

## [Selling Out Or Musical Progression](#)

The act of 'selling out' involves a musician/group rejecting their principles and morals to pursue a more lucrative path. This could involve leaving an independent record label in favour of a major label or a change in musical direction in attempt to achieve higher record sales. There have been various examples of so-called selling out in the music business by such stars as Bob Dylan and Bon Jovi. However, it is a much debated concept and has a variety of interpretations for each musical genre with punk having some of the strictest rules.

Punk rock began in the mid-1970s with bands like the Ramones, Sex Pistols and the Clash. The fast-paced, aggressive music celebrated rough-edges and self-produced recordings to evoke a community-based sense of anti-establishment. However, as one of the main players in the UK punk scene, Malcolm McLaren seemed to manipulate and orchestrate the punk movement for his own commercial gain. It would appear that punk's ethics were being compromised in its earliest stages.

Despite its commercial success in the 1970s, punk continued to represent alternative music for the alternative music fan. Rejecting mainstream culture and revelling in the underground, punk became a cultural phenomenon. It gave kids with little money and sometimes little talent to rip up the rule books and make unconventional music. As punk rock became more popular it would inevitably result in bigger record sales without necessarily any changes in the concepts behind the music.

The pioneers of the UK punk scene, the Sex Pistols, dissolved after just one full-length album only to return almost twenty years later with the 'Filthy Lucre Live Tour'. The title of the tour suggested the band's obvious intentions to make as much money as possible from the reunion tour, though lead singer Johnny Rotten exclaims that he has 'not once ever joined the establishment.' So selling out would appear to be less about focussing on commercial gain and more about the compromise of personal beliefs. Johnny Rotten was and always will be anti-establishment - a true punk rock icon and not a sell-out by a long shot.

In the early 1990s there was a second-coming of punk largely attributable to the success of American bands The Offspring, Rancid and Green Day, the latter two coming from the same Berkeley music scene that had thrived at 924 Gilman Street. Punk seemed to still be very much alive in the youths of the 1990s - the music, clothing and attitude appeared very similar to that of less than twenty years previous.

As a new 'scene' erupted, punk became popular and found itself on MTV and gaining radio airplay. Green Day signed to major label Reprise Records for the release of 1994's *Dookie* and international superstardom ensued as the album has sold 15 million copies by time of writing. There was little change in the style of Green Day's music, but with better production, more publicity and a dramatic performance at Woodstock II - Green Day hit the mainstream.

Success would come at a small price. The band would not be allowed to play at 924 Gilman Street anymore as the venue prohibits major label bands from performing. The band would be outcasts of the Berkeley music scene and be labelled sell-outs having gained radio airplay across the world as well as regulars on MTV with a string of hits including 'Basket Case', 'Longview' and 'When I Come Around'.

Gilman Street was the premier venue for the up-and-coming second wave of punk that hit the America in the late 80s and early 90s. With strict rules of No Alcohol, No Drugs, No Violence and No Major Label Bands - Gilman showcased a variety of great bands propelling them to international stardom. However, during a gig in 1994, ex Dead Kennedys frontman Jello Biafra was attacked while in the audience. As he was pushed to the floor and assaulted, his attackers continuously shouted 'Sell out rock star, kick him.' Biafra hadn't signed to a major label and had not broken the Gilman rules per se, but this small section of the punk community felt betrayed by one of their own.

Following the success of the mid-90s punk revolution a number of punk bands have continued to break through to the mainstream music consciousness. And as this happens the message of punk, and the music itself, has become more and more diluted until punk to most is just safety pin and a tattoo. To accuse bands that play great music and work hard for success of selling out seems a little harsh but for every Green Day there will be 10 other bands thinking it's their ticket to fame and fortune. Just ask Good Charlotte.

Mike Dirnt, bassist with Green Day, states that "selling out is compromising your musical intention and I don't even know how to do that." Wherever you sit on the act of selling-out, the facts are that Green Day sell too many records and tickets to still play at Gilman Street on Lookout Records. Punk is not dead, but don't for a second believe that the stuff on MTV is punk-rock - it isn't.

## About the Author

Patrick is an expert Research and Travel consultant. His current interest include [Luton Airparks](#), [Luton Airport Parking](#) and I have a [travel blog site](#).

