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Early Punk

In 1970, Lou Reed and the Velvet Underground shocked New York audiences with a musical style that later became the standard of the punk genre. Lou Reed's songs greatly contrasted the popular music of the Beatles. Songs such as "Heroin" and "Venus in Furs" not only contained subject matter thought to be offensive to the general public, they were intentionally played with an amateur and aggressive musical style. The use of electronic noise with feedback and dissonance at nearly unbearable volume made the band undesirable for radio, while their rough look and sullen demeanor on stage made them undesirable for popular rock venues.

Fortunately, Andy Warhol produced the band's first album and incorporated the Velvet Underground in a series of mixed media shows. The Velvet Underground slowly developed a cult following which was attracted to their antisocial, non-conformist and non-commercial musical style.



Blondie

New York Punk Scene

Patti Smith

In 1971, Patti Smith, backed by rock-guitarist Lenny Kaye, appeared in New York City performing a unique style of musical poetry. Her poems were personal and emotional. Her vocal style was erratic and avant-garde. She regularly played at Manhattan's Bowery and CBGB's, two clubs known for original unsigned bands.

Patti Smith established herself as a progressive musical voice with her successful 1975 album, Horses, on which she recorded a version of Van Morrison's song, "Gloria." Her most popular hit was "Because The Night," which was co-authored by Bruce Springsteen.