“I played ‘Sheena’ for Seymour Stein,” recalls Joey in the booklet to *Hey Ho Let’s Go!* “He flipped out and said, ‘We gotta record that song now.’ It was like back in the Fifties; you’d rush into the studio because you thought you had a hit, then put it right out. To me, ‘Sheena’ was the first surf/punk rock/teenage rebellion song. I combined Sheena, the Queen of the Jungle, with the primalness of punk rock. Then Sheena is brought into the modern day: ‘But she just couldn’t stay/She had to break away/Well, New York City really has it all.’ It was funny because all the girls in New York seemed to change their name to Sheena after that. Everybody was a Sheena.”

Everett True, *Hey Ho Lets Go: The Story of the Ramones*
back in 1954 it was Sam who told Elvis to sing the country song ("Blue Moon of Kentucky") kinda bluesy and the blues song ("That's All Right") kinda country, and, as Elvis was a polite nineteen-year-old who obliged his elders, somewhere in the crisscross something clicked… "Rock Around the Clock" is the most successful call to arms produced by the revolution, the one kids tore up movie seats over. But its composer, Jimmy DeKnight, wrote it as a fox trot, and its lyricist, Max Freedman, whose last hit had been for the Andrews Sisters, originally wanted to call it "Dance Around the Clock."… "I always said," Phillips told everybody, "that if I could find a white boy who could sing like a black man I'd make a million dollars." … Phillips started in the forties, recording dance bands from the roof garden of the Peabody Hotel. But that was just a job. What he really wanted to do was "race records." When he first heard Howlin' Wolf he howled, too: "This is where the soul of man never dies." To Phillips, black music was a passion. To Elvis, it was an option. And so the producer lent the singer his authenticity. The Man Who Invented Elvis

Don’t look over your shoulder, but the Sex Pistols are coming

Sex Pistols
MARQUEE

“HURRY UP, they’re having an orgy on stage,” said the bloke on the door as he tore the tickets up.

I waded to the front and straightway sighted a chair arcing gracefully through the air, skidding across the stage and thudding contentedly into the PA system, to the obvious nonchalance of the bass drums and guitar.

Well I didn’t think they sounded that bad on first earful — then I saw it was the singer wh’d done the throwing.

He was stalking round the front rows, apparently scuffing over the litter on the floor between baring his teeth at the audience and stopping to chat to members of the group’s retinue. He’s called Johnny Rotten and the monicker fits.

Sex Pistols? Seems I’d missed the cavortings with the two scantily clad (plastic thigh boots and bodices) pieces dancing up front. In fact, I only caught the last few numbers; enough, as it happens, to get the idea. Which is ... a quarter of spiky teenage misfits from the wrong end of various London roads, playing 60’s styled white punk rock as unself-consciously as it’s possible to play it these days i.e. self-consciously.

Punks? Springsteen Bruce and the rest of ’em would get shredded if they went up against these boys. They’ve played less than a dozen gigs as yet, have a small but fanatic following, and don’t get asked back. Next month they play the Institute of Contemporary Arts if that’s a clue.

I’m told the Pistols repertoire includes lesser known Dave Berry and Small Faces numbers (check out early Kinks’ B sides leads), besides an Iggy and the Stooges item and several self-penned numbers like the moronic “I’m Pretty Vacant”, a meandering power-chord job that produced the chair-throwing incident.
Holidays In The Sun"

Cheap holiday in other peoples misery
I don't wanna holiday in the sun
I wanna go to the new Belsen
I wanna see some history
Cause now I got a reasonable economy
Now I got a reason Now I got a reason
Now I got a reason and I'm still waiting
Now I got a reason
Now I got reason to be waiting
It is a joke—and yet the voice that carries it remains something new in rock ‘n’ roll, which is to say something new in postwar popular culture: a voice that denied all social facts, and in that denial affirmed that everything was possible.

The Sex Pistols made a breach in the pop milieu, in the screen of received cultural assumptions governing what one expected to hear and how one expected to respond. Because received cultural assumptions are hegemonic propositions about the way the world is supposed to work—ideological constructs perceived and experienced as natural facts—the breach in the pop milieu opened into the realm of everyday life: the milieu where, commuting to work, doing one’s job in the home or the factory or the office or the mall, going to the movies, buying groceries, buying records, watching television, making love, having conversations, not having conversations, or making lists of what to do next, people actually lived.

**What remains irreducible about this music is its desire to change the world.** The desire is patent and simple, but it inscribes a story that is infinitely complex—as complex as the interplay of the everyday gestures that describe the way the world already works. The desire begins with the demand to live not as an object but as a subject of history—to live as if something actually depended on one’s actions—and that demand opens onto a free street. Damning God and the state, work and leisure, home and family, sex and play, the audience and itself, the music briefly made it possible to experience all those things as if they were not natural facts but ideological constructs: things that had been made and therefore could be altered, or done away with altogether. It became possible to see those things as bad jokes, and for the music to come forth as a better joke. Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*
Sid Vicious and Siouxsie Sioux were sporting swastikas as fashion statements. David Bowie, who three months earlier had been photographed apparently giving a Nazi salute in Victoria Station, told Cameron Crowe in the September 1976 edition of Playboy '... yes I believe very strongly in fascism. The only way we can speed up the sort of liberalism that's hanging foul in the air... is a right-wing totally dictatorial tyranny...'. In that same interview Bowie claimed that 'Adolf Hitler was one of the first rock stars.' This was Britain then in the sweltering summer of 1976, and in that context Clapton's comments were potentially incendiary. 1978, the year rock found the power to unite The Guardian

It was 5 August 1976 and Eric Clapton was drunk, angry and on stage at the Birmingham Odeon. 'Enoch was right,' he told the audience, 'I think we should send them all back.' Britain was, he complained, in danger of becoming 'a black colony' and a vote for controversial Tory politician Enoch Powell whom he described as a prophet was needed to 'keep Britain white'. Although the irony was possibly lost on Clapton, the Odeon in Birmingham is on New Street, minutes from the Midland Hotel where eight years earlier Powell had made his infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech. But if the coincidence was curious, the hypocrisy was breathtaking: Clapton's career was based on appropriating black music, and he had recently had a hit with Bob Marley's 'I Shot the Sheriff'. 1978, the year rock found the power to unite The Guardian
Speaking in 2009, as the last living original member of the Ramones, Tommy said:

Part of the dynamics of the whole thing was the danger of connecting with people who[m] I'd always been afraid of. . . . To bring in forbidden things, horrible things, and make art out of it was basically, for me, an artistic venture—a dangerous one, a controversial one. And the people I was dealing with were basically confused as to their actual perception of things. . . . There was a large dose of humor involved, which I encouraged heavily, and to mix it all up as a volatile mixture of creativity and psychotic notions and just really scary stuff but beautiful stuff at the same time. . . . It's a very complex thing, really. . . .

Also, there's a cathartic effect when you take your deepest fears, your deepest anger, your deepest hurt, your inexplicability of explaining how horrors can happen in the world and try to take that fear and sort of try to get a grasp of it and either make humor out of it or make it something that's, in an artistic sense, something transformed.59

Michael Crolan, *Oy Oy Oy Gevalt! Jews and Punk*
Lyrically, the song is a celebration of youth in the big city, and of what Paul Weller called the "young idea", reflecting Weller's optimism for the punk movement. There was also a direct reference to police brutality: "In the city there's a thousand men in uniform/And I hear they now have the right to kill a man (Wikipedia)"
In the city there's a thousand things
I want to say to you
But whenever I approach you, you make me look a fool
I wanna say, I wanna tell you
About the young ideas
But you turn them into fears
In the city there's a thousand faces all shining bright
And those golden faces are under twenty five
They wanna say, they gonna tell ya
About the young idea
You better listen now you've said your bit-a
And I know what you're thinking
You still think I am crap
But you'd better listen man
Because the kids know where it's at
In the city there's a thousand men in uniforms
And I've heard they now have the right to kill a man
We wanna say, we gonna tell ya
About the young idea
And if it don't work, at least we said we've tried
No pop critic is interested in Dylan as a rock vocalist, even though his stature in this field is now comparable only to Presley; but every pop critic is fascinated by Dylan's lyrics, now the subject of special university courses in the USA.

The difference between the poetic and the musical functions of lyric, and the pitfalls of confusing the two, can be illustrated by a simple, almost trivial, example. In *Long Tall Sally* Little Richard sang: 'well long tall sally she's real sweet she's got everything that uncle john need'. Once written, this couplet is immediately banal. But in the song the fact that the vocal line is broken after 'got' and not after 'sweet' produces an aesthetic charge that depends precisely on the tension between the verbal and musical messages that a sung lyric carries.

This is the problem with which we are now confronted. In England some good writing on rock has been produced, in the shape of articles by Tim Souster and Michael Parsons in *The Listener*, and Alan Beckett in the *New Left Review*. But these writers are at their best in applying aesthetic concepts brought (legitimately) from other musical and artistic fields. Thus Parsons' piece on Vanilla Fudge analyses the group's use of musical reference and of the second hand. Alan Beckett's article on the Stones is principally a psychoanalytic interpretation of lyrics and vocal delivery, despite some interesting comment on Jagger's vocal style. These writers have developed a successful second-order criticism, that is perhaps adequate to their job of explaining rock, or pop as they misguidedly still call it, to the straight public: they do not seem to be developing a set of first-order concepts that come to grips with the internal structure of rock music itself.

The biggest obstacle in the path of rock criticism is the notion of *pop*. The term is of course British, but the American word *rock* is not free of the pop mystification. Pop denotes a cultural, not an aesthetic object; the distinctive popular music of white urban youth, North American and British, that has developed in the past 15 years. The acceptance of a cultural definition of the object of criticism leads inevitably to a cultural as opposed to an aesthetic criticism. Musical form and musical practice are studied as an aspect of social relations, and significance is determined by social, not musical, criteria.

Chester, “For a Rock Aesthetic”, http://www2.hu-berlin.de/fpm/textpool/texte/chester&_merton_for-a-rock-aesthetic.htm
Reggae, and the forms which had preceded it, had always alluded to these problems obliquely. Oppositional values had been mediated through a range of rebel archetypes: the ‘rude boy’, the gunfighter, the trickster, etc. – which remained firmly tied to the particular and tended to celebrate the individual status of revolt. With dub and heavy reggae, this rebellion was given a much wider currency: it was generalized and theorized. Thus, the rude boy hero immortalized in ska and rocksteady – the lone delinquent pitched hopelessly against an implacable authority – was supplanted as the central focus of identity by the Rastafarian who broke the Law in more profound and subtle ways. Not only did the Rasta fix the dreary cycle of solitary refusal and official retribution within the context of Jamaica’s absent history, he broke that cycle altogether by installing the conflict elsewhere on the neglected surfaces of everyday life. By questioning the neat articulations of common sense (in appearance, in language, etc.) the Rasta was able to carry the crusade beyond the obvious arena of law and order to the level of the ‘obvious’ itself. It was here, quite literally on the ‘skin’ of the social formation, that the Rastafarian movement made its most startling innovations, refracting the system of black and white polarities, turning negritude into a positive sign, a loaded essence, a weapon at once deadly and divinely licensed.

Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*
‘Punks are niggers.’ (Richard Hell, punk musician interviewed in New Musical Express, 29 October 1977)…

Both Paul Goodman (1968) and Jock Young (1971) have characterized the Negro as the quintessential subterranean, embodying all those values (the search for adventure and excitement) which coexist with and undercut the sober positives of mainstream society (routinization, security, etc.). In these terms, the positions ‘youth’ and ‘Negro’ are often aligned in the dominant mythology. As Jock Young (1971) writes: They are ‘viewed with the same ambivalence: happy-go-lucky and lazy, hedonistic and dangerous’.... Dick Hebdige, Subculture: The Meaning of Style

It can be recognized and extended into actual links (the mods, skinheads and punks) or repressed and inverted into an antagonism (teds, greasers). In either case, the relationship represents a crucial determining factor in the evolution of each youth cultural form and in the ideology both signified in that form and ‘acted out’ by its members. At another level, patterns of rejection and assimilation between host and immigrant communities can be mapped along the spectacular lines laid down by white workingclass youth cultures.... Dick Hebdige, Subculture: The Meaning of Style
… First, Hebdige concerns himself only with the innovative punks, the original “authentic” and “genuine” punks concentrated in the London area. This is characteristic of most of the Centre’s subcultural theory—it explains why certain youths develop a particular style say, in the East End, but youth subcultures elsewhere are usually dismissed as part of the incorporation and containment of the subversive implications of that style…. Frith and Goodwin, *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word*

he makes the fatal faux pas in (expertly) judging punk as a reaction to glam rock, which “tended to alienate the majority of working-class youth.” For Hebdige, glam consisted of either contemptible teenybop or the music and styles of Bowie, Lou Reed, and Roxy Music, “whose extreme foppishness, incipient elitism, and morbid pretensions to art and intellect effectively precluded the growth of a larger mass audience.” This is simply wrong; glam rock did achieve a popular mass audience. Furthermore, punk was not simply proletarian in style; it drew heavily on the glam rock forms—particularly its use of makeup. Several punk bands produced cover versions of glam hits, Bowie remained popular with the punks, and Marc Bolan and Lou Reed competed for the Defending ski-jumpers 73 title “Godfather of Punk.” Rather than being “an attempt to expose glam rock’s implicit contradictions…an addendum designed to puncture glam rock’s extravagantly ornate style,” punk emerged via “pub rock” as a response to the excesses of “technobores,” “pomp rock,” and the “progressive scene,” a gesture against the Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, Yes, Genesis, and Emerson, Lake and Palmers of the world and not a reaction to Alvin
Stardust, Mud, Roxy Music, and company… Frith and Goodwin, *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word*

The death knell of a style in youth culture is its appropriation by younger age groups, “bubble gum” groups, or its mass production by chain stores. **THIS POPULARISATION MEANS THAT THE STYLE HAS BEEN ROBBED OF ITS MESSAGE.** Another complication is separating the part-time and full-time adherents, separating the RIGHTEOUS from the POSEURS. In a subculture with LITERARY and ARTISTIC affiliations, these are core members at the centre of the culture, often CREATIVE ARTISTS, but followers and peripheral members who may adopt the lifestyle or appearance and who may or may not be perceived as “real members.” 14 (my emphasis)

. First, the “creativity” of the initial members of a subculture is overstated and the “relative autonomy” of youth from the market is inadequately theorized. Within these accounts, the “moment” of creative assemblage is *before* the styles become available. However, such innovations usually have a firm stake in the commodity market themselves. Frith and Goodwin, *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word*
Punk and two-tone had two very important consequences. First, in dis-interring the entire wardrobe of postwar styles, they both decoded these styles and greatly expanded the field of stylistic options for an increasingly self-reflexive and stylistically mobile youth culture. After punk, virtually any combination of styles became possible. To name but a few examples: the revival of skins, mods, and teds; rude boys; suedeheads; a psychedelic revival; rockers—both the traditional type and the younger, denim-clad heavy metalists; Rastafarians; soulheads (short-haired blacks); disco; Ant-people; Northern soul; jazz-funkateers; Bowie freaks; punk (subdivided into Oi, “hardcore,” or “real” punk, plus the avant-garde wing); futurists; new romantics; glam revivalists; beats, zoots, and so on. Second, the “new wave” eroded the distinction between “teenyboppers” and youth, which was largely based on the distinction between progressive LPs and pop singles of the early seventies. Punk made singles and singles artists acceptable. Defending Ski-Jumpers: A Critique of Theories of Youth Subcultures 1981, in Frith, *On Record*

Le concept d’auteur original individuel, de précurseur authentique par rapport à des imitateurs qui transforment le genre en produit de consommation persiste dans ces études subculturelles.