

STRAY CATS · TENPOLE TUDOR

RECORD
MIRROR

CLASH
Basque in
the sun!



BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
in colour

SPECIALS · ADAM ANT · EDDY GRANT
DYLAN 8 DATES INSIDE

EXPOSED!!



BOTTOMS
UP FOR BUCKS FIZZ

SPANISH STRUMMERS

HASSLES SURROUND The Clash like over-sexed iron fillings round an electro-magnet. A band of extremes still obsessed with the romantic notion of the rock 'n' roll outlaw, their every action is garnished with a side-order of wind-ups.

Tour managers are driven to distraction, hotel managers to calling the police and their own managers are swapped almost annually. As for record companies, promoters and Press personnel — well, you chose your job, mate.

But occasionally the electro-magnet is switched off and they become regular human beings. Joe Strummer, in particular, is more than human: he's one of the warmest, compassionate and genuinely concerned people I've ever met. To many the personification of The Clash, he sets increasingly high standards for himself and expects to see this attitude reflected in those around him.

It's this strong sense of moral purpose that caused him to complete the recent London Marathon without having gone into any prior training; to treat his own money with outright scorn; and to flog himself into the ground, relentlessly improving himself both mentally and physically. This may take the form of playing 'till he drops or immersing himself in the language, history and street culture of every country he visits.



PEARL HARBOUR snatches the vino from a desperate Paul Simonon.

Sure, he's no saint. Strummer womanises, gets wrecked and badmouths others like the best of us. But his huge capacity for living makes him a fascinating travelling partner. And as an extension of this, The Clash are probably the ultimate band to go on the road with.

Ironically, the interview was originally to take place in Ladbroke Grove on Saturday morning. But a unique combination of hassles and good timing conspire to find me muscling in on their debut tour of Spain. So exit the standard question and answer session . . . and into the front line.

I've known The Clash for some time now. My first dialogue with them was some time before I started writing for a music paper, at the French Mont De Marsan punk festival in 1977. After that I dropped in on them on every British tour and have had frequent conversations when running into each of them out and about London. Hitting Barcelona and Madrid with the band seems a just journalistic dessert for someone who has held the band in his highest musical affections these past four years.

A typical breakdown of communication between themselves and CBS means they aren't anticipating my arrival. This entails several hours of sleuth-work trying to track them down at hotel, gig and first Press conference, their disdain for schedules meaning missing them on each occasion. Getting into



Topper mixes a Molotov Cocktail while an apple explodes in his friends face.

The CLASH declare uncivil war in Spain. MIKE NICHOLLS gets caught in the crossfire, PETE VERNON turns war photographer

the hall — the Pavillion Juventual Barcelona, no less — proves an even bigger problem.

Next to the local bouncers the average English gorilla is but a mere boy scout and since I didn't know the Spanish for "I'm part of the situation", it takes longer than usual to blag my way through.

Once inside, however, things start looking up. This is not entirely unconnected with the fact that quadruple tequilas are only half a quid a throw and there are some familiar fellow imbibers around. Like veteran roadie Jock who I've last seen passing out at Watford Gap Services after ordering "pizza — deep fried". He obligingly furnishes me with a backstage pass.

Then there's the famous PA supremo Roadent. Ever-ready to trade some juicy gossip for a beer he claims that it is his pallid self who is the subject of The Passions' falsely-titled 'I'm In Love With A German Film Star'.

But to the gig. The Clash haven't played for ten months and it shows. Apart from the fact that you can barely hear him, Mick Jones looks well slovenly and it's left to the rampant Strummer to single-handedly fly the flag.

The following night is a different story altogether. In the same way as a good Paddy Crerand performance used to make Man. United in the Best, Law and Charlton European

Cup winning days, Mick needs to be on form if The Clash are to deliver. And in Madrid he enjoys his finest hour (and 40 minutes).

From the preliminary 'London's Calling' to the concluding 'London's Burning' he's at his most inspired, brilliant best, tossing out scintillating breaks and solos with effortless verve. His style embraces the best elements of HM as well as being particularly suited to the dub-orientated staff of the past two LPs.

The beautiful 'Someone Got Murdered' can raise tears at the best of times but at the Real Madrid (basket ball section) stadium it caught another universe. The 7000 capacity crowd — almost double the number they generally play to in Britain and this is only their second-ever dago date — were also treated to red hot renditions of 'Bank Robber', 'Hammersmith Palais', 'Clampdown', 'Armagedon Time', 'Junco Partner', 'Jimmy Jazz', 'Janie Jones' and, of course, 'Spanish Bombs' and that's only the familiar stuff! Also up for grabs were about half a dozen newbies but they kind of got mislaid in the brain-damaging circumstances of the next 48 hours (which they didn't play).

These begin almost immediately after the Barcelona show where start of tour high jinx co-incide with a need to drown collective sorrows following the inauspicious opener. My unexpected appearance in the dressing room raises further mayhem. Whilst Joe introduces me

to the non-plussed security guy and pumps me for news about cartoonist Ray Lowry's latest exploits, Mick and I chortle about unpaid rates bills.

Topper's greeting is rather more unorthodox. Having collapsed (with shall we say, fatigue?) at the end of the concert, his first action on coming round is to playfully toss half a brick in my direction.

Affecting a deft side-step, I manage to upset a trestle of (thankfully soft) drinks and from then on the lunacy never lets up. Frightened fans run for their lives as missiles strafe the air whilst back at the hotel room things are hardly a whole lot more civilised.

Bounteous supplies of duty free booze and other useful relaxants make for quite an unusual interview situation. This itself is punctuated by regular bathroom huddles comprising Mick, Joe and the ever-lurking Kosmo Vinyl, ostensibly the band's publicist but more essentially a major wind-up artist. For example, the following morning my enquiry about which flight to book to Madrid is met with the astonishing non-sequitur: "You, know, I met the Harlem Globe Trotters in this airport."

Constant jokes are cracked about him being the Information Dept., other departments such as Complaints and Insults being occupied by Mick and bassist Paul Simonon respectively.

Head of the Ideas Department is



Joe Strummer earns extra cash as a travel courier.

Clash manager Bernie Rhodes whose re-appointment to his past position has been the most important development in the group's recent history. To recap a little, Rhodes took the group under his wing soon after his mate McLaren put together the Pistols and was responsible for The Clash's original urban guerilla stance.

Two years later he was ousted by his fully-grown fledglings but since his successors lacked the creativity of his fertile mind he has been recalled. His first major idea has been to abandon Blighty for the next nine months. He sees the whole music scene here as having returned to its pre-punk jaded self and reckons there's more inspiration crackling in the atmosphere of the newly-emerging rock 'n' roll territories.

Spain, with its healthily-growing post-Franco economy is a classic example, as are Portugal, Poland and Yugoslavia, all of which the band intend to play during their self-imposed exile. London, on the other hand, is bereft of any worthwhile rock clubs and TV shows but by the beginning of next year the situation may change.

Bernie tells me all this the morning after the night before at Barcelona Airport. The band are being unusually guarded. This might have something to do with my having crashed out on them a few hours earlier. Then again this personal first (falling asleep at gigs was last year's thing, maaan; Roky Eriksons in reverse are gonna be big in the summer of '81) did take place at 5am and the full effect of the previous evening's poor start to the tour is striking home.

The conservation with Rhodes, whose inter-Clash activities included "discovering" The Specials and Dexys Midnight Runners, continues during the flight to Madrid.

On asking him whether the band's political stance hasn't always been somewhat naive, his reply is "It had to come — like Laker. Politics is something which concerns every individual and the band are encouraging, rather than preaching, arousing interest in the likes of, say, the Sandinista rebels, so that people can investigate for themselves."

"An author of a history book doesn't necessarily agree with what he's writing about," he continues, "he's providing his interpretation of certain facts."

On the other hand, Joe Strummer disagrees that the band are merely passive observers. With the rain beating down on our coach roof as we leave Madrid Airport, he tells me that by the same token the band have no concrete political ideology other than "human rights."

"That explains 'Sandinista!'" he elucidates. "We felt sympathy with what they were doing (overthrowing the ruling family oligarchy in Nicaragua) and there was a total of media blanket at the time. So the title's useful. We're telling people about it. Yeah, I wouldn't say we preach but we are committed."

We? Although Strummer and Jones are generally acknowledged to be the band's songwriters, the last couple of albums have given all four members equal credit and 'Guns Of Brixton' was written by Paul.

TURN OVER

FROM PAGE 4

Although in the light of recent events the song appears quite visionary, wasn't it somewhat provocative in 1979? "No," Simonon replies. "It was just about a situation where people could get pushed too far. And in the end they were — by the police."

Though rarely the most articulate member of The Clash, like Topper, he's certainly no fool, their "strong silent type" personalities admirably suiting them to their engine room role. Paul seems to come into his own at the stadium Press conference where a member of CBS Spain's International Department acts as interpreter.

When asked what he thinks of Mick Jagger's remark that the band "aren't even new for China" he jokes that the old Stone needs that kind of cheap publicity. Other ripostes show a similar degree of wit which is no less than the mainly banal questions deserve.

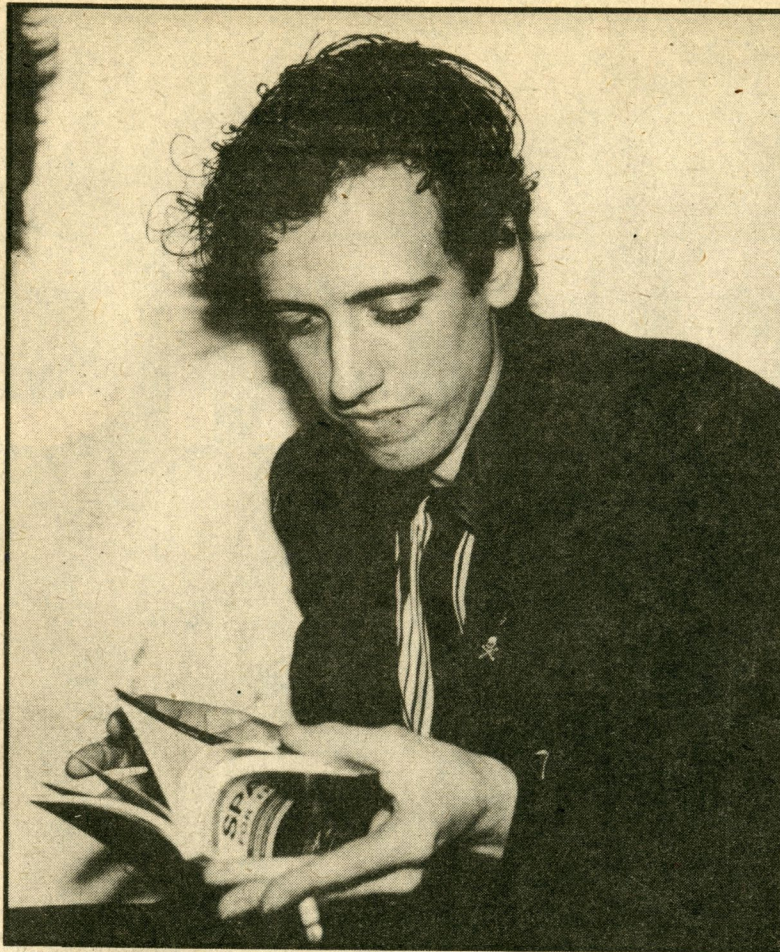
Although Joe's reply about the band touring Spain for "the sun the wine and the women" was not taken seriously by the assembled hacks, a later conversation with him reveals that it isn't far off the mark. Five years ago he hitch-hiked from Malaga to Madrid, having an enjoyable affair with a local senorita in the process.

It was his affection for the country that inspired the melody of 'Spanish Bombs', despite its stern political references. "It's a love song dedicated to myself and my father," he explains before going on to describe how one night, after a few drinks, his dad admitted to him that in the late thirties he'd had half a mind to fight for the Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War.

This return to politics and human rights leads me to ask where one draws the line in striving for freedom. Does he actually sympathise with the Red Brigade terrorists whose colours he's sported in the past?

"I don't want myself or anyone to go round killing people," he retorts bluntly, "I'd rather walk about in the sun with my hands in my pockets."

"That 'T'-shirt," he adds as an afterthought, was only a reaction anyhow — to that whole Rock Against Racism hypocrisy. Playing



Mick Jones looks up the Spanish for shampoo.

with phonies like Tom Robinson in that park and arguing about who'd headline and use which dressing room. It was just a handy way of getting a big audience, with all the record company types getting in on the act."

Yet the band remain staunch propagandists, photographic images of assorted causes adorning their corrugated iron sheet stage backdrop. Projected slides show 'Right To Work' marchers in Detroit devastation in Cambodia, dole queues in the UK and so on.

Equally varied is each of the band's taste in music. Few minutes

demands from the hotel manager to shut up receive the requisite response: A five star hotel with 10 star prices ought not to inconvenience its guests with no-star sound-proofing.

Following continual threats to call the police, the hapless manager finally keeps his promise and arrives at the door with two of the meanest suckers you ever saw. What they see is like something out of a surrealist movie. Lucky Luis Buneul is one of their countrymen.

Unconscious in one corner of the room is a fully-clothed Kosmo Vinyl who has at last succumbed to his most feared phenomenon — sleep. Sharing the ridiculous aluminium thermal bedspread we've draped over him like an Xmas turkey are a couple of, er, night birds (far more polite expression than groupie, eh Joe?) one of whom is staring blankly at the equally blank TV which no one bothered to turn off when reception ceases several hours earlier.

Not only all this but when Paul opens the door and the

Carabinieri appear, Joe is so taken aback that he trips over the coffee (ha!) table and sends a whole pile of empty bottles tumbling to the floor. The domino effect somehow spreads to a neatly-arranged row of tapes which one by one kamikaze dive off the sideboard into the waste paper bin.

Miraculously the uniformed ones leave without making any arrests. The consequent adrenalin flow induced by the previous proceedings puts fresh life into him and he insists that we both "hit the streets".

"C'mon, man, let's go and find something to eat. I'm starving. Wow, the first pang of hunger!" he exclaims, holding his arms aloft.

In the half-light of that hotel room — dimmed by scarves draped over the soulless lamps — it was obvious that he considered this a triumph. A cosseted rock 'n' roll star with international fortune at his feet able to enjoy the easy temptation of Epicurean excess in favour of a fry up at some barrow boys' caff.

I hope Joe Strummer stays hungry and proud. I hope the rest of The Clash do likewise. Inevitably they all will.



"You shouldn't have drunk the water," explains barman Nicholls to a billious Joe Strummer.

Edited by SIMON HILLS



STEVE CARROLL of Praying Mantis

PRAYING ANTICS

HEAVY METAL band Praying Mantis set out on their first headlining British tour later this month, following the chart success of their debut album 'Time Tells No Lies'.

Kicking off at Huddersfield's Eros Club on May 20 the band go on to play: Newcastle Mayfair 22, Barrow - in - Furness Civic Hall 23, Leeds Tiffany's 24, Hull Tiffany's 25, Colwyn Bay The Pier 26, Neath Talk Of The Abbey 27, Banbury Winter Gardens 28, Ebbwvale Leisure Centre 29, Glasgow Technical College June 6, Blackburn King Georges Hall 9, Manchester Fagins 1981 Club 10, Leamington Royal Spa Centre 11, West Runton Pavilion 12, Bedford College of Education 13 and Lincoln Drill Hall 16.



QUADS GET A GIG

THE ANTI - unemployment march from Liverpool to London this month is to be given entertainment by Birmingham band The Quads - whose single 'Gotta Getta Job' was released last month.

Dates along the route so far confirmed are for gigs in Manchester on May 6, Stockport 7, Congleton 9, Stoke On Trent 11, Telford 13, Wolverhampton 14, Walsall 15, West Bromwich 16, Birmingham 18, Nuneaton 19, Northampton 22, Bedford 23, London Wembley 28 and London Southall 29. Venues for the gigs will be announced in the local towns.

MEMBERS BLOW

CONTENTS



...want to go round killing
...I'd rather walk about
...with my hands in my
...I say the GLASH'S Joe
...and he couldn't pick a
...than Spain to do it.
...FOLLOW'S follows the
...Four to Spain, fires
...the tale — and lives to tell
2/3

THIS WEEK'S TOP NEWS STORIES

- 8 NEWS BEAT: Make your mind up... the barest Buck's Fizz, struggle with the Stray Cats and tune into the Yellow Magic Orchestra. Plus all the latest gossip and the return of the delightful Paula Yates!
- 12 HELP! Susanne Garrett answers your problems
- 14 TWO pages of singles, reviewed by Mike Gardner
- 16 Is 'Wha'ppen' the BEAT's best so far? And was the wait for the UNDERTONES' newbie worth it? Find out with best of the rest of the week's albums
- 20 DID we really say BROOOOCE? Learn the 11 Commandments of Rock from the man himself — IN COLOUR!
- 22 ADAM ANT plays for charity and the SPECIALS play for the unemployed... plus Fad Gadget, the Freshies and Killing Joke
- 26 TURN ON! And tune in to four pages of News, gigs, tours, releases, films, TV and radio
- 30 The mighty JAMES HAMILTON with all the disco news and the electro-disco chart
- 34 MAILMAN: if you don't hate him you aren't human!
- 35 CHARTFILE: Our unique five-page guide to the top charts PLUS Eddy Grant and Tenpole Tudor Songwords, Vaughan Toulouse's Star Choice, a special double Link Profile and Chartfile
- 39 X - WORD AND POPAGRAM... and your chance to win an album

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