

They don't wear safety pins in their cheeks or choke each other, but they do spit and throw beer bottles at the bands they like. And sometimes they pogo.

The punk rockers at the Mabuhay Gardens in San Francisco, both bands and audience alike, have embraced a homogenized version of the punk scene that started in England in the middle '70s with the Sex Pistols.



As Ozzie plays, a fan dances

Most of the bands prefer to be called "new Wave," which is basic rock 'n' roll music without the social and political overtones.

The Mabuhay recently had a Sacramento night that featured Ozzie and Permanent Wave, two local groups.

There is no punk scene in Sacramento so the bands must travel 87 miles to be appreciated.

"What I like about punk or new wave," says singer Happy Jack of Ozzie, "is that it is still in a sense undefined. It gives an opportunity for different kinds of expression in rock music."

But Ozzie, named after Ozzie Nelson, really isn't punk or new wave. "We had been working on our musical concepts long before we ever heard of new wave," says Jack, "We're just not the kind of band that can play five nights a week. We don't play dance music and that audience is open to new things."

Like the hippy movement of the '60s, it a quest to be different that spurs on the supporters of the punk scene.

Mabuhay manager Dirk Dirkson explains, "What we here refer to as 'laid back Mill Valley rock' is something that is ten years old. The younger audience of today is looking for something that is more relevant to them. . . something that is an outgrowth of their own experience. The acts that we book are garage bands. Our audience identifies with them. When you have somebody arriving in a Rolls Royce or whatever and has sold a million records, he has by circumstances separated himself from his public."

This is quite similar to what happened in England in 1975 when the Sex Pistols were formed.

Punk rock began as an alternative form of musical entertainment for the youth of England. Since there is a depression going on there, jobs are scarce. A youngster either goes to college, (their equivalent of our high school) or on the dole, a welfare program for the unemployed.

Unable to afford better than second hand, ragged clothes and often going without food for days, the kids could not afford to pay the high ticket prices for concerts. So they formed their own bands.

As Johnny Rotten, lead singer of the Sex Pistols explains, "Everyone is so fed up with the old way. We are constantly being dictated to by old farts who got rich parents. (The big name bands) look down on us and expect us to pay pounds to see them. And people allowed it to happen. But now they're not. Now there's a hell of a lot of new bands come up with exactly the opposite



Story by
Mick Martin

Photos by
Scott Sommerdorf

Two female fans who are regulars at the Mabuhay Gardens

Punk rock much maligned

✓—From C1

attitude. It's not condescending any more. It's plain honesty. If you don't like it, that's fine. You're not forced to like it through propaganda. People think that we use propaganda, but we don't. We're not trying to be commercial. We're doing exactly what we want to do, what we've always done."

Somehow, however, they managed to make headlines all over the world.

The most famous incident was when Pistol's bass player Sid Vicious vomited on an elderly lady in an airport. From that point on many thought that punk bands regularly vomited on their audience.

After their recent tour of America, the Sex Pistols split up. They were becoming just like the bands they loathed and that was perhaps the only way they could prove their sincerity.

In addition to providing punk with its more sensa-

tional aspects, the Pistols actually created the whole scene. Vicious, for example, was the first to pogo. Pogo consists of jumping up and down with arms flailing and head bobbing from side to side. He explained later, "I just didn't know how to dance."

The domestic scene has none of the desperation of its British counterpart. It's a fad, a fashion.

"To me, this isn't punk. . . it's avant garde music theater," says Dirkson, "The media's fascination with the violence associated with punk has given people the wrong impression. To me, the violence is non-existent. You see a lot of throwing of popcorn. Every once in a while, somebody will throw a fish..."

Happy Jack has had first hand experience, "When we played with the Weirdos and the Zeros, two L.A. punk bands, the audience threw beer bottles at us. The audience is very enthusiastic. . . there's no real viciousness, just youthful high spirits."

Dane Henas of Permanent Wave relates a typical incident, "Some guy was spitting at our lead singer, so he took a big mouth full of beer. He kept making faces at the guy until he was about a foot away and just let him have it. The guy ran into the restroom. The audience loved it."

The Mabuhay audience also consists of the curious. Henas says, "I think it's on the gray line tours. You see guys in suits with their wives. After all, it is on Broadway and that in itself attracts a lot of people."

Dirkson sees it as "living theatre. The audience is a part of it. . . everybody is a part of it."

The fans are devoted to the bands because they're accessible. If punk goes the way of the corporate product, it just won't be the same. Sophistication would completely ruin it.

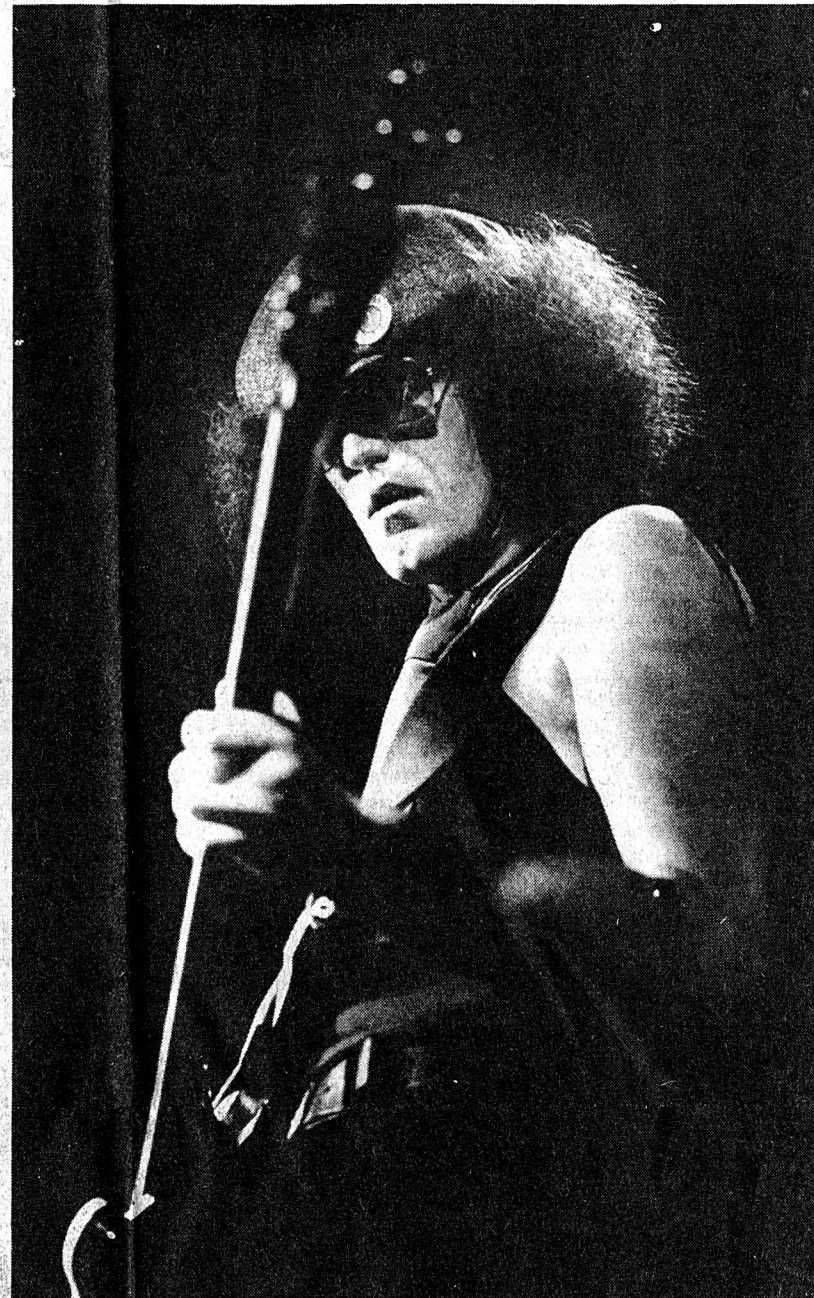
Elvis Costello, Graham Parker and Rumour, The Ramones, the Slits (a female group), the Damned, the Vibrators and others have been signed to major record labels and are being heavily promoted.

It's the first time since the '60s that record companies are again signing groups wholesale.

Whether avant garde, punk, new wave or just basic rock 'n' roll, it's a new form of expression and fashion for young people and not likely to disappear.



Dirk Dirksen, manager of the Mabuhay Gardens



Happy Jack Hastings, bassist for Ozzie

Out a sofa — that will make into a bed — and a gas stove. His phone is 388-2208 . . . Today is Mer-