

R.A.S.H. (Red & Anarchist Skinheads) has a long history within the broader anti-fascist movement, localized chapters often sharing space or working alongside other anti-fascist organizations internationally. Who is this informal network of revolutionary skinheads and punks, and why are they involved in community organizing? The influence of skinhead culture on anti-fascist resistance, and the similar influence of anti-fascist politics on punk and skinhead subcultures could be described as symbiotic.

These two essays trace a history of music, fashion, politics, and culture and why they should matter to anti-fascist organizing. R.A.S.H. and S.H.A.R.P. (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice) crews have often made up significant portions of anti-fascist and anti-racist organizing over the years, either through direct participation or fighting alongside each other in the streets against fascists and the police. Anti-racist and anti-fascist skinheads played a role in the founding of Anti-Racist Action (A.R.A.), an international network in the 1990s and early 2000s committed to taking militant action against fascism and racism in the streets. As evidenced by the countless international R.A.S.H. chapters, internationalism is integral to both skins and anti-fascists, embodying the political slogan “No Borders” by organizing and coordinating across national borders and languages. Underneath the “tough guy” veneer is a culture of big softies who defend their communities with everything they have.

As the wave of revolutionary insurgent activity in the U.S. resulting from the 2020 uprising against the police subsidies, it is important that we locate and utilize methods to continue to meet each other and organize outside of the protest or demonstration or mutual aid table. Punk and skinhead subcultural spaces have and can be used to carve out anti-fascist political spaces, just as militant punks and skinheads have impacted revolutionary community organizing.

You can find more zines about anarchist and anti-fascist organizing by 1312 Press at 1312press.noblogs.org and email us at 1312press@riseup.net



NEVER SURRENDER



a history of the antifascist skinhead movement

No history of RASH is complete without mentioning Dan Sabater, who with his funny, poignant, intelligent writing (some of which can be found online), connections worldwide, boxing classes for other antifascists, setting up punk and Oi! DJ nights and concerts for many years, and clear direction was very much a constant presence for RASH NYC, RASH United and RASH Northeast for a long, long time. Even when this Skinhead scene in NYC was dead set against him and the small RASH crew. There were plenty of enemies, even skinheads of color, that were into RAC and right wing politics. But RASH continued like a rose in the desert, it persevered, grew and is now literally all over the world. One time he told me that even boneheads and fence walkers grudgingly admitted to their buddies: “Watch out for, Dan. He can fight!”

RASH unites leftist skinheads of all kinds and doesn't dwell on historical political divisions between leftists, but rather it provides a platform for true unity against fascists and their enablers in the Skinhead, punk, football supporter and hardcore subcultures on a local and international level. On a larger level RASH skinheads work in conjunction with labor unions, leftist organizations, community groups and other anti-fascist movements for common goals in order to benefit the oppressed people of the world. It is autonomous from any political party and is a collective in which the voice of each individual is respected as all decisions are democratically made. Self-financed and independent, RASH is present all over the world wherever there is a Skinhead that realizes that the struggle against racism is only a subset of the larger struggle against capitalism. There are many RASH supporting bands and zines all over the country in the world. The three arrows facing the left on its logo represent the ideologies of anarchism, communism and socialism, fighting in unity and the two axes are in admiration of the Basque revolutionary band Kortatu.

SHARP: Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice

SHARP began in 1986 New York City, and is an ideal that unites skinheads against racism so that real anti-racist Skinhead culture could be predominant instead of the Nazi bonehead scum that have tried to hijack the Skinhead name. It is composed of many skins from all over the world with different political ideals, but are all united in their hatred of racist, fascist and Nazi ideology. Some consider themselves leftist, some don't care about politics, and a few may even be patriotic, but they share the characteristic of being against Nazi boneheads and racist ideas. There are many crews throughout the world that have the name SHARP. The idea of SHARP was popularized worldwide starting in 1989 by Roddy Moreno, the singer of the legendary antifascist Oi! band The Oppressed, and you can look up interviews with him as well as listen to their music to see their strong antifascist commitment.

RASH: Red And Anarchist Skinheads

In the late 80s in New York City, there were a few skins that claimed to be anti-racist but were also violently homophobic, anti-leftist, transphobic, sexist and pro-imperialist. In response to this, a few skins formed the May Day crew which was explicitly Communist, Socialist and Anarchist, and drawing influences from the 1930s Spanish Revolution, Public Enemy, Banda Bassotti, The Clash, The Baldies, the Paris Redskins, Rock Radikal Vasco, Latin American revolutionary struggles, and the band The Redskins. They decided to form a strictly leftist Skinhead crew and were linked up with other left wing skinheads in Quebec, Ontario, the Midwest and other areas. On January 1st 1993 Red and Anarchist Skinheads formed in New York City. They made a public appearance with a banner at a march that stated "Anti racist skinheads and punks against homophobia, Red and Anarchist skinheads NYC"



Since then, they have drawn a clear line in the sand between them and those in and out of the scene that hold discriminatory attitudes. RASH struggles against capitalism, fascism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and all kinds of oppression which are clearly caused by the capitalist imperialist system.

Introduction: A History of Skinhead Culture (And How Nazis Appropriated It)

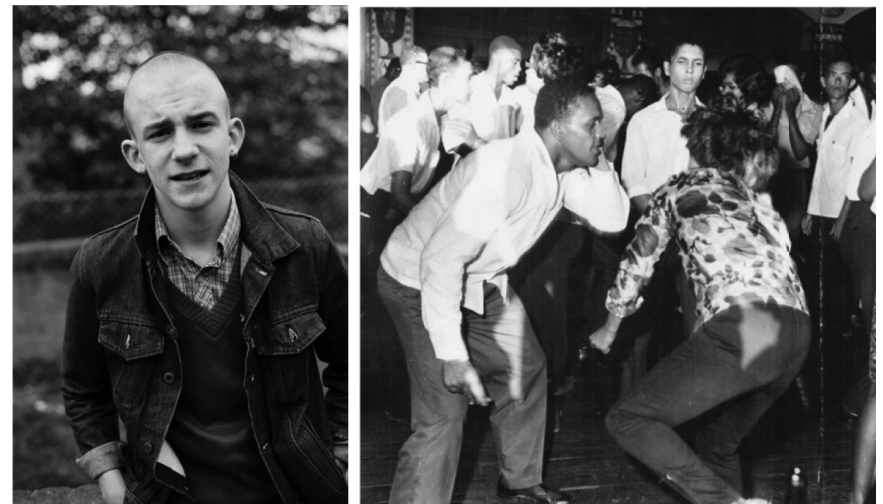
By Shelby Leone for kxsu.org

Recently, my fellow KXSU reporter, Madeline Thomas, wrote an article called "Punk So White" in which she discussed the inherent whiteness of today's punk culture. She argued that though our coffee tables and blogs are filled with pictures predominantly of white punks, it is undeniable that:

"punk modeled itself after reggae and blues, genres born as a means of survival and solidarity. It is the attitude of punk that truly matters, not the face of the movement. Nevertheless, that face needs to be more ambiguous, less obnoxiously white. POC have been involved in punk since the beginning whether that presence was made obvious would have been up to curators who likely white-washed coverage of the genre's uprising."

This article sent Madi and I into a long discussion about why punk is misunderstood as the property of whiteness. To answer this question I argued that we have to delve into the deep and complicated history of the skinheads. So, let's educate ourselves, shall we?

After the second world war, there was an economic boom in England. The middle class youth of the time were free to spend this excess cash any way they liked, which resulted in the flamboyant decadence of the mods. Mods were consumerist, fashionable, and privileged (think early Ed Sullivan Show era Beatles). While this style became wildly popular, it left out those in the British working class. Thusly, working class mods developed a style that was more accessible to their lifestyle, exchanging the typical narrow mod suit for levi jeans and button down shirts with large boots. Both looks were sleek, simple, and easily identifiable, but the working class mod style was, undoubtedly, more practical. Over time, more and more aspects separated the two groups, such as



the choice of the working class mods to shave their heads in direct rebellion against the long hair of the hippies. Soon, the culture was distinguished enough to earn its own name, which was originally “peanuts”. It wasn’t until the 1970s that the term “skinhead” was introduced into the popular vernacular. The roots of this movement lie, surprisingly, in Reggae music.

The late 1960s marked an era of cultural mingling in London. Jamaican immigrants mixed in with the white working class, and along with them, came their culture. Both groups felt disenfranchised by the decadent mods, and thus they found a common ground in the dance hall scene, where new styles and sounds of the caribbean mixed with the peanut kids of England. Dance halls began to fill with bluebell, soul, rocksteady, and of course, reggae music.

Kids of all races and backgrounds flooded these dance halls, and due to the developing popularity amongst white youth, musicians developed a new genre called “ska”. Ska was tailor made for the skinheads who grew up in these dance hall, and mixed together reggae music with the sounds previously enjoyed by white british youth. While Britain in the 1960s overall showcased a much more racist society, by all accounts, this scene was at its core, multiracial. The scene around these halls was thriving, and as the culture developed, so did the uniform.

As the original members of peanut/skinhead culture turned more towards the long hair and flared jeans of the seventies, english jocks began to take over the skinhead scene. Soon, a Harrington jacket, some suspenders, and a pair of Doc Marten combat boots were practically necessary to be known as a skinhead. Both white and black teens enjoyed these styles.

With this history in mind, how did “skinhead” become synonymous with “racist nazi”? Well, these fashion statements became cultural identifiers, and the public began taking note. Much like the youth cultures of the mods, hippies, and rockers, skinhead culture and its influence began to scare authority figures, especially when the scene began to show signs of violence. The working class appeal of the culture allured a large following of northern working class Englanders who loved two things: sports and beating the crap out of each other. This wave of skinhead traveled in large packs, often causing commotion at local football games, defending their favorite team to the end. Soon, it became custom for games to end in all-out fights. It is important to note that this wave also included people of color,



Skaos, that followed the footsteps of Two-Tone to revitalize it. German ska bands were speeding up Two-Tone, while others were recovering the original Jamaican sound with a modern touch. Since then, ska has been influenced by different styles of music, trying to mix ideas and dances.

Modern ska possesses many influences and more current sound, but still drawing very heavily from the 60s and Two-Tone. For many bands, it’s different than traditional ska, somewhat faster or even much faster on occasions, while many others are very traditional. Just like reggae and rocksteady, it’s very popular among skinheads. It can be heard mixed with punk (like Operation Ivy and Voodoo Glow Skulls), with the Latin sound (like Fabulosos, Cadillacs Soul) or even hardcore. You can hear it in bands that become popular like Sublime and No Doubt, and there’s some great bands that you may not have heard unless you’ve been in the scene like The Slackers or Dance Hall Crashers. There are many styles within modern ska, that one may or may not like, but it certainly contributes to strengthening the anti-racist anti-fascist Skinhead culture.

The Baldies



No history of the anti-fascist Skinhead movement could be complete without mentioning The Baldies, a multiracial anti-racist crew of skins that formed in Minneapolis, MN in 1986 and eventually joined up with the skinheads of Chicago (SHOC) and crews in other Midwest cities, and even as far as Portland to fight the boneheads that were in many US cities, terrorizing people of color, the LGBTQ community and political opponents. At that time, The Baldies did such a good job of organizing the community in a non-authoritarian fashion and physically removing the Nazis from the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area that their model was replicated in many cities. It was a significant reason for the downturn in Nazi bonehead activity in the 90s. The valiant networking efforts of The Baldies led to the formation of Anti-Racist Action (ARA), a network of groups fighting fascism in their communities.

Soon, Skinheads began following these new groups that played their traditional music, and another old subculture was reborn, also multiracial in the form of the stylish “rude boys” and “rude girls.” Modern ska music was born here, and that’s what the majority of groups play since then.

Two-Tone and Current Ska Music



ska band The Specials

Two tone music at first consisted of covers of reggae, ska, and rocksteady classics which were played a bit faster and with new energy starting in 1979. As is natural, there were differences between groups and the common basis was Jamaican music. The main difference is that Two-Tone was completely made in the UK, although some musicians were Jamaican immigrants. As such, it also had influences from the Mod scene and the original Skinhead scene, and not just from Jamaica. The main objective was to play modern music, but without forgetting the roots and also to try to keep true to the original music without much innovation. Around this time there had been a musical and social understanding and respect between Punks and Rastas, since they lived in the same neighborhoods and were both subject to police repression and in the case of the Rastas, brutal racism. Groups like The Clash had a huge reggae influence in their punk, both musically and lyrically, and that was the sound that Two-Tone bands initially sought. There was also large soul (Stax, Motown, Northern Soul), RnB, and even rockabilly influence.

The musical style that came out of that was a rhythm that blended, ska, reggae and rocksteady, speeding up the music a lot of times but without hysteria, and that used all the instruments to energize a song. Lyrically, it had punk influence to give it a very direct sense of social protest, allowing its fans to dance to think critically at the same time. With time, many of the groups became involved with pop music or disappeared. Some, after name changes and different line-ups, are still playing today, but what they were able to do in 1979 seems impossible to repeat.

In the mid-80s there was a third wave of ska, in which there are groups like the Potato, 5. The Busters, The Toasters (out of NYC in the main band on Moon Records), or

but with the rise of violence due to sporting rivalries, fights about football matches sometimes devolved into race wars.

The main turning point came in the form of a book by author Richard Allen entitled *Skinhead*, which depicts a young London teen whose life is fueled by violence against authority, minorities, hippies, and... well... anyone who didn’t agree with him. This book, filled with racist and violent themes and messages became the bible for new skins. Despite his outward racism, the protagonist’s love of football, skinhead fashion, anti-authoritarian message, and hatred of the police won him the adoration of the youth who shared his passions and strifes.

Additionally, politics came into the forefront of the skinhead scene, thus prompting a group called the Nationalist Front to obtain a distinct influence on the culture. The Nationalist Front is, according to Wikipedia, a far-right and fascist political party in the United Kingdom. Their main focus was on white, specifically British, nationalism in a time where working class whites felt as if they were being “pushed out” of society. The frustrations of an entire economic class needed someone to blame, and people of color were the perfect scapegoat. The class and racial identity of skinheads became tribal, and the violence between groups rose.

The “Young National Front” specifically targeted skinhead teens at football matches. There, they would sell *Bulldog*, the newspaper/propaganda written and edited by members of the YNF. It is estimated by the former editor of this paper, Joseph Pearce, that they would successfully sell copies to at least 10% of each football crowd. The YNF also owned members-only discos, thus encouraging some skins to join and attend weekly meetings simply to have somewhere to hear music on Saturday nights. Skinhead and YNF became unitary in the minds of these working class kids, and unrecognizable to the skins of the first wave. But by the mid 1970s, skinhead had faded into the background. That is until punk revived it.

In 1977, the Sex Pistols released “God Save The Queen”, thus bringing punk into the public eye. Skinheads, yearning for somewhere to go once more, started to attend these punk shows, despite their lack of enthusiasm for punk music and fashions, which, like that of the mods, were distinctly flamboyant and middle class. It was not until the band Sham 69 came around that skinheads found their place in punk. Their sound was distinct from the almost pop-like sounds of the Sex Pistols and the Ramones, and appealed much more to the working class. Skinheads began to flock to their shows in local punk venues. By the late ‘70s, right wing politics found their way in once again by recruiting kids at Sham 69 gigs. Jimmy Pursey, frontman of Sham 69, began to speak outwardly about his disapproval of the racist ideologies held by these groups, and thus the mutiny began. Entire crowds started sieg heiling and often erupted in us vs them fights at Sham shows. Sham 69 eventually disbanded, and the racist identity of skinheads became the prevailing narrative.

From this scene, came Two-Tone. Two-Tone was a perfect mix of punk and ska, thus bringing together people of color and white skinheads once more. Skinhead fashion spread throughout both cultures, resulting in a revival of skinheads of color. Ironically, racist skins were happy to join in on the fun, attending the shows of black musicians and sieg heiling. Despite efforts to return to the subculture's roots, thanks to media sensationalism, all skinheads were branded as racist, violent, and not to be fraternized with. The more they were talked about by media outlets—who plastered their periodicals with drastic headlines labeling all skinheads as Nazis—the more isolated and tribalistic skinheads became.

As a result of the disenfranchised nature of the new generation of skins, the genre of Oi punk was developed during 1980s. Oi came from the need for an outlet where new skinheads could rebel against the media's hatred for them. This scene was once again dominated by whites, and were a tight group that rallied around white pride. In fact, "Strength Thru Oi!", an Oi compilation album, released in by Decca Records 1981, was a play on a Nazi slogan "Strength Through Joy", and featured Nicky Crane, a skinhead activist who was, at the time, serving a four-year sentence for racist violence, right on the cover.

The tiny differences in appearance (Oi kids tended to look more like soldiers than workers) did not help with the public's lack of separation between non-racist skins and racist ones. Oi listener's love of fighting (paired with, once again, the media's love of a good headline) was a clear sign to any skinheads of color that they were not welcome. Where there were Oi shows, there was violence. Unemployment was high, and tensions between working class skinheads and police came to the forefront during the summer of 1981, when an Oi gig in Southall, a predominantly Asian community, ended in a race riot. As a result, the tavern where the bands were playing burned down, and the asian community was left destroyed and covered in racist graffiti. Oi music soon lost popularity and once again skinheads faded away.

But wait, there is more. From the destructive nature that the tensions between groups created, arose yet again two more groups of skinheads. First, the new neo-nazi sect of skinheads formed from the ashes of Oi—this time twice as racist. There was no hiding the nazi aspect of the new right wing, and they had no intention of hiding it either. They blatantly denied skinhead's roots in black music, and instead focused on white nationalism based in nazi ideologies. In fact, "Blood & Honour" was the name of a neo-Nazi music promotion network and political group founded in the United Kingdom in 1987. Blood and Honour, by the way, was the slogan of the Hitler Youth. The other group, then, was SHARP, or skinheads against racial prejudice. Within SHARP, anti-racist skins began to mobilize and defend the original intentions if skinhead culture and vehemently disavowed their neo-nazi counterparts. Original peanuts came out of the woodwork to aid in this fight for understanding, and thus began the war over the label of skinhead, charged by the media's misunderstanding. In some ways, Nazi skins were actually created by the media. Kids who had no idea about skinhead culture could read the headlines and news reports and decide to seek out the movement. Even

the Oi! or punk scenes, played shows underground to other Nazis because they were afraid of people confronting their bigoted stupidity and were never part of the Skinhead counterculture. Eventually the Nazi scene grew out of the UK and spread all over the world, continuing to this day to poison people's minds.

Even when RAC and the NF, as well as a competing neo-Nazi party known as the BM or British Movement, gained strength, there were many bands against these fascist attitudes, and there were numerous festivals performed at under the moniker Rock Against Racism, where many kinds of bands played against the racist trash.

When the Oi! scene began in the UK in the 80s, they never even dreamed that the music would travel outside its shores, but it did, and so Oi! scenes developed all over Europe, North and South America, and even Japan. The arduous job of cleaning the public image of the Skinhead has continued in the 90s and well into the 21st century, has borne fruit, and now there's a huge number of Oi! bands all over the world that proudly stand up against fascism. There are both new and old bands that are proudly antifascist and antiracist playing at small venues and large festivals. And there's a very significant effort for people to be actively against the fascists because there can never be compromise with such enemies of humanity.

A few Oi! bands worth listening to are: Brigada Flores magon, The Press, Freiboiter, The Prowlers, Los Fastidios, Bull Brigade, Erode, Curasbun, Guardia Bermellon, The Bois, Non Servium, Kaos Urbano, Brigada Oi!, Guardia Negra, Stage Bottles, Keltoi!, Les Partisans, Bolchoi, Redweiler, Hell Fish, Brigadir, Nucleo Terco, Nacidos del Odio, Youngang, Street Troopers, Oi! The Arrase, Afterboltxbike, Autocritica Oi!, Action Sedition, Oi! of the Tiger, Fatal Blow, Camorra, Delito Proeltario, Alerta Guerrilla, Barra Brava, Class Assassins, The Brass, Cinderblock, Camera Silens, Reazione, Opcio K-95, and many, many others all over the world, as well as the bands mentioned earlier.

Two-Tone

Sometime after the punk explosion in the UK, the Skinhead spirit resurfaced, taking strength from this new rebellion, but keeping its aesthetic and cultural values and sharing with punk its anti-authoritarian ideals. Two-Tone Records began in 1979.

This was a record label that gathered all the groups that were pioneering the ska revival of the late 70s, with the difference being that now the groups were multiracial. This revival was led by Skinhead Jerry Dammers, who founded the band The Automatics in 1979, however, the name was later changed to The Specials. The formula used by Dammers as a means to protest consisted in ska music, united with punk verbal aggressiveness, and a direct message in the lyrics. On Two-Tone there were also bands like Madness, The Beat, The Bodysnatchers, The Selecter and Bad Manners, all extremely important bands in the ska revival of the time.

UK punk, such as The Clash (which were definitely a leftist band, quite influenced by reggae and early hip hop later on) and Sham 69 (named after Hersham their working class suburb in London), plus a large influence of The Rolling Stones and The Who (bands that were hugely popular with mods in the 60s). Oi! bands were frequently composed of punks and skins. At the time the word Oi! didn't mean this musical style, and this type of music was generally called Street Punk or Reality Punk

Original Oi! bands include Cock Sparrer (which actually began in 1972) The Cockney Rejects (whose singer always said Oi! before songs, thus giving rise to the name of the musical genre Oi!, an expression in Cockney English, meaning hey or hey there), Angelic upstarts (upfront about their leftist ideals and had a crew named Mensi's Marauders that would physically combat Nazis. Their singer Mensi was one of the founders of antifascist action in the UK in 1985), Slaughter and the Dogs, The Lurkers and the most well known, Sham 69.

During the beginning of the 80s, there emerged a new movement constituted around the sound of the street. Punk bands of the time such as GBH, Broken Bones, Chaos UK etc along with newer Oi! bands such as The Business, The Last Resort, The Four Skins, Red Alert, Oi! Polloi (always very vocal about their anti fascist and anarchist ideals), Infa Riot, the Welsh band The Oppressed (who played a pivotal role in spreading the word worldwide about SHARP: Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice, and are still active today), The Burial (which were Oi! with soul and ska influences and militantly anti fascist) and many others. This movement was called Oi! by journalist Gary Bushell and was a promising unity between punks and skinheads.

At the same time, we can never forget the huge contribution made during that time by the band The Redskins, who were members of the Socialist Workers Party in the UK, and although they didn't play Oi!, their music was a great combination of soul, rockabilly, punk and pop. Their lyrics were militantly leftist. They supported the miners who were striking at that time, stood against apartheid and had intelligent, revolutionary lyrics. Their name was the one that was adopted by left skinheads all over the world in the mid 80s to mean a Skinhead that is committed to antifascist, anticapitalist ideals.

During the early 80s there also arose a fascist neo-Nazi bonehead musical style scene led by a band named Skrewdriver (which actually began in 1976 and at its earliest was called Tumbling Dice, and a clear rip-off of The Rolling Stones), and the music that this band, along with Brutal Attack and other despicable Nazi scum played, was a mix of classic rock, punk, metal, country, rockabilly and southern rock such as Lynyrd Skynyrd. These bands were made up of neo-Nazis and basically stole the Skinhead look aesthetically. They drew a clear boundary with punk rock and Oi! and their musical and political movement was called RAC (Rock Against Communism), which first set up by the National Front in 1978 as a tool to rope skins and punks into racism. After some years there was a fallout with NF and Ian Stewart, the singer of Skrewdriver, created Blood And Honor, which is a neo-Nazi movement. These bands had nothing to do with

though a vast, and I will say that again VAST, majority of Skinhead culture was about embracing reggae music, thanks to the media, Nazi identity and racism under the guise of "skinhead culture" spread to countries like Poland, Germany, and the U.S. In 1980's America, television talk shows such as Geraldo, Oprah, and Ricki Lake featured skinhead panels to induce public shock and thus a rise in ratings.

By simply looking at the audience on this episode of Geraldo shows how divided the Skinhead scene was/is. Luckily, where the racism went, anti-racist movements followed to shut them down. SHARP and other groups fought vehemently against Nazi groups, and punk culture as a whole tried to separate the two types of skinheads. Today, public perception of skinhead culture is still controlled by the media, and thus the violence that neo nazi skins inflict are often what we think of when we think of skinheads. Despite this, it is important to note the existence of anti racist skins as well who readily preserve the intersectional roots of the subculture. So let us say this, all together now, for the racists in the back:

Punk began with black music.
Black musicians,
black culture,
and black experience
POC are the driving force of Punk.
Know your history.



History of the Antifascist Skinhead Movement: Origins and Present
by RASH Guadalajara and Mutuo Producciones
translated into English from Spanish by Isaac (who added some additional info)

Introduction

To adequately focus on an explanation of the history of the Skinhead counterculture, it is first necessary to define what this lifestyle is. After more than 40 years of existence, the term has been extended and enriched.

A good definition would be everything that had or has to do with the culture derived from the scene that emerged in 1969, and that would include from the Rude Boys/Rude Girls subculture born in Kingston, Jamaica in the late 50s, the Mods (born in England in the mid 60s) going through Oi! (derived from punk rock), and up to the present day.

As a scene or movement, we understand all its aspects: musical, aesthetic, behavioral. Thus, the Skinhead scene is formed by ska, blue beat, rocksteady, early reggae, Skinhead reggae, part of the Mods, the beginnings of punk rock, hooligans, etc.

A skin is an individual that likes the scene and that feels comfortable in it. All of its aspects don't necessarily have to interest each one of them but this is logical, because each person has their own taste.

The movement is not considered an "urban tribe," but a youth counterculture (although there are quite a few skins that are in their 40s, 50s, and beyond). There is no

Trojan Records, a music label specializing in reggae, rocksteady, and ska that began in the UK in 1968, is as much a part of Skinhead as Oi! music. The difference is that the first was overwhelmingly played by Afro-Britons and Jamaicans in the 60s and 70s, whereas the latter appeared when punk rock gave skinheads the opportunity to play their own kind of punk. Some Oi! bands were formed by old working class mods that grabbed the opportunity to "say what they had to say." Also, genuine street punk, a name used by oi! influenced punk bands and which is many times used interchangeably or together with Oi! (such as US bands The Unseen, The Virus, Defiance, Lower Class Brats, the German band Oxymoron, the Madrid antifascist bands Non Servium and Kaos Urbano and many others) have a huge influence of traditional Skinhead music which can be heard on their songs.

In the beginning, Oi! wasn't related to any left wing ideology, neither to one side nor the other, because of those suffering workers, (especially the during the brutal policies and unemployment of Thatcher's UK in the 80s), they didn't need to carry any other flag but that of themselves, their friends, neighbors, of their daily lives, and the misery imposed by neoliberalism and trickle down economics. They knew their enemy well and sang and screamed against it, not in favor of anyone or anything, but against rotten society. The truth is that youth rebellion wasn't really liked by the extreme right, but they did suck it in and hypnotize those who erroneously blamed people of color, leftists and Jews for their troubles (instead of those in power). This is a good analogy to the current strength of Trumpism among many members of the working class in the US Who instead of focusing on the corporate capitalist in power, are blaming immigrants for the socio economic woes.

Oi! And Its Relationship To Punk Rock.



oi! band The Oppressed

Oi! began in the last part of 1977 as a reaction to the commercial turn that happened to Punk on that year. It was an attempt to return Punk to the themes that affected the daily lives of working class youth in the UK. Musically, Oi! was based on the first bands of

boots, polos...) and thus the boneheads grew around 1980–1981 in the UK. Soon there were Nazi bonehead bands all over the European continent, and eventually the idiotic trend reached the US, Canada, Latin America, and even Japan. This disinformation was spread by the sensationalist media, which then as now, gave importance to morbid curiosity instead of denouncing and stating the truth about the Skinhead culture.

Many skins opposed this fascist trend by supporting ideas that are completely opposed to those of the Nazi scum, but since they are political, didn't occur during the first wave of skinheads in the late 60s. Thus, the Redskins were born. The word "red" refers to the traditional color of communists and socialists and skins for skinheads in the 80s. Within the Skinhead subculture, this is what Redskins exclusively means. There are also anarcho skins who are anarchist. A leftist collective which united both red and anarchist skins is RASH, formed in New York City in 1993 and is now all over the world. There are Redskins and anarcho skins that don't belong to any Skinhead collective and that struggle against capitalism and racism within political parties, labor unions and other groups.

An important segment of the Skinhead culture are Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice, or SHARP, which was also formed in New York City in 1986. Their common characteristic is being anti-racist, but there are many political ideas within SHARP depending on the city, the country and the individual. There are also traditional skinheads that often shunned politics, dressed smartly as did the skins in '69 and listen almost exclusively to Skinhead reggae, ska, rocksteady, and other music that was listened to by original skinheads. There are also skinheads that are patriotic but are not Nazis, and there are fence walkers that claim to be apolitical, but in reality don't take a stand against Nazis and even hang out with them. There are also straight-edge skins that don't drink alcohol, smoke or do drugs and are often connected with the hardcore subculture. And there are even a very few skinheads that are devoutly religious. The key to realize which skins are which is looking at their patches, T-shirts, political activities, tattoos, pins on their jackets, slogans on their clothing, and of course a simple way to tell sometimes is by the names and lyrics of the bands they listen to. For example, a lot of Nazi bands have names related to Nordic mythology, racism, etc. Although there were and are many skins that didn't adopt a leftist ideology, that never meant that the movement was or is apolitical.

Some Important Things About Oi! Music.

In the late 70s, with the advent of punk, there were two types of skinheads: those into punk and later Oi!, and those that advocated the spirit of 69 Skinhead reggae, rocksteady, ska, etc. And the two didn't have anything in common besides violence, boots, haircuts and football(in the US, soccer). Through time and after many fights between the two, factional unity and blending began, and thus we have the current scene in which the most important factor is rebelling against society and working class pride.

infallible way to recognize a Skin belonging to the scene, but the people who are part of it share a series of tastes that no one imposes on them, and which are those that give them an image or identity, even though each one is different from the other.

Today, the word Skinhead is practically seen almost always as linked to fascist attacks and neo-Nazi groups, thanks to commercial mass media. However, traditionally, and outside of the mass media, true skinheads have always stood against racist, xenophobic, or fascist attitudes.

The 60s

Not in vain, the birth of the skinheads can be found in multiracial England of the 60s. There are predominantly two young subcultures.

The Mods (which comes from Modernists), young followers of black music (especially Soul from the United states), and lovers of fun, stylish clothing, beer, scooters (like Vespa and Lambretta), and good fights, eventually suffered the influence of hippiedom that grabbed the young middle classes of the world towards the end of the decade. The majority of Mods got into the new trend but the most ardent followers of black music among them rejected it, especially those that belonged to the working class, and even then became even more involved into the things they liked.

In parallel, immigration from the former British colonies in the Caribbean, particularly Jamaica, provided them fundamentally with two things:

1. Black friends who were seen as problematic (rude boys and girls)
2. new and exciting musical styles (ska, rocksteady, reggae...) on the dancefloors

In the beginning, these were simply groups of people from working class neighborhoods, where generally there were people of color, that shared a love for Scott, black music, and that had ideas contrary to those of the hippies. They had shaved heads parentheses and that analogous to black youth of the time parentheses, steel toed boots, and braces parentheses in the US known as suspenders and which were analog analogous to the working class parentheses, etc.

Another important factor was the role of the economic situation and England's success in the 1966 World Cup which was held there. This led many young people to support their teams at the stadiums. This led to the rise of football (called soccer in the US) fans/supporter groups and violence exploded between them, thus came the Bootboys.

The fights between supporters of different teams were famous, and these daily skirmishes mobilized the police, judicial system, and civil society, which were outraged and attacked the youth movement. Many skins ended up in prison, others left the movement, and some veterans of it remained by becoming suedheads, whose hair was a bit longer, and thus allowed them to survive anonymously.

From the mix of all these factors, came the skinheads.

We must remember that this word was used for the first time in 1969 (thus many skins have songs and wear patches in clothing remembering the spirit of 69), since up until that year these groups were called by several names such as Lemonheads, Peanuts (from the sound made by scooter engines that sounded like frying peanuts), or simply Mods.

To clear things up in some way, the skinheads were a movement that has lasted until today, is worldwide, and that as a reflection of the English working class youth they could be violent, but no more than the average workers at that time. They had as many political ideas as they were individuals, because let's not forget that above all skinheads were workers.

Their aesthetics was one of their hallmarks. Besides having shaved heads, they like to dress sharply, and especially popular were Ben Sherman Shirts, Fred Perry Shirts, Lonsdale sportswear, Levi's Jeans, Harrington Jackets, and Doc Marten steel toed boots. The now ubiquitous bomber jackets did not come in until after. On weekend nights many opted for something classier, such as elegant three-button suits. However, it was the violence and vandalism that was the true hallmark of the Skinhead during that time. Wherever they went, they destroyed trains, stores, houses, cars, opposed coppers and of course, they hated hippies. Their preferred weapons of choice were sharpened metal hair combs or whatever was available.

Due to these violent incidents, there have been misguided accusations of racism due to fights with South Asian immigrants in the UK at that time. But we must remember that Skinhead crews were multiracial and these fights were not motivated by racism, but because of neighborhood rivalries.

Politically, there wasn't a concrete tendency, but the majority of them voted for the Labour Party, a UK Centre left party with large proletarian support because of their working class background.

This belligerent attitude caused the mass media public opinion and the legal system to attack them, and they had to change their behavior, toning it down, and their aesthetics, growing out their hair and dressing more sharply. Thus came the Suedeheads and the Smoothies (which were short lived). Bootboys, however, continued raising hell on the football grounds.

It is convenient to clear up some things regarding this error: The first skinheads were never racist, they weren't either leftist or rightist. There were skins that were blonde or dark skinned, white and black, tall and short, skinny or of large builds, etc.

They reflected the UK working class of the time and as such they had its characteristics and as a whole were a group that shared similarities in behaviors, aesthetics and tastes.

Every individual had their own ideas depending on education, experience, etc. as do carpenters, Masons, miners, etc., all of them workers.

The first accusations of racism against skins come from this time from the mass media, such as in the Reggae Wars, which were really fights related to neighborhood territory and romantic relationships and anything else. All those who have been involved in the scene from that time and which are well in their 60s and 70s now are openly against racism. And those actions, since the only thing they brought for skins were false accusations against the scene due to a few idiots that weren't really interested in the scene as a whole.

The scene continued declining during the beginning of the 70s. Many people disappeared and this continued dying until punk rock appeared in the mid 70s. Rebellious and provocative aesthetics against society, the government, and against any rule established and imposed on the youth.

Oi! Oi! Music

Punk Rock began its course and turned into a movement, stopped being a mere fashion, and became a vibrant and evolving way of life. Punk Rock was played by working class youth who raised their voices against any type of imposition (family, religion, state). This became due to those factors a totally politicized musical style and with an overwhelmingly left wing ideology.

This is when the Oi! movement begins, which is a mixture of Punk and Skinhead cultures. We can clearly see this in bands such as Blitz, who was composed of half punks, half skinheads. Oi! is punk music played by skinheads for the most part, but sometimes punks as well, with rage and fury. It's not strange to see Punks and Skins playing in the same group and partying in the same bars or squats, but in this music working class politics are always present because skins and punks have almost always been proletarians. Since the very beginning of Oi! music, there have always been skins of all races, including Black, South Asian, East Asian, and as skinheads and punks are all over the world, there are Oi! bands in such places as Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Russia, Serbia. Italy Puerto Rico, China, Catalunya, Thailand etc.

Unfortunately, in the mid 70s, a fascist xenophobic party in the UK, the National Front (or N.F.) engaged heavily in racist anti-immigrant propaganda and was able to get quite a few misguided skins and a few punks into their orbit because of Nazi messages about the "white working class." Punk exhibitionism and the martial-looking Skinhead hairstyle. Thus arose Nazi boneheads, as they are known to those in the Skinhead culture. These people are not and never will be, true skinheads.

The mass media soon promoted the fallacy of Skin = Nazi in order to sell newspapers, thus giving boneheads free advertising to the detriment of real skinheads. Once that cancer grew, Nazi youth dressed in Skinhead aesthetics more and more (short hair