Public Image Ltd.

Are they committing rock’n’roll suicide, or are they simply boring?

SO IS THIS some kind of joke or what? Here’s a guy John Lydon, alias Johnny Rotten, and he’s a major rock’n’roll star—except that he’s proclaimed the death of rock, rejected the role of star, and formed a band that he claims undermines himself in the aesthetics of a star. A couple of months ago, he and his band even provoked their fans to attack them, thus converting them to the antithesis of fans. What do you want to know, who needs rock stars like this anyway?

As the leader of the Sex Pistols, the band that introduced punk rock to world consciousness, young Rotten displayed a remarkability that for the provocative. He was a walking figure, form yet riveting beautiful, with perpetually red hair and mad, glittering eyes. The well boy of London, he was beloved by God knows how many British youth into a tribe of all that seemed decrepit and right. The stage were inspired by the condition of his tooth. And if the music was crude, the message was far cruder: “Anarchy in the U.K.” “Sheena is a Go-Go”; “God Save the Queen” (She Ain’t No Human Beast). The riffs were predictably outraged—particularly when, at the instigation of an interviewee, the Pistols uttered dirty words on nation-wide radio. The resulting headlines shot them right into the charts, until their guitarist created a scandal by apparently throwing up on some old ladies at Heathrow Airport, at which point their record company proved all too eager to drop them. They went through another record company in a week before settling down with a third and proceeding to popularize the concept of N.R.U. But the Sex Pistols were conceivably a fairly blinding instance by Malcolm McLaren, an anarchist boutique owner who sus-pected there might be a future in bondage fashion. But with Rotten as the front man and his childhood chum Sid Vicious on bass, the hustle took on a life of its own.

The Sex Pistols released only five singles and one album during their two years as a band, and they never once cracked the U.S. Top 100, but they revolutionized rock ‘n’ roll nonetheless. Before the Sex Pistols, it was credible to introduce Neil Sedaka as a rock performer; after the Sex Pistols, it was not. It didn’t matter if you liked them; they were impossible to ig-nore. The lure of Rotten’s savage grin worked in tandem with the raw attraction of his message: Everything is over, there is no future, “No Future.”

The man and his band: both were like a walking automobile accident, daring us to look.

On January 14, 1978, in San Francisco, immediately after the last date of their first American tour, the Sex Pistols quite abruptly flew apart. McLaren charged that Rotten had become a selfish, egotistic rock star, just like Jagger and Stewart and all the others he despised. Rotten declared that McLaren and everybody else were trying to make them into another Rolling Stone. On the first leg of the flight back to London, Sid overdosed and had to be rushed to a hospital in New York. Upon his recovery he settled down in the city, be-coming a prime celebrity on the local punk circuit until his arrest ten months later for the grisly knife murder of his rich girlfriend. When the arrest was followed by his suicide, no one was surprised; it was the logical culmination of the punk media myth. “Poor Sid”, Rotten lamented to an interviewer. “He really bought his public image.”

Public Image Ltd. was the name of the group Rotten formed three years ago with Keith Levene, a young musician whose classical training in piano and guitar was for the most part academic. When his sumptuous vocal capacity and gathering critical raves (“Sounds enigmatically like a masterpiece,” declared The New York Time). Although Lydon ex-pressed bitterness over the packaging change, the group went on tour regardless. They were not universally well received: most of their audience were latter-day punks bent on reliving the glory of the Sex Pistols, and P.I.L.’s sophisticated postrock meditations had more to do with the her-metric dissonance of the early Velvet Under-ground and the electronic drone music of the avant-garde composer La Monte Young than with the crude explosiveness of punk rock. At least, that’s what the critics said; actually it could have served as mood music in a shooting gallery.

Released last year by Arista as a two-record set called Second Edition, the album displayed minimal sales potential but gathered critical raves (“Sounds enigmatically like a masterpiece,” declared The New York Times). Although Lydon ex-pressed bitterness over the packaging change, the group went on tour regardless. They were not universally well received: most of their audience were latter-day punks bent on reliving the glory of the Sex Pistols, and P.I.L.’s sophisticated postrock meditations had more to do with the her-metric dissonance of the early Velvet Under-ground and the electronic drone music of the avant-garde composer La Monte Young than with the crude explosiveness of punk rock. At least, that’s what the critics said; actually it could have served as mood music in a shooting gallery.

Last year’s British release was Paris as Predestination, by Image Publishing S.A. Re-issued live in Paris, it opened with an impressively bleak “Themes” song, which had Lydon alternately wailing “I wish I could die” and moaning “I will survive”—a protean inversion of the Gloria Gaynor disco hit, turning survival itself into a sign of defeat. On the other side, Levene twisted the crowd with guitar riffs from “Satisfaction” and “My Generation,” before launching into “Bad Baby.” Lydon’s cue to begin scribbling about an un-reycled Founding. Anybody we know? P.I.L.’s most spectacular media coup was its encounter with Tom Snyer on the Tomorrow show. The previous guest was Al- low Car, the vivacious producer of Can’t Stop the Music. Last year’s attempt at a Bobby Berkley-style disco musical starring the Village People, Snyder and Car had become quite chummy in the preced-
**Wolfschmidt Genuine Vodka**

_The spirit of the Czar_

John Lydon (aka Johnny Rotten) was not a fan of Public Image Ltd. (PIL), according to a recent interview with the band's guitarist, Lyndon. He said that PIL's music was too commercial and lacked the raw energy of Punk. However, PIL has continued to evolve, releasing albums like _Rotten_ and _This is Rotten_.

Lydon, along with fellow members of PIL and the Sex Pistols, were part of the Punkrock revolution that took place in the late 1970s. Their music was characterized by its raw, unpolished sound and its anti-establishment themes. PIL's second album, _Rotten_, was released in 1980 and marked a departure from their earlier work.

Lydon has been involved in a number of other projects, including the band Public Image Ltd. and his solo work. He is known for his controversial comments, which have often been controversial. In 2017, he released a new album titled _Rotten_.