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HOW A PUNK SUPERGROUP JOINED FORCES FOR A TV SERIES THEME SONG



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Tabatha Fireman / Jim Spellman / Dimitrios Kambouris / YouTube

Supergroups do not come around very often, but a new one was temporarily formed earlier this month. The Derelicts features some of punk's and post-punk's best-known figures: **Glen Matlock** of the **Sex Pistols**, Clem Burke of **Blondie**, Richard Lloyd of Television, and Ivan Julian of Richard Hell and the Voidoids.

The foursome got together unexpectedly in early April at Julian's Super Giraffe Sound Studio in New York City to record a punk-style version of "The Bowery," a song from the 1891 Broadway musical, *A Trip to Chinatown*. Kris Gruen, son of the legendary rock photographer Bob Gruen, came in to sing lead vocals, and the new track is slated to be used as the theme song for the upcoming docuseries *The Bowery Boy*.

Julian became intrigued as soon as he saw the **series trailer**. "It's so beautifully filmed that I was compelled to be a part of the project," he told UCR, just a few days after the Derelicts recorded the song.

The eight-part series details the life of Bobby Sheehan, a filmmaker and native New Yorker who was just a teen in the late '70s when he began taking his camera into clubs like CBGB and Max's Kansas City, **snapping photos** of acts like Blondie, Television, the **Ramones**, **Lou Reed** and many more. He spent so much time at concerts that Dee Dee Ramone gave him a nickname: Rockin' Bobby. Decades later, some of those same musicians would join forces to record the theme song to one of his productions.

When it comes to punk in particular, "New York City was really overlooked," said McNeil, who serves as a producing partner on the series. "And to have Bobby who grew up in the neighborhood where I hung out every night ... is a fascinating story. That's what kind of appealed to me."

For Sheehan, "it seemed like everything was happening in New York [in the late '70s], and no one was trying hard to do it. They were just doing it."

Sheehan's wife Sara suggested doing an updated version of "The Bowery," and he passed the idea to McNeil, who in turn contacted Lloyd from Television. The three then met up at a Manhattan diner to discuss the project. Sitting across from one of his boyhood heroes, Sheehan could hardly believe it. "I'm eating an omelet with Richard Lloyd," he marveled.

Sheehan isn't a musician himself, so he handed off arrangement duties to Lloyd. Within a week, Burke, Matlock, Julian and Gruen were getting together at Julian's studio to work together for the first time. It was clear from the start that the song would turn out to be a rocker: Burke almost immediately put his foot through the bass drum. "I've always heard of Clem being a really heavy hitter," Julian said, "but he goes boom, boom, boom and then *crash*." They eventually located a new bass drum head and carried on the recording.

Overall, Julian said the session "went really well." McNeil joked: "As we said at CBGBs when somebody did something: it didn't suck." The Derelicts also recorded a version of the **Byrds'** "Eight Miles High," which may also appear in the series.

Production of *The Bowery Boy* is expected to be completed in the coming months. "It's a gift," Sheehan said of the unexpected collaboration. "So whatever the gift is, I'm taking it and I'm really happy."