



LOGOS

*The origins of
iconic images from
NYC's musical history
explained.*

FOR ORIGINAL PUNK ROCKERS Johnny, Joey, Dee Dee, and Tommy Ramone, less was more. Their economy of dress—tight tees, biker jackets, ripped jeans, and canvas sneakers—matched the efficiency of their sound: fast, compressed, unadorned rock 'n' roll. An odd bunch from Forest Hills, Queens, the Ramones banded together in 1974 as brothers in musical ambition (if not blood). But friend and artist Arturo Vega visually communicated a “more is more” approach in their logo, enlarging the Ramones name in a heavy, highly visible typeface and incorporating the Great Seal of the United States.

Vega designed many of the band's graphics throughout the Ramones' 22-year career. Born in Mexico, he was enamored with symbols of power, specifically the bald eagle in US heraldry. “I always thought of the Ramones as... an all-American band,” Vega told the Fringe Underground site. In a 2012 podcast interview with Going Off Track, he described modeling the eagle on the Ramones t-shirt design from the reverse side of an Eisenhower dollar. An early poster centers on Vega's midsection and his eagle belt buckle, blown up from a photo-booth

self-portrait. *Punk* magazine cofounder and Ramones illustrator John Holmstrom recalls that image: “There was a vague feeling of S&M about it, and its simplicity to me defined the New York punk rock scene.” In 1976, the bicentennial year, Vega decided upon the eagle from the US seal, modified the iconography, and added the band members' names (which would change with the lineup over time). The emblem first appeared on the back of the Ramones second album, *Leave Home*, released in January 1977.

“Using a national symbol was a perfect move back then, because the punk scene was trying to distance itself from the hippie scene,” says Holmstrom. “What better way to do so than embrace patriotism?”

For the band name, Vega wanted to be simple and direct with an all-caps sans serif, eventually settling on Franklin Gothic, the same font that would appear on the Run-DMC logo a decade later. Most of the original Ramones have passed on, but Ramones t-shirts are as present as ever. The logo, Holmstrom says, “has become so iconic, not just for the band but for all of punk rock.”

-SUE APFELBAUM