

CRASS



An analysis of how Crass were influenced by the cultural climate of 1977-81 when writing the song 'Big A Little A' and how they subsequently influenced others.

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ABSTRACT

The following is an exploration of the influence and legacy of the anarcho punk band Crass. The study includes insights into their cultural context and a stylistic analysis of their music as well as research into their later influence on other artists and social activist movements.

Firstly, the study looks into the band's cultural background, including the surrounding political and social climate, giving an insight into their motivation and the effect this had on their songwriting.

Secondly, there is an analysis of the Crass song 'Big A, Little A' (1981) which divulges some of the musical and political influences found within their music. Lastly, is a discussion of the influence Crass has had on a number of other bands and movements, focused predominantly on the anarcho punk movement of 1979-1984.

These objectives have been met through the analysis of prepared research which includes the study of a variety of relevant books, lyrical content, documentaries and interviews related to the band Crass, the punk movement, the post-punk movement and the social and political climate of Britain between 1975 and 1984.

Original interviews have also been conducted for the purpose of this study including interviews with members of Crass such as Steve Ignorant (Singer) and Penny Rimbaud (Drummer) as well as interviews with Crass fans and members of other relevant punk bands such as 999, Slaves and The Skints (See Appendix 1). Musical transcriptions, diagrams and a lyrical analysis of the Crass song 'Big A, Little A' have also been independently comprised for this study.

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Introduction

Anarchy & Peace

In 1978, just as The Sex Pistols and The Clash were winding down and many people deemed punk as dead, a radical band by the name of Crass emerged and released the EP *Feeding of the 5000*. The band hoped to sell one hundred copies initially but the pressing plant used would only print a minimum of five thousand, hence the title. Crass were astounded to sell all five thousand independently and go to a second pressing. Quickly the band gained a following so vast, that they became leaders of their own splinter genre of punk, labelled anarcho punk. Since, *Feeding of the 5000* has hit gold status and Crass' legacy has gone on to influence numerous other bands as well as a profusion of protest movements.

Despite Crass' success and significance in music history, their work and the anarcho punk movement as a whole, is often overlooked. Music historian Berger wrote; "Crass have been airbrushed out of punk histories". Subsequently, the aim of this study is to shed light on Crass' impact on the UK punk scene of 1977-1984.

The study also specifically discusses the influence Crass had firstly, on two anarcho punks who have been interviewed, Paul Scott and Mick Howes, and secondly on the band Slaves. Slaves are a modern band who have expressed their heavy Crass influence despite forming almost three decades after Crass' split. This sits alongside a discussion of Crass' influence on anarcho punk bands who formed around 1981 as a direct influence of Crass' music. Between the anarcho punk bands and Slaves, these bands cover forty years of music inspired by Crass, from 1981 to the present. This gives us some indication of the scope of Crass' musical legacy.

In order to put Crass in context and discuss their impact as a band, the study first explores the musical and social influences that directly affected their music. As with many punk bands, Crass have indicated that their inspiration came from their disparity with and condemnation of worldly injustice, rather than from other bands or music. However, elements of avant-garde, jazz and rock music can be heard in their songs. Most obviously though, there is a strong punk influence.

To contextualise their influences, the study later analyses one of their most complex songs, 'Big A, Little A'. This song is a particularly expressive example of their contempt towards political, religious and monarchic figureheads. It is also however, a later example of their punk, avant-garde and jazz musical influences.

Research has been collected from the few scholars who have written about Crass, as well as the many scholars who have written about punk as a whole. George Berger, writer of 'The Story of Crass' and Ian Glasper author of 'The Day the Country Died' are two important anarcho punk scholars that have influenced this study. This study also includes a series of first hand interviews from Steve Ignorant and Penny Rimbaud (Crass), Nick Cash (999), Joshua Waters Rudge (The Skints) and Isaac Holman and Laurie Vincent (Slaves). Also available in the appendix are interviews with two anarcho-punk fans, Paul Scott and Mick Howes, who despite never meeting have both been vegetarian for over forty years, due to Crass' influence.

This study discusses what influenced Crass and how they went on to influence others. The purpose behind this study is to make the reader conscious of the musical, political and social boundaries pushed by Crass whilst examining why Crass have been continually underreported in the history of punk. Overall, this study aims to fill a gap in scholarly writing and illuminate the importance of the band Crass and the anarcho punk movement in the context of popular music history.

Crass Members

Gee Vaucher - Artwork / Piano

Penny Rimbaud - Drums / Percussion / Lyrics

Eve Libertine - Vocals / Lyrics

Pete Wright - Bass Guitar

Mick Duffield - Filming and Editing

Phil Free - Lead Guitar

Joy De Vive - Vocals

Steve Ignorant - Vocals / Lyrics

Andy Palmer - Rhythm Guitar

Definition of Anarcho Punk

Anarcho punk is punk rock music that promotes Anarchism. The term 'anarcho punk' is often applied exclusively to the British bands that formed the original anarcho punk movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Chapter One

No Authority But Yourself

In late 1977, Crass emerged in London's underground scene. The band had nine members in total and hailed from Dial House in Epping, a home and collective art central where over the next eight years they'd live and breathe the band, keeping everything they did 'in house'.

The group are considered to be "the most notorious and confrontational protest artists to emerge from the punk scene of the '70s and '80s" (Southern). Some of their most notable endeavours include Rimbaud's co-founding of the iconic Stonehenge Festival, the band's involvement in the 'Stop the City' marches and having questions raised in Thatcher's parliament numerous times, besides countless other activities.

Crass promoted anarchism and sought to make people question their leaders decisions, their main saying being 'There is no authority but yourself'. Gasper wrote: "they didn't wanna talk to the media, they talked about 'The System' like it was something real and tangible, this mixture of religion, authority, the police, the government, the media... no one had really said, 'Fuck the system' before".

Their fully confrontational stance towards the authority of modern society and their hyper aggressive playing style soon attracted other bands to follow in their footsteps, escalating Crass to becoming the leading protagonists of a splinter genre of punk called anarcho punk. Bands to follow included; Conflict, Flux of Pink Indians, Zounds, Poison Girls and many others. Even The Damned's Captain Sensible released a single on Crass Records and turned vegetarian after spending time with the band at Dial House. Additionally, more recent artists from outside of the anarcho punk genre have also openly expressed the direct influence of Crass' music on their work, such as Jeffrey Lewis, Bad Breeding, Surgery Without Research, Bob Vylan and Slaves.

Though Crass' music was written off by mainstream press, as an "unlistenable cacophony" and their lyrics as "shock slogans and mindless token tantrums", their large sales figures and high ranking chart positions during the '80s alongside their widespread influence on a series of other successful bands, show them to be revolutionary, not just in a political sense, but also in a musical and economic sense.

Crass' artwork and logo design have recently resurfaced in contemporary culture having been commercialised by London Fashion House and Urban Outfitters on t-shirts and leather jackets without Crass' authorisation. David Beckham, Chris Brown and Angelina Jolie have all worn the Crass logo on

their t-shirts, naive to its meaning. Artist Banksy admits his politically motivating artwork is heavily Crass influenced. Banksy has even collaborated with Gee Vaucher.

Despite their logo's visibility in mainstream culture, their sizeable album sales and their political impact, Crass remain a very underground band. It would seem that there is a gap in the scholarship of this band whilst the detailed documentation of the Sex Pistols and The Clash's leading roles in punk music are reiterated relentlessly. The clandestine of their legacy is partly intentional on the bands behalf, due to their unwillingness to 'sell out' and avoidance of mainstream attention, refusing most press interviews. However, another factor contributing to their under appreciation in punk history is the expurgation of their presence by the government due to trepidation. This is because Crass sought to expose much of the dishonourable political action being practiced at the time. Interestingly, we will discover later in this dissertation how much of Crass' work has been hushed surreptitiously by government censorship since 1977.

Firstly, it is important that we look at the social context of the band as this heavily influenced their anarchist direction. Crass combined well-informed opinions, with a strikingly personal anger in forming the basis of their songs. Consequently, their music united an unemployed underclass of people who felt cheated by the government at the time. Glasper wrote; "an underclass was growing... and in many ways, the system encouraged it."

After the colourful burst of hope, self-expression and freedom that dominated '60s culture socially, the '70s drew in with a bleakness that saw the masses facing a recession, mass unemployment and growing class divisions in England. Historians often portray the 1970's as the most turbulent of the post war decades in the United Kingdom due to the many economic disasters, alongside continuous social developments during the period. Sandbrooke wrote, "These were desperately difficult years for Britain, both politically and economically."

This was a decade of strikes for postal workers, miners and dustmen among others. Economic problems such as mass unemployment saw the introduction of a three-day working week in February 1972 and in the summer of 1976 water rationing was introduced when water supplies reached critically low levels due to high temperatures.

Meanwhile, the popularity of large scale art rock and rock theatre bands meant that spectacle began replacing the intimacy of popular music, whilst stadium performances signalled a detachment between super bands and their fans. Rocks rebellious attitude had once been the voice of its generation. Johnny Ramone explains; "Rock and roll is supposed to be about doing it yourself, people got away from that.

They started overindulging”. Roger Waters of Pink Floyd agrees; “we had been overcome by commerce”.

Like London, New York was also suffering an economic depression and an overwhelming boredom with corporate rock in the early ‘70s. By 1976, bands like The Stooges, New York Dolls and The Ramones were emerging in New York’s CBGB’s club, forming a trashier underground rock scene. They played fast paced two minute, three chord songs with lyrics about sniffing glue, partying and fighting. Their minimalist sound and street lyrics sought to hand rock music back to its fans and give people a chance to reconnect with the true spirit, rawness and simplicity of rock. Importantly, bands like The Ramones simplified music, which paved the way for people to start their own bands without much musical knowledge.

In Britain, London had forged its own alternative rock scene by 1976 led by the formation of first The Sex Pistols and secondly The Clash. Partly inspired by the bands from New York, these group’s anarchist attitudes laid the foundation for what came to be known as ‘punk rock’. Covach explains; ‘Unlike the situation in the United States, the rise of punk in the UK can be linked to specific socioeconomic circumstances’ such as the ‘crushing economic recession.’ Punk had a passion and energy partly inspired by the minimalist sound of The Ramones, but with a uniquely British, explicitly D.I.Y. attitude.

By 1977, much of the nation begrudged celebrating the Queen’s Silver Jubilee, which cost millions in taxpayer’s money, whilst much of the country suffered in poverty and unemployment (Savage 2005). At this time the Sex Pistols released a song, which questioned and ridiculed the Queen and monarchy, ‘God Save the Queen’. The song captured the shock factor and rebellion that punk rock stood for and embodied the generation’s mounting opposition towards higher classes. Reynolds wrote; “The Sex Pistols swearing on television, ‘God Save The Queen’ verses the Silver Jubilee, an entire culture convulsed and quaked.”

‘God Save The Queen’ was a hit in Britain reaching no.1 on the NME chart and no.2 in the official UK chart, despite the record being officially banned by the BBC and Independent Broadcasting Society due to its treasonable lyrics. Lyrics such as; ‘*God save the queen, The fascist regime, They made you a moron*’ and ‘*There is no future, In England’s dreaming*’ were extremely controversial at the time and explicitly signalled a call for change in the conventional running of Britain. For thousands of people who bought the record, the lyrics captured the essence of the time; disrespect towards the state and the sense of a lost generation. It was a set of lyrics that rallied the new generation together through their fight against a common enemy, the establishment. D.I.Y. rock music and the notion of ‘anarchy against the

state' were willingly embraced by the youth of Britain and quickly punk music, fashion and attitude swept the country.

The youth who felt abandoned by the over complicated progressive rock that had gone before it, now had a new hope in punk rock. The Sex Pistols and The Clash kick started a wave of British bands that sang in their cockney London accents about things they experienced on the street. The punk D.I.Y. attitude gave everyone an opportunity to start their own punk band, whether they were talented or not. Glen Matlock of the Sex Pistols recalls; "Anything went, if you had an idea, get on and do it". People began putting on cheap gigs with groups of local punk bands in small clubs and supporting each other, creating a sense of community within the youth. Paul Scott, a punk fan from the time recalls: "There was a shock aspect to everything and the bringing together of small bands, small venues and groups."

In previous years there was a huge gap between the artists and their fans. Now fans were creating and performing their own music. Crass were part of the wave of self-starters. Steve Ignorant of Crass recalls "I saw The Clash play and Joe Strummer shouted: "If you think you can do better start your own band!" So I did!"

Many non-musicians took the opportunity to have a go at playing in a band and subsequently the harmonic language of the emerging music was far more basic. Standard and formal writing ideas were discarded or simplified and more time was spent playing live and in smaller, more intimate venues, unlike during the previous decade. The Sex Pistols confrontational and angry songs demonstrated a new anti-establishment mentality, which threatened authority and was liberating for fans. Reynolds wrote; "The sheer monstrous evil of punk was a huge part of its appeal".

Within the amassing punk culture, vocalist Steve Ignorant had approached drummer Penny Rimbaud to form a 2-piece punk band in 1976. Steve immediately moved in to Dial House, where Penny lived and they began writing and rehearsing. Ignorant recalls that initially: "We never thought it would go further than the garden gate." Gradually more members joined and over the next year, Crass began writing, rehearsing and playing small gigs, festivals and squat parties.

By the end of 1977, The Sex Pistols had "auto destructed" (Berger) and split up, whilst The Clash had left for America on tour to pursue worldwide fame "and never returned" (Berger). As 1978 drew in, Ronnie Biggs guest recorded a soundtrack with the remaining members of The Sex Pistols for the movie *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*, marking the ultimate contradiction of values. It appeared that the pioneers of punk had sold out to the mainstream. Punk music as a whole was being watered down and cashed in on by major labels. Berger wrote; "bands like The Jam and The Undertones were

embracing the mainstream". The Jam decided to remove the swearing from their album *This is the Modern World* whilst Adam and The Ants (who once shared a close punk fan base with Crass) sold out to the new romantic pop scene (Berger). Fans who had once considered punk a way of life, now likened it to as over commercialised as the progressive rock that had gone before it.

The inevitable demise of punk rock by 1978 had left a generation of punk fans orphaned in its wake and to make matters worse, the continuing social and economic depression grew. The combination of widespread anger and mass unemployment led to the persistence of punk culture socially as D.I.Y. rock bands and squat parties provided 'no money fun'. At this time the "enormous free speech crater that the punk bomb benignly left in an explosive wake" (Berger 2006) allowed for post punk to emerge, Reynolds describes this period as 'a counter-culture that was fragmented yet shared a common belief that music could and should change the world'. The aftermath of punk up to 1984 (Reynolds 2005: xv) saw a second wave of punk bands surface, this time with a conviction not to sell out.

In October 1978, Crass released their debut EP, *Feeding of the 5000* and for them, everything changed. Crass fan Paul Scott recalls: "The Sex Pistols signed to Virgin before splitting, The Clash signed to CBS and The Damned went their way, and it seemed like everyone was getting signed. Crass brought it back to what it should have been and that kicked off with *Feeding of the 5000*." Although released as an EP, it was actually an eighteen track double album, complete with artwork and posters and was sold at little above cost price, £1.99 when albums generally cost £3.99. Crass vocalist Eve Libertine said in an interview: "We wanted fans to get the best value for their money". The value for money ethic was greatly appreciated by punk fans. Crass quickly sold all of the five thousand copies they had pressed. Ignorant recalls; "We never had a massive crowd, then one gig all these punks turn up with Crass stencils sprayed on their jackets and t-shirts. That was the turning point where we really took off."

Although Crass advocated a D.I.Y. Punk ethic and heavy punk sound, the band members were extremely diverse in terms of backgrounds and musical influences. Whilst lead singer Ignorant was a self-confessed punk from a working class background he was also a huge David Bowie fan. He even took the band's name from the Ziggy Stardust lyric "The kids were just crass". Whereas Rimbaud had come from a privileged background as a public schoolboy and was heavily influenced by jazz and avant-garde music. Rimbaud revealed in an interview: "I took their upper class education and used it against them!" Interestingly Crass have said they were barely influenced by rock music at all. Despite Ignorant's stern punk vocal, partly inspired by Johnny Rotten and Joe Strummer, the rest of the band were influenced by classical music and Benjamin Britten. Some of Crass' riffs are even based on Britten's work. Free jazz, European atonality, and avant-garde composers John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen were also big influences. The influence of avant-garde features heavily in songs like 'Nagasaki

Nightmare' and 'Mother Love' but also frames the song 'Big A, Little A' through the use of sound collages and atmospheric a-tonal playing. Certainly a jazz influence can be heard in Rimbaud's playing in 'Big A, Little A' which we will look at in more depth later in an analysis.

Though the band's musical influences were diverse, Crass were gelled, not by the music of the time but instead by the social and political context. Rimbaud recalls: "We basically said 'we're not accepting the given rules of punk, which is three chords and smash smash smash. We actually brought in all sorts of strange elements; poetry, jazz drums or collages of radio clips etc., anything to broaden the front really.'" Many of the members were from a hippie or art school background. However, their dissimilar musical tastes alongside the differences in age and class were two major factors in the shaping of Crass' "unique chemistry that set up the claustrophobic tension so inherent in their sound" (Glasper).

Each member shared a similar dissatisfaction with society, state education and the government.

In rejection of the social divides, mass unemployment and lack of responsiveness from the monarchy and government, the members of Crass decided to move into Dial House together to further the band and live as simply and self-sufficiently as possible.

Dial House is a cottage in Essex that Penny Rimbaud discovered during the 1960's. The house was derelict and Rimbaud took it on as a restoration project and home after acquiring permission from the farmer who's land it sat on. This gave the band a free creative space, which they could maintain cheaply as the rent stayed at £7 a week until the '90s. For a punk band's headquarters, the location was unusual, as at that time it was common for punks to live in squats based in the city where all the action was happening. Rimbaud conveys: "I wanted Dial House to be an open art central where people were welcome to come and visit or live, as long as they contributed in some way".

In accordance with the art-driven community atmosphere surrounding Dial House, Crass as a band were considered as an open project and over time they had many freelance members. They grew from a 2-piece to an all-male 5-piece band and eventually became an 11-piece mixed-gender collective. This was an intentional move as they sought not to be explicitly defined or recognised by any particular member. The band made up fake last names such as 'Steve Ignorant' and 'Eve Libertine' in an effort to remain anonymous to the police when protesting or performing. They all stood equally in a line at the front of the stage when performing and they regularly swapped around singers in an effort to remain faceless and nameless. Eve Libertine remembers: "It was a conscious decision not to put anybody forward". Musically there were eight main songwriters in Crass. There were a small number of people in Crass who were filmmakers, artists and writers. They were considered as members of the band despite never actually performing or recording music.

Crass were an intensely focused group, and aside from being heavily influenced by a range of music genres they also took inspiration from writers and philosophers and were extremely politically driven. Crass were committed to pushing social boundaries. As artists, their motivation was a passion for humanity rather than fame. Crass' political conviction and relevance to Generation X is most explicit in the impressive lyricism and passion conveyed through many of their songs such as 'Do They Owe Us a Living?' (1978), 'How Does it Feel?' (1982) and 'Big A, Little A'. The best way to uncover some of their influences both musically and politically would be by analysing one of their songs. By looking into Crass' most anthemic song 'Big A, Little A' in Chapter two, we will explore the direct influences that drove the band's music and how their expression of their beliefs and emotions directly influenced so many people.

Chapter Two

Analysing 'Big A Little A'

This chapter is a lyrical and stylistic analysis of the song 'Big A, Little A'. The intention is to bring to light how a punk song can put forth the political astuteness that inspired so many. Also, we will look at some of the musical factors, which helped enforce the lyrical message.

Crass were extremely passionate in their political expressions. They could have made documentaries or written books but instead they chose music as their main medium of expression, and pointed out some of the inadequacies of its contextual infrastructure in the process. Over the course of their five albums, Crass told people about governmental hypocrisy, corporate malpractice, societal sexism and racism, and put forth personal viewpoints on sexual abuse and injustice.

However, many of Crass' lyrics were extremely offensive to the general public due not only to the use of obscene language, but also the extreme accusations they put to political leaders. For example, in reference to the Falklands war, Crass asked Margaret Thatcher in a song: "How does it feel to be the mother of a thousand dead?" and in 1979 their song 'Reality Asylum' was deemed "criminally blasphemous, for which they were arrested" (Taylor 2004).

In 1981, the song 'Big A, Little A' symbolised the challenge that the band were putting to authority, the status quo and the music industry by ridiculing and questioning the authority of the Prime Minister, the Queen and even God. 'Big A Little A' is one of Crass' most popular songs despite never appearing on an album. The song was released as a B-side to the single 'Nagasaki Nightmare' which reached no.1 in the indie chart and no.16 in the UK official chart, selling over 20,000 singles independently in the first week of release. Controversially, the following week the single was censored out of the charts, therefore it is unknown how many were sold in total (Rimbaud). This is due to the stigma attached to the band's explicitly anarchist nature, which they had maintained since forming in 1976. By 1981, Crass were seen as a threat to society by the government due to their anti-establishment lyrics, which were even raised in parliament. Today it still remains extremely popular, racking up over 1.2 million YouTube views.

The B-side was a step up for Crass in terms of its lyrical depth, stylistic intricacy and recording techniques. Unlike their previous noisy anti-songs, this record was dangerously close to rock and roll whilst at times touching on funk and even includes a fast-paced rap section, which was ground breaking for its time. Though the lyrical content ensures that all this musical development is done without the slightest dilution of the band's punk ideas.

Two years into Thatcher's time in office, the song involved a deleterious depiction of Thatcher, which is the likely cause of it being banned from the charts (Rimbaud). Ignorant recalls: "We were in Thatcher's Britain. The miners strike was coming up, the Falklands war was about to kick off and as a band, we'd gone down the line of confrontation and having a meaning and being against the system." Aside from the personal anger Crass expressed in forming the basis for the song, the writing process of 'Big A, Little A' was principally influenced by social, political and other contemporary factors of the time. Ignorant explained "inspiration was all around you at that time, it was everywhere".

'Big A Little A' comprises three distinct sections written collectively by Penny Rimbaud (lyrics, drums, vocals), Steve Ignorant (vocals), N. A. Palmer (guitar), Phil Free (guitar) and Pete Wright (bass, vocals). Although Steve Ignorant delivers the song with passion and energy, the lyrics were written entirely by drummer Penny Rimbaud who wrote much of the Crass material. The song's contextual relevance is encompassed by Penny's lyrical inspiration, taken from the conditions of working class society in London between 1977 and 1981. Penny recalls "Steve brought the wisdom of the street into my life so we could talk in a very balanced way. I could talk about another part of society and use a privileged education against privileged education."

Punk music is often characterised as musically simple and lyrically aggressive. 'Big A, Little A' portrays those genre characteristics. However, there are a number of other farther-reaching influences involved in the song such as the use of a funk bass line, a nursery rhyme, a rap section and some jazz and avant-garde ideas.

Firstly by looking into the musical characteristics of the song, we can notice the similarity between this and other songs from the punk genre:

Table to show common characteristics in songs from the punk genre

Band	Song	Band's Singing/ Playing Manor	Number of Chords Used	Subject
The Clash	Hate & War	Aggressive	3	Political
The Sex Pistols	God Save The Queen	Aggressive	3	Political
Crass	Big A, Little A	Aggressive	3	Political

As you can see from the table, 'Big A, Little A' reflects the qualities of the punk genre through its political subject matter, aggressive vocal delivery and simple chord structure. These qualities are synonymous with other songs from the genre such as 'Hate & War' by The Clash and 'God Save The Queen' by The Sex Pistols. The stripped down instrumentation of drum kit, electric bass guitar, distorted electric guitar and vocals also embody the music of the vast majority of successful punk bands.

Table to show 'Big A, Little A' chords

Chord:	Eb	Bb	Ab	F Major	G Major	A Major
Degree of Scale:	Tonic	Dominant	Subdominant	Supertonic	Mediant	
Interval:	Root	Perfect 5 th	Perfect 4 th	Major 2 nd	Major 3 rd	Tritone
Abbreviation:	I	V	IV	II	III	

Although the vast majority of the song features a three chord riff, there are actually six chords in 'Big A, Little A', due to the tension building section toward the end in which Ignorant performs an anarchistic rant.

'Big A, Little A' uses a simple transitional structure to shape the politically motivated intentions behind the song. After exploring the harmony further we can see that the simplicity of the structure is related to a blues/rock and roll 'I, IV, V' progression. In relation to the blues, the band also use harmony to mark song changes. The harmonic similarity between 'Big A, Little A' and other punk songs compared with the rock and roll and blues genres, reflect the simple chord progressions of self-taught or new guitarists.

Harmonic comparisons between ‘Big A, Little A’ and other Crass songs

Song	Chords Used	Section	Interval	Abbr.
<i>Do They Owe Us A Living?</i>	Ab, B, Db, Eb, E	<u>Verse</u> Ab - Db	Tonic - Subdominant	I - IV
		<u>Chorus</u> Db - B		IV- iii
<i>Punk Is Dead</i>	E, A, G*, F*, G	<u>Verse</u> E - A	Tonic - Subdominant	I - IV
		<u>Chorus</u> A - E	Subdominant - Tonic	IV - I
<i>Banned from the Roxy</i>	A, D, B, C	<u>Verse</u> A - A - D	Tonic - Subdominant	I - IV
		No chorus		
<i>Big A, Little A</i>	Eb, Bb, Ab, F, G, A	<u>Verse</u> Eb - Bb	Tonic - Dominant	I - V
		<u>Chorus</u> Eb - Bb		

As with most punk songs, Crass use mostly power chords and their harmonies rely on primary triads. As you can see from the table below, Crass often use the Root - Perf 4th interval and in ‘Big A, Little A’ they use the Root - Perfect 5th, heading straight from the Tonic to the Dominant. This shows a repeated pattern in the band’s use of harmony throughout their writing. This simple harmonic writing method further enforces their belonging to the punk genre.

Despite Crass’ performance practice being overtly similar throughout their predated songwriting, the recording of ‘Big A, Little A’ is far more professional, from a sound production point of view, than many of the bands previous recordings. *Feeding of the 5000* had a tinny sound with many of the lyrics muffled. Fans reported that they could not understand Ignorant’s vocals, which is why Crass began printing their lyrics on their record sleeves. However, ‘Big A, Little A’ makes use of advanced production and is well-recorded with a larger sonic landscape. Despite this progress, the fact that Rimbaud uses pots and pans as part of his percussion set up acts as a contradiction to the application of professional production. This relates to the D.I.Y. production found in skiffle music and brings the listener back to the band’s first principle; to remain grounded in their conviction not to take themselves completely seriously, only to take their political message seriously.

The songs structural arrangement is particularly well crafted, partly due to Crass’ use of a lyrical build in intensity alongside sound collages and sneering guitar tones. Interestingly, the song is framed by the use of live recordings of children singing the nursery rhyme ‘Big A, Little A, Bouncing Bee’ which Penny recalls was a street game like ‘catch’ played by children. Alongside the rhyme, a distorted Eb chord,

whilst the vocal continues on, delivering a lot of information to the listener. By including five lines of separate lyrics, Rimbaud has utilised the space in this section urgently asking the listener if they will be taken in by the 'external control' of the system, which is a personally burdening question. This shows an intention to inspire a serious act of re-evaluation in the listener's beliefs.

The 'Big A, Little A' repeated chorus melody is sung, chanted, played on bass and on guitar in various stages of the song as a reminder of the innocence of the original nursery rhyme. This melody is extremely simple using only three notes in the key of E major, E, B and A. This reflects the childish and playful rhymes reminiscent of a playground. The simplicity and repetition make it easy to mimic vocally and on instruments, meaning crowds could remember it and chant it. This makes it memorable, and is partly why it's so effective live.



Main Bass Guitar Riff

Aside from establishing the songs qualities that reflect the punk genre, there are also hints at other musical influences. Halfway through the song the power chords stop suddenly and a 'free jam' section begins, allowing the bassist to improvise, something Crass had never done on record before. The bass melody gives the section a funk sound and the introduction of this new structural idea shows the band gaining an awareness of their instruments as previously Phil Free confessed they; "couldn't jam".

Rimbaud stated that John Cage was a big influence on Crass at the time. Cage's compositions sought to provoke a sense of atmosphere as well as musicality. This influence can be felt in 'Big A, Little A' through the opening sections lack of timing and clear direction as the droning distorted guitar tone acts to create a feeling of horror and discomfort rather than harmony. At the end of the song there is a brief acting scene where a police officer chases a punk. The use of external noises, such as dialogue and running footsteps, shows advancement in Crass' recording abilities as well as an avant-garde influence.

Despite these influences and small progressions in the musicality of the band, Crass' punk rock attitude and motive to get the listener to think for themselves comes through the lyrics of the verses. Exploring more of the lyrical content from the verses will also help indicate how Crass became so influential and how they rallied so many fans to take protest action alongside them.

The songs opening use of dramatic dialogue, sound effects and children's singing contribute to the theatrical tone which follows. Within the verses of the song, Ignorant depicts the detached vantage point of a leader over the masses, featuring heavily articulated role-play. He uses disposition in his lyrical voice to portray God, The Queen and Margaret Thatcher. Rather than speaking in his own gruff voice,

he uses different accents to personify his characters, (for God, Ignorant uses a very deep droning accents and for the Queen he mimics a high pitched aristocratic English accent).

Despite the role-play, the figureheads are literal icons of power (e.g. Prime Minister, God) who in reality, govern the boundaries by which people live their lives. The performance context of these characters acts as a metaphor, which represents these figures as false, powerless puppets and Rimbaud portrays them lyrically as nonsensical and unjust. This invites the listener to question their legitimacy as rulers.

For example when verse one depicts the role of God and religion, the line: “*We'll blind you with morality, you'd best abandon any hope*” strongly indicates a sense of hopelessness in following a religion. This is due to the awareness that religion condemns everyone as sinful, and sinners cannot be worthy of God, making ‘righteousness’ impossible by a religious standard.

The lyrics: “*We're telling you you'd better pray 'cos you were born in sin/ Right from the start we'll build a cell and then we'll lock you in*” powerfully encapsulate the absurdity of the church's rule which many disagreed with at the time. This is backed up by: “*we offer our forgiveness, but first we'll make you pay.*” further highlighting not only the bleakness of a religiously bound existence but also the futility of one.

Secondly, verse two depicts the role of the Queen and Monarchy. The Queen is attacked sarcastically: “*My prisons and my mental homes have ever open doors*” and “*so I'll see the peasants grovel if they refuse to bow*”. This depicts the monarchy as having no empathy with (or understanding of) the general public's problems.

Verse three turns to politics, and this time exclusively points the ‘fraud’ finger at Margaret Thatcher. The verse sarcastically opens: “*Introducing the Prime Sinister, she's a mother to us all*”. Cleverly the line; “*If Moses did it with his faith, she'll do it with an army*” commits a double blow to religion, by highlighting one of the more implausible stories from the Bible, therefore questioning its trustworthiness. Secondly, by mentioning the army, the line links religion with politics and war, most likely referring to the Falklands War, which was ongoing at the time. This would have brought the reality of war home and provoked pathos with the audience, who knew that British soldiers were dying in the ongoing war.

Though Ignorant acts out the different characters during the verses, the songs overall context can be described as parenthetical, outside of the performance context. This is because of the sarcastic reality within Rimbaud's message that people are controlled by state and religion despite the fact these leaders

do not always have the public's best interests in mind. The song is therefore represented as a puppet show, although Crass seek to relate a message that's more profound than a stage act can achieve. Rimbaud's lyrical basis for the song represents the hierarchal system of religion and state as a cabaret of control over the masses.

The final verse concludes with a speech delivered by Ignorant speaking in his own gruff voice, readily representing the angry working class youth of Britain. Ignorant needs not announce that he is about to put forth the band's anarchist opinion, but simply switches back to his own voice. The listener is familiar with this due to the 'external control' section signalling a sobering return from the theatrical piece. Ignorant gives the listener an alternative option to being under the control of state authority: "*if you don't want to be beaten down, refuse to join their race*" and encourages them to "*be exactly who you want to be, do what you want to do*", a simple option of refusal which empowers the listener by handing them a choice as to whether or not to accept authority.

The music intensifies throughout the progression of the verse as the guitar texture, dynamics and tempo increase whilst Ignorant's vocal gains pace. Ignorant tries to fit so much information into the verse that the poetry quickly becomes a rap. This was three years before rap would be introduced to the British mainstream by New York's hip hop scene. The four lines of intense rap (the closest comparison at the time being Gil Scott Herring) alongside building harmonic tension indicate that the song is heading to some sort of climatic epiphany where Crass will lead the way to a new utopian politics. However, whereas in 1977 Johnny Rotten had proclaimed "*I am the anti-Christ, I am an anarchist*" at the dawning of punk, and failed to fulfil his promise to lead people to an alternative lifestyle of true anarchism, Rimbaud turns this phrase into; "*If you don't like religion you can be the antichrist, If you're tired of politics you can be an anarchist*". This essentially gives the audience a choice to make punk their own and make their reality whatever lifestyle they chose. As the songs tension reaches a climax, the tension simply dissolves and returns straight back to the 'Big A, Little A' melodic bass line. This brings us right back to the innocence of the playground and the move ingeniously tells the audience that Crass are not going to be the leaders, it's down to each individual.

'Big A Little A' was an influential song, firstly because of its intricate use of lyricism, which is superbly executed throughout. Although the overall sound of the piece is quite a leap from earlier Crass songs, many of the constructive techniques used, act to exploit an atmosphere rather than a specific harmonic motif which traces back to earlier songs like their first single 'Reality Asylum' / 'Shaved Women' (1979). For example, the use of contrast between sections is thought provoking and diverse.

Crass' songwriting capabilities displayed in 'Big A, Little A' indicate why they had such a lasting

underground influence through bands ranging from Conflict to Slaves. This raw piece of work strikingly displays the ethos, pathos and logos of a well-constructed political speech, which rallies the listener into concurrence and, in many cases, action. Amazingly though, Rimbaud and Ignorant have made their powerful point in three minutes, speaking vernacularly with their audience. Within these four short verses, Rimbaud has seamlessly pulled apart the three empires, which rule over people's minds and keep them in line. By delegitimizing religion, politics and the monarchy, Crass have essentially freed their audience of all moral and lawful obligations to any kind of authority. Most interestingly, Crass have done this without promoting their own hidden motive to capture people as their followers or offer them a new leader. Instead they have asked people to think for themselves in full sincerity and to strive to live a fulfilling life. 'Big A, Little A' seamlessly epitomised the amassing anarcho punk culture of its time, through its musically mischievous and lyrically direct approach.

Crass were a band who held strong stylistic values such as creating D.I.Y. independent art and music and went on to form independent record label Crass Records. The label invested the Crass' earnings into new bands and music. We will contextualise Crass' influence through the anarcho punk movement and beyond, in chapter three.

Chapter 3

Anarcho-Punk & Further Influence

Crass are one of the few punk bands who managed, not only to carry over from the first wave of punk without losing their validity, but to surpass their previous popularity. The persistence of Crass' gritty, angry D.I.Y. music filled the void that the first wave had left behind. They gave hope that punk could be genuine without selling out, which made many fans question whether punk had ever been genuine before Crass. Penny recalls: "we saw something real that was starting in punk and we wanted to be a part of it. When we realised it was fake, we made it real".

Part of what contributed to their popularity was their unique concerts. They were events encompassing music, poetry, film and performance with art and literature (aka homemade banners and fanzines). On their tours Crass booked out halls and decorate them with their own posters and backdrops. Gee Vaucher, who designed the bands striking and thought-provoking collage-style artwork, also designed these wall coverings. Vaucher, in collaboration with film maker Mick Duffield, created films made up of clips of movies, historical footage, news extracts and home recordings, which would feature as a projected backdrop to Crass performances. The band also used snippets recorded from radio and television to create thought-provoking sound art pieces as part of their music. "The band was only very much a part of the whole show, it wasn't like pop and rock music, where the band is the show" noted Rimbaud.

Often there were stalls from different political organisations and members of Crass would personally interact with the audience by talking to individuals before and after the show, handing out fanzines and lyrics sheets. Ignorant recalls: "the gigs were like a meeting place. People would just stand around talking, exchanging ideas and it was like Crass getting on stage was almost secondary to that". The band personally wrote their own leaflets on subjects ranging from bomb making to bread baking, with the hope of enlightening people. Crass fan Mick Howes recalls: "as a movement it was far different to anything I'd seen before. I was bored with bog standard punk rock for punk rock's sake; this (Crass concerts) became everything from eco warriors to paving the way of vegetarianism to serious far left and anarchist politics. Before long I was reading things and getting into things I'd never have dreamed of doing, as were so many other people". Crass fan Paul Scott recalls: "You'd read a record sleeve from Crass, then you'd go get a book out and find out about something. That's why I became a vegetarian because it made me investigate what happened to animals in laboratories and slaughterhouses".

The fact Crass fulfilled a truly anarchist lifestyle with their music and in their personal lives, was a huge part of their appeal with fans. Berger said they were an "example to others that it was possible",

“Anarchy in action”. Aside from keeping their concert tickets and album prices at a low cost, Crass would set aside one day a week solely for responding to their fan mail with handwritten letters. To separate their stance from punk bands who had signed major record deals and forgotten about the hardships faced by working class Britain, they endeavoured to put everything they earned back into the band and later, into furthering other bands. At Crass’ peak, Dial House had two thousand visitors in one year and the band received two hundred letters a week. Rimbaud recalls: “We realised it wasn’t just us we were speaking to, it was hundreds of thousands of kids hanging on every word you’re saying” and “That’s a responsibility we took seriously.” Ignorant adds that even now: “People will come up and say “Crass changed my life”.”

From the beginning Crass had expressed the sincerity of the values they held, including being environmentalists, being against animal cruelty and against war. The influence on their fans led to many of them forming their own bands, becoming protesters, feminists, vegetarians and vegans. Ignorant recalls that by 1981 Dial House was “a headquarters, not a home”. “By now the leaflets we turned out were political, trying to organise people, to create a movement.” Crass’ instigation of an anarchist movement rallied thousands of like-minded people. At this time their hardcore fanbase developed into the Anarcho Punk Movement.

The music side of the anarcho punk movement was a result of Crass’ influence on a huge wave in new bands. Reynolds recalls: “From 1980 onwards, there had been a ‘punks not dead resurgence”. Bands such as Vice Squad, Discharge, Anti Pasti, Flux of Pink Indians, GBH, Zounds, Poison Girl (who both toured with Crass) and countless others overran the independent chart (Reynolds 2005:424). These bands shared a trashy sound, owed to their limited or non-existent musical skill as well as a politically motivated anger. Many of these bands initially formed because of the influence of Crass. Conflict, Poison Girls, Zounds and Flux of Pink Indians each signed to Crass Records.

Crass Records promoted their bands through creating a sense of community. The bands played together often in anarchist centres which were abandoned buildings that anarcho punks would move in to and squat, using the building temporarily as a meeting place, information centre and concert venue where anyone was welcome. Mick Howes recalls: “It was just a meet up of likeminded people”. The bands all used variations of the Crass branding as part of their artwork and record sleeves, clearly stating their association. The bands were all serious protesters, promoting similar causes and many of the concerts were benefits of some kind, raising money for miners during the strikes of the ‘80s among other causes. By having all of their artists support each other by playing gigs and touring the UK and Europe together, anarcho punk spiralled into a bigger scene, which spread across the continent.

Colin Jerwood of Conflict was a passionate animal rights campaigner. Jerwood said that rather than educating people he wanted to: “open people’s eyes to what was going on, through images and putting out records”. Through the anarcho punk movement many people became involved with the Animal Liberation Front and would conduct acts of sabotage towards companies who harmed or experimented on animals. This involved graffitiing or throwing paint over the houses of those who experimented on animals, or sneaking into laboratories to document the experiments through taking pictures or filming. Mick Howes recalls: “I applied for a job in an animal testing laboratory so I could go there and report back what was going on” and “It felt like an individual could do something to affect social change. But it did take direct action to do it.”

For many anarcho punks, protests and rallies were as important as the music. The accumulation of this movement led to the coming together of thousands of anarcho punks in one huge protest in London, the ‘Stop The City’ marches. Green Peace instigated ‘Stop The City’, however Crass and other bands on the scene had a huge involvement in the protests which saw thousands of anarcho punks involved in the blockading of London’s city central in 1983. ‘Stop The City’ was a protest against the military-finance complex. Many protesters named it ‘Carnival Against War, Oppression and Destruction’. The protest involved a daylong blockade of the financial district in the city of London. One blockade involved three thousand people and caused £100 million in shortfall. Police made one thousand arrests on protesters within the following eighteen months.

Crass’ involvement in the ‘Stop The City’ marches gave the anarcho punk movement an opportunity to show how united and coordinate they were, a far cry from the mainstream portrayal of punks as chaotic and incompetent. Berger wrote; “It was no longer a bunch of kids who bought the same records – it was a peoples state” and “a tradition had been born”.

By 1984, Crass had split. The pressures of living together, touring endlessly on the D.I.Y. scene with little money or comfort and having to constantly justify their anarchist position had worn thin. Ignorant admits: “In the end it just burned me out” and “we all got to that point”.

In their eight years of activity, Crass had changed music, rallied a movement and captured the attention of the government, having questions raised in parliament and on ‘Question Time’. They had influenced a number of social movements including Animal Rights, Nuclear Disarmament Movement and the Feminist Movement. They had also captured the hearts and minds of hundreds of thousands of fans globally and inspired other bands to join forces with them and create like-minded music through the anarcho punk scene. As a band and record label Crass have had a viral effect, infiltrating many aspects of society.

Their infamous black and white logo design and record sleeves created by Gee Vaucher have since influenced artists as famous as Banksy and been copied by major fashion design companies for clothing ranges. In 2011 artist Toby Mott exhibited part of the Crass ephemera collection at the Roth Gallery in New York. This featured artwork, albums, singles and copies of Crass' self-published fanzine, *International Anthem*.

Musically, their influence is wide ranging, from anti-folk artist Jeffrey Lewis who in 2007 released an acoustic covers album of Crass material entitled '12 Crass Songs', to the NME acclaimed lo-fi garage punk duo Slaves. Bad Breeding, Bob Vylan and countless other new artists cite a Crass influences and hundreds more artists have recently used stems from 'Feeding Of The 5000' to remix and rerelease Crass songs.

Slaves become increasingly influential since 2014, after signing to Virgin/EMI and playing Reading and Leeds Festival. Despite their embrace of mainstream attention, Slaves claim to be musically inspired by Crass despite forming three decades later, in 2012. NME wrote that the duo had potential to become the "full blown re-embodiment of Crass for the new generation" (NME 2013). Slaves front man Isaac said: "I just like that when (Crass) started they said you don't have to play an instrument to be in our band. You can just do what you want so one of their guitarists just made noise" and "they were the first sort of band that I listened to that did it for the message of the music, they didn't do it for anything else." Laurie, Slaves' guitarist added: "Their sound is just unrivalled as well. I mean, no one sounds like Crass. And they've got hooks that stick in your head but its anarcho, and I see pop sensibilities there, just - there's no one else like Crass."

However, Crass' influence goes further than the music industry. Through Dial House, there have been countless other triumphs brought about by Crass members, outside of the band's heading. Through the many people who have been involved in Dial House over the years, countless projects have reached fruition, meeting Rimbaud's hope of the place being an art central and creative hub.

Some of the projects to come out of Dial House include ICES 72' Festival, the first Stonehenge Festival, the avant-garde band 'EXIT', countless paintings, performance art pieces, exhibitions, and many published literary writings. "Crass the punk band was one of our many project, it just happened to be the most successful in terms of popularity." (Rimbaud 2012)

Conclusion

You're The Only You

"It's still there with me and I'm a changed person because of it."

- Mick Howes, Crass Fan

From looking into a range of factors that influenced Crass, namely their social and economic context combined with a plethora of musical inspiration, we can now clearly see how they appealed to such a vast audience. Crass' legacy is apparent today through the prevalence of their musical and political ideologies through their fans and those they inspired.

Crass spoke to people on a personal level and have encouraged many to think for themselves. The motivational attitude they encouraged, has seen many of their listeners develop the confidence to learn instruments, start their own bands, start record labels, become fanzine editors, film makers or protesters among countless other ventures.

Ignorant said: "Crass stood up and said there's another way of doing things. That people were more important than power" and "a whole nation of kids clicked into that." The growth of anarcho punk spurred interest in anarchist ideas whilst the anarchist punk movement pioneered by Crass has grown continually in the UK, USA, Europe and elsewhere.

Ideologically, Crass inspired many people to fight for change in any way they could. Whether it is personal, social or political. Through their music and words, the exposure Crass gave to injustices such as sexism and animal cruelty led many of their fans to change their lives in some way. Vaucher told Radio Free France: "The feeling I got off a lot of young people was that they thought there was a lot wrong with the world." And added, "we've offered them information which hopefully gave them the possibility of deciding for themselves, and a broader outlook on their own lives"

In many ways, it can be argued that Crass were more active politically, socially and musically than many other punk bands that had gone before. Despite being self taught musicians and many of the band coming from poor backgrounds, they used poetry and lyrics to embolden their passionately fuelled convictions to Environmentalism, Anti-War and Feminism (Two of their popular slogans were 'Fight War, Not Wars' and 'There Is No Authority But Yourself'). Berger wrote: "it is with us today all over the world in the anti-globalisation movement, the animal rights movement, in various anti-war movements and underneath the red and black flags you'll see at demonstrations from Sydney to Lodz".

When asked, Rimbaud said he believed that; “The legacy is that you can do it if you’re willing to try. Each of us has talent, beauty - all those things are very human attributes and they’re so masked over and suppressed by the culture we live in. If you’re going to be a victim to the world, which is how we’re taught to be, then you can’t change it.” Rimbaud conveyed: “the spark of joy, spark of love, they’re all within us. The first way of changing the world is changing your attitude to it.”

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APPENDIX

Dissertation Interviews

1. Steve Ignorant, Crass (16th December, 2013)
2. Penny Rimbaud, Crass (15th January, 2014)
3. Isaac Holman & Laurie Vincent, Slaves (21st December, 2013)
4. Josh Waters Rudge, The Skints (21st September, 2013)
5. Nick Cash, 999 (22nd September, 2013)
6. Paul Scott, Ex-Anarcho-Punk & Crass Fan (13th November, 2013)
7. Mick Howes, Ex Anarcho-Punk & Crass Fan (13th December, 2013)

Transcript of an interview with Steve Ignorant, Crass

16th December, 2013

Conducted, Recorded and Transcribed by Paula Frost

Paula: Could you tell me a little bit about what it was like to start the band Crass with Penny (Rimbaud) because I know that at first it was just you two.

Steve: Say that again?

Paula: Could you tell me a little bit about what it was like when you and Penny first formed the band?

Steve: Well you know I don't think either of us was particularly serious about it I just had this vague idea of starting a punk band somehow and you know I was round Pens and he said to me I've got a drum kit I'll play drums for you and I went 'Great'.

Paula: Cool

Steve: And we just started diddling about with some lyrics I'd written and I don't think me or him thought it would get any further than the garden gate to tell you the truth you know we thought it would just be a weekend thing to shock the middle class hippies that were still going to – what was to become the Crass house at the time. Erm and the funny thing was that the more people that came to visit -we would say 'Oh,

I'm starting a punk band' and they would say oh I'll play guitar for you and so these people just chose to join.

Paula: So you say that you were already writing lyrics. Were you aware at the time that some of the punk bands that you might of been inspired by to write songs, did you feel that they were already selling out or did you just want to join that movement at the time?

Erm I don't think I thought they'd sold out at that time you know, The Clash were still in England and you know The Pistols, I think they were already banned but you could go and see bands like X-Ray Specs still and The Adverts and The Damned. Early on, all I knew was that I wanted to be part of this new think that was occurring called Punk Rock and it wasn't until I'd been in it for a few weeks or a couple of months or something that you know, I suddenly realised it was bigger than just a fashion because it was literally a whole movement. You know, I'm talking about the fanzines and people, filmmakers, poets, dramatists! Everyone was sort of getting in on it and there was suddenly this new wave of bands came along and new art work. Little shops were popping up doing T-Shirts and badges and what have you. So early on I didn't have any concept of it being more than a fashion, it wasn't till later and Crass got established that it hit me. Well, it wasn't till the Pistols and The Clash went to America and didn't come back suddenly I realised they'd sold out and it was up to us to clear up our backyard first and then maybe go to America.

Paula: So you said about fanzines and art, would you say they were just as important as the music?

Steve: Yeh definitely its strange because if I was gunna say for example Janie Jones, you know by The Clash – I'm right back there in 77' and the excitement, the buzz of going to a little grotty hall at the back of a pub somewhere and seeing a three piece band banging out something, but picking up fanzines and just people talking you know? And obviously the sulphate helped a little bit but you know, all these great ideas

that people had and we were gonna give the world a run for its money! And the fanzines and art work that people were doing was a part of that. Certainly the graffiti was great in those days because it tended to mean something back then rather than someone just sticking their name up.

Paula: A lot of people brand Crass, Conflict and bands like that as Anarcho punk or Art Punk now but I heard Penny say he doesn't like it to be branded as anything. Would you give it a name or would you say that's to be avoided?

Steve: No it was just a bloody wracket wasn't it? I mean how can you describe something like Crass? I mean it was unique! I must admit that when I heard 'Feeding Of The 5000' I didn't like it because it was too tinny. There wasn't enough bass on it for me, of course I wanted it to sound like The Clash or whatever, big thumping bass! But looking back on it now I can see that yes it is sort of punk, I wouldn't go as far as to say Anarcho Punk I mean that's a label other people have put on it – you've got to be able to describe it as something so it's as good or as bad as any. But I don't know... what is it semi jazz? It's realistic isn't it, it's so unique so I really don't know but to me it was like call it punk rock!

So at the time what kind of films, or art or bands influenced you to get really angry about society, religion and things like that? What culturally were you into?

Steve: Well I've always been a great film watcher and from an early age I'd been watching the black and white films from the 60's like 'Taste of Honey' or 'Cathy Come Home' and that was about their injustice and stuff which was always within me. When I got into punk that was what I really began to write about in a funny way. So I wasn't going out to see films really I'd say. The bands that inspired me were The Clash and The Pistols but just generally what was happening, inspiration was all around you I remember I saw a band called Dead Mans Shadow at a sort of squat gig and the sound wasn't fantastic but for some reason they were just doing it that night and suddenly it made me turn round and watch them. So it's funny you know, little things like that that happen. It's really hard for me, I'm not effacing the question but it's really hard for me to put my finger on one sort of aspect because it was all around at the time it was all part of the same thing.

Paula: Would you say that since Crass there are any bands today that reflect your anger or your ethos?

Steve: I don't mean this horribly but no I don't. I don't mean that badly but I think really it's because I'm not sure that many people are that interested because it's too cosy with things like Lady Gaga and the X Factor and stuff like that. So I'm sure there are people out there trying to do something similar but I don't think they'll ever reach the same sort of heights that Crass or Conflict or the rest of the bands did. You know, I'm waiting for a bunch of young kids to come along and blow me socks off and for me to go 'wow! That's what I want to say!' You know what I mean? I'm sure it will happen one day but I can't see it happening at the moment. What have people got to protest about? I know what I've got to protest about but I really don't know.

Paula: Have you heard of a band called Slaves?

Steve: No I haven't

Paula: Well they are a current band who say they are influenced by you.

Paula: Why did you start your own record label?

Steve: It was partly just having a go but we said that we weren't gonna sell out, really hard line and we had to stand by our word. And not being flippant or anything but because none of us had really had any money and there was money coming in, well we just used to put that into the next project or we used to give out leaflets and badges for free, just information things. Erm, and everything we did was a benefit, we just used to get petrol money and we thought if we did it, maybe the bigger bands would do it you know so that's also why we deliberately went out to small places like say Winsford in Cheshire or right up near bloody Cumbria right out in the wilds of Wales where people didn't go because we thought why should people come to London, we'll play there and we used to get audiences and things, charge 50p, a quid to get in or whatever and you know bands like Conflict, Subhumans, Flux of Pink Indians followed suit and what happened was this punk circuit went all over the country which was great, but none of the big bands like Generation X or obviously the Sex Pistols had split up, no established bands got involved with that. Maybe they were too big? I don't know but that's what we thought that was the drive behind it, keep that punk ethos.

I recently saw a video of a Crass gig and it was the only footage I'd ever seen and it did look pretty amazing, there were all these banners there and stuff like this and it was all really black and dark and it was all really well put together but to tell you the truth, I remember it being put together just bits of wood and gaffer tape and old bed sheets we had lying around you know – we'll paint a banner on that then! So it was a real sort of 'we've gotta do it!' 'keep the price

down we gotta keep the price down!". That's what we wanted to do and anyway that what it was about. So I think that was the driving force behind it.

Would you say that even though you've driven all over the country and obviously there was a big punk uprising in a lot of different areas, would you say there was a real home coming place where you felt you had the most influence on your fans?

Steve: Do you mean like London where that was our home turf?

Paula: Yeh did you have a bigger following when you played there?

Steve: Well I suppose probably there was more people because it's a bigger city. If you compare London to, lets say, Aberdare in Wales where we played – youre gunna get more people in London then in Aberdare but wherever we played it was the same intensity from the audience. It's been said and I sort of agree really that Crass gigs were very strange events. We used to get up there and there would be a couple of fights or whatever – couple of bone heads bashing the sh*t out of eachother but you know we'd play and really it was almost as though the gigs were like a meeting place for people you know. People would just stand around talking. Talking and talking and talking, exchanging ideas and it was like Crass getting on stage was almost secondary to that so for me yeh there were more people at the London gigs or Manchester for example but for me it was just as extreme wherever you played.

I want to ask you a few questions about the song Big A, Little A. I recently got the book 'Love Songs by Crass' which tells you who wrote each set of lyrics and it says Penny wrote the lyrics for that. Did you write any at all?

Steve: On Big A, Little A? No.

Paula: Do you remember how the song came about in rehearsal?

Steve: Yeh I remember Pen writing the song and I said; 'Big A, Little A, Whats that?' and he went oh it's a nursery rhyme and I said oh ok' tut, typical Pen thing! And Pen said to me when he wrote it he had this idea of a Glaswegian punk in his head and what sort of song could he image this Glaswegian punk singing along to and apparently the words just sort of came, I think he did it in about 20 minutes on the floor and he just sort of sung it to you. But I really liked it, its got a really catchy tune you know, really spot on for me. You know all those little bits like 'If Moses did

it with his face she'll do it with an army' that kind of thing and yeh it's a brilliant song, brilliant song.

Paula: At the start when you've got the children singing the nursery rhyme was that the original melody or did you make it up? No I think that is actually how the nursery rhyme goes, 'Big A Little A bouncing bee, cats in the cupboard and he cant catch me'

Paula: Were the kids friends or family?

Steve: The children's voices were Eve Libertines son and Phil Free's two sons and his daughter.

Paula: Aww, amazing.

Steve: Yeh if you look back at it, yeh!

Paula: Was the nursery rhyme significant or popular at the time?

Steve: You'd really have to ask Penny Paula, I think it was probably something from his childhood. I really can't remember.

Paula: Ok, I was thinking that on the record you deliver that song with such conviction its quite interesting the way when you think of it, it's sort of like a theatre. Like a play because you're taking on all these characters but the listener is grounded in your voice when it comes back to the 'external control section' so when it comes back to your part theres no need for you to introduce yourself because its obvious. Did you put a lot of thought into that or was it just natural?

Steve: That just came naturally you know; 'Hello, hello, hello this is the Lord God can you hear?' I always used to shout that in a semi Vicar type voice, try to sound like the voice of God or whatever and then 'Hello, hello, hello this is a message from your Queen' you know, very tempted to do it in a camp style voice but I just did it in what I thought sounded like the Queens voice and it came naturally. I mean its really funny the way me and Penny used to work together because he would come up with something and I instantly knew how to deliver it. And like with that song I instinctively knew that that's the way it should be done. At the end there's that long middle bit which goes really fast and there's not much room to take breathes so I delivered that directly. But no you're right, to perform it, it was a great theatre piece. And let me loose to do actions and all that sort of stuff, you know? Great song.

Paula: Yeh that part that you mentioned I sort of think of as a rap section I mean I know this was 1981 so did you have any intension of merging the genre of punk with the idea of rap or was this just like a poetical feel?

Steve: No that was just a poetical... well its really strange that because at that time I don't think rap was over here, it might have only just been starting in America. And that's really strange you should mention that because the first time I was on holiday in New York, down on Coney Island and this black family went passed with a great big ghetto blaster as it was known in those days, this huge great big thing with all this amazing stuff coming out of it. I went 'excuse me what is that you're listening to?' and they said 'have you never heard of scratching?' I went 'no what's that?' and they sort of explained it. And I came back to England and was desperately trying to find this rap/scratch music and the only thing I could find was this compilation album put out by Virgin or something which was pretty light weight but then thank Christ, Grand Master Flash came along and a few other people, and I was able to find a little bit more stuff and that's when I started writing it and I could instantly see that I could do rap stuff and in later bands like I was in a band called Swartsnegger – a few of those songs that I did were completely rap style. And to me you know, it was a no brainer the two intermingled perfectly.

Paula: I think they both relate, punk and hip hop seem to originate from an angry working class wanting to vent their struggle.

Steve: Exactly and well breakdancing which came along at the same time I heard from a friend that DJ'ed in New York and one theory is that it kicked off in the south Bronx where theres a lot of gang murdering and stuff going on and to stop the killings the leaders of gangs instead of having fights would have rap offs or break dancing competitions to show the biggest and baddest moves rather than shoot each other. And obviously the stuff that they're talking about comes from that gang culture you know. But theres also gangster rap rubbish which I think is fu*king awful, sexist bollocks.

Paula: But theres people that took punk and made it into something that it wasn't supposed to be as well.

Steve: Well yeh, lets face it when something comes along that's gonna make a buck or two someones gonna pinch it aren't they, someones gonna sell it out! That's just inevitable.

Paula: So when you were just saying you had this ghetto blaster and heard rap, was that before or after you did Big A, Little A

Steve: I think it was just after.

Paula: Ok, so you could have been the first ever rapper!

Steve: (Laughs) well yeh I wanted to be the first ever white punk rapper but unfortunately some twat called Vanilla Ice beat me to it.

Paula: Well I don't think you've got any threats from him now!

Steve: No no, but hes got bigger tattoos then me!

Paula: Yeh but he's still a knob though.

Steve: Absolutely! (Laughs)

Paula: Ok well I'm running out of time but I've got two questions left if that's ok?

Steve: Yeh go on then.

Paula Ok thank you. You might not know this it's a bit of a random one! At the end of Big A Little A, a police officer approaches a man –

Steve: Phil Free – yeh. Imitates police officer 'Hello, hello, hello' No! that was John Loader!

Paula: Oh right! Well the man responds to the police officer – 'oh fair cop gov' and then he runs away.

Steve: Yeh that's me running down the steps outside the studio.

Paula: Oh right! Why does he say 'Fair cop gov' and what is that bit about?

Steve: yeh 'Hello, hello, hello' 'Fair cop gov' and then me footsteps run away!

Paula: Yeh that's it!

Steve: Yeh I had to run up that road about 20 bloody times!

Paula: So is that reflective of a common occurrence of being a punk?

Steve: Yeh and 'fair cop gov' is what your criminals in the old black and white films say to the police men you know? The hands placed on the shoulder 'come along lad' 'fair cop gov' funny.

Paula: Oh right so its sort of like an end to the theatre production in a way where you've come back to reality, said your piece and been arrested for it.

Steve: Yeh and still flustering and trying to get away up park hurst road I think it was called.

Paula: It's funny how people say punk can be quite simplistic and I can see how yeh they might be 3 or 4 chord songs but in the conviction to the message and the lyrics, they're really complex and really thought out – they're clever songs.

Steve: Yeh well I think what helped us out there was that we weren't musicians, so we weren't stuck in that rut like 'oh its got to be 3 chord C, G and D or whatever.

For example, we did a song called Mother Earth which was about Mira Hindley and I remember Pen saying to Phil Free you know, he didn't say Phil put more treble on your guitar he said Phil for this song I want your guitar to sound like its killing someone. So we were more concerned with atmospheres rather than melodies, if you know what I mean.

But we've all come from different influences you know, I've grown up from ska, David Bowie and The Who and Small Faces and stuff and Pen had come up through Jazz and bloody classical music, Pete right had come through Frank Zappa so we had this whole mish mash of musical styles in there which is why, and plus we weren't musicians so we weren't bound by the rules of song writing. Why does a song have to be 8 lines in the verse, 4 in the chorus, then a bridge? Why can't we have 5? Because if you look at 'Do They Owe Us a Living' the first verse is six line and the others are four! But it works in this funny quirky way.

Paula: Yeh it does work definitely! It flows seamlessly although its quite erratic but it just works. It breaks away from conventions.

-End of Interview-

Transcript of an interview with Penny Rimbaud, Crass

15th January 2014

Conducted, Recorded and Transcribed by Paula Frost

Paula: How did the song 'Big A Little A' come about?

Penny: Oh, you mean what was its source? Erm, I really don't know. I mean its sort of very much within the field we always operated. It was unusual in the

sense that it had two very distinct sections, one as a critique of what was going on in the world, quoting the prime minister and the queen and god and the rest of it. And then it went into a semi sort of slightly reggae style second part, which was basically giving a few tips on what you might be able to do about it, like turning off the TV. Erm, so it was unusual in that respect in the sense it had those two parts. I don't think there was any sort of particular genesis, nothing particularly inspired it beyond the fact we were attempting to make peoples lives better and anything I wrote was aimed at that basically.

To some extent, producing songs, obviously they were felt but it was almost tantamount to a job with the band keeping the stuff flowing and expressing the things we wanted to express. It was seven years of song writing basically.

Paula: By that point had you been writing for seven years?

Penny: No, I mean I'd been writing all my life but in terms of writing songs for the band that was about two or three years in. At that time the other members were increasingly not writing which was why I was writing something like 60-70% of the lyrics for the band because the rest of the band seemed to dry up rather.

Certainly for three or four years in the band I was the main songwriter. So I was at it a lot of the time!

Paula: What I thought was quite interesting about the song was that musically it was obviously quite simple because the band were learning to play as they wrote but lyrically its very cleverly put together in the way its kind of presented like a theatre where Steve's taking on all these characters and making a mockery of them.

Penny: Yeh.

Paula: But its also framed by the reality of the kids in the playground, then it comes back to 'Be who you wanna be'. So did it take you long to write?

Penny: It didn't take particularly long to write, to work out the orchestration of how I wanted it to be, you know, the arrangement is mine as well largely I mean I knew how I wanted my songs to sound, and that was sort of very much enforced by years of doing Avant-Garde theatre, electronics and all sort of things. The band was very informed by past experiences. I think in that sense Crass were quite unusual in sort of adding a lot of different genres into what we were doing. I

personally had spent a lot of my formative years listening to Jazz and Classical music.

Paula: I think that comes through in the kind of (drum) grooves you choose. On certain tracks you can hear this hard-hitting punk, gravelly sound and then in the background the drums are playing a Jazz groove. You're thinking wow I didn't even realise that was influenced by Jazz!

Penny: Yeh. Well everything we did, in a sense it was like picking up on it being a sort of theatre and I mean, it was. I regarded the entire band as theatre. If we went out playing it was a piece of theatre, which included a punk band. But there would be films and banners, they were pretty massive events if we had enough space to put them on. The band was only very much a part of the whole show, it wasn't as most certainly in pop music and rock and roll, the band is the show. Well we never saw it like that. Our attitude is well no this is a whole event and the people in the audience are as much a part of that event as we are on the stage so how do we make this work. And the incorporation of all sorts of influences, coming from me at least was trying to create, and succeeding at creating atmospheres. So in a song like Myra Hindley's song (Mother Earth) trying to create a menacing, frightening atmosphere into which the story of Mira Hindley could be written or like in Rival Tribal Rebels, which is a mild, criticism, piss take of skin head culture. You know, using sort of cocky, flamboyant sort of sounds. So we certainly didn't follow the traditions of chorus verse chorus of rock and roll. Also our music was always trying to create atmospheres and trying to tell the story in the music as much as we were in the words.

Paula: I think that's where a lot of bands go wrong where they start to believe their character that they are on stage.

Penny: Oh yeh absolutely, yeh yeh yeh, they become very mono-directional and I think so many bands just become parodies of themselves very quickly for exactly the reason you're saying.

Paula: Did you ever find it difficult when you were at your peak? At any point did you start believing the hype?

Penny: No not at all, other people in the band might of done but I certainly didn't. It was really of no consequence or interest. We weren't in it for the same reasons many bands are within that sort of genre. I wasn't the slightest bit interested in being a rock star or anything else. I was just interested in sharing ideas. That's been consistent throughout my

life. It was the same before Crass, we had a big outfit called EXIT and we were much more radical in many respects than Crass were and again it was just the passing on of ideas, anyone could join the band and anyone did. It was very free, it was a very 60's, early 70's thing. But no I neither believed nor disbelieved the hype it was a joke really to me. It had nothing to offer that was of any consequence.

Paula: I know you and Steve originally started the band, what did it feel like when punk first came out, did that give you an excitement that you wanted to be a part of?

Penny: Erm no not that I wanted to be a part of that would suggest that.. well you mean the Pistols and those people who slightly pre-empted us, yeh I liked the music I thought it was good rock and roll and initially I was slightly taken in by what was being said. I thought 'Yeh this sounds radical this sounds like they mean it'. I mean I pretty soon realised that it was all within the framework of rock and roll and actually they didn't really mean it. But actually I was you know, yeh pretty excited, probably more excited by people like Patti Smith and Television, some of the American art bands. But no, there's no question that people like the Sex Pistols created a platform that we made use of. And yes I was excited by some of the music because for one I think the Pistols are a very good rock and roll band. I mean politically they were crap in the sense that they didn't follow through and they didn't really mean it man but that's by the way really. But to say that in some way they weren't an inspiration or a help in the direction of 'yeh we can do this but we can do it better, we can actually mean it and get on with it we can turn this into something positive rather than something which was really rather destructive.'

Paula: I like what you said about Patti Smith and Television having an art element to their music, one of the things I noticed a lot in Crass records was that you have a lot of different clips of different things. You might have a news clip or static and its very much like a sound collage.

Penny: Yes that's right, yeh.

Paula: And it feels like your listening to a fanzine. Was that intentional?

Penny: Well not that it sounded like a fanzine but again it was part of our 'bricolage' nowadays I suppose it could be regarded as mildly post modernistic, you know. We used anything, I'd just as much use a riff from Benjamin Britten's War Requiem as I'd use something that Elvis had done and it was

pretty much like that you know, everything's up for grabs - lets use it! And always the thing behind it, how can we make this as powerful as we are able, how do we do it, how do we make something which shouts in your face, you know? And from the design side of the covers and everything, to the production side, we just – we were throwing down the gauntlet really to ourselves and to anyone else who wanted to follow up. It was simply, make the best use of this chance and lets go for it really. The atmosphere was right at the time, it might have happened anyway but the social atmosphere, the political atmosphere was right for that sort of thing to happen, in the same way as in the years of The Beatles it was right for that to happen, etc. It isn't the individual bands that create the circumstances it's the social atmospheres that demand really that someone stands up and does something and there always someone standing up and doing what the social requirement is and we happened to be that for a period.

So would you say that, even though you were influenced by Avant-Garde and Jazz and other people in the band were influenced by music, it wasn't the music of the time that inspired you, it was more that inspiration at the time was more in the social and political context?

Penny: Yeh definitely, yes most certainly. I mean how can I use this situation to have as great an effect towards a positive world and positive thinking as possible, you know? And that's where we came in on that. I nowadays write things which are, you know, aimed at the same thing – to offer a positive view on the world, the same method to try and make a better world, which come over much more like Buddhism than punk but you know, the intentions just the same. The intention is 'lets all get together and shake this all up a bit'. We don't have to accept the given rules. And Crass definitely did that in the sense of their music they basically said 'we're not accepting the given rules of punk – which is three chords and smash smash smash, we actually brought in all sorts of strange, often worrisome elements, you know poetry, to Jazz drums or as you say the sort of collage of radio clips etc, anything to broaden the front really.

Paula: Somebody said that you used pots and pans in the recording of 'Big A, Little A' is that true?

Penny: Yes we did actually, as I remember it we did a sort of semi reggae rhythm because we obviously can't do reggae, it's an art form in itself.

Paula: It's got a rap in it as well.

Penny: Yes it has that sort of aspect. I mean I remember hearing reggae songs, which had that sort of sound I mean this was pre computers, pre digital so you had to find things. I think we've still got that saucepan in the kitchen! But we used to use saucepans in my old band EXIT, we used to use any old junk I didn't have a drum kit for a long time so I was used to using an old amplified bicycle wheel.

Paula: I've heard about this actually, how did that work? How did you record it?

Penny: The bike wheel? Well it was just a bike wheel with a pick up mic attached to it.

Back to the sound collages and everything, what I liked at the start of 'Big A, Little A' was the children chanting the original nursery rhyme. Was that something significant to you or your childhood or something you felt people would latch on to?

I like the idea of innocence. You know, the idea of innocence of the song being used in a slightly sinister context. Obviously it was a game I used to play as a kid. Street games were far more common when I was a kid, back then in the 50's.

Paula: Was it a game?

Penny: Yes it was a game, sort of like tag or something. You know I couldn't for the life of me remember how it was played. But yeh it was part of a game. But also creating those sorts of resonances, the resonances of childhood and reminding people of innocence if you like and then ploughing in with all the things that have limited or varied that. I don't think we ever loose our innocence but it gets buried in all the concessions of adulthood and lost and it's a hard job to regain it so its sort of more about that I mean all the kids on it were living here, they were all kids of the various parents within the band and it was nice to include them as well because generally speaking we would all go off to the studio and the kids would go off to school or hang around with someone who was looking after them here whilst we were all working and it was really nice to incorporate all of them I think. It was three young boys and I think a girl and that was a nice thing for them to be part of what we were doing.

Paula: Ok, that melody that's used in the song, is that the original melody or did Crass make that one up.

Penny: I think it was based around the old nursery rhyme yeh. I don't remember – I mean as you know nursery rhymes they vary I mean you can have a street game to a totally different tune in Rotherham

to Newcastle but yeh basically it was probably how I remembered playing that game when I was a kid, I don't know – it could well be as it was but yeh.

Paula: When you say 'the system might get you but it won't get me' – What does the 'system' really encapsulate for you.

Penny: Well system really, we used to use the word system, black culture uses the word 'man', 'the man' erm it means those who like to think they have authority over our lives from bankers to vicars to parents to school teachers to just about every bugger who thinks they can tell you – me and all the rest of us how to live our lives. The system to me is everything but ourselves almost I mean the system is what's out there. The first step of freeing ones self from it is realising that is going on and actually damn this and you can form your own views and you don't need to have a God with a beard you can create your won God maybe you don't have one at all that's the exciting thing about being a human being. Anything that's against that is part of the system I mean I cant think what they call it in The Cuckoo's Nest but.... shit, they use a game which stands for the system, the mental institutions, the politicians, everything that exists that is controlling their lives is given a similar genetic term to cover the whole picture. That's what we meant and I meant by the system.

Paula: Ok thank you. When I spoke to him about the song, Steve said he remembers you running off in rehearsal to write these lyrics and you wrote them really quickly in about twenty minutes and he said you could imagine a Glaswegian punk singing them. D you remember any of that?

Penny: Steve's got quite a memory! What I do remember is that I did have a model Glaswegian punk in my mind throughout the seven years throughout the time we on the road, writing, playing, whilst we were existing as Crass. My own personal identity was rather put aside for that. And I always kept it in mind this idea of a Glaswegian punk with not really much finance, probably rather under-educated, a victim of circumstances. I used to have that kid as a model for me and I used to think what would that kid – I mean in those days with the Gorbals still – terrible slum housing and that's where this kid lived in my mind and I just used to think well what would he think about us? And it was like a metre really, I mean I've come from a pretty comfortable, reasonably wealthy background and its too easy for me to not really look at street realities. That was one of the great things about having Steve as a work partner; he brought the wisdom of the street into my life so we could talk a very balanced way. I could talk about another part of

society and use that part of society against itself largely but using a privileged education against privileged education, which is what probably George Orwell would have claimed to have done the same sort of thing. So you I just had this model in my mind; 'would this Glaswegian punk be going on holiday in Benidorm?' No he wouldn't, he wouldn't be able to afford it – well I wont! He was sort of like a regulator for me. 'Am I getting a bit cocky, yes I am?' So it kept me in line really.

The audience would vary massively but what he was, was one little individual I didn't want to let down. It was important for me not to let people down like that, I didn't want to do some shit thing just because I hadn't thought about it clearly enough. Whatever it was. Going and buying a pair of boots I didn't need, we all very much limited our personal lives to live this sort of concept as a whole – if I'm gunna start talking about revolutionary hardships then you've got to live those revolutionary hardships, you cant be preaching revolution from a swimming pool. You've got to live it and be it and I think we did do that and I continue to do that in my own way.

Paula: Were you all a part of decorating the hall and making banners and things like that?

Penny: Yeh, yeh yeh.

Paula: What were the main things you wanted to change socially and politically? I know you wanted to bring people together and there was sort of a fight against war and a fight for animal rights.

Penny: Well everything really, anything. Everything which prevailed against human decency. We weren't just specifically pacifist any more then we were feminist. No more specifically feminist then we were animal rights, or good food-ists or whatever. I mean it was whatever sees you through the night really. No it was an all out assault really – it was on everything! Nothing was left untouched really – at least I hope! It was an all out attack! – on everything which I described as the system earlier on. We weren't specific about it. We were specific about one thing and that was the catchphrase 'There is no authority but yourself' and that was well make up your own fucking mind you know! This is how we see it, don't take this as gospel. This is how we see it, everything we did turned to that – don't just take it for granted you check it out for yourself – you be your own authority. We really were aware that we weren't ones to preach I mean I know we came across as preachy on occasions but that was always countered by humour, or us basically saying don't listen to us listen to yourself, you know?

So that was the key to everything; “There is no authority but yourself”, in other words “get your own life, make your own life”. Its not for us to be critical about where you take it.

Paula: Well it obviously worked because Crass had a huge influence over a load of other bands afterwards.

Penny: Yes, yeh and more importantly then the bands, it had a huge influence on a whole culture you know, whether it was writing or anything. I think it did, it did work! And that’s because within it there was a sort of, and I use this word rather guardedly, a spiritual message. The spiritual message was ‘there’s goodness inside you – pursue it’ and it was never worded exactly like that but the number of people who could see that understood that that was actually what we were trying to say – was warming, I’m very pleased that people were aware that that’s what we were trying to do. Kinship, love and all those rather old fashioned ideas!

Paula: Do you ever keep an eye out now and hope that another band might come along that will make you feel the same?

Penny: No it doesn’t bother me I mean other bands have come along and do come along but I’m never confined in any way to one genre – I mean there’s plenty of writers, philosophers, scientists, keep ones eye on things, you could almost say the kind of quantum physics is the new punk! They really are if you want an exciting idea go and look into quantum I mean its fucking crazy stuff you know. Ive never limited myself to thinking or expecting – there are people who say ‘ergg nothings happening’ because all they’re doing is watching MTV and checking out X-Factor well of course nothings happening, go and see what’s happening in the scientific world. You know these things come and go, there’s leaders but its all ultimately philosophy and sometimes philosophy comes straight from the rock fact and some times it come strongly from a physicist, some times it comes strongly from a healer. You never know where anything’s gunna come from so I don’t look that way. And ultimately if its not there, why isn’t it there because I’m not doing it! If I sit there and think something’s not there – I do it! It might not become next weeks best seller, I don’t care, its of no consequence. What’s important is that’s missing – I’ll do it. It’s like bread, you run out of bread what do you do? You bake some more. Well if one thinks that we’re lacking something in the world well fucking do something about it! That’s what you do in your own home isn’t it? The fire doesn’t make itself – well

neither does society. We make society. Well why don’t we take responsibility for that?

Paula: So when you got a big response, well – probably the biggest response you could get but parliament discussing Crass, did you feel shocked or did you expect it?

Penny: No well we knew we were under surveillance from MI5 and MI6 throughout. It was patently obvious that we were so it was no surprise. Yeh I was pleased we were getting through it meant we were doing our job well.

Paula: Were they spying on you then? How did you know?

Penny: Oh yes of course I mean our phones were tapped our mail was opened; probably one or two of the people who turned up to do fanzine interviews were actually undercover. It was a certain mania, what we were up to and we were a threat so great. Its pleasing to me because their surveillance indicated to me that we were actually achieving our aim. If no one in politics or the secret services had taken any interest then we wouldn’t have been doing our job. We were a threat. We were talking revolution. You’d expect to have MI5 snooping. If you don’t you’re not doing your job. When that all happened it was a mixed feeling because its not very nice getting into all that deep shit, its dangerous as well. It genuinely is physically dangerous but on the other hand there’s the elation of saying ‘yeh we’re having an effect’ and it wasn’t ‘we as a band’ it was ‘we as a movement’ – we can do it! Yeh the kid in Glasgow’s gunna go; “Fucking hell! Yeh!” Its happening, I thought we were meant to wait until someone told us were were allowed! Its happening, you can do it and that’s what we were trying to demonstrate – that you can do it and we did demonstrate it.

Paula: So with everything being so in house and the whole movement, how did you distribute your music?

Penny: Initially we were distributed by Rough Trade, then we set up our own record label which became the longest lasting distribution company besides rough trade and still exists in a different form, the distribution company Southern, still exist. In independent terms its massive. As I was saying if it isn’t there – make it. We made a record label and then we found we didn’t really have the sort of distribution company we wanted, ok what do you do? – Make a distribution company. It turned into a sort of mini empire in alternative terms and large lumps of it still exist today and are still operating.

Paula: With the sing Nagasaki Nightmare/Big A Little A, do you have a figure for the distribution of that?

Penny: You mean how many were sold? Well I know we sold something like 20,000 in the first week which is why it went into the charts and I think it was at about 16 in the UK charts and the next week it wasn't in there at all which meant we'd been bought out because we'd sold an awful lot more. Anyway, 20,000 was a lot of records to more in a week.

Paula: So were you removed from the charts, censored?

Penny: Yeh, no question of it. I mean we weren't even in the top hundred the next week. Well that's just not possible, I'm sorry! Because once you get into the higher bit of the charts its incremental it just keeps going because people see it and more want to buy it. That's how that sort of industry works. But just as big companies can buy themselves into the charts, they can buy other people out of the charts. I've got no doubt about that.

Paula: What happened on the night of the Roxy gig?

Rimbaud: When they turned us off? Well we turned up, we were booked to play there. It was a fucking great audience, we were completely slaughtered. In those days we used to drink rather a lot before gigs because we were shit scared. I was completely out of my head. We started and it was going really well, the place was heaving. There was a huge amount of pogoing, very wild in deed ad that was sort of new then, sort of 77'. That sort of stuff hadn't really started. Even in the early Sex Pistols gigs it wasn't fucking wild like that. The owners didn't like seeing this happen, we were taking the place over in a way and they pulled the speakers and I tried to keep playing. I wrote an article about it in International Anthem, which covers the entire story rather well. Go on the Existencil press site and Gee might have some – I don't know.

Paula: Did everyone make it home safe?

Penny: I think so, can't remember now! (Laughs) When Eve and I went down there a couple of weeks after we were in town and we thought 'lets go down the Roxy' and they actually threw us out. We were sat at the bar and the guy said 'I fucking know you' I said, 'you don't know me mate.' And he said 'yes I do' so we were thrown out and I don't know if it was my imagination, I don't think it was actually but you know you see those old films were someone's walking home and the headlights of a car come up behind them to

give them a runner. Well that happened with us, in Neil's Street. It was a wild evening.

Paula: Well I think Crass have had a lasting influence and helped lots of people start to think more freely. What would you say would be the legacy of Crass?

Penny: Well I think it's just what you've said. The legacy is that you can do it if youre willing to try. We each in our own way have got value. We need to find how to use our value. Each of us have talent, beauty all those things are very human attributes and you know they're so sort of masked over by the culture we live in and so suppressed in a way and its there you know the spark of joy, spark of love, theyre all within us and I think the legacy of Crass you know is well actually, everything in the world is attitude. Change your fucking attitude. The first way of changing the world is changing your attitude to it. Once you've done that, then you can start moving but if youre going to be a victim to the world, which is how we're taught to be then you can't change it. Even if its just tiny, you know – your change in the world is gonna be window boxes in your street. Great! Well if everyone's doing what they can do, the revolutions over. Because that is the revolution. The revolution isn't men behind guns its people saying yeh I can do that. And that's how we reclaim the world and its not just Britain it's the world - With our feet. Not with lots of sort of clever Marxist ideas.

Paula: I know you've done so much in your life outside of Crass but when I put on a Crass record it makes me feel like I don't have to take it lying down and its helped me through so much so thanks for that.

Penny: Ok great, thanks. Well you've got my email so let me know if you need anything else. Take care, bye bye.

-End of Interview-

Transcript of an interview with Isaac Holman & Laurie Vincent, Slaves

21st December 2013

Conducted, Recorded and Transcribed by Paula Frost

Paula: So this is Paula Frost backstage at Upside-down festival and we're here with Slaves!

Isaac & Laurie: Yeh!

Paula: How are you feeling about playing tonight?

Isaac: Yehhhhhhhhhhhhh..... Feeling good

Laurie: Great

Conducted, Recorded and Transcribed by Paula Frost

I heard you guys are influenced by Crass is that true?

Laurie: I am

Isaac: I.... maybe. A little bit, not much.

Paula: Ok well I spoke to Steve Ignorant on Monday.

Laurie: That's mad, that's Crazy.

Isaac: Yeh I like Steve Ignorant.

Paula: Yes I spoke to him and he was an absolute legend. Basically I'm writing a piece about them (Crass) so I was quite interested to know you were into them. What is it that you like about them?

Isaac: I just like that when they started they said you don't have to play an instrument to be in our band. You can just do what you want so one of their guitarists just made noise and I like... they were the first sort of band that I listened to that did it for the music they didn't do it for anything else and that's really cool.

Laurie: Their sound is just unrivalled as well. I mean, no one sounds like Crass. And they've got hooks that stick in your head but its Anarcho, and I see pop sensibilities there, just – there's no one else like Crass.

Paula: Do you see any bands around now who could rival a band like Crass?

Laurie: I'm not sure it could be relevant but something could happen that's different and Crass is more about the time it happened and Crass was a movement, that punk thing was a movement that's never going to happen again the same. Something else might happen, maybe people will think dub step was that. Hopefully not but...

Isaac: I like dubstep.

Laurie: Penny Rimbaud was a fantastic drummer though, he was good.

Paula: When did you guys start?

Isaac: 5th of January 2012

-End of Interview-

Transcript of an interview with Josh, The Skints

21st September, 2013

CJ: Well this is CJ Dread, Boom and Bass Show, Kane 103.7 FM we're riding true at the Undercover Festival and low and behold, The Skints are in town!

Josh: What's good man? Yes Sir, everything's cool dude. You good?

CJ: Yes A1 my brother it's very good to see ya!

Josh: Thank you

CJ: I'm looking forward to hearing ya!

Josh: Thank you sir, I appreciate that man.

CJ: Can I get you to introduce yourself to the listeners?

Josh: Yeh man, it's Josh from The Skints here, were at the very undercover, Undercover Festival!

CJ: Yes man! In Guildford in Sunny Surrey. How does it feel to be back in Guildford? You done a storm at Guilfest man.

Josh: Yeh thank you man, Guildford's always been good to us like we done Guilfest a couple of times, we done Guildford on our last headline tour and played The Boileroom which was good, it was really good actually, it was sold out, a nice little sweaty vibe!

CJ: It is a nice little sweaty vibe!

Josh: Yeh Man, the people, do you know what? Like Surrey, like, we always had love in South London because we always used to play in like Brixton and stuff back in the day and then when we started playing further south like Kingston, Guildford..

CJ: Love Kingston!

Josh: Yeh all the little festivals around here they always show The Skints love so we appreciate that to the fullest man.

CJ: Ah that's special man and it's good that you're reaching out because I know East London is your roots so that's your base right?

Josh: Yeh well compared to most of the places we played this is kind of a minor trip for us but we're from East London yeh.

CJ: Yeh you get about a lot internationally so to speak yeh?

Josh: Yeh man we're just trying to spread The Skints Vibrations wherever we can kinda thing you know?

CJ: Nice one, nice one Josh. So where about in East London are you actually from?

Josh: We come from all the north East, so the other side of Hackney, Layton, Walthamstow, Woodford, the London boroughs of Waltham borough and red bridge.

CJ: Yes, I know them manors as well, and I thought that was where you were from. I caught you guys down at Boomtown festival.

Josh: Ok, that was a crazy show, man! A crazy show!

CJ: It's a crazy little venue that innit? It's a good little place man I like the Boomtown. I like the whole manor, I like the whole area man.

Josh: Cool man.

CJ: So let me ask you a little bit about The Skints, when did you get started and how did you get started?

Josh: Basically it we me and a couple of friends, I was 14 going on 15 and I wanted to make some Trad-Ska music when I was at school and then me Marcia and John was playing together and then we was kinda playing like, Ska and then we started doing a more ska-punk thing and then Jamie came along and we were only playing like, local because we were still at school, still little kids man, and then Jamie come along 2007 and that's when we started to play all over London and we started doing more Reggae music. And then kind of, from then really you know it kind of went from doing a few shows, to booking our own tours and then yeh it...

CJ: It just blew up!

Josh: Well yeh, 2008 was when we started touring hard! We finished school and we were like, right!

CJ: It's so mad to hear you talking about school and getting all of that stuff going, I mean, what were the main influences? What got you to go from 'I like this music and I like that music' to 'Hey, you know what? We're gunna do this.'?

Josh: Well, I mean I can't speak on behalf of everyone, because were all friends from school yeh but were all quite different people. But me personally, Reggae was always in my household, my mum and dad are big music listeners but not musicians or anything. They were from the 80's soul and disco scene.

CJ: Yeh man, big scene.

Josh: Yeh! So they were about their soul and disco vibes but within that obviously, coming from the area they come from there was also a lot of reggae music. So there was a lot of Reggae music in my house from when I was a little kid. I'm not saying that set me off but I think it definitely laid a foundation.

CJ: Yeh yeh, it was in your ears!

Josh: On my musical Pallet! – Like an acquired taste!

CJ: Nicely put brother, yeh!

Josh: So like soul and reggae was always in my house and then I was, kind of like late primary school going into secondary school I was really into hip hop and garage and stuff, because that was what was popular and what was around. And then I started skating and I got into punk. At 12-13 my uncle got me into The Specials because he said 'You're into punk yeh? Well check out The Clash and The Specials'. So Then I found out about that world. And then I get a little older and all my friends got me into Jungle and Raga and I started going to parties from where we're from and like, Beany Man's playing!

CJ: (Laughs) Yeh!

Josh: So growing up, all these little steps kind of led me to the point where I had a vision of the kind of music I wanted to hear from a band, which is all these little things along the way.

CJ: Yes man, just run them things off, a little itemised list, how would you describe them? I mean, how important would you say is punk for example?

Josh: Well punk rock to me, not only to my listening pallet, because I mean I would say what The Skint's do now musically, isn't exactly the most punk sound, but we still carry that ethic. As a young teenage mind and a young thinker, punk was very very important to me.

CJ: It is crucial brother.

Josh: Growing up in the area I grew up in, and I still see today, a lot of problems socially and a lot of problems around you, that I think when you come at it with an attitude that is given to you by what the media want you to have about it, it can be very negative and detrimental, but punk to me, I was getting used and Punk gave me my own view point that wasn't being fed to me like it was being fed to everyone else.

CJ: That's so important.

Josh: So maybe I don't go round with boots and a Mohawk and I don't necessarily dress like a punk but within me, it opened my mind to think for myself, but it wasn't a rebellion against the way I was raised, my parents were always open minded people and taught me to be open minded, but in terms of what you hear yourself as a young adult, punk was very important to me man.

CJ: Yeh I like the way you described that, the way it breaks down the understanding that is pushed on you by the media and gives you that space to be able to think for yourself, is that a good way to put it?

Josh: Yeh you know, thinking for yourself is something that the punk scene encouraged which is why I rate it highly. But I'm nothing special theirs thousands of people with other opinions.

CJ: No no no no! Listen, to me you're special, to our listeners you're special, that's why we're talking.

Josh: Respect man, but I think obviously Punk wasn't especially popular in the area I grew up in, it wasn't particularly the cool thing. It spoke to me more because what was around at that time, I wasn't really down with. So the punk thing was kinda cool for that.

CJ: Yeh man, I'm feeling that. So there's all these influences, there is the ska, the punk, the reggae, all these things through the family. How would you describe you're own sound, The Skints sound? People describe you in different ways, they try to put these different elements in and say it's a bit of this or a bit of that but how would you personally describe it?

Josh: For other people they say The Skints is a bit this or that but to me its reality music, because we speak about the reality of ourselves, you know, some people have tried to put on some of our songs – 'oh are you a political band because of this?' I don't necessarily and would never try to be like 'we're gunna say these things' but it's just about the reality of our surroundings.

CJ: Safe brother, the reality of our surroundings man.

Josh: For instance, we might sing a love song, because that's the reality of our surroundings.

CJ: Because that's life! Yeh I like that.

Josh: All the sounds as well, it's because that's what we like. You know, we're not playing a sound that we think 'these people are gunna like it' or 'this radio

station are gunna like it'. If other people like it, brilliant! But it should only be a bi product of us!

CJ: That's beautiful, so what we're saying here is its not a question of 'these people like cheese burgers with X amount of onions so lets make cheese burgers with X amount of onions'

Josh: Yeh man.

CJ: It's a case of this is what we like and that's what we're gunna do! Artistic authenticity and integrity, I respect that a lot my brother.

CJ: How did the name come about?

Josh: I made it up when I was 15, I thought it was a cool name for a band because when you start a band and you do it full time you're living off the breadline so The Skints is aptly put. I think now, I'm 23 now and I look at The Skints and I think it's kind of a bad name!

CJ: Ah it's a wicked name!

Josh: Do you recon? I don't really like it now! But yeh it is what it is and we have to stay true to that.

CJ: I like it! And it kind of, to me when I heard about the way you use grass roots funding and the way you dealt with your fans, I mean that really appealed to me on the tip of the name as well.

Josh: Ok

CJ: Can you tell us a bit about the innovative ways that you raised finances and used the grass roots fan base that you had?

Josh: Yeh I will do, one thing I will say about the name though is that The Skints, the word 'skint' is a very British word and it doesn't translate in other languages. When we go to France and Germany and that, they ask us what its means and think we're skin heads! And we're like 'no no no, it means we ain't got no money!'

Josh: But for our second album 'Part and Parcel' we took the fan funded root through 'pledge music' because we were in a position where we didn't have enough money to make another record and we didn't really want to go begging to labels to give us the money to have to be in their pockets. So it was our managers idea to give the pledge music website a go and luckily for us it paid off, for some people it doesn't so we got very lucky.

CJ: Tell me a bit about that, how did you raise the money through the fan base?

Josh: Well basically Pledge Music – you give them a target of the amount you need to record your album and then write a list of pledges which the band will give back for the money that people give you. So say like, £8 was the minimum which was the album downloaded when it's finished and then we did limited edition T-Shirts, we did a one off show for people, limited edition posters.

CJ: Nice!

Josh: Check this out man, we're music nerds yeh? I was a geek about records and music even though I'm growing up in a time where the music industry is dying, I still find the records I've been looking for and I get excited.

CJ: Wicked man, is vinyl really important to you?

Josh: Yeh, so we wanted to do stuff like the limited edition posters where if I was a music fan, I was into this band and that was available, that sort of stuff would have got me so excited!

CJ: Wicked! Yeh man, that's a beautiful way about doing things and it's also giving something back to the fans.

CJ: How important are your fans to the work that The Skints do?

Josh: I wouldn't be able to do this right now for a living, without fans backing it so I'm really grateful. I hope and I think they know that too because when we have a show we go out and talk to people and meet people you know? And get to know people and we become friends with people who have been coming to see us for years. We don't really try to put ourselves on a pedestal. I see a lot of bands doing it where they think that encouraging their separation between the band and audience is a good thing because it makes them look more important!

CJ: Yeh I hear that!

Josh: But really and truly, we're just people who like music too. We just play it and other people come and see it.

CJ: I know that feet on the ground vibe is really important to you and I respect that a lot.

Josh: Yeh, yeh, yeh.

CJ: Can you say a bit about the struggles facing people in East London, in the inner city struggle and the pressures bearing down on the youths at this time?

Josh: Yeh, we're from the outer boroughs but it really is the same problems, but for east London in particular, which is tower Hamlets, Newham, Hackney, Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Barking and Dagenham, East London has always had its fair share of problems financially, to me personally, maybe not to other people, but I kind of feel that the Olympics was kind of a kick in the face to the people who live and struggle off nothing in East London because of the amount of money they were being told, off their tax payers money that was supposed to come back into the boroughs. Dude, we didn't need an Olympics that cost loads of money. They need more estates, more hospitals, people need the education to understand how to get themselves out of the situation they're in. The kids need places to go and stuff to do that isn't just available to those who have money. It's a shame to say and it's across the whole of London, not just east but the poorer people need to understand that no one really in the houses of parliament are there to help them or show them the way to get out.

CJ: That's word brother I hear that.

Josh: You really have to educate yourself. I see the institutional classism, the institutional racism on a daily basis and it's nothing they're ever going to tell you to get out off or fix. It's a real shame because doing this work, doing The Skints, hasn't always been my full time thing. I used to work for my granddads removal firm in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and in Newham and I spent a lot of time in the houses and around people. In London a lot of people have nothing. Our bands called The Skints because we talk about being poor. But there are people in London that are living in poverty, that have nothing, with no escape and they're living in estates opposite million pound houses – it's not in a good place at all.

Last weekend, talking about East London, my sister was in Tower Hamlets on a counter protest to the EDL. They're an organisation that are basically preying on the low income areas of London and across the UK really and telling them that this person and this person and this person – it's their fault that they're in the position they're in. When really and truly it's the complete opposite. It's the way the system is telling them that it's their neighbour's fault that they're in a position but all they really need to do is look up.

CJ: Nicely put brother I'm right there with you on that soapbox. It's the same set divide and rule, its scandalous.

Josh: Divide and conquer! That's the way that... I mean we're talking about England, were talking about London, we're talking about Britain?

CJ: Yeh

Josh: That's what Britain has been built on!

CJ: Yeh

Josh: Do you understand? And they own the media that will demonise the youth, demonise even more the so called immigrant youth and say yeh its their fault but really and truly all you have to do is have a little bit of knowledge and realise just what they're feeding us. It is absolute madness!

CJ: I couldn't agree more!

Josh: Well the people I've grown up with and always associated with will tell you the same thing but we have to watch out man.

CJ: Solid respect, solid vibrations coming from East London, coming from The Skints. Princess Paula, Baby Boss I know you've got a question coming in!

Paula: Ok so in the vein of politics and sociology, 'Live East die young', youre talking about violence, gangs, East London – what was the inspiration for that? Was int to do with your background and upbringing?

Josh: Well 'Live Ease Die Young' is actually talking about two different instances of people I knew, the names and the situations have been made into a song in a kind of theatrical representation of the story but see the first verse is about a young girl that gets pregnant and has a child and her life goes one way and the other one is about a boy that purely through deprivation and not being shown any other way, gets caught up in the drug game and sent to Jail. The song isn't a solution for anything its just a question of 'Why is it the same story every time?' because we see in every single borough, all across the country, we see those situations happen so much and I think why? You know it's a question of asking why, its not cool man.

Paula: Definitely. On a larger spectrum people say you're ska, reggae, dub, you've got a bit of hip hop going on but that punk ethos that you talked about earlier, would you say that theres a punk musicality behind you or more of an ethos in the music, as in,

you're not putting out punk music but that you're message is of anarchy or against the state?

Josh: Well I wouldn't necessarily say we're an anarchy band, were not the kind of band that thinks that everyone should just eat vegan food and drive around on bicycles. We're not those guys.

Paula: No course.

Josh: I've got no problem saying that making money or having nice things is not the biggest problem in the world. We're not necessarily gunna go out there and start burning buildings and rioting. The punk thing for me wasn't necessarily about music. Don't get me wrong its cool for me, I enjoy certain bands where there's a guy screaming and people running around and its bad music. Steal Pulse or Public Enemy is more punk then a lot of 'punk bands' if you know what I mean.

Paula: So would you say, from the first wave punk of 77' or second wave punk 78' -82' – Crass, Sex Pistols, The Clash – Would you say you're influenced by any of them?

I'd say yes, as a listener sure I like the pistols ad stuff, especially when I was younger. I'd say musically now I'm probably not gunna do a song and say yeh lets try and make it sound like the Sex Pistols or Crass but in the same way its just kind of what we like. One of my biggest musical influences is Woo Tang Clan but we're not gunna try and make a song that sounds like The Wo. Maybe subconsciously some of that does slip in but were not trying to sound like anyone, we're trying to sound like The Skints and all the little things that you take on play a part.

Paula: I mean, that's the best thing you can do, when you look back you can see that every band that has paved the way for other bands has been individual and unique and has made their own sound, so what you're doing now is admirably and brilliant really.

Josh: Ah thank you very much.

Paula: No thanks for that!

Josh: Cheers, nice one.

CJ: Right while we still got you because I know you're running on to stage right?

Josh: Yeh man.

CJ: Can you tell me about some of the highlights of your career to date?

Josh: Wow, ok! I mean, we've done some amazing things that I never thought we'd do but we put so much work in to be able to say this is our lives now that everything we do is a highlight to me of being able to say 'I do this'. Obviously theres personal things like bands that I grew up listening to that we played with.

CJ: That's nice, tell me some of them!

Josh: Yeh, The Slackers and The Aggrolites, and we got to go to Thiland last year with Tippa Irie.

CJ: NOOO! Our very own Tippa! Yeh! Tippa works on the show, Paula produces Tippa's shw on the radio! That's beautiful!

Josh: Yes big up my uncle Tippa Irie, original Brixton, saxon sound to the fullest. But obviously the music we write I'm very proud of, also things like Boom Town, we played 3 years ago, and to come back this year and play to the crowd we played to was crazy and we've done Reading and Leeds festivals. Also back in London our home town, we sold out Koko back in may which was a big deal for us man.

CJ: I hear that yes, it's a big deal for anyone man, respect!

Josh: So yeh theres been loads of highlights man.

CJ: Alright well what goes up must come down, what about the lows? Have you had any challenging events?

Josh: Yes. One or two! Well, I'd say the worst that we had was last year on a day off between gigs our tour managers van had all our equipment and all our stuff in it, and got robbed outside my yard last year.

CJ: Noo!

Josh: Yeh, we really thought for a little bit, are we gunna be able to come back from this?

CJ: I hear that yeh.

Josh: But, through the generosity of people we know, other bands, record shops, banquet records in Kingston, they let us put on a show and take the door and the generosity of our fans and stuff saying 'please take this money', that was a very inspiring thing to come from such a terrible thing to happen to us. It showed us that for every bad guy in the world, there's ten good guys.

CJ: Respect! That's beautiful man because I know that's scary to have that hit you like that. Rough.

Josh: When that happens to you yeh, you just think (- can I swear on this show?)

CJ: Yeh.

Josh: You just kinda think, what's the fucking point man? You know what I mean? Like why? Doing all this and then someone just comes along and takes everything from you. But then the people that matter, who you're doing it for, show you, no keep going.

CJ: Now that's a blessed thing brother. What kind of advice would you give to upcoming artists today?

Josh: Don't start, do something that will make you real money!

No, 100% yeh, you've got to feel your own tunes. For me, that would be it. That's the only way that if you're planning to do it for a long time and you know, if people are saying they're serious about music, they should be committing to it for a long time. If you genuinely think in your heart that its sick, what you're doing, then other people will come on board because you know what else as well yeh? Another important thing, a good bit of advice actually, a man called Babar Luck, who used to play in a band called King Prawn. We played with him when I was 17 and I'm 23 now, we've been doing this for 5 or 6 years and it's the best bit of advice anyone in the industry has given me. In the music business yeh, he goes 'you worry about the music and let them worry about the business'. Its true. Make sure that what you're doing is amazing and then the business will come to you. Don't go chasing and don't beg to anyone because you think you need them. If you're good enough, they'll need you.

CJ: I like that a lot! On that trajectory what are your plans for the future?

Josh: Well right now were actually going to a crazy country next week, we're going to reunion island in the middle of the Indian ocean, were doing a festival out there call Kaloo Bang with Sean Paul and a few others. Then we're finishing off an EP we've been working on in North London and hopefully that will be coming out November time. We've got a French tour in December.

CJ: Wow, how do you go down in France?

Josh: Man, France is so close to where we are in England now its really crazy, they're wicked man.

CJ: Any who would you most like to work with, have you got people you'd like to see yourself on stage with or collaborating with?

Josh: There's a few producers I'd like to work with but I've been chatting to Tippa Irie about doing a tune but we've both been a bit lazy!

CJ: Right come on, its Kane 103.7 were gunna force you into it now!

Josh: Fingers crossed 2014, were gunna do a Skints/ Tippa tune.

CJ: Alright brother we're looking forward to that. Ok, do you have any shouts you'd like to give out?

Josh: Shout out Kane FM, keep listening to The Skints, we've got a new EP coming, its so far untitled but we'll hit you with that. Do the right thing – as Spike Lee said!

CJ: Respect my brother!

-End of Interview-

Transcript of an interview with Nick Cash, 999

22nd September 2013

Conducted, Recorded and Transcribed by Paula Frost

Paula: Hey Nick, how are you and how does it feel to be at Undercover festival?

Nick: We've been going for a long time, its great to be here and it's a great show here at Undercover festival!

Paula: Lets wind back to that Jubilee year! Wind back to the formation of your musical trajectory.

Nick: That was the beginning of Punk really and we used to put adverts in the back of the melody maker: 'Wanted: Punk Musicians for a band' and all these great people turned up like Chrissie Hynde (The Pretenders) turned up and John Moss from Culture Club, Tony James (Generation X) and Dolphin from Stiff Little Fingers. All sorts of people came to the audition and it was a big melting pot.

Lots of people who were interested at the time. We all started rehearsing together and various bands got formed and everybody went off and did it you know? Some of them fell by the way side and others have done very well, but some of them have kept going like

us. Here tonight we've got TV Smith, 999, Chelsea and its great, it's a good atmosphere! But it's a melting pot we've got reggae here as well!

Paula: No doubt about it, great atmosphere! I love the ethos of that 77' time, I love the idea that certain magazines would have adverts in the back of them and certain people like the ones you're talking about would come in, jam together and find that trajectory.

Paula: When Exactly did 999 form and how did that come about?

Nick: Well I was playing with Ian Dury and Kilburn and the High Roads and that was like a pub rock thing and that style was coming to its end. Dr. Feelgood approached me and asked me if I wanted to play guitar for him to replace Wilco Johnson because he'd left. I didn't really wanted to step in and do that because there was a new buzz and a new thing happening. So I played with people like Brinsley Schwarz and Chicken Shack, but I wanted to do something new so I started 999. From there we went on and played all over the world.

Paula: Tell us about the rest of the band?

Nick: Well, the Drummer Pablo Britain he also writes some of the songs. He was the original drummer in The Clash who went to school with Joe Strummer and he's just recently been in a film about his life. But they have stayed very good friends and Pablo has contributed a lot to Joe Strummers book and he's in a film about his life now.

But obviously he didn't want to capitalise on that to form 999. It was about getting up there in front of those kids and playing and proving yourself. We're still doing that today!

Paula: I want to ask you about the fan base, how important is the audience? How important is it to be able to achieve that live status?

Nick: Well its very important, I suppose really we've always been more of a live band really, we used to survive by doing it. We were luckier then a lot of the bands at that time because we got to play a lot of shows we played every night of the week and we did massive tours in the states, 56-70 dates on the trot so we could learn exactly what we were doing. We weren't just some over manufactured thing, we learnt to connect with an audience and we learnt what that meant. And that's one of the best things in the world, if you can get through to an audience and then take off and go somewhere else where you can't always go.

Paula: Yes well it's such a different vibe that's created today then the money making that goes on behind the scenes and the creations that they think will sell to people. But the 999 ethos is to take it to the people.

Nick: I think it's a shame what's happening when you've got all these talent shows I mean alright God bless those people but you've got other acts out there – there's bands, there's an underground but that will always be there because there will always be an alternative scene. Not everybody just believes what they're fed on the television man and that's what happens so that's what we've gone for and we're glad we went there and stayed there. Because its 36 years later and here's to the next 36 years!
(laughs)

Paula: I'm totally with you! How would you describe the secret to that longevity?

Nick: I mean just playing the best you can and if you enjoy what you're doing you can go all round the world and do it! This music hits it on the head, I mean I was speaking to someone the other day and said where did you come from man? And he said well I come from Venezuela to see you.' You know, I said 'that's a long way!' he said 'yeh but its been worth it you know?' and its great to see you can touch somebody in Venezuela the same as you can touch someone in bisley. Not saying one is more important than the other, but its fantastic you know?
And they like it because of the music. What it is, the underground, the power of it, they know all that. They've studied it, they like it.

Paula: That's an interesting point you've touched on there, the fact that people are studying the foundations these days. What do you think about the studying of it?

Nick: Perhaps the people who listened to it initially have grown a bit older. But their young kids and new people listen to it and say 'that's for me' that's different that's alternative so therefore that's what I like. That's the nicest way for something to go on. For people to like it at the grass roots and go on. You've only got to look at the people here and what it is, culturally it's a good blend We were one of the first bands to play rock against racism you know?

CJ Dread: Respect, respect! I have to salute you on that my brother that's solid!

Nick: We played that, it was a wonderful thing to do. Hard times, we needed to break that and after that we could go anywhere and meet anybody, you know what I mean? Music breaks down the barriers and the

more barriers it breaks down the better and that's the best thing I've done with my life is to break down, perhaps a few barriers and just to play and to get off on that.

Paula: My dad and me are both big fans.

Nick: (Laughs) That's the thing normally people hate what their parents hate!

Paula: Punk taught me that although society tells us we are not supposed to get along with our parents – music unites us and tells us that there are bigger things to conflict against.

Nick: I think you're absolutely right you know what punk did was say 'stand up for yourself and have your own ideals'. Dress how you like, Do what you want, free your mind. People always say what an evil thing it is, or it was a fly by night that was only gonna last ten minutes...

CJ: Yeh 36 years later people! Live and hardcore!

Paula: Here we all are!

Nick: You liked your music from your dad and that's the best way for it to go on because if your daughter likes it that's fantastic!

Paula: Yeh its wonderful
CJ: BIG UP DAD

Paula: If you take yourself back to your first gig how old were you?

Nick: Well my first gig I played with a band called Pentagon, in Molton so I was about 14 years old.

Paula: Wow yeah, that's brave!

So I got together with these Maltese people and we used to go around and play covers and things like that and I ended up on a comeno hotel playing to Roger Moore in Blackburn

Paula: Standard!

Nick: And they were making a bomb film at the time you know? So that was my first thing you know and that was pretty good! They liked it and they were dancing about down the front you know. So obviously that was a good time.

Paula: So if you take yourself back to when 999 first formed you've got the first gigs and the punk scene fully thriving. How did that feel?

Nick: That was fantastic! We were one of the first ones on the scene you know? It really exploded quickly you know? I had Micky Most calling us asking to sign us tomorrow. We said 'Well Micky we're really not sure what we want to do... Chin and Chapman you know? We feel like you've done for music what MFI have done for furniture. No offence but we want to do it on our own. We want to produce our own music and we want it to sound like we want it to sound not like you want it to sound like.

Paula: There were always fakes on the scene I loved the way the punks dressed, a lot wore torn clothes because it was all they had.

Nick: The punk dress was such a good fashion there was no better street fashion than that. It said so much and it influenced fashion to this day. Somehow when you see it copied by some people and now you see people dressing up like punks to take money from the Japanese tourists to take photos – that's not what it was about it was much deeper – much broader appeal and it goes through everything you know; rockabilly, psychobilly, right through every type of clothes it sold stacks of absolutely everything. And the real good people who do it have got all those types of influences you know?

Nick: There's a bright side and a dark side. I always preferred the darker side of things that's why I wrote songs like nasty nasty.

Paula: Ok so with everything that you've been through, can I just ask, to you – What is punk?

Nick: It's the freedom to be able to do what you want, when you want. The freedom of choice to be able to break away from what society was and what people thought and to live your life how you want to live it – which is what I've done and I'm lucky, I'm one of the lucky ones you know.

Paula: Yeh, it's a good life.

Nick: And in this generation I've been round the world, I've seen things, I never regret, I've met so many brilliant people Paula, all sorts of people from all countries and to be able to play music with them and share a feeling – get off on a theme – that's the music, that's hitting hard, bang bang bang bang – lets go with it you know and you find something in one another. Where else do you get that? You don't get it from buying a Louis Vitton jacket! You can't buy it!

CJ: It's not commoditised is it? You can't download it you gotta turn up man you gotta be here!!

Nick: The things you can't buy are the best things in life. I've got to go on stage!

Paula: That's right!

CJ and Paula: (Laugh)

-End of Interview-

Transcript of an interview with Paul Scott & Beany Samuels, Crass Fans

13th November, 2013

Conducted, Recorded and Transcribed by Paula Frost

Paula: Can you tell me a bit about how the first wave of punk ended and what it was like when Crass emerged?

Paul: The Sex Pistols signed to Virgin before splitting, The Clash signed to CBS and The Damned went their way, and it seemed like everyone was getting signed. Crass brought it back to what it should have been and that kicked off with their first release which was Feeding of the 5000.

It got more serious you know? For that age, for me being a rebel anyway I thought why not go full rebel and anarchist and that's when I started being a vegetarian and I was very anti-government. And it did change everything totally but for me it got totally more political. It was anarchy and peace as Crass used to say but they were really politically motivated but they also had the hard-core music of punk it was the real hard core, which was 3 chords and not mega produced but it still sounded good.

Paula: What was Anarcho-Punk?

Paul: In short, AN-OK stood for Anarchy OK.

Paula: What was the movement that started vegetarianism and brought in the politics?

Paul: Basically it all stemmed from Crass because all the bands that followed Crass, there was Conflict and Zounds and Poison Girls, Flux of Pink Indians and it became a real political movement and it changed me because I became really anti government. I think punk originally, there was a shock aspect of everything and the bringing together of small bands and all the rest of it, small venues and groups but where Crass come in, it reinvigorated punk in fact it was probably what punk should have been in the first place – that's the way we looked at it and it changed us as people, there was loads – especially from Crass – loads of statements, propaganda and it made you look at

other things. You'd read a record sleeve from Crass, then you'd go get a book out and find out about something. That's why I became a vegetarian because it made me investigate what happened to animals in laboratories, in the cosmetic industry, wearing leather shoes, wearing leather jackets – all that. I became a vegetarian because of it.

Paula: How long have you been a vegetarian and when did you become a vegetarian?

Paul: Now I've been a vegetarian for just over 35 years and I think I was about 18 when I turned vegetarian and that was because of Crass and Conflict. Because I knew Conflict in the early days and we did some protests for the Animal Liberation Front and it was politically motivated then.

Paula: Did you do a lot of campaigning then?

Paul: Yeh well we'd write to our MP's, we'd distribute lots of literature about how we felt about things – it was all about being proactive then.

Paula: What do you think went wrong with first wave punk?

It became commercial. It became a money maker. Well The Clash had a line in a song 'turning rebellion into money' and you can't get a more accurate description than that. Even The Clash signed to a major record label. Then you had all these other sort of punkish bands coming up the rear just trying to make money. It wasn't about the kids anymore, even the clothes weren't 'Do It Yourself', it was all being sold and manufactured. It just became manufactured music again. For the good of Crass that's what changed it back again.

Can you name some bands who were alongside Crass?

Quite a few bands adopted Crass' ethic with 'don't pay no more than' record sleeves and record shops at that time used to rip people off and always charge over the odds, they always did. So Crass used to print the price on the sleeve so you couldn't dispute the price or pay more than you should do. A load of bands afterwards did that.

Beany: I'm a big Crass fan and Conflict, but not a vegetarian. What you notice is that their fans will have stencilled logos sprayed on their jackets. I saw at Rebellion Festival the Nazis and Anti-Nazis shaking hands, I think there's a lot of confusion in music as well. I'd say my favourite were Conflict. I'm more of a modern day punk so I'm still learning. But without Sex Pistols you wouldn't have the rest. The Sex Pistols are

the ones that kicked it right up the arse and got it into gear.

Do you think its changed things within politics?

Paul: (Sighs) In politics, no. But I think its made people more aware of what politicians get up to. I think without the punk movement then and without the questions that were raised – because Crass had questions raised in parliament and it got in the paper and everything over that. I think it gave people more of an insight into what to do or where to go – whereas people would just vote labour or vote conservative, or even question the people in charge. It was about questioning and that's what punk brought about because we started questioning everything.

Have people moved away from trusting in religion and politics, higher powers and people?

I think the systems moved away from that, if you just look at society it's all moved away from that anyway because of the mass entertainment we have now. But going back to the punk roots that's what stemmed loads of independent record labels. At one time we didn't have independent record labels it was all major and now any band can release something of their own accord. I think that only really came about because of the punk scene. It wasn't there before. Punk, especially the youth of that generation who as people have got older, they continue to question things.

Crass didn't want to make money they just wanted to cover costs and have enough to fund other bands and further projects. A lot of independent labels try to work to the same ethic today.

Paula: What does punk mean to you?

Paul: It was one of the best times of my life, it has stuck with me and will stick with me for the rest of my life.

Beany: I think if you have a lot of aggression marry punk rock you'll never divorce it.

-End of Interview-

Transcript of an interview with Mick Howes, Crass Fans

13th December, 2013

Conducted, Recorded and Transcribed by Paula Frost

Paula: Can you tell me a bit about your experience of Anarcho- Punk?

Mick: The gig scene was almost every night, it was about two or three times a week and you various anarchy centres that were started up with the one in Wapping, which was the one that released the Crass/Poison Girl single, 'bloody revolution' but I don't know why they never lasted very long in one place they moved around and there were hippy aspects and punk aspects of the younger and older if you like. And it moved so it moved from Wapping, which I went to once, because that was like 1980 you know we were young then and then it moved to Westbourne park and that's where I first saw Conflict and The Mob and it was kind of every week and that was like a meeting place as well and they used to meet and sell stuff. It was just a meet up of likeminded people you know. And then it moved to Rosebery Avenue and I don't think it had a name there. And yes it was just a place basically to see bands, Crass never played there as far as I know but all the bands that came into being because of Crass they all used to play these venues and it was just something different and instead of just talking the talk these people were actually getting up and doing things – setting up gigs, setting up organisations and it all started with the Crass single with the poison girls. And what impressed me about it because I was going to other gigs at the time, I was still into other punk bands but it was like 'wow this is different' you know? There's an entire subculture here who kind of means what it says and there's more to it than three chords and a load of shouting you know? And Crass did some squat gigs as well which kind of took off because of their background in festival movement it was kind of like the start of a free party movement – which later on became something completely different but it was like people getting up and doing things. Because Crass, they squatted the Rainbow theatre which is a long lost big music venue, the police turfed them out of there and they suddenly went to this place called the zig zag club and they put on a gig and about fifteen bands must have played, they played all day and there was free food and free drink and it was wow you know I really felt part of something different.

That's quite an important part because the music press – I'm talking about NME and Sounds at the time basically they didn't really like the bands and used to criticise them and slag them off all the time basically but this kind of made people sit up and listen they thought 'well hang on a minute these bands aren't just saying something they're actually doing something as well.' And yes my experiences at Stonehenge as well – if you want the classic kind of hippy punk crossover well the Stonehenge festivals of the early 80s are the best example of that because you have crusty anarchist band playing but also bands like Hawkwind playing as well. And I didn't realise

then but it was actually the people at Dial House who organised the first Stonehenge festival in 1974/5 so it all kind of links in. Kindred spirits. It made me think as much as I love punk music this was more than music. It was a lifestyle choice a political choice. Because at the time vegetarianism was kind of new to a lot of young people, certainly me and a lot of other punks too. Animal rights became a big deal.

Paula: Are you a vegetarian now?

Mick: I am yes, since those days, since 1982 yes and I wouldn't say it was a particular band that did it but it was being part of that kind of movement and you had the animal liberation front as well which Conflict got heavily involved in and they were always doing benefits and that kind of thing and that's what made me feel it was much more than a bunch of geezers playing to mad punk rock.

Paula: ... It was like a whole ideology...

Mick: A way of life, yes and although I didn't go to Dial House, because a lot of people went there but I just thought I didn't want to just turn up and say hello because I thought if I went there it would be better to interview them for a fanzine or whatever but because I didn't have one I left it. But a lot of people just went up and stayed with them but I was probably a bit shy to be honest.

Paula: So you never went to Dial House?

Mick: I never went to Dial House, no but I went to the anarchy centres because that was gigs and mates you know. Its funny though because back in the 80's everybody called it the Crass Commune including the music press because they used to kind of make fun of the fact it was a 'commune' – I mean it wasn't really but it was kind of a free living bunch of hippies. I knew where it was it's the extreme line of the central line on the tube. I met Colin and Steve before and I had some friends who were in bands but much smaller bands really. But yes as a movement it was far different to anything I'd seen before but I can't have been the only one who was bored with bog standard punk rock for punk rock's sake but this became everything from eco warriors to paving the way of vegetarianism to serious far left and anarchist politics and all that. Before long I was reading things and getting into things I'd never have dreamed of doing, as were so many other people. I was lucky – right place right time really, living in London and going to gigs and all the gigs were cheap and we were skint either on the dole or doing shit jobs and all the gigs were either 50p or £1 to get in and other gigs were £4 or £5 which may not sound like much now but back

then that was a massive difference. A fiver was a night out.

You'd get violence as well because you'd get skinheads and fascists who used to turn up. I'm not saying it was a utopia because there was trouble as well – I was terrified of skinheads. But on the whole there was a level of acceptance, it didn't matter what you looked like so much either. You didn't have to tow a party line to look the part. It didn't matter.

Paula: What kind of person would you say you were before punk and what was the turning point where you changed?

Mick: Well before I was just a very shy schoolboy really who although I kind of had mildly left wing parents, normal labour voters and I didn't know or really care that much at 15- 16. It turned me into an environmentalist, a vegetarian, I used to say anarchist but I have voted in the past. I was extremely shy and introvert as well and meeting people and getting into it kind of let me come out of my shell.

Paula: Where about were you based?

Mick: Lewisham so conflict were the local band I guess. There was more happening in north London to be honest and we used to go to North London, two, three times a week for gigs or just to meet up with people.

Mick: There was a lot going on and a lot of people were into it, I mean the gigs were in small places but if they'd have gone with the mainstream they could have been playing big places like Brixton Academy but they didn't, they shunned the mainstream.

Mick: There were a lot of DIY releases. People were just getting together pressing records and doing it.

Paula: You say you were passionate about animal rights; did you ever get involved in any of the protests?

Mick: Yes I did a few things, a bit of sabotage as well, I went out with the ALF and I applied for a job in an animal testing laboratory so I could go there and report back what was going on but they sussed me! Going undercover appealed to me at the time because I was about seventeen. I thought I could take pictures and find out what was going on. It felt like an individual could do something to effect social change. But it did take direct action to do it.

Crass started an independent label at a time when major labels were extremely powerful, did that inspire

you to feel like you could do things and not just accept what you were given?

Mick: Absolutely yes, it made you think there was more than major labels, Crass Records began and then Conflict started a label as a direct result and they started springing up everywhere yes and it gave you a sense of you didn't have to go through the mainstream. You may not sell as much but in some cases you did sell as many as you would have done if you were in a mainstream set up. Certainly the DIY ethic you know, making your own T-Shirts and things. Basically not going down the same old route because the punk fashion used to embarrass me a bit. Everyone's trying to look the best or a bit cooler or whatever. But this changed all that. It was an eye opener.

Paula: What were the fanzines like? Were they important to you?

Mick: The fanzines yes gosh I've still got a box full of them! They were just cheap and at the time that was when everyone used to read the music press. Everyone read NME every week and Sounds – it was the only way to find out about gigs and bands back then. Me and my mate did start a fanzine and we interviewed Charlie Harper out of UK Subs at a bar and it was all a bit drunken really and never really saw the light of day. We did our own stencils as well and started doing graffiti and collages. It did inspire me. I suppose after a while something had to give and I ended up drifting away from it but its still there with me and I'm a changed person because of it.

Paula: How much would you say Crass influenced other bands like Conflict?

Starting with Conflict yes when their first single came out, I think in 1981, I thought they were just a carbon copy because they had a symbol which was a bit like Crass' and they had a female singer as well as male and they sounded a bit like Crass. When I first heard them I thought this is a bit of a rip off almost. But then after that first single I realised they were their own band and they became as big as Crass, certainly on the underground scene. But they weren't my favourite band I mean I love the Poison Girls and they don't get as much credit probably because their music wasn't hard and fast punk rock but the politics and the attitude and everything and the scene they were in as well was as important in a lot of ways. I got into Omega Tribe and Rudimentary Peni who's art work was so obscure and mental. Check out his work his name is Nick Blinko. Their first single was blow away punk and they were an Anarcho-Punk band. I'd never seen bands do their own artwork before, you didn't

get that when you bought a UK Subs album. Also Hagar The Womb.

Paula: Do you think anyone is doing anything close to what Crass did, now?

Mick: No. I'm sure there are many worthy bands out there but nothing like the way that spiralled.

Paula: What was it like back then to buy a Crass record with posters and patches in them, had that been done before or was that pretty original?

Mick: That was so original, the sleeves then, you used to buy your LP, it was quite cheap as well. You'd get this big fold around cover and it would fold out into this big poster/piece of art. As far as I'm aware I don't know anyone who was doing fold out sleeves. They did it with 7" singles as well, they used to produce leaflets and booklets as well on everything from political theory to recipes. But when you bought an album, and this was when vinyl was king obviously. You weren't just buying an album you were buying a piece of art as well. And the poster would be – Vaucher as well was a brilliant artist and she's now being recognised in her own right as an artist as apposed to just a member of a band. But it took a long time for the recognition to come around.

You'd buy something and be sat on the bus with it reading an essay. It was something else it really was.

Paula: Did you feel personally you'd been kept in the dark by the government?

Mick: Yes I did and it made me angrier. My dad was kind of politically aware and used to tell me stuff but not on the level of this so I wasn't completely naïve but it did open my eyes to the lies and corruption and everything else that was going on. I got arrested three times on demos because of it and it made me angrier. I felt things had been hidden to a certain extent but I wasn't completely in the dark.

Paula: Were you badly treated by the police?

Mick: Yes. It was bad, I was strip searched I was kept in and refused phone calls I was kept for hours and hours, treated like shit basically. This was for the Stop the City Marches in the 80's it was unofficial and unannounced on the spot demonstrations to try to halt the war machine and money machine of the city of London and of course the police took a dim view of this as did many other people and it got ugly and it got violent at time and then it got controlled because basically they just stopped anyone dressed a bit scruffy from getting the tube to bank or anything you

just weren't allowed to do it! It was so effective that unless you had an obvious job in the city or were in a suit then if there was more than a couple of you at least then you would be stopped and then the police learnt how to control it and contain it. That was certainly an influence of the Anarcho-Punk movement at the time, especially the one in 1984.

Paula: Can you name one song, which you think encapsulated the entire movement?

Mick: Do They Owe Us a Living – By Crass. Because its swearing but its making a point as well. As a teenage hearing that, it ticked all the boxes really.

Paula: There's a song called 'Big A, Little A'. What did you think of that?

Mick: That's a good question because the other side of the single was Nagasaki Nightmare, which was kind of different, almost a departure musically and a lot of people didn't like that. But after the intro part that goes off on its own tangent too. It made me think they were progressing musically and the characters Steve Ignorant did I just thought they were funny. He does the Queen's voice (laughs). You know it's like a musical departure for them because its not like hard fast punk all the way through is it? It's quite a long song as well. But that whole single, when I first heard it I wasn't sure but over time I liked it. Now I think its up there with one of their finest songs.

This was the first time I heard Crass have a guitar intro like rock songs have guitar intros. They hadn't done that before it was a break with what they'd done before. A saucepan is used as a bit of percussion as well. It was great. The bass line is kind of rocky and funky.

Paula: Finally, what is Anarcho-Punk to you? Would you be different if the band (Crass) never existed?

Mick: Yes I would be different. It made me think politically, it made me think environmentally, it made me think about right wing fascism because Nazis at the time, the International Front were getting big. We had to think about politics and serious things. It changed me politically.

Paula: Are you still quite heavily involved in music?

Mick: Yes I go to a lot of gigs and a lot of Anarcho-Gig too. I have tickets for Hagar The Womb and I have seen Conflict in recent years and Steve Ignorant. Yes I still have a guitar and I still go to see a lot of gigs. It has certainly influenced me and I still wear a Crass T-Shirt from time to time.

-End of Interview-

Lyrics: 'Big A, Little A' – Written By Penny Pimbaud

Big A, little A, bouncing B
The system might have got you but it won't get me...

One, Two, Three, Four

External control are you gonna let them get you?
Do you wanna be a prisoner in the boundaries they set you?
You say you want to be yourself, by christ do you think they'll let you?
They're out to get you get you get you get you get you get you get you

Hello, hello, hello, this is the Lord God, can you hear?
Hellfire and damnation's what I've got for you down there
On earth I have ambassadors, archbishop, vicar, pope
We'll blind you with morality, you'd best abandon any hope,
We're telling you you'd better pray cos you were born in sin
Right from the start we'll build a cell and then we'll lock you in
We sit in holy judgement condemning those that stray
We offer our forgiveness, but first we'll make you pay

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Hello, hello, hello, now here's a massage from your queen
As figurehead of the status quo I set the social scene
I'm most concerned about my people, I want to give them peace
So I'm making sure they stay in line with my army and police
My prisons and my mental homes have ever open doors
For those amongst my subjects who dare to ask for more
Unruliness and disrespect are things I can't allow
So I'll see the peasants grovel if they refuse to bow

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Introducing the Prime Sinister, she's a mother to us all
Like the dutch boy's finger in the dyke her arse is in the wall
Holding back the future waiting for the seas to part
If Moses did it with is faith, she'll do it with an army
Who at times of threatened crisis are certain to be there
Guarding national heritage no matter what or where
Palaces for kings and queens, mansions for the rich
Protection for the wealthy, defence of privilege
They've learnt the ropes In Ireland, engaged in civil war
Fighting for the ruling classes in their battle against the poor
So Ireland's just an island? It's an island of the mind
Great Britain? Future? Bollocks, you'd better look behind
Round every other corner stands P.C. 1984
Guardian of the future, he'll implement the law
He's there as a grim reminder that no matter what you do
Big brothers system's always there with his beady eyes on you
From God to local bobby, in home and street and school
They've got your name and number while you've just got their rule
We've got to look for methods to undermine those powers
It's time to change the tables. The future must be ours

Big A, little A, bouncing B
The system might have got you but it won't get me

Be exactly who you want to be, do what you want to do
I am he and she is she but you're the only you
No one else has got your eyes, can see the things you see
It's up to you to change your life and my life's up to me
The problems that you suffer from are problems that you make
The shit we have to climb through is the shit we choose to take
If you don't like the life you live, change it now it's yours
Nothing has effects if you don't recognise the cause
If the programme's not the one you want, get up, turn off the set
It's only you that can decide what life you're gonna get
If you don't like religion you can be the antichrist

If you're tired of politics you can be an anarchist
But no one ever changed the church by pulling down a
steeple
And you'll never change the system by bombing
number ten
Systems just aren't made of bricks they're mostly
made of people
You may send them into hiding, but they'll be back
again
If you don't like the rules they make, refuse to play
their game
If you don't want to be a number, don't give them
your name
If you don't want to be caught out, refuse to hear
their question
Silence is a virtue, use it for your own protection
They'll try to make you play their game, refuse to
show your face
If you don't want to be beaten down, refuse to join
their race
Be exactly who you want to be, do what you want to
do
I am he and she is she but you're they only yo

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