

# PLATTERS



**THE CLASH**  
The Clash (CBS)

**VINYLISED AFFIRMATION** of the worth of The Clash. One in the face for the prejudiced, the ignorant and the complacent.

"I don't wanna hear about what the rich are doing / I don't wanna go to where the rich are going / They think they're so clever, they think they're so right / But the truth is only known... by guttersnipes."

Those sentiments, expressed in "Garage Land", are backed up in the 14 songs on the album. Jones and Strummer write with graphic perception about contemporary Great British urban reality as though it's suffocating them. Their frame of reference is a mirror reflection of the kind of 1977 white working-class experiences that only seem like a cliché to those people who haven't had to live through them.

Their songs don't lie. They crystallize growing up and getting out like no band ever have before. But they wear home-made battle fatigues, not Holy Man dog collars, not Politician fancy dress.

They put their emotion-wired imagery across with rock that displays an inherent sense of energy control exerted over the speeding Sound Of The Westway. They create membrane-scorching tension, a natural feel of dynamics and exhilarating rock 'n' roll excitement. They say something and they make you wanna dance.

Classic rock performs both functions. The Old Masters had that quality in another time. This generation has The Clash.

"Janie Jones" opens the album with buzzsaw staccato chords as Jones and Strummer interplay guitars over the obsessive drive of the rhythm section, Simonon joining them for an on-the-terraces chant of their anti-harmonies.

Repetitive, addictive lyrics, the words howled by Strummer in his usual manner of making them discernible only to the people who should hear them — anyone who wants a riot of his/her own.

"Remote Control" is about the type of powers that Orwell forecast and that arrived sooner than he expected: the Tin Gods who butchered the Anarchy tour because they were terrified of something they didn't understand, didn't want to understand.

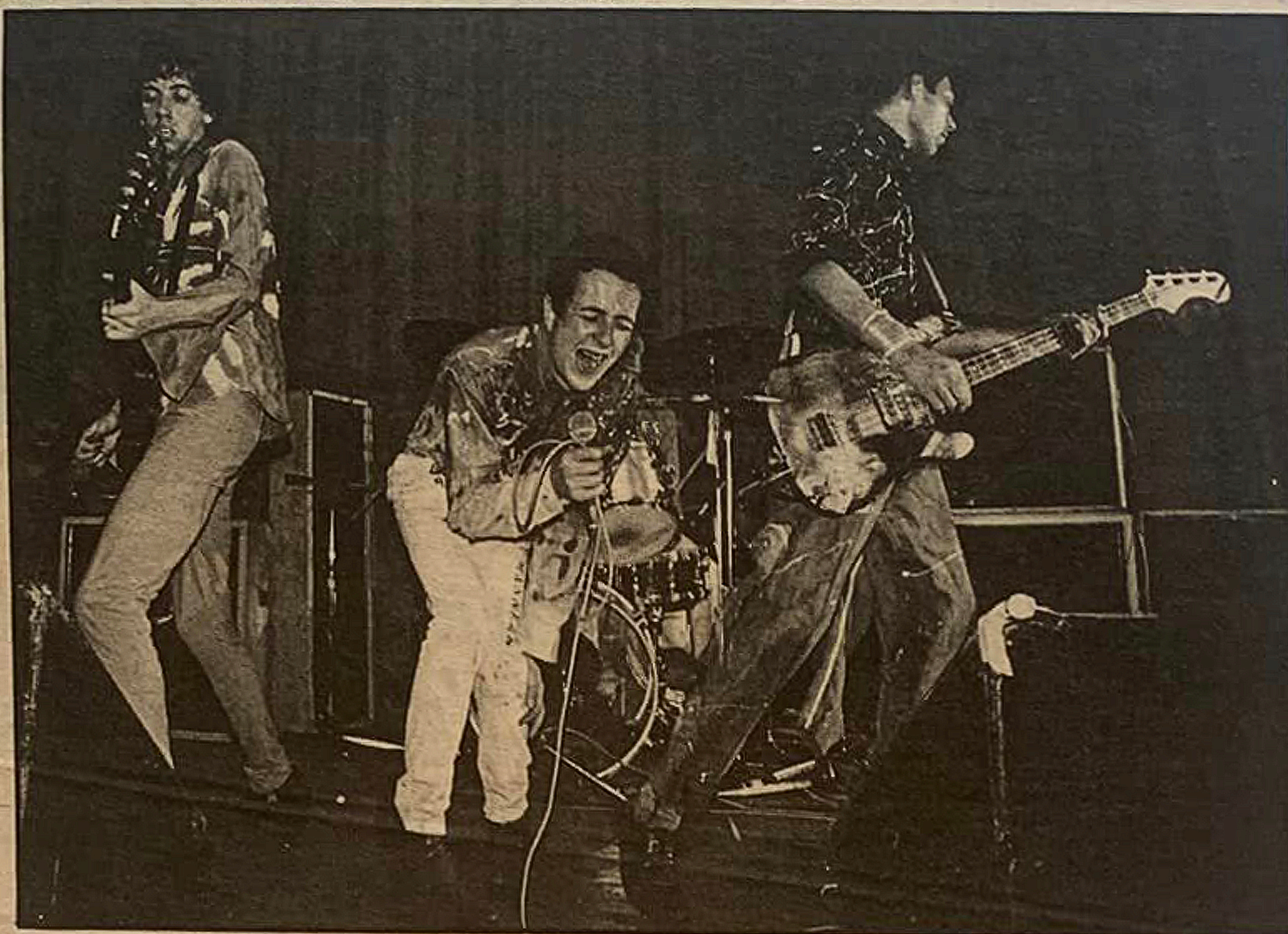
Jones occasionally sings about something he detests in such an inverted, celebratory way that the sardonic joy expresses his (and The Clash's) contempt far more effectively than any direct tirade.

"It's so grey in London Town / Panda cars crawling around / Here it comes / Eleven o'clock / Where can we go now?"

Strummer does the same and brilliantly on two of their finest songs: "London's Burning", the open wound, written in the middle of the night from a high-rise cage, and "Career Opportunities", their statement of signing-on reality.

The former is part of the frantic guided tour that Strummer gives of the futuristic slums surrounding the Westway inner-city flyover and the latter is the ecstatic shouting of the word "CAREER OPPORTUNITIES".

The Clash: Jones, Strummer, Simonon — no "politicians' fancy dress" for these chaps...



## THE CLASH

### War On Inner City Front

after the bitter defiance of the lyrics:

*They're gonna have to introduce conscription / They're gonna have to take away my prescription / If they wanna get me making toys / If they wanna get me where I got no choice / Career Opportunities / The ones that never knock / Every job they offer you is to keep you out the dock / Career Opportunities / The ones that never knock.*

Strummer is almost incredulous as he recites a long list of nowhere jobs that they tried to sell him before eventually reaching the decision to send him away for rehabilitation.

The echo process used by producer Mickey Foote when Joe cries "OY!" shows how his production of the single and the album have about the same differential as a rabbit punch and a napalm bomb. He's done 'em proud and they were right to believe that spiritual affinity runs deeper than music biz reputation.

"White Riot" itself appears here as a furious, raw, live version, including an unexpurgated Strummer solo.

The demand for a culture of our own while retaining a respect for the heritage of others is an attitude defined in their magnificent tribute to J.A. This takes the form of a six minute version of the reggae number "Police And Thieves", the Trenchtown hit of the summer of 1976 written by Lee Perry / Junior Murvin and the only non-Strummer / Jones song on the album.

Strummer's vocal proves skin pigmentation has absolutely nothing to do with soul as Simonon's casual offbeat

bass line rolls around the sparse chord chopping of Mick Jones — beautiful track and indicative of their willingness to experiment with any musical form that emotionally moves...

On either side of "Police And Thieves" are "Protex Blue", a one minute 45 tribute to the method most of us don't prefer, and "48 Hours" which concerns the hedonistic horror-show of speeding through a weekend non-stop to taste as much and as many as possible before the five-day drag arrives.

*"Monday's coming like a jail on wheels / You know a girl, yeah? / Well, she's bound to be rude / But 48 hours need 48 thrills / Cheap thrills / Any kind of thrills..."*

The sadness and futility behind our desperate search for good times, Strummer's vocal redolent of Kerouac's Red Brick Vision; the boredom of the daytime red brick houses forever waiting behind the promise of night-time city neons. And never being able to admit to yourself that the promise is not true.

"I'm So Bored With The USA" could be taken as selective nihilism but, although Yankee Go Home is the basic gist, Strummer barks his vocal out over some fine inter-riffing with just enough sly mockery underneath the surface belligerence to keep the song out of the abyss cluttered with bands writing generalisations, platitudes and politico nursery rhymes...

*"Yan-kee detectives are always on TV / Coz killers in*

*America work seven days a week..."*

"Hate And War" is about the currency of the times we live in and the band's acceptance of the fact that violence can only be met with the same.

*"I have the will to survive / I cheat if I can't win / If someone locks me out I kick my way back in / And if I get aggression I'll give 'em two-times back"*

The music's not really strong enough to fully complement the lyrics of the track until Strummer takes over lead vocal from Jones near the end and, as Simonon and Jones chant the title, he cries out a few of those quasi-throwaway lines that he scatters all over the album...

*"I hate Englishmen / Just as bad as wops / I hate all the blindness / I hate all the cops."*

"What's My Name" and "Cheat" are both musically and lyrically Casualty Ward Rock. The first is the kind of gratuitous and random GBH that you used to inflict on the away team's supporters' personality crisis temporarily forgotten as you act like a Pig and feel like a God. Strummer is crazed as he tries to articulate the desperation of a screwed-up, wanton thug.

*"What the hell is wrong with me? / I'm not who I want to be / I got nicked for fighting in the road, / The judge didn't even know... what's my name!"*

And there's "Cheat" with its pessimistic dog-eat-cat lyrics, the theme as offensive as it is defensive — hurt them before they hurt you, before they can hurt the people you love.

When how you play the game isn't important, it's whether you win or not.

*"I get VIOLENT when I'm fucked-up / I get SILENT when I'm drugged-up / Don't use the rules / They're not for you, they're for the fools / And you're a fool if you don't know that / You better CHEAT if you wanna survive..."*

A Seventies acceptance of violence as a fact of life harnessed to a vicious treble sound taut with repressed aggression, anger and energy — the twitching speed-burn paranoia of too much sulphate in too little time screaming for an outlet...

It's the perfect noise for a song like "Deny" about getting stitched-up by a girl with a habit...

*"Deny you're such a liar? / Selling your honour all over town / You said you'd given it up / Gone and kicked it in the head / You said you ain't had none for weeks / But, baby, I seen your arm / Baby, I seen your arm / Deny you're such a liar?"*

The Clash have made an album that consists of some of the most exciting rock 'n' roll in contemporary music. Whether the great mass of British Youth can get into the sometimes painful but incisive reality of what the band are about is another matter. But they chronicle our lives and what it's like to be young in the Stinking Seventies better than any other band, and they do it with style, flash and excitement. The Clash have got it all.

I urge you to get your hands on a copy of this album. The strength of the nation lies in its youth.

Tony Parsons