

## 2.3. Aesthetics, anti-aesthetics and “bad taste”: a brief journey through Portuguese punk record covers (1977-1998)

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### Abstract

*Aesthetics, Anti-aesthetics and “Bad Taste”* intends to be a brief journey through Portuguese *punk*, by assessing the covers of records released between 1977 and 1998. Thus, within a critical and historical approach, we will look at the courses taken during the first two decades, from the first records released up until the widespread use of computers, emphasizing the awareness and recognition of national and international ideas and, above all, their plastic fulfillment.

**Keywords:** Art & Design, Do-It-Yourself labels, Portuguese Punk, Record Sleeves.

### Introduction

Winston Smith, the graphic designer of *Dead Kennedys* LP's and other punk releases and fanzines, in an interview, synthesized the importance of punk records cover art in a sentence, and I quote it as the starting point for this paper:

Record covers can be a mirror to society... Something you can sink your teeth into... you could bite into it... It is an opportunity for us to change the world.

Keeping this in mind, I bring forward an analysis of Portuguese punk record covers focusing on both the relation between the ideas, ideals and the artworks; and how they relate to society in general and to Portuguese society in particular. All this will be organized in a chronological and historical way so that we can understand the changes that took place throughout the two decades I'll be focusing on and at the same time provide a brief journey through the Portuguese punk scenes between 1978 and 1998.

### “1978-1982”

Starting with a brief roundup of Portugal prior to the emergence of punk we shall go back to 1974 and settle the 25th of April revolution as the point that marks the opening of Portugal to the world and the urgent need for forms, material forms, of freedom. The following years Portugal saw a sort of invasion of all different sorts of cultural material among which music. To cut a long story short and focusing on punk, it was in 1977, that a young Portuguese emigrant living in London, named Rui Castro, who had a label and band named *Warm*, began sending tapes and records that were being released at the time in the U.K. to António Sergio,

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an already well-known Portuguese radio-host, who aired them regularly, thus introducing punk to Portugal. Alongside with that radio-show, some major labels started to release new bands (but no Portuguese bands), stores imported records, and those who had better economic conditions began to travel abroad more freely, updating themselves with the latest trends and bringing new sounds and ideas back to Portugal.

Influenced by all that was happening, with an urge to rebel and to create something they could identify with, around 1978 new kids started to form bands, with more energy and ideas than actual musical skills or professionalism. Among them, in Lisbon we had the *Faixas*, *Minas & Armadilhas*, *Xutos & Pontapés*, *UHF* from Almada, to name a few.

Paying attention to the new scene rising, *Metro-Som*, a small label from Lisbon specialized in fado and folklore music that had also already released a couple of prog-rock bands decided to contract an already existing rock band and release them as punk, in order to cash in on the new trend. As so, what is now considered the first Portuguese punk 7" was released in 1978: *Aqui d'el Rock's* «Há que violentar o sistema». Out of the suburbs of Lisbon, *Aqui d'el Rock*, were a former hard-prog band named *Osiris*, that by 1978 got a new line-up, changed their name and started to deliver a more raw rocking act in the vein of *The Stooges* and *M.C.5*. Despite some early conflicts with supposed "real" punks, since the ideas - punk ideas or April ideals it's up to us to decide - energy and lifestyle were alike, they were soon adopted by the emerging scene and began sharing the same concert bills. Focusing on their first 7", the sleeve, signed by *Aqui d'el Rock* themselves, consisted on a painting of a blood-red lettering where we can read the a-side music title, «Há que violentar o sistema» («We shall violate the system»), and stains over a black background. Despite the poorly designed band logo, probably inserted inside the red stain at a later stage by the record label themselves, and the unnecessary "punk" round label, the sleeve managed to express the violence contained in the title and to sort of visually translate their scream against the tedium felt in the post-25<sup>th</sup> of April, post-PREC times. Unfortunately, the song is a never-ending epic, clocking 4:20, exactly the opposite of the speed and duration that punk was craving for...

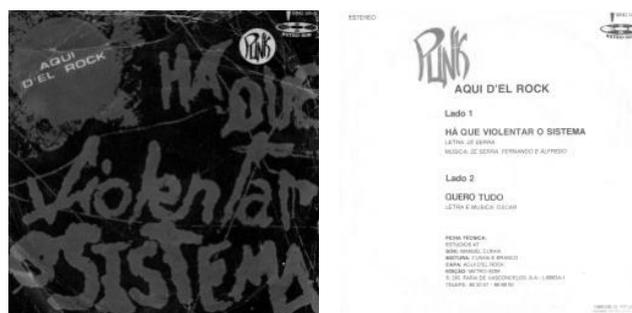


Figure 1 a/b – *Aqui d'el Rock, Há Que Violentar o Sistema, 7"*, Lisboa, *Metro-Som*, 1978

This record was followed by another single with two straight-forward, much more direct songs. The sleeve, signed by Rui Santos consists on a photo that says little or nothing about the band or the music except, maybe, a notion of speed that these two new songs, finally, achieved. «Eu sei» («I know») counts 2 minutes; «Dedicada (a quem nos rouba)» («Dedicated (to those who steal us)») counts almost three minutes. No punk ideals or criticism were expressed in this sleeve that looked no different from any other standard rock band. Maybe it

even looked worse with that new, colorful, neon-like, disco-sound inspired band logo that might be misleading. A record label option which shows that they were paying more attention to *Saturday Night Fever* than to punk.



Figure 2 a/b – Aquí d'el Rock, *Dedicada (a quem nos rouba)*, 7”, Lisboa, Metro-Som, 1979

*Aquí d'el Rock* also ended up having a major role in the emerging scene, since it was through them that a new band named *UHF* managed to get a record deal with the label *Metro-Som*. Coming from the southern suburbs of Lisbon, across the river Tejo in the city of Almada, *UHF* were also formed in 1978, and played their first show in that same year, in Lisbon, along with *Aquí d'el Rock*, *Minas & Armadilhas* and *Faiscas*. A few months later their first 7” comes out and sold-out fast, seeing a second pressing with a different sleeve shortly after.

The first pressing sleeve was signed by Artur Guedes, and consisted on a drawing of city buildings outlines with no definition nor details, just monochromatic solids. Although the city is not identified, since the author insisted in reflecting it in a river, we can assume that that the river is Tejo and therefore the portrayed suburb, Almada. Almada, and I quote the record liner-notes was “a city poor in human contacts, a city made of concrete and indifference”, which is completely the opposite to the traditional and picturesque city of Lisbon shown during the fifty years of dictatorship. Despite the terrible artwork is, it was here that, for the first time, an image of a suburb was portrayed. Music-wise, the record features a song named «A Caçada» («The Hunt») that clocks 1:38, almost one third of the *Aquí d'el Rock* song, no solos and with apocalyptic lyrics that makes it one of the first punk songs recorded in Portugal.

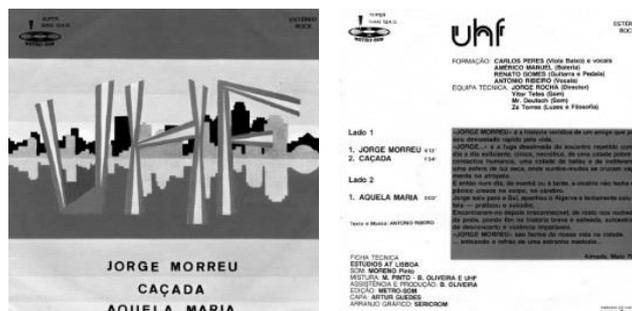


Figure 3 a/b – UHF, *Jorge Morreu*, 7”, Lisboa, Metro-Som, 1979

For the second pressing *Metro-Som* conceived a new front sleeve. Using a photographic negative of the band playing live they tried, with all the sombre and funeral feeling, to express the mourning for the death of the character Jorge, whom the title track refers to. Poorly conceived graphically speaking, this record, along with the second *Aqui d'el Rock 7"*, reveals the total lack of cultural references and artistic skills by the designers at *Metro-Som*. And also the fact that they had no idea about what punk was, or could be, about.



Figure 4 a/b – UHF, *Jorge Morreu, 7"*, Lisboa, Metro-Som, 1979

With these three records we close the first chapter of Portuguese punk. To briefly summarize it, despite the fact that there were several bands at the time, and an audience to listen to them, this early beginning of punk suffers from a lack of interest and investment by record labels; and the visual or graphic side was not a priority nor a part of the bands' agenda, who failed to understand the possibilities of an artwork as a mean to express a message or to express themselves or simply be creative.

If on the one hand, as seen, the emancipatory side, the freedom to create as one wished, that the *do-it-yourself* ethics of punk could imply was not reflected in the record sleeves, on the other hand, many people involved in this punk scene invested in multiple forms personal expression through fanzines, posters or photography, or by organizing their own concerts and creating their own independent labels. Once again, it would be António Sergio, the radio-host and music critic, the person behind this wave of new-found creativity. Inspired by other do-it-yourself labels in 1977 he came up with *Pirate Dreams Records* and, using one of the tapes Rui Castro sent him from London, pressed an LP simply titled «Punk Rock 77» featuring the *Sex Pistols*, *The Jam*, *Screwdriver*, among others. As far as the artwork goes, despite the quality of the pressing, it would be the most interesting object released in this early years of punk in Portugal. Signed by "Faustfried Rich'Ma" it would consist of a collage of band photos and punk artifacts – from razorblades and safety pins to Johnny Rotten's "Destroy" t-shirt along with hand drawn lettering and bits of film -, all in negative to give the artwork a darker, no future, tone and feel. Unfortunately, this was the first and only *Pirate Dream Records* release. Because the bands were not licensed, the record was in fact a bootleg, and therefore copies of this LP had to be confiscated and destroyed.

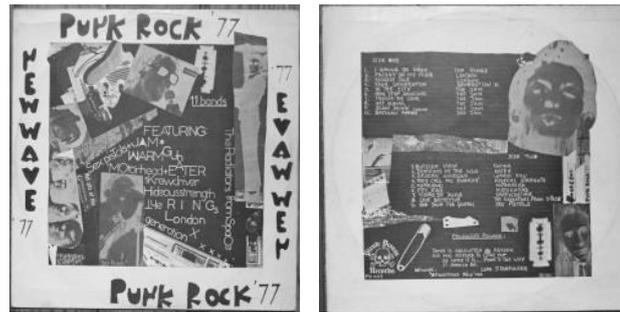


Figure 5 a/b – VA, *Punk Rock '77*, LP, Lisboa, Pirate Dream Records, 1978(?)

After this very short adventure, António Sérgio began to work legally, creating the *Da Nova* label, which among Portuguese pressings of international bands, released what would be a reference record, marking the transition to the 1980's: *Corpo Diplomático's* «Música Moderna». Formed by some ex-members of *Faíscas* – as previously mentioned, one of the first Portuguese punk bands – they got together to form a new band with a concept, not explicitly punk but still provoking, starting with the band name – *Corpo Diplomático* («Diplomatic Corps») - or the record title – «Música Moderna» (“Modern music”) in already post-modern years - ideas that would be worked lyrically and music wise but also on the artwork.

The front-sleeve consisted on a maoist image of Chinese individuals working out, and the back-sleeve on a rhythmic collage by Fernando Cerdeira, with direct Dada influences, making use of cut and paste techniques for the first time in a record sleeve. Over a new-wave blazer suit we can see images of the band members stuck like pins and a rotating mechanical device that divides the image in an almost constructivist way that at the same time gives a sense of motion to the image.

They would also release a 7" at the time with an almost generic sleeve that includes a small reproduction of the LP back-sleeve. They would disband shortly after and some members would form *Heróis do Mar*, a project in which they would take aesthetic concerns much further.



Figura 6 a/b – Corpo Diplomático, *Música Moderna*, LP, Lisboa, Da Nova, 1979



Figura 7 a/b – Corpo Diplomático, *A Festa, 7"*, Lisboa, Da Nova, 1979

## 1980: Portuguese rock boom

*Corpo Diplomático* was a sort of alien phenomenon in the Portuguese music scene and they were only released because of António Sergio's dedication and friendship. No one actually heard or cared about them. But soon after record labels' lack of interest in the late 70s new bands would change. In 1980, due to a professional musicians' strike - who demanded better conditions and higher wages -, labels began paying attention to what was happening, thus realizing that there were bands with just four people and no need for arrangements, desperate to release and play, which would be a better and more cost-effective investment. An LP record by Rui Veloso would soon sell thousands of copies and right after dozens of bands were signed, generating what would be called "Portuguese rock boom".

I won't go in-depth about this phenomenon but it's important to note that it was among all this that we saw the birth of the independent label named *Rotação*, ran by, and once again, António Sergio, now with the help of Cristina Ferrão. Punk was dead by then but a couple of bands that this label released came from the early punk movement, or were highly influenced by it, such as *Xutos & Pontapes* and *Opinião Pública*.

Focusing on *Opinião Pública*, a band from Lisbon, it was in 1981 that *Rotação* released their first single, named «Puto da Rua» («Street Kid»), where the lyrics outline part of the social context of Portugal in the early 80's, a city and society in development, no longer euphoric with the ideals of the revolution, trying to set the pace with what was happening outside. It was Portugal, in the South of Europe, as they named their LP where, as they described and I quote, "we already have rock, we have disco, coca-cola, flippers and the slums, invasions and class war", in a list that also includes color TV, lack of space in the subways, nudism in the Algarve, thousands of miles of highways and tourists. Back to "Puto da Rua", street kids were also part of the new Portuguese society and synthesized the angst of a new generation, dealing with gaps and the discovery of "alcohol and substances", to quote the lyric.

The sleeve translates the music and lyrics into a photo - no author credited - and for the first time we can see a direct relation to a reality. Shot near Praça de Espanha / Sete Rios we can see the Lisbon suburbs in the back, with their 70's /early 80's architecture. Unfortunately the photo was ruined by the artwork which framed it with a band logo, an enormous yellow label logo and song title. The back sleeve showed the band in a late-70s, New York punk-like pose, in the vein of *Television* or similar to U.K. power-pop bands.



Figure 8 a/b – Opinião Pública, *Puto da Rua*, 7", Lisboa, Rotação, 1981

Also released by *Rotação* were *Xutos & Pontapés*, nowadays a major rock act but at the time still inspired by the punk rock scene they helped to develop. Their first 7”, «Sémen», is released in 1981, three years after they started playing. By then they had already changed their music style, more rock and less punk, as the *Joe Jackson* inspired sleeve can confirm. Their second 7”, released in 1982, shows a generic live photo signed by António Pedro and the back sleeve also a photo, this time by Jean Jacques.



Figure 9 a/b – Xutos & Pontapés, *Sémen*, 7”, Lisboa, Rotação, 1981



Figure 10 a/b – Xutos & Pontapés, *Toca e Foge*, 7”, Lisboa, Rotação, 1982

A quick note before closing the *Rotação* chapter: they would also release a 7” of a new band by former *Aqui d’el Rock* members, now called *Mau Mau*, who by then were playing a more new-wave sound.

Another band worth mentioning from the early 1980’s “Portuguese rock boom” are *Street Kids*. Focusing solely on their «Tropa, Não!» («Army, No!»), this would be the first explicit anti-militarist lyrics, a theme that would reemerge in the 1990’s punk/hard-core scene. And the fact that the record has probably one of the best photos from those days where we can see a clear notion of photographic pose, a concept translated to image and a work of the *mise-en-scène*.



Figure 11 – Street Kids, *Tropa Não*, 7”, Lisboa, Vadeca, 1982

To this small discography, which is already diverging a bit from punk, we could also add bands like *Tilt*, *Grupo Parlamentar* and *Speeds* for the energy or rawness, although it seems this was more due to recording and other technical incapacities than ideals or ethic. None of them managed to conceive a single slightly interesting artwork. The *Stratus* 7” might be the only cover worth a closer look, «Um Chuto no Quarto» («A fix in the room»), that explicitly

features drugs on the front sleeve. Curiously, although drugs were a major issue in the early 80's, and during all that decade, especially when heroin became more easily accessible, this theme would rarely feature on songs or artwork.



Figure 12 – Tilt, *Só Quero o Rock*, 7", Porto, Roda, 1981



Figure 13 – Tilt, *Bolinhas de Sabão*, 7", Porto, Roda, 1981



Figure 14 – Tilt, *Play-Boy*, 7", Lisboa, Materfonis, 1982



Figure 15 – Speeds, *Today's Not a Good Day*, 7", Lisboa, RPE, 1980)



Figure 16 – Speeds, *She's Gonna Leave Me*, 7", Lisboa, Gira, 1980)



Figure 17 – Stratus, *Um Chuto No Quarto*, 7", Lisboa, Vimúsica, 1982

Much more interesting, graphic-wise, would be the fanzines and demos, which visually translated the chaos, violence and confusion of the times during which they were published as we can see in the front sleeve of *Estado de Sítio* (1978) fanzine, done by a member of the punk band *Minas & Armadilhas* in the late 70's, *Desordem Total* (1978-1979) or *Leitmotiv* (1980).



Figure 18 a – Borges, Paulo, *Estado de Sítio*, nº 1, Lisboa, 1977



Figure 18 b – *Leitmotiv*, nº 1, Lisboa, 1980

Back to records and bands, in 1982, *Xutos & Pontapés* released an LP compiling their material from 1978 until then. Closing a period in their career, 1982 can also be read as a closing year of rock in Portugal. *Heróis do Mar* were sort of taking all the attention as well as other small rock bands that were getting bigger, more professional and backed by majors.

## From punk to rock

In the meanwhile, among the new-wave and new-romantics, a new punk scene was forming, highly influenced by English *street punk* and *oi* but also by the likes of *The Clash*. This generation would have more politically concerned and “in-your-face” lyrics, but also, and this is something rare in Portuguese punk, a sense of humor.

With a venue in Lisbon to back and support them, *Rock Rendez Vous*, it was there that many of the forthcoming punk bands - *Crise Total*, *Kú de Judas*, *Condenação Pacífica*, *Mata-Ratos*, *Jardim do Enforcado*, to name a few - started or got bigger opportunities, not only by being allowed to play live and in decent conditions, but also due to the record label that they also ran which would release LP's compiling live songs from the bands.



Figure 19 a/b – VIA, *Ao Vivo no Rock Rendez Vous em 1984*, LP, Lisboa, Dansa do Som, 1984

Focusing on the bands from that generation that would later release records, we shall start with *Peste & Sida*. Formed in Lisbon in 1986 they would release their first LP in the following year, after gaining some visibility with the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Rock Rendez Vous* contest where they would reach the finals. Highly influenced by *The Clash* music wise, their first record would pay tribute to them in the artwork - and therefore to Elvis too - although the chosen image ended up being four street dogs, most likely representing the four band members.



Figure 20 a/b – Peste & Sida, *Veneno*, LP, Lisboa, Transmídia, 1987

Their second LP, released in 1989, immediately became a landmark in the Portuguese scene for being one of the few coherent punk albums, featured one of the best artworks to date, a group of nuns cheering – the use of religious imagery was still provocative by then – with the ironic saying «Portem-se bem» («Behave yourselves»). Signed by Manuel San Payo, brother of João San Payo, *Peste & Sida* guitarist, this simple, direct and humorous image would be complemented by the inside booklet, very much inspired by the *Dead Kennedys*, with collages and drawings.



Figura 21 a/b – Peste & Sida, *Portem-se Bem*, LP, Lisboa, Polydor, 1989

A later *Peste & Sida* release, «Orgia Paroquial» («Parochial Orgy»), a cover of an 1980's Lisbon punk band named *Vômito*, would return to the same imagery but in the meanwhile that band was already moving from punk to rock, a shift that would be reflected in the ever-growing uninteresting artwork.



Figure 22 – Peste & Sida, *Orgia Paroquial*, 12", Lisboa, Ariola, 1992



Figure 23 a/b – Peste & Sida, *É que é!*, LP, Lisboa, Polydor, 1990



Figure 24 – Peste & Sida, *Eles andam aí*, LP, Lisboa, Ariola, 1992)



Figure 25 – Peste & Sida, *Tu queres ecus*, 12", Lisboa, Ariola, 1992

Like *Peste & Sida*, the next band we will focus on, *Mata-Ratos*, was crucial for the Portuguese punk scene and also got more visibility thanks to the *Rock Rendez Vous* contests. Formed in Lisbon 1982, after several line-up changes and a few demos, *Mata-Ratos* managed to build a name in the scene and in 1990 they released their first LP. Out on a major label, produced by Paulo Pedro Gonçalves - former member of *Fáscas* -, this LP would have one of the best cover arts among Portuguese releases. Managing to capture the energy of *Mata-Ratos* live concerts – the bomb represents it all -, the author, Nuno Saraiva, in one of his first works in a career dedicated to illustration and comics, didn't forget to reproduce the audience, which at the time, at least in Lisbon, comprised of a mixture of punks, rockabillys and skinheads, carefully drawn with attention to detail from clothes to hairstyles.

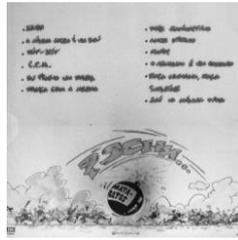
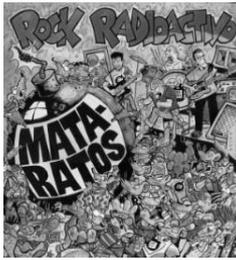


Figure 26 a/b – Mata-Ratos, *Rock Radioactivo*, LP, EMI / Valentim de Carvalho, Lisboa, 1990



Figure 27 a/b – Mata-Ratos, *Expulsos do Bar*, 7", Drunk Records, Lisboa, 1994

The next record would be «Expulsos do Bar» («Expelled from the Bar»), released four years later, in 1994, distributed on a new independent label, *Fast & Loud*, and the sleeve illustrates the content: songs about drinking, partying, farting and puking. The next record follows the same approach musically and artwork wise it is practically irrelevant to our argument, as no social comment, aesthetic concerns or ideologies are expressed, except maybe for the back-sleeve of the «Bebedeiras e Miúdas» («Drinking and Girls») 7", that amidst the confusion features a drawing of two skinheads, Portuguese and Brazilian, easily identified by the dress codes, cheering and drinking.



Figure 28 a/b – Mata-Ratos, *Estás Aqui...Estás Ali...*, CD, Lisboa, Drunk Record, 1995

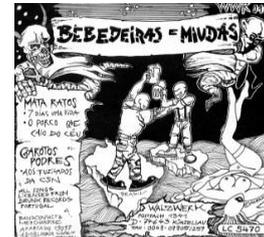


Figure 29 a/b – Mata-Ratos / Garotos Podres, *Bebedeiras e Miúdas*, 7", Alemanha, Walzwerk Records, 1995

In parallel to all this, a new independent label is created, *Ama Romanta*. Highly influenced by do-it-yourself and punk ethics – some of the people involved were part of the early punk scene – they soon would put out all sorts of records, from punk to jazz to electronics. Concerning this label we will only look at two of their releases. Firstly, a compilation named «Divergências», released in 1986, where, among others, we can hear the punk band *Grito Final*. While the front-sleeve expresses nothing, the back sleeve, hand-drawn by one of the first female punks in Portugal, Ondina Pires, doesn't follow regular graphic structures making a free use of the space, working the lettering and adding small details.

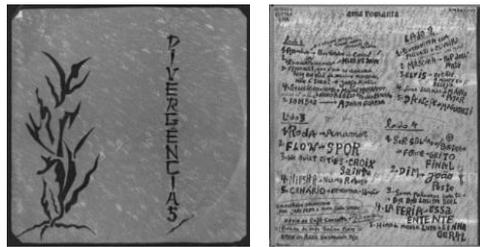


Figure 30 a/b – VIA, *Divergências*, LP, Lisboa, Ama Romanta, 1986

Secondly, the punk rockabilly band from Porto, *Cães Vadios*, whose 7" came out in 1987, being one of the few releases from a band outside Lisbon. The poorly drawn almost childish sleeve, created by the band themselves, consists of a joke inspired by Hanna-Barbera's *Top Cat* where the cat is replaced by a psychobilly dog, as we can see by the haircut, where the filth and violent scenery can help build an atmosphere for the music. The back-sleeve has the classic, almost uninteresting, collage with photos of friends, where the clothes and hairstyle might be the only thing interesting to look at after all these years.



Figure 31 a/b – Cães Vadios, *Cães Vadios*, Lisboa, Ama Romanta, 1987

Punk was generally associated with anarchist, or extreme left-wing politics, but in all the freedom they reclaimed there was also space for other political wings which soon would use the same music style to express themselves, with similar energy and rage. Focusing on the not very prolific right wing skinhead scene there are two bands we must look at: *Guarda de Ferro*, for being the first skinhead band, and *Lusitanoi*.

Even if in the beginning *Guarda de Ferro* did not assume an extreme political agenda, on their first 7" released in 1991, a typical skinhead imagery is used to portray strength, and to impose fear: shaved head, army boots, bomber jackets, baseball bats. This photograph is framed by an uninteresting graphic design. For the back sleeve a band symbol was created, like a montage of several elements that concerned the band – celtic cross, skulls, medieval axes, and also a few Japanese characters left unexplained. On their first LP released in 1992, they display a clear nationalist stance with ideals expressed in songs such as «Portugal aos Portugueses» («Portugal to the Portuguese») and on the sleeve's chosen image – a reproduction of a painting of the historical Aljubarrota Battle.



Figure 32 a/b – Guarda de Ferro, *Short Hair, Heavy Boots, Big Beat!*, 7", U.S.A., Steve Priest Fan Club, 1991



Figure 33 a/b – Guarda de Ferro, *s/t*, LP, France, Boot Boyz Records, 1992

As for *LusitanOi!*, the front sleeve of their «Olho por Olho, Dente por Dente» («Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth») shows a drawing of a typical skinhead, again identified by his dress code, fighting against a riot police officer, which can parallel to some anarchist graphics that will be seen in the future. The lyrics inside explain the band's position against the corrupt governments at the time, demanding another regime.



Figure 34 a/b – LusitanOi!, *Olho por Olho, Dente por Dente*, 7", Italy, Tuono Records, 1994)

## 1990's a brand new age

In the transition from the 1980's to the 1990's a new band was formed with *Ku de Judas* members, *Censurados*. Releasing their first songs on an independent compilation named «Feedback 001» they would soon get signed by a new label, *El Tatu Records* ran by Tim of *Xutos & Pontapés*.



Figure 35 a/b – VIA, *Feedback 001*, LP, Lisboa, Feedback, 1990)

In 1990 they released their first LP, a straight forward punk rock album, more melodic than *Kú de Judas*, still with political lyrics but on a more personal perspective. The front sleeve for this LP would be a black and white photo of the band members, with special emphasis on the leather jacket, capturing a small movement that translates the band’s live energy, for which they were already known. The army type lettering would add punk credibility.

Moving fast from an underground to a more mainstream circuit, thanks to *Xutos & Pontapés*, on the second LP, «Confusão», sleeve, which came out in 1991, *Censurados* revealed a more serious approach to music. The front featured a mixed media artwork and the back-sleeve featured four live photos that represent a maturity that the sound confirmed but also a departure from their punk rock roots. Their third and last album, «Sopa» was released by a major label in 1993 but by this stage, *Censurados* were nothing but another rock band, that fortunately split right afterwards.



Figure 36 a/b – Censurados, *S/T*, LP, Lisboa, El Tatu Records, 1990

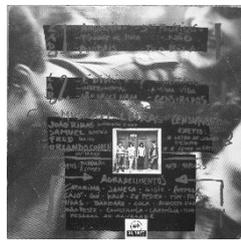


Figure 37 a/b – Censurados, *Confusão*, LP, Lisboa, El Tatu Records, 1991



Figure 38 a/b – Censurados, *Sopa*, LP, Lisboa, EMI, 1993

As previously mentioned, in the late 1980’s an underground punk/hardcore scene was emerging. Much more informed, with a more political and critical conscience, they would reclaim a set of ideals imported mostly from the United States hardcore scenes, crossed with English anarcho-punk. For the first time, a music scene was connecting to organizations or collectives nationwide – from anarchist centers to animal rights -, or even worldwide, trying to build a more solid scene, not exclusively musical. It was a new generation, most of them born after the April 1974, this time coming not only from Lisbon suburbs but also from nearby urban centers Sintra and Cascais (and their respective suburbs), who by building a strong network, soon extended all over Portugal. Among bands, concerts, demonstrations, squatting, opening of social centers, debates, etc there were also do-it-yourself record labels to back the bands and spread the ideals.

The first record releases came out on a previous trash/death-metal small label named *Slime Records* that shifted to punk hardcore and released a 7”, in 1992, compiling five of the new

bands. *Corrosão Caótica*, *Inkisição*, *Alcoore*, *Subcaos* and *X-Acto*. All of them had previously released demos and were for the first time on vinyl and as a sample of something new that was emerging. The inner sheet filled with lyrics, contacts and manifesto would reinforce this new ethos. The compilation name was *Change* and on the front sleeve, a poster stated «Velhos Tempos, Novos Tempos» («Old Times, New Times») predicting that something was about to happen. The photo itself would be the first of many appropriated from books with no identified author, trying to either “show reality” or question it, illustrating the music, synthesizing the band’s agenda.

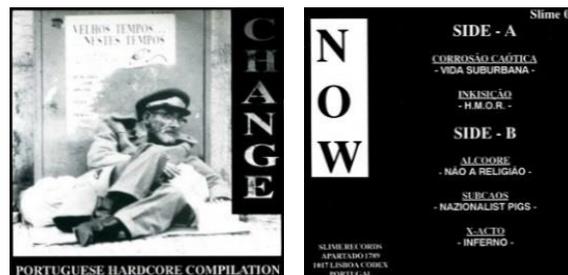


Figure 39 a/b – V/A, *Change*, 7”, Lisboa, Slime Records, 1992

Analyzing one by one the bands featured in the compilation – it would be these bands who would release records in the following years – and starting with *Corrosão Caótica*, from Lisbon, they were formed in 1988, released their first demo in 1990 and in 1992 Slime Records releases their 7” «União e Okupação» («Unity and Squatting»). The front sleeve, a black and white drawing by Johnny, inspired by Spanish punk comics, consisted on a visual manifesto of all the ideals that the band sung about. From the “Resiste” t-shirt to the writing on the wall that includes the “anarchy” and “squat” symbols, the stance against police and against hard drugs, and not forgetting punk iconography - leather jackets, spiked hair and studded belts and army boots – the drawing had all the elements of the new punk hardcore scene. The back-sleeve was inspired by anarcho-punk, with a *Crass*-like photomontage about the dangers of nuclear power, something completely displaced if we look at Portuguese society in those days (it’s worth mentioning that there was never the threat of a nuclear plant being built in our country).



Figure 40 a/b – *Corrosão Caótica*, *União & Okupação*, 7”, Lisboa, Slime Records, 1992

Settling a name within the scene due to constant live shows, *Corrosão Caótica* would invest in their sound, crossing punk and trash metal, and also by becoming more professional as the back sleeve of their first album, a photo of a recording studio, suggests. But they would soon split.



Figure 41 a/b – Corrosão Caótica, *ST*, CD, Lisboa, Projecto Global, 1994

Also in 1992, *Slime Records* releases a split CD with two other bands featured in the *Change* compilation: *Inkisição* and *X-Acto*. Here would be included both new and previously demo-released songs. The sleeve was, again, a stolen photo. Author not credited, as most of the artwork of the punk hardcore scene that believed that everything could be disposed of, it was in fact a photo taken during the Pacific Campaign, 1944, by Eugene Smith, here highly contrasted or simply badly reproduced. On a quick side-note, it has to be said that it's ironic that one of the first straight-edge releases includes a photo taken by a person who would become an alcoholic and drug addict.

Back to the artwork, the back-sleeve was an uninspired piece with a track-list, two band logos, a stolen illustration. This austerity can either be seen as stance against luxurious packaging and commercial releases or just a lack of graphic ideas from bands and labels, more concerned with the written message. Something that would affect the majority of the releases, the bands didn't seem to know how to deal with new possibilities, and to the fact that there were no restraints to their freedom to create. Still, if we look at the song titles we can see this back-sleeve as the tablets of the commandments of the hardcore scene: «Meat is Murder», «Bull fight is torture», «Fascist Pigs», «Clean Planet», «War on Drugs».



Figure 42 a/b – Inkisição / X-Acto, CD, Lisboa, Slime Records, 1993

After this release, *Inkisição* would release a split with a Japanese band and would split shortly after as two band members would die in a car accident. Others would make a new band years later named *Intervenzione*.



Figure 43 – Inkisição / Battle of Disarm, *Ordem*, *Racionalidade – Não*, 7", Lisboa, Ataque Sonoro, 1995



Figure 44 – Intervenzione / Yuppiecrusher, 7", Sweden, Dod & Uppsvald, 1998)

One year after the first bunch of *Slime Records* releases, a new label from Cacém starts to release some of these bands, and in 1993 we can see a new *Alcoore* record out. Also from Linha de Sintra, Cacém, Mem Martins, *Alcoore* formed in the late 80's and in 1993 released their first and only 7", «Terra das Flores» («Land of Flowers») with a poetic, metaphorical or simply uninteresting artwork which reveals nothing about their sound or ideas. Luckily the booklet would clarify their positions and concerns, namely regarding drugs, in a much more mature way than society in general.



Figure 45 a/b – Alcoore, *Terra das Flores*, 7", Cacém, Rage Productions, 1993

Also out on *Rage* was *Subcaos* second 7", released in 1994, and there we could see, on the sleeve and music, all the anarcho-punk / crust clichés. No originality found in the music, lyrics or graphic work, *Subcaos* soon became known for their live energy and punk lifestyle. The sleeve consisted on a collage – which surprisingly was not a very common practice among the vinyl releases, only on demos – and an original drawing of a punk, with all the identifying symbols, dreadlocks, bullet belt, peace punk patches, setting the model of the crust-punks to come. This was pasted over newspaper photographs of chaos and disorder.

A brief round through their sleeves, the first 7", a split with *Hiatus* was a stolen photo of riot police and band logo, a not so creative do-it-yourself artwork. Other releases were a CD that showed another poor intervention on a photograph, still it made clear about the contents, and the last 7" would be a ninja, which shows their then obsession with Japanese punk.

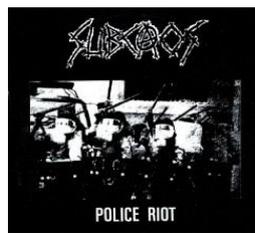


Figure 46 – Subcaos/ Hiatus, *Police Riot*, Lisboa, Slime Records, 1993



Figure 47 a/b – Subcaos, *Revolution*, 7", Cacém, Rage Productions, 1994



Figure 48 – Subcaos / Genital Deformities, *Who Did This to My Sister?*, CD, Lisboa, Ataque Sonoro, 1994



Figure 49 – Subcaos / Battle of Disarm, Disarm or Die!, 7", Japão, D.I.Y. Records, 1995

*No Oppression*, from Cascais, were formed in the early 90's and released their first 7" in 1995. With a highly engaged political agenda, the front cover would express this stance through a photomontage made with plundered photographs. This would be one of the first uses of computer in the punk scene and amidst the confusion we can see a priest and the face of an Indian. Indigenous rights were part of the anarcho-punk international agenda by then, and would be a concern rapidly adopted by the Portuguese scene, which made some sense especially on the eve of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Portuguese Discoveries during the 1990s. The back sleeve would be an art work inspired by Monty Python, with a slight Dada or Surrealist feeling, which could be reclaimed as influence if any of them knew what Dada was.



Figure 50 a/b – No Oppression, *Change! What Destroys You!*, 7", Portugal / Espanha / Austria, Creative Conscience / Our Struggle / VDP-CDE, 1995

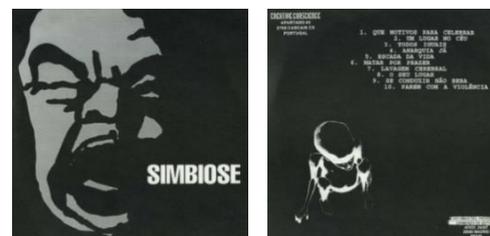


Figure 51 a/b – Simbiose, *S/T*, 7", Cascais, Creative Conscience, 1995

The first *Simbiose 7"*s was out at the same time on the same label, *Creative Conscience*, with an uninspired artwork that showed a screaming face in the front sleeve and in the back sleeve, like many others crust bands, a third-world child reminiscent of Nausea's «Extinction» LP. *Simbiose* would become the most prolific punk band in Portugal still playing nowadays but with a completely different line-up.

Back to *X-acto*, after their split CD with *Inkisição*, in 1994 *Rage Productions* released their first record, a five songs 7" where they would continue to settle down what would be the rules of the hardcore scene. This time there was an anti-nazi song, anti-fur song, a song about unity, among others, all inside an artwork that expressed their strong stance on animal rights and veganism, with two images of a slaughterhouse in the front sleeve and a free cow on the back sleeve.



Figure 52 a/b – X-Acto, *S/T*, 7", Cacém, Rage Productions, 1994

Achieving a cult status and a horde of followers, in the following year *Ataque Sonoro*, ex-*Slime Records*, released the much expected full album, named «Harmony as One», where an aerial photograph of the sea and earth tried to illustrate and confer deeper meaning to the album title. The back-sleeve showed a new attention to design. In the following two records, both from 1997, a split CD with the American band Ignite and a 7", the artwork tries to capture the band's live "positive" energy and since some band members became graphic designers for the first time a punk band achieved a professional look. As so, this last *X-Acto* record can be seen as the definitive end of an era of cut-and-paste and hand-drawings made by friends, and the shift to computer design and investment in cover art, not necessarily creating better artworks, the beginning of a new hardcore scene.

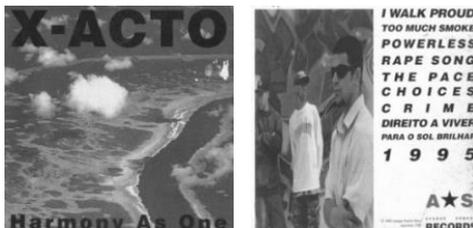


Figure 53 a/b – X-Acto, *Harmony as One*, CD, Lisboa, Ataque Sonoro, 1995



Figure 54 a/b – X-Acto / Ignite, CD, Lisboa, Ataque Sonoro, 1997



Figure 55 a/b – X-Acto, *The New Child*, 7", Lisboa, Ataque Sonoro / Bee Keeper / Milk-Shake, 1997

To list some conclusions from this brief journey through two decades of Portuguese punk:

-Cover art was rarely a concern in bands' agendas. Music and lyrics were always the priorities. As so, there's neither an aesthetic nor an anti-aesthetic developed. This is something that is easily explained as there were no artists or illustrators in the scene, nor collaborations with artists abroad. And usually the friend invited to conceive an artwork would never be invited again.

-The freedom punk bands sung about in their songs was rarely reflected in the artwork. Portuguese punk record sleeves were usually a montage of clichés, an abuse of visual codes and an imitation of what was seen in imported records.

-Very rarely do bands deal with their own daily realities, concerns, angers or frustrations, preferring to focus on more generic realities such as war, famine in third world countries, state violence. The artwork is never thought-provocative, and their perception of *do-it-yourself* seemed to be about stealing images.

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