



Zounds Demystified: Lyrics and Notes

Steve Lake

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"Zounds has been described as a political band. It has been labelled as squat-rock, pop-rock, peace-punk, anarcho-punk, post-punk, psychedelic, punk-pop and a million other things. But those are just labels, I'm not that bothered what people call it really." Steve Lake, June 2013

This is part Steve's autobiography, part band history and part insiders story of the 1980's UK anarcho punk scene.

Zounds was formed around the nucleus of Steve Lake and evolved from a number of jamming sessions with other musicians and friends in Oxford, taking in influences from the Velvet Underground to the Sex Pistols. The band began performing gigs in 1977/78, and became more politicized owing to troubles with police and unfolding events of the cold war, and became more and more involved with free festivals, alongside The Mob, with whom they developed a close association.

They met up with fellow anarchists Crass when, legend has it, their van broke down on the road. They made their way to nearby Dial House, where Crass were based, who helped them with repairs. The two bands became friends, and although musically very divergent, they shared many common political views. After undergoing several line-up changes Zounds shortly afterwards released their first EP, *Can't Cheat Karma*, on the Crass Records label. The EP featured possibly their most well-known track "Subvert", a call to arms against the grind of daily life. The release of this EP and association with Crass led to an increase in the band's profile in the embryonic Anarcho-punk scene, touring with both Crass and the Poison Girls, as well as performing several squat gigs in West Berlin.

The band released their first album *The Curse of Zounds* on Rough Trade Records in 1981, recording and mixing the LP within five days. The cover art, by anarchist artist Clifford Harper, featured a painting of fire fighters apparently trying to put out a blaze at the Houses of Parliament in Westminster. However, the picture continued onto the back cover, which showed that in fact they are spraying the fire with petrol, thus feeding it. In this book Steve Lake, principle writer of the band Zounds, collects all the band's lyrics and illuminates each with a relevant commentary. It contains personal reminiscences about how the band and their peers lived, it delves into the background of the lyrics and looks at the wider social context in which the band operated.

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