

The History of Rock Music: 1976-1989

New Wave, Punk-rock, Hardcore

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Hardcore

(These are excerpts from my book ["A History of Rock and Dance Music"](#))

New York's scum 1977-81

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Three New York bands (the New York Dolls, the Dictators and the Ramones) had started something that would spread around the world like wild fire and come back to the USA like a hurricane. 1976 was the year that punk-rock became a mass phenomenon in Britain. But in the USA punk-rock was hardly what the British thought it was. "Punks" were the new beatniks, the new hipsters, the new bohemians, not necessarily the heroin addicts with barbaric haircuts and leather clothes. Punks listened to Patti Smith, Television and Suicide.

It took a while for "punk-rock" (as in "violent, fast, loud") to conquer the USA the way it had conquered Britain. When it happened, this "hardcore" form of punk-rock became the national idiom for millions of kids, and would remain so for two decades.

In fact, punk-rock of the 1980s consisted of a series of tidal waves of subgenres. Roughly, these waves of punks followed an existential trajectory that took them from the initial stance of nihilism and exhibitionism to a stage of no-nonsense sociopolitical awareness to a terminal stage of introversion ("emo-core"). Punk-rock started as the soundtrack of angry young men but, by the end of the decade, had turned into the sobs of a child crying alone in a dark room.

The first stage emerged just a couple of years after the Ramones' debut. While the New York scene was ruled by the intellectuals of the new wave, a number of less "serious" punks were roaming its clubs. The [Misfits](#) (10) were already a legend in 1977, but it took them five years to release an album, the breathtaking carnival of **Walk Among Us** (jun 1981/jan 1982 - mar 1982). Their grotesquely horrific atmospheres featured Glenn Danzig's shout (a hybrid of Van Morrison's *Gloria* and Jim Morrison's *Break On Thru*), but, mainly, exploited the Ramones' idea of concise catchy rapid-fire rock'n'roll.

Another shocking act of the time, the [Plasmatics](#), captured the headlines for a few months, selling an image of obscene, vulgar, perverted, raw and barbaric animals. But they were

selling the image, not the sound, which, in itself, was closer to heavy-metal. Indirectly, the Plasmatics began a tradition of "scum-rock" that followed on the footsteps of the decadent acts of the early 1970s. After them came [GG Allin](#) (by far the "worst") in Boston and the [Meatmen](#) in Washington. Amoral sex, not punk-rock, was the attraction that they were promoting.

Punk-metal 1983-85

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Merging punk-rock and heavy-metal was not a particularly original idea (the Ramones had done it in 1978), and it was certainly not too difficult (given that both relied on aggression). So it was bound to happen, and to get bigger and bigger.

Punk-metal crossover was pioneered by Los Angeles' [Suicidal Tendencies](#) (1), namely on their spectacular **Suicidal Tendencies** (early 1983 - jul 1983), and by North Carolina's [Corrosion Of Conformity](#) (1), whose breakthrough recording was **Animosity** (? 1985 - oct 1985). Both of them eventually became regular heavy-metal bands.

[Agnostic Front](#) (1) led New York's hardcore punks towards heavy-metal, particularly on the seminal **Cause For Alarm** (? 1986 - ? 1986). Former Misfits singer Danzig had already experimented with this format on **Initium** (mar 1981/? 1984 - jun 1984), the debut album by his new band [Samhain](#) (1). It was a historic meeting and it became one of the main themes on the East Coast.

Boston was one of the key centers for punk-metal crossover, beginning with the generation of [Jerry's Kids](#), and [SS Decontrol](#).

Boston's hardcore madmen [Siege](#), who only recorded nine (brief) songs, mostly for their cassette **Drop Dead** (feb 1984 - may 1994), pioneered the super-frenzied blastbeat-driven style of grindcore

Boston's main punk group was [Mission Of Burma](#) (10), who were not properly hardcore, but rather a mixture of punk-rock, pop, heavy-metal and progressive-rock. The elastic power-pop of the EP **Signals, Calls And Marches** (jan/apr 1981 - aug 1981), driven by guitarist Roger Miller's loud signatures, led to the versatile and erudite crossover of the album **VS** (jan/apr 1982 - oct 1982), one of the most influential albums of punk-rock. Martin Swope's tape manipulations and Peter Prescott's drumming were emblematic of the opposite forces that pulled their melodies apart.

Boston's [Gang Green](#) (1) led the skatepunk nation and eventually found their true voice on **You Got It** (? 1987 - ? 1987).

Washington's art-punk 1980-85

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Punk-rock was born in New York, but New York was never the capital of punk-rock. The relationship between the two was always cold. New York was always warmer to the intellectuals.

Washington was the first city to advance its candidacy as capital of the hardcore nation. >From the beginning, Washington's line-up was impressive. The [Bad Brains](#) (11), a quartet of black Rastafarians, created a mixture of reggae, punk-rock, funk and heavy-

metal that was ten years ahead of their time. The early singles, such as *Pay To Cum* (1980), and the album **Rock For Light** (early 1982 - mar 1983) displayed Paul "H.R." Hudson's bellicose shout (simultaneously reminiscent of Prince, Iggy Pop, Mick Jagger, Robert Plant and Johnny Rotten) matched with Gary "Dr Know" Miller's repertory of Hendrix-ian riffs and glissandos. The songs were odes to street life that wed the contemplative tone of Jamaican spirituality and the materialistic wrath of the urban USA society. Under the influence of Clash and Police, **I Against I** (? 1986 - nov 1986) used reggae in a more conventional way, but still achieved the charisma of a sincere, vibrant call to arms.

[Scream's Still Screaming](#) (oct 1982 - jan 1983) was a similar infusion of metal and reggae

[Minor Threat](#) (1) were propelled by Ian MacKaye's vehement vocals. The songs on their two EPs, **Minor Threat** (apr 1981 - jun 1981) and **In My Eyes** (apr 1981 - dec 1981), sounded like exploding granite, and, incidentally, defined "straight-edge" hardcore (hardcore that rebelled against the stereotypes of alcohol/drugs/vandalism). Their only album, **Out Of Step** (jan 1983 - apr 1983), was a poignant document of teenage pessimism.

[No Trend](#) (1) were the ultimate in punk devastation, much closer to the chaotic self-indulgence of the "no wave" than to the Ramones, particularly on their third and last album, **Tritonian Nash-Vegas Polyester Complex** (aug 1986 - ? 1986).

In the mid-1980s Washington pioneered two of the most important evolutions of hardcore: "pop-core", with [Government Issue](#), [Dag Nasty](#) and [Jeff Dahl](#)'s numerous bands; and especially "emo-core" ("emotional" hardcore), which would become the most abused style of the following decade. Its inventors, the [Rites of Spring](#) (1), lasted only a few months, but the melancholy, romantic odes of **Rites Of Spring** (feb 1985 - jun 1985), delivered by Guy Picciotto in an agonizing register, were for hardcore the equivalent of Jesus' stigmata.

An important school of brainy, unorthodox rock was initiated in Virginia by [Honor Role](#).

San Francisco 1977-84

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San Francisco's punk scene was characterized by extreme frenzy and strong sociopolitical overtones.

Fast, loud, short anthems were the staple of the two bands that launched the phenomenon in 1977: the [Avengers](#), with *We Are The One* (1977) and *The American In Me* (1978), and the [Nuns](#), with *Decadent Jew* (1977) and *Suicide Child* (1978), both written by Alejandro Escovedo. Neither lasted long enough to complete an album, nor did Ricky Williams' Sleepers, whose EP **Seventh World** (march 1978 - ? 1978) was equally influential, nor did the [Crime](#), whose *Hot Wire My Heart* (1976) and many unreleased tracks predated many of the coming fads.

The [Dead Kennedys](#) (11), the agit-prop vehicle for truculent, articulate vocalist and political agitator Jello Biafra (Eric Boucher), lasted long enough to deliver the supersonic punch of **Fresh Fruit For Rotting Vegetables** (may/jun 1980 - sep 1980), a volcanic eruption of soaring riffs and anthemic refrains. The band's demented frenzy, paradoxical lyrics and music-hall parodies updated the satirical art of the Fugs with the tools of

hardcore, and produced at least two all-time masterpieces: *California Ueber Alles* and *Holiday In Cambodia*. Despite the didactic excesses, **Plastic Surgery Disasters** (jun 1982 - nov 1982) was another social fresco by one of punk's maddest preachers.

[D.R.I.](#) (1), the fastest and loudest (Dirty Rotten Imbeciles), were even more influential, because their **Dirty Rotten** (nov 1982 - dec 1982) virtually invented "thrash metal" before Metallica.

Their followers included [D.O.A.](#), and [M.D.C.](#) (Millions of Dead Cops), bands that ejected some of the most extreme and provocative hardcore in the nation; as did, from Portland, the [Poison Idea](#), at least on **Kings Of Punk** (? 1986 - ? 1986).

[Flipper](#) (11), who evolved from legendary noise-makers Negative Trend, were the undisputed masters of San Francisco's experimental hardcore, forefathers to one of the most fertile scenes of the 1980s. The bleak anthems of **Generic** (oct 1980/aug 1981 - apr 1982) were built around Mersey-beat singalongs, Rolling Stones-ian boogies, Cramps-ian voodoobillies, Stooges-ian garage-rock, P.I.L.-like hallucinations, Chrome-esque zombie dances, but then drenched into the musical equivalent of nuclear radiations (loud and frantic drums, overdosed feedbacks). **Gone Fishin'** (? 1984 - aug 1984), in fact, wasn't even hardcore anymore: its pieces were more reminiscent of a psychedelic freak-out.

The [Toiling Midgets](#) (1), which evolved from the Sleepers, were even less orthodox on the varied and dissonant **Sea Of Unrest** (? 1981 - ? 1982).

Female rock lived one of its historical moments in San Francisco when [Frightwig](#) (1) were formed, one of the first all-female (and lesbian) punk bands. Taking inspiration from Joan Jett and her Runaways, they filled **Cat Farm Faboo** (? ? - mar 1984) with theatrical anti-macho attitudes and with raw, bare, amateurish playing (centered around Mia Levin's guitar). They de facto pioneered the "riot-grrrrls" movement.

Beach punks 1979-82

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California punks developed their own identity, first in Los Angeles and then in San Francisco. The first heroes of the Los Angeles scene were the [Germes](#) (10), whose brief and tragic career would remain the symbol of the entire school. **GI** (? 1979 - dec 1979) contained not songs, but miniatures of songs, not melodies but mere screams at breakneck speed. Their vocalist, Paul "Darby Crash" Beahm, was a decadent visionary in the tradition of Rimbaud and Kerouac, but didn't have the time to prove it (he died of an overdose in 1980).

But it was [X](#) (12) that best epitomized the L.A. zeitgeist in the age of punk-rock. Instead of practicing the nihilism and perversion that punk-rockers often boasted, vocalists John Doe and Christine "Exene" Cervenka painted them as social ills, caused by alienation in the metropolis. The depressed litanies of **Los Angeles** (jan 1980 - apr 1980) were closer to Suicide's weltanschauung than to Sex Pistols' desperation. While not as metaphysical as the Doors, they too centered on the atmospheric portrait of the disease (dehumanization), rather than on the physical analysis of its symptoms. Unlike the Doors, who aimed for psychedelic trance, X vented anger and disgust. The album was, ultimately, a gallery of misfits, junkies, beatniks, perverts, vandals, etc. Decadent life was not the subject: it was the object of their hyper-realistic sermons. Not surprisingly, their punk-rock relied on guitarist Billy Zoom's stylistic nuances which contained strong elements of country, blues and rockabilly, genres that harked back to ordinary people and ordinary lives. **Wild Gift**

(mar 1981 - may 1981) and **Under The Big Black Sun** (? 1982 - jul 1982) proved it: X were a roots-rock band, their vocal harmonies harked back to Jefferson Airplane, and their lyrics introduced populism of a new kind.

Black Flag and Circle Jerks opened the golden age of "beach punks". While [Circle Jerks](#) produced a faster and louder version of Germs on **Group Sex** (? 1980 - nov 1980), [Black Flag](#) (12) proved to be the more gifted musicians. They crafted the second masterpiece of Los Angeles' punk-rock, **Damaged** (aug 1981 - dec 1981), a collection of brief, epileptic, devastating ruminations pierced by guitarist Greg Ginn's merciless bombardment and shaken by the anthemic/suicidal howls, shrieks and roars of exuberant vocalist Henry Rollins. As Ginn began to indulge in hard-rock sludge and free-form guitar improvisation, Rollins began to indulge in verbose ramblings and theatrical orations. The lumbering sludge of **My War** (dec 1983 - mar 1984) pioneered both doom-metal and mathcore. For a while Black Flag's schizophrenia paid off, as albums such as **Slip It In** (jun 1984 - dec 1984) and **Loose Nut** (mar 1985 - may 1985) alternated between heavy-metal and punk-jazz, allowing Ginn to show off tornadoes of feedbacks, drones, fuzz-tones, atonal screeches, glissandos, harmolodic phrases, etc. The EP **Process Of Weeding Out** (mar 1985 - sep 1985) found the missing link between garage-rock and free jazz.

As teenagers became familiar with its loud/fast/angry format, punk-rock lost some of its rebellious connotations and it simply became a way to speak up. This led to a warmer kind of punk-rock, which focused on the problems of ordinary middle-class teenagers. The [Adolescents](#) (1), with the anthemic and satirical **Adolescents** (feb 1981 - may 1981), and the [Descendents](#) (1), with one of punk-rock's rare concept albums, **Milo Goes To College** (jun 1982 - sep 1982), before transforming into power-pop outfit [All](#), were typical of this new, less confrontational and less tragic approach.

A lot of Los Angeles punk-rockers, in fact, had remained relatively close to the original (foolish) Ramones sound, especially the [Dickies](#) (1), whose **Dawn** (summer 1979 - oct 1979) was a farcical take on B-movies worthy of the music hall, but also the [Angry Samoans](#) and the [Weirdos](#).

1981 was the year of the peak, thanks to the soundtrack of Penelope Spheeris' documentary **Decline Of Western Civilization** (dec 1979/may 1980 - dec 1981), and to [Fear](#) (10), the leading band of the second wave. Their **Record** (dec 1981 - feb 1982), one of the most important punk albums of all times, was a philosophical manifesto and, stylistically, a hysterical revision of boogie and rock'n'roll dogmas drenched into overdoses of sarcasm, topped by the war anthem *No More Nothing*.

Texas-born vocalist and guitarist Jeffrey Lee Pierce formed [Gun Club](#) (102) in Los Angeles, inspired by both the Cramps' "voodoobilly", Robert Johnson's Delta blues, Louisiana's swamp rhythms, Jim Morrison's dark and sensual dialectics, and California's hardcore scene. The breath-taking parade of **Fire Of Love** (may 1981 - aug 1981) spun around demonic rock'n'roll rave-ups, hypnotic and amphetaminic blues-rock shuffles, and bleak country-rock ballads. The musical vocabulary of blues, country and rock music was employed to feed the spasmodic fever that consumed Pierce's mind, a fever that originated from obscure forces and inner ghosts. While raiding stereotypes and canons, Pierce and his gang secreted a magical balance of suspense and despair. Gun Club were more than the expression of nihilist anger: their music embodied a metaphysical quest for the meaning of life. As he didn't find it, the singer screamed and the band roared, venturing deeper and deeper into Pierce's nervous breakdown (which was really the breakdown of an entire generation). **Miami** (jun 1982 - sep 1982) was a morbid affair that removed most of the violence and focused on the emotional tension. It was a rural album, whereas its predecessor had been an urban album (despite its rural roots). Rather than a call of the

wild, it was a psychoanalysis of an alienated state of mind. The first album was an earthquake that created new seismic faults: the second album was an exploration of those seismic faults. The orgiastic and macabre overtones of the first album permeated the EP **Death Party** (feb 1983 - apr 1983), but **Las Vegas Story** (mar/apr 1984 - jun 1984), influenced by second guitarist Kid Congo Powers (Brian Tristan), veered towards a more pensive and atmospheric tone, the same tone that surfaced over and over again in Pierce's solo albums, which basically kept repeating the mantra of a man who was not at peace with himself. Pierce may have found what he was looking for when he died in 1996.

In the meantime, hardcore had already become more reasonable, thanks to bands that sang melodies instead of just screaming like maniacs, bands such as [Agent Orange](#) (1), full of nostalgia for the sound of the Sixties (surf, Merseybeat) despite the quintessentially Eighties despair of **Living In Darkness** (sep 1981 - nov 1981), and Mike Ness' [Social Distortion](#) (1), whose versatile and populist **Mommy's Little Monster** (dec 1982 - early 1983) bridged hardcore and roots-rock.

[Legal Weapon](#) (10), probably the most talented, recorded **Death Of Innocence** (? 1982 - sep 1982), a superb collection of vibrant, adrenaline-pumping power-pop layered on top of exuberant boogie and rock'n'roll rhythms, one of the era's most accomplished records.

[Bad Religion](#) (3), perhaps the most influential punk band of this generation, were late-bloomers: they became the bards of teenage frustration long after they had grown up, with the trilogy of **Suffer** (apr 1988 - sep 1988), **No Control** (jun 1989 - nov 1989) and the unusually pensive **Against The Grain** (may 1990 - nov 1990), which are basically rock operas about the moral crisis of the 1980s. The first two installments featured the emphatic vocals of Greg Graffin debating the meaning of life inside catchy melodies, and a double-guitar attack led by Brett Gurewitz that rehashed rock'n'roll cliches from Led Zeppelin to the Clash.

Punk-rock became punk-pop with their followers: [M.I.A.](#), [Leaving Trains](#), [Rich Kids On LSD](#) and Nevada's [7 Seconds](#).

Jazz-core 1981-86

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The [Minutemen](#) (102), boasting one of hardcore's most competent and creative line-ups (Dennes Boon on guitar, George Hurley on drums and Mike Watt on bass), wove a spiderweb of soul, jazz, funk and rock'n'roll around their syncopated, fractured, disjointed tunes. Borrowing the pagan impetus from hardcore, the harsh quirkiness from the new wave and the cerebral, and the convoluted indulgence from progressive-rock, the Minutemen concocted the miniature hardcore shrapnels of **Punch Line** (feb 1981 - nov 1981) and **What Makes A Man Start Fires** (jul/aug 1982 - jan 1983). The acrobatic primitivism of these albums became even more neurotic and atonal on **Double Nickels On The Dime** (nov 1983/apr 1984 - jul 1984), one of the most ambitious recordings of the decade, a veritable encyclopedia of musical styles revisited from the point of view of a spastic genius reminiscent of Captain Beefheart and the Pop Group. After Boon's untimely death in 1985, the survivors hired a new vocalist, renamed themselves [FIREHOSE](#) (1), released **Ragin' Full On** (oct 1986 - nov 1986) and pursued a more conscious program to refound the song format, except that R.E.M.-like folk-rock took over Minutemen's unpredictable structures.

Black Flag and the Minutemen must be credited with raising the standard for hardcore. Their works were often experimental and their instrumental skills were way above the

average. Joe Baiza's [Saccharine Trust](#) (2) attempted the boldest fusion of hardcore and jazz on **Pagan Icons** (apr 1981 - dec 1981) and **Surviving You, Always** (? 1984 - ? 1984), two albums that are rich in guitar inventions and group counterpoint, although still fully immersed into hardcore dementia. Joe Baiza's subsequent venture into punk-jazz, [Universal Congress Of](#) (1), adopted decisively Ornette Coleman's free-jazz. The lengthy, free-form, chaotic jam *Certain Way* (1987) raised the stakes and **Prosperous And Qualified** (nov 1987 - ? 1988) delivered the goods: an inventive and sumptuous group sound.

Secret Hate's mini-album **Vegetables Dancing** (? 1983 - ? 1983) was aware of the innovations of Dead Kennedys, Bad Brain and Minutemen.

Elsewhere, [NoMeansNo](#), two brothers from Vancouver (Canada), tried to fuse Sex Pistols and Frank Zappa, while focusing with manic determination on teenagers' psyche: albums such as **Mama** (? 1982 - ? 1984) and **Wrong** (summer 1989 - fall 1989) were self-parodies both grotesque and introverted, while doling out fluent and sophisticated interplay.

Midwest 1980-86

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The hardcore nation extended to the Midwest as well, from Pennsylvania's [Dead Milkmen](#) to Kansas' [Micronotz](#), and around the world from Canada's [SNFU](#) to Australia's [Hard-ons](#). Ohio's [Necros](#) were one of the most visceral bands, playing ultra-violent socio-political anthems on **Conquest For Death** (? 1983 - summer 1983).

Chicago's [Effigies](#) were one of the earliest punk bands to experiment with pop and heavy-metal, on their EP **Haunted Town** (spring 1981 - nov 1981).

Overlooked at the time, Indiana's [Zero Boys](#) (1) played popcore ante-litteram on their only album, **Vicious Circle** (nov 1981 - summer 1982).

John Brannon's [Negative Approach](#) were the link between the Stooges and the Necros, although their career was limited to **Tie Down** (aug 1983 - ? 1983).

In Texas the [Dicks](#) (which would relocate to San Francisco and evolve into [Sister Double Happiness](#)) the [Big Boys](#) and the [Poison 13](#) kept the scene alive, but the real attraction was [Scratch Acid](#), one of the bands that set a new standard of ferocity for the late 1980s. David Yow's spastic, dilapidated vocabulary, basically reduced to screaming, agonizing and vomiting, duelled against syncopated psycho-funky rhythms (bassist Dave Sims and drummer Ray Washam) and repulsive guitar distortions. The primal angst that permeated the EP **Scratch Acid** (jul 1984 - ? 1984) harked back to the skewed eloquence of Captain Beefheart, Pop Group and Birthday Party.

But clearly the scene of the Midwest was revolutionized by the appearance of Minnesota's pop-core giants: Husker Du and Replacements.

By making it simultaneously more personal, more challenging and more accessible, [Husker Du](#) (113) changed hardcore forever. Their two songwriters (guitarist Bob Mould and drummer Grant Hart) packed an unlikely combination into the narrow framework of their violent epileptic hardcore miniatures: loud guitar that was neither passive (as in most hardcore) nor obnoxious (as in most hard-rock) but rather emotional, and catchy melodies that came from the heart, despite all the noise. The mini-album **Metal Circus** (dec

1982/jan 1983 - oct 1983) upped the ante by focusing on introspection and releasing psychedelic perfumes, and the double album **Zen Arcade** (dec 1982/oct 1983 - jul 1984) took punks for a ride on a merry-go-round of fragile feelings and pensive moods. The cornucopia of poppy tunes dressed the galloping thrash foundation with both gentle and rude touches that ran the gamut from folk-rock to heavy-metal, while lulled by Hendrixian glissandos as well as by raga-like scales. Punk desperation was still ubiquitous, but it was no longer expressed in the form of primal wrath. It had become a lyrical state of the soul in a pathological state of the mind. **New Day Rising** (jul 1984 - jan 1985) added sonic perfection to the idea. An epic "wall of sound" and a slower, solemn pace removed the last traces of brainy rebellion, while at the same time emphasizing the personalized experience. In a sense, Husker Du were tweaking hardcore to stand as folk music and speak up the affections that punks had been reluctant to admit, thus healing the denial of a generation raised on confrontation, the equivalent of what R.E.M. was doing in a more straightforward folk format. Matured as a man, a musician and a composer, Mould became unstoppable: **Flip Your Wig** (mar/jun 1985 - sep 1985), that betrayed his debt to the Sixties, **Candy Apple Grey** (oct 1985/jan 1986 - mar 1986), their least traumatic reportage, and **Warehouse: Songs And Stories** (aug/nov 1986 - jan 1987) overflow with charming and penetrating punk-pop vignettes.

The [Replacements](#) (22) were the populist, grass-roots alter-ego of Husker Du. Their early albums were influenced by the epic frenzy of the Sex Pistols and the New York Dolls. But on **Hootenanny** (oct 1982/jan 1983 - apr 1983) Paul Westerberg emerged as a confessional and visionary songwriter, and the band began to spin blues, country, rockabilly and boogie while retaining the anthemic spirit (and the raw sound) of punk-rock. **Let It Be** (mid 1983/mid 1984 - oct 1984) slowed down the pace and toned down the guitars, giving Paul Westerberg the front stage and a messianic role. His inner torture became the spiritual journey of an entire generation, a sort of passion/martyrdom that ordinary USA kids identified with in an almost genetic way. It was his iconic mixture of pride, defeat, longing and will that propelled the band's power-ballads. **Tim** (jun/jul 1985 - oct 1985) was at the same time a documentary of USA teenage life and a parade of authentic, impeccable rock'n'roll. In its desolate cries, the mythology of the misfit and the loner reached another zenith of pathos. The versatile, eclectic, encyclopedic style of **Pleased To Meet Me** (late 1986/early 1987 - jul 1987) signaled that the Replacements had exhausted their historical role. They had exhausted their generation's sorrows.

Husker Du and Replacements created a background that fostered a fertile scene. [Magnolias](#) and [Rifle Sport](#) were other significant bands of the 1980s in Minneapolis.

Chicago 1983-85

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A new level of violence was reached in Chicago by the generation of the mid 1980s, by bands that went beyond hardcore in the way they mustered tension, fear and hatred. In a sense, Minnesota went towards melody and Chicago went the other way.

[Naked Raygun](#) (3) gave new meaning to the brutal, abrasive, excoriating sound of hardcore. That sound was vivid and expressive on **Throb Throb** (summer 1983 - early 1985) because the band was capable of a broad range of moods, from grotesque to epic, despite the devastation caused by guitarist John Haggerty (who played the guitar like a chainsaw) and his rhythm section (that careened through the melodies like a machine-gun) and while Jeff Pezzati intoned his odes of teenage frustration. The "adult" tone of **Jettison** (late 1987/early 1988 - may 1988) perfected the formula, coupling tight music with rational balance, and the professional-sounding **Understand?** (late 1988 - apr 1989)

showed that they knew what they were doing and showed glimpses of what Haggerty would do with his next band, Pegboy.

Among the many musicians who tried to set the apocalypse to music, [Steve Albini](#) (31) has certainly been one of the most effective. Borrowing from Killing Joke's cadaveric dirges, from the Pop Group's syncopated spasms, from Suicide's psychotic rituals, from Red Krayola's demented psychedelia, Albini consistently approached rock music as a victim to be vivisected, mangled, corroded with muriatic acid and nailed to the cross. His first project, Big Black, debuted with two age-defining EPs, **Lungs** (? 1982 - dec 1982) and **Bulldozer** (apr 1981/sep 1983 - dec 1983), which focused on the musical equivalent of repulsive violence. Rather than a collection of songs, **Atomizer** (spring/oct 1985 - jan 1986) was a sequence of shockwaves of industrial music, hardcore, heavy-metal, and horribly deformed rock'n'roll. In a stunning chaos of polyrhythms and dissonances, Albini told his macabre stories of deranged minds. The overall effect was similar to the suspense of a murder thriller (of a serial-killer thriller). Big Black died after **Songs About Fucking** (? 1986 - jan 1987), which seemed willing to compromise with a more reasonable kind of rap-funk-punk song. Rapeman, which featured Scratch Acid's rhythm section of Rey Washam and David Sims, added two new monsters to Albini's discography: the EP **Budd** (? 1988 - may 1988) and the album **Two Nuns And A Pack Mule** (? 1988 - aug 1988), another orgiastic, dissonant vision of his blackest part of the human soul. Shellac, with Rifle Sport's drummer Todd Trainer and Volcano Suns' bassist Bob Weston, was almost a reflection on Albini's own career, as if he were trying to make sense of his own journey through the land of the damned. Cold and cerebral, **At Action Park** (mar 1994 - oct 1994) was the ultimate contradiction: rational irrationality.

Europunks 1983-85

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Some European punks came up with wildly unorthodox takes on the genre.

Dutch anarchists [Ex](#) (2) had begun in the militant vein of Crass but would continuously improve the quality of their cacophonous, incoherent bacchanals via increasingly challenging albums such as **Blueprints For A Blackout** (dec 1983/jan 1984 - mar 1984), **Joggers & Smoggers** (? 1989 - nov 1989), **Instant** (apr/jun 1995 - oct 1995), possibly their masterpiece, and **Starters Alternators** (jun 1998 - oct 1998).

Scotland's [Dog Faced Hermans](#) were the main disciples of Ex. Led by vocalist and trumpet player Marion Coutts and noise-guitarist Andy Moor, they indulged in the violent and atonal pieces of the mini-albums **Humans Fly** (early 1987 - ? 1988) and **Every Day Timebomb** (early 1989 - ? 1989), the antechambers to the agit-prop bacchanals of **Mental Blocks For All Ages** (may 1991 - ? 1991).

Throughout the 1980s, Italy boasted one of the most vital hardcore scenes in Europe. The revolution started with [Skiantos](#)'s demented **MONOtono** (? 1978 - jul 1978), Italy's answer to punk-rock, and with Gaznevada's **Sick Soundtrack** (? 1980 - ? 1980), Italy's version of the new wave. The [Confusional Quartet](#) (1) mixed punk-rock, the new wave of the Residents and the Italian "varietà" (vaudeville) on the madcap **Confusional Quartet** (? 1980 - ? 1980), which stands out as both an aural experiment, a post-modernist experiment, and a melodic experiment._____

Some of the most experimental punk bands of the 1980s were Italian. [Raw Power](#) (1) achieved an impressive fusion of hardcore and heavy-metal on **Screams from the Gutter** (sep 1984 - ? 1985). [Negazione](#) penned a classic of Italian thrash/hardcore, **Lo Spirito Continua** (jun 1986 - ? 1986).

Italy's new wave was, on the other hand, quite derivative of British pop/rock and often redolent of the national melodic school. [Diaframma](#)'s **Siberia** (? 1984 - ? 1984) and especially [Litfiba](#)'s **17 Re** (? 1986 - ? 1986) offered melancholy lyrical psychodrama in the tradition of Italian romantic poetry.

Italian hardcore bands, instead, turned towards a mixture of vibrant tension, dark/noir atmospheres and political commentary. [CCCP](#) (2) left behind the stereotypes of punk-rock, and achieved a genre-defying convergence of hardcore, militant rock, ethnic folk, industrial music and chamber music while delivering a bleak vision of eternal angst. **Affinità Divergenze** (? 1985 - ? 1986) excelled in the eerie contrast between a harsh but spare instrumental background and Giovanni Ferretti's delirious cut-up texts and Brechtian vocals, while **Epica Etica Etnica Pathos** (? 1990 - ? 1990), was a stylistic tour de force. They mutated into [C.S.I.](#) (Consorzio Suonatori Indipendenti), whose **Linea Gotica** (? 1996 - ? 1996) was an experiment in chamber rock music.

The only band to match CCCP's avant-rock was Franti, which released only one album, **Il Giardino Delle Quindici Pietre** (? 1986 - ? 1986).

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