

A STORM IS COMING



Last week Clash jumped 60 places in the chart and Johnny Thunders and the Heartbreakers packed out London's Marquee. New Wave is now Big Wave. Barry Cain talks to two bands

THE CLASH: "We haven't given up half way"

IN THE BEGINNING

RAIN IN the city, sliding down the monolithic offices, seeking out concrete crevices.

Spews in the mews. Macs in the cul-de-sacs. Fleets in the streets. Metropolis mirages on each droplet. The distorted face of Joe Strummer peering out of the top deck window of a No 19 bus in Cambridge Circus inhabits a globule.

He's with a girl. "You ought to be a guitarist," she says. He ignores her nineteen and nebulous. "She's a slag anyway." Couple of drug taking years follow. Boring. Then he remembers her voice.

In South London Mick Jones — five 'O' levels and a degree of uncertainty — buys records by the score. That's what working for the social security can do to you.

It's dream — time down the Streatham Locarno and Paul Simonon, after a hard day on the terraces, unwinds to the nigrescent muzak.

And in the gutters the tyre-splashed day debris gurgles like a deformed baby.

INCARNATION

Like three neon cave-dwellers who have just learned the dark secret of fire The Clash dispel any puritanical doubts with the ultimate weapon — sincerity. Not the Hughie Green sweaty-palm brand but the kind found scrawled on tenancy walls — "J.L. is a grass and he's gonna get his legs cut off."

"We wanted to do SOMETHING," says Mick. "And, like most others, we haven't given up half way. It comes out good and it goes through rubbish again."

"But it can all be overblown. There are so many useless bands around. It's taken a long time to break out of the love-song syndrome." He keeps stopping mid-way through sentences, throws alarming looks at the other two, smiles, and continues.

"There is still the deaf aid of rock and roll. It takes a lot to overcome it like 10 years ago in America when comfortable college kids were coming home from Vietnam in wooden boxes. People like Phil Ochs started singing about it. Everyone took LSD."

"People who are frightened of us will take what we sing about as major political statements. All I know is what we are in what we understand."

"We still have the code of the street."

Their single 'White Riot' climbed 60 places in the chart last week and

their debut album has phenomenal advance sales. The Clash have arrived.

"A lot of people feel very angry about us because they cannot identify with what we play. Some guys followed us home after a gig and threw a brick through our friend's window," says Mick.

"Things like that are always happening. That's just coz they don't know what's going on. But I think they will hear it soon. 'White Riot' is a good rock 'n' roll record. There are a lot of good rock 'n' roll records with terrible words — like say, 'Happy Jack'."

"And it's never worried us that they might not hear our words."

Another piercing glance. Another smile. "Young white guys need an identity. There are too many different culture groups in this country. We are talking to kids like us who don't have anything. Those who remember 1955 were lucky. They had their own music then. We ain't looking for swastikas, just rock 'n' roll. Before it was only authors that made important statements."

"Power is a politician," says Mick. "But they are so full of corruption. They are the ones who get across to everyone. Everyone hears about the budget coz everyone is affected — y'know, ½p on butter. Maybe Denis Healey should sing rock 'n' roll. No... he's well past it."

"Music has always spoken to me, it's just that now we are saying it a bit plainer. I'm selling off most of the records I ever bought because listening to them now is a waste of time. The Clash work on a purely emotional level and that's what we are trying to produce."

"We recorded our album in a few weeks. It took ELP two years for theirs. Wow, they must be wondering what on earth has happened now."

"See, all we are doing is telling people to question what they are doing and if it doesn't satisfy them to do what they want. I hate preaching, it's just encouragement."

STRUMMER'S BOMB-SITE SO-LOLOQUY

"The fact that 'White Riot' has jumped so much is good — but it's not good enough. I want more. I want a Number One. It's not getting any radio plays because the people in control of the airwaves are so against us. They want to stamp it out. They feel threatened. They are Nazis. We ain't, but we want to persecute

them off the face of the earth."

"I've found you can only really think on your own. When you're with other people it's impossible."

"I only live at night and that's when I do strange things. A lot of the time I get molested by the police because they want to know what I'm up to. I see restrictions coming up, not just for individuals but for governments, cities, nations. I see army conscription returning, less personal freedom, identity cards, numbers. I can feel it."

"That's the only way to control. All the government wants is ultimate control. I don't think it's frightening. If I did then I couldn't live. It's going to get totally out of my control and yours and anyone else's."

"If the people controlling us now haven't got control of us in the near future they have lost. Therefore they are going to do everything in their power to increase the control."

"I know I'm never gonna be able to beat them. I don't believe in other people. They are morons. They must be to stand for all this."

"I don't see anything after ultimate control. Just bombsites and a few survivors. Roll the credits — end. You'll soon know when that control comes. Things will start BOOMING. Industry will thrive, unemployment will come down. People will march through the streets waving banners willing to die for Queen and country. And I'll get my head kicked in."

"Aristocracy is bullshit. Eight per cent of the people own the country. All hereditary rules are wrong. When you're born you're in a certain strata without even being asked to join the club."

"You can't change anyone. You can only make an atmosphere. If people want to change they will change themselves. The Clash ain't gonna do that. Still, trying is better than sitting around getting bored."

"I have a great time banging guitars and shouting. People can read too much into that and it makes me sick. They are stupid creeps. All this talking about how people can gain from what we do makes me puke."

"Lawrence of Arabia was my only hero 'cos I thought it was real smooth his just coming out of England and leading the Arabs."

"I find myself in a void. I've always known what to do and always known what I'm doing it for. I'm smart, I'm lucky. Luck is a dominant factor. You make your own luck by grabbing opportunities."

"I grab opportunities and follow the Cherokee Indian way. When they have to make a decision they always choose the most reckless course of action. I always like to have my hands on the steering wheel."

"I'm like this 'cos people have walked over me in the past. When they do that I'm interested. I want to know why, so they won't do it again. When I was nine I went to a boarding school and on the first day I was surrounded and taken to the bathroom where I was confronted by a bath full of used toilet paper. I had to either get in or get beaten up. I got beaten up."

The TV. phenomenon which took America by storm

ROOTS

BEGINS ON BBC1 THIS FRIDAY

Don't miss it!

I see less personal freedom, identity cards, numbers. I can feel it — Joe Strummer