

Chapter Six

“Blank Generation”

Prologue:

**The Effect of the American
Avant-Garde
on 1970's East Coast Rock**

Generation X

Generation X (born between ~1961-1977) was wedged between the baby boomers (~1945-1961) and Generation "Y" (Millennial Generation) (~1977-1994).

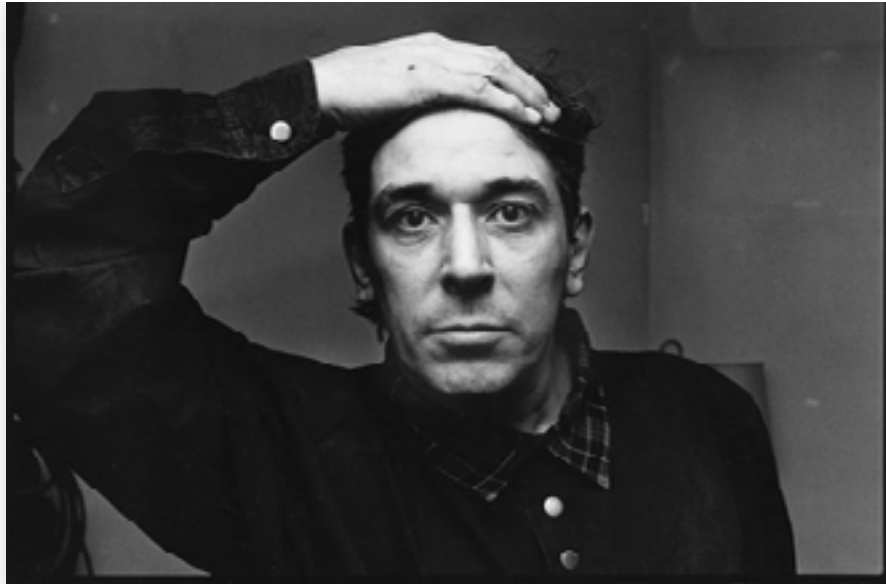
Generation X, sometimes referred to as the "baby bust", often disdained the apparent values of the baby boomers: over-achieving, social experimentation, impracticality, and excessive idealism. Gen X kids, feeling somehow alienated as if they had missed the party, refused to compete with a generation twice its size and with most of the toys.

The resultant attitudes left their mark on rock styles of the period: the music expresses either carefree abandon in such styles as glitter/glam and disco, or wrought with self-doubt and alienation, as in punk and new wave.

The Roots Of Generation X Music In America

In the mid to late 1960's, there was a reaction to the complexities and excesses of "artsy" British rock and the commercialization of flower-power generation pop music. Much of the music seemed to have become institutionalized, complacent, and missing an aggressive edge.

Some of the late 1960's rockers felt the need to get back to the abrasiveness and rudeness of earlier rock and roll. The major centers for this new musical activity were the Midwest and New York City.



This is *John Cale* (1942-)

Avant-Garde Musician and Violist –
who happened to admire John Cage

Cale produced albums by the The Stooges, The Velvet Underground, The Patti Smith Group, and many others

The New York Art Rock Scene Influenced by:

Minimalism - Stripping away elaboration and de-emphasizing technique (4'33" and extreme example)

Pop Art - Themes and techniques derived from Popular culture (Campbell soup cans, etc)

Literature: Beat writers and esoteric literary references (Leopold von Sacher-Masoch)

New York's Art Rock (Mid To Late '70's)

New York rock was influenced by Pop Art (especially artist Andy Warhol, 1930-1987), minimalism (classical composer John Cage, 1912-1992), and post-Beat aesthetics. New York Art Rock is an extension of the Detroit Proto-punk style. Bands use minimal technique, deliberately rough sound and unsteady, fluctuating rhythms. The lyrics, influenced by Beat Poets, deal with inner conflict, mainlining hard drugs, alienation, sadomasochism, and homosexuality.

Audiences, typically in their late '20'S, listened to these acts in such NY clubs as Cafe Bizarre and CBGB's

The Velvet Underground (1965)

Notable Members: Lou Reed (d. 2013), vocals, guitar; John Cale, viola, bass and keyboards.

At the height of the flower-power generation, the Velvet Underground wrote songs about alienation, drug addiction, sexual perversion, sado-masochism, and hopelessness. Notorious for its out-of-tune primitivism, the Velvet Underground became the primary model for 1980's alternative rock bands. During the early part of their career, the Velvets were taken under the wing of artist Andy Warhol (1930-1987) who promoted them and designed the cover for their first album.

The Velvets toured with Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable (1966-1967) traveling mixed media show. Although the Velvet Underground had no major hits nor achieved any commercial success before they broke up, their cult hits include “Heroin”, “Venus In Furs”, and “Femme Fatale”.

Detroit Proto-Punk (Late '60's To Early '70's)

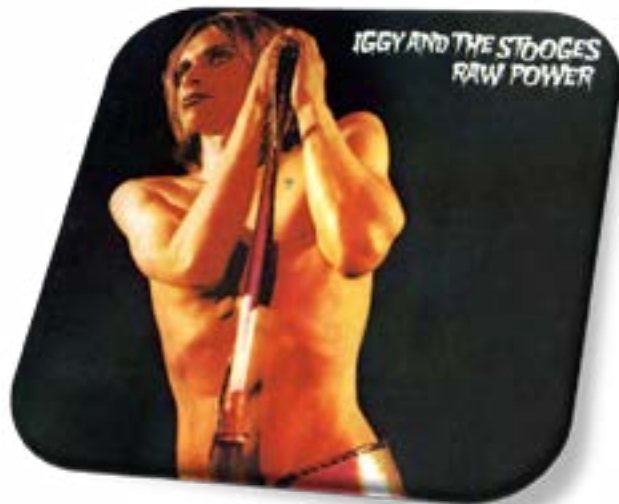
Performers in Midwest cities such as Detroit, Akron, and Cleveland played a significant role in a new movement away from established pop music norms in the late 1960's. Bands in this style used stripped down arrangements, lowest common-denominator musicianship, deliberately amateurish stage presentations, outlandish dress, and vulgar lyrics.

The bands, now classified as Detroit proto-punk, were loud and deliberately annoying. The style, dominated by such performers as the Stooges' Iggy Pop, MC5's Rob Tyler, and Fred "Sonic" Smith, anticipated the punk explosion of the mid 1970's.

Iggy Pop and the Stooges (Ann Arbor, MI, 1967)

Considered the grandfather of punk, Iggy Pop (Iggy Stooze), gave his first Stooges concert on Halloween 1967. His act included rubbing raw steak over his body, gouging his skin with broken glass, and diving into the audience.

After bouts with drug addiction in 1975, Iggy committed himself to a L.A. mental hospital. Iggy Pop was rediscovered by David Bowie Iggy went on tour with Bowie in 1976 and 1977.



Iggy Pop (1947) was inspired by Jim Morrison and Lou Reed.
He was the first performer to “stage dive”



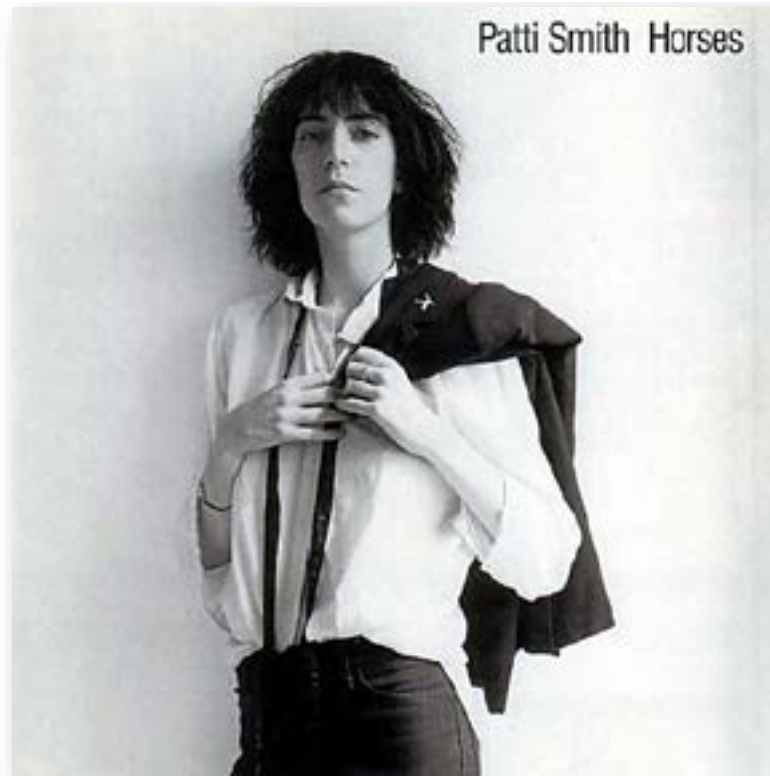
CBGB's

Situated in lower Manhattan's Bowery District, owner Hilly Kristal's CBGB's - OMFUG (Country, BlueGrass, and Blues and Other Music For Uplifting Gourmandizers) was the premiere punk rock club in the mid to late 1970's. Originally a down-and-out and seedy bar, CBGB's started playing avant-garde rock in 1974 using unknown and unsigned acts. Soon the 350 capacity hall became center of a trendy, intellectual club scene. Patti Smith, Blondie, the Talking Heads, the Heartbreakers, Television, and the Ramones all established their careers through regular appearances at CBGB's. Soon after the success of CBGB's, other NYC clubs, such as Max's Kansas City, followed CBGB's led by featuring unsigned acts.

New York Dolls (U.S.1973)

Vocalist David Johansen's pivotal band the New York Dolls bridged the gap between New York Art Rock and N.Y.Punk. Their entry onto the music scene came at the end of the glitter/glam movement so they are often referred to as “glitter punks”. In their latter career they were managed by Malcolm McLaren who used them as a model for his later group the Sex Pistols.

Their first album New York Dolls (1973) included track like *Trash*, *Pills*, and *Personality Crisis*



Patti Smith Group (1975)

Patti Smith (1946-) was the first female punker of the 1970's. Her vocal style was imitated by every female punker after her. A poet and playwright before she became a rocker, her outrageous debut single, *Piss Factory*, set her apart from the rest of the pack.

New York Punk (Early '70's)

New York Punk started as the hard-core contingent of the New York Art Rock style. The performers were younger than the art rockers and had little allegiance to the Beat poets. The style is characterized by very simple, stripped-down thrash rock: Very short, fast songs, minimal soloing, unemotional, uncolored singing. The style has a deliberate non-funky feel. Many of the bands were first introduced at CBGB's, New York's premiere punk/thrash nightclub.

New York New Wave

A style first anticipated by groups such as Pere Ubu, New York New Wave was a hodge-podge of styles: jagged guitar lines, disco/funk dance beats, punk alienation, glitter/glam, art rock, and thrash. Blondie, for example, makes use of pop, rap, surf-rock, and punk.

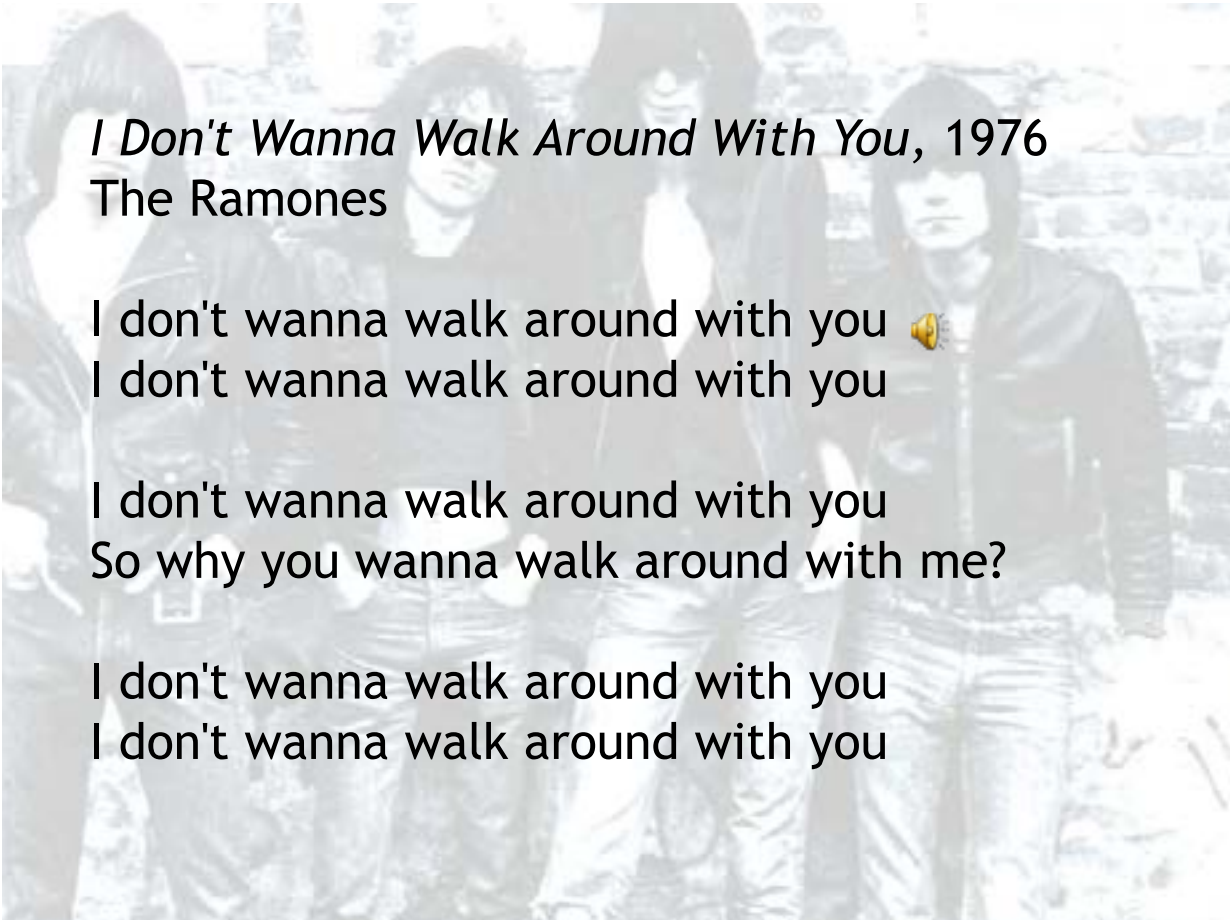


Ramones self-titled debut album, 1976
The album cost about \$6400 to make

The Ramones (N.Y. 1974)

Members: Joey Ramone (d. 2001), vocals; Johnny Ramone (d. 2004), guitar; Dee Dee Ramone (d. 2002) bass; Marky Ramone, drums.

The Ramones take their name from Phil Ramone, a Paul McCartney pseudonym when the Beatles were still the Silver Beatles. The Ramones were the first true punk band: stripped down deadpan lyrics, fast and forced tempos, and no guitar solos. Their first album *The Ramones* features such punk classics as *Beat On The Brat*, *Blitzkrieg Bop*, *Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue*, and *I Don't Wanna Hang Around With You*.



I Don't Wanna Walk Around With You, 1976
The Ramones

I don't wanna walk around with you 🗣️
I don't wanna walk around with you

I don't wanna walk around with you
So why you wanna walk around with me?

I don't wanna walk around with you
I don't wanna walk around with you

The Talking Heads (N.Y. 1975)

The Talking Heads, led by vocalist David Byrne, first performed at CBGB's in June 1975. In the early part of their career they toured with the Ramones in Europe.

One of the most inventive new wave bands of the 1970's, the Talking Heads made extensive use of African rhythms, P-funk, call/response vocalizing and minimalism.

Precursors of British Punk

**American Garage Bands
New York Punks including:
The New York Dolls
Television (Richard Hell)
and the Ramones**

British Pub Rock

British Pub Rock

Rebelled against:

**Arena Rock, AOR and Progressive Rock
of the 1970's**

Big, bloated sound

Synthesizers and special effects

Pretentious, self-absorbed stance

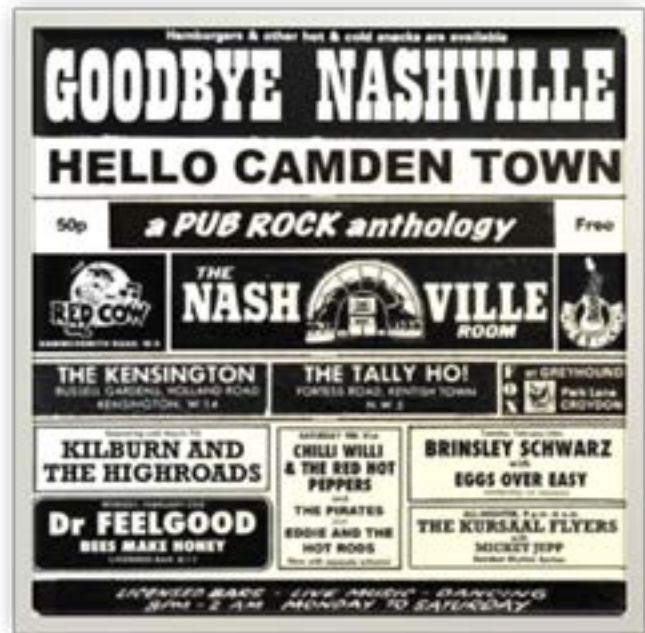
Elvis Costello

Dave Edmunds

Graham Parker



Pub Rock venues such as Hope & Anchor converted to punk rock venues



The Sex Pistols, The Stranglers and The Damned played pub rock venues such as North London's Nashville Room

British Punk (Mid To Late '70's)

Disenchanted with music industry controlled rock and roll and unemployment in the U.K., British youth sought back-to-basics rock style emphasizing personal authenticity, political reform, and a common-man's right for musical self-expression. Like N.Y. punk, it uses stripped down arrangements, political lyrics, and a crude amateurish delivery. A fundamental difference between N.Y. punks and London Punks was that the London punks were all much younger than the N.Y. punks.

The British punks seemed to lack the tongue-in-cheek humor of some of the N.Y. acts. British punk lyrics usually revolve around the devaluation of society, political systems, and anarchy. The major venues for British punk during the mid 1970's were the Marquee Club and the 100 club.

The British Punk Explosion, 1975-1977



Differences between N.Y. Punk and British Punk

N.Y. Punk:

Performers in their Mid-twenties playing for disenfranchised audiences looking for a new scene

Punk never “caught on” with mainstream audiences of that period

Musical experimentation, diversity of styles

Influenced by the Beat poets

Differences between N.Y. Punk and British Punk

British Punk:

Younger performers and audiences

Punk gains much mainstream media attention and chart success.

More political lyrics

Abandonment of the Mid-Atlantic accent

Became a fashion statement

Sex Pistols (U.K. 1975)

Taking the lead from American punk acts such as The New York Dolls, Richard Hell, and the Ramones, British underground impresario Malcolm McLaren began promoting two young unknowns Johnny Rotten (John Lydon, 1956-) and Sid Vicious (John Ritchie, d. 1979) as the Sex Pistols as a way of advertising McLaren's London underground clothes boutique Sex.

The Sex Pistols effectively became Britain's first punk rock band. Their first single "Anarchy in the U.K." (Dec. 1975) was immediately banned. After a series of vulgar British television interviews, the Sex Pistols record contracts were dissolved and they were banned from performance in major halls across Britain. The Sex Pistols second hit, "God Save The Queen" (May 1977) was timed to coincide with the Queen's 25th Silver Jubilee. The record went No.1, despite the fact that it was unavailable at major record shops.

The Clash (U.K. 1976-)

Significant Members: Mick Jones, vocals, guitar; Joe Strummer, vocals, guitar.

The Clash was one of the earliest British punk bands. More political and self-righteous than the nihilist Sex Pistols, Clash lyrics are about racism, police brutality, and alienation.

The Clash's musical roots are broader than most British punk bands including reggae and mainstream pop. Their biggest hits were “Should I Stay Or Should I Go” and “Rock The Casbah”.

Elvis Costello (Declan McManus, 1954-)

One of the best and most prolific songwriters of the British New Wave, Elvis Costello and the Attractions had a broad impact on music of the 1970's.

Costello's style was very diverse: jagged guitar-band songs, country and western influences, and lush Beatle-like arrangements. Elvis Costello's major albums include *My Aim Is True* (1977) and *Armed Forces* (1979)

Alison, I know this world is killing you.
Oh, Alison, my aim is true.

Well I see you've got a husband now.
Did he leave your pretty fingers
Lying In the wedding cake?

You used to hold him right in your hand.
I'll bet he took all he could take.

Sometimes I wish that I could stop you from talking
When I hear the silly things that you say.

I think somebody better put out the big light,
Cause I can't stand to see you this way.

Alison, I know this world is killing you.
Oh, Alison, my aim is true. My aim is true.

British Post-Punk

British post-punk bands differ from earlier punk bands in several ways.

The post-punk bands were less political, more melodic and much more introverted.

The style has a fuller sound, sometimes using synthesizers and saxophones. Depression and despair are favorite subjects in Post-Punk rock.

Post-Punk Style characteristics:

Introverted lyrics and delivery style

More complex instrumentation than punk

Return to “clean” guitar playing

**Avoidance of mainstream pop music idiom
some as disco, stadium rock, blues, etc.**

Goth Rock is a sub-set
of Post-Punk

Characteristics:

Influenced by Gothic Horror
and melodrama
example: Dracula (1897)

Romanticism

Dark, brooding lyrics

Mostly in minor keys or modes





Haile Selassie a.k.a Ras Tafari

Official title, King of
Kings, Lord of Lords,
and Conquering
Lion of Judah was
crowned in 1928. He
is considered the
Rastafari Messiah
and was heavily
promoted by Marcus
Garvey in the 1930's.



Ska (1956-To Mid-'60's)

In the mid 1960's Jamaican teenagers began listening to American rhythm and blues broadcast on American radio stations in Miami, New Orleans, and Memphis. Also mobile DJ's began playing the latest rhythm and blues records at parties and other events.

As the interest in R&B increased, local musicians began blending rhythm and blues horn sections and chug-a-lug rhythms with the traditional hesitation Calypso beat. The resulting style was called ska: imitating the scratching sound of a muted guitar. In the late 1970's there was a British Ska revival.

Reggae (1968 -)

Between 1969 to 1976 Reggae had a profound influence on rock and roll. Many rock groups as diverse as Stevie Wonder, Eric Clapton, the Police, and the Clash used reggae themes, rhythms, and attitudes. Reggae combines a hesitation calypso beat, electric guitars and bass with Rastafarian lyrics. Also, Jamaican toasters, mobile DJ's providing rhythm and rhyme talkovers (Dub), provided the basis for the practice in American Rap. The impact of reggae on rap is especially ironic considering that American blacks have traditionally shown contempt for Jamaicans.

Much of Reggae makes use of Rastafarian lyrics. Rastafarianism embraced the political and spiritual beliefs of Haile Selassie I (aka Ras Tafari, 1892-1975), the last emperor of Ethiopia (1930-1974). Selassie's goals, often cited in reggae are cultural and political emancipation, black self-determination, and reuniting Jamaicans with Ethiopia where once they were kings and queens.

Jamaican Dance Music

Calypso 1940's and early 1950's -

Ska (1956-66)

Rhythm and blues with a Calypso
hesitation beat

Horn sections, slow chug-a-lug rhythms

Rock Steady (1966-68)

More sophisticated, upbeat dance music

Electric guitar and bass replace horns

Reggae (1968 -)

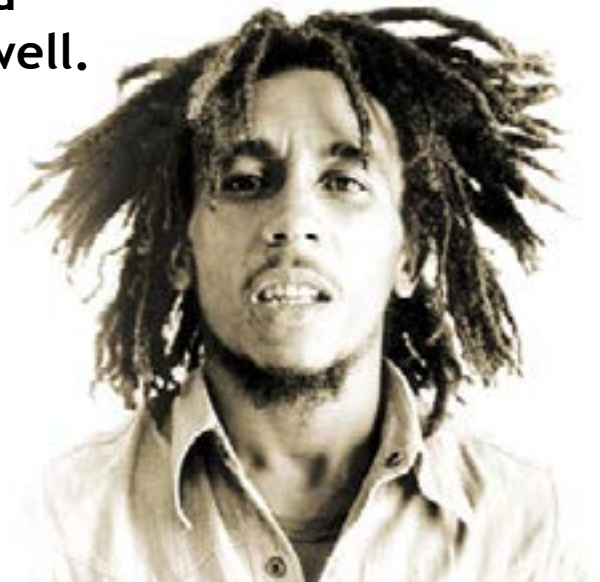
Slow tempo with sub-divisions.

Bass, Guitar, Drums and vocals

Bob Marley (1945 - 1981)

Bob Marley spearheaded the Reggae
movement in the late 1960's

After his death, Bob Marley came to
represent the Third World
Liberation Movement as well.



First Wave Ska - (1956)

Second Wave Ska - (2 Tone) late 1970's

**Third Wave Ska - late 1980's
(West Coast Ska)**

2nd Wave Ska-Revival (1979-1981)

Also known as the Two Tone (from Two-Tone Record Co), 2nd wave Ska used live, often humorous, stage routines. Also, Ska bands were integrated groups of 7 to 9 members with heavy use of horn sections and chug-a-lug rhythms.

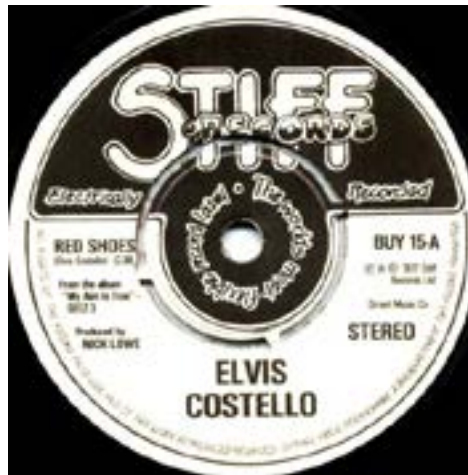
The New Labels



The English Beat, The Cramps, The Go-Go's,
Oingo Boingo, Squeeze, The Alarm,
Gary Numan, Wall of Voodoo, General Public,
and Concrete Blonde.



The Cure, Echo & the Bunnymen,
Depeche Mode, The English Beat,
Madness, Madonna, Ministry,
My Bloody Valentine,
The Pretenders, The Smiths, Soft Cell



Rodney “Rodney on the Roq”
Bingenheimer with Blondie

His KROQ program debuted
in August 1976 - he is STILL
on the air today.



Techno-Rock (1977-1981)

Techno-rock was a synthesizer-based rock style of the late 1970's. The style exhibited an infatuation with technology, jagged mechanical rhythms and melodic lines. The lyrics seem to be obsessed with the excesses of materialism, estrangement, and de-humanization.