

KISS UNMASKED AT LAST? PAGE 19

HIT PARADER

CDC 00045

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CHARLTON



CLASH BACKSTAGE

FAST TALKING WITH
JOE STRUMMER,
MICK JONES
& LISA ROBINSON

POLICE NILE STYLE

PRETENDERS

BLONDIE DEBBIE'S JEANS

BOOMTOWN RATS

GELDOF SAYS IT

YELLOW MAGIC IN TOKYO

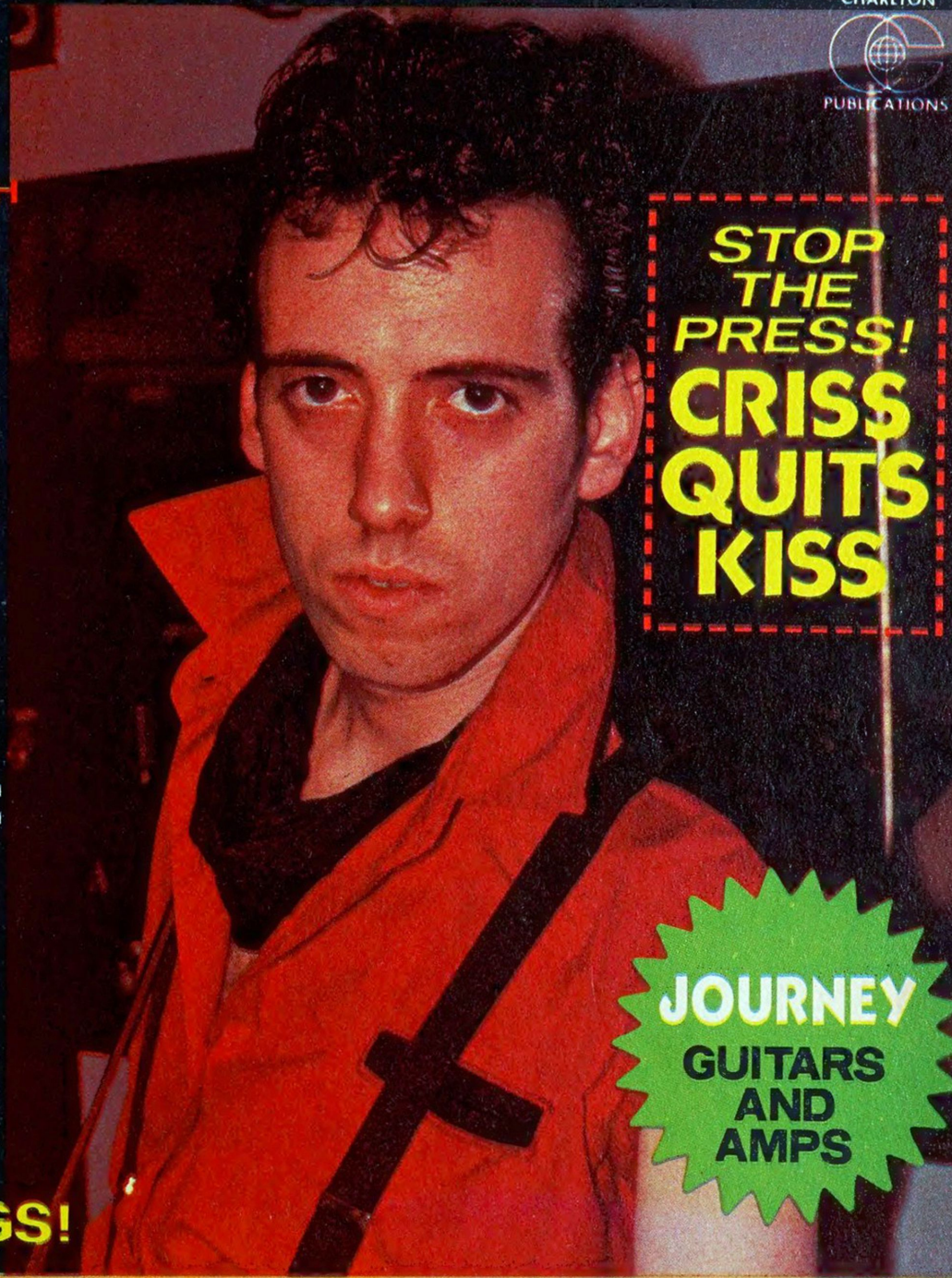
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SEGER RECORDS, JAM UNDERGROUND, JOHANSEN
PIX, TRIUMPH TOUCH DOWN, IGGY'S EXPERIMENT, TED
NUGENT, GENESIS TIX, ZZ TOP, LINDA RONSTADT**



00045

THE HIT PARADER INTERVIEW

FAST TALKING AND INSTANT RECOGNITION WITH THE CLASH



Bob Gruen

By Lisa Robinson

The car that pulls up in front of the Minskoff Theater lets out a load of passengers who look as if *they* should be in the show. "West Side Story" is in revival on Broadway and The Clash (yes, The Clash) want to see it. Mick Jones — dressed in a light blue suit, white shirt and red tie, Joe Strummer — in red and black, Kosmo Vinyl, Pearl E. Gates and a few friends proceed with the fabulous Susan Blond, and myself upstairs to the mezzanine.

"Usually we sit in the orchestra," mutters Susan Blond, with a glint in her eye, "but we knew you wouldn't want to sit in the elitist seats."

We file into half a row, drawing stares. The overture begins. I whisper to Mick for about the tenth time that his voice, and accent, remind me of Jimmy Page. He smiles. The last time he heard that I think it was around 6 a.m. in The Brasserie, on a very snowy night, after The Clash had paid a visit to Studio 54. It's only been a few months, but they've come a long way.

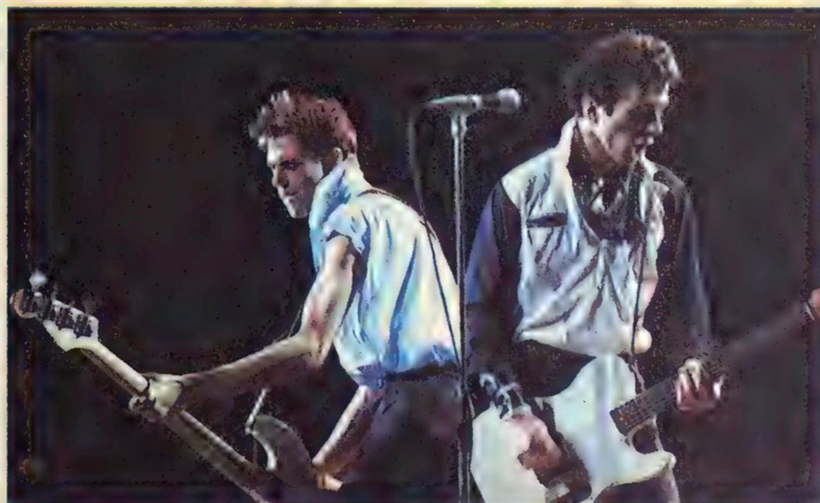
The overture begins. "Tonight, Tonight", "I Feel Pretty", mighty different from "Train In Vain" or "Clampdown". Seated between Mick and Joe I notice that they seem to enjoy this from the moment it begins. Strummer is nodding his head. Later, Mick laughs at some of the jokes. This doesn't seem to be a mistake, after all.

Flashback, December, 1976: Manchester, England. A Religious Ex-

perience: I am sent to London to see some act which shall here be nameless. I flee the junket, taking some of the press with me to Manchester to hook up with the Sex Pistols "Anarchy In The U.K." tour. Everywhere there is English press, attempting to get to the band because of the scandal caused when some unprintable words were uttered by Johnny Rotten on live TV.

Opening for the Pistols are the Heartbreakers — old friends from New York — The Clash, and The Buzzcocks. Heartbreakers' manager Lee Black Childers gets me to the sound check, and then right up front for the show. The Clash performed for perhaps twenty minutes, and I would not stop talking about it for the next six months. After

"The record company doesn't want you to keep pumping stuff out, because they want to have time to flog it. They get nervous when they think you're too keen," says Joe. "When I heard that, I went, 'Eh?, Wot?' I had to sit down for a few minutes to figure that one out."



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their set I raced up to the tiny dressing room and looked at Paul, Mick, Joe and Topper with widened eyes. "You took my breath away," I said, shamelessly, and my opinion of the group has never changed. It only took four years for the industry to catch up to what the kids then already knew.

1980: Intermission—"West Side Story": A race to the bar. "Didja see that set with the slanted wall," enthuses Strummer. "That would be great for our show." Kosmo passes drinks all around and talks about how as a kid, he listened every day to the cast album of this show. It seems so tame now, I mumble. "Isn't it?," says Susan Blond. "When we were kids and saw it, it seemed so tragic, so scary..." And she adds, "You should all be on that stage."

The rumble scene draws much applause, still much deadpan concentration on the part of Strummer and Jones as I watch them both with my peripheral vision. I'm trying hard to stay awake.

"We realize everything is a giant windup. A lot of young guys, people, anybody who plays an instrument and tries to make some music, they get promised a lot of stuff that never turns up. Contracts, or managers, money, studio time, tapes, interviews, auditions, all kinds of stuff that young musicians try to hang onto. We realize that it never really shows up. You get what you pay for. So, I don't get carried away by any of this. I try not to. I make a conscious effort to take it with a pinch of salt."

— Joe Strummer

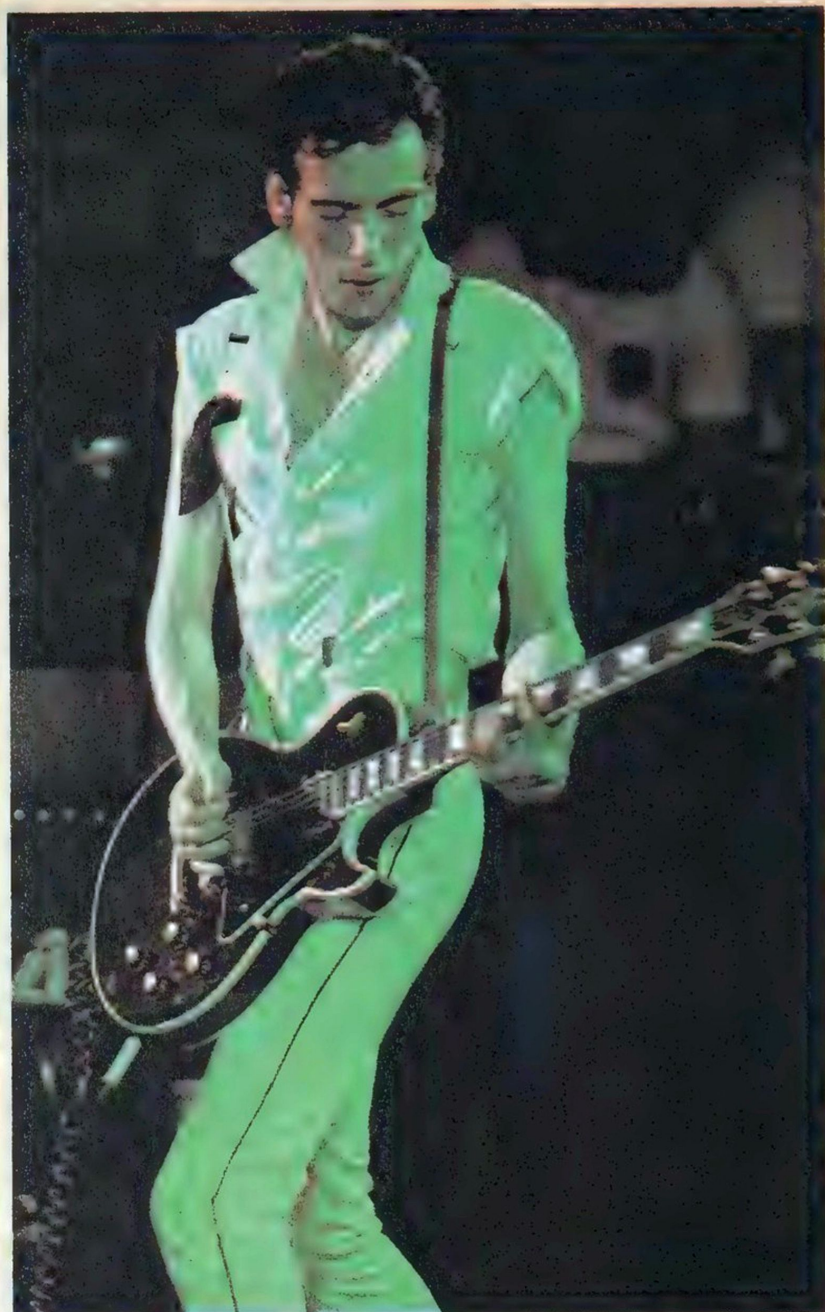
After the show, it's *Un, Deux, Trois*, in the heart of the theater district, where — even in that jaded atmosphere, our gang Draws Looks. We are ushered to the large, round table in the middle of the room and Susan points out Jonathan Leiber (His father was the President of CBS Records) and Marina Schiano ("She does all the stuff for Yves St. Laurent here," Susan whispers to a virtually unimpressed Joe Strummer).

Mick says he eats too many eggs, then proceeds to order an omelette. Strummer gets a steak with French Fries which I immediately begin to nick off his plate. Many drinks are ordered, some back and forth to the restrooms, some of the younger friends leave (school the next day, it seems), and we settle down to some not so serious talk. As fabulous as it is, I ask, why a song about Montgomery Clift? Joe talks of his deep interest in James Dean, says he wants to get a Dean biography written by a William Bass (*I haven't been able to find it, if you can, contact this magazine.*) talks about his interest in Warhol, the 1960's, ("He saw me in 'Bad' three times," says an obviously pleased Susan Blond.), and talks about writing songs.

"If you can write a song, in twelve lines, that ain't rubbish," said Joe, "and tells the truth, I think it's the highest form of writing prose. In most prose, you can get away with one or two daft lines. But with a song, you can't, and you boil it down to the purest form. I'd even like to do a musical one day, like the one we saw tonight. I felt like I was watching it with a pair of binoculars."

"I'd like to compose music," adds Mick, "but not specifically about the West Side of New York. I'm going to have all drips in my musical," he laughs.

Do they envision an end to their rock



Neal Preston

"If it gets bad, I'll run away, piss off, out of it. Leave me alone, normal, you know?"

and roll world? "Oh," says Joe, "as soon as my stomach gets too full for these tight trousers, I'll do movies ... or something."

We leave for the Mudd Club to see Lene Lovich, although the boys were not wildly enthusiastic about the prospect. A mob outside, we have to push through and there is some hesitation. Elitist, and all. But the arrival of Jones and Strummer causes the proper excitement, and once inside, it is all happy, communal, rock and roll heat. Videotapes of James Brown and Diana Ross and The Supremes are on the monitor. Lene starts to emote downstairs. We all trek downstairs, and even though it's far too crowded to see the stage, there's no missing her voice. John Cale leans over and whispers to me that he likes her, but she looks as if she's about to liberate the Jews from Soviet Russia. (Would that she could.) Susan Blond has that look on her

face like "everything is going nicely, everyone is having a good time, this is so much fun, all my wards are taken care of," the look that always contributes to everyone's good time. It is about three a.m. I begin to tire. I wish I could see The Clash onstage right now. Almost instead of anybody, these days.

"I don't give that punk label a moment's thought. I believe that talking fast is one of the finest things that America has invented. Fast talking. It's like if you go into a shop, you can make your deal in ten seconds flat. In line with this, I think 'punk' is a good handle because you know what I mean, right? Otherwise you'd have to go 'loud, thumping music with people shouting blah blah', long sentence, and this way you've got the idea already. To me, punk is a good way of looking at the world I want

to maintain at all costs. I define it as my bullshit detector. My attitude where I suss things out. The way I know what I think is a good idea of what ain't."

— Joe Strummer

James Brown is performing at Studio 54. Ten tickets are sent over to The Clash. Due to a prior television commitment, I arrive at Studio 54 late. Two numbers and Brown is off the stage, but I see Mick Jones — spiffy in a black suit and white shirt, and enthusiastic about the show he's just seen. Didn't you see it, he asks. I was on TV, I reply, talking about you. Oh, smiles Mick, they ask you to go on and tell them what's happening, and then you come and ask us? Ha-ha. We arrange to meet later on that week for more of his telling me what's happening, at the studio. "Electric Lady," he says significantly. Ah yes, the one's that haunted.

"Don't you think you could put some newer pictures of us in Hit Parader," Mick asks me the minute I arrive at the studio. AHA — The Clash, vain? "No," he says, "I just think the fans should get some better snaps to look at. The last ones were so old." I find it interesting that upstairs another Mick, Jagger that is, is mixing "Emotional Rescue". There's a message in this, somewhere. We listen to some of the different rhythms they've been playing around with all week in the studio, and then Joe and I, armed with a bottle of tequila and orange juice for some Vitamin C, go into the inner studio for a chat. LR: Do you think that there is anything about your music lately, with its commercial acceptance and all, that can be considered calculated?

JOE: Not at all. We're true believers, and that's the only way to really learn something. You can study all you like about anything. But unless you've got a true passion for it, and I'm talking about true detail — true passion, we've got the same passion, so therefore we know. I don't know anything about a car, but I do know something about Sam The Sham and The Pharoahs.

I take the music that we're making now to be the most important things to concentrate on, and the other things — like news of how the record has done, or stuff like that, I think people get all jangled up thinking about that. They get obsessed with the idea of "breaking America", they get a little strung out about it, so they bash out a decent tune and the lp sounds like something's gone wrong somewhere. I don't know, look at Slade, it was staring at you in the face. I can remember Chas Chandler saying, "I'll tell ya sonny, in six weeks Slade is gonna be the biggest band in the whole of America. Headlines like that. And, well, I mean, what's the hurry?"

LR: Do you think there is still a real communal spirit among rock and roll bands, or is it really a pretty jealous scene?

JOE: Everyone's jealous as hell in this business and if they don't admit it, they're just lying. Of course I'm jealous. Everybody, of everybody, anybody who's successful for a start. I hate (mumbled) ... and everybody's like that too, they just don't admit it. If Elvis Costello brings a record out I still go 'bloody rubbish'. I don't even bother to listen to it. I'm happiest tuning into the oldies stations on the radio. I can't stand all that hard driving rock, those butch singers, screaming. I can't



Bob Gruen

"Everyone's jealous as hell in this business," says Joe, "and if they don't admit it, they're just lying. Of course I'm jealous, of everybody, anybody who's successful, for a start. I hate 'em all. Except for some good bands. Some ones we've played with and stuff."



Gary Gershoff

"We'd like to open a sort of club for the people in London. And we've got a record company to form," says Mick. "We don't want to be all mouth and no trousers. We'd do it if we had tons of money. Actually, we'd appreciate tons of money, and if anybody wants to send me any, we really could do with it."



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"If you can write a song, in twelve lines, that ain't rubbish, and tell the truth, I think it is the highest form of writing prose. In most prose, you can get away with one or two daft lines, but with a song, you can't. You have to boil it down to its purest form."

stand it. I'd rather be a wimp than that. I hate 'em all. Except for some good bands. Some ones we've played with and stuff. (Laughter here.)

LR: Do you think that rock and roll is essentially about girls, and drugs, and cars? Do you think Johnny Lydon would think that?

JOE: It always has been, and always will be. Of course Lydon's dealing with drugs, girls and cars all the time. Right now, he's probably outside of London, in a car, with his arm 'round a girl, what's the other one? Drugs? He's probably got some of each in front of him... (Laughter here.)

LR: What about your politics?

JOE: I'm just an idiot. They're confusion politics. I believe, though, that we should have a sense of community for ways of getting forward. Basically, I believe in the quality, the togetherness of people. That is the way to achieve anything, and that's the ethics of the confusion. Ha-ha.

LR: Do you think you're a rockstar?

JOE: Of course not.

LR: Who do you think is?

JOE: Mick Jagger, probably. Or once he was, maybe. He probably doesn't care anymore. Who is a rock star? Good question. WHO'S A ROCK STAR? (he yells).

MICK JONES! someone yells back.

Back in the studio, I listen to some of the tapes: a new song, "Call-Up" is anti-draft and very danceable. I tell Mick they should rush release it. The new rhythms run the gamut: reggae, Caribbean, country and western (whether or not Strummer's version of "King Of The Road" will get on the final album remains to be seen; but they had a lot of fun doing it), and even some jazz. Mick's piano playing sounds quite jazzy. Have you heard Thelonius Monk, I say. No, he says, although he owns up to Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane. I'll have to get you some Thelonius Monk, I promise. ("OH NO!", shrieks Susan Blond the next day when I inform her of this.



Gary Cershoff

While Mick Jones and Joe Strummer laid down some basic new tracks in New York, Paul Simonon was busy filming a movie in Hollywood. Here, Paul onstage at The Palladium.

"Don't let him listen to JAZZ. You'll ruin their music." I send the album over anyway, and Mick calls to thank me; enthusiastic, particularly about "Misterioso".

"Sure I can walk down the street in London," says Mick. "I might get a thick ear, I might get into a fight, one kid may come up and congratulate me, one may come up to heckle. But all that is too stupid. If it gets bad, or even a bit like that, believe me, I'll run away, piss off out of it. Leave me alone, normal, you know? But my family — well, I live with my grandmother, and they're all pleased to hear how I'm going on. That's good — they're all interested in seeing me on the telly."

"There's a place in London that we'd like to open up as a sort of club for the people in London. And we've got a record company to form with Kosmo. We don't want to be all mouth and no trousers.

We'd do it if we had tons of money. Actually, we'd appreciate tons of money, and if anybody wants to send me any, we really could do with it. Right, and we promise to put it to a good cause."

"We've got all sorts of other things in mind, like shops, not where we would sell merchandise, but places where people can hang out, get new records. We figure that if we make a record, and we could make a track a day, we could press it in another day, put it out on the streets the next day, and people could have a record a week. When we actually do have the money, we'll try and get something together. We're working as fast as we can."

— Mick Jones

LR: Is there pressure on you now, since you have a hit, to record more stuff fast?

JOE: No. I'd say the opposite, because they don't want you to keep pumping stuff out. They want to have time to flog it. The record company gets nervous when they think you're too keen. When someone told me that last week I went, "Eh? Wot?" I had to sit down for a few minutes to work it out. But for me, the key thing is making music, you've got to keep making music, and touring is quite fun and we love to do it. But you've got to keep making music."

P.S. Several weeks later: Chicago: I am in a Holiday Inn, talking with Chrissie Hynde following The Pretenders show in that city. The TV is on, the sound down, a dreadful show called "Fridays" is on, some skit about "Women Who Spit". And all of a sudden, there they are, The Clash. We race to turn up the sound, and it's "Clampdown". Paul looks gorgeous, Topper is bashing away, Mick is dancing, Strummer looks wired. They are phenomenal, it is a real rush. And not unlike seeing the Rolling Stones on Ed Sullivan in 1964. Instant recognition. □



Sheila Rock

"We realize everything is a giant windup. A lot of young guys, people, anybody who plays an instrument and tries to make some music, they get promised a lot of stuff that never turns up."