



CHAPTER 9

The Punk Scene and the National Music Press in France (1976–1978): ‘Dangerous Liaisons’?

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INTRODUCTION

In the years 1976–1978, in France as well as in the UK or the USA, there emerged a number of bands that called themselves ‘punk’, with disruptive and violent ideas targeted against the Establishment, the hippies, and the music codes of the time. These bands used French as a language to convey their ideas. It is in the press, particularly in periodicals that specialized in music (*Best* and *Rock&Folk*) that we can note the importance of this ‘punk explosion’ that called into question fundamental

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beliefs about our society, a brief and very intense period beyond which the self-claimed ‘ephemeral’ movement was considered dead. The media dramatization of the punk movement was important in terms of novelty, sales and print runs, discoveries, new feelings and identification for the readers. Hence, the press participated in the ‘mainstreamization’ of a musical movement—in other words bringing about its acceptance by the mainstream.

The first issue of *Rock&Folk* appeared in the summer of 1966, promoted by Philippe Koechlin, who was then news editor of the *Jazz Hot* magazine, written in the same precincts by the same journalists and published in the same way. Taken as a standard in music mass-media periodicals, the monthly magazine followed a triple approach dealing with category, commerce and identity. The magazine was totally devoted to musicians or music productions, which determined its contents according to a musical subdivision and not to the readers’ age, like *Salut les copains*. The readership of the magazine was large, with over 100,000 issues in 1979. It was targeted at a widespread and homogeneous readership, that is, young people who were keen on this specific music genre, rock music.

On the other hand, *Best*, whose subtitle was ‘the best news about musical evolution’ [*‘La meilleure actualité de l’évolution musicale’*] appeared as the direct competitor to *Rock&Folk*. It was created by Gérard Bernar, news editor and former model maker and journalist on *Disco Revue*, and by Jacques Morlain, himself the director of *Best*. Yet the periodical had quite a different status: in fact, it was from its inception directly linked with the protest movements in France in the spring of 1968, and with the resulting underground press that promoted a certain way of thinking and specific convictions, alongside an eagerness to defend and affirm the values of social groups that had up to that point been considered of a lower status. *Best* can provide a window into the idea of the ‘fanzine’ since it used similar material, had a handcrafted presentation, and was published twice a month. By 1969 it had become a monthly magazine and was widely read, as evidenced by its print runs, with over 100,000 copies produced in 1974.

The purpose of this chapter is to browse through all the numbers of *Best* and *Rock&Folk* published between January 1976 and December 1978 (72 numbers in all) and analyse the ‘dangerous liaisons’ they had with the punk scene over those two pivotal years. We shall first analyse the way the press revealed the scene, welcomed it, and even got involved in

it. Second, we shall try to understand in which ways the punk scene was for this press a commercial opportunity likely to seduce French youth. Last, we shall question the contribution of the media in the process of permanently moving the border between mainstream and underground. Thus, on a larger basis, we shall consider the cultural, strategic and commercial dimension of press behaviour about the musical punk 'fact' and therefore identify and measure the gap between a restricted culture of subversion and its representation for the greatest number of people.

APPEARANCE OF PUNK IN THE SPECIALIZED MUSIC PRESS

If the information on punk similarly appeared in both periodicals, in three distinct phases—cautiously, more assertively, and then completely engaged—the rhythm and intensity were different according to each periodical. *Rock&Folk*, which was better established, with a more traditional vision of rock, gives the impression that it had not immediately grasped the changes that were on the horizon. The signs of this missed rendezvous between the magazine and the emergence of punk are numerous and varied if we consider the special issue of summer 1976 about... 'Folk in France'. In March 1976, the proto-punk group Doctor of Madness, active since 1975 with its blue-haired singer Kid Strange, was described in the nomenclature of the decadence of rock (*Rock&Folk*, 1976c: 31) whereas conversely it was held up as the vanguard of the punk explosion. The lack of interest in the new French groups was obvious, along with the disregard towards articles on punk albums from the New York scene. As for Europunk, the first European punk festival, held in 1976 in Mont-de Marsan with bands such as The Damned, and Eddie and the Hot Rods, was totally ignored on the front pages of magazines. The belated announcement of the festival 'Europunk first festival, 21 August in Mont-de Marsan?' [Premier festival Europunk le 21 août à Mont-de-Marsan?] (*Rock&Folk*, 1976a: 15), at best denoting a lack of knowledge, or at least a lack of interest, was reduced to a sentence of one and a half lines, totally hidden behind the very prominent discussion of the Orange Rock Festival held in August 1976 which featured a number of famous rock stars (*Rock&Folk*, 1976a: 19).

In the same way, the artists who were to become punk stars or who were involved in this new music phenomenon were simply described as good rock recruits: Eddie and the Hot Rods, which had emerged from England in 1976 with a sound that broke with all previous styles

and excesses, and which channelled an intense energy, were considered as ‘the greatest hopes of English rock music’ [*‘Le plus grand espoir du rock anglais’*] (*Rock&Folk*, 1976a: 35). The band was described as a ‘fantastic success [...] in the province’ [*‘terrifiant succès [...] en province’*] (*Rock&Folk*, 1976c: 23). Similar remarks were used for Little Bob Story, a French group created in 1971, whose intense concerts displayed a wildness that the newspaper tried to analyse as typical of old rock (*Rock&Folk*, 1976a: 89), or the recording of the Sex Pistols album ‘Never Mind the Bollocks’ (*Rock&Folk*, 1976c: 23). The magazine placed less emphasis on the groups’ creative novelty (characterized by music, style or sound innovation) than on their classical enunciation rituals, or the technical precision of the producer (Chris Spedding for the Sex Pistols, and Andy MacKay for the Hot Rods).

Consequently, the punk movement was not conceived immediately either as an autonomous creative force or as a potential vector of subversion reversing norms and tastes. On the contrary, it was assessed on the basis of the old codes that normally corresponded to the established rock of the Seventies based on sound quality or its power, melodies or guitar solos. Moreover, it provoked mistrust as a sterile ‘posture’ opposed to ‘real’ rock music, as Bruno Le Trividic wrote about the Paris concert of Eddie and the Hot Rods, that ‘Dave Higgs, a 25-year-old guitar player, was the first to reassure those who distrust “killer evenings”’ [*‘Dave Higgs, vieux guitariste de 25 ans, fut le premier à rassurer ceux qui se méfient des “soirées killer”*’] (Trividic, 1976).

Best’s attitude towards the public reception of the punk movement was quite different from its competitor’s. The magazine was less stuck in rock traditional codes, and more open to new music trends as well as to the French scene, also with a better and earlier comprehension of the fundamental break brought about by punk. Long articles were thus devoted to the punk movement and to the new groups that were emerging in Great Britain and France, notably with the column ‘Rock from here’ [*‘Le rock d’ici’*]. In the same way, the magazine advertised the French label Skydog, whose creator, Marc Zermati, was both the organizer of punk festivals in Mont-de-Marsan and the manager of the Open Market, an independent shop that was to become one of the reference spots for the punk scene and occasionally to be used as a base for the groups Zermati was carefully following: in June 1976, the magazine announced the French tour of the Sex Pistols (14 June–early July) and of the 100th First (15–22 June), Joe’s Strummer’s group before the

creation of the Clash (*Best*, 1976b: 82). The magazine had been observing London since April 1976 to be able to describe in full pages—and not just in small news items—the energy of this new genre embodied by the Sex Pistols: ‘it wails, it howls, it irritates, it plays out of tune from time to time because there is no restriction. But in the end, nothing’s important but the energy those guys put into it which goes far beyond the rest’ [*‘Ça gueule, ça hurle, ça crispe, ça joue faux de temps à autres’*] (*Best*, 1976a: 10), words that contrast compared with what Philippe Manoeuvre said at the same time in *Rock&Folk* about the Ramones:

How, yes how can you believe in this novel New York scene so much advertised with big boasting howls in the fanzines? [...] ‘The Ramones’ is Rock zero degree, even punk. [The musicians] have no class. It’s not what they mean, you will shout, but they look like so dumb [...] OK, solos are out of fashion, but with the case of the Ramones, we feel like saying this is true. (*Rock&Folk*, 1976b: 115, 1976d: 113)

It is quite interesting to notice that this archaic and not quite open-minded vision by *Rock&Folk* was not approved of by all readers. In August 1976, a reader vexed by the small amount of space and said there was a need to put new singers in front of recognized ones and those that were at the top of the charts. He remarked that a magazine was missing, ‘another *Rock & Folk* that would be more specialized in 1976 rock and roll’ [*‘un Rock & Folk bis plus spécialisé qui témoignerait du rock and roll 1976’*] (*Rock&Folk*, 1976a: 21) and deplored that ‘we get some news about the hot groups of the time bit by bit [whereas] the new rock rascals who are facing business and the numerous pseudo rock groups more than ever need specialized magazines to be known, to impose themselves and eventually to live their saga, however short it might be’ (*Rock&Folk*, 1976a: 21). Whereas *Best* had already been working hard for a year, publishing major articles as well as local news, people had to wait till June 1977 to discover in *Rock&Folk* a column devoted to French punk called ‘Béret punk’, and July of the same year for a specific discussion about the punk groups in England. And even in the heydays of the punk movement the magazine continued to feel distrust towards the new trend. In the column ‘Flashes’ of September 1977, you can read about the French trio Bijou: ‘Don’t trust them. They belong to a terribly dangerous species and are not so rare as it seems: the rockers. *Not especially punk or fashion, or any craze you may imagine, rockers, nothing else*’ (*Rock&Folk*, 1977: 35, emphasis added).

THE PUNK, A COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITY

In a very short time—less than a year—the punk scene that embodied a kind of radical and subversive freshness likely to seduce part of French youth (and therefore its readers) was to offer the media a commercial opportunity they were ready to grasp and amplify. The u-turn in the press took place as early as the autumn of 1977, that is to say, a few months after ‘a punk summer’ marked by the second edition of the Europunk Festival in Mont-de-Marsan in August 1976. On the front cover of the *Rock&Folk* November issue, Iggy Pop can be seen, flaunting his made-up face, with his wide-open mouth and insolent attitude. The title was shaped like a pun, ‘Iggy, punk king?’ [*‘Iggy, punk roi?’*], the Stooges’ leader the godfather of this new music trend (*Rock&Folk*, 1977). Beyond that emblematic image, the focus on punk had stemmed from an idea very much used by the periodical, which consisted in ‘punkizing’ all the music of the time. This process can have a twofold interpretation: it can reveal that the punk movement was spreading and the periodical was then able to understand the phenomenon; but it can also mean that the paper was trying to make up for lost time and acknowledge the trend it had largely disregarded and even attempted to ostracize.

The theme of rebel and rebellion shown in the August 1977 edition of *Rock&Folk* in the column ‘News’, in a colour picture set in a quarter page that presented Johnny Rotten holding a glass of beer and standing in front of a London police officer who is searching him is the perfect image of this journalistic approach (*Rock&Folk*, 1977b: 23). It was not important whether the scene was artificial or not, it worked efficiently. The side bar about a music group, the Starshooter, displayed in the September 1977 *Rock&Folk* issue is another example of the phenomenon. Deliberately organized in a cheap way, the article used the same font as the one for the Sex Pistols and showed the four members of the group running away, with masks over their faces, as if they had just committed a crime, opting for subversive and violent rhetoric: ‘Odious! They run faster than Magma. They are noisier than Guy Drut. A Starshooter is born. They will strike in September’ (*Rock&Folk*, 1977: 12). The subversive dimension which was supposed to seduce the young audience beyond the pun inverting attributes (sport and music) really functioned in the staging of subversive codes: on the one hand, Magma, which symbolized at that time the type of non-contested progressive

music, the music of the previous and hardly older generation; and on the other hand, sport, which happened to be the image of a rigid and encoded society. This was a crystal-clear message: listening to Starshooter meant being opposed to the two kinds of order, namely the dominant artistic trend, and the society with its patriarchal values. In other words, in doing so, you become a rebel. *Best* acted in the same way. In its March 1978 edition, the advertising of the English musician Ian Dury's latest album, whose title was 'Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll', and the announcement of his concert in the Bataclan, was accompanied by an eye-catching slogan: 'Is he going to pervert our beautiful youth?' ['Va-t-il ruiner notre belle jeunesse?'] (*Best*, 1978b: 3). You can see Ian Dury wearing some make-up, his ear pierced with a safety pin, and posing in a purposely perverted attitude. The whole scene was supposed to embody the clash against morals, established values and the patriarchal system.

And the stars of the time were not afraid to show themselves as rebels. One example was Roger Daltrey, lead singer of the rock band The Who, who in the *Rock&Folk* August 1977 issue presented himself all clad in punk paraphernalia: a lacerated T-shirt, leather pants, un-combed short hair, his hands in his pockets and his face made up in an unfriendly way (*Rock&Folk*, 1977b: 27–28). To accompany the picture, there was a caption 'I believe in punks' ['Je crois aux punks'] that underlined The Who's main singer's allegiance to the new music. The picture was used by *Best* at the same time, in a guessing game—'Guess who's behind this disguise?'—and the answer was given in September 1977 in a special Punk column—'the ultra punk was Roger Daltrey, clad this way for a television show' ['L'ultra punk [...] était Roger Daltrey, ainsi travesti pour les besoins de la télé'] (*Best*, 1977a: 7). Some well-known French groups also succumbed to the temptation: Christian Vander, the drummer and founder of the progressive rock group Magma, in the *Rock&Folk* August 1977 edition, posing like this in front of a wall on which the word 'Punk' was handwritten in red letters (*Rock&Folk*, 1977b: 57). The same type of image appeared on the odd 7th album cover drawn by Hans Ruedi Giger, 'Attahk', with the use of numerous safety pins as a subliminal message.

The contamination of the music world by the punk movement was also present in the unique relationship resulting from the promotion of groups. The use of this terminology became a selling point for record labels widely covered by the specialized press. In May 1977,

for example, a full-page insert entitled ‘Punk is here’ presented the label of the eponymous first album by the American group Blondie, the single of the British rock group Stranglers *Grip London Lady* as well as, and more astonishingly, the last pop album of the British Dirty Angels *Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye* (*Rock&Folk*, 1977a: 33). Two months later, *Rock&Folk* published another insert entitled ‘the three feet of the month’ [‘*les trois pieds du mois*’] and illustrated with three large footprints (*Rock&Folk*, 1977b: 11). Blondie was present again, this time associated with the Deutsch progressive rock group Focus and with the British Duncan MacKay, who was also infatuated with progressive rock music. Putting those three successes together and including a punk success in the winning trio, everything looked as if the magazine had explicitly adopted the punk movement and gave it its credentials.

The fact that both magazines simultaneously covered Cheap Trick, the American rock group created in 1973, as well as the title of their album, illustrated the commercial dimension that was being bestowed onto the punk label, and at the same time the difficulty in categorizing the new music. In *Rock&Folk*’s May 1977 issue, an ad described Cheap Trick as ‘the hardest of punk bands and the punkest of hard bands’ [‘*le plus hard des groupes punk et le plus punk des groupes hard*’] (*Rock&Folk*, 1977a: 34). It went on to invite readers to return a coupon to win the group’s single, with an injunction ‘be punk and fast’ [‘*Soyez punk et rapides*’]. *Best* used this commercial vision of the punk label in exactly the same way: the same ad appeared the same month in the magazine. This time, to win the single, it was not about being fast. The reader had to opt for the music category the group should be put in, either ‘punk’ or ‘hard’ (*Best*, 1977b: 20).

Advertising was also a tool that helped to define the limits of the punk, as can be seen in the ad for the ‘Punk Records’ shop in Nancy published in *Best* in January 1978 (*Best*, 1978a: 81). Among about thirty groups presented through their albums, there were the not-to-be-missed groups from Great Britain such as The Damned or the Sex Pistols, from the USA like the Ramones, but also less expected groups such as The Lovers or Talking Heads. On the French side, punk as it was commercially defined hinted indifferently at well-established groups like Little Bob Story or lesser-known groups such as Volcania, and even new participants like Telephone. Other ads were subtler because they worked by using idea associations. Always in the same issue, the promotion of the Skydog label re-used the emblematic writing of the cover of the Sex

Pistols' *Never Mind the Bollocks* to create punk-like promotional images, linking in the same label (here a mere tin can) the French punk group Asphalt Jungle, the 'high energy' of Iggy Pop or the Flamin' Groovies rock and roll (*Best*, 1978a: 83).

A significant step forward was taken when the magazines spread the clichéd representations of punk that also existed beyond the musical sphere. 'The punk' was gradually represented according to a large number of aesthetic and commercial trends: in comics, the theatre or in photonovellas. A good example was provided by Philippe Paringaux's comics entitled 'The Valstar Case' [*L'affaire Valstar*] referring to the punk community's main beverage, the very cheap beer Valstar, ironically called 'the stars' beer' and set to music by Bulldozer in 1977 in 'L'Enclume des jours'. It relates the bad deeds of two companions, Edmont Ganivet and Maurice Zazou, who aimed to steal some beer and hide the booty in a perambulator (Paringaux, 1977: 112–115). Always by Paringaux, the comic entitled 'Punk tennis' [*Le tennis punk*] described an improbable downtown tennis match (Paringaux, 1978: 42–43). Its moral—'it's hard to be a tennis punk champion' [*dur d'être champion de tennis punk*]'—is particularly interesting. First, it misuses the established terms used in sport and its values, mocking the well-educated French class that usually went to Roland Garros tennis courts (for example, the traditional handshake between the competitors was replaced by a blow to the genitals). It also focuses on the do-it-yourself side of punk (they made it up as they went along; here they used frying pans instead of tennis rackets) as well as the violent dimension that belonged to punk, with the opponents fighting each other. Finally, it revealed through that particular medium—the comics—the playful aspect of the punk movement: all this was nothing but a game, which mocked society and consequently the readers themselves. Identical tools were used at the same period in *Best*. In March 1978, 'one of the best comics ever [...], narrated by Malcolm McLaren himself' reported on the short existence of the Sex Pistols and the dismantling of the group. This document is interesting because of the vision it offered on this chaotic trajectory, the aesthetics and the philosophy of the punk movement (*Best*, 1978d: 62–65).

As a consequence, it can be observed how the music press took an active part in the cultural and media construction of the punk phenomenon, actively contributing to make it 'trendy'. While doing so, two contradictory attitudes were superimposed on each other. The first was a classic critical attitude, deeply rooted in the press and arts traditions

denouncing a lack of freedom and disinterest. The second is a commercial attitude: the content of the magazine showed that it was situated in the market of music goods, and considered its readers not as mere music amateurs but also as the consumers of those goods. The critical activity was thus directly linked to the commercial activity, which raises a few questions about the manner in which the media contributed to moving the border between mainstream and underground as well as the consequences of this construction in the media for the punk movement.

THE PRESS, SPRINGBOARD OR GRAVESTONE OF PUNK?

In this section we shall attempt to analyse the ways in which the appearance of punk in specialized music papers could harm a movement that deliberately set itself the task of breaking the codes and practices of the Establishment (society, major labels, and the mainstream media). First, it appears that the press showed the punk movement as something directly linked with mainstreamization. The relationship between punk and commercial success was much developed in the magazines, especially after 1978. In doing this, the press highlighted the very nature of the punk paradox: how not to break with ideology but also to remain credible when joining the world of majors and thereby making a lot of money? The adherence of the punk groups to a major is thus reported by the press in an interesting way. In *Best's* January 1977 issue, one can read in an insert judiciously entitled 'Jewel placed!' ['*Bijou placé!*'] that 'thanks to its unprecedented reputation, the group Bijou, who had made no records up to that point could opt for a firm according to its size [Phonogram]' (Pons, 1977: 19). In showbiz no one wanted to set this 'affair' aside. Formerly, the magazine had focused on the affiliations of the trio with punk, since the band had participated in the Europunk festivals in 1976 and 1977. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that record companies were eager to sign punk groups in order to appear trendy and not to miss potential success and sales. Contrary as it was to the punk stressing of the importance of DIY, this adherence was considered by the press to be quite normal, as shown in the concise telegram in *Rock&Folk* from May 1978 that seemed so astonished by the purist attitude of 'Siouxsie and the Banshees, the only group so punk that it refused to sign with a record company' (*Rock&Folk*, 1978b: 43).

The relationship with commercial success also underlined the contradictions and tensions within the punk movement, often commented

upon by the specialized press. In January 1978, in a major article in *Rock&Folk* entitled ‘the rock of 9’, Philippe Manœuvre remarked that ‘the Stranglers are exactly what people say about them, but no one seems to know that they are the biggest record sellers of the new British wave. Consequently, Jagger and Townshend, in two recent interviews, called them “dirty fellows” and “disgusting groups”. Funny to see that friendly old fellows can become rude to the next generation when royalties are at stake’ (*Rock&Folk*, 1978a: 95). In the same way, the periodicals kept writing about the money made by the Sex Pistols. In the same article, we can read:

During the first TV show of the group [...] Bill Grundy asked Johnny Rotten if he liked the Stones or Led Zeppelin. ‘None’ Rotten yelled ‘because they are ESTABLISHED and ACCEPTED. So just count the people who will not buy the Sex Pistols record. And tell me if show business has not discovered the means to kill them by making them more popular than Jesus Christ AND John Lennon. P. M. (1977, June)

A few months earlier, the magazine had also concentrated on the creation of the Sex Pistols’ label: ‘Sex Pistols Records, if you please, just like Rolling Stones Records. If you want it done right, do it yourself’ (*Rock&Folk*, 1977b: 41). Of course, the action was in accordance with the idea of DIY that punk cherished so much. But it was generating a lot of cashflow that could not be concealed: the comparison with the Stones’ commercial success did de-legitimate the British group’s image, the more so because it was the primary exponent of punk ‘ideology’. It was apparent that punk groups were part of a system they were also denouncing, by using the media and by accepting the media ‘game’ to access the limelight and thus contribute to the visibility of the movement. As early as summer 1977, emerging punk groups (Clash, Sex Pistols or Damned) set themselves up in music magazines not only expressing sentiments of revolt but also showing more mercantile eagerness. The Clash interview in *Rock&Folk*’s July 1977 issue is a good and telling example, with Joe Strummer’s words: ‘We all come from London. The western side. All from working classes, but me [...] We play punk rock, nothing but a label, but for us, it is efficient music [...] We’re looking for an impact. And we don’t want to starve. We want to become kings, No 1’ (*Rock&Folk*, 1977d: 59). All seemed as if punk, its freshness, its novelty and its seductive inventiveness could be used by some people who just wanted to climb the social ladder in a well-thought-out strategy.

Consequently, one can easily understand how the punk movement in its relationship with celebrity and money success was sawing the branch it was sitting on, helped in this by the specialized music press that highlighted and fed those debates around punk money. It thereby questioned a movement ideologically doomed to fail. One thing remains to be analysed: along what thematic lines was the dialogue that could help or slow down the punk groups' rise organized? Three main trends can be seen. The first consisted in presenting punk as a vector of energy opposed to the learned style of jazz rock as well as to the established styles of the accomplished groups who knew how to play (Stones, Bowie, Queen). This shift is apparent in the letters to the editor, such as one by a Mr. Cussonai, who wrote 'an exciting punk prophecy', declaring that 'Lou Reed is not a punk because he can play the guitar' (*Rock&Folk*, 1978a: 132), a letter which elicited an aggressive response from one of the defenders of the new music.

The second trend presented punk as a mundane posturing that would be deceitfully creative, a cheap rebel illusion, even chicanery exploiting the public under a punk disguise. The fashion element was probably the most striking in so far as it was questioning the reality of adherence, the creation of music, and the feelings therein. If the image of a rebel was the one that could sell most successfully to the readership, it was the same image that was being disapproved of by other parts of its readers or by some journalists who denounced musical imposture and what was seen as a passing fad. In the *Rock&Folk* July 1977 issue, the journalist commenting on an interview with Joe Strummer noticed that 'the punks, those working-class heroes, are mostly guided by people who have been to university, who learnt bits of philosophy and art history, and who know how to create an image. Strummer with Clash, McLaren with the Sex Pistols etc. All revolutions were encouraged by *petite bourgeois* intellectuals' (*Rock&Folk*, 1977d: 126). A similar approach was apparent in the column 'Vibrations' in May 1978, where in an insert about Starshooter's concert at Swing Hall, the reporter regretted that discrepancy: 'Looking as if it were coming down from Pigalle to racket the punks—40 francs to get in—the management doesn't take any short cuts. In spite of all that has been written on the topic, there are still 40-year-old people who disguise like punks. Hard times for Starshooter who should be fed up with those sharks rather than the Beatles busy living their old age the best they can' (*Rock&Folk*, 1978b: 40). This was crystal clear criticism: Starshooter, instead of attacking the established rock and mainstream via

songs such as ‘Get Baque’, where they mocked and subverted the rock of the Beatles and of other former idols, should better beware of those who were exploiting them and pretending they were punk.

The last great trend was to present punk as a movement predestined to self-destruct. Punk was not supposed to last, because it represented the image of a breaking point carrying within itself the germ of its own destruction: nothing was left of its novelty once it was consumed but another novelty to take its place, while the dinosaurs of rock were left on the stage. As early as 1978 the press was half-anxiously and half-excitedly questioning the future of the movement. It is most interesting to notice that the media operated in two different ways. By questioning the future, they contributed to a modification of the genre because they questioned the groups, their positioning, their creative capacities, and their success. In January 1978, *Rock&Folk* published a cover article by Philippe Garnier simply entitled ‘New Wave’ that dealt mainly with the punk performers and the traps they fell into:

So, and what if it turns bad or is made into dollars, and what if it has already degenerated [...] So what if ‘punk is dead’ as has been said everywhere in London since last summer. And what if the ‘new wave’ is already worn out [...] Punk is dead but small business is living well. As Elvis, punk is dead but it is everywhere. (Garnier, 1978: 114)

Garnier’s point of view is indisputable. Even the scheduled end of the movement helped to feed the polemic and selling what was to come next—new wave, post-punk, new artists and converted former punks—as we can notice in the ad for the independent Californian record label Beserkley Records, usually regarded as a power pop and rock ‘n’ roll label that tolled the bell of punk with this slogan ‘That’s rock with less noise and more music’ [‘C’est du rock avec moins de bruit et plus de musique’] (*Rock&Folk*, 1978c: 101). Thus, throughout those two landmark years of 1976–1978, the punk scene and the specialized music press had a dangerous liaison. If this power was dealt with differently according to the periodical either in rhythm or in intensity (more precocious and committed for *Best*), we can identify how the wind blew when it was time to exploit the novelty. The punk scene appeared to be a commercial opportunity because it then embodied a radical and subversive freshness, real or invented, likely to seduce French youth. This mediatization of punk which contributed to shifting the border between

mainstream and underground, and questioned the very foundations of the process of creation and rebellion, appeared for the punk like the chronicle of a death foretold. It was a double-edged sword for the musicians, who experienced a painful paradox: they were committed to a radical reading of their creation and at the same time attracted by the spotlights of the stage. This hot and burning light could never fit with wild rebellion.

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