

TUNE INTO ENGLISH

Sex Pistols'
God Save
the Queen

Cavalcando l'anarchica cresta dell'onda del punk, la veemente ma effimera band londinese dedicò un acido omaggio a Elisabetta II per il suo giubileo d'argento. Un controinno sprezzante con un lugubre ritornello.

A defining moment in punk, *God Save the Queen* was released in 1977 to coincide with Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee, and included on British band the Sex Pistols' only studio album, "*Never Mind*¹ the *Bollocks*², Here's the Sex Pistols". Sharing its title with the UK's national anthem, the controversial song attacked the monarchy with such enthusiasm that it was *banned*³ by the BBC, and many record shops refused to *stock*⁴ it. Nevertheless, it still managed to reach number two in the official charts during the royal celebrations. There is even evidence that it was by far the best-selling single at the time. Originally titled 'No Future', the song is an assault on the British establishment and laments the Queen's indifference to the general population. It revealed deep divisions in British society: on its release⁵, the Sex Pistols were *dropped*⁶ by their record

label A&M Records, but were immediately signed by Virgin Records. Band members were physically attacked numerous times in public. However, singer and lyricist John Lydon, who went by the stage name Johnny Rotten⁷, later stated he wrote the song because he loved his country. To promote the record, the Sex Pistols performed the song on a boat named the *Queen Elizabeth* on the Thames, *sailing past*⁸ Westminster two days before the Queen's river procession. Police forced them to *dock*⁹ and manager Malcolm McLaren was arrested. The record cover is one of punk's most iconic images. Designed by Jamie Reid, it features Queen Elizabeth II with *ransom*¹⁰ note lettering across her face. It is now *displayed*¹¹ in London's National Portrait Gallery. ☒



SCAN, READ
& LISTEN
07

LOWER INTERMEDIATE B1

GLOSSARY

- 1 **never mind:** non preoccuparti di
- 2 **bollocks:** stronzate
- 3 **to ban:** proibire
- 4 **to stock:** avere a disposizione
- 5 **release:** pubblicazione, lancio
- 6 **to drop:** lasciare
- 7 **rotten:** marcio
- 8 **to sail past:** navigare oltre
- 9 **to dock:** ormeggiare
- 10 **ransom:** riscatto
- 11 **to display:** mostrare, esporre
- 12 **moron:** imbecille
- 13 **mercy:** pietà
- 14 **sin:** peccato
- 15 **dustbin:** cestino
- 16 **puppet:** marionetta
- 17 **to take up:** prendere
- 18 **to punish:** punire

The Sex Pistols' (left to right) Sid Vicious, Johnny Rotten and Steve Jones perform in San Francisco, USA in 1978.



England's dreaming: the English often have an obsession with their supposedly glorious past.

no future: this phrase became an emblematic phrase of punk. The phrase "N.F.—No Future" was later taken up¹⁷ in anti-fascist propaganda.

'cause: an often used abbreviation of because, sometimes written 'cos.

all crimes are paid: contradicting the proverb 'crime does not pay' meaning that ultimately, crime does not benefit the criminal, and only results in negative consequences.' the song suggests that one day the monarchy will be *punished*¹⁸ for their atrocities in history.

God save the queen
The fascist regime
They made you a *moron*¹²
A potential H-bomb
God save the queen
She ain't no human being

And there's no future

In *England's dreaming*

Don't be told what you want to want to

Don't be told what you want to need

There's no future

No future

No future for you

God save the queen

We mean it, man

We love our queen

God saves

God save the queen

'Cause tourists are money

And our *figurehead*

Is not what she seems

Oh God save history

God save your *mad parade*

Oh Lord God have *mercy*¹³

All crimes are paid

Oh when there's no future

How can there be *sin*¹⁴

*We're the flowers in the dustbin*¹⁵

We're the poison in your human machine

We're the future

Your future

God save the queen

We mean it man

We love our queen

God saves

God save the queen

We mean it man

There's no future

In England's dreaming

No future, no future

No future for you

No future, no future

No future for me

No future, no future

No future for you

No future, no future

No future for you

ain't: is informal and often used in songs, meaning "she isn't a..." The song implies the Queen is a *puppet*¹⁶ of the fascist regime.

we mean it, man: we're serious, not joking man a slang term, meaning friend, used here for emphasis.

figurehead: a leader with no real power.

mad parade: mad parade history is defined here as a crazy procession.

the flowers in the dustbin: the only good things in a terrible situation.

Scan this QR code with your smartphone or tablet and listen to the official song on YouTube while reading the lyrics.

SCAN & WATCH



Fergal Kavanagh runs the website www.tuneintoenglish.com, the web's largest free resource for learning English through pop music.