

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Punk Culture at Skirball

Elisa Leonelli · Wednesday, June 3rd, 2026



Sex Pistols poster at Skirball

I wanted to see the Punk Culture exhibit at the Skirball Cultural Center, because in May 1977, I had traveled from Los Angeles to London to photograph the exciting Punk Rock scene.



Vivienne Westwood © Elisa Leonelli 1977

I met Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood,



Sex Pistols-Johnny Rotten, Sid Vicious © Elisa Leonelli 1977

Johnny Rotten and Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols,



Chelsea © Elisa Leonelli 1977

Chelsea and the Damned,



The Damned © Elisa Leonelli 1977

Punk rock fans at clubs



Punk rock fan at the Roxy © Elisa Leonelli 1977

Punk boutiques and punk kids on Kings Road.



Punk kid on Kings Road © Elisa Leonelli

[Read here about my experience.](#)



Punk fashion at Skirball © Elisa Leonelli 2026

“Outsiders, Outcasts, Rebels + Weirdos: Punk Culture 1976-86” (May 20–September 6) examines Proto-Punk in New York 1975-77, including Patti Smith and the Ramones, because of their Jewish ancestry, UK Punk 1976-78, LA Punk Venues 1977-1984, such as the Masque in Hollywood and Madame Wong in Chinatown, New Wave 1979-1982, the term was used interchangeably with punk, etc.



Punk outfit at Skirball © Elisa Leonelli 2026

The black caption explains that Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren, who was raised by his Sephardic Jewish grandmother, invented the look of UK punk. The [Skirball Museum](#) collects art and objects that reflect Jewish life.



Punk Fashion show © Elisa Leonelli 1977

In Los Angeles I photographed a punk fashion show at the Hollywood Palladium in 1977.



Punk make-up, Hollywood © Elisa Leonelli 1977

I would go to [the Masque](#), an underground club where people danced uncontrollably bumping into each other, and ask some of the girls to pose for me.



Punk girl © Elisa Leonelli 1977

I befriended Jerry Casale of Devo and the band posed for a photo session in 1980.



Devo © Elisa Leonelli 1980

By 1981, another fashion and music trend had emerged, the **New Romantics**. I did a photo essay at Club Lingerie, also founded by Brendan Muller, like the Masque.



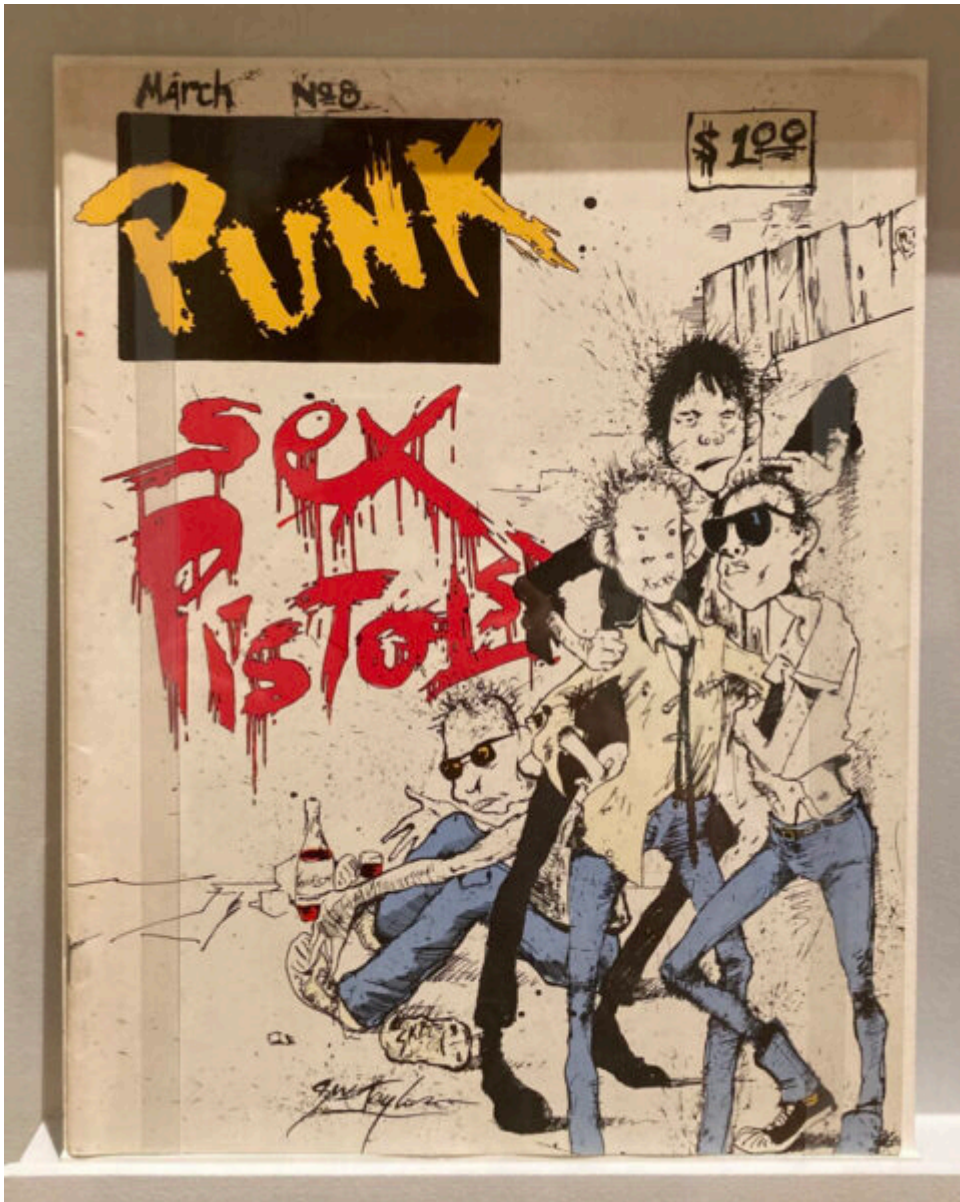
New Romantics-Club Lingerie © Elisa Leonelli 1981

The final note from Skirball concludes: Punk is not a sound, it's an attitude, outside the mainstream.



Devo poster at Skirball

It's a useful reminder today, 50 years after the birth of punk, that to rebel against the government is more necessary than ever.



Punk fanzine at Skirball

P.S.: Please click on underlined words for more info.

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