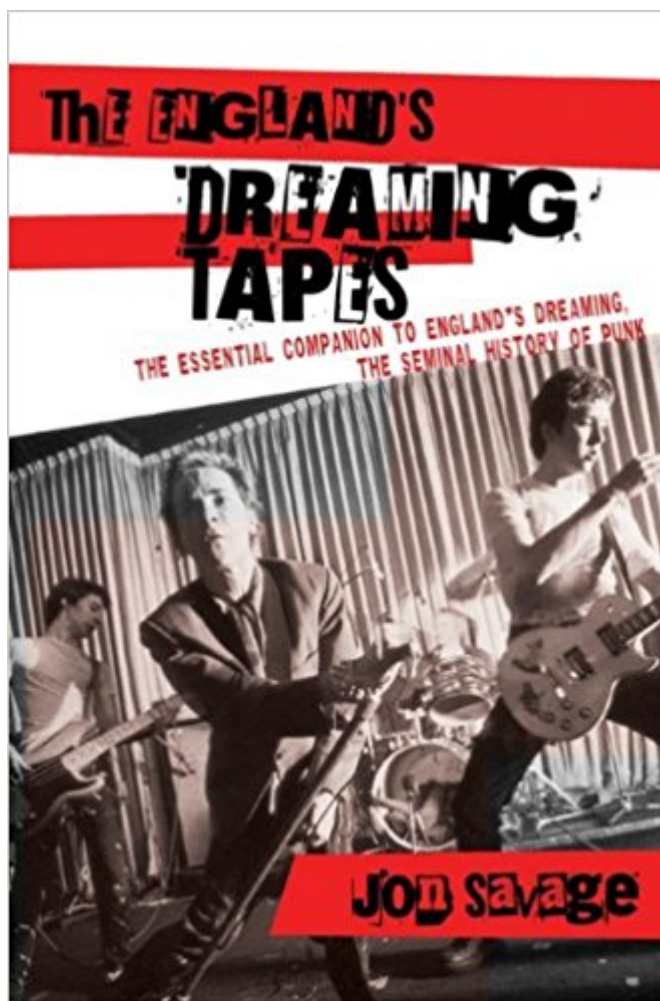


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# The England's Dreaming Tapes



## Synopsis

Jon Savage's 1991 book, *England's Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock, and Beyond*, was hailed by the New York Times Book Review as "the definitive history of the English punk movement." Widely imitated but never equaled, it remains that rare work of music history that appeals to music fans, critics, and scholars alike. In researching *England's Dreaming*, Savage conducted hundreds of hours of interviews of which only a fraction made it into the finished book. Now, in *The England's Dreaming Tapes*, Savage makes available for the first time the full, uncut, sensational story behind the cultural moment that was punk. Here is the story of a generation that changed the world in just a few months in 1976, as told by the scene's major figures: all four original Sex Pistols as well as Joe Strummer, Chrissie Hynde, Jordan, Siouxsie Sioux, Viv Albertine, Adam Ant, Lee Black Childers, Howard Devoto, Pete Shelley, Syl Sylvain, Debbie Wilson, Tony Wilson, Jah Wobble, and many others. Together, they offer a sweeping history of the late 1960s and the 1970s—not just the era's music, but also its radical politics, social issues, fashion, and culture. An invaluable source of information about a movement that has become obscured by myth, these vivid, unvarnished interviews were conducted when punk was only a decade old. In many cases, this was the first time that the subjects had talked about the period. The interviews describe the founding of the Sex Pistols; 430 King's Road, site of the legendary boutique Sex, which helped establish the punk aesthetic; punk rock New York; the cultural landscapes of London and its suburbs; the writers who covered punk; and the Manchester music scene centered around Factory Records. With *The England's Dreaming Tapes*, Savage gives us the first and final word on the music, fashion, and attitude that defined this influential and incendiary era.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The England's Dreaming Tapes takes you back to the genesis, to the very beginning of the cult, back to a time when Poly Styrene was a hippy, when Steve Diggle and John Lydon had long hair, when Siouxsie Sioux was a disco kid. This book holds the provenance of punk, and identifies, through the words of the 59 people Savage interviews, its very essence. . . . Everyone is here— all the bands, all the protagonists, all the club-runners, all journalists, shopkeepers, photographers, and the rest—and it is an absolute joy." —Dylan Jones, GQ (UK)"A journalist on a British music weekly at the time of punk, Savage succeeded in assembling a comprehensive cast of interviewees when he was writing England's Dreaming in the late 1980s, and their unedited voices, presented in this new context, bring the epoch alive with the force of oral history." —Ludovic Hunter-Tilney, The Financial Times"The England's Dreaming Tapes is undoubtedly the best interview-based book on British punk published thus far. It's an indispensable documentary resource that offers panoramic insight into UK punk's most innovative and influential stage; it manages to immerse the reader in the visceral rush and the sheer creative energy of the period at the same time as it provides measured, incisive commentary on that period." —Wilson Neate, Blur

Jon Savage is a writer and broadcaster. His books include England's Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock, and Beyond and Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture and among the documentaries he has written are the award-winning The Brian Epstein Story and Joy Division. He lives in North Wales.

After reading "England's Dreaming" (see my review), I had to go for the full monty w/ this oral biography. I was swayed by the strong reviews here, but have to say I was let down somewhat. There's a couple of issues w/ this book that pose a problem. First, quite a few contributors are completely unknown to us punk fans stateside. There's always been music that doesn't translate from England to the States, so I suppose this is no surprise. But since author Jon Savage chose to include unfamiliar voices, how about a photograph at least showing us who's doing the talking? Or better yet, include a photographic representative for each and every contributor? At the heart of this book is the back story of English punk band par excellence, The Sex Pistols. Music has never been

more pungent than theirs, and the level of their audience antagonism rates right up there w/ Iggy Pop. What true punk fan would want it any other way? You hear from them all: Malcolm, at the helm, John Lydon, bassist Glen Matlock (writer of "Pretty Vacant" and "God Save the Queen"), Steve Jones, lead guitar and drummer Paul Cook. Anyone seriously into The Pistols, this here is the inside dope on the band that re-wrote rock and roll history. Go ahead and check out the oh so-fun portrayal of Steve Jones. Tangents include: Steve the sex machine and Steve the thief. Aside from being a fabulous guitarist in the Johnny Thunders' tradition, Steve Jones proudly admits to regularly nicking other bands' equipment, most notably post-Barrett Pink Floyd's! The post-Barrett distinction must be noted because while Pink Floyd, the corporate machine, was famously depised by the English punk movement (hence the famous "I hate Pink Floyd" t-shirt), Syd Barrett was actually sought out as producer by both The Sex Pistols and The Damned. It should go w/o saying that this never happened. Other interesting Brits included: Malcolm McLaren, Jordan (whose outrageous attire and hardcore attitude made her famous), Siouxsie Sioux, Captain Sensible (The Damned) and Pete Shelly (The Buzzcocks). Without much effort, the publisher could amp this up a notch and give this the treatment it deserves. Otherwise, an excellent oral history of the British punk scene with serious inside flavor.

As advertised. Great seller.

An incredible insight, written and compiled when Punk was out of vogue and many were trying to distance them selves from it. Essential.

I admired "England's Dreaming," the essential study of punk's birth from music critic Jon Savage, who watched. For me, it's the best account of its rapid rise and, post-Grundy interview with the Sex Pistols, fall as the small vehicle of artists, intellectuals, students, toilers at dead-end jobs if they were "lucky," and I suppose even a few bonafide working class kids turned into a media-hyped bandwagon where many leaped on, eager to cash in on by what after that TV appearance by the Pistols and pals the end of '76 transformed into a cynical case study in capitalism harnessing an "alternative" subculture. Not that some who were there, alongside Savage, resisted the lure to sign with big labels and reach wider audiences, but this conflicted among purists with the art-school, hermetic, and countercultural (often reflexively anti-hippie, but many older punks had dodgy pedigrees in other bands, in the days of flared trousers: "sub-heavy metal played badly" in Pete Shelley's phrase shows up along a love for Iggy, Bowie, and Roxy) suspicion of selling out. I write

this review the day manufactured publicity rolls out for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, and I reflect on how little protest occurs compared to the punks the summer of the Silver one in '77. The final section of these conversations deals with the post-Jubilee Pistols, the major labels, the drugs, the tours, the fatigue, and it makes dispiriting if necessary reading after earlier idealism. Savage in this compendium provides perhaps a fans-only companion to his own narrative, but the tapes--transcribed here from his interviews edited with those featured in the original "England's Dreaming"--convey nuance and offer necessary testimony on what I find are three reiterated, key issues. First, the Grundy interview: this marks a before-and-after moment for the fledgling punks. Marco Pirroni sums it up with Sham 69 as "an excuse to be stupid" (359); Steve Jones separates the music before the publicity with the media; Paul Cook charges Malcolm McLaren's manipulation of the band's tensions that sapped its musical energies. As many repeat, after Glen Matlock was sacked, the Pistols only wrote four songs in their Sid Vicious stage. Matlock himself explains how the earlier band emphasized a slower power, not a Ramones speed. The Who and Small Faces influences gave the trio of musicians a less strident, but forceful foundation for Johnny Rotten's sneering vocals. Second, this leads into how well the Pistols could play, and why that mattered--or not. Jordan notes how Rotten developed the authority "to sing with conviction, those sorts of powerful words every night, words that were black and white, not clouds and rolling hills." (51) But, she thinks he lost that "need

"The England's Dreaming Tapes will surely become the final word..." as the blurb round the back cover says. A bold claim when p. 721 states that "Joe Strummer died in 1992." Picking the nit aside, the book's a hell of a lot of fun to wade through [if not hernia-inducing].

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