

Rob Griffiths – Lead singer of bands The Fiction / Little Murders
Written by Rob Griffiths for ‘Why Punk?’

In 1977 I had finally got myself a band together. I had wanted a band ever since seeing Bowie doing ‘Jean Genie’ on the TV. But we weren’t like that. We were called **Subway** and we played one gig at the Bayswater Youth Club. I wrote most the songs because we weren’t very good at doing cover versions. We were not punk. If anything, we were a crappy version of Dylan’s electric era.

Since the early seventies I had religiously read my **NME** that I had bought from the same Box Hill News agency every Wednesday. I was reading these stories about bands like the **Sex Pistols** and **The Clash** and **The Damned** and I was becoming a fan, not through hearing the music but reading the excitement in the writing. I took note of their influences, and it was all the records David Bowie had pointed the way to.

And so, after a **Bleeding Hearts gig at the Tiger Lounge in Richmond**. We had taken off back to Blackburn in a station wagon with drums loaded in the back. Vic Bolger our drummer was driving. A car pulled up beside us with Bruce Milne in the passenger seat. He saw the drums. He asked us if we were in a band and if so, what we were into musically. Instead of saying what we actually were doing I called out a list of punk icons straight from the NME - New York Dolls, the Stooges, Velvet Underground. He looked very excited. I was very excited too. In a short conversation at a set of traffic lights in Hawthorn I had plotted my future.

A week later there was an ad in the Swinburne Press. "**Subway if you really exist call Bruce**" followed by his phone number. I rang. I went back to the band and said we were now a punk band. Half of them left. So, there was just Vic and I and we got a friend Chris Hunter to join on guitar. We had no bass player. Bruce told me the bass player from the Obsessions needed a gig. **Rob Wellington** came to a rehearsal and thought we were terrible.

A short time later Radio Birdman came down to play at The Tiger Lounge. It was a frenzied night and we got to see people actually pogoing for the first time. One was Rob Wellington. He told me my band was rubbish, but he liked the songs I had written and maybe he might join as guitarist. Chris left and Rob joined the band as the “guitarist”. I was now the “singer”. We renamed the band **The Fiction** and we started rehearsing at Rob’s dad’s factory in Nunawading. We rehearsed as a 3 piece because we couldn’t find a bass player. We taped our rehearsals. We listened to ourselves. We didn’t care that the band wasn’t complete. The Clash didn’t have a drummer.

We went to see the **Boys Next Door** play in a community hall in Clayton a few weeks before our first gig. I realised my look wasn’t right. The next day I had my hair cut by my girlfriend with a red tint put through it and I had raided half a dozen op shops buying old clothes including a pair of plastic imitation leather pants.

Just before we played our opening gig at the **Pulp Benefit**, we got ourselves a manager, **Nigel Rennard**, a friend of Vic’s from Swinburne. The Fiction played their first gig on **April 30, 1978**, at the Pulp Benefit. Pulp magazine was a **photocopied fanzine** put out by Bruce and his cohorts including Clinton Walker. They wrote about the scene in Australia mostly. I didn’t realise how much of a scene we had. Although the scene was lucky to be 30 people tops.

The venue was run by the band **News**, and they started putting us on the bill playing with the other punk bands.

After using Graeme Pitt on bass for the first gig I went round and saw an old friend who had played guitar in an early incarnation of Subway, Ken. Now we had a bass player. We were a band. I would yell "Start!" Rob would count us in 1-2-3-4 and we were off.

We started playing at a venue run by **Dolores San Miguel** called the **Paradise Lounge at the George Hotel** on Saturday afternoons. At first, we were supporting bands like Two Way Garden, and the Boys Next Door. Then we became regulars.

Our manager Nigel Rennard had also taken on another band to manage called **La Femme**. Nigel in his management role bought a PA system and decided to try it out where we rehearsed in Rob Wellington's dad's factory. La Femme was so loud the police came and put an end to our free rehearsal space. Forever.

With only Rob playing guitar Nigel persuaded us to add a second guitarist. So, we advertised for one in the Age. His name was Joe Clarke and he turned up in a suit and polka dot shirt. Very sixties. He made his debut at our first Ballroom headliner. We went down a storm and the place was almost full. That was his only gig. Living on pub snacks and beer had made me ill and put me out of action for a while. And the Fiction lost our manager and our rehearsal space. And then we broke up.

Meanwhile, Bruce and the manager of Two-Way Garden had formed a label called **Au Go-Go Records**. I persuaded The Fiction to record a few songs and to do it cheaply we would record at a friend's place on a farmhouse in St. Andrews. It was early 1979. Nigel was by now running a venue at the Champion Hotel in Fitzroy called **Scabs** and he gave us a weekly residency on Thursday nights, which would give us a chance to sharpen up our act. The gigs turned out incredible with great crowds turning up each week.

So, with three gigs practice under our belts, we loaded up our cars and drove out to the country to record. Stuart Beatty was coming up to produce the record. We played the tracks live and recorded them onto a TEAC 4 track.

By March **1979** we finished the first single. The Fiction no longer existed. So, it came out as the **Little Murders** first single.