



GO ahead... PUNK made my day

Laura Millar is one of the first people through the doors of Las Vegas's hottest new attraction: a punk rock museum...

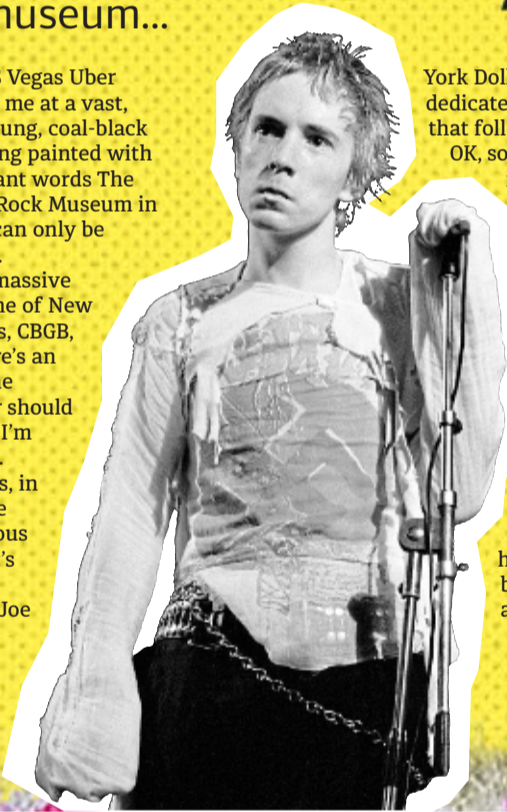


MY LAS Vegas Uber drops me at a vast, low-slung, coal-black building painted with the giant words The Punk Rock Museum in what can only be

described as slime green.

Inside, one wall has a massive monochrome photo of one of New York's most famous clubs, CBGB, superimposed on it. There's an actual doorway where the picture of the club's door should be - stepping through it, I'm transported back in time.

All the way to the 1970s, in fact, where before me are glass cases housing various artefacts. I spot Joan Jett's leather jacket, a shirt belonging to The Clash's Joe Strummer, and an outfit from punk singer Beki Bondage. There are also original gig posters and flyers for everyone from Blondie to New



York Dolls. Beyond are rooms dedicated to bands from the decades that followed.

OK, so I wasn't born at *quite* the right time to be pogoing in sweaty clubs to the latest from the Ramones or the Sex Pistols (left), but any self-respecting music lover has grown up with punk's iconic and anarchic sounds and looks in their consciousness: ripped trousers, safety pins, Never Mind The B****cks... And now five decades' worth of memorabilia have been curated here, over an area stretching 12,000sq ft off a highway roughly halfway between the city's downtown area and the Strip. There's a

tattoo parlour on site, as well as a chapel, bar and, of course, gift shop. It's the brainchild of two people passionate about punk: Michael 'Fat Mike' John Burkett, singer and bassist with band NOFX, and tour manager Lisa Brownlee, who's been on the road with everyone from Alien Ant Farm, Bebe Rexha and Fall Out Boy to, er, Justin Bieber.

So what inspired them? 'Well, our original plan was to open a punk rock store,' says Burkett, an engaging character with a shock of bright blue hair. 'I've known Lisa for years and asked if she'd be up for running it - then she had the idea to include some memorabilia.'

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'Why's it in Las Vegas? Why not?'

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'And when I started looking at properties here, the idea for a museum came to us instead,' adds Brownlee, a Debbie Harry blonde with Vivienne Westwood badges pinned to her leather jacket.

'We got in touch with everyone we knew and because this was just after the pandemic, people had been clearing out their lofts or garages, so it was the perfect time for them to donate stuff.'

And why Vegas? 'Why not?' says Burkett. 'People always want to come to this city as there's so much going on, even if it's not necessarily the first place you associate with punk rock. There's something for everyone here.'

Along with a collective of associates, with Canadian punk singer Talli Osborne as the museum's ambassador, they're planning a regular programme of tours, talks and jam sessions.

Fired up, I head to nearby Area 15, another recent addition to the Vegas entertainment scene which jerks me from the punk era into the rave one, as it's covered in fluorescent paintings and thrums



Band together: The Clash (right) and New York Dolls (right, below)



Collective: Laura Millar (centre) meets Lisa Brownlee (pink top) and Talli Osborne (dress). Above: The museum's Bryan Ray Turcotte



with house music. It features immersive and VR experiences (passes from £39.50, area15.com), and I visit Wink World, a psychedelic journey, and Omega Mart, a slyly subversive art installation set in a supermarket. It is, like a lot of Vegas, full-on. Thankfully I'm staying downtown at the new Circa hotel around Fremont Street, the 'old' part of a city which only came into being just

over a century ago. Here there are walkable neighbourhoods, great bars and restaurants - don't miss Evel Knievel-themed pizza joint Evel Pie (evelpie.com) or hip brunch spot



Esther's Kitchen (estherslv.com) - and fascinating museums. I while away a few hours in the Mob Museum (tickets from £24, themobmuseum.org) and send my Insta game into overdrive at the Neon Museum, where old casino signs are sent to rest (tickets from £16, neonmuseum.org).

But I can't avoid the Strip forever, particularly as it's en route to the airport, and I stop off at one final new Vegas destination which, like most other things here, is big, busy and slightly over the top. However, because it's the latest branch of Brewdog - albeit with its own in-house brewery, vast rooftop bar and a restaurant serving the likes of wagyu beef and lobster - I know exactly what to order: a nice cold pint of - what else? - Punk IPA...

Tickets from £24, thepunkrockmuseum.com. Rooms at Circa hotel from £97, circalasvegas.com; return flights from London to Las Vegas from £551, virginatlantic.com. See visitlasvegas.com

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