

ALBUM

TRACKING

The easy reference guide to the month's albums Rock, Soul, Country, Reggae, Blues, Folk and Jazz

The Clash are alright

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Freeway
ride
with
the
Eagles

Sweet
little
rock 'n'
rollers



Pat Travers, Horslips, Peter Baumann, Ronnie Spector,

'The only thing the older fans have to do is they have to attempt to understand. You have to be very brave to break out of your decade'



Joe Strummer

Jazz Flora Purim and the Brazilian Connection

YET AGAIN last December husband and wife Aíro Moreira and Flora Purim topped the lists as percussionist and female singer of the year in *Downbeat's* influential jazz poll.

For Flora it is the third year in a row, yet for each the 'jazz' tag tells only part of the truth; for one effect of their success has been to bring into the jazz mainstream a distinctively Latin rhythmic flavour and style of phrasing which has made the notion of Brazilian jazz something more than a novelty, more than the casual collaboration of Stan Getz's with Astrud Gilberto in the '60s.

Coincidentally it was Stan Getz who first gave work to Flora Purim when she arrived in America in late 1968.

Getz heard her sing on Jobim's "How Insensitive" at a late-night jam at the house of a musician with whom she was staying and asked her to work with him. That led to a spell with Gil Evans, and then Chick Corea's original Return To Forever, and subsequently Aíro's band, where under the tutelage of Hermeto Pascoal she learned to combine her Brazilian and jazz training into a decisively new form of singing.

In Chick Corea's band she had begun, she says: "To sacrifice technique in order to communicate."

Pascal, as her voice-coach, went further: "The breakthrough came with Hermeto's suggestion to aim

at the *sound*, not the note," she explains.

Her new sound, and her concern to "say to people that there is a place for beautiful music, a place to be free, and that I could take them there," was rudely brought to a halt when she lost her own freedom on a conviction in 1974 for a drugs possession charge dating back to 1971. For eighteen months she was confined to the ironically named Terminal Island in Southern California and able only to compose, except for one concert given at the prison in which she participated in March 1975. Also playing were Aíro, George Duke, Miroslav Vitous, the late Cannonball Adderley, and Raul de Souza.

Since her release in late '75 Flora has recorded three albums, one a live set, the latest of which has just been released on Warner Brothers in the US but as ever on Milestone here, it is entitled *Nothing Will Be As It Was... Tomorrow* (M 9075). Like all her work it represents a unique synthesis of jazz and fluid Brazilian elements.

Among the musicians to be found here are Aíro of course, and on keyboards, Hugo Fatturoso. Fatturoso, with his brother, George, on drums, and bassist

ever you want to call it, are, in retrospect obvious: the cult of technical and musical perfection resulting in what Simon Frith has called Hip Easy Listening e.g. the Eagles; the accession of rock to the dominant position in showbiz, now out-grossing the cinema; the 'maturity' of the lyrics; the general air of complacency and boredom, the 'business' orientation — all these factors have in true dialectical fashion generated their own opposite.

This negation has the following characteristics: it's rough, it's young, it's poor, and it has a lean and hungry look about it. Compared with the rich sheep like Elton John or Peter Frampton these boys are wolves. They are also an age group — too old for teeny wimps and too young for old farts — with nothing really exciting in music to get their teeth into...

Ok, you say, but can they play? Can they cut the mustard when it comes to cutting grooves?

Which is where the audience divides. Because if the last thing you listened to is Fleetwood Mac and the next is Clash you are going to hate Clash... or the Damned, or Eater, or the Pistols, or whoever. It took these ageing ears a while to get what Clash are up to; but they are very fine indeed, and what is more they stand right in line with Eddie Cochran, early Who, and the Kinks.

The reasons for the rise of punk, or the new wave, or what-



Paul Simonon

A tough quartet fronted by Joe Strummer and Mick Jones with Paul Simonon on bass and a collection of harsh, honest songs about apathy, boredom, the dole queue, about standing up for yourself, about being young and poor, about the clash between the rulers and the ruled, Clash come like a brick through the window of the musical establishment.

Their first album was produced by their own sound operator, Mickie Foote, after an attempt at recording with a CBS-nominated producer failed abysmally when he told Joe to pronounce the words right. The album also features drummer Terry Chimes but he has been a constant problem within the band, and after some 200 other drummers had been auditioned, they have just found someone to replace him.

The reasons why I think they are good have to do with music, the reasons why they may well become very successful are only partly so. That's because, as guitarist Mick Jones says: "To a certain extent we are a reflection of the times we live in. The way we look is a plus. The way we sound is a plus. Our lyrics are a plus."

The way Clash look is immediately threatening to anyone over 25: the army fatigues with slogans stencilled on, the unfashionable shoes liberally spattered with paint, the spiky short hair... but that's nothing to compare with their performance.

Guitarist and singer Joe Strummer, the one from the 101ers,

The CLASH

A trashy white rock 'n' roll band dealing with oppression

And furthermore, a band who are prepared to get up and do it right.
By MIKE FLOOD
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sounds more like a kid on the terraces who wants to strangle the ref than a rock 'n' roll vocalist: the guitars are amphetamine fast, the songs short sharp two minute shards of aural graffiti. The violence of their delivery is like a series of staccato attacks with a dentist's drill. And when you finally get to make out the words, say to "1977", they turn out to be uncompromising and stark: "Ain't so lucky to be rich/Sten guns in Knightsbridge/Danger stranger/You better paint your face/No Elvis, Beatles or the Rolling Stones/In 1977."

No wonder the over 25s feel threatened. But then for how long have we been going around complaining that the old gods have gilded feet of clay and that they see

the world from the inside of a limousine?

The difference is that Clash, among others, are prepared to get up and do it right. Mick Jones is aware of the antipathy this has generated among older fans: "They feel straightaway alienated by it, and they feel they can't get involved."

"The only thing they have to do is they have to attempt to understand. You have to be very brave to break out of your decade. Everybody has a decade, and you have to be brave to make the transition. Like a lot of people don't want to do it. A lot of people would like to stay, like you say, an old fart."

"Everybody knows it's happened, right? Everyone knows that it's the next thing that's going to have any kind of real force, and it's up to people to get involved. Like EMI now, they're trying to save their face after the Pistols thing, otherwise they're fucked for the next ten years of rock 'n' roll — which is what we're involved in."

"I dunno, everything goes so quickly, everything gets speeded up. The media gets hold of things and... it may not be ten years this time, it may just be two."

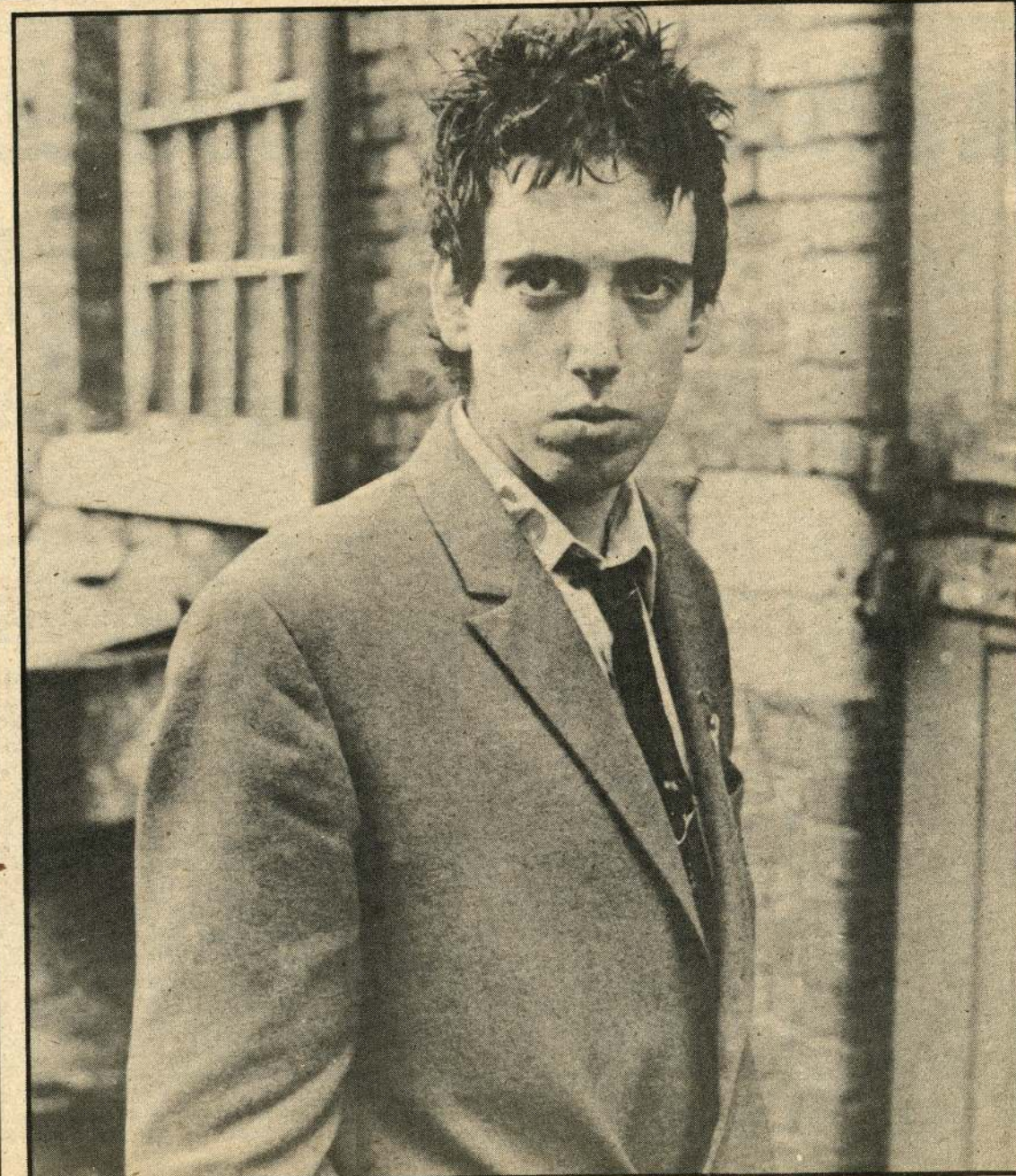
The wider movement — the bondage clothes, the new clubs like the London Roxy, the new drugs like glue and amphetamine sulphate, represent a new con-

figuration of social forces. And of course 1977 isn't 1963 or 1956 for that matter. The anti-authoritarian, up yours! stance of the new music is set in a different context, although it's an element that has always been vital to rock 'n' roll. It has a parallel in reggae, to which Clash owe an obvious debt — they even include Junior Murvin's "Police And Thieves" on the album.

But as Mick says, Clash are "a trashy white rock and roll band. Basically we are dealing with oppression, which is what we have in common. I should say we're probably a lot more interested in what they're doing than they are in what we're doing."

PAUL Simonon, bassist with Clash, explains the context in which "White Riot" arose. During the Notting Hill Carnival riot:

"We was down one end of the road, and the coppers at the other, and we were with the black kids, throwing bricks and all that. And the coppers come whizzing round the corner and pushed us up against the wall and searched us. Then they told us to piss off. Then these coloured kids come up to us and wanted to see if we had any money or anything so they started searching us. We had the confrontation with the coppers, and



Mick Jones

then with the black kids, so we was completely on our own..."

Which is not to say Clash are racist. The reverse in fact, they've done benefits for anti-racist groups, but what they do represent is a group of kids whose experience has effectively been denied a voice in rock 'n' roll. Until now.

The predominance of musicians who, by virtue of being around for 10 or 15 years, are technical virtuosi, even if they have little to say with all that technique has inhibited and intimidated kids who are just beginning. Just like *Sniffin' Glue's* Mark P believes everyone should start their own fanzine, so Clash believe *anyone* can play. Paul happily admits he's only been playing bass a year: "I'm playing away, and there's a kid watching me, and he's going to feel..."

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Joe Strummer: "... I can do that!"

Paul: "Yeah, right. Anybody can do it. The thing is to be creative."

Joe: "That's the healthy thing, innit? When you see Yes or somebody, you never feel that."

There are some indications in the way they talk, that Clash are trying

to avoid some of the failures of the heroes of the '60s. Joe Strummer feels that "Pete Townshend and all these geezers who we used to really dig when we were kids, they're sort of washed up now. If we can't learn by their mistakes, then there isn't any point in their making them."

"I know it's gonna happen, but I'm just on the watchout for that. Whatever songs I write, I want to make sure that I ain't degenerating into some kind of stinkin' self-indulgent egotistical thing. I mean, if I can't do what I really want to do, I ain't going to do nothing. I hope I've got enough courage to say one day: 'I quit.'"

Which is easy enough to say as your first single bounces into the charts and you have 10 years before anyone can call you to account. But what it shows is the terms of comparison Clash have set for themselves.

From outside of London, the punk phenomenon may have the

appearance of the response of a few jaded rock journalists with decadent taste to the publicity hype of some very rough, young and arrogant bands. But there is more substance to it than that.

Rock 'n' roll never was just about good music, and if that becomes the sole criterion, at the expense of having something vital to say, then the way is paved for some tough newcomers with more hunger than complacency to blast in and turn the rules of the game upside down.

Clash and bands like them have divided the rock audience. So did Elvis, so did the Stones, so did Lennon and Bowie. Perhaps, as a friend said recently, rock 'n' roll just doesn't mean that much anymore. If so it won't be 10 years this time.

But when you see Clash you'll see a band that still believes it does, and like rock 'n' roll, they aren't just going to go away.

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