

Skinheads

Today, racism, neo-nazism, thuggery, and all other forms of anti-social behaviour associated with skins have become the snap judgements most people make. It wasn't always like that. The original skinheads hailed from the late sixties. It began with *Mods 1* who were welcomed into the world of reggae clubs in London, such as Ruby's on Carnaby street. Here they discovered not only Ska music, but the key style components that defined the original skinhead look. The skinhead culture was taken up by black and white working class kids working in shipyards and on factory lines who were bonded over a love of reggae and forging a particular kind of English identity, with braces, suits, boots, and sometimes a Cromby hat a top heads shaved, military style.

There was no peace and love for this lot, life was a series of hard knocks and this tough, fighter's appearance was how they chose to express those truths.

The second wave of skinheads, in the early eighties, were in one sense similar: just kids from council estates finding their place by being different together, like teenagers everywhere. Allegiance was now sworn to bands that acknowledged the heritage of Ska music, like Madness or The Specials. At the time a new genre sprang up in *Punk 2* infused oil. Music, romper-stomper, screwdriver tunes, charged for fighting. Dressed in Dr. Martens and with heads shaved military style, these kids would give the V to anyone foolish enough to give them the eye. These were teens who came from areas of high unemployment looking for solidarity beyond Thatcher's "me" culture. They were abandoned by society and that of course made them vulnerable to the advances of the National Front.

1 – Mods : Youth mouvement in the sixties

2 – Punks: Youth mouvement in the seventies