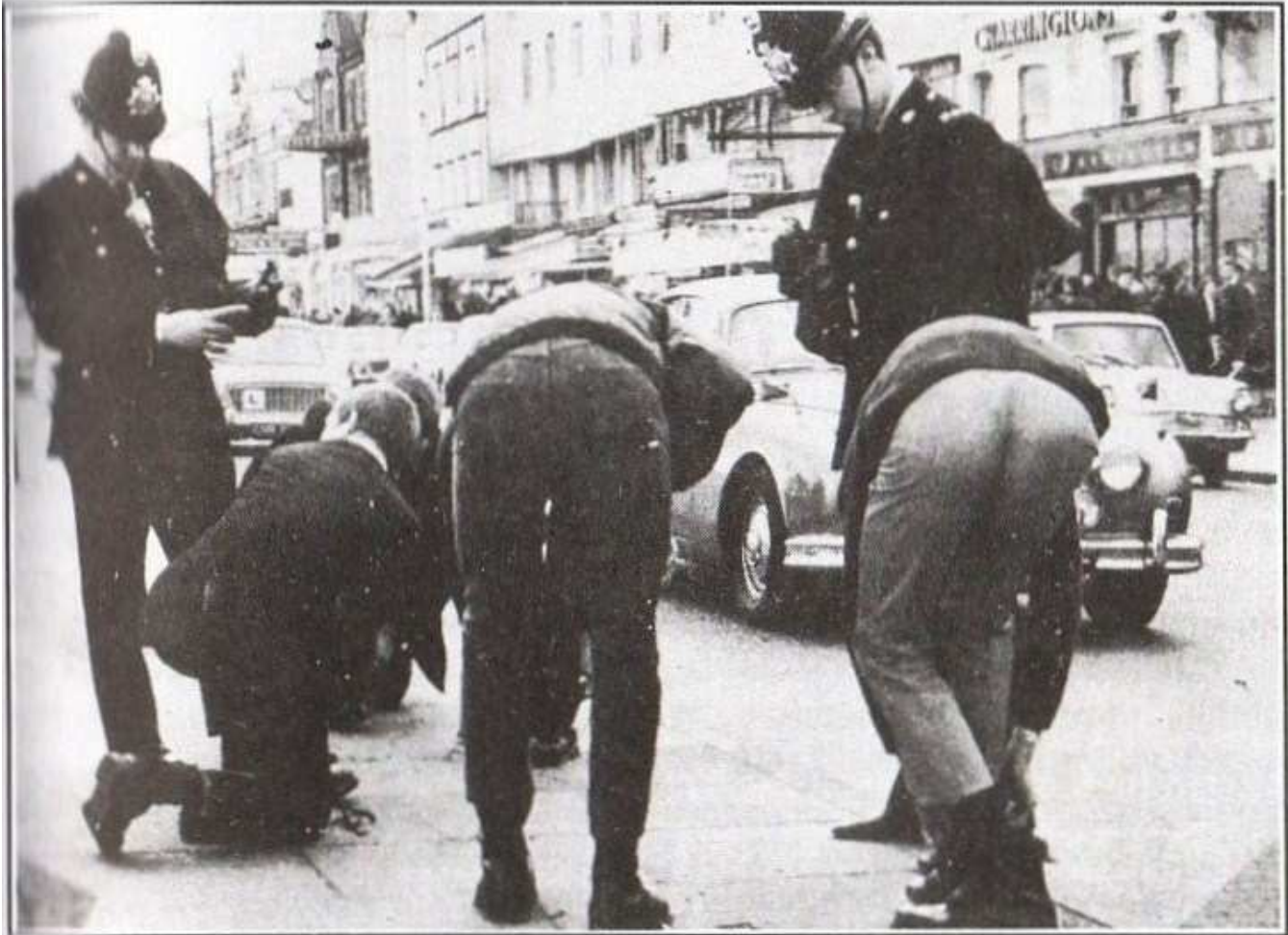
That said, most skinheads would admit a grudging admiration for true bikers because of their commitment to their lifestyle and what they believe in. And there weren't many 14 year old skinheads game enough to ruck with them either. Or that lived to tell the story anyway. But Peter Test Tube's leather clad moped lads who thought they were Hell's Angels were a different kettle of fish.

Just as the mods had battled rockers, skinheads would fight greasers. The grease were very obvious descendants of their rocker forefathers, although both were probably the missing link anthropologists have been searching through fossils for. I mean, there are dirty faces and then there are dirty faces. And grease just loved dirt.

Funnily enough, skinheads probably had more in common with greasers than they did with mods in some respects. There was certainly no room for expertly styled hair, tipped cigarettes and make-up on blokes in the harsh reality of the skinhead world. And while the true spirit of mod lay with the individual, skinheads craved the uniformity that came from belonging to a

super-gang. Greasers on the other hand shared skinhead values of masculinity, male dominance and male solidarity, but that's about as far as it goes because in every other respect they walked different paths. Both had very different ideas about dress, music, cleanliness and transport. While the grease went about on motorbikes, skinheads went by Ford Anglia or by scooter or more often than not by bus and train.

Skinhead hatred for grease was never greater than during bank holiday clashes with them at seaside resorts around the country. Skinheads always outnumbered the grease, but they were also usually younger than them too so



Above: skinheads having their laces removed by seaside bobbies.

It was more even than might be imagined at first sight. Even so, there was nothing a skinhead gang liked more than to get a greaser on his own. Then he'd need every inch of his bike chain to keep them at bay!

Football and bank holiday aggro was great for grabbing the headlines, but the skinhead violence that caused perhaps the most concern was that directed against Asians living in Britain. In fact things got so bad, that paki-bashing as it became known, was even the subject of top level talks between the British and Pakistani governments of the day.

It wasn't just Pakistanis who were attacked. Indians, Bengalis and other Asians were all labelled "paki" and all potential victims of a skinhead attack. It wasn't simply racial violence either as so many commentators have stated.



Above: When people waved goodbye to Old Blighty to start a new life in Australia, it was obvious that they would take their culture with them. And for kids at the end of the Sixties, that meant packing the old boots and braces. Soon new gangs formed and Oz became home to one of the few skinhead populations outside of the U.K. and Ireland. And just as skinhead gave way to suedehead over here, Oz skins graduated into the sharpie cult which survived into the mid-Seventies.

In fact it wasn't even just skinheads or even white youths involved in the attacks. Greek youths, West Indians and others were all at it.

The problem was really two-fold. On the one hand, Britain was in the grip of hysteria about the country being flooded by foreigners, with Enoch Powell's rivers of blood speech stoking the fires nicely in April, 1968. He lost his post in the shadow cabinet because of it, but there is no doubt that he captured the mood of the British people - as any opinion poll of the day will testify. He received tens of thousands of letters of support and both the dockers and the market porters marched from the East End of London to the Houses of Parliament in his support.

On the other hand you had an influx of immigrants from the Indian sub-continent and from Uganda who kept themselves very much to themselves and who had no real interest in becoming part of the communities they moved into. Asians had their own cafes, cinemas and mosques to go to and were really only here to find work so they could send money back to their

families. Most didn't even speak English and even worse, couldn't play football.

The colour of their skin made them easy scapegoats for the problems facing a country that might have won the war, but had obviously lost the peace. Asians were seen as competition for jobs and housing, at a time when jobs in heavy industries were being lost and traditional working class communities were under attack by town planners intent on throwing up high-rise flats. That, together with the fact that they didn't fight back, made them a ready target for a smack in the mouth.

Many a young skinhead might have claimed old Enoch as a hero, but the nearest most got to organised politics was being handed tea and biscuits by the Young Liberals at Skegness one bank holiday. Most skinheads were too young to vote anyway, but Labour would no doubt have been the most popular choice. Paki-bashing and paki-rolling, as mugging Asians was often called, was certainly no part of an extreme right plot. They were just skinhead enemies to be added to the list of hippies, gays, perverts, grease and anyone else who looked at you the wrong way.

West Indians by then had already been absorbed into the British way of life and of course they had reggae as a common link with skinheads. That said, things weren't always sweetness and roses in that department either. All black skinhead gangs, often called afro boys, would clash with white gangs and even mixed-race gangs, but it all came down to territory far quicker than it did colour.

When there was nobody coming off the last train worth noising up, skinheads would turn their attention to other acts of mischief. Joyriding was popular in some areas, and another good one was turning over the local corner shop. Anyone who did a 'paper round could tell you where everything worth nicking was, no sweat. Then there was the cigarette and sweet machines on the wall outside. They'd be whipped off in seconds and taken to a quiet place to be looted. You knew who the idiots were in the gang. While you were busily pocketing the money they were picking up the bubble gums.

Petty crime wasn't confined to skinheads. It was just part of growing up and remains so today for more kids than bears thinking about. And the aggro was just part and parcel of the skinhead's exaggerated working class outlook on life. Sometimes it was vicious enough to kill, but more often than not it was basic playground bravado.

Skinheads loved their violent image. Being in the newspapers is always good for the old morale. Even getting put inside has its advantages because when you come out you're treated like royalty. That is of course unless you do a long stretch and get out to find all your mates have got married, settled down or moved away.

Being a skinhead soon became bovver in itself and you couldn't even drop a sweet wrapper without being nicked. Once a copper spotted a crop and boots that was it. You were assumed to be trouble even if you were just minding your own business. And if you went before the court and the judge had had

his car scratched by a little skinhead the week before, you could guarantee the book would be thrown at you.

By the end of 1970, a lot of the older skinheads were beginning to move on anyway. The cult was becoming associated with just violence and younger kids thought that's all skinhead was about. In Luton, skinheads couldn't even go out of an evening after a curfew was imposed on them by the boys in blue after a series of violent incidents involving Asians, grease, rival skinhead gangs and anyone else interested in chancing their arm. Few skins would walk away from trouble, but the older you get the more you calm down and more important things grab your attention. Why go looking for a fight when your better half's parents are going out for the night, leaving you to get up to some of the old nudge nudge, wink wink?

All good things come to an end sooner or later and the skinhead cult was about to sing its swansong. But there was still life in the old dog and they didn't get rid of us that easily. The boots and braces might have been put away, but the spirit of '69 was to live on.

"The leader of the Stepney mob is Mickey Steal. There are 50 in his gang - some of them coloured people, giving lie to the suggestion that their paki-bashing is sparked purely by racial hatred."
Eugene Hugo, 1970.

SKINHEAD REGGAE

Reggae was without doubt the boss sound for most skinheads first time around. Soul was popular too, but unlike skinhead reggae, it has been given the credit and coverage it deserves in other books. This guide will hopefully go some way to redressing the balance, and should give you some background as you flick through the boxes at record fairs and the like. It is in no way complete, but will get you out of the starting blocks. Respect goes to Iain McKinlay and Steve Barrow for their help in compiling this section.



Owen Gray (Trojan)

ACKEE

Reggae label which was in business from 1969 to 1972, with another two years spent under Trojan's wing. Around 50 releases with *Life Of A Millionaire* by Dave Barker pipping Owen Gray's *Whispering Bell* for top release.

AMALGAMATED

An early Trojan label and one of the best for skinhead reggae. It ran from '68 to '71 and specialised in Joe Gibbs' produced releases by the likes of The Pioneers, Ken Parker, The Destroyers and The Reggae Boys. Crucial skinhead cuts include anything by Joe Gibbs & The Destroyers, including *Nevada Joe*, The Soul Sisters' *Wreck A Buddy*, Ken Parker's *Only Yesterday* and *Them A Laugh And Kiki* by The Soulmates. And there's plenty more where they came from including some of The Pioneers earlier and better reggae tunes. Some great albums too.

ATTACK

Born in 1969, Attack was one of Trojan's most prolific labels, with around 130 singles and 20 albums to its name before bidding farewell in 1978. All the big guns appeared on it as some time, including Derrick Morgan, The Upsetters and The Pioneers. Very collectable because it charts JA music from early reggae to dub.

B&C

Part of Lee Gopthal's Beat & Commercial empire, which clocked up less than a handful of reggae releases around 1969.

BAF

Another small label, best known for instrumentals by The Cats including its first release, *Swan Lake*.

BAMBOO

British label run by Junior Lincoln from 1969 to 1972. Over 70 releases, including a lot of Studio 1 reggae from all time greats like John Holt, the late great Jackie Mittoo and Sound Dimension. Some much sought after LPs to look out for too.

BANANA

Another of Junior Lincoln's labels, and releasing much the same as Bamboo. Started in 1970, with its main artists being John Holt, Ken Boothe and The Freedom Singers.



BIG

Another Trojan label, specialising mainly in Rupie Edwards' produced reggae. Rupie himself, Joe White and The Itals were the main breadwinners as the label knocked out some 40 odd releases between 1970 and 1972.



BIG SHOT

Now we're smoking. A truly classic Trojan reggae label that dates back to '68 and before the merger of Island and B&C to form Trojan as we came to know it. Around 130 releases, plus four diamond albums, from the likes of Niney The Observer, Rudi Mills, Lloyd & The Prophets and the irrepressible Judge Dread. Top sound though goes to The Kingstonians with *Sufferer*, although Rudi Mills' *John Jones* gives it a run for its money in the skinhead reggae stakes.

BLACK SWAN

Originally an old Island subsidiary, belting out mainly classic ska back in '63, '64, and not to be confused with the later 1970s releases under the same name. Highly collectable thanks to a stable boasting The Maytals, The Vikings, Delroy Wilson, Stranger Cole, Ba Ba Brooks, Sonny Burke and Shenley Duffus.

BLUE BEAT

A label that should need no introduction to ska fans. Basically the British arm of Melodisc which charted seven glorious years of JA sounds from 1960 to 1967. R&B, ska, rocksteady, they are all there, including over 100 Prince Buster releases and a lot of Laurel Aitken's and Derrick Morgan's early releases. You'd need to write another book to do this label justice, but among the gems watch out for the odd rogue cut, usually by a British band with a white singer.

BLUE CAT

Here's a label that released around 70 singles during '68 and '69, in the rocksteady, reggae and soul veins. Main artists were The Pioneers, The Maytones and Dermot Lynch. Quite a few Coxsone releases too, but not a Studio 1 label.

BLUE MOUNTAIN

Island reggae label with some good tracks including Lorna Bennett's *Breakfast In Bed*.

BREAD

Small Trojan subsidiary with less than 25 releases under its belt. Main artists Jackie Edwards and Del Dennis.

BULLET

Long running Pama label ('69 to '75), but most of the top releases came in the early years. Some good skinhead reggae here, including The Crystalites *Fistful Of Dollars* and The Fabions *V. Rocket*.

CALTONE

Part of R&B Records, run by Rita and Benny King, with mainly rocksteady cuts featuring the talents of Tommy McCook and others.

CAMEL

Another classic Pama label, with around 100 releases between 1969 and 1973. Main artists were Owen Gray and bands like The Techniques, The Upsetters, The Maytones and Gloria's All Stars. Loads of good stuff, but skinhead-wise don't be without The Upsetters *For A Few Dollars More*, The Techniques' *Who You Gonna Run To* (which launched the label) and *Jumping Dick* by Gloria's All Stars.

CARIBOU

Calypso and ska from around 1965, including classics like Don Drummond's *Bellevue Blues* and the furious *Belly Lick* by Orville Alphonso.



Above: Laurel Aitken (54-46 Pressure Drop Skinzine)

CARNIVAL

British ska label with all the recordings made over here. Despite that, pretty good. Tended to specialise in nursery rhyme ska by Sugar N' Dandy (Sugar Simone and Dandy Livingstone).

CLANDISC

Classic Trojan label that pumped out some great tunes between 1969 and 1972. Hardly a bad release in sight, thanks to material from Clancy Eccles who ran the label, King Stitt, The Dynamites and Cynthia Richards. *The World Needs Loving* by Clancy and *Vigarton* by King Stitt launched the label and provided its best cuts.

COLLINS DOWN BEAT

Tiny label run by C. Collins which released no more than five records. Hard to come by, but *Dry The Water From Your Eyes* by C. Collins with The Uniques' *I'm A Fool For You* is a stormer.

COLUMBIA BLUE BEAT

All British produced rocksteady label from '67, '68. About a dozen releases from The Bees, Blue Rivers & The Maroons, Cindy Starr & The Mopeds and other acts playing the London club circuit at the time.

COXSONE

Clement "Coxsone" Dodd's British label for about 100 rocksteady and reggae releases, including classics from Slim Smith, Jackie Mittoo, The Soul Vendors, Ken Boothe and Norma Fraser.

CRAB

Undoubtedly, one of Pama's finest labels and home to some of the all-time skinhead reggae greats. Around 70 releases between '68 and '71, including a lot of Derrick Morgan's best, including *Seven Letters*, *Night At The Hop* and *Moonhop*. Check out The Versatiles' *Spread Your Bed* as well. Other good



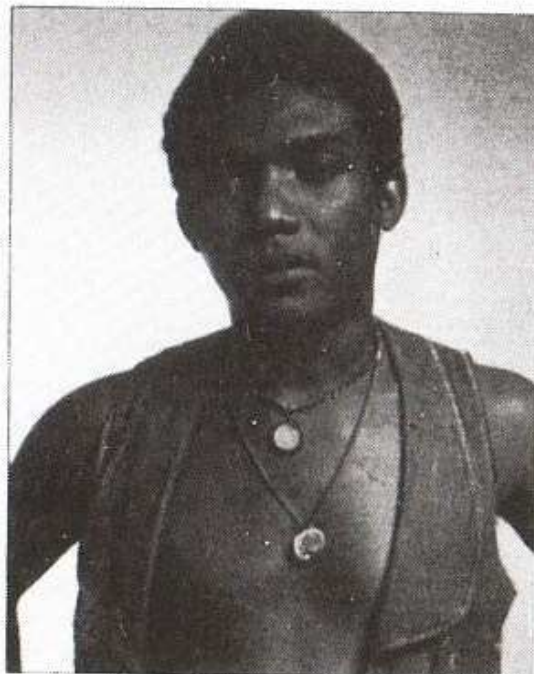
stuff from The Tennors, Ernest Wilson and The Kingstonians make this a truly boss label.

CREOLE

A Trojan label with barely a handful of outings to its name.

CRYSTAL

Reggae label about which little is known. The Cats' *Sherman* was released on it though.



Ken Boothe (Trojan)

DICE

Mostly early Rhythm & Blues and ska, with the odd soul song done by a ska artist for good measure. Most of the releases were recorded in Britain. Prince

REGGAE CHART ATTACK

The popularity of reggae during the late Sixties and early Seventies is clearly illustrated below by the number of chart entries. All were on small labels and few were afforded radio airplay or serious attention from the music newspapers. Highest chart positions are noted after the record details.

1969

Desmond Dekker & The Aces - Israelites (Pyramid)	No. 1
The Cats - Swan Lake (Baf)	No. 48
Max Romeo - Wet Dream (Unity)	No. 10
Desmond Dekker & The Aces - It Mek (Pyramid)	No. 7
Tony Tribe - Red Red Wine (Downtown)	No. 46
The Upsetters - Return Of Django (Upsetter)	No. 6
The Pioneers - Long Shot Kick De Bucket (Trojan)	No. 21
Harry J Allstars - Liquidator (Trojan)	No. 9
Jimmy Cliff - Wonderful World, Beautiful People (Trojan)	No. 6

1970

Desmond Dekker & The Aces - Pickney Gal (Pyramid)	No. 42
The Melodians - Sweet Sensation (Trojan)	No. 41
Derrick Morgan - Moonhop (Crab)	No. 49
Bloris Gardiner - Elizabethan Reggae (Duke)	No. 14
Jimmy Cliff - Vietnam (Trojan)	No. 46
Bob & Marcia - Young, Gifted And Black (Harry J)	No. 6
The Maytals - Monkey Man (Trojan)	No. 47
Nicky Thomas - Love Of The Common People (Trojan)	No. 9
Desmond Dekker - You Can Get It If You Really Want (Trojan)	No. 2
Horace Faith - Black Pearl (Trojan)	No. 13
Freddie Note & The Rudies - Montego Bay (Trojan)	No. 46

1971

Dave And Ansel Collins - Double Barrel (Technique)	No. 1
Bruce Ruffin - Rain (Trojan)	No. 19
Bob & Marcia - Pied Piper (Trojan)	No. 11
Dave And Ansel Collins - Monkey Spanner (Technique)	No. 7
Greyhound - Black And White (Trojan)	No. 6
The Pioneers - Let Your Yeah Be Yeah (Trojan)	No. 5

1972

Greyhound - Moon River (Trojan)	No. 12
The Pioneers - Give And Take (Trojan)	No. 38
Greyhound - I Am What I Am (Trojan)	No. 20
Bruce Ruffin - Mad About You (Rhino)	No. 9
Dandy Livingstone - Suzanne Beware Of The Devil (Horse)	No. 14
Judge Dread - Big 6 (Big Shot)	No. 11
Judge Dread - Big 7 (Big Shot)	No. 8

1973

Dandy Livingstone - Big City (Horse)	No. 26
Judge Dread - Big 8 (Big Shot)	No. 14

The above was first compiled by Roddy Moreno for *Backs Against The Wall* skinzine.

Buster saw *Blackhead Chinaman* (dedicated to Derrick Morgan) go out on Dice along with a number of other tunes.

DIRECT

Tiny British ska label from the mid-Sixties.

DOCTOR BIRD

Probably the best and most collectable of all ska and reggae labels. Between 1966 and 1969, this Island label released countless classics including *Ska-ing West* by Sir Lord Comic and Roland Alphonso's *Phoenix City*. Rock steady fans rank this very close to Treasure Isle for top

releases too. Albums released on this label tend to be rocksteady compilations with little or no ska despite the "Best Of.." tags.

DOWNTOWN

Trojan label specialising in Dandy Livingstone produced releases between 1968 and 1973. Around 120 releases, including a lot of average stuff, but also skinhead reggae greats like Dandy's *Reggae In Your Jeggae* and Desmond Riley's *Skinheads, A Message To You*. Also home to Tony Tribe's *Red Red Wine*.

Below: Skinhead hero Alex Hughes, known to one and all as Judge Dread. He was the first white vocalist to appear on Trojan, and went on to have 16 hit singles, selling 20 million records worldwide in the process. Prior to the release of Big Six, the Judge had worked as a bouncer and DJ at the Ram Jam, and as a bodyguard to stars like Prince Buster and The Rolling Stones. He started work at Trojan as a debt collector, but ironically enough, he ended up being owed the best part of a million pounds as a recording artist when the company went bust in 1975. Inset: Judge Dread and *The Last Of The Skinheads*.



DRAGON

Late reggae label (1973-75), but still some good stuff from the likes of The Maytals and Eric Donaldson. Eventually absorbed by Trojan.

DUKE

Like Trojan and Big Shot, Duke was one of the three labels that pre-dated the Island-B&C partnership. Between 1968 and 1973, it released over 170 releases and rates as one of Trojan's finest. Main artists were Boris Gardiner, Carl Dawkins, Winston Wright, The Dials and The Techniques. And every skinhead reggae collection deserves copies of The Techniques' *I Wish It Would Rain*, Boris Gardiner's *Elizabethan Reggae*, *Love Is A Treasure* by The Dials and Andy Capp's *The Law*. Early Duke stuff is very hard to come by.

DUKE REID

Very collectable Trojan subsidiary with less than 30 releases. It's main source of interest is U-Roy's toasting releases.

DYNAMIC

Another Trojan subsidiary, which saw 60 odd releases between 1970 and 1972. Main artists were The Slickers (*Johnny Too Bad* is a stormer), Eric Donaldson and Dennis Alcapone.



ESCORT

A Pama label with some good releases between '69 and '71, but certainly not Pama at its strongest. Main artists were

Tony Scott, Stranger Cole and Lloyd Charmers. Check out Tony Scott's *What Am I To Do*, which uses the *Liquidator* rhythm to great effect, and Denzil and Jennifer's version of *Young, Gifted And Black*.

EXPLOSION

Trojan label, best known for its instrumentals from '69 to '74. Top artists were Lloyd Charmers, The Crystalites and The G.G. All Stars who gave us the skinhead reggae classic, *Man From Carolina*.

FAB

FAB really picked up where Blue Beat left off, and so is best known for its Prince Buster releases like *Madness* and the juicy *Pharaohan House Crash* (to the rhythm of The Ethiopians' *Everything Crash*). Also home to classics like *Ride Your Donkey* by The Tennors and others by The Tennors and Owen Gray. A lot of catalogue numbers were used on more than one release which makes collecting even more of a nightmare than ever.

GG

Trojan label from the early Seventies with some good reggae cuts to its name from The Maytones, Max Romeo and the G.G. All Stars. Main producer was Alvin Ranglin.

GAS

Pama label from 1968 to 1971, releasing mainly reggae with a few rock steady tracks during the early months. Some great skinhead reggae, including most of Pat Kelly's greatest, among its 70 or thereabouts releases. For those who don't know Pat Kelly check out *How Long Will It Take*, *Festival Time* and *If It Don't Work Out* for starters. *Sail Away* by The Marvels is another Gas cut not to be missed.

GAYFEET

Small Trojan label, with female producer Sonya Pottinger at the controls. About ten releases in four years at the start of the Seventies.

GIANT

Another of R&B's labels, again specialising in rocksteady between '67 and '68. Dandy Livingstone, Ewan & Jerry, Junior Smith and Roy Shirley all found a home here. Over 40 releases.

GRAPE

Trojan label which released some great skinhead reggae cuts during its 1969-'73 reign. A real rare gem is *Skinhead A Bash Dem* by Claudette & Corporation. Also worth getting are King Horror's *Loch Ness Monster* and Joe Gibbs & The Destroyers' *Nevada Joe*, which also went out on Amalgamated.

GREEN DOOR

Rare reggae and soul label from the Trojan stable, including a lot of early Wailers' material.



Harry J Allstars (Trojan)

HARRY J

Trojan label responsible for releasing most of Harry Johnson's material in the UK between 1969 and 1974 (the first few releases went out on Trojan). Main

artists were Harry J. All Stars, Bob & Marcia and The Ethiopians. Harry J's *Liquidator* actually went out on Trojan, so the label is best known for Bob & Marcia's version of *Young, Gifted And Black*.

HIGH NOTE

Trojan label that ran from '68 to '74 and again catered for Sonia Pottinger produced material. Again the earlier releases are the best and include some good skinhead reggae. Main artists were The Hippy Boys, Delano Stewart and The Gaytones, but top release goes to Patsy with *Fire In Your Wire*.

HOT ROD

Trojan reggae label specialising in Hot Rod All Stars releases.

HOT SHOT

Independent reggae label from 1970 that chalked up only a few releases.

ISLAND

When it comes to Jamaican music, Island leads the way. Between 1962 and 1968, it released over 400 records, mainly in the ska and rock steady vein. Also some soul and reggae, but either way far more collectable than even Blue Beat and rightly so. The only drawback is the price of some stuff! Again, you'd be here all day listening to choice cuts from this label, but Derrick Morgan, The Maytals, The Wailers, Jimmy Cliff, Derrick Harriott and Theo Beckford are just the tip of the iceberg here.

JJ

Another Harry J label. Bit of a funny one this, as a lot of releases are simply re-releases of material found on Dr. Bird and Pyramid, like The Ethiopians' *Hong Kong Flu*.

J DAN

A Trojan label from 1970 which specialised in Dandy produced material,

with an emphasis on releases by The Music Doctors.

REGGAE

TOP 30

1 TR 695	Sweet Sensation	Melodians
2 TR 7710	Samfie Man	Pioneers
3 DU 39	Elizabethan Reggae	Byron Lee
4 PYR 6078	Pickney Gal	Desmond Dekker
5 TR 698	Poor Rameses	Pioneers
6 TI 7052	Pop a Top	Andy Capp
7 HS 027	Got to Come Back	Delano Stewart
8 TR 7709	Pressure Drop	Maytals
9 TR 690	Wonderful World, Beautiful People	Jimmy Cliff
10 TR 675	Liquidator	Harry J. All Stars
11 TI 7050	Skinhead Moon Stomp	Symarip
12 HS 035	Reggae Pressure	Hippy Boys
13 TR 7717	Lock Jaw	Tommy & The Upsetters
14 TR 679	Ease Up	Bleachers
15 TR 7712	Cotton Dandy	Ansell Collins
16 EX 2005	Bombshell	Crystalites
17 GR 3005	Leaving Me Standing	Winston Groovey
18 TR 7706	Black Coffee	Tommy McCook
19 CLA 201	Dollar Train	Clancy Eccles
20 TR 7704	Dry Up Your Tears	Bruce Ruffin
21 US 324	Yakety Yak	Lee Perry & The Upsetters
22 AMG 855	Nevada Joe	Joe Gibb & The Destroyers
23 CLA 206	The Ugly One	King Stitt
24 TR 7713	Shanghai	Freddie Notes & The Rudies
25 US 313	Live Injection	Upsetters
26 DU 50	Brixton Cat	Joe's All Stars
27 US 301	Return of Django	Upsetters
28 TR 7722	Vietnam	Jimmy Cliff
29 GR 3011	Babylon Burning	Freddie Notes & The Rudies
30 TR 658	Fattie Fattie	Clancy Eccles

TROJAN

JACKPOT

Another Trojan label, with Bunny Lee behind the mixing desk for most of the releases. Between '69 and '73 it released over 100 singles, from the likes of Pat Kelly, Slim Smith, Delroy Wilson, Derrick Morgan and Dave Barker. Derrick's *Seven Letters* launched the label, even although Bunny had sold it to Crab as well.

JOE

And yet another Trojan subsidiary, with early releases having Duke catalogue numbers. Producer here was Joe Mansano, with main artists being Dice The Boss and Joe The Boss. A lot of good reggae including *Trial Of Pama Dice* by Lloyd Dice and Mum.

JOLLY

Another of Stamford Hill's own, courtesy of Benny and Rita King. About 20 rock steady and reggae releases between 1968 and 1969.

JUMP UP

Island label from the early Sixties which was later re-released by Trojan. Lots of rude calypso like *Dr. Kitch* by Lord Kitchener and *Pussy Galore* by Young Growler.

KALYPSO

Very similar to Jump Up in terms of output, although pre-dates it by a year or two. Some early Laurel Aitken cuts.

KING

Part of the R&B stable and bearing the owner's name. Only about 20 or so releases during 1964 and 1965, including some soul and American releases. Top cut is *Do The Ska* by Clive & Gloria.

LIMBO

Calypso from 1960 or thereabouts.

MARY LYN

Little known label, with at least one decent reggae release to its name. *Time Is Tight* by Pat Rhoden.

MOODISC

First appeared as a Trojan subsidiary in 1970 to release Harry Mudie produced material, and then apparently went it alone in 1971. Either way, some good cuts including *Give Me Some More Loving* by Slim Smith & The Uniques.

Other artists included John Holt, The Rhythm Rulers and I-Roy.

NATIONAL CALYPSO

Calypso label from the mid-Sixties.

NU BEAT/NEW BEAT

Arguably the best of Pama's subsidiary labels, with about 100 releases, initially as Nu Beat and then as New Beat. Nearly a quarter of its releases were by Laurel Aitken, with all his best skinhead reggae cuts included. *Landlords And Tennants*, *Pussy Price*, *Jesse James*, *Skinhead Train* and *Reggae '69*. Another skinhead fave is Clancy Eccles' *Festival '68*.



PAMA

The main label run by the Palmer Brothers, keepers of the boss sound. From '67 to '73, it released over 150 rocksteady, soul and reggae singles, including Lloyd Terrell's *Birth Control* and The Mohawks' *Skinhead Shuffle*. Clancy Eccles and Alton Ellis were other mainstays of the label.

PAMA SUPREME

Reggae offshoot of Pama really, with more or less the same recording artists.

Some of its better releases came after the skinheads in '73.

PLANETONE

Early British ska label with about a dozen releases to its name. It was once based in the same building as Island, but ended up being forced out of business by the quality of Island's releases.

PORT-O-JAM

Another of R&Bs labels from '64, catering for ska releases by the likes of Lee Perry and Lord Creator.

PRESSURE BEAT

Trojan label, releasing Joe Gibbs' productions in the early Seventies. Around 20 releases.

PRINCE BUSTER

Blue Beat begat FAB begat Prince Buster. A few releases in '67, but the bulk of its 50 or so releases came about in '71-'72. The Prince was the main recording artist (*Big Five* and *Rough Rider* were early releases), with Dennis Alcapone and John Holt bringing up the rear.

PUNCH

Classic Pama label which released some great skinhead reggae numbers between 1969 and 1972. Over 100 releases and very collectable. Must finds are *Dry Acid* by Count Sticky & The Upsetters, *Too Experienced* by Winston Francis, *Clint Eastwood* by The Upsetters and Dave Barker's *Shocks Of Mighty*.

PYRAMID

PYRAMID

Island subsidiary from '67 to '69 and briefly revived by Trojan in 1973. Around 80 releases including *54-46 That's My Number* by The Maytals, *Tougher Than*

Tough by Derrick Morgan and the first reggae chart-topper, Desmond Dekker's *Israelites*.

Q

Trojan label from 1970. Possibly just the one release, *Please Don't Go* by Count Suckle And Freddie Notes & The Rudies.

R&B/SKA BEAT

The main label in the R&B jigsaw, run by the Kings from their shop in Stamford Hill, London. Between 1963 and its demise in '67, it clocked up nearly 300 releases and ranks alongside Island and Blue Beat in the ska stakes. Main artists included The Wailers, Delroy Wilson, Lee Perry, Dandy Livingstone and Winston Samuels.

RAINBOW

Melodisc subsidiary which released around 20 mainly rocksteady and soul singles during 1966 and 1967. Main artists were Prince Buster and Laurel Aitken, although top release has to be *Rude Girls* by Doreen & The Rude Girls.

RANDYS

A Trojan label, specialising in V. Chin productions between 1970 and 1973. Some pretty good reggae including *Pepper Pot* by Randy's All Stars.

RHINO

A Subsidiary of Creole, after it had gained its independence from Trojan. Between '72 and '74, it churned out 30 or so releases, including some cracking tunes next to commercial pop reggae. Dave Collins, Bruce Ruffins, Desmond Dekker and Winston Francis were its bread and butter.

RIO

An Island/B&C label, and part of the Doctor Bird group. Between '63 and '67 it released about 140 singles, mainly produced in Britain except for the later JA

rocksteady releases like The Ethiopians' *Train To Skaville* and The Rulers' *Don't Be A Rude Boy*. A lot of Laurel Aitken releases too.



Above: Prince Buster

RYMSKA

British ska label from about '64. Very few releases, and not up to the standards set by Jamaica.

SIOUX

About 25 reggae releases during 1971 and 1972, gave this indie label some minor successes, including The Roosevelt Singers with *Heavy Reggae*, a version of *Johnny Reggae*. Main artists were Sammy Jones, Joe Higgs and P. Jackson. Pretty easy to get hold of.

SMASH

Trojan reggae label from 1970 to 1973. Main artists were Delroy Wilson, Keith Hudson and John Holt. Top cut? Probably Bill Gentles' *Stop Them*.

SONG BIRD

Another Trojan subsidiary which released just under 90 Derrick Harriott-produced singles between 1969 and 1973. The bloke must have loved spaghetti westerns since a lot of titles come straight from

them. Top artists were The Crystalites, The Kingstons and Derrick himself. Killer skinhead cuts are *Singer Man* by The Kingstons, *The Undertaker* and *The Overtaker*, both by The Crystalites, and *Isies* by the same studio band.



SOUND SYSTEM

Another indie reggae label with only a few releases during 1969-'70 to its name.

SPINNING WHEEL

Trojan label with ten or so reggae singles to its name, all released at the start of the Seventies.

STARLITE

Very early label from 1960, with a lot of its releases later appearing on Island. 80 singles to its credit from stars like Laurel Aitken, Owen Gray, Wilfred Edwards (better known as Jackie) and others.

STUDIO 1

Classic, but now rare, British label for releasing Coxsone Dodd material between '67 and '69. Mostly rock steady from the likes of Ken Boothe, The Heptones, Delroy Wilson, The Soul Vendors and Jackie Mittoo.

SUCCESS

Pama label from 1969 to 1970 with around 15 reggae releases under its belt. Some decent cuts too, including *Fat Girl*, *Sexy Girl* by John Holt.

SUMMIT

Trojan label from the early Seventies, with around 45 reggae singles released, including two great Maytals' cuts, *Peeping Tom* and *Monkey Girl*.

SUPREME

Pama label, but not to be confused with Pama Supreme. Between 1969 and '71, Supreme released around 30 singles. Not a lot to write home about, except for a handful like *Work It Up* by Jack & The Beanstalks (aka The Kingstons) and The Pioneers' *Starvation*.



SWAY

A Planitone ska label from '63. Only three releases.

TECHNIQUES

Trojan reggae label with over 30 releases between 1970 and 1974. Winston Riley was the producer and the main artists were Dave & Ansel Collins, who chalked up hits with *Monkey Spanner* and *Double Barrel*.

TORPEDO

An indie label, which released 35 odd singles during 1970, and one that was briefly revived in 1975. The Hot Rod All Stars were the top act on the label, a band who gave us *Moonhop In London* backed by *Skinhead Moondust*, and *Skinheads Don't Fear*.

TREASURE ISLE



Between 1969 and 1973 this was a Trojan label, but for the two years previous it had been releasing rock steady as part of Island. Its name came from Duke Reid's JA label (as did Trojan after the lorry he drove), and gave us some of his best rock steady cuts. Check out anything by Phillis Dillon, especially *Things Of The Past*. Once in the hands of Trojan, some classic skinhead reggae came forth, including *Skinhead Moonstomp* and *Parson's Corner* by Symarip (aka The Pyramids) and Andy Capp's *Pop A Top*.

TROJAN

Initially a Duke Reid label in '67 for rocksteady releases, Trojan was the name chosen for the Island/B&C partnership which was to establish reggae in Britain. Early releases are the rarest and usually the best, with later releases losing their hard edge with the use of strings, orchestras and other pop trappings. Even so, there are loads of great cuts to chose from here, including some great skinhead reggae. Who hasn't jumped about to The Untouchables' *Tighten Up*, David Isaacs' *Place In The Sun*, The Termites' *Love Up Kiss Up*, Clancy Eccles' *Fattie Fattie*, The Melodians' *Sweet Sensation*, Nora Dean's *Barbwire*, The Maytals' *Monkey Man*, Joya Landis' *Angel Of The Morning* and so the list goes on. No wonder Trojan became another word for reggae.

TROPICAL

Around 20 releases to its name, with Max Romeo and DJ toaster Dennis Alcapone

providing much of the material for this indie label.

UNITY

Another great label from Pama. Between 1968 and 1970, it weighed in over 70 singles, mainly reggae with a few ska re-releases thrown in for good measure. Classic skinhead reggae discs include Derrick Morgan's *Return Of Jack Slade* and *Top The Pop*, Max Romeo's *Wet Dream*, and his *Clap Clap* with The Hippy Boys, *1,000 Tons Of Version* by Jeff Barnes, *Peyton Place* by Don Tony Lee and *Pepper Seed* by Ranny Williams. Plus loads of Slim Smith.

UPSETTER

In the skinhead reggae stakes, this was Trojan's best answer to Pama's top guns. Between 1969 and 1973, Lee Perry and his studio band The Upsetters came up with some great cuts. *Return Of Django*, *The Night Doctor*, *Live Injection*, *Cold Sweat* and *Shocks '71* with Dave Barker. Also catch up with The Bleachers' *Come Into My Parlour* and The Muskyteers with *Kiddy-O*.

VARIOUS

Now and again, a decent track or three appeared on a label that didn't specialise in the sound of Jamaica. The Piglet's *Johnny Reggae* came out on Bell for example. Other examples can be found on Atlantic, Columbia, Fontana (especially Millie), President and Page One.





SONS OF SKINHEAD

"It's funny, the further you go out into the Black Country mobs' territories the older the styles get. Some of them are still wearing army boots, while in towards the city, we all wear brogues. The coppers were picking us up if we wore boots. Brogues look innocent enough, but they can do damage."

Bob, 18 year old Lieutenant with Birmingham's Quinton Mob of bootboys, 1971.

Time stands still for no man and that's particularly true of youth cults. Despite bold and rash promises of remaining a skinhead for life, deep down everybody knows that the day will come when they hang up the boots and braces for good. It's the same with every cult and there are very few exceptions to the golden rule. The odd punk granny might make the 'papers on a quiet day, but always with about as much credibility as the Loch Ness Monster. And sometimes less.

That said, there is something very special about belonging to a youth cult that will stay with you for the rest of your life. You might look completely different at thirty something, but a little bit of your heart remains faithful to the cause until your dying day. If I had ten pence for every time a drunk hit me with a "I used to be a skinhead" story, I wouldn't bother with the pools coupon every week.

We all have to grow up and as we do our priorities change. There's nothing quite like playing Mr. and Mrs. House to make you leave your misspent youth behind. One year you'll be scouring the local market stalls for a new Brutus shirt, and the next pushing a trolley around Tesco's. And then there's the job where it's grow your hair or find somewhere else to earn your keep. Add the fact that youth cults tend to go in and out of fashion at the drop of a pork pie hat, and a chain-smoking butterfly looks a better bet in the long life stakes.

The skinhead cult had such a grip on working class kids as we marched on in to the Seventies that there was no way it would disappear overnight. Some slowcoaches (usually of the country bumpkin variety) were only just getting into all this crops and boots lark, while others were quite happy to keep the faith for at least another year or two. But as numbers did begin to drop, it

RICHARD ALLEN



Probably the most famous skinhead of them all is one Joe Hawkins. Quite a feat for a skinhead who only existed in the pages of the cult paperbacks written by his creator, Richard Allen.

Joe made his first appearance in the novel, *Skinhead*, which was published by New English Library and the first skinhead book of all time. The cult was at its peak and the adventures of old Joe and his gang were required reading for every self-respecting skinhead. Over a million copies were sold, and the uproar over its content only added to its selling power.

The book's success prompted Richard Allen (whose real name was James Moffatt) to write a follow-up, *Suedehead*, which saw Joe get out of prison to find the cult had moved on. It too sold a million copies and at the end of 1971 was joined by *Skinhead* in the Top Ten paperback lists. Throughout the Seventies, Richard Allen added more titles to what must be the most famous set of

youth cult novels of all time, ending up with *Mod Rule*, a second-rate attempt to cash in on the '79 mod revival.

Today, it's trendy to knock the Richard Allen novels, especially in politically correct circles. Joe himself was a violent racist and sexist to boot, and if he wasn't between the sheets with a bird, he was out there paki-bashing, planning a robbery or something similar. How he found time to kill a copper beats me, but you could always count on Joe to come up trumps before the end of each thin book. Most of the characters stay firmly in a two dimensional world, and that's particularly true of the female ones.

All that said, fiction is fiction and there would have been little point devoting a chapter to Joe strolling down to the chippy one wet Wednesday evening only to find it closed. The books were written as entertainment, and one thing Richard Allen could do was tell a story. In fact James Moffatt, who wrote under more aliases than even he could remember, wrote over 400 books during his career, and was widely regarded as the king of pulp fiction both in the U.K. and in his native Canada.

Another criticism is that the books promoted racism. True, a lot of the characters are racist, but nobody accuses Agatha Christie is creating a generation of mass murderers do they? Back in the 1970s, they were the best books a teenager's money could buy. Reading about Joe having sex every other chapter, and him beating someone up in between, was the stuff skinhead dreams were made of. When you're 13 pushing 21, you couldn't have asked for more. Richard Allen also deserves credit for documenting the changing faces of British youth cults throughout the Seventies, even if the books are a little short of detail in the style and music departments.

James Moffatt died of cancer at the end of 1993, but will always be remembered for his Richard Allen series of novels by skinheads the world over.

The 18 books by Richard Allen are *Skinhead*, *Demo*, *Suedehead*, *Bootboys*, *Skinhead Escapes*, *Skinhead Girls*, *Trouble For Skinhead*, *Teeny Bopper Idol*, *Glam*, *Smoothies*, *Sorts*, *Top Gear Skin*, *Skinhead Farewell*, *Dragon Skins*, *Terrace Terrors*, *Knuckle Girls*, *Punk Rock* and *Mod Rule*.

became clear that a lot of older skinheads hadn't totally abandoned the cult to their younger brothers and sisters.

The tabloid newspapers had successfully defined skinhead as little more than a brainless, vicious thug. A few were indeed just that and a lot more did their best to live up to the tag, but it really did nobody any favours. Being picked up by the police before you even get to the football ground isn't quite as funny third time around, and neither is getting a knock-back from every half-decent bird in town. Playing the fool's one thing, but being condemned to life's scrapheap of folk devils is an entirely different kettle of fish.

Large numbers of skinheads began to grow their hair just that little bit longer so that they weren't instantly recognised as a member of the bovver brigade.

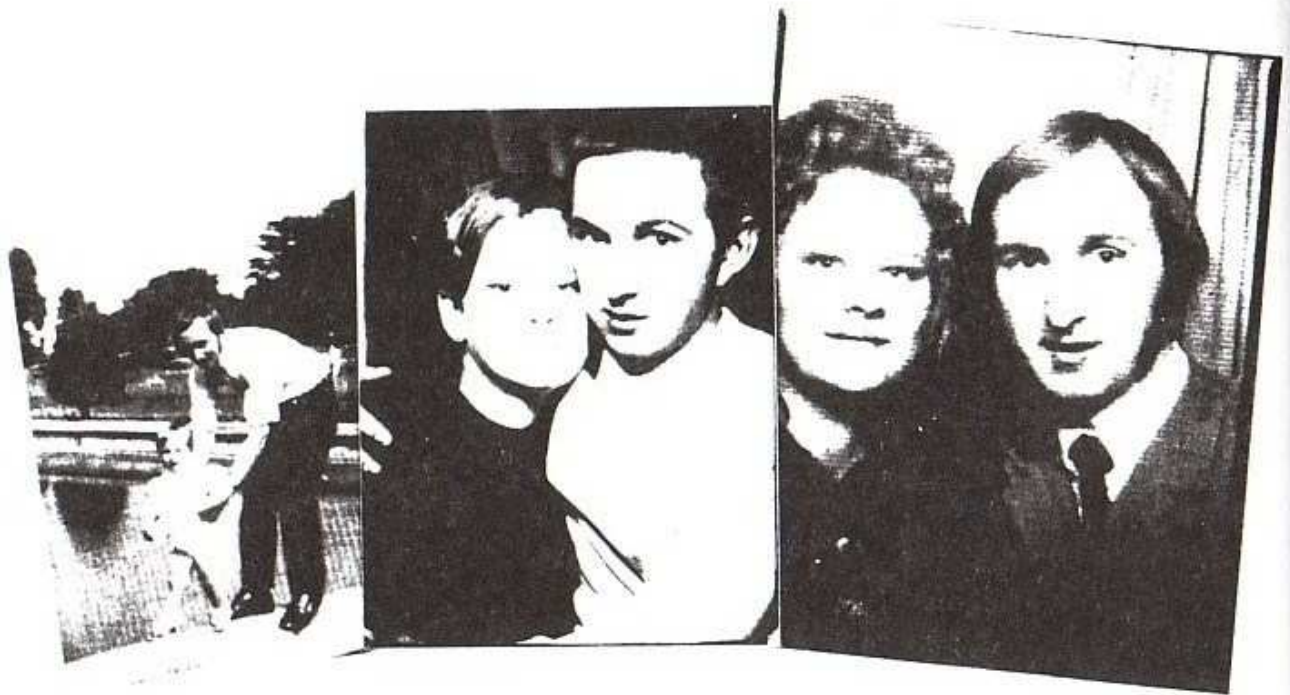
Suits and shoes which were once almost exclusively evening wear started to become standard issue for any time of day. The skinhead look never disappeared totally, but there was no disputing who the new king of the castle was. A leaner, wiser animal by the name of suedehead.

Suedeheads were very much a product of the big towns and cities and were often streets ahead of their country cousins in the style game. A minority of skinheads had always dressed in what became to be seen as a suedehead way, but it wasn't until the end of 1969 that suedeheads began to take on a cult identity of their own, particularly in London and the south.

The name suedehead came from the grown out crop which takes on a suede appearance. The hair was grown long enough for a comb to do it some good, but still in the short, smart tradition of the skinhead. On suedehead girls the hair was grown longer too. Very few skinhead girls ever had crops as such, although some did go to a gents' barbers to get their hair just right and to save on the expense of a ladies' hairdresser. Many kept their hair long and normal, and this was continued through suedehead and beyond. Feathercuts and Jean Shrimpton's were allowed to grow longer and more fuller, and on the right girl the effect was nothing short of stunning.

Clothes for both sexes generally became smarter and a little more daring. Even mod-like. A casually dressed suede might go for loafers, Levi's





Above: Mark Kelson who followed the cult from mod, through skinhead, suedehead and on to smoothie.

sta-press, a Fred shirt and a lightweight Harrington jacket. For a big night out, no expense would be spared. On went the gleaming brogues, a suit, a Bennie and a crombie overcoat.

Suits remained a cult status symbol, but true to the new look, flashier material was often used. Most skinhead suits were in dull shades of mohair and tonic, or at least substitute mohair and tonic as few could afford the real thing. Suedeheads tended to go for lighter shades of brown and blue, and even petrol blue and fairly loud two tone tonic combinations. You could also now get away with patterned suits and Prince Of Wales checks and dogstooth soon became all the rage. Belts replaced braces and another suede fave was a blazer with your football club's crest on it. Very F.A. Cup final.

Some suedeheads even took the virtual city gent look a step further by carrying an umbrella and wearing a bowler hat. Now, everyone knows that real men don't need umbrellas, but it wasn't as pretentious as might first appear. Granted, strutting along with umbrella to hand was a million miles away from the hard bastard of a docker look perfected by skinheads just a few months before, but they weren't all for show. Quite a few had sharpened metal points to aid and abet a few rounds of fisticuffs. What's more, when it did rain it saved your crombie getting wet - a distinct advantage if you have ever had the misfortune to smell a soaking wet crombie!

A crombie was the ideal coat to accompany a smart suit, and along with the humbler Harrington, was a must for any self-respecting suedehead's wardrobe. Of course, very few suedes could afford a genuine Abercrombie coat, but many did go for a tailor made Chesterfield look-a-like and as long as

your fake looked smart enough, nobody really cared. The good old sheepskin could still turn heads too and never really went out of fashion.

Like sheepies, crombies had been worn in skinhead circles as early as '68, but they really went big time during 1970. There was even a sub-cult known as crombie boys who wore all the right gear, be it skinhead or suede, but had collar and shoulder length hair. It was a popular look in some areas, and particularly in North Kent. White skinhead reggae star, Judge Dread, had flowing locks when he sang about skinheads, as did many of his followers who were skinhead in every way except for the crop.

Soon even the suedeheads were letting their hair grow and by about the Spring of 1971 large numbers had moved on to become smoothies. Dates are necessarily vague because styles caught on at different rates in different places. Some places had smoothies as early as the Summer of 1970 while



Above: Bootboys from Birmingham, 1971.

others never really got past the boots and braces phase. Others still were home to a mixture of skins, suedes, smooths and bootboys at the same time. Smooths took their name from their hairstyle, which was short on top and down to the collar at the back and sides. A poor man's Rod Stewart as someone once put it. They were also called smoothies because of their preference for very plain shoes which were neither capped or studded. Either that or they wore ugly basketweave patterned shoes called Norwegians (no doubt because they'd score no points in any Eurovision Shoe Contest).

Smoothies dressed a lot more casually than their suedehead counterparts, opting for round collared shirts, cords, Rupert The Bear check trousers, jumpers and sleeveless jumpers called tank tops which usually came in hideous combinations of colours. At night though, tonic suits and crombies were still widely worn.

For the first time, the girls had a name of their own. Smoothie girls were called sorts. Skinhead had initially been a very male-orientated cult, but as it

progressed, the skinhead girls had developed their own unique style. This continued through suedehead and by '71 they were striking out on their own as sorts. Again the hair was longer, but smartness was still a top priority with Trevira two piece suits, Brutus shirts, patterned tights and those clumpy nurses' shoes as fairly standard wear.

To a lot of people, smoothies appeared very ordinary with no obvious uniform or identity. Like the latter day casual cult, they went largely unnoticed by anyone above street level. Virtually all links with their skinhead forefathers had disappeared, despite the fact that most smooths had been skinheads just a couple of years earlier. The actual cult never achieved the popularity of skinheads or even suedeheads and was very short-lived. By the end of the year they had all but vanished.

The smooths did however have a non-identical twin who was to survive well into the Seventies. Football violence reached unprecedented levels of violence during the 1970-71 and 1971-72 seasons, and that's when things turned full circle and the second coming of the bootboy arrived.

Whereas smoothies tended to adopt aspects of the skinhead and suedehead's club style, bootboys represented terrace fashion. Suedes and smooths were also primarily southern cults, although aspects of their clothing spread far and wide and that's particularly true of the crombie. Bootboys on the other hand could be found all over the British Isles and were a natural progression from skinhead for many.

Music and fashion played a secondary role in a bootboys life, as everything went back to aggro and battles over territory, whether it was a village, a town, a football end or a pub at stake. Soul and reggae were still popular with some, but others followed the charts or whatever was on offer in their area. The cult was more about gang life than anything else.

Bootboy gangs were usually called mobs, with younger kids forming stars around the older hardcore element. So you'd have the Holmesdale Mob and maybe a Holmesdale Star too. A bit like the so-called under-five soccer hooligans of today. What's more, there were even bootgirls who formed mobs and often made quite a name for themselves.

Most bootboys had been skinheads, although a lot had missed out the suedehead and smooth phases. As such they were often in their late teens and early twenties and saw themselves as a cut above skinheads. Older and wiser. In fact any skinhead firms which survived into the Seventies were usually written off by bootboys as backward hasbeens. The story went that skinheads looking to turn over a nearby town would get all tooled up and wonder what bus to catch, while bootboys would organise a fleet of vans and cars to take them there and back in style.

Football was still the highlight of every bootboy's week. White butcher's coats, often with the team's name stencilled on the back and blood splattered over it for the effect, represented the height of terrace style at the time. Legend has it that Chelsea's Shed started the craze, but soon it became a popular look for nutters at grounds all over England. Then there were the

SLADE

"Skins are just down to earth kids, who at least work for a living. We wear boots and braces because we like wearing them."
Noddy Holder, Slade.

When it comes to naming the first skinhead band, Wolverhampton's favourite sons Slade top most people's lists. Soul and reggae were where it was at musically, but virtually all of the artists were black Americans or Jamaicans who shared little in common with their skinhead following beyond a love of good music.

Most white musicians were into making right on music for hippies, and the only contact they had with skinheads was when they were on the receiving end of a doing. Slade on the other hand were young, white working class kids and were the first band to dress in working class fashion. Take a look at their debut album *Play It Loud* (Polydor) and there they are as bold as brass, wearing boots and braces.

Sorry to burst any bubbles, but Slade weren't skinheads who formed a band and made a name for themselves though. In fact when the skinhead cult first gained national attention in 1969, Slade weren't even in the country. They were playing a four month residency in The Bahamas as a reggae and soul backing band. What's more, by the end of it they hated both styles of music!

When ex-Animals Chas Chandler first saw Slade at London's Rasputin Club, they were little more than a covers band. They had just had some publicity photos taken too, and they all had long hair. Not that anyone got the chance to see them, because within months of Chandler becoming their manager, Slade had become skinheads.

At first the band didn't want to go along with it, but Chas Chandler persuaded them that the skinheads were crying out for a band they could identify with, and it could be their passport to the big time. The band had actually been together since 1966 and hadn't got very far, so with nothing to lose, they became overnight converts to the skinhead cause. Not that it helped them really because their first hit didn't come until 1971 and the release of *Get Down And Get With It*, a Little Richard cover, but in terms of publicity the boys couldn't have asked for more.

As a skinhead band, Slade found promoters wary to book them, and by the time they reached the charts they had already distanced themselves from the skinhead cult and were on their way to becoming the long haired louts of glam we know and love.

The rest is history, with Slade doing their best to murder the English language courtesy of titles like *Skweeze Me Pleeze Me* and *Mama Weer All Crazee Now*, and going on to have over 25 hit singles and ten top forty albums.

The next time Slade's name was associated with skinheads was when they played at the 1978 Great British Music Festival, where skinhead-mod battles during The Jam's set ended in a stabbing incident.





Above: The tattered remains of a newspaper cutting on smoothies. Very little was ever written about these skinhead offspring, and it's all the more interesting because of its attention to detail. The text said that the smoothy was 17 year old Ian Moore from North London. He's wearing a made to measure crombie (£16) and a trilby (£6.30), Levi's, a Ben and Oxfords. The girl, a model, has a petrol blue/gold Trevira suit which cost £11.50, her shirt £3.30, tights a quid and her shoes £4.99. A lot of the stuff came from High Street stores like Burton and Top Shop.

small armies of droogs who turned up in white boiler suits, straight out of *A Clockwork Orange* for a bit of the old ultra-violence.

Skinhead turned journalist Chris Lightbown, who is still writing for *The Sunday Times*, produced a guide to football grounds in 1972. Top names in the world of football aggro were Manchester United, Manchester City, West Ham, Spurs and Stoke City. Ipswich Town were famed for the amount of females who went to their games and little else. Few weapons were used that year, although there had been several weapon crazes in seasons just gone by. What's more, although a few northern teams still had skinheads, there was no real hooligan uniform at the time. Chris argued that falling attendances were more to do with the standard of play than hooliganism, and that ordinary fans could attend most games without getting involved in any trouble. Chris also pointed out that the clubs were taking their fans for granted, and over 20 years later, that situation is worse rather than better.

The media really hyped up the hooliganism and a lot of games ended in riots particularly if Man Utd's Red Army was involved. The television news cameras always seemed to be in tow and everyone played up for them. Saturday evening's news was always full of pictures of fans climbing on to the roofs of stands to bombard the police with missiles.

It was still very much rival end against end though, and your average football fan was as safe as ever from getting a kicking just as long as he minded his own business and didn't want involved in the bover. Even football specials

weren't wrecked as often as they once were much to British Rail's relief, although one was hi-jacked!

Apart from the boots and the aggro, the terrace bootboys had little in common with the skinheads who had reigned in previous seasons. By 1972, the last traces of skinhead style were largely confined to northern outposts where the cult survived as late as 1974. Obviously, the cult never died completely, but it was really left to individuals to carry the flag rather than mobs and crews.

High Street shops had new styles on the racks, ready to attract the next generation of mugs trying to find their feet in the difficult world of the teenager. Reggae had lost its way for a lot of white kids as it began to focus its talents in the direction of Jah, Rastafarianism and all things African. Glam was the latest craze, with a lot of hooligans getting into yobbo outfits like Slade and Mott The Hoople. Even soul had been overshadowed by funk and disco as John Travolta somehow became a household name.

Still, something as good as skinhead was never going to be forgotten and when Judge Dread released his classic *Bring Back The Skins* on his *Last Of The Skinheads* album (Cactus), little could he have known that just a few years down the road his dream would come true.

"I can always remember going to fun fairs with my big brother and they always played ska music like Live Injection and Monkey Spanner. Not like the crap today. It was the same at the football when the chants were words to pop songs of the time. What ever happened to all those great songs?"

Martyn Sears, Sittingbourne skin.

REAL HORRORSHOW!

Few films have ever caused as much controversy as Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*. Based on Anthony Burgess' classic book of the same name, it was a tale of ultra-violence and the old in out, but beyond that was a story about the freedom of choice. Ironically, the censors couldn't see it, and so before the film even made it to the big screen the old editing scissors had been in action.

A Clockwork Orange was eventually released in 1971, hot on the heels of *Straw Dogs*, another film that had the nation's moral guardians jumping up and down. Some local councils banned it and so much fuss was made in the media, that Kubrick withdrew the film from general release after a run of 61 weeks. Rumour had it that he had done so because of death threats, but nearer the truth was the fact that he had refused requests for further cuts to be made.

The film held a special fascination for skinhead types at the time, and many who did get to see it saw it not once, but half a dozen times. Meanwhile, the media were claiming that the film was encouraging trouble, with every act of violence being labelled a "clockwork crime".

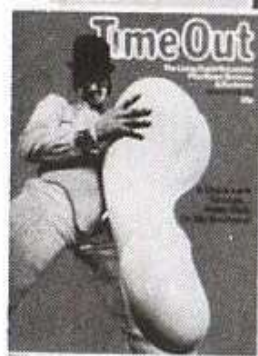
Kubrick had filmed *A Clockwork Orange* on London's notorious Thamesmead Estate. His film version remained faithful to the book, with the only major change being an older girl replacing the ten year old weepy young devotchkais in a rape scene. Devotchkais was just one of the words used by the hoodlums in the film from a language called nadsat, which was part Cockney and part Russian. At first, it's a bit confusing, but you soon get the hang of it. Also, Kubrick had only read the American version of the book which is actually a chapter shorter than the English one. The main character is one Alex Delarge, the leader of a gang of droogs. He ends up inside for a string of crimes, but is released on the condition that he undergoes a new

Being the adventures of a young man whose principal interests are rape, ultra-violence and Beethoven.

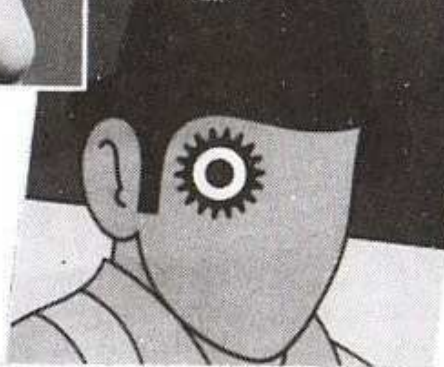


STANLEY KUBRICK'S

CLOCKWORK ORANGE



TimeOut
ANTHONY BURGESS
A CLOCKWORK ORANGE



cure for criminals. This involves brainwashing drugs that make him feel sick if he so much as thinks about violence and sex. His behaviour is greatly improved, but some liberals believe Alex is being denied the freedom of choice, and the story continues with Alex being used as a political pawn.

Alex and his pals were dressed in the height of fashion, which Kubrik interpreted as a cocktail of city gent smartness and the bootboy gear of the day. In turn, the film influenced street style, and gave rise to a tiny offshoot of the skinhead cult based closely on Alex and his droogs. They would go on parade at football matches in white boiler suits, black boots and bowler hats, and after the game go into action in true horrorshow style.

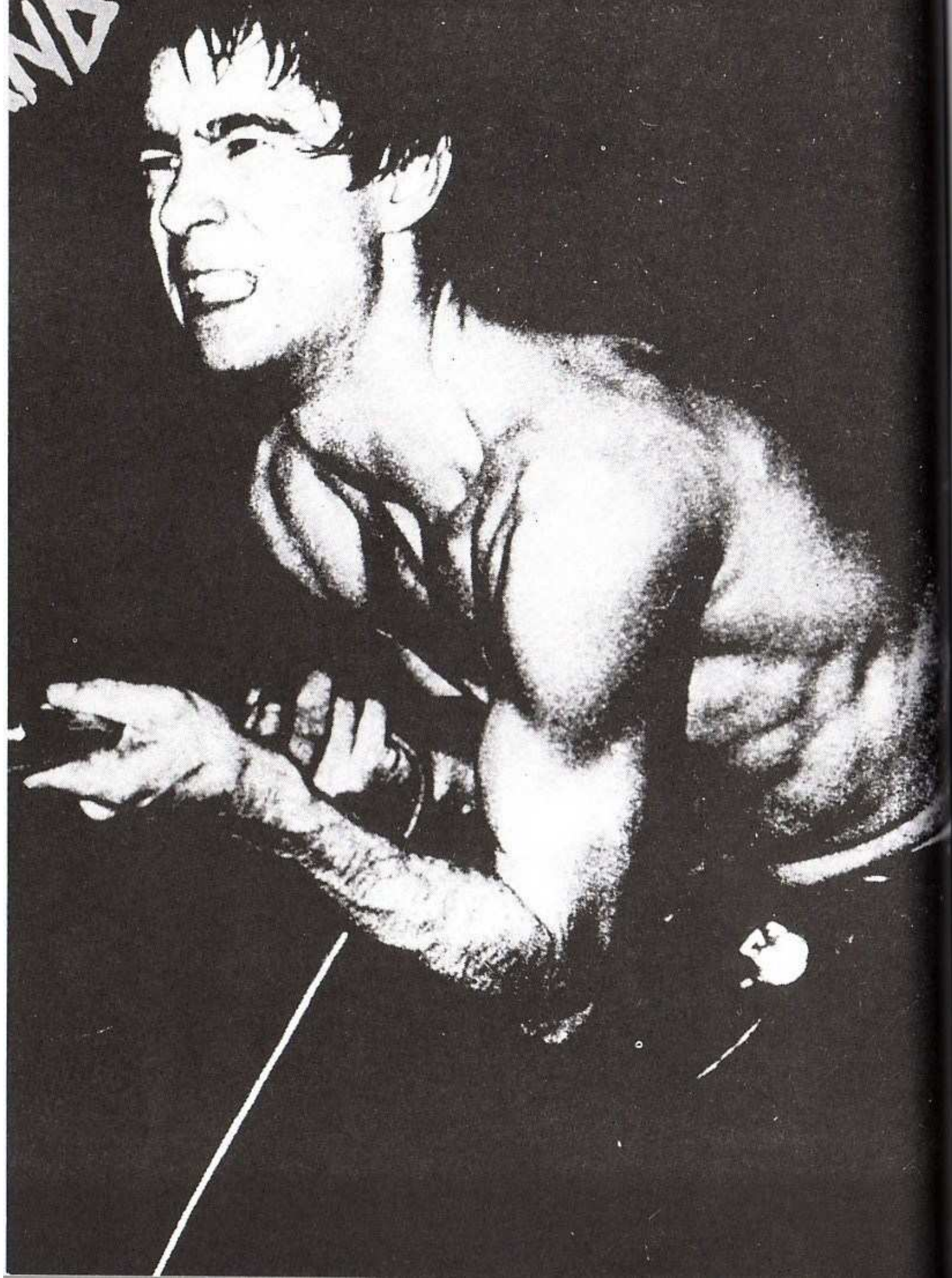
The film's withdrawal in 1972 just added to its infamy, and memories of *A Clockwork Orange* lingered on until the video age came upon us. Then the film reappeared on pirate tapes and so began the copying of a copy of a copy, until today when few skinheads in Britain are without a copy. Not many have crystal clear versions, but quite a few are only dodgy in parts and still very watchable. So I'm told anyway. The film is widely available abroad though - in Paris it is screened daily - so why it remains unseen in the U.K. is becoming beyond a joke. A number of cinemas have shown it, including under false names to avoid court action. In 1986, 30 bowler-hatted skinheads rioted during the showing of *A Mechanical Fruit*, forcing the cinema to cut the week's bill to a one night only affair.

Still, *A Clockwork Orange* remains the most popular of underground films, and it has influenced more than its fair share of skinhead bands. The Violators, Blitz, The Clockwork Soldiers and others have all used the clockie theme to good affect. The Upstart's *Teenage Warning* single featured an orange with a key in it on its sleeve, The Last Resort recorded *Horrorshow* as The Warriors, California's Durango 95 take their name from the car driven by the droogs, and Darlington's Major Accident positively thrive on all things clockwork.

Top of the clockwork band tree though are The Adicts. They dress the part, right down to singer Monkey's painted face, and play punk versions of the classical music that Alex gets off on. They even called one of their album's *Smart Alex*.



NO



CHAPTER THREE

ANGELS WITH DIRTY FACES

"Betrayed? Yeah, course I feel betrayed. It's like everything's gone back to what it was like in '74 and '75. But I honestly think it's started again in the East End. The feeling's coming back again."

Micky Geggus, Cockney Rejects, 1979.

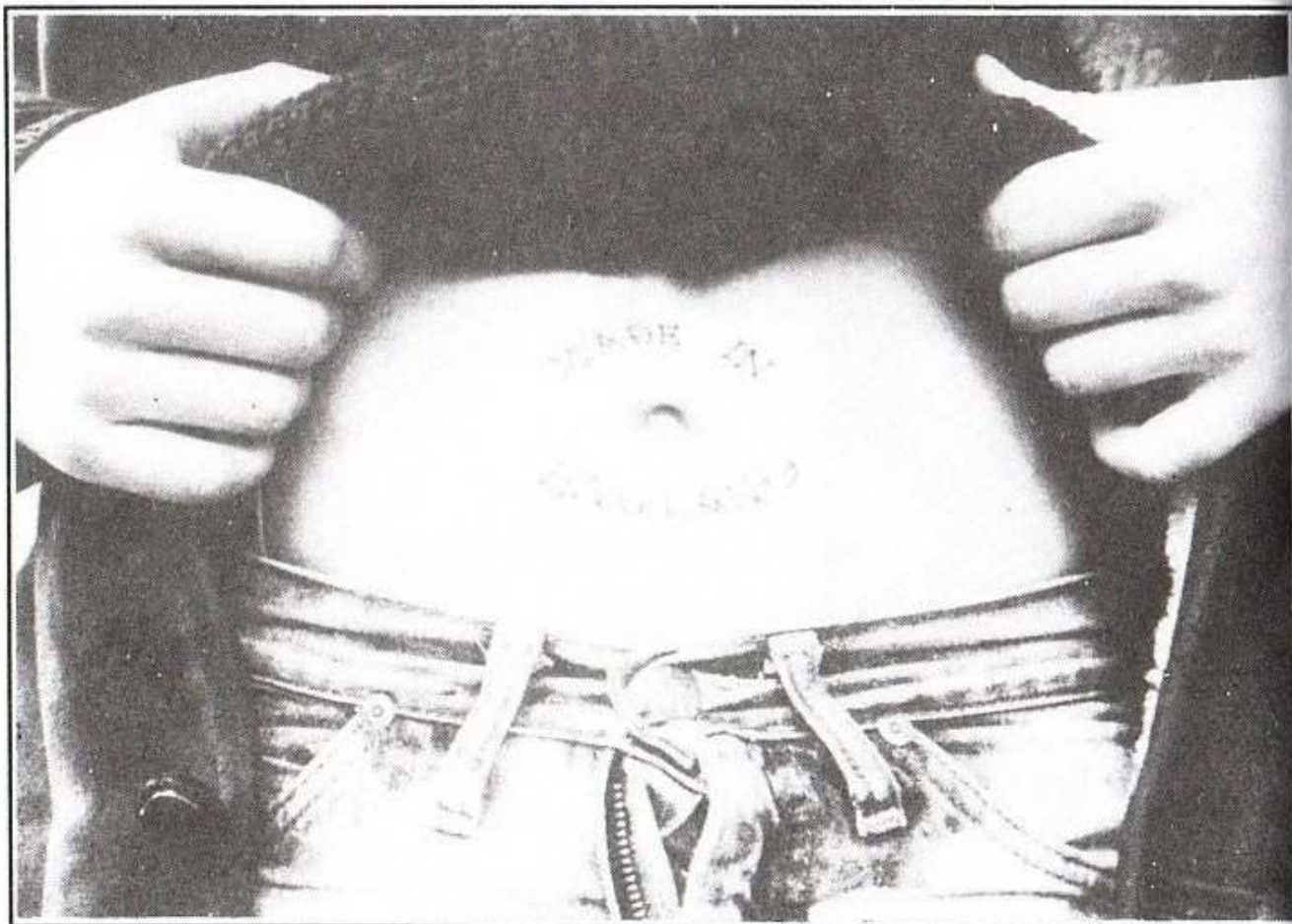
When punk first began its crusade to turn the world day-glo back in 1976, it must have been on a Saturday or a Sunday. That much is for definite because punk was never any spontaneous street rebellion made good, as the myths would have it. More like a weekend exercise in shock, courtesy of the oh so trendy fashion and art colleges. And all this a million miles away from the snotty nosed kids in their snorkel coats, too busy booting a ball around a sprawling council estate to lead the charge of the punk brigade.

Punk was simply the greatest rock 'n' roll swindle of them all. True, bands like The Sex Pistols and The Clash did at least give the stagnant music industry a much needed kick in the balls, by serving up a refreshing alternative to tiresome bubblegum pop and dinosaur rock. And anyone who gets Mary Whitehouse's knickers in a twist gets my vote, but Christ, it didn't take much did it? A couple of swear words, during an otherwise tame Bill Grundy interview for London Weekend Television's *Today* programme, doesn't exactly constitute a major breakdown in law and order. Walk into any primary school playground and you'll hear worse, but it was enough to put The Pistols on the cover of every newspaper and to send *Anarchy In The UK* racing into the national charts. Not bad for a band put together by small-time entrepreneur, Malcolm McLaren, to gatecrash art school gigs and promote his expensive King's Road clothes shop, Sex.

**WOKING
CENTRE HALLS**
Thursday, January 19th

**SHAM
69**

**+ MENACE
+ THE SPEEDOMETERS
+ MASTERSWITCH**
8 p.m. - 12
Tickets £1.25, at the door



It's not so surprising then that punk quickly became just another part of the established order it pretended so hard to despise. When it became High Street fashion with High Street price tags, it also became the preserve of those who could afford it rather than those who could feel it. Buying a pair of ready made bondage trousers for thirty quid down the King's Road could hardly be chalked up as one in the eye for the system. And neither could paying a fiver for a ripped bin liner. I mean, I was nearly a punk once, but the sew-on anarchy patch I sent off for never arrived.

By 1978 the writing was on the wall. PUNK IS DEAD in massive letters, another bastardised feather in the music industry's cap. It became more about gobbing at bands than rebelling against society. In fact it wasn't even called punk anymore. New wave was the latest buzzword doing the rounds. The inspirational punk fanzine, *Sniffin' Glue*, xeroxed its final issue, The Roxy closed its doors for the last time, The Roundhouse held a hippy love-in, and Johnny Rotten summed it all up at the Pistols' farewell gig at Winterland, San Francisco, by asking the audience, "Ever had the feeling you've been had?". Even bands like The Stranglers, who'd given us the punk anthem, *No More Heroes*, had ditched the intimacy of the small clubs to play at the Ally Pally and other cock rock-style venues where they could pack in 6,000 lemmings with wallets.

That would have been the end of that if it hadn't left thousands of kids out in the cold. A fortnightly dole cheque was never going to be a passport into a world of designer tears, but that didn't matter because a handful of bands

were still to be found playing punk like they lived it. None of your bawling about an-er-ky and playing on the back of a lorry while Britain burns, just as long as there's a colour TV back in the hotel room and plenty of hot water for a bath. This was punk at its most honest and refreshing, coming straight from the hearts of bands like Sham 69, Cock Sparrer, Manchester's Slaughter And The Dogs, Menace from London and Skrewdriver.

Cock Sparrer will go down in history as the best street band of all time. Bar none. And it's nothing short of criminal that the band were never given the mainstream success they so richly deserved. Anyone reading this who hasn't caught up with classics like *Argy Bargy*, *Working*, *England Belongs To Me*, *The Sun Says*, *Riot Squad* and countless other street anthems just hasn't lived.

Sparrer had been going since '74 and were originally called Cock Sparrow. They were a punk band before the label was invented, and had been gigging a full year before The Sex Pistols even got together. Ironically, this worked against them with record labels unwilling to sign them because they weren't "new", but support slots with Motorhead and The Small Faces eventually led to a record deal with Decca and the release of the single *Runnin' Riot*.

Bands like Sparrer and Menace were usually tucked away at the bottom of the bill, and would normally have gone the way of most support bands. Nowhere. But this merry lot weren't that easy to ignore. They came at you with all the subtlety of a baseball bat, catching you full on in the face. And by the end of '77, Jimmy Pursey and Co. had come of age and were filling clubs in their own right, playing punk rock as it should have been from day one. Street music for street kids.

The coming of street punk also heralded the return of the skinhead. However, this was no carbon copy revival and at times had little in common with the class of '69 much beyond the name. In fact most of the new breed of skinheads started out as little more than bald punks, who had taken shock value two steps further in a bid to distance themselves from the middle class mess punk had become.

There were still skinheads who believed in the old ways, but for many, simply reviving the old skinhead look, lock, stock and barrel, just wasn't on the cards.



Above: Stevenage Skins, 1978.

A lot of water had passed under the bridge and the new breed reflected the changing times that they lived in. Instead of a number three or a number two, a dark shadow and even baldness became the norm. Boots were worn just as before, but were now often fully exposed, with the trouser leg just about touching the top of the boot. What's more, boots with 14 holes right up to 22 holes became popular, and in some cases nearly touched the knee caps. By the time you'd laced them up, it couldn't have been worth going out.

And instead of sticking to the standard tattoo on the arm, facial tattoos somehow invaded the cult. Now, tattoos are obviously a matter of personal choice, but suffice to say that the majority of the kids walking about with **MADE IN BRITAIN** or the like across their foreheads were later to regret it. What made it worse though was that a lot of professional tattooists won't do



Above: Jimmy Pursey.

work on people's faces, and so the poorer examples were done by second-rate backstreet merchants. On a bad day things could get even worse, especially if you let a drunken mate have a go with a needle and a bottle of Indian ink. Ouch. And with tattooing you don't get a second chance if you misspell a word or haven't worked out the spacing correctly, and end up having to squeeze a word in at the end. Walking about with ripped jeans, a glue-stained t-shirt and **I AM BRITTISCH** across your forehead did the skinhead cult no favours whatsoever and only served to add dubious credence to the standard tabloid shock horror stories. In fact some of the characters who claimed to be skinheads would have been better off getting their address tattooed across their ugly mugs just in case they forgot where they lived. Bald punks, boneheads, call them what you like. They had sweet F.A. to do with the spirit of '69, which was always about dressing hard, dressing

smart.

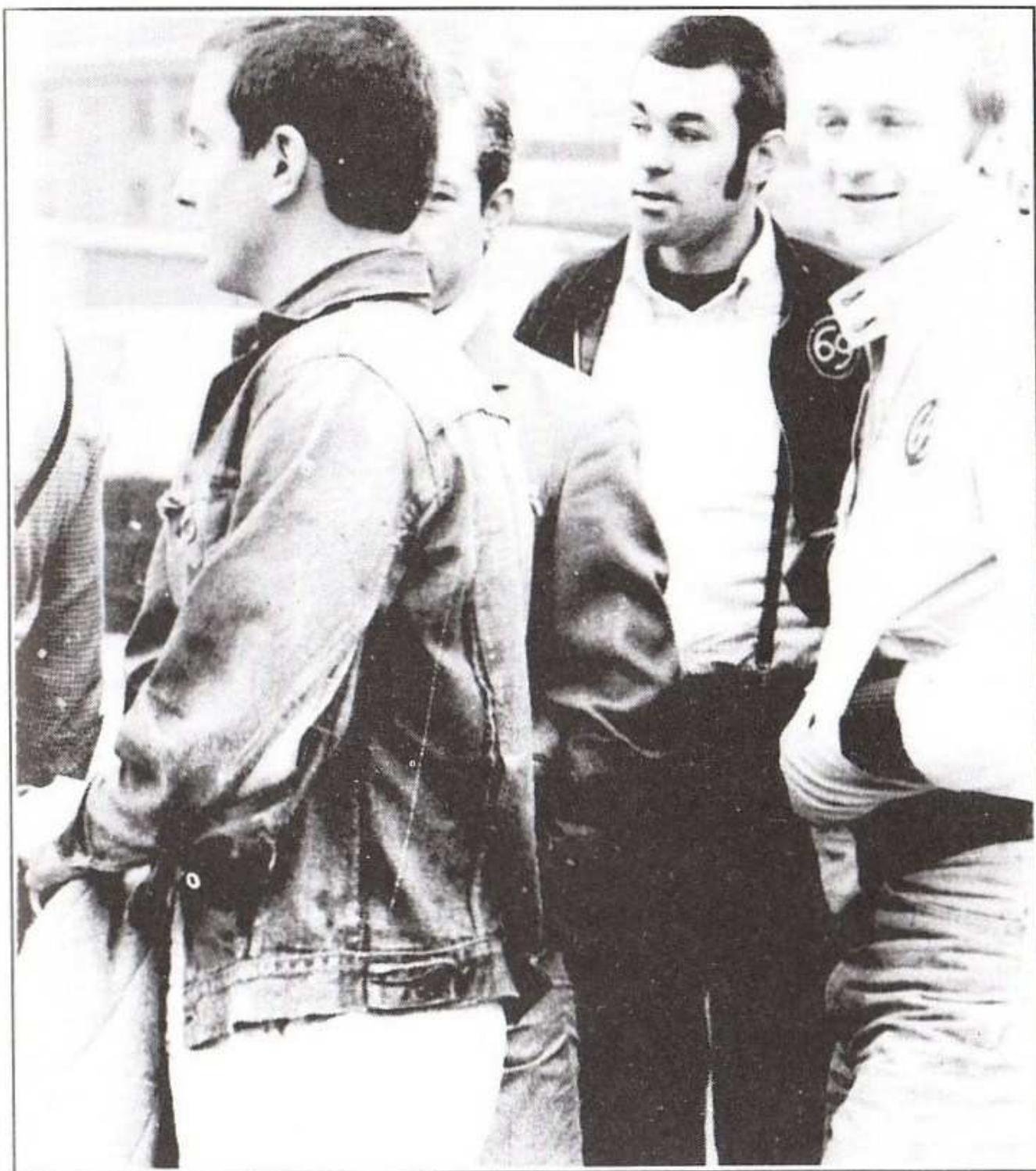
The few skinheads who had survived the barren years of glam, disco and rock would have nothing to do with them. The cult had never totally disappeared, but even in a big city like London, to see a skinhead you didn't know in '75 was about as likely as coming up on the pools, and you'd go out of your way to say hello and have a chat over a pint or three. The same courtesy was never extended to punk-influenced skinheads. If one wandered into a traditional skinhead pub they'd be shown the door pronto. And usually head first. The original skinheads had far too much pride in the skinhead cult to

see a spotty kid use and abuse it to scare old grannies and tap ten pence pieces from bemused passers-by.

Sham 69's Jimmy Pursey once said that if punk had been around in 1969, the skinheads would have loved it, but it's more likely that they would have written it off as greaser or hippy music. Certainly anyone with a leather jacket and a mohican would have been booted all over Margate as a bit of bank holiday skinhead entertainment.

Similarly, nothing upset a well-turned out ted more than some scruffy urchin of a punk, strolling along in a torn drape jacket with drainpipes held together by zips. Not surprisingly, both were McLaren specials because he had a load

Below: Sham Skins, London, 1978.



of teddy boy gear left over from when Sex was called Let It Rock and catered for Britain's original teenage rebels.

During the summer of 1977, when battles between teds and punks were a regular weekend tourist attraction along the King's Road, the original skinheads who believed in the old ways, often fought alongside the teds, while the new breed sided with the punks. Pride and tradition versus sneering disrespect for anything and everything. The trouble usually amounted to no more than a lot of name calling and the odd scuffle - the Old Bill saw to that - but the tabloids and even some of the music 'papers hyped it up to Third World War proportions.

One band who probably wished they'd stayed at home that summer was the then Blackpool punk outfit, Skrewdriver. It was their first trip to the Big



Above: Cock Sparrer

Smoke and as they were loading the van after a gig at The Roxy, they were attacked by a gang of teds. Grinton the drummer came off worst, losing a few teeth and needing 23 stitches thanks to a mike stand in the mouth. The following day, the band's van with all their equipment in it was stolen, leaving Ian and the boys with 82p between them and no transport home. No wonder they dedicated their second single, *Anti-Social*, to the teds.

As the months ticked by and punk ventured further and further into mainstream acceptability, the new generation of skinheads began to distance themselves from punk and eventually claimed their own identity. The old styles, which never disappeared completely, made a strong come back, and crombies, Ben Shermans, sta-press and brogues mixed freely with boots and bleaches. The look of '69 with a '77 accent. And most began to take a lot more pride in their appearance, preferring smartness to punk's contrived scruffiness. Even skinhead reggae was rediscovered and given the DJ treatment between bands.

The street punk bands became the focus of attention for the new generation of skinheads. By the start of 1978 they had been joined by disillusioned punks who began to sport a crop and boots to show their rejection of plastic punk and their allegiance to bands like Sham. Even so, skinheads were usually in the minority at gigs, with the majority of the punters still being punks and herberts; street corner kids who followed the music, but didn't fit neatly into either the punk or skinhead pigeon-hole. Only in London, and only at certain gigs, did skinheads come close to winning the numbers game, and then only because that was where the cult had first been given its latest lease of life.

None of the leading street bands were actually skinheads themselves. Cock Sparrer often came on stage wearing boots, button-downs and sta-press, but didn't have the crops to go with them. Similarly, Jimmy Pursey had been a skinhead before starting Sham 69, but if the band had suddenly turned up at a gig dressed as skinheads everyone would have known it was just a pose. And anyway, Sham were never purely a skinhead band. They wanted to reach out to ordinary kids everywhere, croptops or not. Only Skrewdriver abandoned their punk gear and flowing locks in favour of skinhead dress, and probably did most to actively court the skinhead rank and file.

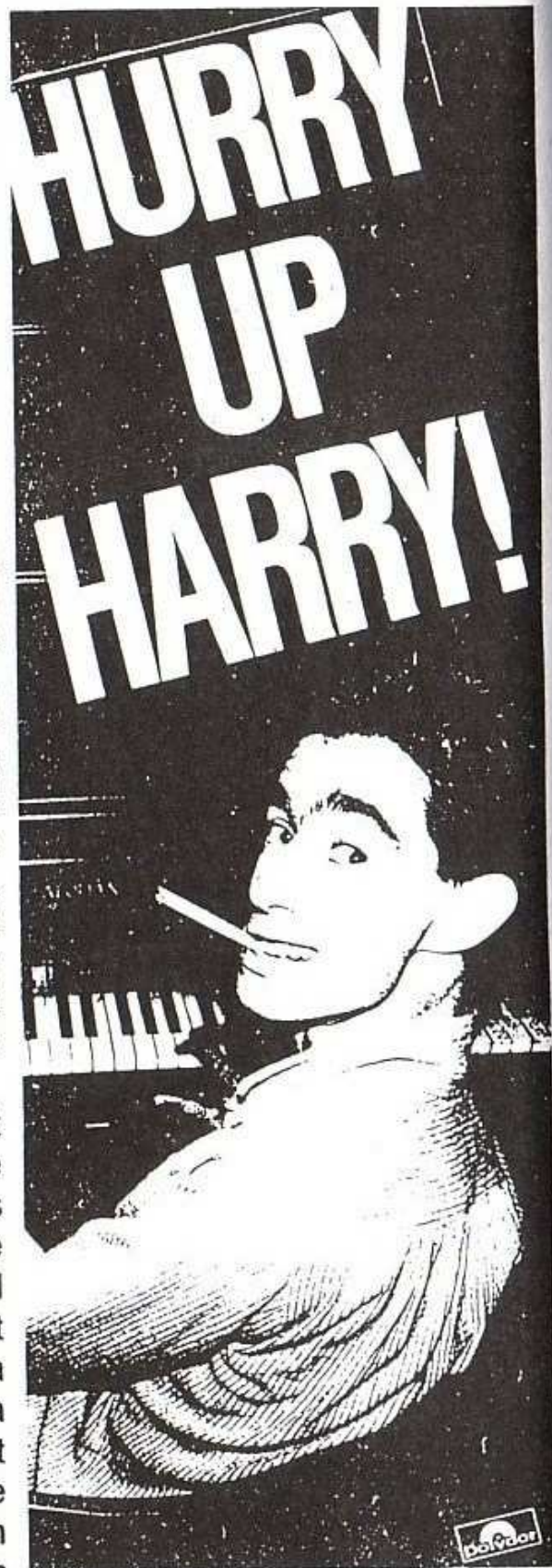
That said, the skinheads adopted the street punk bands as their own, and none more so than Hershams' favourite sons, Sham 69. Trying to confine a band like Sham to the pages of this book is like getting Jimmy Pursey to shut up. Both were so much larger than life that it just can't be done with any great success. Lyrics to songs like *Borstal Breakout* and *If The Kids Are United* might look simple and naive on paper, but they weren't being entered into a sixth form poetry competition anyway. And it's only when played live that they genuinely come into their own and sound as sharp as any Stanley blade. The pride and passion with which Jimmy belted out his three minute masterpieces, and the way every word was unanimously echoed by the crowd, is what it was all about. And going to a Sham gig was about being a part of something, a part of Sham 69, a part of probably the best band ever to tell it as it was on the streets. And if you can't understand the pride a kid felt by having SHAM ARMY plastered across the back of his Harrington, then unlucky my son. Because you just haven't lived. Not at street level anyway. Nothing summed up Sham 69 more than when they played the opening of the Vortex punk club on London's Hanway Street in October, '77. Jimmy and the boys took to the roof to belt out crowd pleasers like *George Davis Is Innocent* (The forerunner to Sham finding the cockney kids, Glasgow kids and even themselves innocent) and *What Have We Got?*, much to the delight of the skins and punks down in the street and the office workers hanging out of nearby windows. Unfortunately the roof Sham chose to occupy didn't belong to the Vortex Club, and its true owners and the boys in blue weren't so taken by the band. In the end poor old Jimmy was nicked for using threatening behaviour and so began Sham's knack for getting gigs cut short. Still, it couldn't have hurt the sales of the band's debut single, *I Don't Wanna*, which

was released on the Small Wonder label that very day.

Sham, whose name came from graffiti on a wall that had originally read HERSHAM 69, began life with the customary rehearsals before playing their first gig in November 1976 at Walton's Saturday morning flicks. Then followed a year of support slots as they built a reputation as one of the hottest live acts doing the rounds, mainly due to the efforts of front man Pursey. Things really started to move in June of the following year though, when Jimmy sacked most of the band for not believing in what they were doing, and brought in Dave Parsons on guitar, Mark Cain on drums and a few months later, Dave Treganna on bass as replacement for Albie Slider who became the band's road manager. He could get away with it simply because Jimmy Pursey was Sham 69. That's not to dismiss the others, although they'd be the first to admit that they were never in the running for any musician of the year awards. It's just that without the little man with the big mouth there would have been no Sham 69.

Jimmy's mouth was not only his biggest asset, it was also his biggest problem. He would put it into gear, open it and let his heart rumble. What made it worse, he often talked about as much sense as Bill and Ben, the notorious flowerpot men. It wasn't his fault though. He didn't get a decent school education, let alone a degree in bloody philosophy, and yet everyone seemed to think he had the answers to questions that politicians on thirty grand a year can only make excuses

for. Of course Jimmy never was short of an answer, but whether it actually fitted the question seemed to be down to pure chance. It was quite funny really. Someone would ask him a question and then hang on his every word for the next five minutes while our Jimmy talked complete bullshit. The occasional pause for thought might have helped, but then again why bother when you've got a bren gun for a mouth?





Above: Sham 69 at the Reading Festival, 1978. Jimmy left the stage in tears when Sham fans rioted.

When he was up on stage it was a totally different story. The bloke was a natural. Song after song about what life was like at the bottom of the pile, and all complete with a terrace-style chorus so that the Sham Army could add vent to Jimmy's fury. *Tell Us The Truth, Hurry Up Harry, I Don't Wanna, The Cockney Kids Are Innocent*. Every one a winner and that's just the tip of the Sham iceberg. When he shouted, "What Have We Got?", Jimmy's little angels with dirty faces didn't beat about the bush. "Fuck all!", came the deafening reply.

What's more, there was little doubt that the bloke's heart was in the right place. Nobody could fault him in that department, except to say that he put far too much trust in his fellow man, and especially sections of his skinhead following. He really did believe that Sham 69 could change things. Not the world, he was never that stupid, but maybe the lot of those who followed the band. Even if that just amounted to an hour and a half of entertainment at a Sham concert in what was for the rest of the week a no future world.

There was never any of this we rock stars you worship bollocks. Gigs were treated more like family get-togethers as the Sham clan came to town. Everyone sang along and usually the best part of the audience ended up on the stage with the band. Even the dressing room had an open all hours policy, with any food and beer laid on for the band quickly disappearing in a

free for all. And sometimes Jimmy would still be sitting there, a couple of hours after a gig, chatting away with fans.

Never has a band the size and stature of Sham ever been at one with its following like these loveable Hersham rogues were and still it all went horribly wrong. Sham concerts tended to go as smoothly as a corporation bus gear change, which always sends some old dear to the back of the bus whether she's a smoker or not. The stage invasions got totally out of hand and the promoters brought out the metal barriers. Not that they made much difference. People paid good money to see them and a lot of the time all they saw was some fat bastard swinging on Jimmy's tall, thin frame, pretending to know the words as he sang along a Sham.

Then came the trouble at gigs and particularly those in and around London. Gigs at Kingston, the London School Of Economics, Middlesex Poly and other venues, all kicked off with frightening regularity. And at the Reading Festival in August of '78, Jimmy left the stage in tears as Sham fans turned the event into a full-scale riot.

Jimmy did his best to stop any trouble, but the fact was that gigs had become just another battlefield where blood could be spilled in the name of your town, football team, political affiliations or what have you. Kids were just turning up at gigs with the sole intention of picking a fight, whether it was the U.K. Subs at London Uni, The Poison Girls at Stratford or Ian Dury at Oxford. So it wasn't just Sham gigs either.

When Cock Sparrer played their last gig barring comebacks at the Fulham Greyhound, idiots were setting fire to the wallpaper before the band even came on. And when they left the pub, the stage was being demolished and they found their van had had its tyres slashed. Menace and the other street punk bands suffered similar trouble at gigs, but so did a lot of other bands with nothing to do with the scene. It was just a sad reflection of the times, and left many a true fan too scared to see their favourite bands play live.

Nearly all of the finger pointing was being done in the general direction of skinheads and not without good reason either. When it came to violence at punk gigs, skinheads started proceedings, or happily joined in, on an all too regular basis. Not that all or even most skinheads were interested in destroying what was after all music they had paid their money to listen to, but it only takes one cook too many to spoil a broth. And there were plenty of would-be skinhead chefs ready to land one on your nose if your face, badge or haircut didn't fit. Punk bashing at gigs became a favourite pastime as did mod bashing, and Jimmy's vision of the kids united proved a non-starter.

Look at any old footage of Sham gigs and the amount of hair will surprise you, but what the reality of the situation was didn't come into it. Sham became known as a skinhead band and the trouble at gigs escalated. Once the 'papers had done their bit to link Sham with skins and skins with bovver, every nutter and his dog bought a ticket when Sham 69 rode into town. Some people were just turning up in the hope that there would be aggro and went home disappointed if a ruck didn't happen.

With a little thought, some of the trouble could have been avoided. Like at L.S.E. where nearly eight thousand pounds worth of damage was done. Or so they told the insurance company anyway. There was no security except for some very nervous student volunteers, glasses were used instead of plastic tumblers, and of course Jimmy had to insist that those still outside should be let in, despite an already full house. The presence of BBC cameras couldn't have helped matters and neither did the arrival of the now disbanded S.P.G. police unit who, er, sorted it all out in their own unique manner.

The straw that broke Sham's back though wasn't so much the violence by itself. Isolated outbreaks could have been contained, but orchestrated violence in the name of politics was another story. A lot of the skinheads who followed Sham and the other street punk bands supported the National Front



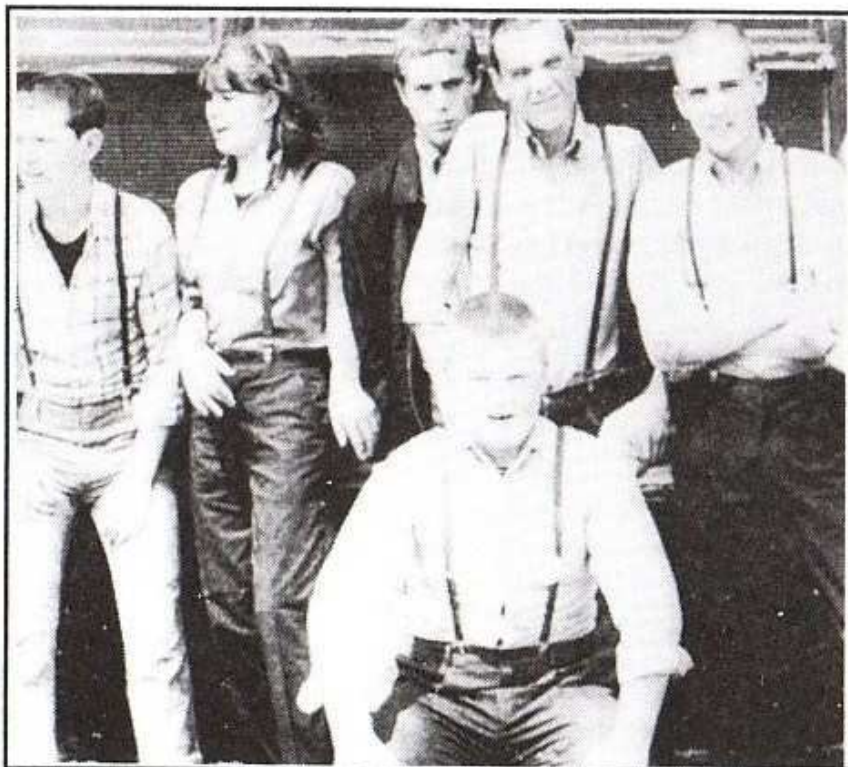
and the British Movement, two extreme right wing organisations who were enjoying considerable support at the time. For most skinheads it ranked alongside smoking behind the bike sheds in the flirtation stakes, but the powers that be demanded action from Sham to denounce them and exclude them from gigs.

At first Jimmy Pursey was reluctant to do anything beyond what he was doing already. Everyone knew that Sham 69 weren't interested in the politics of the NF or the BM and that the band did nothing to

Above: Tottenham Skins, 1977.

encourage them at gigs and as much as anybody to discourage them. But at the same time, Jimmy didn't want to turn his back on any of his followers by banning them from gigs. He preferred to argue his corner on and off the stage in the hope that they'd come 'round. Whether that was the way forward or not is open to debate, but it's got to be better than the left's common stance of preaching to the converted. Talking to a crowd of people wearing Rock Against Racism badges is all well and good, but it doesn't exactly win over many new hearts and minds.

But it wasn't enough for them anyway. The music 'papers, the left-wing pressure groups and other assorted know-alls wanted Sham 69 to do Rock Against Racism gigs along with the other street punk bands. And those who wouldn't toe the line could say goodbye to any press coverage, radio play, gig



Above: London Skinheads, 1978.

promotion, everything. It made you wonder who the real fascists were, but Jimmy gave in and the band played an RAR benefit with reggae band Misty at the Central London Polytechnic in February, '78. In April, Jimmy also joined The Clash on stage at an Anti-Nazi League carnival in Hackney, but by the end of the year Sham had to pull out of similar events because their presence might have attracted trouble. Sham were better off out of it anyway. All it meant was

that they were being used by the left instead of the right and the only losers were Sham 69.

Once their colours had been tied to the RAR flag-pole, there was an increase in right-wing activity and violence at Sham gigs, particularly in the London area where support for the Front and British Movement was at its strongest. Sadly, skinheads were at the centre of it all, being used as pawns to fight political battles that should have taken place at election meetings, not gigs. That said, there were many true Sham fans who also supported the BM and who felt genuinely betrayed by Pursey. And so began the demise of Sham 69.

Promoters wouldn't touch them with a barge pole for fear of trouble, and despite packed houses where they were allowed to play, and the band's cheeky appearances on *Top Of The Pops*, Sham's days were numbered. Nobody needed all that aggravation, and repeated calls to stop the fighting saw Jimmy banging his head against wall. The band couldn't play in the U.K. without fear of trouble and Jimmy didn't want to play abroad so the decision was taken to call it a day.

It was announced that Sham would play a farewell gig at the Apollo in Glasgow, but even before the day arrived there was talk of another one in Finland and then one in London. The Glasgow Sham Army did Sham 69 proud, as skins, punks and herberts buried their differences for the day to show that if they put any effort into it, the kids could be united. Sham were even joined on stage by Jones and Cook to add fuel to the rumours of a Sham Pistols super band.

When Sham took the stage at London's Rainbow Theatre to the strains of the theme to *2001*, it was instantly apparent that Sham had taken one leaf too many out of Gary Glitter's *Book Of Farewell Gigs*. The two support bands, Little Roosters and The Low Numbers had already had a hard time of it, but the worst was being saved for Sham 69.

What should have been Sham's finest hour and a half started well enough, with the band ironically sounding as good as they had ever done. *What Have You Got?* opened, but by the fourth number,

Angels With Dirty Faces, things started to go wrong. A skinhead tried to get up on the stage and was stopped by security. A scuffle ensued and in a bid to quiet things down, Jimmy let the skinhead join the band. That was the unintentional signal for other skinheads to climb the barriers, so the curtains came down and Sham left the stage.

For the next 20 minutes chaos reigned, as 200 plus skinheads surged back and forth through the crowd, like a runaway Chieftain tank while others joined in the chants of sieg heil from up on the stage. Eventually, some sort of order was restored, Sham returned to play more of the set, but it was again cut short by the party poopers who made repeated attempts to storm the stage. When they succeeded, Jimmy exploded off stage, knocking the bass drum flying and screaming into a mike, "I fucking loved you! I fucking did everything for you! And all you wanted to do was fight!".



Above: Sham's Last Stand. (NME)

Sham's Last Stand turned out to be exactly that, with General Jimmy Cusack being stabbed in the back by so-called fans of the band. He had wanted to give London one more chance and they just threw it back in his face, finishing off the best thing they ever had. Not that it seemed to bother them. The following day, a hundred skinheads wrecked a Young Socialists' Jobs For Youth gig featuring The Ruts and Misty.

And then began the verbal assault. Talk of Sham 69 selling out. Jimmy Pursey being middle class. Rumours that Jimmy had bought a mansion with a swimming pool for £130,000. So Jimmy hadn't been brought up in a tower block in the East End. So what? Nobody should be written off by anything as random as birth and anyway, Jimmy lived in a caravan until his parents had saved to buy a house of their own. And there's nothing wrong with that. Where does it say that the working classes have to be confined to council estates and dole queues? We're too proud for that and it's about time some of us got off our knees and realised it. And as for any money the band made, good luck to them. They certainly earned it the hard way.

Jimmy also put a lot of his money into helping other bands get a start in the music business and at least two were to pick up where Sham 69 left off. Introducing The Angelic Upstarts and The Cockney Rejects. There was no doubting either bands credentials to pick up Sham's mantle. The Upstarts hailed from the shipbuilding communities of Tyneside and The Rejects were your genuine London Eastenders. Both played raucous punk rock, both

Below: The Angelic Upstarts.



ended up with healthy skinhead followings and both attracted more than their fair share of bovver.

The Angelic Upstarts formed in the summer of '77, but lost half of the original line-up after trouble at their first gig in Jarrow. Their debut single, *Murder Of Liddle Towers*, released initially on Dead Records and then by Small Wonder via Rough Trade, brought trouble from more unexpected quarters though. Towers was a local boxing trainer who died in police custody and this was the band's way of drawing attention to his death. Obviously this didn't go down too well with the local constabulary and neither did the smashing of a pig's head on stage when the song was played live.

The police started turning up at every Upstarts gig, just waiting for Mensi and the boys to step out of line. Despite police claims to the contrary, this resulted in the Upstarts being effectively banned from playing their native North East, with no promoter wanting to risk a run-in with the forces of law and order. And that included charity and benefit shows too.

Jimmy Pursey took the Upstarts under his wing and signed them to his Wedge label which he'd talked Polydor into setting up. Before any vinyl could be released though, Polydor gave the Upstarts the order of the boot, following a snowball fight which ended with one of the record company's security guards getting a punch in the mouth. Pursey was furious at the way Polydor had treated the Upstarts and smashed the silver disc Polydor had presented to him for Sham's second album, *That's Life*, in protest. Every cloud has a silver lining or so the saying goes, and Mensi's marauders were soon signed to another major, Warner Bros.

Again it was politics that was to cause the band more grief than anything. Although always a punk band, the Upstarts were seen primarily as a skinhead band and that led to the same old accusations of encouraging right wing activity at gigs. In fact the Upstarts were even once accused of being fascists themselves because of songs like *Spandau* and *England* in their set, when the truth was they were good old fashioned street socialists who happened to be proud of their country.

Just like Sham, they had no way of keeping NF or BM members from coming to their gigs and initially didn't want to anyway. The band were more interested in talking with them and trying to understand them, believing it was more dangerous to ignore and alienate them. But again that wasn't good enough. The left wanted them to choose between left and right when all the band were interested in was the difference between right and wrong. They played the odd RAR gig and even one for CND while touring Scotland, but politics was never the main driving force behind the band at the time. At the CND gig, Mensi was asked to say a few words in support of the campaign to

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the gathered crowds. "Make love not war. Girls queue up after the show", said the elephant man in his broad Geordie accent before diving straight into the next song.

In June of '79, 50 National Front supporters attacked the band at a Wolverhampton gig, with the band's then manager Keith Bell needing six stitches after being cut by a glass. It wasn't skinheads who did the damage, just ordinary blokes, but it was the start of a sustained campaign to wreck their gigs because the extreme right now had them down as communists. If



Above: The Angelic Upstarts

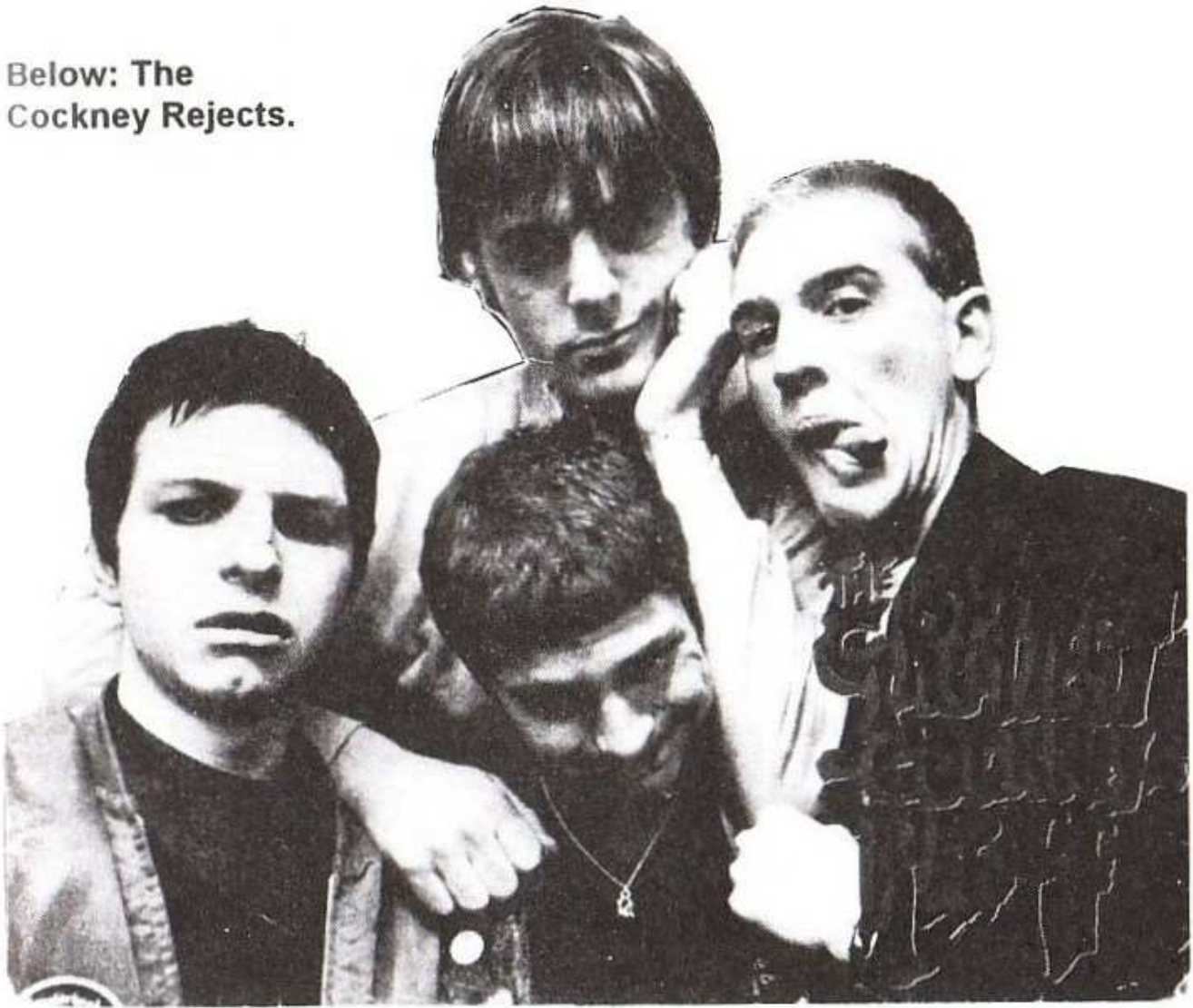
that was the case I don't think the band would have been demanding guns for the Afghan Rebels or would have supported Poland's Solidarity movement, but these things are rarely thought through. If you're not a Nazi then you must be a commie and if you're not a commie then you must be a Nazi. Simplistic nonsense that gives both camps a reason to exist.

A TV programme once tried to link the Rejects with the British Movement, but their history of aggro had little to do with politics. Hailed as the band that Sham were supposed to be, the Cockney Rejects were trouble personified.

The two Geggus brothers who started the band were decent amateur boxers, with the eldest Micky having worn the colours of England. They were joined by big Vince Riordan, who had been both minder and roadie for Sham 69 before picking up the bass on behalf of the Dead Flowers. All three contributed to the band's hard image as a ruck 'n' roll band ("we ruck and you roll") which soon attracted a hardcore support of old Sham and Menace fans, as well as Secret Affair's Glory Boy following.

In May, '79, Mick and his brother Geoff, who was to become universally known as Stinky Turner, waltzed up to *Sounds'* scribe Garry Bushell in a pub and gave him their tape. He was impressed enough to put them in touch with Jimmy Pursey who in turn agreed to produce their first a demo. A demo

Below: The
Cockney Rejects.



which, after a bit of spit and polish, emerged on vinyl in August as the *Flares And Slippers* EP on the, yeh you guessed it, Small Wonder label.

If trouble started at a gig, the band and their immediate following would wade in and put an end to it. Like when they supported the Upstarts at the Electric Ballroom. It won them a lot of respect, but the Rejects took it one step beyond. They were all West Ham hooligans and made sure nobody was in any doubt about what team they followed. Union Jacks with West Ham on them were flaunted on stage and most of their records incorporated the claret and blue colours. They even released their own version of *I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles* to celebrate the Hammers reaching the F.A. Cup final, followed by *We Are The Firm* and *War On The Terraces*. And all this when football related violence at gigs was getting out of hand anyway.

A month after the release of *Bubbles*, a Rejects' gig at Birmingham's Cedar Club ended in a riot which nearly finished the band. 200 plus skinheads showed up to settle the score from an incident at a previous Rejects' gig at the club and because of the West Ham links. During the band's second number, plastic glasses started to be thrown, and before Stinky could offer the throwers a fight, the band was being pelted with real glasses, ashtrays, the

works. The band and about a dozen followers waded in and ended up battling with the Birmingham skinheads across the dancefloor. Micky ended up at the local hospital and needed nine stitches, but worse was to follow. The band's van was trashed and two grand worth of equipment, some of it not even insured, was stolen.

Support band for the night was Kidz Next Door who were fronted by Jimmy Pursey's brother Robbie. Also in the band was former Sham aide, Grant Fleming on bass, who was the star of BBC's *Arena* documentary on Sham, *Grant's Story*. Grant was a veteran of the violence at Hendon and the Rainbow with Sham and at Hatfield with Madness, but the Cedar Club riot topped them all. The following day, everyone headed off to the next gig at



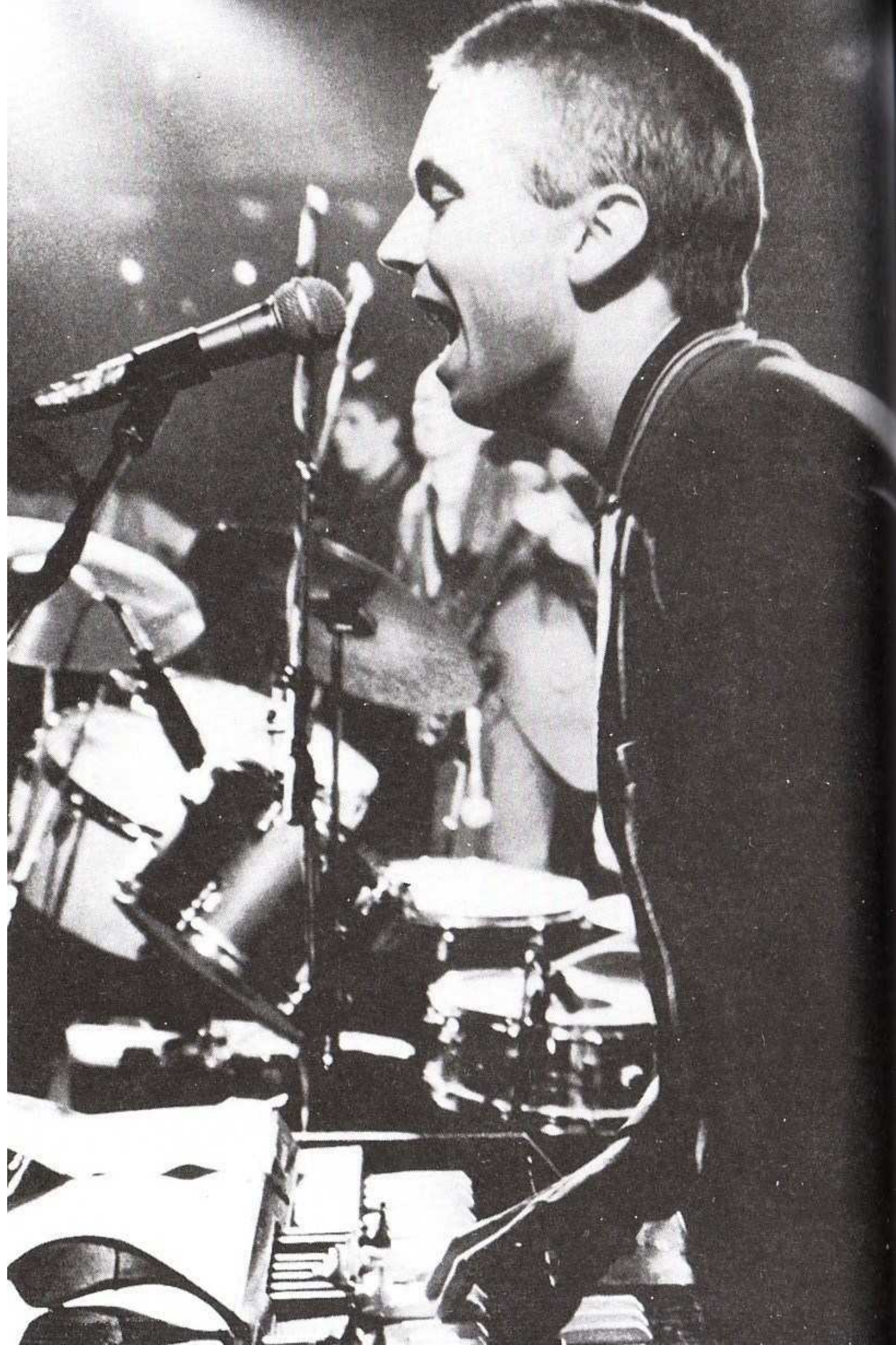
Above: The Cockney Rejects.

Huddersfield, bar Grant and Micky who stayed behind to see if they could find the stolen gear. Both ended up in more trouble and were nicked, with Micky looking like he was going to be sent down for using a metal bar during the street fight they'd started. After nine months of sweating it out, Mick was given six months suspended and a £500 fine, while Grant got 150 hours community service and was £200 out of pocket. If Micky had gone to prison, the band would have called it a day. As it was they stayed in business, but found it none too easy to shake off their violent image. Their Autumn tour of 1980 had to be abandoned because of serious trouble at the first few gigs, and particularly at the one in Liverpool come October. By then it was almost impossible to play outside of London without someone wanting to take them on, but they had nobody to blame but themselves.

Now seemed as good a time as any to move on musically, as the Rejects became more and more attracted by the world of heavy metal. They'd had their day and now it was the turn of a whole new crop of street punk bands to show the way. But that's another story for another chapter.

"I know I'm not gonna change the world - if I ever believed that I'd be a complete nutcase. All I can do is get on stage, sing about it and make people enjoy it at the same time as listening to it. I'm not a politician, I'm not a leader, all I am is a bloke who gets on stage and sings rock n' roll."

Jimmy Pursey, Sham 69.



STREET FEELING

"Everyone puts skinheads down but they never mention the good side. At Dingwalls for example, the skins went around stopping all the trouble."

Chas Smash, Madness.

A support slot on a big name tour is usually a stepping stone to greater things. Unless of course you go down like a lead balloon, as happened when Coventry band, The Special AKA, toured with The Clash during their On Parole Tour of 1978. Then it was more a case of don't pass go, don't collect two hundred notes, and the band right back at square one. The band's attempts to consummate a marriage between punk and reggae just didn't come off. One moment they were asking the audience to dance, the next to pogo, and the result was that the crowds ended up doing neither. On a good night, the early birds simply retreated to the safety of the bar and waited for the arrival of The Clash. On a bad one, they gave the band the

usual welcome reserved for support bands the world over. A barrage of abuse and empty glasses.

When the tour was over, The Specials returned to Coventry with their tails between their legs. The drawing board was pulled out, and the band spent a bitter cold winter playing at brass monkeys in the back room of a pub, trying to put things right.

The main man behind The Special AKA was keyboard player, Jerry Dammers. With his front teeth missing and a gormless smile on his face, it looked like



the bloke was always out to lunch, but the reality was quite the opposite. There were certainly no flies on our Jerry, and despite the Mr. Magoo exterior, his brain was in top gear and working overtime.

He had brought the band together over the previous two years. Horace Panter had been at art college with Dammers and played bass with a local soul band called Breaker. Even better, he could drive a van. Lynval Golding had played guitar in a band called Pharaoh's Kingdom, which also boasted



two future Selecters in its ranks. Terry Hall had been lead vocalist and chief spitter with local punk outfit, Squad, and Roddy "Radiation" Byers played guitar and sang for The Wild Boys. The two missing links were drummer John Bradbury, who was borrowed from a band for a recording session and never returned, and Neville Staples, who had gone on tour with The Special AKA as a roadie and ended up fronting the band with Terry.

The offers might not have been flooding in after the On Parole Tour, but The Specials had learned a trick or two from working with Bernie Rhodes, who was manager of The Clash at the time. The first was the need to clean up their sound, and that was well in hand. It was Dammers' idea to drop reggae in favour of the earlier Jamaican sound of ska, in the hope of giving the band a clearer edge. On paper, the change doesn't appear all that drastic, but in practice it made the world of difference. The result was an infectious ska beat with the balls of punk, and a sound that was to take an unsuspecting nation by storm in the months to come.

The second was to sell the band not just on its music, but as a complete package. And that meant looking the part, as well as sounding it. 1979 was to prove very much the year of the youth cult. And not just one particular cult either. If you'd walked into any secondary school classroom at the time, you would have been greeted by a merry assortment of boots, parkas, safety pins, quiffs and Motorhead patches.

The Specials were playing punk-injected ska, and so the obvious choice was to adopt the Sixties look of the Jamaican rude boys, tinged with a few odds and ends from Jerry's days as a mini-mod and a suedehead. Pork pie hats, wraparound shades, mohair suits, button down shirts, white socks and black loafers, all became the order of the day as they set about bringing to life Walt Jabsco, the soon to be famous 2 Tone logo.

The rest of the band would have been more than happy with a bit of recognition for the years they'd spent going nowhere on the Midlands music scene, but Dammers wanted a lot more. He wanted the band to be successful sure, but not for fame and fortune's sake. Both were well down the list of his priorities. What he really wanted to do was create a band in the mould of The Who, The Small Faces, Slade and the Pistols. A band which led the way, and had something special going for it far beyond chart success and *Top Of The Pop* appearances.





Above: The Specials.

Dammers' vision involved the creation of a new movement, based around a record label, just as Stax and Tamla had done in the Sixties with soul. The release of the band's debut single, *Gangsters*, in March '79, saw the birth of just such a label. 2 Tone was its name, and for the next year or two it was to be the rallying call for the cream of British ska bands and their followers.

Talk about timing though. The Specials couldn't have picked a better moment to hoist the chequered flag over the 2 Tone camp. It was the mods who had first warmed to the sound of ska back in the mid-Sixties, and the original skinheads knew a thing or two about the old blue beat too. The fact that both were enjoying a massive revival in numbers during the late Seventies virtually guaranteed success for The Specials, and for the other bands who were soon to be associated with the sound of 2 Tone.

Sham and kin might have given a new lease of life to the skinhead faithful, but it was 2 Tone that was to give them a more authentic soundtrack to dance to. In fact, The Specials picked up much of their skinhead following from support slots with punk bands, and winning over the croptops present with their magical brand of ska.

One of the band's first big London dates was at The Lyceum in April, 1979, when they were bottom of the bill to The Damned and The U.K. Subs. The Subs had a decent skinhead following at the time and they instantly warmed

to The Specials. The same skinheads became regulars at Specials' gigs from then on in, and as soon as word got around, there were as many pairs of boots following the band as there were record companies vying for their signature.

Although The Specials didn't know it at the time, they weren't the only band doing the rounds in the name of ska and reggae. In Birmingham, bands like The Beat and UB40 were walking similar streets, and London too had a couple of like-minded bands in the shape of Madness and Bad Manners. And all were household names in the making. Once The Specials had made the breakthrough, it was only a matter of time before the others gatecrashed the music industry's cosy little world to put dance music back in fashion.

Within a couple of months of *Gangsters* being released, The Specials were no longer confined to propping up punk bills. They had created the biggest buzz since Johnny Rotten opened his mouth on behalf of The Sex Pistols, and were getting full houses in their own right. At the end of July, a 2 Tone night at Camden Town's Electric Ballroom saw The Specials, Madness and another Coventry band The Selecter, packing them in. Queues of skinheads, mods and punks outside the venue threatened to block Camden High Road, and it was obvious to every Tom, Dick and Herbert that this was the beginning of something massive.

Below: Madness (Stiff)



Madness were on home territory that night, and well on their way to having the biggest skinhead following of all the ska bands. A lot of their mates who followed the band were boots and braces merchants of a few years standing, and so they had something of a headstart on the others anyway. One skin, Chas "Smash" Smythe even ended up as a member of the band. He'd already been booted out for some dodgy bass playing in a previous line-up, but found himself a permanent place thanks to his role as Master of Ceremonies at gigs and his very fancy footwork.

In fact the band had been through the wars as it struggled to maintain a line-up since forming back in '77 as The North London Invaders. Lead singer, Graham "Suggs" McPherson had been dropped at



Above: Bad Manners

one point for going to see his beloved Chelsea one time too many when he should have been at rehearsals, and Lee Thompson wasn't the most reliable of sax players either.

Still, with the addition of Mike Barsons on keyboards, Chrissy Boy Foreman on guitar, bass player Mark Bedford and Dan Woodgate on drums, the Invaders entered 1979 as Madness, and from then on that's exactly what it was. Sheer Madness.

As luck would have it, Suggs caught up with The Specials down at the Hope & Anchor one night, and he got talking to Jerry Dammers. It wasn't long before the two bands were sharing the bill, with the Nashville playing host to two stormers of gigs just as summer came upon us.

Before long Madness had picked up a name for themselves as a skinhead band, and their gigs were packed out with nutty skins, bobbing and weaving to the heavy heavy monster sound. Fellow Norf Londoners, Bad Manners, had their own certain somebody who was also to prove an instant hit with the skinhead faithful. And particularly the fat ones.

Doug Trendle was his name, although everyone knew him as Buster Bloodvessel. His trademark, besides the tabloid talk about scoffing 30 Big Macs in one sitting and a thirteen inch long tongue, was his totally bald head. On and off stage he was unmistakable thanks to that shiny bonce and his

heavy goods vehicle of a body. Sixteen stone of skinhead lard as one hack had it.

As he jumped about in boots and jeans, sweating buckets and singing about



Above: Rude Boy and Rude Girl

skinheads, fat people and booze, he was surrounded by musicians who looked like refugees from a jumble sale clearance. A scruffier bunch of blaggards you'd be hard pushed to meet. Not that Buster dressed any better. When God was handing out dirty striped t-shirts with big holes in them, the fat man must have been the only one in the queue.

Unlike Madness, who put out their debut single *The Prince* on 2 Tone, Manners decided to go their own way and ended up on the books of Magnet. It didn't stop them shoving their way into the charts though with stompers like *Lip Up Fatty* and *Special Brew*, or later appearing in the somewhat disappointing 2 Tone film, *Dance Craze*.

Skinheads took to the new sound of ska like ducks to water. It was more like the welcoming home of long lost friends than discovering new bands, particularly for those old enough to remember the good old days of skinhead reggae.

Even so, playing to audiences of mainly skinheads, as regularly happened in London, still proved intimidating for some bands. Brummy boys, The Beat, who released *Tears Of A Clown* on 2 Tone, were completely knocked out of their stride the first time they came face to face

with a sea of crops at a gig. It was something they quickly got used to though, which was just as well because a skinhead was the most popular haircut of the day, and not too far off the 1970 head count.

That was because the success of The Specials, Madness and the other ska bands wasn't based solely on deserters from the Sham Army. They also attracted a whole new generation of skins into the fold, many of whom weren't the slightest bit interested in punk music. They preferred to devote all of

their energies to the current ska sounds and skinhead reggae, which was quickly revived in the clubs and at gigs.

A lot of other kids called themselves rude boys or rude girls. This time around they were mainly white kids whose love of music went little further than 2 Tone related bands. The dress code was strictly black and white, and by the end of the summer, the streets were filled with thousands of mini Walt Jabscoes.

There wasn't a lot in a name though. Quite often the only difference between a skinhead, a rude boy and a mod was the flavour of their button badges, but such are the subtleties of third form life. If you saw a bloke walking down the street with a crop, Harrington, jeans and moccasins, he could have easily got away with claiming to belong to any one of the above cults. And just to confuse matters, a lot of skins, mods and rudies jumped about together anyway.

The speed at which ska covered Britain in a black and white blanket was nothing short of amazing. By the time the 50 date 2 Tone Tour got underway at Brighton's Top Rank, home of reggae and soul nights tens years previous, no less than three 2 Tone bands were chartbound. And before the tour was over, The Specials, The Selecter, and Madness, had all appeared on the



Above: The Selecter (Chrysalis)

same edition of *Top Of The Pops*. It wasn't so much a walkover as a bloody takeover.

Still, life on the open roads wasn't always a bowl of cherries, with skinhead violence once again threatening to spoil the party. As was said before, all sorts of gigs were going off at the time, but that didn't make it any easier for the bands to swallow. It was the same old story as well, with fights breaking out over football, politics or allegiance to a cult. Some things never change, and people were still turning up expecting gigs to go off. A slight nudge at the bar was often all that was needed to kick-off a full scale riot.



Above: Madness (Stiff)

There were isolated outbreaks of violence throughout the 2 Tone Tour, but none worse than what occurred at Hatfield Poly just a week into the tour. Halfway through The Selecter's set, a 30 strong gang forced their way into a bar area through a fire exit, and started attacking people with razors and Stanley knives. The same blokes had been refused entry earlier because they were carrying banners announcing themselves as The Hatfield Mafia and Hatfield Anti-Fascist League, and it was obvious that they had come looking for National Front supporters. And for NF supporters, read anyone with a crop and boots because it was skinheads who bore the brunt of the violence, and nobody took the time to ask about political affiliations. The final score was ten people hospitalised, 11 arrested and about a grand's worth of damage to the building.

Obviously a lot of skinheads who followed 2 Tone bands didn't support either the NF or the British Movement. Most weren't even interested in politics, but



despite the obvious multi-racial nature of the bands, large sections of the crowd at 2 Tone gigs did give at least vocal support to the extreme right. And there's no pretending otherwise. A lot of skins saw no problem about dancing to The Beat with a copy of *Bulldog* rolled up in their back pocket. It just wasn't thought through by a lot of them, but such are the trials and tribulations of growing up.

Even people who should have known better couldn't see beyond their own noses. Most of the tabloids linked 2 Tone with skinheads, and added them together to conjure up some sort of musical fascist movement. London's *Evening News* even ran a picture of The Selector under the headline, DON'T ROCK WITH THE SIEG HEILERS. Considering the only white person out of a band of seven was Neol Davies, a three year old could have told you that The Selector weren't exactly prime candidates for NF membership. The Rock Against Racism movement also took the odd pop at ska bands for not doing enough to combat racism, but that said more about the petty mindedness of RAR than it did about bands like The Specials. There could be no better advert for racial harmony than seeing black and white faces on stage together, and particularly when that stage was television and reaching millions of homes. Maybe a lot of skins were NF at the time, but without 2 Tone you

can bet your last pound coin that thousands more would have been.



Madness were the band most criticised because they were all white. As if a token black, or Lee Thompson dolled up as a black and white minstrel would have made any difference. Ska and fascism have never been the most obvious of bedfellows anyway, and Madness made it clear that they were not NF and wanted nothing to do with politics whatsoever.

What's more, there fans were told that if the violence didn't stop, the band would knock the whole thing on the head and call it a day.

That didn't stop NF skins turning up at their gigs though. Chas put his foot in it a bit when he told *NME* that there was no way Madness were going to stop them coming either, a statement that the rest of the band were quick to distance themselves from. It might not have been what the press wanted to hear, but he did have a point. Most kids were NF just because it was fashionable, and unless they had "I Am NF" tattooed on their forehead, who was to say who got into gigs and who didn't?

It wasn't that Madness didn't care. It just wasn't a problem that could be solved as easily as sections of the press imagined. If you banned all NF

insignia, they would just turn up without it. If you banned all skinheads, they'd just grow their hair. And anyway, that wouldn't have stopped NF mods or BM trendies getting in. Better perhaps to have them inside the gigs, where they would hear ska and reggae, and maybe appreciate that there was a lot more to being a skinhead than stiff right arms and bird spotting.

Madness weren't alone in this. The Beat's Rankin' Roger believed it was better to talk to the kids who claimed to be NF, and try to win them over to the non-racist camp. Lynval Golding from The Specials did the same, even after he was hospitalised following a racist attack outside The Moonlight Club in 1980. Maybe not quite what RAR had in mind, but ask anyone from the 2 Tone camp what they remember most about it all, and more often than not you'll get a story about a racist skin talking to Lynval or another black band member, and leaving without the NF badge.

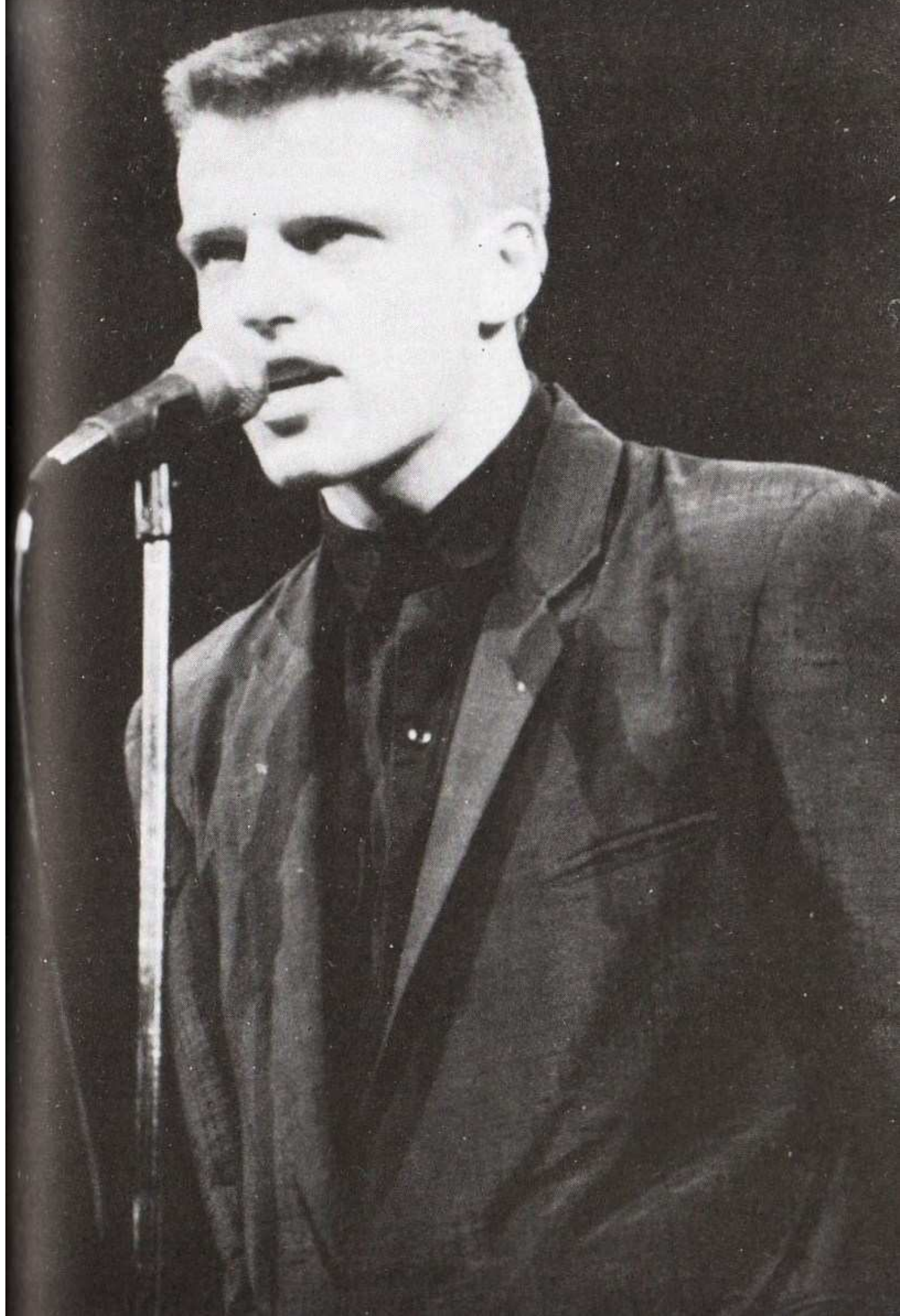
Nobody wanted the violence at gigs, but at the same time, the bands didn't want to turn their backs on their skinhead following. After all, it was the skins who had given the bands the leg up the success ladder in the first place. A lot of clubs introduced a no skinhead door policy because of the aggro, and to their credit, bands like The Specials right down to The Bodysnatchers refused to play at them. And there are all too few bands willing to put their fans before a nice little earner.

Violence at 2 Tone gigs wasn't just politically motivated anyway, and there never was another Hatfield. A lot of the aggro was actually directed at non-ska support bands and their following, like when skinheads refused to allow Echo & The Bunnymen to complete their set when they were on the same bill as Madness and Manners at The Electric Ballroom. The same fate befell Red Beans And Rice, when Madness returned to the Ballroom a few months later, and Holly And The Italians were forced to vacate the support slot on The Selecter's 2 Tone 2 tour after a number of their fans were attacked at gigs.

Not all the gigs ended in argy bargy. Just like Sham before and Oi! after, lots of gigs passed off without an angry word being exchanged or the police leaving their vans, which were always parked down side streets waiting for chucking out time. What's more, plenty of gigs saw mods and skinheads getting on with enjoying the night's entertainment, rather than creating their own. And that after all is what going to a gig's all about. Ska crossed the cult barriers better than any other music, and anyway, a lot of skins and mods were still in league for bank holiday rucks with teds and rockers.

Southend and the Kent coast were regular haunts for London skinheads come the long weekends off. Brighton, Scarborough, Great Yarmouth, Rhyl, and virtually every other town with a beach and a ready supply of Kiss-Me-Quick hats also found themselves on the evening news courtesy of a visit by the boover brigade.

Right: Suggs, Madness (Streetlink)



Regular mod versus skin battles didn't happen until 2 Tone had started to give way to Oi!, but that's not always how the tabloids saw it. They saw everyone and everything as a potential target for skinhead aggro, and weren't slow in letting their readers know about it. Mixed armies of skins, mods and rudies were a common sight, as they attempted to wage war on the grease in re-runs of Sixties' battles.

Another day at another resort, you might find mods fighting teds, skins fighting bikers, skins fighting mods, football fans fighting skins, or even mods fighting mods. It all depended on who you went down with and who you happened to come across. Many a time though, skinhead invasion armies got no further than the seaside train station. The Old Bill would be waiting to put them straight back on the train and send it off home again, without so much as a lick of a stick of rock for the bootboys.

The police took great delight in nicking skinheads, and boot laces and braces were routinely confiscated. They must have been sick and tired of young hooligans cancelling their weekend leave, and they made sure you knew about it too. Virtually every skinhead who was pulled put on a show for their mates, and of course the older skinheads took a lot longer to move along than the nippers, but once the dog handlers moved in everyone hurried along like good little children should.

Most arrests were for minor offences, like being drunk and disorderly, using threatening behaviour and the like. Considering the numbers who turned up for aggro, there were very few serious injuries, with the most common probably being sunburn. That was because the trouble rarely went beyond mouthing away at a rival mob from across the street, and if you were lucky, chasing them up and down the prom. The police had it well sussed, and the only chance of giving or receiving a kicking was to break away from the main pack, and go hunting in small gangs.

Back on the music scene, Madness had managed to get away from all the violence by heading off to play the States, and on their return, the band made a conscious attempt to distance themselves from the skinhead tag. The

band's sound progressed away from ska and more towards mainstream pop, a move that was eventually to make them the number one pop band of the Eighties bar none. Matinee gigs were also booked so that younger fans could see their heroes at a decent hour and without the

Right: Brighton skins, 1980.



threat of going home with a bloody nose. Both these moves made them the darlings of the teeny bopper weeklies, and in the process saved the band from going down as ska's answer to Sham.

The poppier sound wasn't everybody's can of Coke and some saw it as yet another sell-out. Let the skinheads take you to the top and then ditch them when it looks like you'll strike it big. That wasn't really the case though, and skinheads turned up at Madness gigs right up until *(Waiting For) The Ghost Train* signalled the end in October, 1986 (bar comebacks). And never did they go home without being treated to early Madness gems like *One Step Beyond*, *Night Boat To Cairo* and *My Girl*.

As it turned out, Madness had made another smart move in the career game. By signing with Stiff, they missed out on the 2 Tone backlash which began

BANK HOLIDAY AGGRO

One of the most important aspects of being a skin when I first embraced the cult was **Bank Holiday Mondays**. A day where I would escape the mundane life that I led, and joined hundreds of others for a few hours of merriment.

I didn't walk to the seafront. I swaggered. I felt like I could take on the whole world. And when I saw the first group of skins, my heart would fill with pride. I was part of an army and for a day the town would be ours.

The police, in their infinite wisdom, would confiscate our laces and braces in a vain attempt to curb the violence. I didn't care, my jeans were skin tight and a pocket full of paper clips soon solved the lace problem.

Putting on Cockney accents, my mates and I would spin a web of lies to the best looking girls we could find. With a bit of luck I'd end up with a quick fondle and a love bite on my neck, which I could show off to my school mates, telling them ever wilder stories about how I got it.

The hardest part for me was how to obtain beer. Being only a young pup of 15, shopkeepers always asked my age. When I told them I was 18, they would laughingly send me on my way empty handed. Never mind. There was always an obliging older skin who would get some for me for the price of a can. And with a four pack under my arm, I felt a mile high.

Later, when the pubs had kicked out their drunken contents, all the skins would meet up. It was time for some heads to be bashed, and more often than not one of them was mine.

The police would view us as the enemy. Any chance they got, they would give you



hassle. They would move us on to the beach, make us empty out our pockets and ask stupid questions like, "What are you doing in Margate, son?". I would have thought the answer was obvious. We were after some aggro, but the usual answer was, "Just having a laugh."

As the afternoon wore on, the Old Bill would form snatch squads, and a few of us would be carted off to the local cop shop. This was the place to exchange stories of birds we'd had and fights we'd won.

After a couple of hours, the police would let us go, usually without any charges, and we would amble off home. The next day at school, sporting a black eye or a thick lip, I would tell my mates all about when the boot went in. These were the days when skins were kings, and to mess meant a good kicking.

Toast, Tighten Up skinzine.



Above: The Beat (Arista)

with The Bodysnatchers during the summer of 1980, and barely a year after *Gangsters* had gone top twenty. A few months earlier, and 2 Tone was where it was at according to the music 'papers. But as quickly as they build you up, they take great delight in knocking you down, and suddenly 2 Tone was old hat and everyone was waiting for the first flop.

Already on the wrong end of a media tongue lashing were Bad Manners. Their brand of good-time music and loony tunes like *Ne Ne Na Na Na Nu Nu Nu* hadn't tickled too many cultured hack's tastebuds, who in turn took great delight in despatching most of Manners' offerings into the box marked superficial nonsense. They were also accused of cashing in on the success of Madness and The Specials, but Manners had been experimenting with ska and blues as early as 1976, albeit under the name of Stoop Solo & The Sheet Starchers.

Some people obviously have a problem with having a good time. And when you went to see Bad Manners live you got exactly that by the bucketful. They might not have matched songs by The Selecter and The Specials in terms of social content, but for entertainment, Fatty and his mob were with them all the way.

If you happened to be a small provincial ska band hoping to make it big you could forget it. Record releases by bands like Mobster and The Ska Dows were dismissed before they'd even reached the reviewer's dansette. Admittedly some were very poor, and were indeed bandwagon jobs of the very weakest kind, but by dismissing everything that wasn't released on 2 Tone, the media caused some real gems to fall by the wayside.

Hull band, Akrylykz, released the smashing *Spyderman* (Red Rhino), and gave Fine Young Cannibal Roland Gift an introduction to the music biz. Herne Bay's Arthur Kay & The Originals was well on form with *Ska Wars* (Red Admiral), and the main man there went on to find more hope and glory with Oi! band The Last Resort. And there's a handful of other tunes by bands like Boss, Headline, Cairo and The Gangsters that deserved a lot more credit than they ever got.

Sooner or later, the backlash had to reach 2 Tone itself. Obviously one journalist too many had had an unpleasant experience in a tube train full of skinheads, and The Bodysnatchers looked like an easy target for revenge. An inexperienced all-female band that had landed itself a chart place before most new bands have found a regular place to practise in, was crying out to for a few harsh words in the right places. But even if *Let's Do Rock Steady* was a standard cover of a Dandy Livingstone gem, and an obvious choice at that, the so-called "Two Tone Tessies" weren't the fall girls the press were hoping for. The follow-up single, *Easy Life*, was as good as anything released on the chequered label, and the real flops were still to make The Dominoes in their set, and Madness obviously had access to a half-decent Prince Buster collection. The Beat covered The Miracles' *Tears Of A Clown* as well as



Above: The Bodysnatchers.

others, and virtually every band had a go at the Prince's *Madness* at one time or another. And UB40 ended up making a living as a covers band, with their *Labour Of Love* albums.

There was a positive side to it all though. Classic songs that might have been forgotten were revived and given a fresh lease of life for a new generation of skinheads. In turn, this created a demand for the originals, and it wasn't long before

**SKA, MODS AND
SKINHEAD
MOONSTOMP**
7" (TRO9062) 12" (TROT906!)
OUT NOW
TROJAN Distributed by CBS

the likes of Trojan and Island were raking through the vaults so that they could re-release them. *Skinhead Moonstomp* made it back into the lower reaches of the charts, and Prince Buster, Desmond Dekker, Judge Dread and others found themselves back in the recording studios. Laurel Aitken even had his first chart hit with *Rudi Got Married* (I Spy), but the biggest treat was the chance to see the likes of Laurel back on stage where they belonged.

During 1980, Jimmy Cliff, Desmond Dekker, The Heptones, Toots & The Maytals, Judge Dread, Laurel Aitken and others were all to be found strutting their stuff around Britain for an adoring public. And most had nothing but praise for the 2 Tone bands who had given a new lease of life to the sound of Jamaica.

2 Tone itself had become like a monster nobody could control. It was certainly something much bigger than Dammers and Co. had ever dreamed of, but rather than a fairytale rise to success, the whole thing was more of a nightmare. The label's original hopes and plans had long since been buried under a pile of dodgy sew-on patches and cheap black ties, and The Selecter for one had had about as much as they could take.

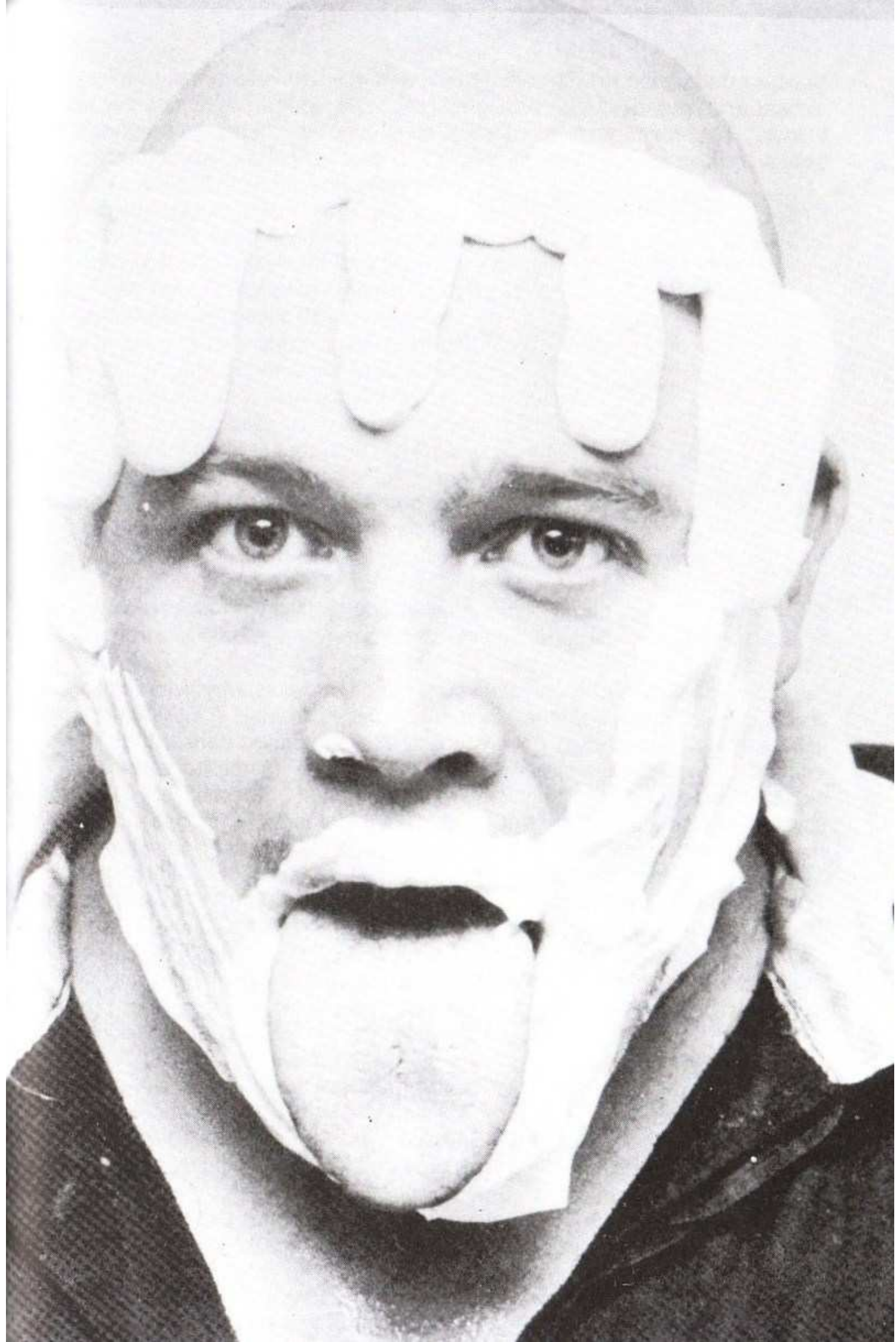


Above: The Specials.

At first they tried to close down 2 Tone, but when The Specials weren't having any of it, The Selecter left and signed to Chrysalis directly. They went on to release a couple of singles and a second LP, *Celebrate The Bullet*, but the band that was tipped to be one of the biggest of the Eighties didn't make it past 1981.

The Specials were also feeling the strain, and wanted to break away from their past and venture into new musical territory. The release of *More*

Right: Buster, Bad Manners

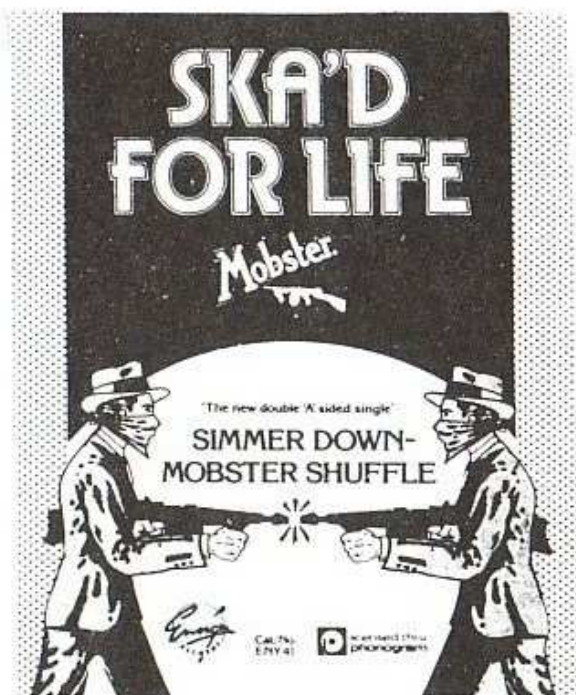


Specials underlined this change of direction. Hints of ska remained, but only alongside heavy doses of soul, rockabilly and what Jerry Dammers called Musak. The album was far more relaxed than their debut offering, and the band had dropped the suits and loafers for a more casual look to match their

more catholic music.

Visions of student lift music had many a skinhead running for cover, but when all was said and done, the album was a good one by any standards, and the band continued to belt out *Rat Race*, *A Message To You Rudy*, *Concrete Jungle* and other crowd pleasers when gigging.

All musicians have the right to develop their sound. It must get a bit boring knocking out the same old tunes night after night, and if you were happy doing the same old set for the rest of your life you might as well throw your hat in with the likes of Yes from day one. Equally though, the fans have the right to say thanks, but no thanks. And the sight of



hundreds of Muzak Skins filling the once overflowing 2 Tone terraces was about as likely as Dollar covering *Wet Dream*.

Even so, The Specials could still fill any venue in the country, and despite the broader base to their sound, audiences were becoming more and more cult-orientated. By the end of 1980, the vast majority of those at gigs were skinheads, mods, rudies and the odd punk or three. So-called normals often didn't turn up for fear of being singled out for a bit of boot practice.

Stage invasions during sets were another problem. They had become something of a tradition with all the ska bands, but just like with Sham, they were harder and harder to control. As soon as The Specials hit the stage, early birds were making a beeline to join them, and it got to the point where songs were being interrupted because the musicians didn't have the space to play in.

Rather than put up the barricades, The Specials just built higher and higher layers for the band to retreat to, so that they could at least keep playing. Things came to a head at Skegness in the summer of 1980 though, when the stage collapsed under the weight of having half the audience on it.

Somebody could easily have died and so the decision was reluctantly taken to keep the stage clear during performances, a move which caused a riot in Dublin when the band visited the Emerald Isle. Gig-goers ended up battling it out with tooled-up bouncers to reach the stage at the Starlight Ballroom, and a few days later the venue was burned down.

Unlike Madness, The Specials' change of direction hadn't put an end to aggro at gigs. During the More Specials Tour, trouble broke out at Cardiff,

Edinburgh and Newcastle. The same happened at Cambridge, where 30 to 40 ticketless youths forced their way in to the huge tent on Midsummer Common, where 3,500 had turned up to see their 2 Tone heroes. Trouble broke out initially over football, but then the ever-tactful bouncers joined in, and things went from bad to worse.

The Specials did their best to lower the temperature by leaving the stage on a number of occasions, but even they weren't prepared to stand by and watch some kid getting his head kicked in by neanderthal bouncers. Once the police had arrived and cleared the tent, Dammers and lead singer Terry Hall found themselves being charged for inciting a riot. Both ended up getting thousand pound fines, courtesy of the best legal system in the world.

It was becoming all too much for The Specials. Things went very quiet at the 2 Tone camp, as each member of the band went to work on their own projects. The band splitting was just around the corner, but not until the band had their finest hour during the long hot summer of '81.

Unemployment was at an all-time high and England's inner cities were going up in flames. Still what did it matter, everyone had the royal wedding to look forward to, the highlight of which turned out to be when the helicopter following the royal procession flew over a multi-storey car park to see the words ALL THE BEST TO CHAS AND DI FROM WEST HAM SKINS painted in massive letters on the roof. And amidst all the pomp and ceremony, radio stations around the country were blaring out the new number one by The Specials called *Ghost Town*.

No song could have captured the state of the nation as accurately as these three minutes of 2 Tone sobriety did. The no future lot from '76 didn't have it half as bad as the kids living on Maggie's Farm five years down the road, but 2 Tone was never about lying down and accepting your lot in life.

After *Ghost Town* and the band's decision to split, 2 Tone was finished despite labouring on until 1985. But for two glorious years it had filled countless ordinary kids' lives with something worthwhile, and for that alone it deserves to be a cherished label in the skinhead world.

For most of 1981, Oi! had been the major focus of skinhead attention, particularly with 2 Tone being so quiet for the first half of the year. And with Oi! came the skinhead cult's very own ghost town called Southall.

"It is not enough to be anti-racist yourself. You have to be a positive anti-racist. You have to stand against it, because otherwise nothing changes."

Jerry Dammers.



WELCOME TO THE REAL WORLD

"The bands and stuff were already there, the Cockney Rejects and their following who formed their own bands. All I did was write about it, which probably gave it the impetus to grow into something bigger."

Garry Bushell.

One law for us and one law for them. That's how the 4 Skins summed up the aftermath of Southall. And not without good reason either. The night the Hambrough Tavern went up in flames out came the sewing kit for the biggest stitch-up job this side of the Singer factory. Oi! music, the bands who had played the gig, and their skinhead following, were all used as scapegoats so that no finger pointing had to be done in more sensitive directions.

It's easy to lay the blame for anything at their door because its taken for granted that skins are to blame for any trouble within a ten mile radius. In the national horror league, skinheads weigh in somewhere between serial killers and devil dogs. It's as if shaving your head and lacing up a pair of DMs turns you into some sort of dangerous alien life form.

Aggro has always been part and parcel of skinhead life and there's nobody claiming otherwise. Most skins accept it as part of the territory and wouldn't want it any other way. What skinhead bedroom isn't covered in tabloid cuttings of bank holiday riots and football rucks? Of course a lot of it's sensationalised drivel, but it's good for the old morale. It's also a million miles from what was said about Southall.

Then they went a lot further than a few fairy tale headlines. So far in fact that they came close to ripping the heart and soul out of the Oi! movement, nearly destroying it in the process. If they had succeeded it would have been a crying shame because what the media had to say about Oi! was at best based on half-truths and at worst out and out lies.

Oi! was your original street sound come good. For probably the first time ever, the people on the stage really were the same as the people out on the dancefloor. Before a gig, the bands would be propping up the bar and knocking a pool ball about with the best of them. It was also a world populated with genuine characters who oozed street corner confidence. Most

of them could have made a fortune giving it some mouth down the market, and no doubt some of them did.



Oi!

THE ALBUM

Prior to Southall, Oi! was well on its way to making it big time. Taking its name from The Cockney Rejects' *Oi! Oi! Oi!*, and from Stinky's insistence that "Oi! Oi! Oi!" should replace the customary "one, two, three" at the beginning of each song, Oi! represented a battle cry for the new street punk bands that had sprung up in the wake of Sham and friends.

Bands like The Pistols might have been relevant once upon a time, but the summer of '76 was a picnic compared to the early years of Thatcher's Britain. And if punk had originally been about opening a few doors for any kid with a guitar and an attitude, then Oi! was about ripping them off their hinges.

The man who put the name to the face of Oi! was ex-Rejects manager and *Sounds* journalist, Garry Bushell. He had cut his teeth on a number of punk fanzines, including the nearly famous *Napalm*, and turned out to be one of the few hacks who took an interest in what was happening out on the streets music-wise. When scribes at lesser 'papers were just beginning to take notice of the growth of street punk, Bushell was already championing the music.

A bloody good writer he was too, even if he was a little too caught up in a mythical Cockney world of honest (guv) villains, apples and pears, Queen Vic pubs, unlocked front doors and where everyone is called John. John. Worse

still, he supported Charlton Athletic. Now Charlton isn't exactly Bow Bells territory anyway, but if there was one thing that made you think London wasn't quite as great as he'd have you believe, it was his choice of footie team.

It's often said that Bushell invented Oi!, but that's giving the bloke far too much credit and doing the bands a big disservice. If it had been manufactured in the pages of *Sounds*, Oi! would have been nothing more

than a spineless Cockney knees-up. There were times when it did become too London orientated, and one of the series of Oi! albums was almost entirely devoted to music from the Big Smoke, but with bands like The Upstarts from Geordieland, Criminal Class from Coventry and Manchester's Blitz, it was obvious that something was happening on a national scale. As the saying goes, the East End's everywhere.



Above: Skinheads on Brighton seafront.

Credit where credit's due though. Bushell did have the foresight to bring together the new punk bands under Oi! the umbrella, thereby giving them the opportunity to progress as a movement. No doubt some of the bands would have done okay for themselves if they'd continued as plain old punk bands, but a new name did wonders in a world where everyone's looking for the next big thing. Just ask Cock Sparrer.

They hadn't even heard of Oi! until they were told that *Sunday Stripper* was on *Oi! The Album*, a street punk compilation that Bushell talked Sounds and EMI into financing and releasing in November, 1980. The band had been around since 1975, hadn't even recorded since '77, and had more or less jacked the game in. Not exactly young pups looking for their first break by any means.

Most of the other bands featured on the album couldn't be described as up-and-coming either. The old Slaughter favourite, *Where Have All The Bootboys Gone?*, was in there, and The Angelic Upstarts gave the fledgling Oi! movement its blessing with a couple of tracks too. Even The Cockney Rejects managed to get no less than three tracks on it, two under the name of The Postmen and one as The Terrible Twins. And just as every Oi! album had its high and low points, Splodgenessabounds waded in with the awful *Isubeleene*. Not a patch on their summer chart topper, the thirst-quenching, *Two Pints Of Lager And A Packet Of Crisps* (Deram).

Barney And The Rubbles' *Bootboys* added hooligan value to the album, but the one band that stood head and shoulders above all the other offerings, old and new, was The 4 Skins, with two great punk tracks in *Wonderful World* and *Chaos*. Now here was some fresh, raw talent just waiting to be discovered. The band had been formed in 1979 by four skinhead mates, Hoxton Tom McCourt (guitar), Garry Hodges (vocals), Steve 'H' Harmer (bass) and Gary Hitchcock (manager). Their interest in punk stemmed from following Sham, Menace, Skrewdriver and the Rejects, and they'd also been big fans of hard mod faves, Secret Affair. The idea of the band was all a bit of a laugh, and

despite a plum support slot with The Damned and The Cockney Rejects at the Bridge House (with Micky Geggus drumming for them), The 4 Skins didn't take life too seriously for quite a while. Not least because they didn't have the equipment to make anything more than a half-decent racket.

Oi! The Album gave them the kick up the arse they needed and by the new year they were ready to lead Oi!'s bid to take its boots and booze gospel to an awaiting public. Not before a few personnel changes though. H quit and ended up back as a roadie for The Rejects, Hoxton Tom took his place, Rockabilly Steve Pear came in on guitar, and John Jacobs planted his backside on the drummer's seat.

The idea was that a series of new punk conventions would be held to showcase the best in skinhead and punk bands. One at Southgate, one at The Bridge House in Canning Town and one at Acklam Hall. But what's a birth without some pain thrown in, and two out of the three gigs ended in violence.

Southgate in North London was the first to go off. The gig was held in early January at the Alan Pullenger Centre, a posh name for what was little more than a youth club. 300 turned up to see North London's very own Infa-Riot, Coventry's Criminal Class and The Angelic Upstarts, who stepped in at the last minute when The 4 Skins didn't show. H had just left the band to prepare to go before the beak for assaulting a policeman and they were still waiting for a replacement to walk into their lives.

Vocalist with Criminal Class was Craig St. Leon, who'd been a skinhead the first time around, but when the band formed in '79 their main influences were Sham, Skrewdriver and Slade, and not the reggae and soul of yesteryear. Their sound also drew heavily on the early Upstarts and had been known in the Midlands as thug rock until Oi! came along. This was the band's first



Above: The 4-Skins (NME)

London gig and they went down well enough in front of the assembled punks, skins and normals.

Next up were Mensi's marauders to play a few choice cuts from their set and then it was time for the homeboys Infa-Riot to strut their stuff. Two of the band, Lee and Floyd Wilson, were brothers who were originally from the West Country, but they had moved to North London in good time to form the band in February of 1980 with two local likely lads, Barry Damery and Gary McInerny. By the time Southgate came along, they already had a reputation as one of the best punk bands on the go, with support slots with The Upstarts and Johnny Lydon's 4 Be 2s safely under their belts. Not bad going for a couple of 17 year olds and two schoolies.

Unfortunately, they hardly got the chance to impress anybody at the Alan Pullenger Centre. They managed to squeeze in *Brick Wall* and *Riot Riot* before the venue erupted in just that. This time though it wasn't the skinheads who'd started the aggro. Older blokes, who'd been spoiling for a fight all night, finally found



Skins outside Last Resort Shop (Sounds).

one and nearly turned the birth of Oi! into an abortion.

In contrast, The Bridge House was never really likely to go off. This was Rejects country and had proved itself time and time again to be a safe bet for a trouble-free night out. The new look 4 Skins were there as headline merchants, belting out all the crowd favourites including a new one, *Clockwork Skinhead*, in front of 450 assorted street urchins. Playing the supporting role were Bristol punk band, Vice Squad, led by none other than the Queen Of Oi!, Beki Bondage, and South London's Anti-Establishment, who chipped in with half a dozen ditties on the theme of violence. Lovely stuff. And just to add a dollop of icing to the cake, Judge Dread made a guest appearance to give his seal of approval to the new skinhead hordes.

And so to Acklam Hall in West London. Anti-Establishment opened again, but did little to improve on their Oi! by numbers set churned out at the Bridge House. Far better were The Last Resort, who took their name from the famous skinhead shop which was situated in Aldgate, just off London's Petticoat Lane.

The band were managed by Micky French, who ran The Last Resort shop with his wife Margaret, with most band decisions being made on the terraces of Millwall's Den. The shop itself became a mecca for skinheads from all over the world during the early Eighties, and was like a second home for a lot of them. With a larger than life model of Marilyn Munroe as a centre piece, the shop sold skin and punk wear by the shelf load. Not that you had to buy anything. The shop became a regular meeting place for a chat and a fag, something that was encouraged by both Micky and Margaret who were well respected in skinhead circles.



Above: Infa-Riot (Link)

It started to go down hill a year or two after Southall though, especially in the mail order department, with kids getting sweet Fanny Adams in return for the money they'd sent in. The shop eventually closed its doors for good after Mick got sent down and with it went a slice of skinhead history.

The band actually came from sunny Herne Bay on the Kent coast, although all of them were ex-pat Londoners or from thereabouts. Roy Pearce on vocals had been a roadie for top Sham support band, Menace, while bass player Arthur "Bilko" Kitchener, the Peter Pan of Oi! at the grand old age of 32, had been a veteran of the music business since the Swinging Sixties. The other two, guitarist Charlie Duggan and drummer Andy Benfield could quite easily have passed as his kids.

Like The 4 Skins, The Last Resort were very much a skinhead outfit. In fact only Arthur wasn't a skin, a fact hidden by the ever-present cap. And in keeping with skinhead traditions, most of their songs were about aggro and life on the streets.

Back at the Acklam Hall, The Last Resort finished their set and made way for Infa-Riot, but once again the poor bastards weren't allowed to play. Just before they went on, a gang of local Ladbroke Grove skinheads and soul boys smashed their way into the hall and started an almighty ruck. The band and their followers responded in kind before barricading themselves in until the Old Bill arrived to restore order and help ferry seven injured bodies to the hospital.

The Ladbroke Grove mob had mistakenly believed that there was a West Ham firm at the gig, but that was never really on the cards with the Hammers playing a European game at Upton Park that night. At least the trouble had come from outside the gig this time, underlying the fact that violence was not

a problem confined to the Oi! movement as some would have it, but one facing society as a whole. And for all the talk about it being second rate punk music to bash people to, at least Oi! was doing its best to keep its own house in order.

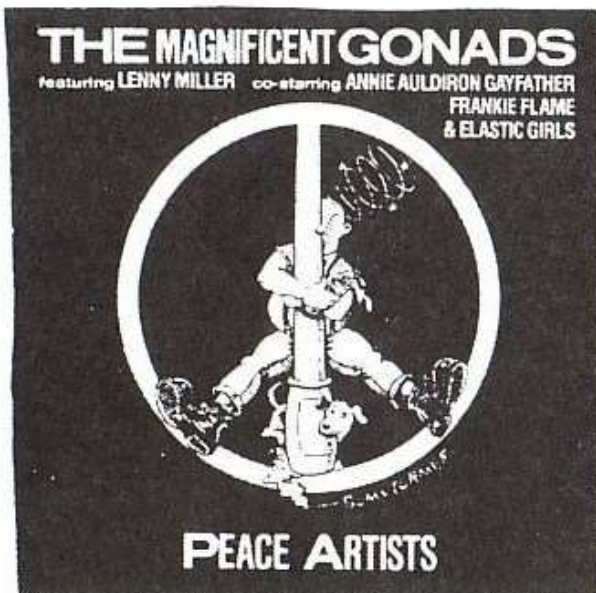
What's more it was a battle being won. Trouble had been a regular at punk gigs since Skrewdriver at The Vortex in '77, but it was something the Oi! bands did their best to stamp out. Most of them had a football-based following which meant the presence of rival mobs at gigs, but everyone had seen what had happened to the Rejects when they played the football hooligan card and nobody wanted a repeat performance. Now and then Oi! gigs did go off still along football lines (The Business and The Oppressed gig in Bridgend springs instantly to mind), but most of the time trouble was averted by calling a truce for the night or by using security drawn from opposing hooligan factions.

Oi! bands were regularly accused of asking for trouble because of the lyrics to some of the songs. Violence was certainly the most popular topic with the likes of *Someone's Gonna Die* (Blitz), *Violence* (Combat '84), *Violence In Our Minds* (The Last Resort), *Smash The Discos* (The Business) and *In For A Riot* (Infa-Riot), being just the tip of the iceberg. The bands always used to argue that they weren't advocating violence, but singing about the realities of life on the streets. What's more a lot of the songs actually spoke out against aggro, but you're always going to get the neanderthals who see them as a call to arms.

Even so if you really wanted to see some mindless violence all you had to do was follow the herds of sheep who made their way to the trendy nightclubs every Friday and Saturday evening. You were more likely to see a stabbing there than at any Oi! gig, but for some strange reason it was unlikely to make the 'papers.

Skinheads were still to be found at the centre of most of the gig aggro. Or at least people with crops and boots anyway. There have never been quality control stewards on the door of the skinhead cult deciding who gets in and





who doesn't. Anyone can claim to be a skinhead and as long as he looks the part, who's to say he's not? And for all its good points, Oi! did have an unhappy knack of attracting scum to the cult.

Skinhead fashion sunk to an all-time low in some Oi!-some circles, with the glue bag replacing any sign of a brain. When you're on the Evo-stick things are bad enough,- but some skinheads were sniffing anything they could get their grubby hands on from asthma inhalers to soda stream canisters.

Not surprisingly, a total lack of standards wasn't to every skinhead's liking. A lot remained loyal to the dress hard, dress smart traditions of those who had gone before, while others found their way in to the growing ranks of casuals who were quickly replacing skinheads as the terrace armies to reckon with. The Leeds Service Crew, Millwall's Bushwackers and West Ham's I.C.F., all had ex-skinheads among their casual ranks. Going casual not only got rid of having to mix with simpletons, it also saved you from the increasing interest the police were showing in kids with no hair and big boots.

Cult bashing was still a game being played at some gigs in London, although in the north, skins and punks tended to get on with each other well enough. Wattie's *Fuck A Mod* mentality even saw some skinheads abandoning all sign of their roots to do battle with mods at bank holiday beanos. Even The 4 Skins' John Jacobs couldn't resist the temptation and he picked up a £175 fine for his efforts at Hastings that Easter.

And of course that dreaded word, politics, had to raise its ugly head again. There will always be those who add two skinheads together and get a Hitler Youth rally and there's not a lot you can do about it. Oi! was tarred by the same brush and the sad fact was that Oi! was indeed politically motivated. A quick glance at the back of the sleeve of the *Bollocks To Christmas EP* (Secret) provides proof enough of that.

There you'll find a manifesto that any political party could proudly take to the country. Well, The Monster Raving Loony Green Giant Party anyway. Nationalising the breweries, bringing the price of beer down to ten pence a pint, and ending unemployment by diverting labour to the ceaseless production of Oi! albums, were just three of the, er, more novel suggestions. Oi! was about having a laugh and having a say, the politics of the street not the ballot box. The Gonads summed it up with *Pubs Not Jails* and *Hitler Was An 'Omo*, because everyone knew that no matter what shade of government gets in you can guarantee that the working classes will always be at the bottom of the heap.



Above: The Last Resort at Southall (Link).

Most of the bands and their followers just weren't interested in party political bullshit full stop, and went out of their way to distance themselves from extremists from both the left and the right.

When The Last Resort played, punters were often told to remove political badges and the like before being allowed in to the gig. Infa Riot went as far as dropping *Britain's Not Dead* from their set because of supposed National Front connotations, at a time when even squeaky clean Spandau Ballet were featured in the YNF 'paper, *Bulldog*, on the strength of their name. And Bushell took weekly swipes at both dodgy politics and violence in the pages of *Sounds*.

And any sieg-heiling from sections of the crowd was more often than not greeted with derision from the stage. Max Splodge used to say, "I can't see any seagulls", and when Tony "Panther" Cummins took over the role of frontman for The 4 Skins he'd throw back a casual, "No need to wave".

Compared to the days of Sham, Oi! didn't really have a look in when it came to either violence or extremist politics anyway. Bushell's 25th birthday party at the Bridge House in April, 1981, underlined the family affair that Oi! was fast becoming. 600 herberts, including members of a dozen or more bands, squashed into the pub to see The Business, The Last Resort, a reformed for

one day only Cock Sparrer, and The 4 Skins. And not a fist thrown in anger all night. Even tabloid attempts to pay kids to sieg heil for the camera fell flat on its face. The knockers could say what they liked but as The Business' Micky Fitz once had it, Oi! was nothing more than punk without the poseurs. Things seemed to be going well as the second Oi! album, *Strength Thru' Oil* (Deram), hit the streets in the middle of May! This time for your further inebriation, titillation and emancipation, Garry Bushell served up a plateful plus of generous helpings of The 4 Skins, The Last Resort, Infa-Riot, Cock Sparrer, Splodge, The Strike and others.



Above: The Business with road crew. Manager Lol Pryor (bottom right) went on to launch Syndicate, Link Records and Dojo.

Oi! gigs were being held up and down the country and trouble was conspicuous only by its virtual absence. And so as the summer approached it was full steam ahead. Two major festivals were planned for July, in Manchester and Bradford, with promises of similar events in Scotland and London to follow. Meantime a series of mini-festivals were organised which promoter Dave Long hoped "would prove that Oi! is not about mindless violence."

As fate would have it, one of the mini-festivals was to take place at the Hambrough Tavern, in Southall, at the start of July. On the bill were The Business, The Last Resort and The 4 Skins who had already played a number of gigs together on a rotating headline basis. The bands jumped at the chance of a gig up west because of complaints that they only ever played in the East End. If you weren't local, it was often hard getting transport home afterwards and so Southall gave fans from the other side of the city a chance to see the bands on their own doorstep for once.

Southall itself was and still is a usually quiet suburb of West London and the bands expected it to be just like any other gig. True, it was home to a large Asian community, but that didn't make it a no-go area. Oi! bands had played gigs in potentially far more volatile places like Deptford, Hackney, Moss Side, and Bradford, without a whiff of bovver.

On the night, the bands arrived a couple of hours early for the gig so that they could do their sound checks and get themselves ready. The last to arrive were The Business, whose van came under attack for no apparent reason from a gang of Asian youths as it entered the town centre. The driver ended up driving the wrong way down a road so that the van could reach the gig in one piece. When they arrived at the Tavern, there was already a crowd of about 300 Asians on the other side of the road and two dozen policemen keeping an eye on them.

By about seven, half past, gig-goers were arriving at the pub with tales of what was happening outside. A few had been attacked on their way to the gig, others had traded verbal abuse. One skinhead had even been dragged off a bus and assaulted, while others were warned that they were going to get it later on that night. The worst that happened was a couple of skinheads putting a chip shop window in, but even that wasn't a patch on what was to come.

For whatever reason, the local Asians were expecting trouble and were well prepared for it. Nobody has stocks of petrol bombs at the ready just on the off chance. Maybe they equated Oi! with skinheads and skinheads with the National Front, and saw the gig as some sort of white supremacist stand in the middle of their community. Back in '79, an Anti-Nazi League demo outside an NF meeting in Southall's town hall had ended in violence and the death of anti-racist activist, Blair Peach, and that wouldn't have been far from their minds. Neither would the frequent attacks on Asians by skinheads, particularly in the East End of London.

But even if that was the case, it doesn't excuse the scenes that were to follow and neither was it the whole story. Talk on the streets was that if that gig hadn't gone off, then The Meteors' gig booked for the following week would have done. And The Meteors had neither a skinhead or a racist following.

The arrival of two coaches from The Last Resort shop certainly didn't help matters according to the press. By the time Southall had reached the front pages of the newspapers, it was claimed that anything up to six coaches were used and that they had been organised by the National Front. In fact Micky French himself had booked them and it was standard practice when The Last Resort played away and knew its fans would want to travel.

There was also talk about the coaches arriving covered in National Front regalia. That must be tabloid speak for the two Last Resort Union Jacks in the back windows. This supposedly provoked the locals, but only in this country could it be regarded as offensive to wave the nation's flag. The very same flag in fact that had seen Hitler and his cronies on their way during the Second World War.

What everyone seemed to forget was that the National Front hadn't bought the rights to the Union Jack and there was no reason why it should be abandoned to them either. Virtually all skinheads are patriotic, but that doesn't mean that all skinheads are racist. Not by a long chalk.

That's not to say that NF and BM supporters weren't at the gig because they were. But so were left-wing skinheads, Irish skinheads and even (shock horror) a couple of black skinheads who followed The Last Resort. The media tried to pretend that it was nothing more than a racist gathering, but they were well off the mark. If that had been the case, different bands would have been booked to play (some Oi! bands like The Elite and The Ovaltinies were pandering to the extreme right at the time), and they would have turned up a lot more firm-handed.

Perhaps only half the 500-strong crowd were skinheads anyway. There were a few punks, some rockabillys and lots of normal types mainly out for a beer and a laugh. There were also a few kids who followed the bands and about a hundred women at the gig. And when it says women, that's exactly what it means. Not just skinhead girl bruisers who could hold their own in the ring with a pit bull terrier, but wives and girlfriends of band members and the like.



Above: Micky Fitz, The Business (Link)

All in all, not quite the army of sieg heiling skinheads certain sections of the media claimed were present.

When the crowd outside the pub was still only a few hundred strong, the police should have moved in and ended a potentially volatile situation there and then. Instead, they chose to stand back and allow numbers to grow to around the two thousand mark, making the possibility of a serious outbreak of trouble all the more likely. A tactical error that was to prove

very costly indeed, but one that was hardly touched on by the media.

Despite the threat of trouble, the decision was taken to allow the gig to go ahead. To cancel it would have left large numbers of gig-goers waiting around outside for the coaches to return to take them home. And if that had happened, the two opposing crowds would really have given the thin blue line

something to write home about. At least the police knew exactly where the bands and their followers were if they stayed in the pub.

The bar was closed, the doors locked and the curtains drawn, and for the best part of the night it was just like any other gig. First on were The Business from South London (la, la, la). They had formed in October, 1979, with Micky Fitz doing the shouting, Nick Cunningham banging the drums, Steve Kent on guitar and Martin Smith on bass, but even as late as Southall they hadn't been fully accepted in Oi! circles because of their pop leanings. In fact it gave them a headstart over most punk bands because it gave them a clearer sound, and one that was soon to see them emerge as one of the best Oi! bands ever.

At the Hambrough, they went down as well as they ever had, belting out soon to be Oi! standards like *Harry May* and *Suburban Rebels*, the latter a song that saw Oi! poet Garry Johnson's words set to music. You can forget your local HMV record store. The Business' brand of drunk rock should have been on tap at every pub in the country.

Next on were The Last Resort who were already established favourites on the Oi! circuit. They charged through a set of crowd pleasers like *King Of The Jungle* and *Working Class Kids*, before making way for the mighty 4 Skins who lashed out with classics like *A.C.A.B.* and *Wonderful World*. By all accounts it would have been a great gig if it wasn't for the trouble brewing outside.

Throughout the night the bands did their best to keep things moving along and their fans away from the windows. The police were starting to take more flak from the crowd and just as The 4 Skins were belting out *Chaos*, the pub's windows started to come in. Bricks and bottles started raining in on the police

Below: The Hambrough Tavern goes up in flames during the Southall riot. (NME).



and the pub, and inside the place erupted in pandemonium as band members and followers alike grabbed what ever they could to defend themselves.

Again band members and their immediate following tried to keep some sort of order inside the pub, but people were being cut by flying glass and then The Tavern was attacked from the rear. It looked like either the place would be stormed or petrol bombs would follow the stones through the windows, so just before eleven o'clock, the doors were unlocked and the decision taken to evacuate the pub.

The police did their best to keep the gig-goers and local Asians apart. Some bricks and bottles were returned to the Asian crowd, but the media claim that skinheads attacked the police was pure fabrication. Some of the older blokes even picked up riot shields and stood with the police, in a bid to save the pub and let the bands get their equipment out.

The size of the crowd proved to be too much for them though. The 4 Skins had just got everything out, when the police and the skinheads were forced back beyond the pub. A police van was set on fire and rammed into the Hambrough Tavern, setting it alight.

By then most of the band's followers were on their way to Hayes & Harlington station. The police had sealed off the area and so, with the coaches being turned back, the train was the only way home. The Special Patrol Group had also arrived to help make a bad situation worse and arrests were made on both sides, mainly for public order offences. Arthur from the Resort was one of the unfortunates who got lifted that night.

Instead of pursuing the gig-goers to the station, the Asian youths seemed content to vent their fury at the Old Bill and the pub. The Hambrough Tavern was very much a white pub and it appeared to be the real target for the mob, with the Oi! gig giving them some sort of excuse. Whatever, clashes between locals and the police continued well after the bands and their entourage were at home tucked up in bed.

When the pub first came under attack, a lot of people thought that their time had come. Someone could easily have died that night, but looking back there were the odd funny moments too. Like the P.A. man, who had all his equipment chained up because he was worried that skinheads might steal it. So secure was it fixed, that it all went up in flames with the pub because he couldn't undo the chains in time.

Then there was the small kid inside the pub who had a toy machine gun. A skinhead grabbed it, smashed a window and started "firing" at the crowd outside. Some Asians and a few plods ran off in the opposite direction shouting, "They've got a gun!".

And even as the pub burned down, a



member of The 4 Skins who shall remain nameless was asking the pub manager for the money for the gig!

Plus there's Rockabilly Steve who jumped through a window to escape the flames, was chased across gardens by a gang of Asians, got hit over the head with a frying pan by a bloke who had come to his front door, and was eventually thrown in the back of a police van and dumped on the outskirts of the town! Talk about it pouring when it's not raining.



Above: The 4-Skins with Roy Pearce on vocals, and Paul Swain and Ian Davies in the line-up.

The next day though things didn't look very funny in any light. No matter their reasons, the people responsible for the Southall riot were the local Asian youths who attacked the pub and then continued to fight pitched battles with the police well into the night. That much you'd think was beyond dispute. Certainly if it had been the other way around, a mob of skinheads attacking an Asian gig, and then rioting until the early hours, the media and the politicians would have had no hesitation in pointing the accusing finger.

But when you opened the newspapers the following day that's not the story that was told. In fact you had to wonder if the press had witnessed an entirely different riot. One where pages could be filled with tall tales about racist skinheads going on the rampage after seeing Nazi bands at a National Front rally. But no, they were talking about the same Hambrough Tavern, the same Southall and the same riot.

The bands and their followers weren't just blamed for the riot either. They were hung, drawn and quartered for it by a media circus that added up to nothing more than a kangaroo court. Only *The Times* and *The Guardian* printed anything like a fair account of what had really happened. The tabloids of course loved every minute of it and had themselves a field day.

Being at the forefront of the Oi! movement, The 4 Skins came in for the most stick. In March they had featured alongside Infa-Riot in a *Sunday Times* feature on fascism and youth. While it wasn't exactly stated that either band

were racist, the implications were there, and it had cost both bands gigs. They had issued statements at the time saying that they weren't fascists and neither did they want a racist following, and it looked as if the whole episode was nothing more than a storm in a teacup. After all, Infa-Riot had even played at Rock Against Nazi gigs.

But the tabloids seized on the feature as if it was somehow proof that The 4 Skins were indeed fascists. And obviously the way they twisted it, that's exactly how it appeared. Most newspapers claimed the band incited the skinheads at the gig to riot and claimed they were sieg heiling on stage. All a pack of lies.

A few even went as far as saying that Infa-Riot were on the bill at Southall just to add credence to their drivel. Garry Bushell also came in for criticism and he wasn't at the gig either. When news of Southall broke, he was up in Newcastle with The Angelic Upstarts. Much to their amazement, even Cock Sparrer turned up in a local 'paper as one of the bands who supposedly started the riot!

Another old feature that came back to haunt The 4 Skins was one on skinheads from *Sounds* in which the band's manager, Gary Hitchcock, had said he was once in the British Movement. What wasn't mentioned though was the fact that he also said that skinheads who get involved in politics were "mugs", or that the feature pre-dated the formation of the band.

Another classic was the photo which appeared in quite a few newspapers of a crisp new National Front leaflet lying on top of the smouldering ruins of the Tavern. Either the NF had invented fireproof paper or someone had put the leaflet there after the event. It was also claimed that hundreds of NF leaflets were handed out at the gig, but that wasn't the case either. Two skinheads had tried to hand out some at the gig for the White Nationalist Crusade, but they'd been stopped by Steve Cooper, The Business' roadie. Most people hadn't even seen them.

The *Strength Thru' Oi!* album turned out to be another skeleton in the cupboard. Not only was the title a play on a Nazi slogan (not that it had done bands like Joy Division any harm), but it turned out that the skinhead on the cover was Nicky Crane, a leading light in the British Movement. In fact the front cover was supposed to feature a bloke called Carlton Leech, who was a body-building soul boy type, but the photos didn't turn out. So they decided to use one of a skinhead and by the time they found out who he was, it was too late. Nicky's BM tattoos were airbrushed away and nobody thought anyone would be any the wiser. That's the way Garry Bushell tells it anyway, and according to the book *Oi! A View From The Dead-End Of The Street*, he is the journalist the kids know and trust so there you go.

The media couldn't have dug up much more dirt if they were hoping to reach Australia. And what they couldn't discover, they simply invented. Overnight, *Oi!* moved from street level cult to front page notoriety. It was written off as mindless music for an equally mindless audience, and everyone remotely connected with the movement was branded a racist.

Meanwhile, the politicians couldn't do enough to pander to the Asian community of Southall. The G.L.C.'s Ken Livingstone and Prime Minister Maggie Thatcher were quick enough to lap up everything they had to say, but nobody was interested in meeting representatives from the bands to hear their version of events. Not even the Labour Party, supposedly the party of the working classes. So one-sided was the aftermath that you'd have thought it was the skinheads who'd attacked the pub while a few Asians were enjoying a quiet pint. Even the Asians version of events was largely buried in the bollocks that the media spewed up, so the real reason for the riot will probably never be known. With hindsight the gig might have looked

SKUNX TOUR

- ERASERHEAD (THU MAY 20)
 - ARH
 - WET POINT THEATRE
- PETER AND THE TEST TUBE BABIES (FRI MAY 21)
 - SUBCULTURE
 - VERBAL ABUSE
- THE WARRIORS (SAT MAY 22)
 - ANGELA RIPPON'S BUM
- THE BUSINESS (FRI MAY 28)
 - ONE WAY SYSTEM
 - VICIOUS RUMOURS
- THE DRONES (SAT MAY 29)
 - ANABOLIC STEROIDS
 - SUBURBAN RELAPSE
- THE GONADS (SUN MAY 30)
 - THE JOKES ON YOU

11-11 BRUNSWICK RD LONDON E11 1AB

like a mistake, but the bands played Southall for no other reason than music and to blame them for the riot was a massive travesty of justice.

Oi! ended up being daubed with a massive big swastika and the music industry couldn't distance itself quick enough. Deram immediately withdrew and deleted *Strength Thru' Oi!*, just as it entered the Top 50, and without even asking for the bands' side of the story. The Oi! Festival due to take place at Manchester's Mayfield was first postponed until August because of "a double booking" and then cancelled all together, and the same fate befell the one planned for Bradford Tiffany's. The irony was that the bloke organising the Bradford festival was Asian. Oi! The Turban they called him.

Below: Skinheads at Southend, August 1983



Promoters pulled out of other gigs, Oi! kissed goodbye to any chance of radio airplay, and both The 4 Skins and The Business lost major record deals. Shops were also refusing to stock Oi! releases and rumours were flying about that chart shops were being asked not to return sales figures for those that were sold.

It could all have very well ended there because it all

took its toll and brought the movement to its knees. The bands had other ideas though. After a few days of doom and gloom, everyone knuckled down and began pick up the pieces. Most of the shit had been thrown in the direction of The 4 Skins and so they had perhaps the biggest mountain to



Above: The Blitz (Link)

climb. They offered to arrange a benefit gig for injured police officers along with the Asian community of Southall, and said they'd play an independent anti-racist gig to show that they harboured no ill-feelings.

With A.C.A.B. in their set, a lot of people assumed that the band were anti-police, but that wasn't the case. Virtually everyone realises that society needs some sort of police force if its to survive. What The 4 Skins , and bands like the Upstarts, were against was bad policing. The coppers at Southall had literally been piggies in the middle and ended up on the receiving end of most of the stick dished out. A benefit was the band's attempt to heal relations with the local community and the force, but in the end they were knocked back for both the police and anti-racist gig. Still, at least they'd made the effort.

A secret gig was also organised at Mottingham's Prince Of Wales pub in South London, and BBC's *Nationwide* was invited along so that they could see for themselves that Oi! didn't mean trouble. The 4 Skins had booked the gig as a country and western outfit called The Skans, and the support band for the night was The Bollyguns, better known as The Business. The evening was trouble-free, but marred by the sound cutting out all the way through The

4 Skins' set. It all ended in a bit of a fiasco with half the audience up on the stage making up for the lack of volume coming from the speakers.

With little chance of a record deal, The 4 Skins decided to release a single, *One Law For Them* on their own Clockwork Fun label. It was a damning attack on the class system that pervades British justice and was the perfect answer to what had happened after Southall. If British justice is the best in the world, then God help all you foreign bastards. Despite problems with distribution, with some shops refusing to stock it, it became one of the biggest selling punk singles of the year.

Oi! conventions were held to try and iron out the problems facing the bands, but they ended up being little more than talking shops. The one silver lining was that Secret agreed to handle the manufacturing and distribution of future Oi! releases, including another Oi! album, the aptly named *Carry On Oi!*, which saw the light of day in October.

In fact by October, Oi! in general had taken great steps towards recovery. Infa-Riot and The Business went on tour to promote the release of their debut singles, *Kids Of The Eighties* and *Harry May* respectively (both on Secret), and played a couple of anti-racist gigs to boot, one in Sheffield and one in Manchester.

The Sheffield one was billed as Oi! Against Racism, Political Extremism, But Still Against The System, and it took place a week after Rock Against Racism had held their own concert in the city under the banner, Oi! Against Racism. Shorter, but not as sweet.

To confuse matters, Infa-Riot played both, but bands like The Business and The 4 Skins didn't want anything to do with RAR because it would have been as good as jumping straight out of the fire and into the frying pan. Sham had done what they were told and ended up being used, so nobody was foolish enough to fall for that old chestnut again. And you certainly didn't have to wave a SWP placard to prove you were anti-racist.

Another band out and about was Blitz, who although always called a Manc outfit, actually came from New Mills and Buxton in Derbyshire. Still, near enough. The four piece band, two punks and two skins, had been on the go since March 1980, and were well known by the time of Southall because Bushell was always raving about them, and because they were one of the few bands who had been banned from The Mayflower Club in Manchester. Apparently, some bouncers had taken a kicking for trying to stop a stage invasion during *Fuck You*. Silly billies.



In August, 1981, their debut single was released on the fledgling No Future label. Much to everyone's surprise, especially that of the band and the record company, *All Out Attack* ended up selling over 25,000 copies and basically provided the money for No Future to expand its activities.

October saw the band play the Bradford leg of the Right To Work March as well as headline a No Future "Skunk Rock" package which included The Partisans and The Samples. Skunk was the name for music for skins and punks that had dreamed up at the first ever Oi! convention at London's Conway Hall, just before Southall, in a bid to end the aggro between the two cults at gigs.

Even The 4 Skins, who it was thought might never play live again after Southall, went back on the road before the end of the year. Gary Hodges left the band shortly after the Mottingham gig, and before their comeback gig at Brannigan's in Leeds, Steve Pear parted company too. They'd come this far and so the decision was taken to keep the band going and to keep the name. Former roadie, Panther Cummins took over the vocal duties, John Jacobs picked up the guitar and ex-Conflict drummer, Peter Abbots, became the sticks man.

The only band not pulling their weight was The Last Resort. Here was a band that was destined for much bigger things if Southall hadn't happened along.

Anyone who saw them or had anything to do with them could tell you that. But instead of touring the country to build a name for themselves, they played the same old South London boozers time after time.

They decided to call it a day at the start of '82, after trouble at a King's Lynn gig between skinheads and

local soul boys which resulted in a pub being smashed up. In the end everyone aboard the band's coach home was arrested, but ended up being released without charges.

An album, *A Way Of Life - Skinhead Anthems*, was hurriedly recorded and released in April on the Last Resort label, which was run by Micky French. It was blatantly aimed at the skinhead market for a quick cash-in, rather than to show the world what they'd be missing - hence the album's title, the poor quality of the recording, and the inclusion of *Red, White And Blue* and *Last Resort Bootboys* at the expense of *Soul Boys* and *Johnny Bardon*.

Another let down was the book, *Oi! A View From The Dead-End Of The Street* (Babylon Books). It was supposed to be the true story of Oi!, but it fell well short of the mark. In fact it was poorly written, patronising and confused, as if





Above: Oi! Gig in Prague.

Inset: Prague skinhead.

Garry Johnson had written it in one drunken sitting. Maybe it would have been better left to a Garry of the Bushell variety.

1982 was very much an up and down year all round. In February, Skunx opened to the sound of Infa-Riot at the Blue Coat Boy in Islington, London, to give skin and punk bands a regular venue in the capital. By this time, the Infas were drifting away from their Oi! tag and more and more towards the punk scene. They picked up the support slot on The Exploited's Apocalypse Now Tour and joined them at Glasgow's Apollo Theatre for the Gathering Of The Clans with a number of other punk hopefuls. An all-seater theatre wasn't the ideal venue, and with Glasgow's mod barmy army declaring war, it might have been better to have had the gathering in The Exploited's home town of Edinburgh. You live and learn.

The 4 Skins released *Yesterday's Heroes* before unleashing their debut album, *The Good, The Bad And The 4 Skins*. They too had signed to Secret, a label not renowned for throwing money around, and so the finished product was poorly produced and tended to lack power. It certainly surprised a few people though as it walked on the wild side of Chas And Dave, but only just (*Plastic Gangsters* could have been Madness).

They went on tour to promote it with Combat '84 in tow, but by November had lost two bodies in the shape of Messrs. Abbots and Jacobs. In came Paul

Swain and Ian Davies who had previously been with Hatfield Oi! band, Criminal Damage. Trouble also returned to a few gigs, including one at the 100 Club, and they still had to live with the effects of Southall.



.Above: Upstarts gig in Bologna, Italy.

The local council banned them from performing at the Keighley Funhouse with Trevor Griffith's play, *Oi! For England*. The play, which eventually made it on to the box, was obviously anti-racist, but such are the whims of local democracy. The local student's union stepped in to put on the play, but they refused to let The 4 Skins perform because they also had them down as fascists. And they wonder why skinheads hate them!

With the release of *Oi! Oi! That's Yer Lot*, Secret's final Oi! album, and Bushell's albeit tongue-in-cheek *Punk Is Dead* article in *Sounds*, it began to look as if Oi! was finished. Companies like Riot City didn't help matters by punting any old shit with four mohicans on the cover.

By the end of the year, Blitz had split after seeing their album, *Voice Of A Generation*, reach number 27 in the national album charts with zero promotion. And of course, no Blitz effectively meant the end of No Future. The Business went the same way in December because of musical differences.

Still Oi! refused to lie down though. Micky Fitz bounced back at the start of '83 with a new-look Business, having culled Mark Brennan (bass) and Steve Whale (guitar) from Lewisham band, Blackout, and eventually picking up

Kevin Boyce (drums) from the same outfit after a false start with Combat '84's John Fisher. Reality punk was the new battle cry, as the band recorded *Suburban Rebels* (Secret), which went to number 37 in the nationals, despite being Bushwacked in *Sounds* by the Godfather Of Oi!.

Like other Oi! bands, The Business hadn't compromised an inch along the way. They played loads of benefit concerts (far more than a lot of trendy lefty bands) and always refused to play gigs where sections of their following were banned (as was the case at The Marquee with skinheads) and where ticket prices or the price of beer was too high (as was the case at The Lyceum). As much as any band, The Business captured the spirit of Oi! to a tee. Having a laugh with the likes of *Drinkin' And Drivin'* and having a say with killer cuts like *Guttersnipe*, a classic anti-tabloid song in the mould of Sparrer's immortal *The Sun Says*.

One-eyed hero, Roy Pearce was back in the Oi! fold too after replacing Panther as vocalist with The 4 Skins. The Last Resort had managed to sneak *Horrorshow* on to *Oi! Oi! That's Yer Lot* as The Warriors, but now he was committed to life with Hoxton Tom and the boys, until The 4 Skins finally called it a day in 1984.

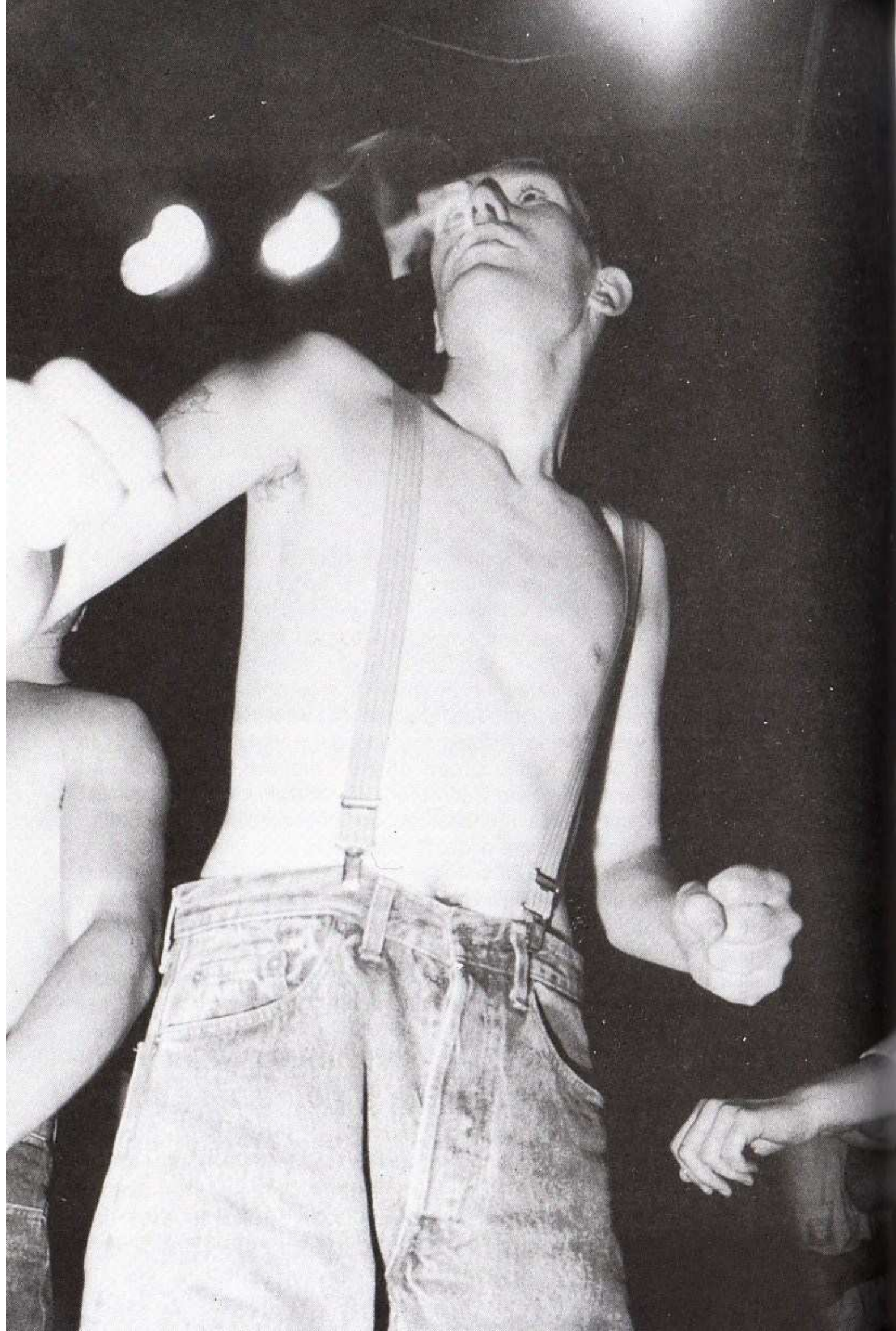
They became fed up with not being able to gig as much as they wanted to and then Paul Swain and Ian Davies were sent down for being naughty boys. The band said their farewells with the live album, *From Chaos To 1984* (Syndicate). All the classics bar *Sorry* made it a fitting tribute to Oi!'s number one outfit.

And what would the year have been without an Oi! album. Although Secret's last effort was supposedly the final episode, the sleeve notes had promised that future albums were being hidden up various people's sleeves. In November, 1983, *Son Of Oi!* hit the streets on the Syndicate label which had more or less taken over from where Secret left off. Certainly not the best Oi! album, and a lot of the bands on it lasted no longer than the recording session, but at least it was out there flying the flag.

Few had given Oi! much chance of survival after Southall, but against all the odds it survived and grew. London's *Evening Standard* called it "pop's lowest common denominator", but like the rest of them they didn't know what they were on about. Oi! was about having a laugh and having a say, but it was also a lot more than that. Oi! was the voice of street kids everywhere, and that's one voice they will never keep quiet in a month of Southalls.

"Oi! is rock n' roll, beer, sex, going to gigs, havin' a laugh, fighting back, it's our life, it's our show, our world, it's our way of life."

Garry Johnson.



CHAPTER SIX

NEITHER WASHINGTON OR MOSCOW

"Britain first became aware of the term paki-bashing last Wednesday. A group of skinheads boasted on TV that they beat up coloured immigrants in East London for the fun of it."

Sunday Mirror 1969.

There's nothing like a bit of violence to boost the old viewing figures, so it was hardly surprising that the cameras kept rolling when the tables and chairs started to fly at Benny's Bar in Harlow. Seeing a nightclub wrecked by rival mobs of skinheads, and capturing it all on celluloid, must have been a producer's dream come true. And particularly when your angle has been shock value from day one.

The cameras were there to shoot some live footage of London band, Combat '84, for a documentary in the BBC's *40 Minutes* series called *Skinheads*. Before plumping for Combat, the programme makers had approached a number of bands, but they either weren't interested in playing ball or obviously weren't controversial enough. The Business looked a good bet, and would have given a good account of the skinhead cult and themselves, but *40 Minutes* had other ideas.

In the wake of Southall, they wanted something a bit more controversial, a bit more spicy. After all, what would a programme on skinheads be without a bit of racism and the promise of a good kicking for some poor bastard? And who better to bump into than Chubby Chris Henderson, singer with Combat '84, and well-known racist thug about town?

Chubby Chris never denied his politics and perhaps that was one of his biggest mistakes. Others who flirted with the extreme right have kept quiet about it and ended up in the big time. And of course, dabble in the extreme left and nobody bats an eyelid. As for trouble, every time a gig went off in London and skinheads were to blame, you could bet your last penny that someone would put forward Chubby Chris as chief culprit. The bloke's the first to admit that he's been involved in more than his fair share of rucks and is certainly no wronged innocent, but it got to the point where he was being blamed for aggro at gigs he wasn't even at.

Ironically enough, Combat '84 had finished their set and were watching fellow Londoner's, The Elite, when fighting broke out at Benny's. What's more, together with Harlow's very own Gary Hitchcock, Chris did his best to stop the

aggro by making appeals from the stage and trying to keep the battling mobs apart on the dancefloor. Two points that usually don't get made. With Chubby Chris up front, Combat '84 were written off in some circles as a right-wing band that meant trouble. All this must have come as a big surprise to the rest of the band since none of them shared Chris' political views. In fact all the band had done their best to keep politics and football out of their music, and that went for Chris as much as any of the others. To encourage either at gigs was like signing your own death warrant, particularly after Southall.

If nothing else, *Skinheads*, had clearly shown that the band, just like the skinhead cult, was made up of individuals each with their own beliefs and opinions. Bass player Deptford John said he wasn't interested in any politics and was certainly no racist, while drummer Andy The Greek was exactly that. All bubble and squeak. And as for Chris, he spent more time talking about education, adoption and soap powder than he did about politics.

Still, you'll always get those who only see what they want to see. And Combat '84 obviously had short straw written all over them. Thanks to the rumours about politics and aggro which haunted the band throughout its career, Combat ended up losing gigs, tours and even a record deal with Secret.



Above: Combat 84.

One thing they never lost though was their grassroots support, who helped the band pack out punk venues on the London circuit on a regular basis, and who put the band's debut EP, *Orders Of The Day*, at number 11 in the indie charts after it had clocked up sales

around the 5,000 mark. Not bad for a self-financed release on the band's own Victory label which was afforded minimal press exposure and only poor distribution.

In October '83, a good year after *Skinheads* was broadcast, Combat '84 split while recording their debut album, *Send In The Marines*. Deptford John and guitarist Jim of monkey ears fame got fed up with the band's right-wing image and left to roadie for The U.K. Subs. Combat had become yet another casualty of the skinhead movement courtesy of politics.

In a perfect world everyone would have their own political beliefs and would save them for the ballot box and the occasional spot on *Question Time*. That's exactly what Combat '84 tried to do, but they might as well have been pissing in the wind for all the good it did them. The reality is that everyone's entitled to their own opinions, it's just that some are more entitled than others.

We've all got our crosses to bear, and since the late Seventies, the skinhead cult has laboured under the strain of politics. And that's particularly true of the tinpot variety. Both the left and the right have attempted to use and abuse skinheads with varying degrees of success, and to such an extent that today, extremist politics have become as much a part of the cult as Doctor Marten boots.

The original skinheads had shown no real interest in organised politics and were never associated with the far right. When you're young and there's talent to chase, a ball to boot around or a street corner to defend, what the politicians get up to shouldn't come into it. After all, no matter who you vote for, the government always gets in and there hasn't been one yet offering free crops and cheap boots has there?

True, some of the class of '69 supported the ideas of Enoch Powell, but you would have found others who supported the Labour Party, the Tories and even the Liberals. A few stray cats even thought the hippies had the right idea. But at the end of the day, politics was well down the list of skinhead priorities and never the cause of division.

It was the National Front who first put the politics into skinhead. Before '76, very few people took the NF seriously and it spent its time roaming around in the political wilderness. All that was to change though with the arrival of some refugee Malawi Asians that summer. The actual numbers involved were tiny, but the tabloids managed to turn a few dozen into a flood, and in doing so whipped up near hysteria with tales of five star hotels and massive state handouts.



The National Front suddenly found the race card was coming up trumps and from virtually nowhere, managed to field hundreds of candidates and secure 250,000 votes in the '77 local elections. The voice of the far right had come in from the cold, and people were even beginning to talk about the Front replacing the Liberal Party as the third force in British politics.

Like all parties, the National Front had a whole range of policies, but they were seen very much as a one plank effort, best summed up by the slogan, IF THEY'RE BLACK, SEND THEM BACK. Immigration was becoming a key issue in British politics at the time, and one that would eventually see Margaret Thatcher become Britain's first lady Prime Minister. She literally pulled the rug from underneath the NF's feet by using the race issue for her own ends.

But that was still a couple of years down the road. Meantime, the Front was picking up considerable support, particularly amongst the country's youth. And it wasn't just skinheads answering the Front's call to arms either. Punks, teds, mods, hairies and normals all began to claim allegiance to the Front, although few could tell you anything about the party beyond a few slogans, and even fewer were old enough to vote.

Punk's brief flirtation with Nazi chic had already led to the formation of the Anti-Nazi League and its musical offshoot Rock Against Racism. Now with the NF very much on the march, both anti-fascist organisations stepped up their efforts to prevent its success, particularly among the young. With the formation of the Young National Front towards the end of '77, schools, football grounds, gigs and youth clubs all became political battlegrounds, with the kids being used as pawns by both sides.

Among white working class kids, the YNF definitely had the edge. In many ways, saying you were NF was part of playing the hard man, as you ran along behind the big boys in the playground chanting, "National Front". It was just part of growing up in a world of a quick fag in the toilets and bunking off early so you didn't have to go to double French. The Anti-Nazi League didn't really help matters by asking teachers, of all people, to speak out against the Front. What further encouragement did you need to fork out ten pence for a copy of *Bulldog*?

Skinheads became a particular focus for NF recruitment drives during the days of Sham. While virtually everyone else was condemning football hooliganism and other skinhead pastimes, the Young National Front hailed them as terrace warriors and published a regular League Of Louts feature in its newspaper, *Bulldog*. Here was a party that didn't talk at you, but talked to you, and didn't look down at you, but treated you as the cream of British youth.

Just as punks had flaunted anarchy, skinheads quickly became identified in the public's eye as National Front bootboys. For most, it was a chance to fly the Union Jack and stick two fingers up at the rest of society, and often little more. And of course, the prospect of regular clashes at rallies and marches with anti-Front demonstrators just added to the occasion for a lot of skins.



Above: Skrewdriver Reich'n'Rolling (Skrewdriver).

The Anti-Nazi League had its successes among the young too, not least because it could get big name bands to perform at its rallies. 80,000 people turned up at their Carnival Against The Nazis at London's Hyde Park in April '78, to see the likes of The Clash, The Tom Robinson Band and Steel Pulse. In fact so successful was the Rock Against Racism idea, that it wasn't long before the YNF had come up with its own, Rock Against Communism mirror organisation.

The ANL's biggest mistake though was to try and drive the National Front into a corner. That just made it more attractive to kids looking to rebel and helped reinforce the "no-one likes us, we don't care" attitude already widespread among YNF skinheads. That said, even at its peak, National Front membership never topped 15,000, and some credit for that must go to the ANL and similar anti-fascist organisations.

Ironically the skinhead image probably cost the National Front more votes than it gained. The 1979 general election results didn't come close to the Front's success of two years earlier, and the party quickly ran out of steam, largely thanks to the in-fighting that followed. Matters weren't helped by a series of tabloid features exposing a number of leading NF officials as closet Nazis, homosexuals and convicted child sex perverts.

A lot of skinheads deserted the Front at the time, partly because of the above, but also because more extreme organisations had come into the frame. To

be really where it was at, your YNF membership card had to be traded in for one bearing the name of the British Movement or the Anti-Paki League. Others claimed to be members of paramilitary style organisations like Section 88 or the National Socialist Action Party.

The British Movement benefited most from the influx of skinheads, with its numbers swelling to around 8,000. It was an openly Nazi organisation and, much to its members' delight, it was far more interested in direct street action than waiting for the returning officer to tell you that you'd polled 326 votes, 15 less than The Bring A Bottle Party.

By the time Southall was ready to go down in history, skinhead support for both the National Front and the British Movement was on the decline. Both were so involved in internal battles over leadership and the like, that they became about as attractive as watching Aldershot and Halifax Town play out a 0-0 draw in the pouring rain.

There's no doubt that a lot of skinheads supported the NF and the BM because it was the fashionable thing to do at the time. As Max Splodge said, by the time they were old enough to vote, most of them had grown out of it. Even so, whether skinheads or not, there will always be those who genuinely believe in the politics of the far right just as there are those committed to any other political walk of life. And for those still intent on fighting for race and nation, the rebirth of Skrewdriver was to provide the life-raft they were looking for.

The band had called it a day and returned to Lancashire in the summer of 1978, totally disillusioned with the music business. Unlike Sham, Skrewdriver had refused to answer the music 'papers' call to distance themselves from the racist element among their following and had paid the crippling price of no publicity, no gigs and no record contract.

Towards the end of 1979, vocalist Ian Stuart and bass player Ian McKay moved to Manchester and revived the band with the help of two locals, guitarist Glen Jones and drummer Martin Smith. They gigged in and around the city and released the *Built Up, Knocked Down* EP on the local TJM indie label. Any hope of making it to the big-time though were still hindered by alleged National Front links and so at the end of 1980, Skrewdriver folded for the second time.

When the band resurfaced in London towards the end of '81, only lead singer Ian Stuart had made the journey south. He had moved back to London that August and with the support of The Last Resort shop, had reformed Skrewdriver. Joining him were Mark French and Geoff Williams who had been with The Elite, and Mark Neeson. At the start of '82 *Back With A Bang* was released on Last Resort Sounds, and it found its way into the



independent charts. Skrewdriver began to gig again in and around the Big Smoke, packing out Skunx and the 100 Club on a regular basis.

Doubt still remained about the band's political leanings, but not for much longer. Skrewdriver had been accused of being a National Front band way back in '77, at a time when none of the band was involved in the NF. All they had done was refuse to disown the increasing numbers of racist skinheads who found their way to gigs. In fact, Ian Stuart hadn't joined the Front until after the band split and



Above: Skrewdriver at the Rock Against Communism Open Air Festival, Suffolk, 1985.

returned to Blackpool.

The Elite themselves (not to be confused with the latter day Elite of pop Oi! fame) had been no strangers to the extreme right, and with the new line-up, Skrewdriver began to take a more openly political stance. Songs like *White Power* and *Smash The IRA* were added to the set, and Ian Stuart began to make pro-Front speeches from the stage. The music press continued its attacks on the band and tried to get clubs to ban them from playing live.

At first the clubs refused, not least because the name Skrewdriver had the tills ringing, but things came to a head that summer when a fight broke out at the 100 Club between band members and roadies of Infa Riot and Skrewdriver. The promoters had already come in for criticism for allowing bands like Skrewdriver and Combat '84 to play there, and this turned out to be the straw that broke the camel's back. Skunx on the other hand continued to book Skrewdriver right up until police pressure forced the club to close its doors to one and all at the end of the year.

With nowhere to play and no media publicity, Skrewdriver turned to the only friends they had left, the National Front. Together with Young National Front organiser, Joe Pearce, Ian Stuart reactivated Rock Against Communism and began to organise gigs all over London. As well as Skrewdriver, other skinhead bands like The Ovaltinies, Peter And The Wolves, The Die-Hards and Brutal Attack began to play under the RAC banner. And to beat the music business at its own game, the NF launched White Noise Records and released Skrewdriver's *White Power* single.

Throughout 1983 and 1984, both White Noise and Rock Against Communism went from strength to strength. Attendances at gigs averaged 500 with only

word of mouth publicity, and the release of the *This Is White Noise* EP featuring Skrewdriver, ABH, The Die-Hards and Brutal Attack with *The Return Of St. George*, underlined its growth.

ABH had actually managed to get themselves on Syndicate's second and final Oi! compilation, *The Oi! Of Sex*, with *Don't Mess With The S.A.S.*, but that was very much against the run of play. In a bid to distance themselves from the NF, Syndicate's two comps tended to be increasingly left-wing, particularly with the choice of poetry. There was even a male voice choir by the name of the League Of Labour Skins who belted out a patriotic rendition of *Jerusalem*. The League was as short-lived as some of the five minute wonder bands who appeared on the albums, and were never heard of again. The same was true of the Skins Against Nazis who were formed in July '78 and whose only real claim to fame was a half page feature in *Sounds*. In reality it was nothing more than another badge to be worn alongside Skateboarders Against Nazis, and never achieved any widespread support. Given the support for the NF at the time though, you had to take your hats off to the young East London skins who had the balls to start Skins Against Nazis in the first place.

By 1984, the skinhead movement was indeed split right down the middle by politics, and increasingly by music and dress too. The situation was summed up by two letters in *Sounds*, following trouble at a Broken Bones gig in Hereford. The first was from a punk bird who complained that skinheads had attacked anyone who dared to dance. It brought a swift response from a skinhead fanzine called *Hard As Nails* which claimed real skinheads wouldn't have been seen dead at a Broken Bones gig, and blamed the trouble on bald punks

Hard As Nails first hit the streets in August 1983 and only 75 copies were sold, but it was enough to lay the foundations for the return of traditional skinhead values. Its main aim was to act as a focus for what it called sussed skinheads, skins who looked smart and were an asset to the cult. A feature in *Sounds* saw it clock up sales into the high hundreds, but more importantly, the seven issues that appeared over a two year span were the inspiration for a whole host of skinzines which followed in its wake. *Backs Against The Wall*, *Bovver Boot*, *Tell Us The Truth*, *Crophead* and so the list goes on.

Hard As Nails was to become as much a rallying point for skinheads opposed to racism as the White Noise Club was for racist skins. Its Campaign For Real Skinheads and the sussed label drew the battle lines more clearly than ever. The gospel according to *Hard As Nails* proclaimed that genuine skinheads were pro-style, pro-music and anti-politics, while those who followed Skrewdriver and kin were little more than glue-sniffing sieg-heiling scarecrows claiming to be skinheads.

But even within the pages of *HANs*, there was no escaping the contradictions of life. For a fanzine that blamed punk for the decline of skinhead standards, it was perhaps surprisingly dominated by coverage of Oi! music. What's more, a band like Indecent Exposure was given space, despite posing with

upside down Union Jacks and gigging with bands like Skrewdriver and Brutal Attack, on the grounds that the band were not racist, just patriotic.

Not that there's anything wrong with patriotism, particularly in skinhead circles, and the fanzine always was more an attempt at uniting the skinhead cult than it ever was at dividing it. But with swipes at Skrewdriver and regular nods at the street-based anti-fascists, Red Action, and by championing bands like The Redskins, *Hard As Nails* was dragged into the murky world of politics whether it liked it or not. And out of the window went any hopes of bringing the cult back under the one roof.

Originally called No Swastikas, The Redskins were overtly political from day one. What's more, there's wasn't simply an anti-Nazi stance. Two of the band, vocalist Chris Dean and bass player Martin Hewes, were fully paid up members of the communist Socialist Workers Party and openly used the band to promote the party line.

The support given to the band by *Hard As Nails* had little to do with the band's politics though. In fact, The Redskins dogmatic support for the SWP was a big turn off for a lot of skinheads who followed the band. Most went to see The Redskins for the music and a beer, and not to hear the revolutionary rantings between bands. To a lesser extent, not everyone at a Skrewdriver gig was an out and out racist either. Even today, a lot of skins who have no time for Blood And Honour, rate early Skrewdriver as top notch punk.

Not that The Redskins were a skinhead band in terms of their following, despite the name and the fact that they looked the part. In London, just as many rockabilies turned up at gigs, and of course you had more than your fair share of student SWP types in attendance. And the same was true at gigs in the rest of the country.

To a lot of skinheads, it looked like The Redskins had adopted the style as a marketable image, and the band were the first to admit that they did make a conscious effort to portray themselves as skinheads. Drummer Paul Hookham only had a crop when he left indie popsters The Woodentops for pastures red, so he could hardly go down in the born to be a skin category.

Chris Dean's tiny quiff often left a lot to be desired too, unless you were a big Tintin fan. And his fetish for wearing a different coloured Harrington every night of a tour was another source of amusement. Immediate followers of the band even ran



Above: Chris Dean of The Redskins (Wake Up).

a book on what colour he'd turn up in. But like Martin Hewes, he'd dressed skinhead for ages, so it wasn't just a fashion trip.

After two single releases on the Leeds-based CNT label, the band signed to Decca and made several appearances in the lower reaches of the charts with the likes of *Keep On Keeping On*, *The Power Is Yours* and *It Can Be Done*. The moral was that if you were left-wing it was hip to mix politics and music, but if you were right-wing forget it.

More important though was the fact that The Redskins offered a refreshingly different sound, at a time when skinhead music was in danger of deteriorating into little more than stale second rate punk tinged with heavy metal. Big Redskins' influences were the soul labels, Tamla and Stax, but they also borrowed heavily from rockabilly and bands like The Fall.

Skinheads or not, there was certainly no love lost between the White Noise Club and The Redskins camp, and it wasn't long before mutual hatred erupted into violence. In June 1984, the Greater London Council held a massive Jobs For A Change festival at Jubilee Gardens. The Redskins were on the same bill as Billy Bragg, Aswad and The Smiths, but were never to complete their set.

Half way through *Lean On Me*, a bottle was thrown at the band and this acted as a signal for 50 or so National Front skinheads and Chelsea Headhunters to storm the stage. In the resulting chaos, the bass guitar ended up going through a drum, heads cracked and more bottles smashed, all to the sound of feedback and sieg-heiling. Anti-Nazi skinheads and other Redskins' fans fought back, but the majority of the crowd, in their oh so trendy Free Nelson Mandela t-shirts, headed off in the opposite direction as fast as their little legs could carry them. So much for solidarity.

A running battle followed in the streets around Jubilee Gardens, with the sight of skinhead battering skinhead leaving a lot of people wondering who was on whose side. The fighting continued along to Waterloo Station and even inside the nearby St. Thomas' Hospital where the injured had been taken. The casualty ward certainly lived up to its name anyway. And that night, a notorious right-wing pub in Islington was attacked by left-wingers looking for revenge.

After Jubilee Gardens, there was always a slightly paranoid atmosphere at Redskins' gigs, especially in London where anti-Nazi skinheads often stood on the door to point out any right wing skins who tried to get in. For the most part though, the band retired to the safety of playing student gigs, a move which rubbed a lot of people up the wrong way.

There was something that stuck in the throat about a skinhead band playing to largely middle class students, whose interest in lefty politics usually lasts as long as their grant cheque. On the other hand, it did allow the band to keep beer and ticket prices down (for those who could get in) and it also enabled them to raise more money for benefits, with student unions often willing to donate bigger shares of the night's takings than regular promoters.

Nobody played more benefit gigs than The Redskins, particularly during the miner's strike. What's more, when Decca refused to release *Kick Over The Statues* as a benefit record for anti-apartheid organisations, the band stood their ground and eventually it went out on the Abstract label, home of fellow Yorkshiremen, The Three Johns.

Back at the White Noise Club, plans were well under way for their own Rock Against Communism festival to be held on a private estate in the wilds of Suffolk. Skinheads travelled from all over Britain and beyond to see Skrewdriver and five other bands in what was to be the first of several open air events held by the Front.

By then Skrewdriver had gone through another line-up, with two Aussies and an Italian joining the ever-present Ian Stuart and the band's producer, Geoff Williams, who had come in on drums. This new international flavour underlined the fact that the band's reputation and following was not confined to these fair shores.

The early Eighties had seen the skinhead cult embark on something of a world tour, picking up recruits in Europe, North America, Australia and even more surprising places like Japan and South America. Previously the cult had been very much a British affair with Australia being the only big exception to the rule.

By the Eighties though, Australia also had its fair share of racist skinheads who took Skrewdriver and friends to their heart. The majority of foreign skinheads knew little about the origins of the cult and were doing well if they got as far back as Sham 69. Most thought the cult began with Oi! and was now being championed by White Noise bands, with fascism being just part of the skinhead uniform.

The release of the single, *Invasion*, and the band's second album, *Hail The New Dawn*, on the German Rock-o-rama record label served notice that Skrewdriver were more than happy to see their struggle for white power take on a world dimension. Rock-o-rama could offer far better exposure than White Noise Records ever could, and allowed the band to make massive inroads into the booming German skinhead scene.

British squaddies had taken the skinhead style to West Germany during the days of Sham and 2 Tone. By the time Oi! came along, the skinhead scene was growing, with teams like Hamburg SV having anything up to 200 on duty for home games. The cult still remained very British, right down to Union Jack patches and West Ham tops, and more often than not German skinheads would drink with British servicemen at the weekends.

As time went on though, German skinheads adopted their own sense of pride, and began to develop their own scene complete with bands. One band in particular, Bohse Onkelz, provided a focus for German skinheads in the early days, but just like their British counterparts, they weren't immune to set-backs. When a German punk was beaten up by skinheads on a trip to London, war was declared between the two cults back home in the Fatherland, and more often than not the battles were fought at Bohse Onkelz gigs. The Onkelz had

no real interest in organised politics, but their patriotism was often confused with nationalism by the media, and that also hindered the band's attempts to gain more widespread appeal. In fact, although formed back in '79, their first vinyl outing didn't come along until Rock-o-rama released *Der Nette Man* in 1984.

By then, the skinhead cult was being distorted into a political form, with increasing numbers of kids seeing the skinhead style as a uniform for the return of a Nazi youth. This was particularly true in East Germany, where opposition to communism and calls for a united Germany were becoming more vocalised. At the same time, there were large numbers of left-wing skinheads opposed to the return of Nazism, and you had other skinhead mobs who took great delight in fighting both the left and the right.

In recent times, Germany has provided the media with countless stories about



the rise of Nazi skinheads and their threat to society, although the large numbers of skins who aren't interested in extremist politics are largely ignored.. Several people have been killed by skinheads, including women and children who were fire-bombed by what can only be described as scum. Again though, the word "skinhead" is used to describe anyone who the media decide are Nazis. There is plenty of news footage where the commentator is telling you that skinheads are running riot when the

actual pictures are of kids who obviously aren't skinheads at all. When you see stuff like that, it makes you wonder just what else the media empires are misreporting, and whether any important issue can really be condensed into 30 second sound-bites.

The links with Rock-o-rama bore fruit in other ways too for the White Noise Club, and not least with collaboration over a compilation album called *No Surrender*. It featured the usual nationalist bands as well as a few new faces, including a dodgy electro-pop outfit from Southampton called The Final Sound. Not exactly skinhead moonstompin' by any stretch of the imagination. Even a lot of skinhead bands, and not just nationalists ones, had come a long way since the Oi! days. Thrash and heavy metal were increasingly being touted, taking supposedly skinhead music beyond punk and well inside the realms of hippies and grease. Although casually described as an Oi! band by some observers, Skrewdriver saw themselves more as a rock band, and that went for a lot of other white power bands too. Skrewdriver's cover of Lynyrd Skynrd's *Sweet Home Alabama*, and others like Skullhead's version of

Hawkwind's *Silver Machine*, would have gone down like a lead balloon in '69 skinhead circles, and must have had old Joe Hawkins turning in his grave.

The White Noise Club's relationship with Rock-o-rama didn't have a happy ending, particularly for the bands involved. In 1986, the National Front split yet again, and it slowly emerged that bands involved in the WNC had been ripped off. Royalties due to the bands weren't being paid and Rock-o-rama itself was owed three grand for records sold through the club.

The result was that Rock-o-rama refused to supply any further records or release any new material by White Noise bands until the money was paid. As per usual, the last people to find out were the people who sent money off for records and got nothing in return, and so a number of bands left the White Noise Club in disgust.

Leading the breakaway were Skrewdriver, together with two London bands No Remorse and Sudden Impact. Brutal Attack, who hadn't played for over a year, were soon to join them, resulting in the leading southern bands striking out on their own, while most of the northern bands stayed loyal to White Noise.

Of course both sides called the other everything under the sun. The White Noise Club accused Skrewdriver of splitting the movement for its own ends,

Below: Ian Stuart from Skrewdriver and Kev Turner from Skullhead (Northern Echo).



and claimed that they were only interested in making money. What's more, the bands that left were Nazis and the NF didn't want to be associated with them anyway.

Differences in politics were indeed partly to blame for the split, although the NF was more than happy to have the bands in the WNC while they were filling party coffers, Nazis or not.

The story gets quite confusing because both parties in the NF split continued to use the National Front as a name, but the one that controlled the White Noise Club was pursuing a path towards what it called national revolution. Amazingly, this resulted in the *National Front News* appearing with a black clenched fist on the cover with the words, FIGHT RACISM. And even Libya's Colonel Gaddafi became an unlikely hero.

Not surprisingly, Skrewdriver and the other departing bands made great play of the so-called Third Way politics now being spouted by one-half of the NF. On top of that came the accusations that homosexuals and perverts had taken control of the Front, which they now called the Nutty Fairy Party. In competition with the WNC, the breakaway bands launched Blood And Honour, a white music organisation centred around a magazine of the same name.

Blood And Honour made no bones about its national socialist beliefs. Quite the opposite in fact, with issue two of the magazine describing it as "the one incorruptible ideal". No Remorse in particular have taken a no compromise Nazi stance since they formed in November '87, and this has allowed them to quickly grow in stature within Rock Against Communism circles and in infamy outside of them.

Even so, Blood And Honour saw itself as the independent voice of Rock Against Communism and so welcomed all bands to the new organisation, whether Nazi, nationalist, patriotic, anti-communist or white power. What's more, it refused to ally itself with one particular party either, preferring to offer its support to a variety of organisations, including the born again British Movement, the British National Party, the Ku Klux Klan and the Flag group of the NF.

The White Noise Club soldiered on for a few more months thanks to the loyalty of the bands and fanzines who refused to believe that it was a corrupt and dying organisation. The biggest name still associated with it was that of Consett band, Skullhead, who were formed back in 1984. Its lead singer, Kev Turner, was inside at the time of the split, and while remaining part of the WNC, the band refused to get involved in the slanging match between the NF and Blood And Honour.

On his release from prison, the band continued to play White Noise Club gigs. In fact, when Kev Turner got weekend leave from HMP Arlington he often played with the band, much to the horror of anti-fascist organisations and the local MP. In the end though, even Skullhead's loyalty was stretched beyond breaking point when the NF decided to scuttle the White Noise Club and launch an organisation by the name of Counter Culture.

This new organisation was supposed to reach out to the whole spectrum of music lovers, which meant Skullhead and other WNC bands like Cardiff's Violent Storm, finding themselves in a melting pot with opera and other unlikely bedfellows. The final insult was when the skinhead bands were told to abandon their familiar boots and combats for a smarter image.

Not surprisingly, Counter Culture was something of a non-starter and Skullhead left to form Unity Productions, which again aligned itself with no particular political organisation, but was well into the Nordic pagan religion of Odinism. Unity never had the hold that Blood And Honour did, but it did go a long way to help reunite the nationalist music scene with a number of well-attended gigs.

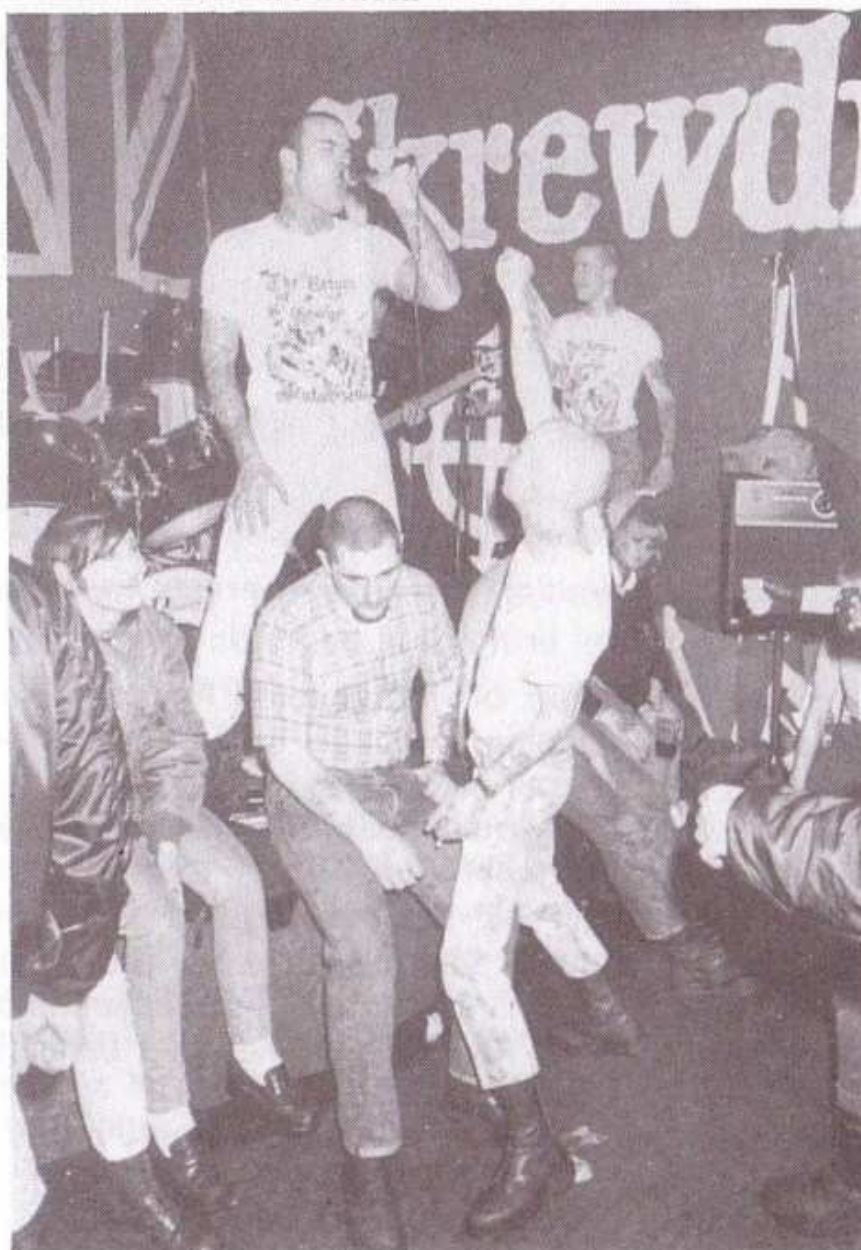
It wasn't long before Unity was holding joint gigs with Blood And Honour, like the 1990 St. George's Day gig in Newcastle which saw Skrewdriver, Brutal Attack, Skullhead, Squadron, Battlezone, English Rose and Close Shave play in front of a 400 strong crowd. Not before the usual runaround though. Anti-fascist organisations like Cable Street Beat, Anti Fascist Action and the

magazine *Searchlight*, have always done their best to stop nationalist bands playing live, and Newcastle was no exception.

Blood And Honour might not be a brains trust, but it's not as thick as some trendy lefties like to imagine either, and more often than not the gigs still go ahead. Provisional bookings are usually made at a number of halls, often under false names, and the chosen venue is kept a secret until the last possible minute with the use of re-direction points.

The atmosphere generated by bands like Skrewdriver and Brutal Attack at Blood And Honour gigs was nothing short of a mini Nuremberg Rally.

Below: Brutal Attack.



Hundreds of skinheads chanting, "Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!", as Ian Stuart and Ken McLellan did their bit for Adolf and country. Despite claims to the contrary though, most of the B&H gigs pass off without any hint of aggro. There are exceptions to any rule though and one Rock Against Communism gig that did go off was at Brest in France, in May, 1988. No Remorse were expected to headline a five band package which was completed by French bands Brutal Combat, Bunker '84, Legion 88 and Skin Korps. However, the police cancelled the gig an hour before the doors were meant to open, leaving several hundred skinheads, many of whom had travelled from Germany and



Above: The Geraldo Rivera Show erupts in violence between rival skinhead factions.

the U.K. for the gig, out in the cold. Anger erupted into violence, with gangs of skinheads running rampage through the streets of the Brittany town, resulting in a number of stabbings and arrests.

Playing abroad often provides nationalist bands with their biggest and most fervent audiences, with Rock Against Communism gigs regularly taking place in Germany, Italy, Sweden, Holland and other European countries. The one that they all want to play though is the USA, but to date only No Remorse have made it to Uncle Sam's with their appearance at the Aryan Fest held in Oklahoma in 1990. Skrewdriver and other bands have been refused entry to the States on a number of occasions.

Mind you, the yanks have been doing very nicely for themselves in the Nazi skinhead stakes. Throughout the Eighties, racist attacks by skinheads have

made the news, but since 1988 the media has been falling over itself to give massive publicity to anyone with a crop and a swastika armband. All the major newspapers have run features, *Rolling Stone* came up with a *Skinhead Nation* article, and chat shows hosted by top names like Oprah Winfrey and Geraldo Rivera have been like a second home.

Despite the common language, the USA is a very different place to Britain. A lot of American skinheads are just white middle class kids who can afford to rebel (DM boots are three times as dear in the

States), and who are attracted to racist organisations like Aryan Nations, White Aryan Resistance and the Ku Klux Klan for the kicks.

Another big difference is the level of violence involving skinheads. In the U.K., stabbings might be fairly common place, but a death in a street fight is still something that makes you sit up and take notice. On the other side of the Big Pond, fists and blades are replaced by guns and firebombs, and you virtually have to be a two-headed serial killer for anyone to bat an eyelid. You get a whole new perspective on the word extreme when you hear that in Sacramento a man was nailed to a plank of wood by skinheads, crucifixion-style, for trying to leave a racist gang. And when a skinhead girl trying to do the same in Chicago, ends up being beaten up so badly in her own home that her blood was used to daub a swastika on the wall.

Once again though, the media attention, with its regular excursions into the world of half-truths and exaggerated claims, has managed to attract loads of nutters in the land of the free to the ranks of the skinhead cult. Often its deliberate sensationalism, sometimes its just ignorance. Like the *San Francisco Chronicle* which wrote that racist skinheads were "modelling themselves after the Teddy Boys who emerged in England in the late '60s", and went on to say that the only difference between U.S. skins and British ones was a Californian touch, Fred Perry shirts.

It's been estimated that there are anything between three and five thousand racist skinheads in the U.S.A., with the biggest beneficiary of their support until recently being the Aryan Youth Movement wing of the White Aryan Resistance. It was largely unknown in skinhead circles until Skrewdriver name-checked it on the back of an album, but from then on in, WAR did more than any other group to court the growing skinhead movement.

Its leader, Tom Metzger, saw skins as his "front-line warriors" in the battle for white supremacy, but a few took his message of cleaning up the streets to mean a lot more than forming litter patrols. Two racist murders by WAR skinheads in San Jose and Remo were followed by the beating to death of an Ethiopian student by three East Side Pride skins in Portland. Long prison



sentences were handed down, but the court went much further than punishing those who wielded the baseball bats. It agreed that WAR had been implicated in the Portland murder, because it had encouraged and assisted in promoting racial violence in the area. The family of the deceased were awarded over \$12 million damages, effectively bankrupting Metzger.

Racist skinheads are only part of the story in the States despite what the media might say. Hardcore music has had a massive influence on skinheads in the USA. Bands like Agnostic Front and Warzone have been attracting hardcore skins to gigs since the late Seventies, and Harley Flanagan, one time skinhead and singer with The Cro-Mags, even started a move towards the Hare Krishna faith in some New York skinhead circles.

While racist skinheads have adopted and adapted the cult's uniform to resemble paramilitary dress, hardcore skins have only the boots and crop in common with more traditional British counterparts. Not many skinheads outside of hardcore circles sport leather jackets or consider skateboards to be big news anyway. In fact, a lot of skinheads who followed hardcore were little more than bald punks. There was always a racist element in hardcore circles, but the real violence was always skinhead against punk.

Today, hardcore continues to have a skinhead following, but it is far smaller than in the early Eighties. Since then, British influences have seen Oi! replace hardcore as the music of choice for most skinheads, and today America boasts a bigger Oi! scene than any other country. It too has been accused of being a racist movement, but all the knockers would have to do is visit New York to see how wrong they are. There you can find skinheads of every colour and creed, and bands like Oxblood and Templars have multi-racial line-ups. There are also large numbers of skinheads who follow ska music, and a growing number who are into skinhead reggae, soul and the whole 1969 look and beliefs.

The effect of the media circus around the white power scene meant that all skinheads were seen as being racist by the general public. The truth was that it wasn't so much skinheads turning to Nazism, but Nazis turning into skinheads, making the two words virtually interchangeable in a lot of people's eyes. The anti-skinhead backlash that followed affected the entire cult and not just the white power brigade, forcing those against racism to speak out.

During 1986, an organisation called Anti-Racist Action was born from the Minneapolis-based Baldies Against Racism, and throughout the country similar skinhead gangs nailed their colours to the anti-racist mast. In New York, a skinhead called Marcus started Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice, which quickly established chapters throughout the States.



SHARP's biggest strength was that it was non-political. Its only aim was to let the world know that all skinheads weren't racist. In fact the pride shown in being American by a lot of SHARP skinheads, many

of whom serve in the armed forces, has caused some trouble with a number of left-wing anti-racist organisations, who see anti-racism as just one of many causes worth shouting about. By using the slogan, PRIDE WITHOUT PREJUDICE and the stars and stripes on their logo, SHARP skins were regularly accused of waving a racist flag and thereby supporting the genocide of native Red Indians! There's just no pleasing some folk.

Others were disappointed to find that the anti-racist skinheads didn't denounce violence. In fact, many boasted of battles with Nazi skins and other gangs, and a number were involved in attacks on gays and hippies in what was regarded as traditional skinhead fashion. Not that it bothered most SHARP chapters. They didn't want to go down in history as the good guys, just skinheads without a racist chip on their shoulder.

The idea of SHARP was imported into Europe and beyond by Roddy Moreno, who was the lead singer with Welsh Oi! band, The Oppressed. On a visit to see American bands for his Oi! Records label, he picked up a SHARP leaflet and decided to bring the idea home with him. Although the right always claimed he was a communist, the truth was that Roddy had no time for anybody's politics (his record label's slogan was NEITHER RED OR RACIST) and simply wanted to combat the media focus on Blood And Honour which had every skinhead down as a Nazi thug.

A number of SHARP chapters did take off in the U.K., and large numbers of individual skins supported its aims, but it never reached the level of success it had in America. One problem was that it was seen as political, and that was an instant turn off for large numbers of skins who'd seen the cult ripped apart by wannabe politicians from Sham onwards.

Another was the fact that despite the name, anybody who agreed with SHARP could join. So you had hippies, punks, normals and others claiming to be SHARP members in what appeared to be a massive case of missing the point. If they opposed racism, then there were plenty of other organisations

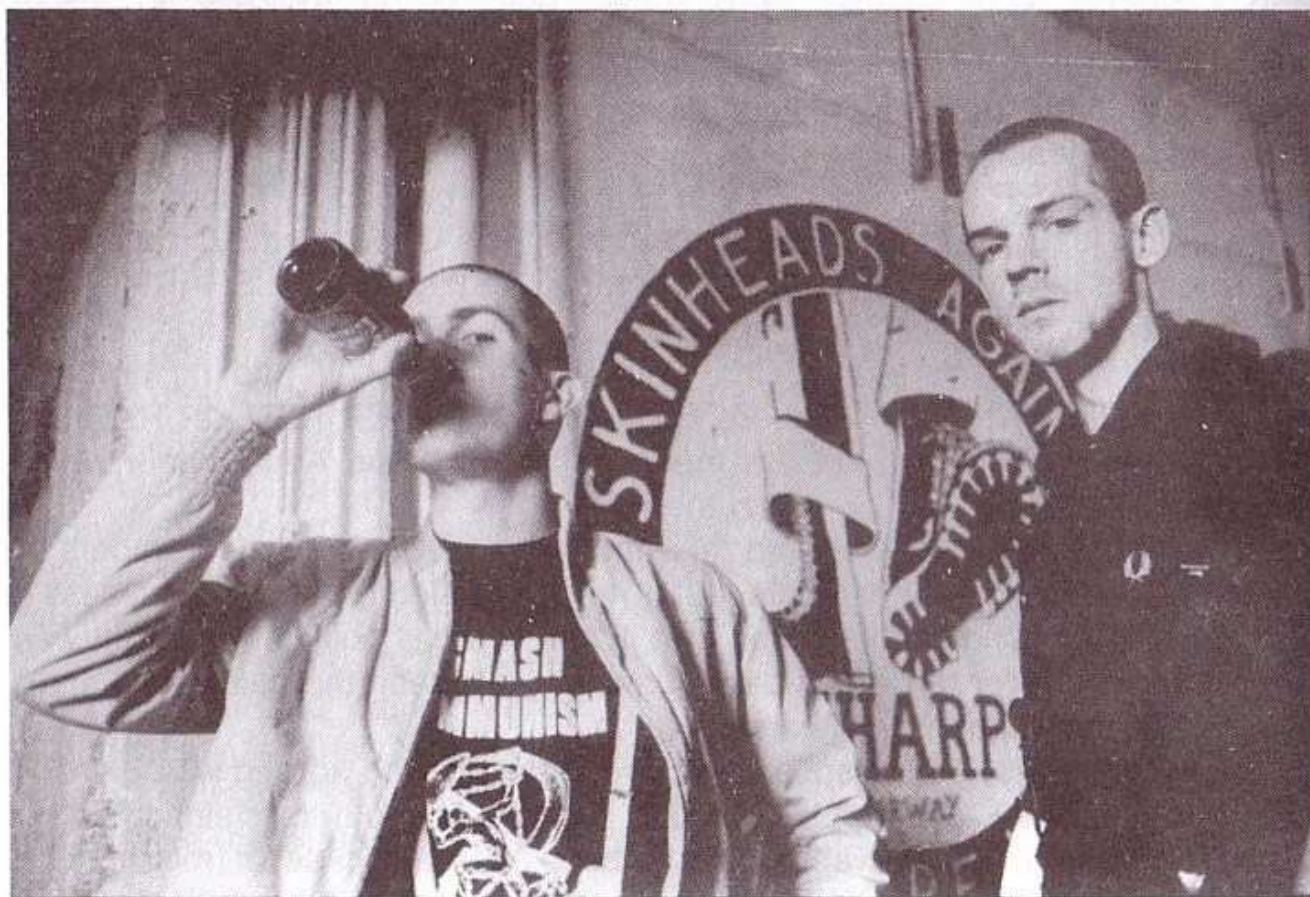


they could join without turning some SHARP divisions into a laughing stock. One boasted half a dozen members, and of them only two were skins. Even so, the SHARP ideal, particularly in its American form, was far closer to the traditions of the original skinheads than Blood And Honour. It's difficult to advocate white power when your one big love in life is skinhead reggae, performed by black artists. What's more, not too many skins back in '69 would have warmed to the bikers and Angels who have appeared in *Blood And Honour* magazine, or indeed sieg heiling at gigs, when there was still pride in the way Britain had sent Hitler on his way during World War Two. With Blood And Honour, the skinhead cult had obviously come a long long way from its roots. So far in fact, that the word bonehead was widely banded about to describe the typical Skrewdriver follower, decked out in black pilot jacket, big boots and no hair. Almost as if it was a separate cult.

The gulf between original skinheads and those who follow Blood And Honour skinheads could hardly be bigger on the dress, music and politics scale, and if life was indeed that simple, maybe by now a lot of today's skinheads would have a different label attached to their back.

Things though are never that simple, and those who try to divide skinheads into two warring camps are totally ignoring the various shades of opinion that fall inbetween. Life is never as simple as black and white. True to form you get skinheads in button downs, sta-press and brogues turning up at reggae revive nights, but there are also Nazi skinheads who dress smartly. You also get bald bastards in 14 up boots and black pilot jackets who hate Blood And

Below: SHARP skins from Norway.



Honour. Even Ian Stuart admitted to having some old Trojan stuff tucked away in his record collection, and it's not unusual to see a feature on Skrewdriver next to one on Desmond Dekker in skinzines, and particularly foreign ones. And you wouldn't have to walk a million miles to find a SHARP skinhead who might not hold any grudges, but wouldn't mind putting a stop to immigration into the country.

As it is, with perhaps 5,000 skinhead supporters around the world, there can be little doubt that Blood And Honour does represent a sizeable slice of the skinhead cake. The idea that all skinheads are Nazi thugs though is nothing more than a red herring, even within Blood And Honour circles. Ian Stuart died in a car crash in November, 1993, and it still remains to be seen what will become of Skrewdriver and Blood And Honour, given the fact that he was such a central figure for both. Nicky Crane, of *Strength Thru' Oi!* fame, and another leading Blood & Honour skinhead, died of cancer in the same year.

It's easy to blame a visible group like skinheads for racism because they are an easy touch in the scapegoat stakes. After all, the skinhead cult must be the most feared and hated movement ever to put the boot into society. And all the know-alls can jump up and down, wave their fists, and thereby forget that it's society that has the problems, not just gangs of kids in boots and braces. And those who say all skinheads are fascists, Jimmy Pursey included nowadays, are no better than those who say all blacks are muggers.

Politics has never done the skinhead cult any favours and it's doubtful it ever will. And that goes for the left and the right. Somehow it has managed to worm its way into the very heart of skinhead, and by doing so has bastardised the cult. And the media's constant portrayal of skinheads as extremist political animals has simply reinforced the fallacy that to be a skinhead you've got to either be a fascist or a fascist hater.

In a democracy, everyone should be entitled to his or her views, without feeling the need to ram it down every other poor bastard's throat. Maybe the day will come when skinheads will once again leave politics outside when they go to gigs and dances, and maybe the petty politicians who do all the mouthing and then lead from the back, will find some other mugs to fight their battles. What was it our Jimmy used to say about the kids being united?

"No true skinheads are racist. Without the Jamaican culture, skinheads would not exist. It was their culture mixed with British working class culture that made skinhead what it is."

Roddy Moreno, founder of SHARP in the UK.



CHAPTER SEVEN

SKINHEAD RESURRECTION

"I don't like skinheads coming to my gigs. I love skinheads coming to my gigs!"

Laurel Aitken, reggae superstar.

Unless you were rocking for race and nation down at the White Noise Club, it was mostly a case of all quiet on the British skinhead front come the mid-Eighties. Every one of the big names of Oi! had waved goodbye to this particular game of soldiers, and 2 Tone was but a fading memory. And if it hadn't been for the scooter rallies, things would have looked very bleak indeed.

The true spirit of mod had never really died in the North of England thanks to the soul allnighters and scooter clubs. The immortal Wigan Casino had kept its doors open for northern soul enthusiasts right up until 1981, and at the last count could boast 80,000 fanatical members.

Anyone who actually went to the Casino can tell you it was no pretty sight. A fresh coat of paint wouldn't have gone amiss, and the toilets were always ankle deep in piss, but the only thing that mattered was hitting the dancefloor and putting your feet where your soul was. In the USA, they couldn't give away soul records, and the story goes that many were used as ballast in cross-Atlantic ships, and then sold in Britain for buttons. That didn't stop the rarest of collectable singles eventually changing hands for anything up to a thousand pounds a piece though.

And central to the northern soul scene were the scooter clubs. Virtually every town in Lancashire and Yorkshire boasted a scooter club, with anything up to 200 members a piece. Throughout the Seventies, clubs would go on regular weekend runs to the coast, and by the end of the decade they had grown into massive rallies courtesy of the mod revival.

Numbers dropped off again when the plastic mods had discovered a new craze to follow, but the scootering fraternity was left perhaps stronger than it had been for years. Lots of scooterists gave up the mod look, but didn't want to trade in their Lammy for a secondhand Skoda, and so the runs became the home of genuine enthusiasts rather than not so dedicated followers of fashion.

Soon numbers were growing again, with clubs springing up all over Britain. What one year had been a run to bucket and spade land with your mates, quickly grew into a weekend of high jinx and revelry for thousands of kids and kids at heart. What's more, the rallies quickly became a rainbow alliance of youth cults rather than a mod preserve, and campsites became the

temporary home for skinheads, psychobillies, mods, assorted scruffs and plain old scooterists. Rumours even abounded that some casuals had taken to the road on two small wheels, no doubt in pursuit of the ultimate in Italian style.

Scooter skins had been part of the northern scene since the early Seventies, albeit in small numbers. By 1984 all the big clubs like the Mansfield Monsters, The Soldiers Of Fortune, The Mercenaries and the Stafford Boro Upsetters all had cropped haired elements. Plus there were skinhead only clubs in the shape of the Cardiff Cougars, the Birmingham Bulldogs and the Union Jack Club from Cumbria.



Above: California's Santa Cruz mob outside the Dover Arms pub.

Almost totally ignored by the mainstream media, the scooter scene soon became the focus for all things street. The biggest bank holiday rallies would attract anything up to 15,000 people. A good time was virtually guaranteed as you danced and drank your way around the bombsight that the local council had assured you was the official campsite for the weekend.

The bigger the rallies, the more organised they became, with entertainment in the form of dances and live bands being laid on. In turn this attracted even more people, including a lot of hangers-on who had no real interest in scooters beyond cadging a lift on the back of a mate's to and from a rally. Some people didn't even bother with that, and turned up on the rallies by car, van or train. The rallies were seen by many as the latest thing in bank holiday outings, and as they became more and more diluted so the trouble started.

By 1984-85, thieving was becoming a big problem. Customised and chromed parts were being stolen right, left and centre, along with expensive exhausts, side panels, spare wheels, you name it. If a spanner or screwdriver could loosen it, someone would steal it, and if a bag of tools didn't do the trick, all you needed was someone to help you lift the whole scooter into a van, and you were away.

If that wasn't enough, aggro was never far away. And what would a bit of aggro be without skinheads being involved? The seeds had been sown at Keswick back in '84 following a little matter of a few petrol bombs being thrown in the general direction of the local constabulary, but you had to wait until 1986 for the real fireworks to start.

The first rally of the year was the Easter one to an old favourite, Great Yarmouth. All had gone fairly well for the 6,500 scooterists present until the Sunday night. A local nightclub called Tiffany's was playing host to Desmond Dekker, and not surprisingly, the place was packed out. Everyone was having a great time too, until Desmond started to sing his worldwide hit, *Israelites*. In what was obviously a planned attack, 30 NF skinheads surprised what little security there was, and stormed the stage. Brave boys that they were, they started laying into the reggae star before running out of the club, lashing out at other scooterists as they went.

It all happened so quickly that nobody knew what was happening, but even so, very few rushed to the little man's aid, and the night came to a very sorry end. A number of the security team were NF skins themselves, and to most people present it looked like they aided the stage invasion rather than try to stop it. That said, others in the security squad did their best to maintain order and got little thanks for it.

A lot of people blamed the attack on outsiders, skinheads who had just come for some trouble and who had no interest in scootering. The magazine *Scootering* said as much at the time, but that wasn't the case at all. A lot of skinheads were every bit as dedicated to the scooter scene as other scooterists, and like it or not, that went for NF skins as much as it did others.

Sad though it was, Great Yarmouth was a teddy bear's picnic compared to what was to happen on the Isle Of Wight come the August bank holiday. It has always been one of the most popular and better attended rallies, and 1986 was to prove no exception. Even the ban on vans, the Great British weather, and doubts over the existence of an official campsite, didn't keep the hordes away. In the end,

Below: Condemned 84





Above: Charlie, Andi, Rik, Alan, Gaf, Buster, Dave, Keith, Darren, John, Ben and Vicky from Just Another S.C. Cambridge and The Dereham Roadhogs, Norfolk.

a campsite was indeed laid on, but at seven quid a head it was well over the odds, as were the ridiculous prices being charged for cheap cans of booze in the beer tent.

Saturday night and all was well, with scooterist fave Edwin Starr entertaining all and sundry with Motown classics and one rendition too many of his own *War*. Sunday though was a totally different kettle of fish. The attractions for the night were The Business, who after a very quiet 1984 had recently resumed normal service, Condemned 84 and Vicious Rumours. All of them were well-known on the Oi! scene, but none of them were every scooterist's choice for a night out. Still, the gig passed off without any trouble, so for once Oi! couldn't be blamed for the grief that was to follow.

Come the early hours of Monday morning, a few bright sparks obviously fancied a pint or three, and decided to turn over the beer tent. Its owner had already ripped everyone off a treat, and soon lots of scooterists were helping themselves to his stock Robin Hood style. Not too many people were bothered about it until someone decided to torch the tent. Before you could

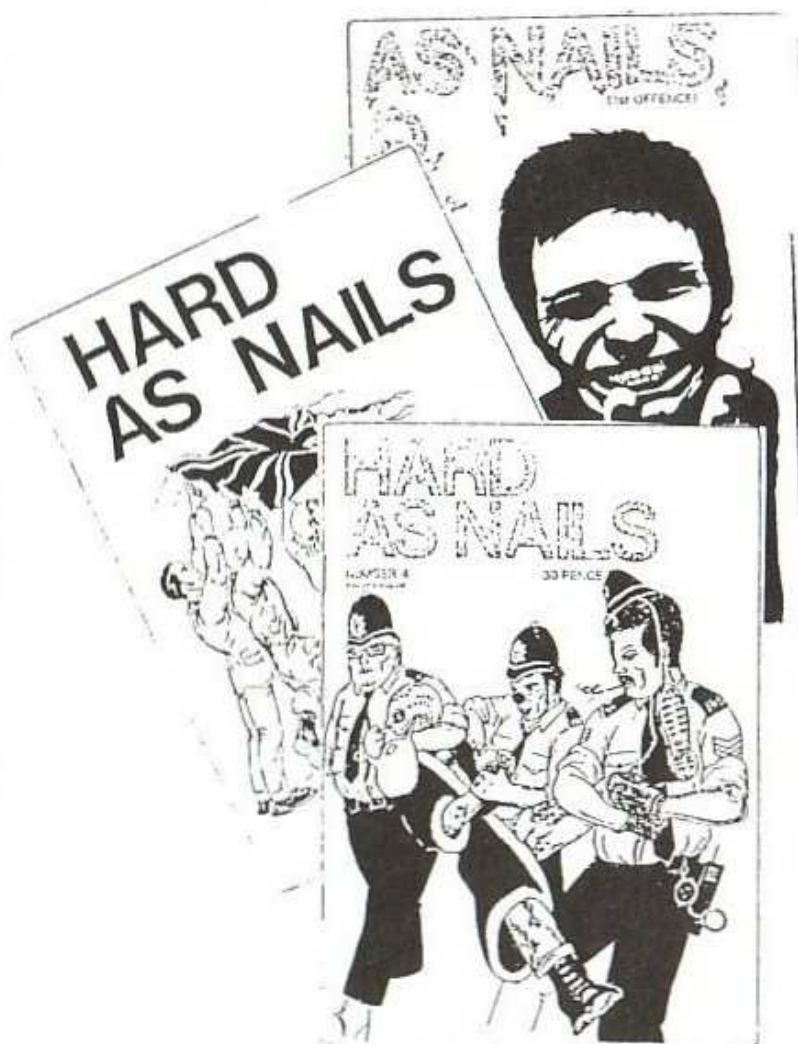
say Maid Marion, the thing was up in flames, gas cylinders were exploding and Fireman Sam was on his way.

If it had ended there, the only one shedding any tears would have been the bloke who owned the tent, but he'd more than filled his pockets anyway. However, once the beer tent had fallen, some scooterists started turning their attention to the food stalls and the other traders' stalls, many of which were run by fellow scooterists and not just cash-in merchants. Those who tried to protect their stock were attacked and scared off, and even the fire brigade came in for a hail of unwarranted missiles. If all that wasn't enough, you had vigilante groups who took it upon themselves to walk about punching anyone who looked the least bit shifty.

All of the trouble was confined to the campsite, and despite tabloid tales of "mods versus Hell's Angels battles", it didn't really affect the general public.

Mainly because of that, scooter rallies continued, but there had been trouble at Porthcawl and Margate as well as Yarmouth earlier in the rally season, and the final rally at Stoke had to be cancelled. The following year it was decided to make the campsites available to National Run Committee members only and to ban live bands, in an attempt to return to the days of scooter riders only rallies. A lot of traditional skinheads even started going to mod rallies for a time to distance themselves from the mongrels getting them a bad name on the nationals.

Since then, numbers on the runs have dwindled quite considerably, but the violence and thieving has been more or less stamped out. Some scooterists prefer it that way while others want more entertainment laid on. After all, you need a lot of dedication to think that sitting in a field for a weekend is the highlight of your month, but then again it beats thumbing a lift home because some bastard has nicked your back wheel. None of this has stopped skinheads going on the rallies, with both political and non-political skins making the effort, bands or no



bands. Scooters have been part of our cult since the late Sixties, and it looks like it will stay that way for years to come.

The attack on Desmond Dekker at Yarmouth showed just how far sections of the skinhead cult had drifted from their roots. If the original skinheads had had their way, Desmond Dekker's birthday would have been a national holiday. Well his and everybody else's they could think of, but you get the point. What's more, a lot of skinheads still felt the same way and did their best to preserve the cult in its traditional form.

The traditional skinhead flag was being proudly flown by *Hard As Nails* and other skinzines that shared its ideals. There was no doubting that times were lean for any skinhead who wasn't interested



Above: Paul from HaN with skingirls.

in the right wing bands, and nowhere was that more obvious

than in London. The majority of skinheads from that neck of the woods were white noise boys, with the only real alternatives being the *Hard As Nails* crew and the London Legion Of Trojan Skins. The same story repeated itself over much of these fair isles, with the cities of Dublin, Glasgow, Newcastle, Cardiff and Plymouth being the only real strongholds of traditional skinhead values.

Now that numbers had tailed off again, skinhead fanzines were the ideal grapevine for news of gigs and dances. They also brought people into regular contact with others from different areas, just like the scooter rallies did, and soon an unofficial network of contacts was built up all over the country, and eventually stretching around much of the globe.

Dances were held on an irregular basis too, and they attracted skinheads from all over. Between 1985 and 1987, the legendary One Up bar in Glasgow's East End played host to several nights of moonstompin' mayhem courtesy of the Spy Kids crew, and attracted skinheads from all over Britain and beyond. And in Cardiff, the Casa Gill and Lexington pubs were home to as many as 400 skins come the weekend, an easy hundred virtually every other night of the week.

Those who followed the so-called spirit of '69 had little time for WNC skins and generally wrote them off as boneheads and muggies. White power skins

in turn saw their traditional counterparts as commie filth. The cult was split right down the middle, and the gulf was too wide to bridge. For the most part, the two halves of the skinhead cult led separate lives, followed different bands, dressed differently and had totally different values. When older skinheads battled with young glue-sniffers at Barry Island in 1984, the standard was being set for what went on in lots of areas thereafter, with rival skinhead gangs settling their political differences over a few smashed pint glasses.

The growth of the skinhead cult away from right wing politics was given two much needed boosts with the return of Oi! and the appearance of a whole new crop of ska bands led by the Potato 5. The Business had made a more than welcome return in '85 following the success of the double album package *Back To Back (Wonderful World)* and were soon up to all sorts with the release of the *Drinkin' And Drivin'* single ("the band should be prosecuted for aiding and abetting manslaughter," screamed a dotty old professor at the time), and the threatened release of a tribute to Jeffrey Archer's "error of judgement" with a prostitute called *Caned And Able*.

Even funnier were the tabloid hysterics when a hooray henry band tried to use the same name and ended up getting short shrift from the genuine article. Proving beyond all doubt that The Business were still very much the business. What's more, they weren't alone. Coming



Above: Skinheads from London.

up on the outside were other bands ready and willing to pick up Oi! the baton. Ipswich's *Condemned 84* led the renewed attack with bands like Stoke's *Section 5*, Londoner's *Vicious Rumours* and Folkestone's *The Betrayed* bringing up the rear.

After touring Britain's pubs and clubs, *Condemned* had even picked up a big enough following to see their first bit of vinyl, *Battle Scarred*, hit number 21 in the national indie charts, the follow up *Oi! Ain't Dead* (RFB) climb to number 24. *Battle Scarred* had been released on Oi! Records, the label set up by skinhead Roddy Moreno of *The Oppressed* fame. During 1984, *The Oppressed* had really made a name for themselves with the release of the classic *Oi! Oi! Music* album, but trouble at gigs forced them to call it a day. That left Roddy twiddling his thumbs, but he was handed the opportunity to start his own record label when he received a windfall courtesy of some insurance money from a car accident. He also got a government grant, but

that was withdrawn when Roddy criticised the scheme in an interview. What they give you with one hand, they are only too glad to take back off you with the other. Bastards.

For a couple of years, the label flew the flag for young Oi! bands virtually on its own. It quickly became known for promoting punk and skin music together (not least on its *Punks N' Skins* split albums), and its totally unimaginative sleeve designs. The ones with the pictures were the adventurous ones, but that was Oi! Records for you. No contracts, no press packs and certainly no fuss. And if his favourite programme came on the TV while he was doing business, Roddy would put the phone down as quickly as you'd pick up a ten pound note.

By 1987, another street label was about to give Oi! Records more than a run for its money. Bass guitarist with The Business, Mark Brennan set up Link Records with the first Oi! compilation (bar Roddy's sampler, *This Is Oi!*) since Syndicate's *Oi! Of Sex. Oi! The Resurrection* it proclaimed, and it heralded the arrival of a true street label that would go on to release punk, psychobilly, ska and of course Oi! long after the demise of Oi! Records in 1990. After a couple of releases, Mark was joined by Business manager of old and ex-Syndicate boss, Lol Pryor, and together they created one of the biggest street labels of all time.

One big advantage Link had over Oi! Records was its connections within the Oi! world, and therefore access to its deleted past. Nobody can pass up a trip down memory lane, and Link was soon making a fair whack out of re-issues alone. That said, most of the money was ploughed back into the label and some of the main beneficiaries were up and coming street bands. And not just from the UK either.

The irony was that both the skinhead cult and Oi! music was enjoying far more success abroad than it was in its birthplace. And most of the records released were sold on export to Europe, Japan and North America. A country like Italy could boast more Oi! bands than Britain and the same was true for Germany, France, the States and to a lesser extent even unlikely countries like Poland, Hungary, Argentina and Japan. There's even enough skinheads in Greece to take over the holiday island of Ios for a week every summer.

Not surprisingly, a lot of British bands found it easier to get gigs abroad than they did at home. Red Alert and Red London, two street punk bands from Tyneside who have been going on and off for well over a decade, are better travelled than most British Airway stewardesses. Few British promoters would touch Oi! with a barge pole, and so what gigs that did come up in the U.K. were usually organised by the bands themselves or through other skinheads.

Not that they got much thanks for it. Weeks of work would go into the planning and organisation of a decent night out, only for some plonker to turn up with a CS gas canister and ruin it in five minutes flat. Either that, or the toilets would get smashed up for some deep psychological reason or another. I blame that bloke Freud.

The Main Event of 1988 was a good example of trying to organise a night's entertainment, only to have it wrecked. The police only allowed the show to go ahead at the Astoria if tickets were sold exclusively by mail order, and limited to one per person per address. What's more, The Business were not



Above: Skingirls from Birmingham, 1986.

allowed to be the headline band, and so The Angelic Upstarts took their place.

On the night 1,500 people packed the place out to hear and see Vicious Rumours, Section 5, Dutch wonders The Magnificent, a surprise package called The Oi! Allstars, The Business and the Upstarts. A couple of hundred more ticketless fans were turned away, and even Judge Dread turned up to comper the show and sing a few rude anthems.

Everything had gone to plan until the Upstarts went on. Since the attack at Wolverhampton, the band had had a number of run-ins with NF supporters, and were now one of the most outspoken anti-fascist bands doing the rounds. Together with bands like The Beggars, they had regularly played anti-Nazi gigs

in support of Cable Street Beat and Anti-Fascist Action, as well as taking part in other anti-fascist activities.

Come the Main Event, right-wingers in the audience took exception to a couple of Upstarts' songs and decided to kick things off. It was what the knockers had been hoping for, and the gig came to an abrupt end with 16 collars being felt by the long arm of the law.

Oi! will no doubt be around for years to come aggro or not, but whether it will ever achieve the success of '81 remains to be seen. Certainly none of the more recent bands has come up with a classic to rival the best of Sham or Sparrer, and until they do they'll never reach beyond a cult following.

The problems of life as an Oi! band saw a number of bands branch out in other directions. The Burial, who hailed from the land of sticks of rock and donkey droppings known as Scarborough, had donated two tracks to the *Oi! Of Sex* compilation, one Oi! and one a cross-over into ska. The experiments continued and the final result was a volatile cocktail not a million miles away

Below: Kriminale Klasse from Italy.



die-hards, and both bands quickly split when success eluded them. Maybe for the better too, at least for Skin Deep, because from the band's ashes came one of today's more authentic ska and reggae bands, 100 Men.

1987 was also to witness something of a third coming of ska. Revival is too dirty a word because there are always those who maintain ska never died anyway, but a revival of fortunes it most certainly was.



Above: Potato 5

pumping out mainly European sounds from the likes of Germany's The Busters and Italy's Spy Eye, before coming across the talents of Laurel Aitken and Derrick Morgan.

Yes, once again, the oldies were out there showing the young pups how it was done. Even Prince Buster made a surprise appearance at the first (and best) International Ska Festival at London's top music venue, The Sir George

from The Redskins meet Madness. The sort of music you'd have expected to do well on Go! Discs, Zarjazz or even Paul Weller's Respond label, if only one of them had had the guts and sense to sign them.

Another Yorkshire band, Skin Deep, gave up the noise they made for *Oi! The Resurrection*, and ended up with a similar sound to The Burial. Maybe it was something they were putting in the water at the time. The only problem was that it left both bands somewhere between their old Oi! following and the out and out ska

die-hards, and both bands quickly split when success eluded them. Maybe for the better too, at least for Skin Deep, because from the band's ashes came one of today's more authentic ska and reggae bands, 100 Men.

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Oi! Records set up a Ska Records subsidiary which ended up as an outlet for mostly yank ska bands like The Toasters, Bim Skala Bim and The N.Y. Citizens, who themselves were laying the foundations for today's massive ska underground in the States which is centred on New York's Moon Records (run by Rob Hingley, a Plymouth skinhead first time around) and superb bands like California's Hepcat and Boston's Bigger Thomas. Link also had its own Skank label up its sleeve which was to become home to some of the better British ska bands in the shape of The Hotknives, The Riffs and The Loafers. Even the mod label, Unicorn, went almost totally ska,

Robey. Well, Finsbury Park's best venue anyway. And after the fiasco of the Main Event, it was good to see Judge Dread make a welcome return to the stage too.

That night at the Robey and the following one at Brixton's Fridge looked like the beginnings of something massive. Both nights were packed out with smartly dressed skinheads and rudies, and it looked like ska was once again on the march.

That was indeed the case, although nobody seemed to know in what direction. At the start of 1989 it was like a free-for-all, with bands coming out of the woodwork to claim a slice of the action. The problem was without radio airplay or chart success, it wasn't a very big cake to go around.

Major labels showed little interest, and the smaller ones involved in the scene didn't help matters by releasing anything and everything that could loosely be termed ska. Just like a lot of white power bands who have released more vinyl than have played gigs, a number of releases were nothing more than second-rate demos committed to black plastic. And of course the real loser was the mug who forked out seven quid a throw for them (doesn't seem that much now we live in a CD age). There still is a lot to be said for bands having to pay their dues live before being given the run of a studio.

Those bands that did achieve any sort of commercial success did so in Germany and the States, and if the truth be known, gigs in London would have been near empty if it hadn't been for the foreigners who boosted attendances. Sometimes there were more Aussies than Cockneys at gigs.

Ironically, the bands that most deserved to make it big time were lost in the fool's gold rush. Not that a band has to be in the charts to give you a good night out (in fact the opposite is probably the case), but there's no doubting that a bit of success keeps the wolves from the door.



Above: Skinheads in Germany (Mike Buytas)

Even so, probably the best nights were to be enjoyed before anyone started dreaming of *Top Of The Pops*. Potato 5 gigs during 1986 and 1987 were as good as any that followed. The spuds were perhaps the best ska band Britain has had the privilege to produce, and that includes all your 2 Tone lot. Their debut album and a string of singles, mostly on Gaz's Rockin' Records, showed them to be one of the classiest acts around, and their early gigs were



Above: Belfast skinheads who have to break down religious as well as racial prejudice in their divided city.

full of perfectly kitted out skinheads and skinhead girls. Tonic suits, Ben Shermans, oxblood brogues, pocket hankies, the works. What's more, the atmosphere was excellent, with virtually everyone on nodding terms if not best of friends. And yet The Potato 5 bowed out in 1990 after achieving no more than a cult following. Now that was criminal.

Other London bands like Maroon Town, the all-female Deltones and The Trojans, deserved a lot more credit than they ever received too. Maybe if The Trojans' Gaz Mayall, son of blues man John and main mover behind a thousand and one great nights at Gaz's Rockin' Blues club in London's Dean Street, had swapped his famous line in hats for a few hooded tops and a Manchester accent, they'd be riding high in the popularity stakes today.

Still, a new generation of skinheads was able to taste the charms of JA music and therefore lay the foundations for the next horrible lot to come along. What's more, the cult was now firmly entrenched in towns and cities all over

the world, and to such an extent that most could boast bigger firms than you'll now find on the streets of Britain.

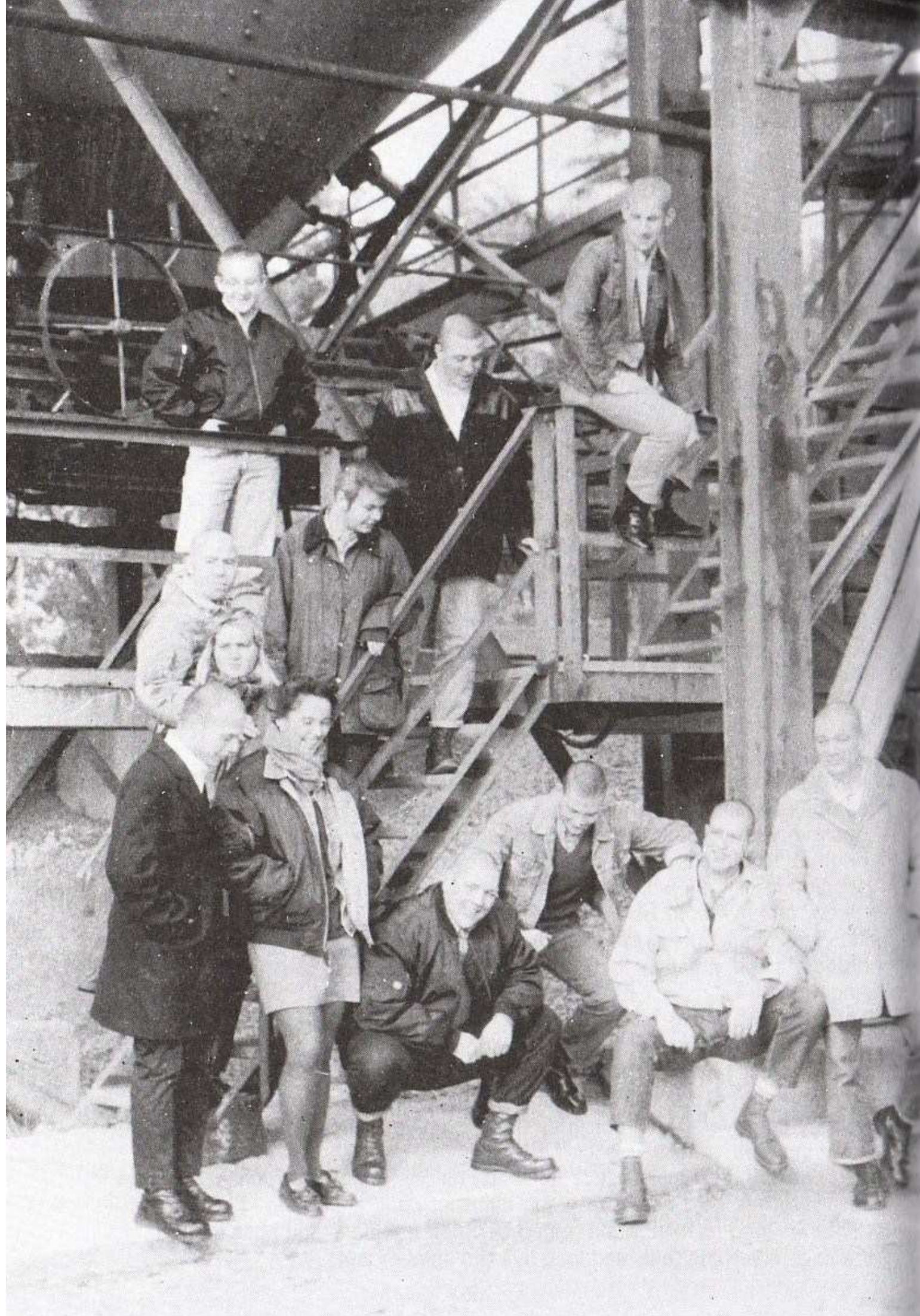
In Britain, the good old skinhead was becoming something of a prodigal son. The bad lad come good. Cults have come and gone, but none are as timeless as the skinhead cult. And despite their reputation for aggro, this fact wasn't lost on the advertising agencies. Maybe they weren't that bad after all missus, just loveable awkward teenagers, boys next door, so how about buying some washing powder to wash his shirts (a TV commercial still being shown today!), or getting your kid to join him on a YTS scheme. It was unbelievable really, but a lot better than having student punks opening bank accounts. Skinheads telling you to read *The Guardian* newspaper and buy Weetabix breakfast cereal was a million miles away from life on the streets, but there you go.

There was little hope of similar campaigns working on the Continent though, where people were finding out about the skinhead cult first hand. Things had turned full circle, with skins causing bovver at football games and clashing with other gangs all over Europe. Big names like Paris St. Germain, Barcelona, Inter Milan and Lokomotiv Leipzig all had hundreds of skinheads manning their expensive stadia. It was hard to believe that the most British and working class cult of them all would rule the back streets of the world. Talk about awards for export, the skinhead cult should have been top of the list.

And still the story continues. There are still thousands of skinheads all over the world, putting the boot into society on a daily basis. Ska, reggae, Oi! and punk are still very much alive, even if largely ignored by the mainstream media except for the odd trip into fantasy land. The cult has obviously come a very long way since its beginnings on the housing estates and council schemes of late Sixties Britain. Times have changed and with them the cult has evolved, sometimes for the better, often for the worse. Certainly a lot of original skinheads wouldn't cross the street to piss on some of today's specimens if they were on fire. And who'd blame them? But by the same token, others would never have believed that over 25 years down the road, kids would still take great pleasure in swaggering down the street in boots and braces. And not just in Birmingham and Liverpool, but in Berlin and Los Angeles too.

There is one thing skinheads should never forget though. Skinhead has always stood for pride. Pride in yourself, pride in your family and friends, pride in your town, pride in your class and pride in your country. You might not have been dealt a fair hand in the game God jokingly calls life, but nobody can ever take your pride away from you unless you choose to throw it away yourself.

You can bring on all the teds, casuals, hairies, mods and punks you want to, but there has never been a youth cult that could touch us. And there never will be as long as skinheads remember their traditions and pass them on down the line. Keep the faith and long live the spirit of '69!



CHAPTER EIGHT

A-Z OF SKINWEAR

Skinhead was never meant to be about label twitching, and this guide is not an attempt to lay down the law about what you can wear and what you can't. It's simply a guide to what is widely worn today and has been worn in the past. There can be no room for snobbery in a cult that prides itself in being working class and just because you may have a wardrobe full of tonic suits and Brutus shirts, it doesn't make you any better than a kid with one Fred Perry and a pair of boots to his name. After all, any prick with money can look the part, but it's where your heart is that really counts.

Airtex make of shirt.

Astronauts once popular make of eleven hole boot, so called because the air wair sole was like walking on the moon. That's what it says hereanyway.

Blazers yep, standard blazers with silver buttons were a suedehead favourite. Often in football team colours with a club patch sewn on to the breast pocket.

Blooding anyone with new boots risked a bleeding, with all your mates doing their best to stamp on them to make them dirty. Also called christening.

Bomber Jacket see flight jacket.


Boots originally studded army boots with steel toe caps, NCB boots, monkey boots or anything else you could get your hands on, but eventually DMs became top dog, not least because steelies were classed as an offensive weapon. Cherry red and black were most popular, although black boots lost their appeal for some when black DMs became standard issue for plods. Other boots came in brown or tan.

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Bowler Hat suedehead and clockwork orange headwear.

Braces meant to hold your trousers up, but usually worn for style. Certainly not worn for comfort because they do your balls in most of the time. Sometimes worn over a thin pullover or tanktop. Wider originally than the quarter inch common today with, half inch, 1" and even 2" being sported. They were also

worn over the shoulder and not around your bum until punk came along.

Brogues lace up shoe with holes punched over the toe and down the sides to form a pattern. Black, brown or burgundy in colour. Steel toe caps were an optional extra. In the States they are commonly known as Cordivans and were worn by the FBI. Also available as a very smart boot.



Brutus make of shirt, including the best tartan ones available. Brutus Gold were excellent button down checks. Also a make of jeans, but never really popular in skinhead circles.

Cardigan Fred Perry makes them so they must be okay. Chunky ones with pockets look best, but remember to leave the bottom button undone.

Combats army camouflaged jackets and trousers were worn by original skins, but are now mainly the preserve of boneheads. Shame.

Combs not much use when you've got a crop. Still, in '69, hair that was long enough to be combed did pass for skinhead fashion. Steel combs were all the rage anyway, not least because a

sharpened one makes a handy tool. Carried in your back pocket so all your mates knew you had one.

Corduroy now it's into the just when you thought you were safe department. You can run, but you can't hide! Corduroy jackets and trousers made by Levi's, Lee and Wrangler were quite popular at the start of the Seventies. Sad eh?

Cravats usually paisley pattern and tucked into a shirt or blouse collar. Ties only worn at weddings, funerals and when made to at school.

Crombie despite what you may have read elsewhere, crombies were not post-1970 suedehead wear. They have been the mainstay of shady deals and gangsters for decades, and were picked up by the skinhead cult as early as '68. Check out the 1969 film *Bronco Bullfrog* if your mates don't believe you. Short for Abercrombie, a genuine made to measure one would break the bank, so most make do with cheaper imitations, often with a lining of cheaper still red satin. Even here there's quality and crap so go for one with some weight behind it, and a left breast pocket so you can shove a hanky in it. Velvet collars are a nice touch too.

Donkey jacket good enough for dockers, miners and labourers, and certainly good enough for their sons and daughters too. Best ones have waterproof orange or black plastic at the top of the back, and a nice touch would be to have NCB or the like stamped across it. Names were often written on the plain ones. Cheap, deep pockets and warm.

Earrings blokes started having one ear pierced in the early Seventies, then both. Girls had anything up to eight around each ear. Well before punk, some Sunderland skins wore small rings in

their noses. An oddity of fashion, like Maidstone skinheads who spent a summer in the early Seventies parading around the town wearing those big plastic ears you get in joke shops. It takes all sorts.

Falmers a make of baggy jeans, popular with smoothies.

Feathercut girl's hairstyle, originally a lot longer and a lot more subtle than some of the girls you see today with friar tuck type cuts. Originally the top was cropped, but not shaved, and so longer. Often the fringes are bleached a different colour to the top too. Causes split ends, particularly if you use the good old steel comb.

Harry Fenton well-known tailor in the Sixties who made a decent button down shirt. Again tartan a speciality.

Fishnet stockings what every skinhead bloke's dreams are made of. Other tights and stockings worn, including patterned ones, but obviously not as popular or as sexy. Ankle socks, usually white, are worn over them with shoes.

Flat cap a must for every skinhead whippet owner and Andy Capp fan.

Flight or Flying Jacket also called a flighty, it must be the most popular jacket on sale today. Olive green tops the colour charts, although black ones are most popular with white power skins ironically enough. Other colours include air force blue. Although supposedly original USAF MA1 issue flying jackets, that's not really the case because they have epaulets on the shoulders. Still, what everyone calls an original with a metal zip, decent zip pocket on top of left sleeve, inside pockets, and decent elastic cuffs and collar, are far superior than some of the trash sold by dodgy market



Above: Ilena from Sweden and Lene from Denmark.

stalls and shops. Smarter left plain, but often covered in scooter patches, or decorated with other badges and sew-ons. Reversible in theory, with the bright orange lining allowing you to be spotted easily if you bail out of a plane. Worth remembering next time you go abroad by plane.

Gloves it used to be pretty fashionable to wear fingerless gloves. Apart from that, the nearest the skinhead cult gets to them is the boxing ring.

Greens army trousers made of green durable material. Cheap and hard wearing.

Handkerchiefs nice touch to finish off a suit jacket or crombie breast pocket. Silk is best. Folded in a variety of ways and held in place by a pocket stud, which often boasts a football team crest.

Harrington lightweight jacket, named after Rodney Harrington, a character on TV's *Peyton Place*, who was always wearing them. Zip up front, button up collar. It has always been available in various colours (black, red and fawn are most popular), with a tartan lining as standard, but as with most things the quality of them today isn't a patch on the ones being sold in '69. Also available for a short time in tonic and Prince Of Wales pattern. Suedes loved them, but by the mid-Seventies they were High Street fashion.

Identity Bracelets popular item of jewellery during the original skinhead period, but worn by everyone really.



Jaytex a make of shirt, noted for its superb checked button downs.

Laces the colour of boot laces causes more arguments than a blind referee. The problem is that different colours mean different things in different areas. White might be NF in one town and anarchy in the next. In Montreal, yellow's meant to mean cop killer. What makes it worse is that there is always some know-all who claims to know the lot. Not exactly Earth-shattering stuff.

Lambswool Jumpers very smart and very comfortable. Aaaaah, or should that be baaaaah.

Lee make of jeans, especially popular in the north before Levi's became widely available. Just as good too.

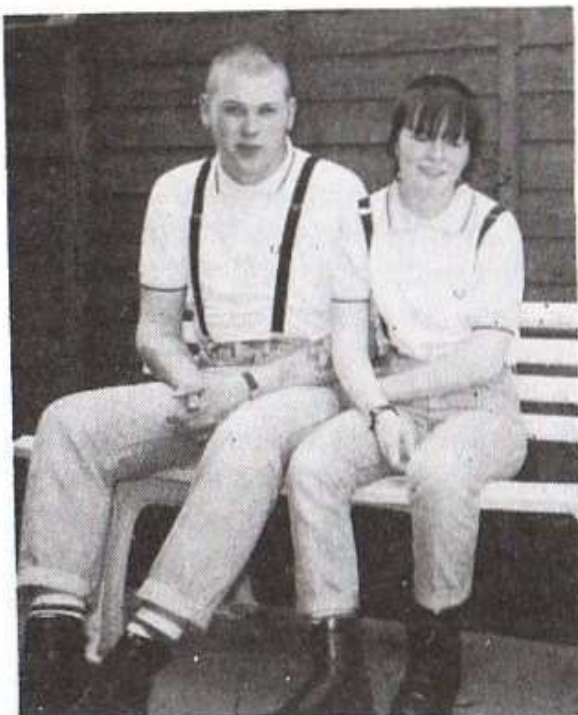
Levi's red tag 501 jeans and jacket are a must for a skinhead. Button flies are in vogue at the moment, but some still prefer zips - myself included. Red tag 505s have zips as standard. Orange tab jeans are frowned upon in some circles, but God knows why. Jeans were always baggier in the original days, with skin tight ones appearing with punk.

Loafers plain slip-on shoe usually with a fringed strip across the tongue and with a couple of small toggles tied like little laces. Usually one of the toggles falls off though. Usual shoe colours, but black most popular thanks to 2 Tone. If you're after a brand name check out Frank Wright. Penny loafers were so-called because girls often attached an old penny piece to their shoes.

Lonsdale manufacturers of boxing equipment. Their range of vest and sweatshirts became popular with mods and skins because of the Lonsdale shop just off Carnaby Street as much as for the love of the noble art.

Mac smart raincoat, a throwback to the mod days. More a suede thing, and never really popular. Now the preserve of dirty old men.

Doc Martens also called docs and DMs, the most famous make of shoe and boot thanks to its "air wair" soles invented by the good Austrian doctor. Very comfortable, hence their popularity. They are available in 8, 10, 12, 14 and even 20 holes (count the eyelets up just one side of the boot) and most sizes, including small kids. 8-12 holes are



Above: Barry and Tricia from Dumfries, Scotland.

most popular, although boneheads prefer them to touch their knee caps. Black and cherry red as standard and steel toe caps are available too. Now that the Doc has gone all trendy, they are now available in an amazing array of styles and colours. Enough to make you puke in fact.

Mini-skirts now we're talking! Denim (often made from an old pair of 501s), dogstooth, Prince Of Wales, plain, tonic, you name it. Very smart with matching jacket, shirt and stockings.

Moccasins once popular footwear, even as late as '79 and '80, but now rarely seen. Probably because all your mums have a fluffy pair as slippers.

Mohair expensive material made from Angoran wool. Perfect for suits if you can pick up the bill.

Monkey Boots ankle boots with the word monkey written on the sole's tread. Popular with kids and girls because they are widely available in small sizes.

Norwegians basketweave style of shoe popular with smoothies. Selatio was a popular brand. To be honest, they look bloody awful.

Oxfords usually plain leather shoe with square toe.

Arnold Palmer make of shirt. Loud checks in unusual combinations, but not all buttondowns.

Permanent Press make of shirt. Excellent button downs for girls. Also made trousers that never needed to see an iron.

Fred Perry range of tennis wear bearing the name of Britain's greatest ever tennis player. The short-sleeved shirts were popular with mods in the Sixties, and are now standard skinhead issue. Originally four button and then three, they are now usually only two button affairs and made from lighter material. Colour schemes were once pretty tame, but very smart thanks to the piping on the collar and sleeves. Now available in 52 hideous shades in a sad attempt to compete with Benetton. Gone are the days when the ads ran, "Shirt by Fred, 'Nuff said." Other lines bearing the famous laurel wreath logo like cardigans, jumpers and Harrington style jackets are popular too.

Polish proper little spit and polish merchants are skinheads. I was going to say that nobody likes polishing shoes, but I know a few faces who can't get enough of it. Certainly if you take pride in how you look you can't go out without a shine on your boots or shoes, even if they are then trampled into the ground at gigs.

Pork Pie Hat narrow brimmed trilby hat borrowed from the rude boy look. Sometimes called a blue beat hat or stingy brim too. Any colour will do, but black is most popular. A decent one will last years longer than the cheap kiss-me-quick variety.

Royals Faith Royal were the company who pioneered the brogue style, hence the shoe is often named after it.

Scarf a must for the winter unless you happen to live in Hawaii (and before you ask, plenty of skins do live there). Football ones are definitely most popular, with Gillingham F.C. ones being most prized. Also paisley patterns.

Shaver an electric shaver, also called barber's clippers, are widely available and pay for themselves after a dozen haircuts. Wahl is the top brand and comes complete with plastic clip-on settings so you can have a number one, two, three or four at the flick of a wrist. Keep well-oiled for a lifetime of service.

Sheepskin coat worn by wide boys and football managers the world over, not to mention thousands of skins. Expensive, but worth every penny. Plus they always turn up in second-hand shops. The ones that cover your bum are most popular. Colours to choose from include fawn and dark brown.

Ben Sherman most popular make of skinhead shirt available, not least



Above: Viola from Roermond, Holland.

because it's the easiest to get hold of. Ben Sherman was a Canadian who started selling his own brand of American style shirts in the early Sixties. They soon became fashionable with mods, but it was skinheads who really put the bloke on the map. The button down collar includes a button at the back, plus there's a loop for hanging the shirt on the back together with a pleat. Those features along with a left breast pocket are now trademarks of skinhead style. The earlier short-sleeved ones had two buttons and a V-shape cut out of the sleeve, then just two buttons and now just the one. Often called Bennies, and available in plain, checked and striped.

Shirts American style button down shirts easily the most popular. Always worn with top button undone and long sleeves rolled up once or twice. Freds usually worn with all buttons down up.

Skull Caps woollen hats to keep your head warm. Often called Benny hats after the amiable thicko on *Crossroads*, a soap opera which was once compulsive viewing for skinheads in Britain because of its torrid sex scenes. Miss Diane, where are you now?

Socks plain white sports socks are universally popular. Red is a long way behind in second place.

Sta-Prest trousers that never needed ironed, and very smart too. Made by a number of companies, but none could touch Levi's whose white ones were stunning compared to other brands. Ever-prest were another good make. Colours included white, burgundy, black, ice blue and fawn.

Steelies steel toe-capped boots were very popular because of their aggro potential. One kick in the balls and few would come back for more. But once they were classed as an offensive weapon, other types moved in on the boot territory.

Style the stuff that oozes out of a well-dressed skinhead.

Suits three and four buttons, narrow lapel, and either a middle or back vent or two side vents (up to 18" long) are standard features of skin suits. Ticket pockets are another nice touch. Competition for the best suit often saw extra ticket pockets being added, so you ended up with two pockets on one side and one on the other, and then three on one side and two on the other and so it went on. Buttons on the sleeve were another measure of style, with three being a bare minimum and some racing up to the elbow! The bottom jacket button is usually left undone and the trousers short enough to see the top of your shoe and some sock. Originally plain mohair or the cheaper Trevira, then dogstooth followed by Prince Of Wales checks and tonics. Summer colours tended to be petrol blue, green and navy blue, while black and brown came in during the winter. Smoothies went for double-breasted suits in similar

materials. Skinhead girls originally wore their suit jackets at three quarter length.

T-shirt worn by kids since the Fifties, and skinheads are no exception. After



Above: Mandy Jarman, a skingirl from Walsall.

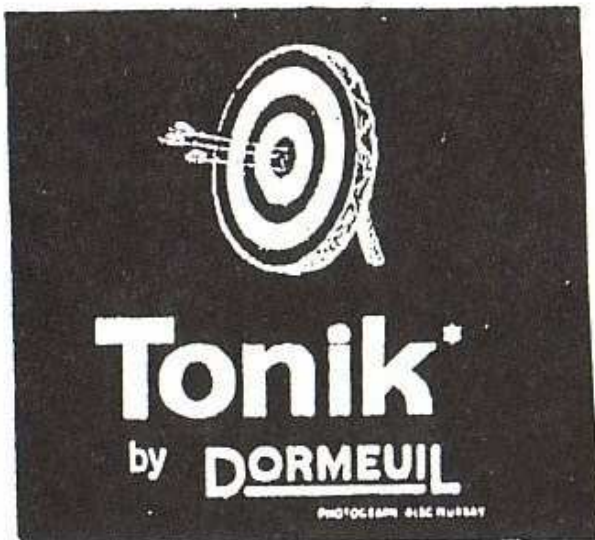
all, not everyone can afford umpteen Bens. Band logos, footie teams, Union Jacks and the like are all popular.

Tank Top sleeveless jumper popular in the early Seventies. Usually patterned, sometimes in really bad taste. Braces were sometimes worn over them.

Tattoos loads of skinheads have tattoos. Football teams, bands, lovers, countries, firms, all get a look in alongside the odd swallow. A lot of London skins had a star in the centre of their left palm at one

time, and another popular one is the four dots in a square pattern between your finger and thumb for those who have done time. ACAB. Tattoos can look really smart or really tacky, depending on who does them. At the end of the day though, you've got to remember you'll have them for the rest of your life and so the decision to get one done is a very personal one.

Tonic two tone material that changes colour in the light. Very smart suit material.



Trevira made of cloth similar to mohair, but less expensive. Again, popular for making suits.

Trim Fit Brutus shirt, especially popular with lasses. No use for beer bellies.

Umbrella suedehead accessory, often with sharpened tip for aggro.

Union Shirt collarless shirt, also called a granddad shirt. Harks back to the days when collars were detachable and weren't worn for hard manual work. Usually available in plain or striped, with left breast pocket.

Windcheater lightweight smock, rather like a kagoule. Originally very popular,

but rarely seen these days. Meant to be shower proof and warm, but the rain and wind went straight through them.

Wrangler another popular make of jeans and jackets. Northern skins and that.

You the most important part of the skinhead cult. Take pride in the way you look and you won't go far wrong.

A neatly folded hanky sets off a suit or a crombie like nothing on Earth. Match it with your socks or shirt, and you'll certainly turn some heads. The important thing is the fold, be it square, three pointed, four pointed with one fold down, or what have you. It may take a bit of practise, but you'll soon get the hang of it. Try the easy to follow steps below, courtesy of Boots N Booze skinzine.

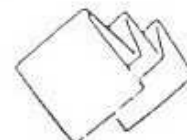
1. First fold in half.



2. Then fold to make a point.



3. Repeat.



4. Staple to a piece of card.



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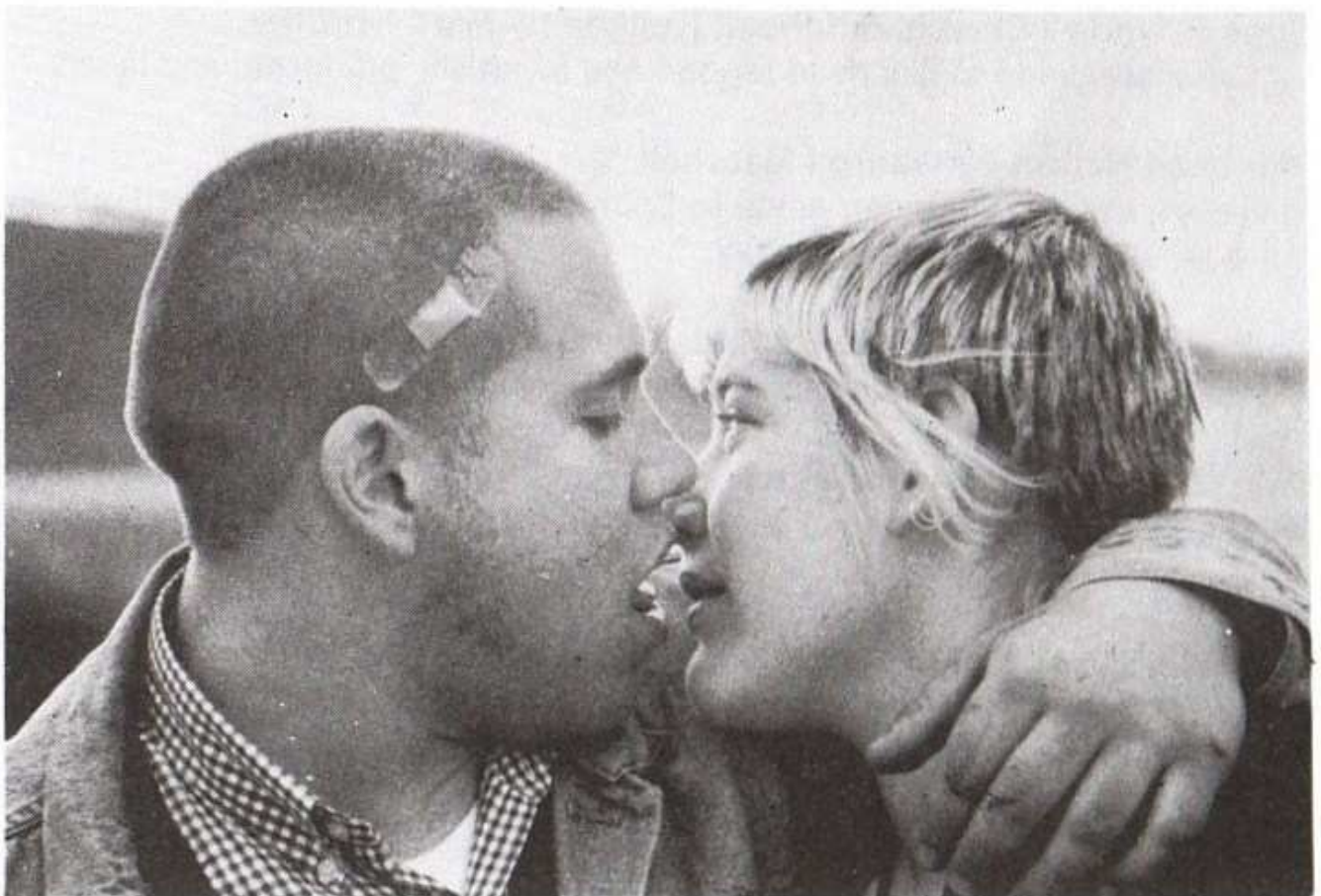
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