



# A TRACK-BY-TRACK GUIDE TO OUR CLASH TRIBUTE CDs

STRUMMERVILLE

Taking their name from a track on The Vibrators' debut album, Northern Ireland's Jake Burns and Stiff Little ers were present at The Clash's first-ever Belfast gig 977. The bonds between the two bands were immediately evident and, like The Clash, SLF were soon adding dub and reggae influences to their high-octane punk fuel. By 1982, they had split but they ed in 1990. This potent tribute to Joe Strummer comes from their first studio album in six years.



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# JANIE JONES

Songdog earned high praise from Uncut for their second album Haiku earlier this year. Songwriter and modern-day beat Lyndon Morgans, guitarist Karl Woodward and multi-instrumentalist Dave Paterson recorded their captivating acoustic version of "Janie Jones" from The Clash's debut album especially for Uncut in August this year. They were so pleased with the pastoral makeover they've given the song that in a message posted on the band's website they're now threatening to do the same to Motorhead's "Ace Of Spades"



### HAWKSLEY WORKMAN BANKROBBER

We were just about to sign off the track listing of this Clash tribute and regretting we didn't have a cover of "Bankrobber" when at the last minute this splendid version of the band's 1980 Top 20 hit arrived out of the blue in an MP3 file from Hawksley Workman. The acclaimed Canadian singer-songwriter with the soaring voice has just released Lover/Fighter, his third album of lushly textured, impeccably produced alt-pop, on Universal. (See album review, p130.)



### HAMELL ON TRIAL WHITE RIOT/HITSVILLE UK

Hamell On Trial, as you will all know, is really Ed Hamell, New York's very own one-man revolutionary front monthly Uncut columnist and friend of Jakey. His basic philosophy holds that an acoustic guitar is the next most lethal weapon after a sub-machine gun. This makes him probably the only man on earth who could record an unplugged version of "White Riot" and somehow make it sound more menacing, angrier and louder than the original. Believe it. (See Album Of The Month, p114.)



### MARC CARROLL LONDON CALLING

Irish singer-songwriter Marc Carroll earned rave reviews last year for his Ten Of Swords album and his contemporary distillation of classic styles – not least in this magazine. His take on the classic "London Calling" stays relatively true to the spirit of the original, but he brings his own unique personality to this guitar-heavy version, on which he plays all the instruments himself.



### MATTHEW RYAN

SOMEBODY GOT MURDERED

Steve Earle describes Matthew Ryan as "one of the best songwriters I've seen come out of Nashville". A prolific writer who has released six albums in as many years in America, Concussion, his first to appear in Britain, was recorded in 2001 and released here earlier this year. Uncut featured one of Ryan's own powerful compositions on the free CD with our July issue (Take 74). But Concussion also includes this gritty version of "Somebody Got Murdered" from Sandinista



### JOSH ROUSE STRAIGHT TO HELL

Nashville-based singer-songwriter Josh Rouse left his acoustic roots behind on his current album, 1972, for a hurricane tour around the West Coast pop and blue-eyed soul of that era. But on this spellbinding cover of one of the most memorable tracks from the Clash's fifth album, Combat Rock, he's back in stripped-down acoustic troubadour mode. The effect is a simply stunning testimony to the timelessness of Joe Strummer's songwriting.



# \*\*EALER TRAIN IN VAIN Exclusive to Uncut

Manchester's Jason Kelly has been around. The name "Kealer," is the one he used to give the police whenever he was arrested for dealing in London in the late '80s. Then he ended up living in a storage unit under the Westway, a famous location in Clash mythology. After a couple of singles with a band called Stroke, he released his debut solo album this year. This version of the turnultuous final track on London Calling was specially recorded for our Clash tribute.



# ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION & ZEBDA POLICE ON MY BACK Exclusive to Uncut

The most streetwise act to emerge from the British-Asian underground, it was inevitable Asian Dub Foundation would sooner or later cover The Clash, a band with whom they have often been compared both for their energy and radical politics. This live version of the Sandinistal classic "Police On My Back" was originally recorded for the French TV show Music Planet International Compared to the French TV show Compared to the French TV show Compared to the French TV show Compared The French TV show Compare



# MR DAVID VINER SHOULD ISTAY OR SHOULD IGO? Exclusive to uniture

"Should I Stay Or Should I Go?", which first appeared on Combat Rock and gave them a Top 20 hit in October 1982, must be the most covered Clash song of them all—even Kylie's had a go, for heaven's sake. London's very own urban blues man, Mr David Viner, whose debut album was recently released on Dim Make Records, brings his own unique interpretation to the song, performed in the style of John Lee Hooker.



# TERRY EDWARDS & THE SCAPEGOATS

From the Sartorial album Plays, Salutes, Executes

Terry Edwards first emerged blowing his horn with The Higsons in the early '80s. The band drifted around different labels, including a spell on 2-Tone. But the frustration of the breakthrough that never really came was summed up in the title of their second albuin. The Curse OFThe Higsons. Frontman Charlie Higson went on to fame with The Fast Show, while Edwards has worked with Yeah Jazz, Butterfield 8, Tindersticks and Gallon Drunk. "Version City" is his take on a song that first appeared on Sandinista!



# THEA GILMORE I'M NOT DOWN Exclusive to Uncut

When we first asked Thea Gifmore about her favourite Clash songs, she really wasn't sure she was intimate enough with their work to give an informed opinion. After all, the band's first two albums were released before she was even born. If turned out, of course, that she knew far more of their back catalogue than she was letting on, and after further research she volunteered this engaging folk-rock take on the uplifting "I'm Not Down" from London Calling.



# 15 EDWYN COLLINS

Edwyn Collins made some of the best pop records of the early '80s with Orange Juice and later went on to solo success, scoring a huge chart hit in the early '90s with "A Girl Like You". "1977"—the B-side of The Clash's first single, "White Riot" – remains a fond memory for him as it was the year he turned 18. In this version, recorded specifically for our Clash tribute, he gives the song a typically romantic treatment.



# JEFF KLEIN THE GUNS OF BRIXTON Exclusive to Uncut

The influence of The Clash's London Calling on a generation of American youth in the early '80s can't be over-estimated. Even Bob Dylap's son, Jakob, cites it as the record that changed his life. Among those who also fell under its spell was Austin-based Jeff Klein, whose second album Everybody Loves A Winner earlier this year evoked comparison with Ryan Adams and Jay Farrar from Uncut's reviewer. His reinvention of "The Guns Of Brixton" is one of the most extraordinary covers in this collection.



# 16 THE FIERY FURNACES ONE MORE TIME

Uncut's reviewer reckoned that The Fiery Furnaces' album Gallowsbird's Bark "may well be the most exhilarating debut" of 2003. Refusing to follow the garage-rock style that is de rigueur right now with most new American bands, brother and sister Eleanor and Matthew Friedberger instead favour glorious pop hooks, kooky lyrics and springing rhythms that range from punk to ragtime. They revisit The Clash's sprawling Sandinista! for this cover of "One More Time".



# THE CARAVANS KNOWYOUR RIGHTS

Not to be confused with the '50s gospel group of the same name, rockabilly stalwarts The Caravans have been around since 1984. Over the years, they vebuilt up a strong live following and recorded for a variety of small labels, including two albums for Raucous Records. They also contributed two tracks to the label's *This is Rockabilly Clash* compilation — "Jail Guitar Doors" and this stirring version of the opening track from *Combat Rock*.



# JOE STRUMMER & THE MESCALEROS LONGSHADOW

There was only one way to end this tribute CD to Joe Strummer and The Clash – with the voice of the man himself. "You cast a long shadow and that is your testament," Joe sings in this track from his final posthumous album. "Somewhere in my soul there's always rock'n'roll." As Uncut's reviewer put it last month, the song is as "deep and lasting" as anything he ever penned. Originally written for Johnny Cash, it serves just fine as his own obituary, too.





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1 8

### STIFF LITTLE FINGERS

STRUMMERVILLE
Taken from the EMI album Guitar And Drum

Taking their name from a track on The Vibrators' debut album, Northern Ireland's Jake Burns and Stiff Little Fingers were present at The Clash's first-ever Belfast gig in 1977. The bonds between the two bands were immediately evident and, like The Clash, SLF were soon adding dub and reggae influences to their high-octane punk fuel. By 1982 they'd split, but they reformed in 1990. This potent tribute to Joe Strummer comes from their first studio album in six years.







2

### JESSE MALIN DEATH OR GLORY

Taken from the One Little Indian single "Wendy

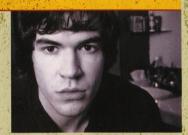
New York's Jesse Malin has become a firm *Uncut* favourite, whether rocking out with his band, as heard on his uncompromising Ryan Adams-produced album, *The Firie Art Of Self Destruction*, or in the stripped-down solo acoustic style he deployed on tour here earlier this year. With Adams and his side-project The Finger, he also recorded a hardcore punk album. But on "Death Or Glory", originally from *London Calling*, he's in unplugged style, accompanied only by piano and drums.



# 5

### ADAM MASTERSON GATES OF THE WEST

One Tale Too Many, the debut album by the young London-based singer-songwriter, Adam Masterson, was hailed by Uncit as one of the finds of the year on its release in June, and we've already featured a track from it on one of our previous cover-mounted CDs. The album betrays the influence of such classic songwriters as Van Morrison and Bruce Springsteen. But he shows the breadth of his influences on this version of a song that originally appeared on The Clash's The Cost Of Living EP.



3

### **BILLY BRAGG'& THE NEUROTICS**

GARAGELAND
Taken from the "Wake Up" fanzine CD, courtesy of Steve Dr

When The Clash released their debut album (on which "Garageland" first appeared,) the 20-year-old Billy Bragg was putting together Riff Raff. The band recorded an EP for the Chiswick label, but it took another six years and a spell in the army before Bragg emerged as a solo artist. "If I owe anyone, I owe Joe," he wrote in a moving tribute in Uncut on Strummer's death. This live version of "Garageland" was recorded in East Berlin in 1986.



# 6

# NOUVELLE VAGUE THE GUNS OF BRIXTON

Taken from their forthcoming Peacefrog Records album

Hailing from France and taking their name from a Jean-Luc Godard film, Nouvelle Vague's debut album consists entirely of cool nu-jazz and bossa nova versions of classic '80s songs by the likes of Joy Division, The Cure, XTC — and this remarkable take on "The Guns Of Brixton" from The Clash's London Calling. The band's as-yet-untitled album will be released some time in 2004. Remember, you heard it here first.



4

### SPARKS WE ARETHE CLASH

Of course, in reality they're Ron and Russell Mael, and the fact that they're covering a Clash song is one of those delicious rock'n'roll ironies. Stylistically located somewhere between Roxy Music and The Rubettes, their '70s glam-pop was superseded by punk, leading them to take the advice of their own "This Town Ain't Big Enough For Both Of Us" in 1977 and quit London for LA. They later returned as an electro-disco act. Yet, as you can hear, their unique style can incorporate just about anything.



# 7

# THE NATIONAL CLAMPDOWN

US five-piece The National make music of evocative beauty, and the nicotine-stained baritone of frontman Matt Berninger has been compared to Leonard Cohen and Tindersticks' Stuart Staples. Their first self-titled album appeared in 2001, before they'd performed live. The follow-up, Sad Songs For Dirty Lovers (reviewed on p133), displays the advantages of honing their craft on the road. "Clampdown", from London Calling, is an unlikely cover for them to tackle – but that's surely why it works so well. For more, see www.americanmary.com, www.talltres.com and www.brassland.org



# CRACKER WHITE RIOT Exclusive to Uricut

Formed out of the ashes of Camper Van Beethoven by David Lowery, over a 10-year career Cracker have tackled almost every musical style from country-rock to grunge via psychedelia and skewed pop. They've even had a go at rap, while Camper recently got back together to make a bizarre album of Fleetwood Mac covers. Somewhere in this heady musical mix, The Clash were also a seminal influence, although you probably won't have heard "White Riot" played quite like this before.



# 13 PETE WYLLE STAY FREE

aken from the double album Pete Wylie Live At Haddfest, available from www.petewylie.com

"The greatest band who ever walked the planet, except obviously for Chicory Tip," deadpans Pete Wylie when introducing this live, mostly acoustic version of a song that first appeared on The Clash's second 1.P, Give 'Em Enough Rope. That album appeared in 1978; Jisus as Wylie was putting together The Crucial 3 in Eiverpool with Julian Cope and Ian McCulloch. The band never recorded, but all three of its key players went on to form important post-punk bands, Wylie with Wah!



# 9

# THE WACO BROTHERS

Originally a Top 10 hit for The Bobby Fuller Four, The Clash appropriated "I Fought The Law" in 1979. The Waco Brothers may specialise in well-lubricated American roots music, but the band's Jon Langford has impeccable punk credentials. When The Clash were starting out in London, he was up in Leeds putting together The Mekons. Fuller, by the way, certainly fought someone — and sadly he didn't win. He was found bruised, battered and dead in his car in 1966 (see Strange Days, p.22).



# 14

### MY RED CELL CAREÉR OPPORTUNITIES

The punk spirit lives on in the rough-and-ready raucous rock n'roll of My Red Cell. The young band from Barry in South Wales recently signed to V2 and their debut release, a four-track EP is due to hit the shops mid-November, with a full album to follow: some time in 2004. They piled into the studio at the shortest notice with commendable gusto to record this version of "Career Opportunities," which first appeared on The Clash's 1977 debut album.



# 10

### THE HYPERJAX

Taken from the Raucous Records album This is Rockabilly Clash

If you think modern radio is shit, 'twas ever thus. "In tune with nothing," The Clash sang on "Capital Radio", written about London's leading 'independent' station of the '70s. The song was originally given away with NME but was later included on the '60st Of Living EP. The Hyperjax are a trio from Preston and Wigan whose album, Generation X-Rated, is available on Raucous Records, Their version of "Capital Radio" comes from the same label's rockabilly tribute to The Clash.



# 15

# THE BANDITS THE GUNS OF BRIXTON

included on the three-song single "Hit The Road" (B-Unique

There are no less than three versions of "The Guns Of Brixton" from The Clash's classic *London Calling* spread over our two tribute CDs – but all three could hardly be more different. Liverpool's The Bandits, who cite their influences as ranging from Augustus Pablo to Frank Zappa, give the song a totally fitting reggae tinge. The cosmic Scousers' impressive Chris Kimsey-produced debut album, *And They Walked Away*, was released in September,



# 11

# JANIE JONES & THE LASH

Taken from the RPM album I'm In Love With The World Of Janie Jone

Having enjoyed a minor singing career in the '60s, Janie Jones became better known as the Streatham 'madam' whose brothel-keeping activities hit the tabloids in the mid-'70s. Her notoriety was celebrated with a song named after her on the Clash's first album. Then Joe Strummer wrote her the sharply-observed "House Of The Ju Ju Queen", which she recorded on her release in 1983 following a spell at Her Majesty's pleasure, backed by a rather famous band thinly disguised as The Lash.



# 16 JOY ZIPPER

The Long Island pair of Vinny Cafiso and Tabitha Tindale – aka Joy Zipper – are better known for their warm and woozy harmonies than their punk attitude. Their self-titled debut album was allegedly written on acid and led to comparisons with Nancy Sinatra, shoegazing and '60s psychedelia. Yet here they dip into The Clash songbook to give a memorable makeover to one of the best tracks from Sandinistal (See album review, p133).





# 12

# TOMMY STINSON & THE FIGGS

Exclusive to Uncu

Best known as the spiky-haired bass player with The Replacements — a band in which he was once memorably described as playing Prince Hal to Paul Westerberg's Falstaff — Tommy Stinson went on to form the bands Bash & Popand Perfect. For the past five years he's been playing bass in Guns N'Roses. His cover of "Hateful", from London Calling, was recorded live at the Palais Royale, Bryn Maur, Philadelphia in August this year.



## 17

# JOE STRUMMER & THE MESCALEROS LONGSHADOW

Taken from the Epitaph/Hellcat album Streetcore

There was only one way to end this tribute CD to Joe Strummer and The Clash – with the voice of the man himself. "You cast a long shadow and that is your testament," Joe sings on this track from his final, posthumous album. "Somewhere in my soul there's always rock 'n'ioll." As Uncut's reviewer put it last month, the song is as "deep and lasting" as anything he ever penned. Originally written for Johnny Cash, it serves just fine as his own obituary, too.



# the Clash Mk II: what the hell was trummer thinking? POCK FOLLES!

THE CLASH CUT THE CRAP

MOST OF USTRY AND PRETEND it never happened, nervously kidding ourselves that The Clash disbanded in 1983 with the departure of Mick Jones. Oh, if only they had. Instead, Joe Strummer and Paul Simonon persevered with a new drummer (Pete Howard) and two "young, hard" guitarists (Nick Sheppard, Vince White) recruited through the 'Musicians Wanted' classifieds in Melody Maker. First they toured. Then they busked. And then, in November 1985, they released an album of all new material. It was called, with no shortage of irony, Cut The Crap. Its sleeve featured a cartoon drawing of a mohawk punk. It contained a song inspiringly titled "We Are The Clash". And yes, it was absolute dogshit.

Well, not entirely. "This Is England" remains a great Strummer song. Half the others weren't really that bad either. In fact, they might have gotten away with it had the final mix not been tampered with by a troupe of German session musicians using keyboards and synthesisers who ensured it sounded less like a Clash record than it did The Cockney Rejects if produced by Stock, Aitken and Waterman.

What the *hell* was Strummer thinking? Blame manager and co-writer Bernie Rhodes who, as Joe later confessed, "destroyed my self-confidence" to assume creative control.

At least by the time CutThe Crap was savaged by critics ("Guess What?", said Uncut's Adam Sweeting writing in Melody Maker at the time, "It's CRAP!"), The Clash had heeded its title and already disbanded.



# MUSIC news & rumour...

RYAN ADAMS is putting together a new band and plans a UK tour in the New Year. By the time you read this, the first half of his Love Is Hell album should be in the shops as a nine-track EP, with a second EP containing an additional nine tracks due in early December. In an effort not to divert attention from his 'official' album Rock'n'Roll (see review, page 116), Lost Highway is refusing to send copies to reviewers. But song titles include "Political Scientist", "Afraid Not Scared", "We're Surrounded", "This House Is Not For Sale", "Love Is Hell", "The Shadowlands", "World War 24", "Avalanche" and a cover of "Wonderwall".



- Singer-songwriter ADAM MASTERSON (pictured above with Mark Collins), who covers "Gates Of The West" on this month's Clash tribute CD, releases a re-recorded version of "Same Sad Story" as a single on Nov 3. One of the stand-out tracks from his debut, One Tale Too Many "Same Sad Story" also appeared on Uncut's Only Love Will Break Your Heart cover CD (Take 74, July 2003). The new version is produced by The Charlatans' MARK COLLINS. Masterson will also be touring with Thea Gilmore.
- Middle-aged militants BILLY BRAGG and STEVE EARLE are to team up on a Tell Us The Truth" US tour Meanwhile, SONIC YOUTH, THE DONNAS, THE LIARS and ERASE ERRATA are among those supporting Bands Against Bush, an organisation which aims to "struggle against a world of perpetual fear and violence bolstered by the Bush administration". In a separate project, various US punk bands are assembling a "Rock Against Bush" compilation
- It turns out ROWAN WILLIAMS, the Archbishop of Canterbury, is a massiv INCREDIBLE STRING BAND fan – and has been for 35 years. In his foreword to a new book about the ISB, he writes: "Forget the clichés about psychedelic and hallucinogenic vagueness, this was work of extraordinary emotional clarity and metaphorical rigour.' Presumably His Reverence is only talking about their pre-Scientology albums...

# A RECORD THAT CHANGED MY LIFE STUART MURDULH

THE SMITHS

Belle & Sebastian's kingpin on The Smiths' crowning glory from 1986

IWENTTO GLASGOW when I was 17 to become a student. So I was studying science at university and listening to rock – Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple and Yes. But I felt like something was waiting to happen. Then one night in the student launderette, it did. There was a TV in the corner showing Whistle

Test. The Smiths came on and played 'Bigmouth Strikes Again' and it was instant. Just like that. I heard the true call.

"It was definitely a Catcher In The Rye moment music-wise, one of those where you're gonna give up your life and everything you do to follow poetry and art and music. I'd heard The Smiths before and thought they were strange but interesting, wondering whether they were 'rock' enough for me. But 'Bigmouth...' was devastating.

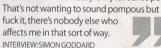
"I spent that summer working in an airless cashier's office in Butlin's in Ayr listening to The Queen Is Dead, which had only just come out. That record is like a blueprint, not just for Belle & Sebastian's albums but for any album because it's a record that's greater than the

sum of its parts. I mean I don't particularly like "The Queen Is Dead", nor "I Know It's Over", nor "Never Had No One Ever". That's a large chunk of the first side! But how do they do it? By the end of the final fade of side two you're lying gasping on the floor.

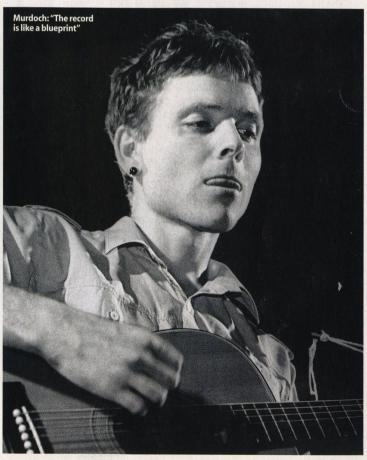
DISPATCHES

"The sequencing is great, the breath of fresh

air that is "Cemetry Gates" (sic) and then the second side onslaught leading up to "There Is A Light That Never Goes Out", which is beautifully poised and placed. Then the final song, "Some Girls Are Bigger Than Others", which to some people doesn't mean anything, it just irritates them, but to me it's genius. Poetry plus music is like pleasure squared. I still say that Morrissey is my favourite poet.

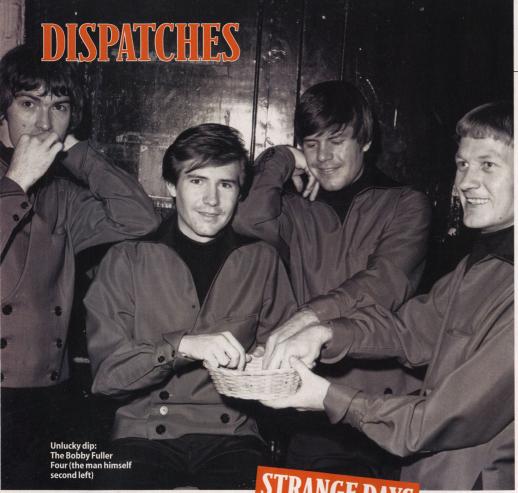


Belle & Sebastian's new album, Dear Catastrophe Waitress (Rough Trade), and DVD, Fans Only (Jeepster), are both out now









# BOBBY FULLER

### The suspicious death of the original "I Fought The Law" hitmaker

One of his

sodden with

OF COURSETHE CLASH never wrote it, though judging from its lofty position in the upper reaches of this month's Uncut 30 Greatest Clash Songs poll, for all intents and purposes they may as well have. Instead, credit for the glorious "I Fought The Law", lead track on 1979's The Cost Of Living EP, goes to Sonny Curtis; the original guitar player with Buddy Holly And The Crickets who took less than an hour to compose it one hazy Texas afternoon in the summer of 1958.

The Crickets may have been first to record the song following Holly's violent death in a plane crash the year after, but it was another young Texan, also doomed to meet a premature fate, who would make a hit of "I Fought The Law". fingers had been He was Bobby Fuller, and it was his bent right back out version, as recorded by The Bobby Fuller of its socket. His hair Four in 1965, that eventually inspired and clothes were The Clash to try their own tumultuous cover when it caught their attention on a

gasoline... Born October 22, 1942, until "I Fought The Law", Fuller's career had been that of just another struggling rock'n'roller. After forming his own band and cutting a handful of singles for local Texas labels (including an early stab at Curtis' same law-battling masterpiece), Fuller and his Four headed west to Hollywood in late '64 in a last-ditch attempt to hit the big time. They'd eventually succeed, but at one hell of a price.

Unbeknownst to Fuller, his manager had attracted the interest of the kind of business partner used to dealing in concrete boots and making offers that disc jockeys couldn't refuse. On the plus side, this meant unlimited airplay from radio stations who'd been severely compromised either financially or under threat of waking up with a severed nag's head on their pillow. The downside, however, was that the group were being fleeced out of their rightful earnings. So when "I Fought The Law" smashed into the US Top 10, Fuller studied his bank balance, did his sums, and demanded a management showdown. A date was arranged for July 18, 1966 at their record company headquarters. The band duly turned up on time. All except Bobby himself, that is.

They phoned him, but to no avail. They waited one hour. Then two. Then lost their patience and decided to call at his apartment. Just as they arrived, Bobby's mother was collecting that day's post from the mailbox

outside when she spotted that her son's car, missing since the early hours of the morning, had returned. It looked as if somebody was sat inside. She hurried over and opened the unlocked driver's door. Indeed there was. It was Bobby Fuller. He was battered and bruised. One of his fingers had been bent right back out of its socket.

His hair and clothes were sodden with gasoline. And he was stone dead

The coroner of the Los Angeles Police Department concurred that Fuller had died of gasoline asphyxiation. The final verdict? This 23-year-old budding rock'n'roll idol on the cusp of international success had "committed suicide". Assumedly by beating himself up, breaking his own fingers then dousing himself in petrol? Not surprisingly, his bandmates suspected mob back-handers and a dodgy police cover-up, but were too helpless and more than a little scared to fight the authorities themselves.

So, yes. The law won after all. SIMON GODDARD

# **JIM MORAY**

He's young. He's northern. He plays folk. No, really...

### lim who?

Moray. Remember the name, for his debut album Sweet England has been hailed as "nu-folk", "folk-electronica" and even "Liege & Lief for the Kings Of Leon generation". Made in his bedroom and "paid for by the Student Loans Company", the record consists of him reimagining traditional English folk ballads in audacious new settings with electronics and programmed beats.

### If it's folk music, shouldn't he have a beard?

Not sure at 21 he's even old enough to grow one. He grew up in Macclesfield and Stafford, got dragged around folk festivals by his mum and dad as a kid and the music struck a chord. Then he went to study music composition at the Birmingham Conservatoire. "I'm interpreting traditional songs in my own way," he says. "But I don't even feel it's innovative. I just make music that's influenced by everything around me. To play purely acoustic folk, I feel I'd have to act stupid and pretend I'd never heard anything else."

### Didn't folk-rock die out with Fairport Convention?

Some would say. The current Brit-folk revival spearheaded by the likes of Eliza Carthy and Kate Rusby is actually deeply conservative, which led Uncut to suggest that Sweet England could well be the most important new development in English folk music since the fabled Fairports. "I think what's happened is that folk music has lost its ambition, which is why I feel compelled to go completely overboard," Jim says.

### What have songs about poachers and milkmaids got to do with the modern world?

"They're just great stories. People talk about making folk music relevant again. But I don't think it was ever irrelevant." And milkmaids get born, fall in love, get into trouble and fall out of love. Just like the rest of us, right? "Exactly. And then they bewail their fate. That still goes on."

### But wouldn't he be better off listening to The Strokes at his age?

"I listen to everything from hip hop to Sigur Rós," he says. "I don't compartmentalise music other than whether it's good. I studied classical composition by day at college,



studio jukebox.



# CLASHCITY ROCKERS

A year after Joe Strummer's death, an all-star panel votes for the band's 30 greatest songs in this exclusive *Uncut* poll

Portrait: Pennie Smith



# UNCUT PANEL

### **LAURENCE BELL**

Domino Records founder FAVOURITE CLASH TRACK: "(White Man)

In Hammersmith Palais"

### MICHAEL BONNER

Uncut associate editor
FCT: "London Calling"
CLINT BOON

Inspiral Carpets
FCT: "Rock The Casbah"
MICKEY BRADLEY

The Undertones FCT: "(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais"

JOHN BRAMWELL I Am Kloot

FCT: "London Calling"
PETER BUCK
R.E.M.

FCT: "(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais" TIM BURGESS

The Charlatans
FCT: "Rock The Casbah"
JAKE BURNS

Stiff Little Fingers (new album Guitar And Drum features the tribute track "Strummerville")
FCT: "(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais"
JAMES CARGILL

Broadcaster FCT: "Spanish Bombs" MARC CARROLL

Irish singer-songwriter
FCT: "Complete Control"

TERRY CHIMES
The Clash drummer,

1976-77,1982-83
FCT: "Straight To Hell"
GIDEON COE

Broadcaster, BBC6music FCT: "Straight To Hell" NORMAN COOK

Fatboy Slim
FCT:"(White Man) In
Hammersmith Palais"
ALEX COX

Movie director
FCT: "Straight To Hell"
GARY CROWLEY

Broadcaster, BBC Radio London 94.9FM FCT: "Complete Control"

STEVE DIGGLE
Buzzcocks

FCT: "London's Burning"
ROBERT ELMS

Broadcaster, BBC Radio London 94.9FM FCT: "White Riot"

US author of Days Between Stations FCT: "London Calling"

### JAY FARRAI

Singer-songwriter, once of Uncle Tupelo FCT: "Clash City Rockers"

RODDY FRAME
Singer-songwriter,
collaborated with Mick
Jones on Aztec Camera's
"Good Morning Britain"
in 1990
FCT: "(White Man) In

Hammersmith Palais"
MATT FRIEDBERGER
The Fiery Furnaces

FCT: "Broadway"

RAY GANGE

Star of Rude Roy m

Star of Rude Boy movie
FCT: "City Of The Dead"
BOB GELDOF
Boomtown Rats singer

and Band Aid organiser
FCT: "London Calling"
BOBBY GILLESPIE
Primal Scream

FCT:"Complete Control"
SIMON GODDARD
Uncut Dispatches

editor, author of The Smiths: Songs That Saved Your Life FCT: "Complete Control" JOHNNY GREEN

Clash tour manager, author of Clash memoir A Riot Of Our Own FCT: "(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais" ED HAMELL

Hamell On Trial FCT: "Garageland" JEFF HOLMES

Horse Stories FCT: "Armagideon Time"

ROB HUGHES

Uncut contributor

FCT: "White Riot"

NICK JOHNSTONE

Uncut contributor, author of the memoir A Head Full Of Blue FCT: "London Calling" JASON KELLY

Kealer FCT: "Should | Stay Or Should | Go?" JAMES KIRK

JAMES KIRK
Ex-Orange Juice, now solo artist
FCT: "Complete Control"

JEFF KLEIN
US singer-songwriter
FCT: "The Card Cheat"
JON LANGFORD
The Mekons The

The Mekons, The Waco Brothers FCT: "(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais" DON LETT

Associate of The Clash, reggae DJ, director of Westway To The World documentary, joined Mick Jones in Big Audio Dynamite from 1984-89 FCT: "(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais" JESSE MALIN

US singer-songwriter
FCT: "(White Man) In
Hammersmith Palais"
GLEN MATLOCK
Former Serv Pictol

Former Sex Pistol, currently touring with Dead Men Walking FCT: "Career Opportunities" ALAN McGEE

Founder of Creation Records, famously discovered Oasis, now managing Mick Jones FCT: "(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais"

Electro superstar FCT: "(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais" RICK MOODY

American writer, author of Garden State, The Ice Storm, The Black Veil FCT: "I'm So Bored With The USA"

THURSTON MOORE
Sonic Youth
FCT: "Janie Jones"

SIMON MORAN
Promoter, Joe
Strummer's manager
1999-2002
FCT: "(White Man) In

FCT:"(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais" LYNDON MORGANS Songdog FCT: "Complete Control"

ALAN PARKER
Punk commentator,
author of The Clash: Rat
Patrol From Fort Bragg
FCT: "Somebody Got

MARK PERRY
Alternative TV singer,
Sniffin' Glue editor
FCT: "1977"

Murdered"

FCT: "1977"

MARK REFOY

Ex-Spiritualized, now

recording as Slipstream FCT;"(White Man) in Hammersmith Palais" ROBERT RODRIGUEZ Film-maker, director of Once Upon A Time In Mexico, From Dusk Till Dawn, El Mariachi FCT: "Should I Stay Or Should I Go?"

MARK RODGERS Loose Music

FCT: "Broadway"

Film-maker, director of Cabin Fever FCT: "Clash City Rockers" JOSH ROUSE

US singer-songwriter
FCT: "Straight To Hell"
MATTHEW RYAN

US singer-songwriter FCT: "Somebody Got Murdered"

PETE SHELLEY

Buzzcocks FCT: "Janie Jones" STEVE SHELLEY

Sonic Youth
FCT: "The Call Up"
CHRIS SHIFLETT

Foo Fighters
FCT: "This Is Radio
Clash"

BRETT SPARKS

The Handsome Family FCT:"Armagideon Time" TOMMY STINSON

Ex-Replacements and Guns N'Roses, debut solo album out 2004 FCT: "Stay Free"

ADAM SWEETING
Uncut contributor,
music critic for The
Guardian and Daily
Telegraph, television
producer, broadcaster
FCT: "(White Man) In
Hammersmith Palais
RUTCH VIG

Garbage, Nirvana producer FCT: "London's Calling" ANDREW

WEATHERALL

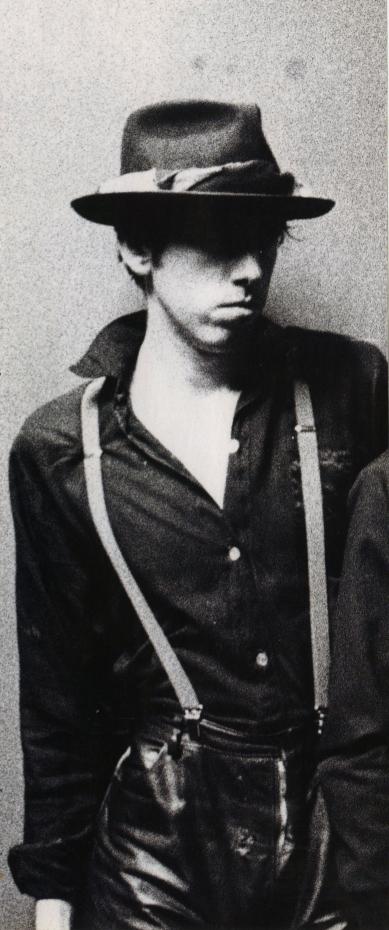
Two Lone Swordsmen and acid house legend FCT: "I'm Not Down" PAUL WELLER

Singer-songwriter, ex-Jam/Style Council FCT: "1977" PAUL WESTERBERG

Onetime Replacement, now solo artist FCT: "London Calling"

PETE WYLIE
The Mighty Wah!
FCT: "Complete Control"
STEVE WYNN

Ex-Dream Syndicate, currently fronting The Miracle 3 FCT: "Complete Control"





# Single A-side, September 1985, from the album *Cut The Crap*, November 1985

DON LETTS: I made a Clash documentary called Westway To The World. We stopped at Combat Rock, right? But to deny "This Is England" is a fantastic song is to not do Joe his full justice. It was a magic combination between Joe and Mick obviously, but this song points out what Joe's part in that relationship was. I'm talking about lyrically and the 'state of the country' thing. That's the reason I pick it out, and it's a fantastic tune. I do agree with everybody that The Clash ended when Mick left, but "This Is England" is a tune that highlights what was great about Strummer. No disrespect to Mick, I even feel like saying 'apologies to Mick', but even he couldn't take "This Is England" away from Joe as a great Clash record.

MARK RODGERS: Like so many of Joe's songs, it's just as relevant now as it was then. This is one of the great lost singles and the lines "I got my motorcycle jacket/ But I'm walking all the time" just about summed me up in '85.

ANDREW WEATHERALL: I was disappointed by Cut The Crap, but "This Is England" still sounds a good song almost 20 years on. We talked about doing a cover of it when I was in Bocca Juniors, but the rest of the band told me to fuck off in the end.

ROB HUGHES: Guaranteed, no amount of revisionist thinking can save Cut The Crap from the turkey pile, but "This Is England" was the Jones-less Clash's last great roar, in which Strummer seethes and writhes

At three-and-a-half minutes and 40 years long, it ends too soon.

BUTCH VIG: Joe didn't have a really great voice by pop standards, but when you listen to a song like "Spanish Bombs", he sounds like he's on fire.

ROBERT ELMS: I love Spain, loved the heroic stories of the Civil War, loved the fact that The Clash also got into all that. Paul Simonon stayed at my house in Spain last year and I enjoyed the link.

ANDREW WEATHERALL: They did over-romanticise left-wing rebellion, but they were never too earnest or self-indulgent. They sang from the heart and wrote about what they knew about. That's what marked them out and that's why their records still sound so valid. Listening to "Spanish Bombs" is like looking at an old photo album.

THE GUNS OF BRIXTON London Calling album track, December 1979

DON LETTS: I think lyrically what Paul was trying to get out here he probably did better on "Red Angel Dragnet", but "The Guns Of Brixton" is just a lot more personal. I'm a south London guy, I was in the Brixton riots and all that stuff. In fact, y'know that

dread walking up to the policemen on the cover of Super Black Market Clash, Well, that's me! It was actually taken in Notting Hill, not Brixton, but not a lot of people know that. Anyway, this song just captures the mood of what was going on in Brixton with the SUS laws and everything. Another south London thing, but one that was particularly poignant to black people.

JEFF KLEIN: I'm a huge guitar fan and this is incredible. It's one of those songs you just put on and want to immediately jump around the room. A lot of their songs feel like huge anthems. I remember going to the movies as a kid and going to see Rocky, and when you come out you're thinking you can kick everyone's ass! And that's what it was like listening to "The Guns Of Brixton". When it's over, you think, "All right! Bring on the establishment!"

JAY FARRAR: Paul Simonon at his best. It seems to me that The Clash used inspiration from Jamaican music to create their own art in the same way The Rolling Stones drew from American blues to create theirs. Great things happen when a cross-cultural influence takes hold.

STEVE WYNN: I remember the first time I heard London Calling and I knew instantly that I was listening to one of the best albums ever made. But





when this final track of Side One came on, everything jumped to another level. Comparisons to classic albums by the Stones or Beatles give way to flashes of Scorsese or Coppola – I mean, "The Guns Of Brixton" feels more like a mini-movie than just another song on a record. It's absolutely cinematic, dark, mysterious, and has one of the best bass lines ever. Oh, and the Jew's harp. Who puts a Jew's harp on a 'punk rock' record. Fearless, I tell you. Fearless.

# 27 CAREER OPPORTUNITIES The Clash album track, April 1977

TERRY CHIMES: Big stadiums are never much fun because you can't see the people you're playing to. But I can remember playing "Career Opportunities" at Shea Stadium in 1982 (featured on the posthumous live album From Here To Eternity). It was odd, thinking back to when we used to rehearse in a tiny place in Camden and here we are bashing it out in front of tens of thousands. Life's full of surprises.

PETE SHELLEY: It doesn't sound as good on record as it did live, but "Career Opportunities" is probably one of my favourite songs. It has a real energy and intensity to it, and the lyrics are about not wasting

your life working nine-to-five in a job you hate. That was what Joe was best at really – writing songs that people could relate to on different levels.

GLEN MATLOCK: The first proper gig The Sex Pistols played with The Clash, where people had to pay to get in, was at The Black Swan in Sheffield. I insisted that they supported us to Malcolm [McLaren], and then we did Screen On The Green together in London. There was a bit of rivalry between us by then, and I was a bit annoyed that they nicked the Jackson Pollock/paint-splatter look from me, but they were still a good live band and they played a blinding version of "Career Opportunities". There wasn't a lot going for young men in Britain back then, so that song touched a nerve with a lot of people.

### C TOMMY GUN

Single A-side from the album *Give 'Em Enough Rope*, both November 1978

ED HAMELE: I never thought one way or another about this song until I saw Strummer solo a few years ago in NYC. Everybody loved him, was really glad to see him. I saw Joey Ramone out on the street going in. Joe was doing some Clash songs, the crowd was very pumped up, and he did "Tommy Gun". He was spitting and passionate, all pretty great – but the thing that killed me was when he got to the drum lick, that solo snare marching thing, everybody in the crowd, unprompted, played air-drums. I'd never seen anything like it.

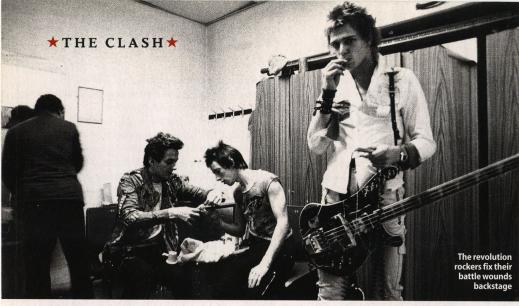
**CLINT BOON:** What you learn about politics from bands like The Clash is more important than what you learn at school. You didn't get taught about terrorist factions in school, you learnt about that from records like "Tommy Gun".

JAKE BURNS: After Joe died, I was asked to write a little tribute. I was trying not to be too gushing a fan, even though I am, and I mentioned the fact that I did find some of his political ideas somewhat naive. I was specifically referring to that terrorist chic, Joe wearing the Brigade Rosse T-shirt and things like that. I find all that dangerous anyway, anyone who does that. I know nobody back home in Northern Ireland was particularly impressed when they came over to Belfast and had their picture taken outside a British Army base. I recall that on that particular trip they didn't even play, so it was a bit like a cheap holiday in other people's misery. But everybody's allowed to make mistakes. "Tommy Gun", though, is a great record. Just that intro. That's what a rock band should sound like, v'know.

NORMAN COOK: Bands like The Libertines and The Manics would probably cut off one of their arms to write such a devastating song. I used to leap around my bedroom to it alongside "White Riot" and The Damned's "New Rose".

# L'M SO BORED WITH THE USA The Clash album track. April 1977 RICK MOODY: I loved the USA-bashing of "I'n

RICK MOODY: I loved the USA-bashing of "I'm So Bored...", and the anti-draft sentiment of "The Call Up" (which came out not long after I had to register for the draft), and those sentiments still seem >>



fresh today. The Clash have aged well, they sound even better now than they did back then, and their variety of commitment is sorely missed. *Resquiat in pacem*.

MARK PERRY: To me it's like, "Well keep all your USA, your clichés about American rock'n'roll because we wanna sing about where we come from." That was another unique thing about The Clash. The Kinks were a great band and they sang about London, but the way The Clash did it was special. That's why to me they'll always be the greatest punk band, the most important band ever in my life. And, along with The Who, the most important London band.

LYNDON MORGANS: Mick Jones said the song's not about being bored with the USA, so - doh! - dumb thing to call it then, eh? And Joe was in total thrall to Americana anyway! But he was a great one for poses, and it's sometimes when he was chucking his silliest poses that he was at his most endearing, so here's a case in point - daft lyrics, a tune reminiscent of "Down The Dustpipe", but a great two-and-a-half minutes anyway, especially for the guitar playing. STEVE ERICKSON: As an American who insists on still believing America is the best idea for a country anyone's had, and who's dismayed by how it's sold out by its present leaders in the name of patriotism, I feel honour-bound to include this, not only for the original version but the one I heard the band perform the last time I was in London. It was the summer of '82 and Strummer had just reappeared after his so-called "lost weekend" - I like to think he was off making a secret record with Jane Birkin in the cellar of the Bastille - and in the early days of Reaganism, America was never scarier or more bellicose - until now. The band was playing in Brixton and they sounded anything but bored. Loving the idea of America as much as I, they sounded every bit as betrayed. I coaxed along a pal of mine who wasn't into either punk or the band. We had seen the Stones in Paris a few months before, and after the Clash show we made our way back to Earl's Court where he finally broke the silence, admitting what we both knew. "No comparison,"

THURSTON MOORE: Loved this song straight away, but it wasn't until I finally saw the lyrics months later that I understood what Strummer was actually singing about. "Suck on Kojak" – strange, yet true!



# 24 THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN Sandinista! album track, December 1980

NORMAN COOK: The Clash were one of the first rock bands to embrace rap music. That was hugely influential on me – I was blown away that The Clash and, later, BAD, had the bollocks to do rap. I thought it was very brave; it risked alienating a lot of people. But they really embraced it, just like they had reggae – they hooked up with Futura and Grandmaster Flash and brought them over to England, and seeing them support The Clash was my first exposure to hip hop. The dub version, "Mustapha Dance", was equally groundbreaking – it still gets played in clubs, and a lot of house DJs acknowledge how ahead of its time it was.

BOBBY GILLESPIE: I used to work in a factory when I was a teenager, so when I listen to "The Magnificent Seven" I can totally relate to the words. "Cold water in the face/Brings you back to this awful place" totally sums up the alienation of work and spending five days a week in an environment you hate. People talk about Dylan and Jagger and The Beatles, but Joe Strummer was an equally talented songwriter. He wrote so many fucking great songs — I'm just an enormous fan.

ADAM SWEETING: The Clash's ability to absorb all kinds of styles and sounds and morph them into new musical shapes was one of their great gifts, and they had a whale of a time with this steaming funk-rap groove. Strummer, a natural ranter who always lit up when somebody stuck a mic in front of him, must have thought rap had been invented specifically for him, since he could say anything that came into his



head and never had to sing in tune. He obviously hadn't wasted too much time honing these lyrics ("vacuum cleaner sucks up budgie"), but the precarious way the rickety structure hangs together is half the fun.

MICKEY BRADLEY: Of course it's not the first rap record, but it wasn't that far behind the pioneers. It's amazing how good this is, despite the dodgy sound effect of a vacuum cleaner, presumably NOT sucking up a budgie. Do people have the same debates about which songs to leave off Sandinista! that they do about The White Album? Why not?

LYNDON MORGANS: Substitute speed for dope, Ladbroke Grove and environs for New York City and the punk orthodoxies of '77 for the more amorphous

he just said



# "The Clash were one of the first rock bands to embrace rap music" - Norman Cook

climate of the turn of the decade and you get this, Mick and Joe's response to the nascent hip hop scene, from The Clash's equivalent of *The White Album*, their big, sprawling, self-indulgent epic. And here they're still generating the old excitement but by other means than buzzsaw guitars and heart-attack tempos. It must've sounded a lot more radical in 1980/81 than it does now to our rap-attuned ears, but it's still a cracker: Joe's

obviously having a ball, and the vocal's a hoot.

**ROBERT ELMS:** One of the funkiest riffs ever from a bunch of white boys, and one of Joe's finest moments.

**BRETT SPARKS:** The first five seconds of listening to "The Magnificent Seven" made me

panic. Oh shit, not disco! But, check it out – the bass line here is a clever reworking of the bass line of "London Calling" and by the song's end you feel like bashing your head against the wall with joy. If only the Wild West had been populated with these cowboys, maybe Enron and General Motors would be living on a reservation in Arizona instead of the Jicarilla Apache.

# 23 SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

Combat Rock album track, May 1982. Later issued as double A side single, September 1982

GARY CROWLEY: The fact that it was used on a jeans ad doesn't put me off at all. When I first heard it I thought "Jesus! What's THAT!" It's such a great riff, really dirty, almost like The Kinks. It's one that makes me want to jump straight on the dancefloor or get out the old air guitar.

**STEVE ERICKSON:** Back when it came out, even before it was used in a TV commercial, everyone thought this was just a Mick Jones throwaway, like >>



## "One day I'll sneak 'Should I Stay Or Should I Go?' into a kids' movie. Fuck with their heads, you know, instead of all this nu metal shit"-Robert Rodriguez

The Clash trying to make a T. Rex record - which didn't sound like a bad idea, once you stopped to think about it. If you're having a party and you're going to play a Clash record, it has to be this one, doesn't it? After Strummer fired Jones a year or two later, you could imagine maybe this song had more meaning than we realised – but I prefer to think it's just about what it always seemed to be about, which is a guy trying to figure out at two in the morning if the girl's going to sleep with him ("Always tease! tease! tease!"). And it's not like it would have killed them to have a song or two about sex in their repertoire. MATTHEW RYAN: At one stage I was driving a '76 Chevy Nova. A classic muscle car, like a tank, but it was falling apart. The cassette player had no mid-range and no bottom, but the opening of this song sounded so magnificent on it that I made a 60-minute tape just repeating the song, and on Friday nights I'd just drive around Main Street, playing it over and over. The song's a great example of what happens to each of us in our teens. You start out wanting to blow away the last generation, then you realise there's a musical line, through them on to you. I think The Clash realised,

"Wow, Chuck Berry was good, Motown was good," so they quickly went from anti-establishment to classicist on some level. This one's as good a rock song as "Lucille". For its riff, humour and honesty it will stand next to any song.

**ROBERT RODRIGUEZ:** This was among the first Clash songs I ever heard and it made a huge impression on me. I saw them play on Saturday Night Live when I was a kid. I had one of the first VCRs on the market. And the very first tape I recorded on was the half-hour tape that came

with the machine, and I taped The Clash. And I still have that tape to this day. They played "Should I Stay..." and "Straight To Hell". Me and my brother used to watch it and we'd go, "Hey, look at Paul Simonon, he's sliding around, he's not touching the ground!" And Strummer, with his mohawk, had such intensity. The coverage they had on SNL was good. They cut to Strummer looking cool, sounding raw, all this camo stuff hanging from the wall - the whole stage set-up was fantastic. One day I'll sneak "Should I Stay Or Should I Go?" into a kids' movie. I think kids would really dig it, treat it as a new song. Fuck with their heads, you know, instead of all this nu metal shit. STEVE DIGGLE: The Clash were an incredibly prolific band. They put out a lot of great albums and they made a conscious decision to fuck with the formula and take themselves and their fanbase on a journey. Not everything they did worked, but the fact they tried their hand at writing rock, punk, reggae and blues is amazing. People bang on about Radiohead and how eclectic they are, but they've never written a song as immediate and infectious as "Should I Stay Or Should I Go?". It's incredibly simple – just vocals, drums and guitars slowed down and speeded up -

but it captures the whole essence

of The Clash and what they were about in three minutes. **NICK JOHNSTONE:** Both of its time and timeless - the way all great songs are and should be. JASON KELLY: It always makes me feel the same way and I'm always in the same situation when I play it. It's always when I've been on the lash for two or three days, I go home and whoever's there is screaming.

> And I just put this track on. It's a feelgood record. It's uplifting. >>



from hepatitis in 1978

"THE FIRST TIME I SAW The Clash was at the 100 Club Punk Festival when they were still a fivepiece and I thought they were fucking amazing. The power, obviously, plus the fact that the songs were all only two minutes long or whatever. That whole kind of look, with the paint-splattered clothes and all that stuff. They were definitely an influence at the time. "I remember reading the very first interview in Sniffin' Glue where Joe and Mick were talking about bands wanting to write songs that were relevant to the times and bringing politics into music. These were things that nobody had been talking about or writing about, least not in my generation.

VE SERVED IN

PAUL WELLER on The Clash and their alleged rivalry with The Jam

"But the last few times I saw them, I thought they'd just become a clichéd rock band, the antithesis of everything they were supposed to be about. I ain't trying to do them down, but that put me off. Some of those later photos and their image after they'd been in the States. I much preferred that London thing they had at the beginning.

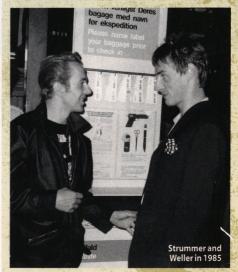
The nearest to it I could ever relate to was Pete Townshend

or Ray Davies, so that definitely had an impact on me.

"If there was any rivalry between The Clash and The Jam, I didn't feel it. We did a couple of gigs on the White Riot tour and then we left, but it wasn't cos of any rivalry, it was cos we weren't getting fucking paid enough and we weren't getting soundchecks. I always liked Joe, anyway. I remember going round his squat once near Regent's Park. It was a horrible place but it had this big fish thing spray-painted on the wall. I just remember crashing back there one night, staying up and smoking loads of gear with him.

"The only time there was any fall-out was after our first NME piece when we said we were gonna vote Tory. They weren't really pleased about that. Well, quite a few people weren't [laughs] and yeah, he sent us a telegram when they got in government, saying something like, 'Maggie Thatcher expects you for target practice next week.' But it never seemed to affect us when our paths crossed.

"To me, Joe was a real gent, a proper English gentleman. The last time I saw him was last summer. We were on the same bill at this festival in Manchester. He looked really well, y'know. But how could we have been rivals? We all went through the same thing. It was like we all served in the same army at the same time." INTERVIEW: SIMON GODDARD





# 22 SOMEBODY GOT MURDERED Sandinista! album track, December 1980

BOBBY GILLESPIE: The Clash have had a huge influence on Primal Scream and the way we approach music. Everything they did had an emotional impact and they really tried to push themselves as a band and experiment with different sounds. I don't think it's as mind-blowing as *Give 'Em Enough Rope* or *London Calling*, but I'm a big fan of *Sandinista!* and particularly "Somebody Got Murdered". It's a really brutal song with a lot of depth and passion behind it.

ADAM SWEETING: Mick Jones' forays as lead vocalist were always something of a mixed blessing, but he struck an affecting note in this speedy, atmospheric account of a random killing ("I've been very hungry, but not enough to kill"). The barking dog and random sound effects added a quasi-documentary feel to the track, maybe because a bit of hip hop-vérité was creeping into Clashworld.

STEVE ERICKSON: With all due respect to The Who and Led Zep, and notwithstanding my unreasoning adoration of Mott and The Jesus And Mary Chain, this song shows as much as any why, after The Beatles, Stones and Kinks, The Clash are the greatest British band. It was written for the William Friedkin movie Cruising but was never used. In any event, here they had the integrity to cast everything they were about to the winds of moral ambiguity, confronting the consequences of the violence implicit not only in their music but the movement they led. When the guns of Brixton get fired, someone gets dead, and not just for the duration of an album. "I've been very hungry/But not enough to kill," is all the more moving for how it's equal parts weariness and defiance, for how you can hear both the singer's hunger and the determination to hold on to his humanity anyway.

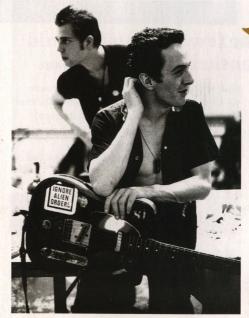
**ED HAMELL:** This song really could have been on the first two albums – stylistically it's not a giant leap. If anything, on an album that has so many different

unit - when I was first writing songs, and was on my way round to a friend's early one morning. When I got to All Saints, a couple of geezers came up to me. One in front and another 20 yards behind. This black guy, cracked out of his mind, says, "Give us a cigarette." When I told him to fuck off, he moved his coat aside and there's a gun. I said to him, "Look mate, I haven't got any fuckin' cigarettes." And if his mate hadn't have come up behind and stopped him, I think he might have done something fucking nutty. And it completely and utterly freaked me out. I really thought he was going to shoot me. So I went back to the unit, had a shower and put on "Somebody Got Murdered". Anyway, the next week, this geez got banged up for six years! He'd shot somebody in the bakery at All Saints.

**ALAN PARKER:** One of the greatest songs ever written, from the first bar to the last. I never wanted it to end.

**THURSTON MOORE:** Revolution reggae made genuine by yobs.

BRETT SPARKS: As a middle-class white kid growing up in Texas, this was the first actual reggae song I ever heard. Written by Clement Dodd and Willie Williams, two early founders of dancehall, the song opens with Joe Strummer wailing what sounds like the beginning of an old cowboy song - "I stayed around and played around this old town too long/Feel like I got to travel on." Interesting spelling of 'Armagideon' - Gideon appears in the Book of Judges. An angel told him to destroy all false prophets. Gideon and his men smashed pitchers, blew trumpets and screamed, "The sword of the Lord!" Old Testament punk rockers. STEVE WYNN: This used to scare the shit out of me when I would play it alone in my room late at night you could feel yourself crawling between the bass lines and echo-laden beats and swampy reverb. An awesome performance and an incredible production.



# 20 BROADWAY Sandinista! album track, December 1980

SIMON GODDARD: Joe Strummer's brilliant lyrical monologue – it's a proper performance in every sense of the word on Strummer's part. It's like *On The Waterfront* meets "Rhapsody In Blue" or something, fucking genius. I admit it's pretty lonely being in the *Sandinista!* fan club, but I love every inch of the bastard.

RAY GANGE: The way Joe sings it is such a trip. I think that goes with the whole of *Sandinistal*, really. It just blew everything apart. Whatever people were expecting from the next Clash album, *Sandinistal* wasn't it. The variety of stuff was brilliant. I liked the fact that a lot of people didn't get it. A triple album for a start, that's so not expected from a punk band it just confused the fuck out of people.

GIDEON COE: Sandinista! is my favourite Clash album. It's a sprawling, flawed masterpiece of a record that just happens to be one-and-a-half sides

# "'Armagideon Time' was the one. It's spooky and it's taking reggae and making it their own thing. An ominous record" - Pete Wylie

kinds of songs, it's grounding, a return to classic Clash. The lyrics are unusual, however, in that they opt for a very movie-like or short-story quality, which is odd for a band that had previously been so straight ahead. Plus, I'm always a sucker for this kind of content.

MATTHEW RYAN: When I first started really listening to music I listened to as much old music as I could – Johnny Cash, The Carter Family, early Dylan. And to me "Somebody Got Murdered" is a folk song, a protest song, a death ballad. It reminds me of when I was 13, living in a terraced house in Chester, outside Philly. One night I looked out of the bedroom window and the place was under eight inches of snow. The bridge looked beautiful, even the projects were beautiful. Then suddenly there was mayhem in the alley behind, and I saw eight guys beating on one drunk. Within a fraction of a second everything had changed.

**JASON KELLY:** This is a true story that happened to me in Notting Hill. I was living under the Westway – in a

### 1 ARMAGIDEON TIME B-side of "London Calling", December 1979

PETE WYLIE: I used to DJ at Eric's in Liverpool and we'd play this three or four times a night. People would still go back and dance to it every time. Liverpool sometimes picked on a certain track over others. Maybe it was a perverse bullshit thing but "Armagideon Time" was the one. It's spooky and it's taking reggae and making it their own thing. An ominous record.

MARK REFOY: This reminds me of seeing them at Birmingham Top Rank Suite when Mikey Dread was doing the support. These four figures came out in long coats with the collars turned up, big cowboy boots, hats covering their faces, and started skanking. Now in Johnny Green's book, A Riot Of Our Own, he says nobody ever noticed that these guys were actually The Clash. Well I noticed! I remember at the time saying to my mate, "Fucking hell – that's The Clash!"

too long. "Broadway" is one of the reasons for forgiving them its excesses. Strummer's on top form and his Grove-meets-Lower-East-Side drawl is honed to perfection for this tale of a bum who's down on his luck. The Clash are full of delightful paradoxes, one being the way America puts fire and anger in their bellies while at the same time firing their imagination. They may have been bored with the USA but they also bought into its mythology and romantic imagery big-time. That's what you get with "Broadway". And the band sounds great. Start to finish.

MARK RODGERS: Spread over six sides of fat black vinyl, Sandinista! came as a much needed musical education to this 15-year-old boy, closed in by the chapel-cold walls of the South Wales valleys. As the punch-drunk hobo in "Broadway" falls out of the night, everything The Clash ever stood for comes stumbling out after him. It's all here – humility, anger, passion and pride. Why Tom Waits hasn't covered this song is anybody's guess. Perfection.

# London Calling album track, December 1979

BUTCHVIG: A lot of people see The Clash as an old punk band but there was a lot of different styles and ideas in their music. One minute they'd be playing around with rock and blues, the next ska and reggae. "Lost In The Supermarket" brings a lot of these different influences together with a really hypnotic chorus. It also demonstrates Mick Jones' unique guitar techniques and the way he would produce really hooky leads. I used to get into arguments with Kurt Cobain about The Clash because he would say they didn't have as much energy as The Sex Pistols and I would say The Sex Pistols only had four or five killer songs and that most of their material was really one-dimensional. It was just a light-hearted thing, but we'd argue for hours about this and other classic rock debates like The Beatles vs The Stones. ED HAMELL: I always dug the occasional Jones vocal.



# "The Clash were one of the few bands who could turn desperation into an anthem" - Steve Erickson

This is a catchy little bugger, and in a perfect world this would have been a radio hit.

MATTHEW RYAN: The first song I wished I'd written. I was inspired by their wonderful marriage of truth-telling, vulnerability and being pissed off. It was my first moment of absolute envy, and an important point in my interior life as a writer. JOSH ROUSE: "Rock The Casbah", "Train In Vain" and "Lost In The Supermarket" basically made it all right for white boys from the wrong side of the tracks to do a pop-soul thing. You might not be able to tell without reading between the lines, but these particular songs and The Clash as a band were a big influence on my new record. They inspired me to use different characters in songs, pick up the newspaper or watch television for ideas and use more call-and-response vocals. Thanks boys! BRETT SPARKS: Hearing London Calling for the first time was a major event in my musical life. Ironically enough, I bought this strange record in a large department store in Odessa, Texas. This song takes

place in a ring of tenement hell in which the more you shop the more you disappear. This invisible man sings a beautiful, melodic, perfect pop song made even more poignant by the fact that he can no longer see the hands he reaches out with.

JOHN BRAMWELL: The greatest Jam song that Paul Weller didn't write.

goes on long after it's over, not only in the mind but in the air.

MATTHEW RYAN: As a kid I went through a time when I was in a lot of trouble – though I never got caught – so I kind of identified with this one. Like Keith Richards, The Clash had such a great attitude and looked so great. Unfortunately, I'm built the wrong way. Telecasters never suited me, I needed a bigger guitar. I'd stand in front of the mirror thinking "How did Simonon stand like that?" There was something empowering about his bass, like an M-16.

# Sandinista! album track, December 1980

STEVE ERICKSON: About 10 seconds into this, I forget they didn't write it but, more to the point, they sound like they forget too – and taking away nothing from the songwriter, Eddy Grant, without even hearing his version I know for a stone fact it doesn't touch this one. Like The Who and Mott, The Clash were one of the few bands who could turn real desperation into a genuine anthem, and never sound less desperate for all the ways they also sounded liberated. This song

# London Calling album track, December 1979

**DON LETTS:** It just sums up that moment when we were turning each other on to our respective cultures. I think that was written in the summer when Joe and Paul were going to a lot of reggae shebangs and blues dances, partaking in herb and brew and generally being turned on by West Indian culture. At the same time me and my mates were being turned on by them. We became closer by understanding our differences and not trying to be the bloody same. >>

# BOB GELDOF explains his misgivings about The Clash

"I THOUGHT The Clash were shite at first. They came late in the day from my point of view and I thought it was a put-up.

"I thought they were like a modern Bay City Rollers. I still think that's true. I thought their songs were obvious and not very good.'White Riot' was rubbish, laughable. I didn't believe in it, whereas I believed utterly in the Pistols. I didn't understand why they had credibility. From what I understand their first gig was in a room full of journalists and they were all wearing specially made gear. Here was Joe, who was a son of a

diplomat and a public school boy, living out this working-class-hero thing. So I was very irritated.

"The Boomtown Rats did get on with The Clash, though, we respected each other. Me and Joe would chat and I liked Mick as a geezer. But I thought Mick and Joe wanted to be Mick and Keith and I still believe that. That was no bad thing. I just couldn't see why they had to be embarrassed about it. I used to say I loved The Rolling Stones, which drove people nuts because you weren't supposed to. I loved The Beatles, I loved Bob Dylan, fuckin' sorry but I'm not

gonna apologise, you c\*\*\*s.

"The truth is, a band is its music and what it leaves behind. If The Sex Pistols had only been a social phenomena and not left us Never Mind The Bollocks, they'd be wholly academic. The point is they left this absolutely thrilling artefact that's as exciting today as it was then. The Kinks would've been The Swingin' Blue Jeans had they not written those fucking great deathless songs of their moment. The Clash turned into

what they said they were at the beginning only after time, and people call me a c\*\*\* for saving that they were shite when they started, but I still adhere to that.

"They only came good on London Calling and then went into overdrive on Sandinista! That's the one for me. I just think they were off, they were doing wholly new things and I thought they developed into The Clash. On Sandinista! they'd moved

from the security of being a great band into that period of a band going into experimentation, where everything they tried was immensely interesting. They developed into a truly significant, important band, and why we remember them now is for those two great albums. People say the first album is great. Fuck off! It was well average and not very good in my opinion. Combat Rock sucks, as well. They were over then, that was it.

"But they were a great band. They

had that fucking band shit, y'know? Joe, Mick, Paul and Topper, only those four could do that thing." INTERVIEW: SIMON GODDARD



Joe's description of the Rudie character too —"drinking brew for breakfast" and the "chicken skin suit" — it's a great song. A classic.

**NICK JOHNSTONE:** If there's a Clash song that encapsulates the way they looked, the rebel rocker image, this is it.

ROB HUGHES: A fat burst of musical joy, horns and all. "Sing, Michael, sing!" urges Joe, as Strummer and Jones proceed to careen off each other like drunken dodgems. Incredible guitar-playing, too. Sounds like they were all knocking back the sky juice,

## ROCK THE CASBAH

Combat Rock album track, May 1982. Issued as single A-side, June 1982

NORMAN GOOK: A personal favourite of mine for the simple reason it made me realise a white rock band could make dance music. In those days dance music was black music, so the fact they attempted to make songs that fused rock with elements of dub and reggae was a real revelation. Getting Grandmaster Flash to support them on tour was another brave move that introduced the whole concept of hip hop to thousands of teenagers, including myself.

CLINT BOON: The all-time definitive punk-pop record. BUTCHVIG: Like Springsteen's "Born In The USA", "Rock The Casbah" was a big radio hit in the US, but I don't think many people had a clue what the band were really singing about at the time.

ROBERT ELMS: The sound of a band taking on all these new influences and making great fun music out of them.

ANDREW WEATHERALL: Whenever I hear "Rock The Casbah" it brings back really vivid memories of going to warehouse parties and nightclubs in the early '80s. It also reminds me that The Clash helped me get out of a few dilemmas. As a teenager, I couldn't decide whether to be a mod or a rocker and as a young man I couldn't decide whether to be a punk rocker or northern soul boy. Hearing The Clash weld brutal rock'n'roll with dub, reggae and ska made me realise I didn't have to make the choice — I could listen to everything and be everything.

DON LETTS: Interesting how this was a kind of rock hit in America. Again Joe was taking on things that he was concerned with. "The king told the boogie men/You better let that raga drop" is actually about Bernie Rhodes, the manager, who'd said something like, "The songs are getting too long," or something. I think it just triggered something in Joe's head. He'd also heard something about religious leaders in Iran were locking up people who owned disco albums or something. But really it was about how people try and stop other people listening to music for whatever reason. So it was ironic that the Americans turned it around to become the soundtrack for the bombardment of Baghdad. Obviously that was something that was out of the band's control. That's the last thing they'd have wanted.

BOB GELDOF: The Clash went one better than even London Calling with Sandinista!. I got the whole picture and loved the breadth and the ambition of it. Combat Rock, the album that came after it, was crap. But it did contain "Rock The Casbah", which is a classic and one of my all-time favourite Clash songs.

ED HAMELL: Topper's [Headon] finest hour. I'm sure >>>







I'll be accused of this one being too obvious as well, but Good Lord, it's a fucking weird-ass radio hit, isn't it? I mean the lyrics were 19 years ahead of their time. And with all that Buena Vista Social Club stuff, so was the music

TIM BURGESS: I remember hearing it when I was 16 or 17 years old – hanging out in Manchester for the first time, drinking in the afternoon. It was just a really great summer anthem for me. The video was brilliant – all the gear they were wearing. Combat Rock is definitely in my top two favourite albums by them. The first record I got by The Clash was Give 'Em Enough Rope. I love the first three tracks on that. The second record I got by The Clash was Sandinista! and I think I bought it for, like, £3.99. But the first album is still my favourite.

MICKEY BRADLEY: Couldn't make out the words when I heard it on the radio, but it didn't matter. Heard the chorus, could sing the chorus, and dug that "crazy casbah sound". The Undertones had a song called "Casbah Rock". It wasn't as good.

JOSH ROUSE: I know "Rock The Casbah" may be taboo in England, but it was a hit in the States and it's my favourite Clash song. I think the main reason is the groove. The bass line and electric piano could not

"'Stay Free' made me realise I shouldn't waste a moment of my life. It was a seminal song on a seminal album" - Norman Cook

be more funky. My friends and I used to say "What the fuck are they singing about?" But it didn't really matter, the song just

swings. I later learned it was about the banning of rock music in Iran.

Give Em Enough Rope album track, November 1978

DONLETTS: All I'll say about "Stay Free" is that it's a south London thing. I don't know if that makes any sense but it's a south London thing - you either get it

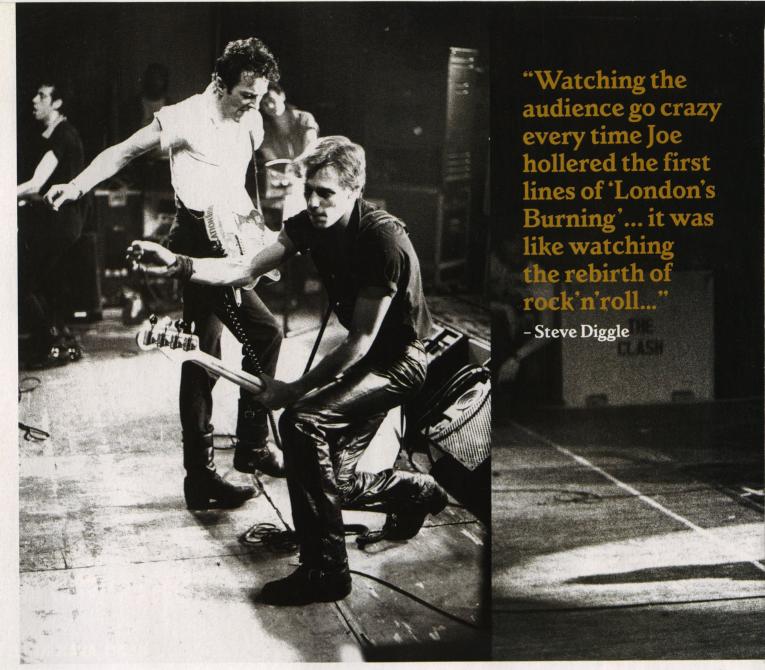
PETE WYLIE: Mick had a great voice, and even though he only got to sing one or two songs, he made the most of them. "Stay Free" was a different kind of Clash song, very melodic. Mick's finest hour.

NORMAN COOK: The Clash were the first band to get into politics and I know they had an equally big effect on the rest of The Housemartins. They talked about important issues in interviews and addressed problems like racism and unemployment in their songs. "The Magnificent Seven" took a scalpel to factory life, while "Stay Free" made me realise I shouldn't waste a moment of my life. It was a seminal song on a seminal album and, whenever I see one of my oldest mates, we still sing it to each other.

**TOMMY STINSON:** It's a song that I used to listen to a lot when I was hanging out with my friend David Roth. He was a kid I went to high school with. He and I used to be the two ruffians of our school. We'd get spat on and picked on a lot because we had spiky hair and little spiky bracelets and shit. You know, we were these crazy little kids, and "Stay Free" always reminds me of him. Most of The Clash records I got onto because of him, because his family had been to England right before I met him and he came back from England and he had bondage trousers and Give 'Em Enough Rope and he turned me onto a lot of cool stuff.

ALAN PARKER: Reminds me so much of my teenage years in Blackburn, with our little gang trying to stav free...

GIDEON COE: An excellent example of Mick Jones as lead singer, this song also contains one of his finest guitar solos. It has a special place in my heart because my friends and I used to play it busking on Canterbury High St. Tales of smoking menthol, fighting and doing time in Brixton rang very true with us middle-class grammar school boys. Our main concerns at the time centred on history homework and broken strings. I'd always leave out the profanities in case the Archbishop was walking past. Not that he ever gave us any money. Back to the record. It's The Clash at their most wistful. It's as affecting a tale of friendship and >>



lost days of youth as I've ever heard in my life. STEVE DIGGLE: Give 'Em Enough Rope got slagged to death because of its polished production, but "Stay Free" has to be one of the best Mick Jones compositions ever committed to tape. The whole song is really moving and poignant and it sounds just as good decades later.

# 14 BANKROBBER Single A-side, August 1980

**PAUL WELLER:** That's the thing, the arse-end of when you say you're not gonna play *Top Of The Pops.* You get Pan's People dancing to "Bankrobber". So what's worse, y'know?

MARC CARROLL: Strummer comes from this whole narrative lineage of songwriters, like Dylan and Woody Guthrie. He always said he was influenced by Woody Guthrie, and the lyrics to "Bankrobber" are proof of that, with this tale of an immoral lawbreaker. It's exactly the sort of thing Guthrie sang about. If there was something going on, he'd let you know about it. And Strummer was the same. I met him about two years ago in Battery Studios and it was an

unbelievable experience. He was the most amazing person, incredibly polite. I don't get star-struck easily, but I phoned everybody I knew – including my parents – to tell them. I went into the room and he was asleep on the couch with his dogs. He was totally cool.

# 3 LONDON'S BURNING The Clash album track, April 1977

STEVE DIGGLE: The Clash are one of my favourite bands and in my autobiography, *Harmony In My Head*, I actually admit I'd much rather have been in The Clash than The Buzzcocks. I know they're not as popular or fashionable as they used to be, but they were an amazing live band and I don't think they released a single duff track. We supported them on the White Riot tour in 1977 and I'll never forget the shivers I used to get every time they played "London's Burning". I used to stand at the side of the stage and watch the audience go crazy every time Joe hollered the opening lines... It was like witnessing the rebirth of rock'n'roll through a punk perspective.

MARK PERRY: It's about a time and a place, about The Clash as they were living then. All that stuff about the Westway, I mean Mick Jones actually lived in a flat overlooking the Westway, so the track just reflects the tension of living in London at that time. Skyscrapers, having the motorway running past your house, y'know what I mean? Literally, London's burning with boredom. It's superb. The Clash had these rallying calls which I think The Sex Pistols would have loved to have had. Apart from "Anarchy In The UK" and "God Save The Queen", I don't think the Pistols were that good at describing what it was like to be young, bored and frustrated in London. The Clash did that perfectly with "London's Burning". PETEWYLIE: I still think of Joe every time I see the Westway. The night he died, me daughter was coming home from Australia for Christmas so I was staying with a mate in London so I could pick her up from the airport the next morning. About two in the morning the phone goes. It was me mate John McGee, who'd just worked on the Mescaleros tour. He said, "Joe's dead." I was baffled. I thought, "Why would anyone make such a stupid joke?" I was absolutely in bits. A few hours later I met me daughter at Heathrow and I was overjoyed, I hadn't seen her in



two years and I was ecstatic. But mixed in with all that jubilation was that thing of "one of me mates has died". So on the journey home, we made a detour so we could go along the Westway. It was so poignant, there in the car with me daughter, the morning after Joe died, driving along the Westway singing "London's Burning" to meself in this half-broken, shocked way. It's still a bloody shock, when I think about it.

MARK REFOY: For me this song will always mean Victoria Park, April 30, 1978, and the Rock Against Racism festival. I was 15, I had my O-levels looming and I didn't give a flying fuck. I came down on a coach organised by the local Anti-Nazi League. There were thousands of us in Trafalgar Square who then marched all the way to Hackney. When we got to Victoria Park we just legged it down the front to try and get as close as possible. Nobody was that bothered about the other bands. We just wanted to see The Clash. When they came on and Joe said, "For those of you who've just come down to London..." and went straight into "London's Burning" it was utterly fucking unbelievable. Then Ray Gange coming out at the end, giving it "More Clash!". It was chaos!

RAY GANGE: Victoria Park? Well I was just really pissed off that they were gonna pull the plug. I wanted to see more Clash so I assumed that if there were 60,000 people out there then they did, too. I went up there to gee them up, hoping everybody was gonna storm the barricades, but after a while people were just looking up at me a bit bored!

MARC CARROLL: I used to change the lyric to "Dublin's Burning" when I was jumping around my living room. And I changed the line "Dial 999" to "Dial N-N-N-No-one". Humorous now, but deadly serious when you're younger and you're raging against everything. When I first came over to England in 1988, I used to go down to Ladbroke Grove a lot. I still think of it as The Clash's manor.

LYNDON MORGANS: À brilliant piece of myth-making, using words as a blunt instrument – sheer brute-force poetry – to endow the Westway/ Harrow Road area with all the sleazy glamour of a Bronx or a Bowery.

**ROBERT ELMS:** They knocked my family house down to build the Westway and I still love that road and this song about it.

# 12 POLICE AND THIEVES The Clash album track, April 1977

TERRY CHIMES: The first album was really a case of bashing out the live set in a studio. The only song that sounded very different from what we played live was "Police And Thieves". We began experimenting with harmonies, realising we could do overdubs and all those kinds of things.

PETE SHELLEY: When The Clash first started, a lot of people thought of them as purely a punk band doing punk songs, but their songs were always very melodic and very catchy. I think everybody tried to dabble in the politics of the time and write about things that meant something to them, but with songs like "Police And Thieves", The Clash managed to write political songs you could sing along to.

JAKE BURNS: The thing that really impressed me about "Police And Thieves" was the fact that they weren't actually trying to play reggae. The guitars still sounded like white-boy rock guitars, and they didn't make any concessions to try and sound Jamaican in any way. I thought that was really honest. I hadn't heard the original when I bought *The Clash* because, >>



### Jim Jarmusch, cult film director, on Joe Strummer and The Clash

"A LOT OF JOE'S FRIENDS, we always quote what we call Strummer's Law — or at least one of them — which was, 'No input, no output!' He'd always shout that at us. I'd be going, 'Aw, I really gotta work, Joe, I can't go out all night again.' He'd reply: 'That's lying-down talk! We're bloody going out!'

"Strummer was so incredibly valuable to me, both as a friend and for all the things he created. The Clash too, I gotta say — I don't know Topper, but I definitely count Paul and Mick (and certainly Joe) as really close friends. I've known them for quite a while now, and I love them all.

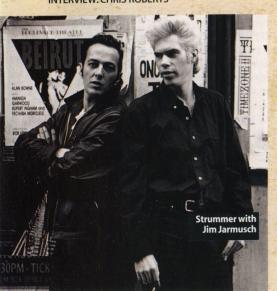
"I think I met Joe first in the early '80s, and then consequently met and spent time with Mick and Paul. I lived in Berlin in 1987, and Mick came to visit and crashed in my house there for a week. I see Paul often in New York and always when I'm in London. I own a beautiful painting of his, of eggs and bacon in a frying-pan on a table, which is almost abstract, a kind of looser version of Cézanne.

"They are amazing people, very rare, who together made something incredibly rare. I'm writing a series of essays, sort of to amuse myself, a sorta Battle Of The Bands thing. One is Duchamp versus Warhol. And one is The Clash versus The Sex Pistols. The Pistols, like The Ramones, were to me about reduction, and reducing rock'n'roll to its absolute essentials. They were masterful at that. They created one record, basically. In the pantheon of rock'n'roll they are perfect in their ability to reduce rock'n'roll to that degree and to have that kind of emotion and anger in it. I love them for that.

"The Clash, on the other hand, to me were so incredibly open to everything. Rather than reduce music to an essence, what they did was take anything that flowed in to their hearts and souls. They grabbed onto that essence and used it and made it part of themselves, whether it's rockabilly or dub or reggae... so I find them almost diametrically opposed, in a way, to the Pistols. They just opened their hearts to the universe and anything that is real or moving to them becomes part of them. That's what The Clash were always, continually doing. Whether they pulled in fragments of English folk tunes, or elements of hip hop, stuff like that.

"There's some people who make great work and then you meet them and you're not so sure about them personally, but that's OK. But the thing is about those guys from The Clash, they are all so... generous and open, wonderful people. They're just really amazing cats, all of them."

INTERVIEW: CHRIS ROBERTS



with regards to reggae, Belfast in the mid-'70s was very much a backwater. You heard Bob Marley on the radio and that was it. The Clash opened my ears to all that. I like the original by Junior Murvin, but I prefer The Clash's. It's a lot more edgy, a lot more urban.

ANDREW WEATHERALL: A lot of people dismissed "Police And Thieves" at the time, but hearing that song encouraged me to go and check out people like Lee Scratch Perry and Big Youth. When John Lydon started doing reggae stuff a few years later, that was the final seal of approval for me and my mates, and we spent a lot of time actively seeking good reggae and dub records.

LYNDON MORGANS: Great vocal – even

the cod-Jamaican accent thing works. And the intro in waltz time and the falsetto backing vocals and the chopped-out off-beats on the guitar and the cheese wire solo, they're all lovely touches. And at nearly six minutes long, they probably had to leave off three or four anthems done at "Westway speed" to make room for it.

BUTCH VIG: I've always loved The Clash, but I never really got into their more reggae and ska-based stuff until I heard "Police And Thieves" played through a big PA. There was a bar called The Crystal Corner near my old studio and they used to play it night after night. It could easily have sounded terrible in between the staple country rock and boogie blues, but for some reason it always sounded like the best pseudo reggae punk song in the world.



RODDY FRAME: I had The Clash on cassette, and this tiny cassette player, and I can just remember everyday coming home from school and playing "Janie Jones". It was so exciting, it was like hearing Chuck Berry coming out of a jukebox. I can see now that a lot of the stuff Strummer was doing came from his rock'n'roll schooling in The 101'ers. It kind of boogied, you know? That's something The Sex Pistols didn't really do because they were rooted in that whole New York Dolls sleazy thing. But in The Clash you could hear those elements of rockabilly and almost boogie guitar — it had its roots in something much older.

PETE SHELLEY: I didn't buy the first Clash album until a few years ago, but I heard them play "Janie Jones" every night on the White Riot tour in '77. We'd never toured outside the north-west before and we were all pretty blown away by how incredible they were live. They used to play "Janie Jones" straight after the opening number and I remember people ripping out the seats when they played The Rainbow in Finsbury Park. The Clash were very much a London band and they always got a phenomenal response in London. We never bothered how well we played, but I remember they would come off stage and be shouting "You missed that bit" to each other regardless of how well each set went. They were always trying to be tighter and better and harder and faster.

**PETEWYLIE:** Just the start with Terry Chimes' drums.



He sometimes gets a hard deal does 'Tory Crimes', but his drumming is amazing. I'd never heard anything like it. It was the same the first time I heard "Anarchy In The UK" or "Starman" or "Wrote For Luck". The first time you hear it you think, "Fuck me, what's happening?" It was sparse, then intense, then sparse, then intense again. It summed up The Clash for me. From the first three seconds you knew that first album was gonna be fantastic. Those lyrics, about this guy working in a crap job and then the glamour of singing about Janie Jones. To have the bollocks to start with a song that good, y'know?

THURSTON MOORE: Who the fuck was Janie Jones?

JON LANGFORD: You can't overestimate how important The Clash were back in 1977. We loved the Pistols' self-aware nihilism, but we didn't want to be the Pistols, and if The Clash were cartoon-heroic and occasionally a bit silly we still loved them and recognised the risks they were taking... The soundtrack to life in Cromer House where the snotty bunch of art students that formed The Mekons, Gang Of Four and Delta 5 sat around shagging and smoking when they should have been doing art. LYNDON MORGANS: It rattles along like it was compulsory for all Clash tunes of this era to do and yet there's something fragile about it, and it's a love song, and any 'political' point is made nice and obliquely - via the slagging of the nine-to-five treadmill. If these snotty little urban guerrillas had realised just how sophisticated a piece of work this is, they'd probably have slung it out of the set on ideological grounds. But luckily they couldn't see past the genius chorus and the great words and the sweet and perfect drumming.

### 10 WHITE RIOT Single A-side, March 1977

ROBERT ELMS: The joyous machine-gun rattle of this battle call is still the ultimate Clash thrill for me. I was at the Carnival in '76 when Joe was inspired to write this. Then I first heard it at Harlesden, and it all came back. I saw at least half a dozen gigs on the White Riot tour, and this tune always kicked off. The classic time was at The Rainbow, when it literally turned into one and the Art Deco roof nearly came off the house.

ED HAMELL: I just love the song because it rocks so hard, the production is real inventive, and you can really hear Jones' guitar influences heavy – both Mick

version, different to the UK one and with all those extra singles on it. To me it's like the song you put on as you're cracking your first beer open when you're ready to go out.

JAY FARRAR: The first band I was in was called The Plebes, and "Clash City Rockers" was one of the first songs we worked out. It was bar-chord heaven. The simplicity and power of the chord structure made it ideal for starting a band.

# SAFE EUROPEAN HOME

Give 'Em Enough Rope album track,' November 1978

LAURENCE BELL: It's a juggernaut of a rock'n'roll song that really taps into that thing of a white boy wanting to be cool, wanting to be black. Here was Joe, arguably the coolest singer with the coolest band in the world but he was vulnerable enough to say "I could never be as cool as these guys."

But this song reminds me of my favourite personal Clash memory. I used to do a fanzine called Harsh Reality when I was in the second year of school. I came up to London one day to interview Swell Maps at Rough Trade, but rather than go home I decided to hang around afterwards and try selling some fanzines. I ended up outside The Rainbow where The Clash were playing this Rock Against Racism gig. It was just so exciting to be that close to a Clash gig, soaking up the atmosphere.

Eventually everyone in the queue filtered in when this Clash roadie came out the side and said "Anybody wanna see the band - follow me!" There were about 15 of us who all piled in, running down these back corridors of the venue until we were behind the stage. He sent us into the crowd, two by two, scuttling across the stage and in to the front. It was like "Go! Go! Go!", a military operation or something. I was only 13, only small, and I couldn't believe it. I'd only gone to sell fanzines outside and here I was about to watch The Clash. Five minutes

later they came on with

'Safe European

Home" and it

was incredible.

So anyway, I

missed the

Simonon meets David Bowie in New York, 1982

last train home, ended up rolling in at 7am the next morning and was grounded for a month!

BOBBY GILLESPIE: A lot of people don't rate Give 'Em Enough Rope, but I think it's really intense and desperate sounding. A lot of the songs sound like they were recorded in one or two takes and "Safe European Home" is a brilliant example. I can't remember the lyrics or the ending, it's just a really intense, emotional song that always lifts my spirits. I just love it.

PETEWYLIE: Stunning. It still sounds fresh. In the movie Rude Boy when they're doing "Safe European Home" live, if you pause the DVD, you can see me in the wings when I roadied for them. I'm wearing a pink shirt, white jeans, looking longingly at Mick Jones. That was me movie debut, but I missed the premiere.

JESSE MALIN: I remember I had it on vinyl and when I put that needle down, the thing just exploded. I love the outro, that dub thing when it rolls out at the end and comes up again with Topper's drum rolls through the tom. That's Sandy Pearlman's production. When you put that record on, it just explodes.

as taking the anger and power and humour of the first album and spreading out in full, widescreen Technicolor. It was HUGE and was the kind of leap that allowed them to move on to the incredible London Calling one year later. This song rocks impossibly hard and then hits its stride with the exciting and innovative rock dub moments at the end. MATT FRIEDBERGER: Perfect. I have a couple of different recordings of it, but my favourite's the

second Clash album and this song in particular.

At the time, it was seen as a sell-out, but I just saw it

version in Rude Boy. I put my tape recorder up to the TV so I could record it and listen to it through my headphones.

SIMON MORAN: Joe used to play "Safe European Home" all the time in his solo sets, and the fact he did so many different interpretations only goes to show what a great song it was. The melody is ridiculously catchy and the lyrics are pure Clash. I know it's one of Bruce Springsteen's personal favourites, too, because he'd agreed to be a special guest when MTV were considering doing a special Storytellers programme on Joe. It's a shame it never happened - I'm sure he would have had some interesting things to say about The Clash and he promised to perform "Safe European Home" and a couple of other songs with Joe. GIDEON COE: I used to play this record before going out and drinking three-and-a-half pints of cider on

a Friday night. The opening crack of the drum shows Sandy Pearlman got some things right when working with the band. This also contains a fine example of the duelling Strummer/Jones vocal as Mick sings the melody with Joe muttering about Rudie in the background. I love the thought of the two of them going off to Jamaica for inspiration and getting the fear. Meanwhile, the man who really wanted to go -Paul – was left at home fuming. Makes for a great song, though. And the fade-out at the death before the sudden end works brilliantly. Best played very, very loud.



B-side to "White Riot", March 1977

PAUL WELLER: What I really liked about "1977" was the fact it was only one minute 40 seconds or whatever. I was really impressed with that, how powerful and short it was. I mean all that "No Elvis, Beatles or The

Rolling Stones" was fucking nonsense, really. I'm sure Joe didn't really mean it either when you think about all those old artists who'd influenced them as well. I mean, one of the things I really liked about The Clash was how they got Lee Dorsey and Bo Diddley to support them on tour. All that ground-zero nihilism stuff, I dunno how much of that they really believed. They were all very aware of rock'n'roll history and English pop culture. One of the first

things that really struck me about Joe

"They were always a bit ahead of the game, they were always pushing forward'

Ronson and Johnny Thunders. I don't know for sure but I've always suspected Jones is playing all the parts except for drums.

**THURSTON MOORE:** One of the best first-generation UK punk singles. Total thrash.

MICKEY BRADLEY: They could have disappeared after this and would still get talked about a quarter of a century later. Being in Derry, I found it amazing that there were riots in London. Did people get their bowler hats knocked off? Interviews with The Clash explained things. Paul Simonon's bass line is still almost impossible to play.

LYNDON MORGANS: A spontaneous outburst of excitement from a band that's suddenly realised it's on to something, that its moment is imminent. And it's secondly an emetic, designed to make you puke up that iffy old meal of Genesis or The Eagles you swallowed yesterday.

CLINT BOON: I saw The Sex Pistols and The Clash on the Anarchy tour. It was at the Electric Circus in Manchester, December 1976. It was a turning point in my life, that moment. The Clash struck such a chord with me, not just the songs but the image. It was like, "Fucking hell! People like me making music." Before that, people like me didn't make music. It was a massive inspiration, that whole punk scene in general. A lot of people of my generation still live by that ethic, really.

JAKE BURNS: The Clash were absolutely vital to the formation of Stiff Little Fingers. They were singing songs about their own lives which struck a huge chord with me. I thought, "Well, if they're fed up growing up in west London, how fed up do they think I am growing up in Belfast?" Up until "White Riot",

I quite liked what I'd heard of the punk movement, but it had just struck me as a bit of fun, nothing particularly important. But The Clash came along and they were singing serious songs, but in an exciting fashion. It was electrifying. To me, "White Riot" was as exciting as it must have been for someone in the '50s first hearing Elvis Presley. Especially since I'd grown up in Belfast where rioting was a way of life.

# 9 CLASH CITY ROCKERS Single A-side, February 1978

THURSTON MOORE: The Clash produced dozens of brilliant songs, but "Clash City Rockers" was the one that actually made you feel part of the band. The fact they used their name in a song—like Bo Diddley used to—was very exciting back then.

STEVE DIGGLE: "Clash City Rockers" has to be one of the ultimate punk tracks. The opening chords are electrifying and the whole song just has a ferocious energy to it. I've been listening to it for half my life now and I'm still not tired of it. The Clash were the greatest punk band in the world.

**ROBERT ELMS:** It's a kind of nursery rhyme which includes "the bells of Prince Far-I". Only the Clash could do that.

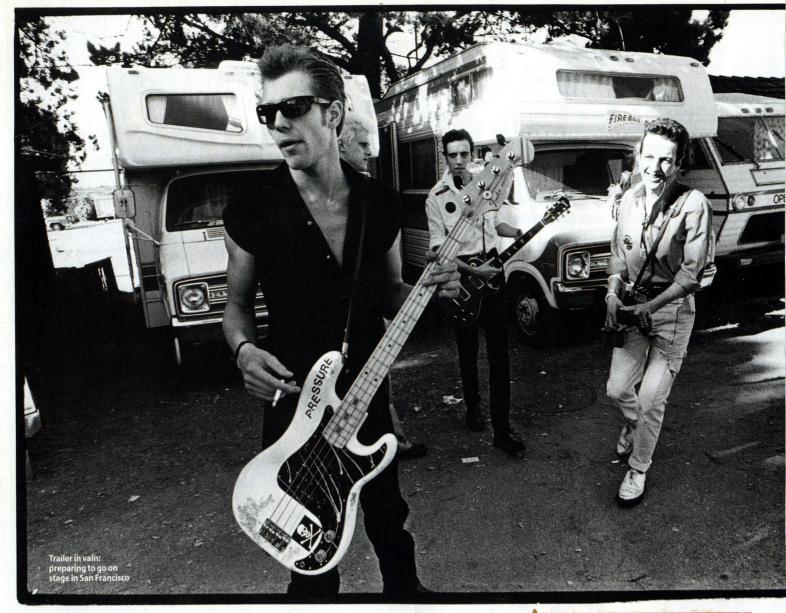
ANDREW WEATHERALL: "Clash City Rockers" is both a statement of intent and an anthemic last-gang-intown song. The chorus is really immediate and the opening guitar chords really remind me of Mott The Hoople and "Born Late 58". I had no idea at the time that Mick Jones used to be in the Mott The Hoople

fanclub, but they obviously influenced him and the way he wrote songs.

ELIROTH: The first time I heard this, I was in a club in New York City called Brownies, and I had just heard my friend Natasha's band play. I was jumping up and down and dancing and screaming, and then after her set, this song came on in the club. I just stood there, frozen, not wanting to talk to anyone, thinking, "My God, this is the real shit." It had the same familiar British rock sound I associated with The Who's "Can't Explain," but it had the violent energy and aggression of The Sex Pistols.

ADAM SWEETING: God knows what Strummer is going on about here, but the sound of the track says it all. It's the way he bounces his chopped-up syllables off the sizzling slash-and-burn guitar riff that drives straight through the middle, especially when he rhymes "Clash city rockers" with "electrical shocker". MICKEY BRADLEY: How many other punk bands could get away with Bo Diddley's trick of putting their name in a song title? A song which you loved when you'd never even heard it, having only read the title in the NME months before it was recorded. Again the words make it - "You owe me a move say the Bells of St Groove/Come on and show me say the Bells of Old Bowie/When I am fitter say the Bells of Gary Glitter/No one but you and I say the Bells of Prince Far-I..." A London band, a London song. For a 17-year-old who'd never been to London, you could smell the fumes just by listening to this single. CHRIS SHIFLETT: My brother bought the first Clash album way back when, so "Clash City Rockers" was probably the first song of theirs I heard as it was the first track. You have to remember this was the US >>

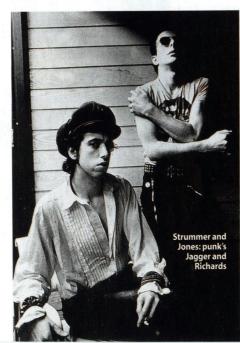




my haircut, and recognising that it was supposed to be like a mod cut. I thought that was pretty cool. MARK PERRY: It's under two minutes and it's just this amazing statement. All those images, like Sten guns in Knightsbridge. You knew that was never going to happen, but it was just the idea of it. It was a real rallying call. That refrain - "No Elvis, Beatles or The Rolling Stones" – is just genius. I think it's their best riff ever. The way it starts, it's so tense. Unbeatable. **DON LETTS:** Have you ever heard a tune that comes in at just under one minute and 40 seconds that has so much bollocks? The cheek of these young whippersnappers to rail against the old, heralding in the new. Sheer bollocks, man, you gotta take your hat off. Even though I believe that when Joe first came up with the line "No Elvis, Beatles or The Rolling Stones", he felt a little embarrassed. But "1977", the sheer balls! LYNDON MORGANS: It always rankled with me, that Year Zero aspect of the Great Punk Upheaval, the screw- everything-that-went-before mentality. Of course, most rock stank like a used litter-tray by '76 - is it ever any different? - but if it was a case of renouncing Exile On Main St for "Neat Neat Neat" then you could fuck fuck fuck off. But I guess "No more Wakeman, Frampton and Emerson, Lake & Palmer" wouldn't have scanned as well as "No more Elvis, Beatles or The Rolling Stones". So I'll dock The Clash one point for their dodgy historical

revisionism, but award them nine more for this swaggering little fucker of a record.

THURSTON MOORE: My all-time favourite tear-jerker. MICKEY BRADLEY: The Undertones learnt this within days. Played it every week for the next nine months. Funny how 1984 seemed so far off. Funny how the riff was "pure Kinks" according to Tom Robinson, who reviewed it for *NME*.



# 6 GARAGELAND The Clash album track, April 1977

TERRY CHIMES: My favourite song off that first album would have to be "Garageland". Great fun to play live. I love the lyrics and the sentiment but more than anything I just love the sound. We never thought it was going to be an anthem because we never thought about the future. We were very much a band of 'now'. I mean we thought we were going to be famous, but we never really considered the implications of that. I was always the one who thought the punk 'sell-out' thing was nonsense anyway. You have to have a record label, you have to have money coming in. I was a realist, whereas the others used to fight against it. We used to argue all the time about that stuff. ED HAMELL: You have a few friends who are musictaste-alpha-males (or females). They start raving about a band or an album. You listen. It's good, you're digging it, but is there going to be a song that makes the 'connection' to you? Not the 'hit' or the 'anthem', but the thing that sits down on the end of the bed in your room and says: "Hey, check it out, I'm a chump just like you, I'm turning my miserable fucking life around with this shit." (This is, of course, what I hear - you may have your own 'connection' phrase.) I remember where I first heard this. I was at a friend's

NORMAN COOK: "Garageland" is very close to my heart. When we were in The Housemartins, that was always our encore and we all used to swap instruments and I'd play guitar and sing it.

**PETEWYLIE:** A great song, written off the back of a bad review, so it's a statement of intent. The first time I saw The Clash, there's a phrase that's never left me head and that's that they had "a roar of defiance". And it was like a roar,

ADAM SWEETING: Choosing cover versions is a fine art that most bands never master. The Clash did this one so well that hardly anybody realised it wasn't one of their own, since the outlaw sentiment felt so intrinsically Clash-like and the song's terse, taut verses and singalong chorus felt like they'd come straight out of the Strummer/Jones operator's manual.

LYNDON MORGANS: Judged against the sheer velocity of most of the stuff on the first album, this track is almost jaunty, but the attack is totally ferocious, and, of course, the tune itself is completely inescapable. And considering that traditional muso values were so low down their list of priorities, the tightness of the playing is remarkable, too. I can imagine how exciting they must've been up there on a small stage right in front of you. I never saw them – but we did play on the same bill as Joe once, a benefit gig at the 100 Club a few years back. Bez got up and bobbed up and down alongside him.

JON LANGFORD: The Waco Brothers have been bashing this out in the bars of Chicago since 1994. It's a wonderful number for striking a few poses and throwing some shapes! We did it at a charity show earlier this year and Jimmy Chamberlin [ex-Smashing Pumpkins drummer) managed to miss the six-gun drum break and will never be allowed to live it down.

# "The first time I saw The Clash, they had 'a roar of defiance'. And it was like a roar. A fucking animal sound" - Pete Wylie

a fucking animal sound. When I was 18 it was a lot more intense and serious, but "Garageland" is also funny. "There's 22 singers – but one microphone" – that's funny! It was an anthem.

RODDY FRAME: We used to do a version of "Garageland" in Aztec Camera when we started. In fact, we did it when we first played in London. We had these big semi-acoustic guitars, so it was odd, I suppose. But it was comforting to have that in the set because it kind of reminded you where you came from.

GARY CROWLEY: It just sums up that whole first album for me and brings back all the memories of those early gigs, seeing The Clash at The Rainbow, The Lyceum, Nôtre Dame Hall. That three-pronged attack of Paul, Joe and Mick in a line along the front and Topper at the back. Such an incredible live band.

# From the "Cost Of Living" EP, May 1979

BOB GELDOF: It's only in the last five years or so that I've listened again not only to The Boomtown Rats' records but all of that music from 1976-77. And it feels exciting, radical, dynamic and new. Surprisingly better than I remember it, really. All those other bands like The Clash were our rivals, and so that's how I listened to their records. Yeah, I was bristling with rivalry. I still think The Clash's early songs were trite and lame. But "I Fought The Law" – which was inspired by Bobby Fuller's version of the Sonny Curtis song – had attitude and spirit and still sounds great.

JESSE MALIN: "I Fought The Law" just explodes compared to the original. I heard a story that they were in a coffee shop or a diner in San Francisco and they heard the original by Bobby Fuller on the jukebox and got turned onto it. But when you hear the Fuller version, it's so light. When you hear Strummer sing "I left my baby and I feel so bad", it's unusual because The Clash don't sing a lot about girls, they don't sing a lot about love.

### STRAIGHT TO HELL

Combat Rock album track, May 1982. Issued as a double A-side single, September 1982

TERRY CHIMES: Even though I never played on the record, this is still my favourite Clash song. When Topper went and I rejoined in 1982, "Straight To Hell" was the one song I loved playing live more than the others. Normally I always preferred the faster, harder side of things but because it was slower this was one of the few songs that I could actually sit back and listen to as we were playing. The way Joe sang it, he always had so much feeling. The lyrics used to get me every time.

RODDY FRAME: A beautiful, beautiful record. They were always a bit ahead of the game, they were always pushing forward. For me it's a personal thing because I can just remember touring in 1982 with Aztec Camera and we listened to Combat Rock over and over again on headphones and just hearing all these lovely things that were happening in the music.

Lyrically, it's just great and it's very kind of personal — it just showed that the whole punk thing could go >>

# **★THE CLASH**★

# HATE AND WAH!

PETE WYLIE's highs and lows as a Clash City Rocker



"THE FIRST TIME I EVER saw The Clash was in a photo at the back of Probe Records in Liverpool. I knew the moment I saw it they were gonna be my favourite band, before I'd even heard them.

"People have talked at length about the night The Clash first played Liverpool. May 5, 1977. It was like a galvanising night from which everything came. Anybody who played on a Liverpool record for the next 10 years was there. It was incredible.

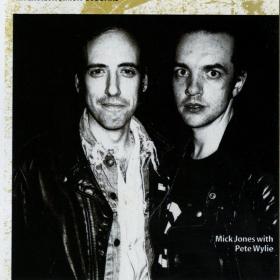
"I started out being a fan, but ended up being mates with them. Then in 1981, Wah! Heat supported The Clash for a week at the Mogador Theatre in Paris. On the last night, they said I could join them on stage and sing any song with them, so I picked 'Garageland'. The problem was I'd had some difficulties that week, drinking too much and being out of me head, so I didn't show up.

"In the end they sent Kosmo Vinyl, their roadie, to get me. So he pulls me into the dressing room. Mick was crying, going, 'Where' ve ya been?' I said, 'If I wanted to sing with Thin Lizzy, I'd sing with Thin Lizzy.' I mean, now I can't believe I said that, but I'd started to feel like they were betraying their punk roots. Joe had written out the words to 'Garageland' for me and I said, 'Mate, you wanna look at the fucking words,' which seemed very cool at the time, But looking back I was wrong. It was unforgivable and totally fuelled by red wine, so through this interview I beg forgiveness from Mick and from Joe, The upshot was that I missed me chance to sing with them in the end.

"We fell out after that, so I decided I wasn't going to see them any more. Anyway, about a year later they're playing Liverpool and they send Kosmo Vinyl to my house to get me. I was like a sulky boy saying, I'm not coming to the fucking gig.' Kosmo said, 'You gotta come, Mick and Joe sent me especially.' So I said, All right, I'm gonna come but I'm gonna stand at the back.' So I stood there, pretending not to enjoy it. Then Mick came up to the mic and said, 'I hope this ain't too sentimental, this is for my mate Pete from Liverpool.' And he did 'Stay Free' I'm telling you now, I shivered right the way through.

"The Clash had to deal with a lot of sniping, a lot of accusations about their politics, that they were naive and just sloganeering. Well, y'know what? Fuck it. They inspired me, they made me think and thousands of others like me. Even if you took away the politics, the looks, the style, they'd still be a fucking special group."

INTERVIEW: SIMON GODDARD



somewhere else. In the wake of The Clash and The Sex Pistols, there were about a thousand daft punk bands but they were never going to go anywhere other than that three-chord trash. "Straight To Hell" is just a beautiful piece of music – it transcends the whole punk thing.

JOSH ROUSE: In 1986, at the tender age of 14, I moved to Ft Benning, Georgia to live with my father, who was a drill sergeant in the US Army. That summer I purchased my first Clash cassette through Columbia House record and tape club ("Buy one record at full price and receive eight more for a penny!"). Listening to Combat Rock with its militant undertones, and living on an Army base, my life was becoming very ironic. Although I enjoyed the entire album, my first love was "Straight To Hell". It was perfect for puberty, dark lyrics, that deep tom-tom groove. The whole track just had a spooky appeal. I read somewhere that the lyrics were about immigrants from the Indo-Chinese wars, but of course that meant nothing to a 14-year-old whose sole purpose in life was the new Dead Milkmen album... oh, and of course, masturbation...

SIMON GODDARD: The first record I played after hearing Joe Strummer had died, and it cut me in half. Then later I was walking around the supermarket with a Walkman and – this is true – a makeshift black armband I'd concocted out of an old bag strap. I was listening to the live From Here To Eternity album, feeling pretty sombre, and then that version of "Straight To Hell" came on where

Strummer goes to the crowd "Sing in tune, you bastards", and I burst out laughing. It was fantastic because all that grief over one of my biggest heroes having died evaporated as the sheer joy of Joe Strummer suddenly dawned on me. It said everything to me about his passion, his humanity, and his invincible rock'n'roll spirit. ED HAMELL: Strummer did this one with The

# "Joe's lyrics, man... his rhyming couplets had more content than most people's albums. What The Clash could do in three minutes was a fucking trip" - Don Letts

Mescaleros, too, and it was as powerful as any of the early 'rockers' that they did. Combat Rock was their most avant-garde record. And yet, because of "Should I Stay Or Should I Go?" and "Rock The Casbah", it was their biggest commercial success. Isn't life a mindfuck? The lyrics to this one are very self-righteous, which really only a few rockers can get away with (read: Dylan), but the music, I propose, might have indicated where the band was headed if they'd stayed together. Jones was using his guitar like a synth, selectively, like a modern Pete Townshend, Who's Next era. More organic than the Big Audio Dynamite stuff, and even more inventive rhythms thanks to Topper. If this album, and subsequently this song, was any indication, they didn't have to seek any greener pastures musically, and they never individually achieved anything so adventurous or bold. They probably were sick of it all or each other at that point and used 'musical differences' as the excuse (read: Brian Jones). TIM BURGESS: It's so disturbing, isn't it? It's so sleazy.

TIM BURGESS: It's so disturbing, isn't it? It's so sleazy. It always seems to tie in with "Ghetto Defendant", the Allen Ginsberg one. They're both incredibly bleak observations on American imperialism.

DON LETTS: Another thing I love about The Clash is

that all their music was about something. They
just had this ability to come out with stuff that
was really evocative. Again, "Straight To
Hell" is a good example of how Strummer
moved the lyrical goalposts of what rock
music could deal with. Joe's lyrics, man – any
two of his rhyming couplets had more
content than most people's fucking
albums. Seriously, what The Clash could
do in three minutes was a fucking trip.

JAKE BURNS: I'd never heard anything like it
before. The whole arrangement, the sound
of it and the lyrics are fantastic. That line
about "it ain't Coca-Cola, it's rice"

Americanisation of the Far East.

- that's such a fantastic

way to describe the

An audio version of Apocalypse Now, as Strummer intoned his weird panoramic lyric about American expansionism, British postimperial

imperial decline, rotting ghettoes, rampant drug cartels.

Slightly mad, admittedly, but the clattering

but the clattering pseudo-Asian percussion and

treated fiddle sounds conspired with Strummer's bleak vocal to create something authentically chilling. **ALEX COX:** Just such a beautiful song and it shows where Tommy Atkins and all his Army friends are going to end up.

MATTHEW RYAN: A sad story with an indignant quality, so primal yet so delicate. I love the way The Clash never underestimate you, they assume you care as much as they do that these things are said. For them, we're all in it together. They're talking about the difference between an ordinary citizen and privileged corporate aristocrats, about how poverty and despair preclude you from government. To me, they're wholeheartedly an inspiration. I still believe in The Clash, like I believe in Hank Williams.

GIDEON COE: The edit on Combat Rock is mighty fine, but after you've listened to the full version on The Clash On Broadway, that's the one. I once asked Joe why it had been edited for CR. After quite a pause, he said, "Well, it was kinda long... so we shortened it." Fair enough. I'd like to give honourable mentions to the kick-drum intro, Jones' killer guitar line, Topper's hypnotic beats and Simonon's dubby, farty bass but, more than all that, this is one of Strummer's great vocal and lyrical performances. Every line is up there with his best. Go on, pick one at random. "Speaking King's English in quotation/As railhead towns feel the steel mills rust". See what I mean? It may be the sound of a band falling apart, but it's a beautiful record. NORMAN COOK: The Clash didn't do many slow songs, but when they did they were usually just as powerful as the fast, thrashy ones. My particular favourite would have to be "Straight To Hell" because the lyrics have always stuck in my head. I don't pick up a guitar or bass much these days, but when I do the strap's always strung exactly like Paul Simonon's.

# 3 Single A-side and title track of third album.

December 1979 BOB GELD OF: I thought The Clash were new wave's answer to The Bay City Rollers. They were a manufactured band, all dressed up. They came out of pub rock, even though they tried to deny it. And Joe and Mick really wanted to be Mick and Keith, even though they pretended they hated the Stones, because that was the punk attitude you were supposed to have. They were fucking pseuds, with their slogans so carefully sewn on their expensively designed uniforms. I thought the first Clash album was trite and the songs were lame. But they eventually became the band The Clash always tried to be with London Calling. The title song alone is enough to make them one of the greats. Despite all the misgivings, I admit they were a classic band and The Boomtown

**PETEWYLIE:** If this was the only song The Clash ever did, they'd still deserve a special place. The fluke, though, was they had millions.

**RODDY FRAME:** It's writ big. It's cinematic. It ranks alongside the best Rolling Stones stuff or whatever.

Gangster chic: punk's coolest bassist gets tooled up

### **★THE CLASH★**

It's just a classic record. The musicianship's great — I know you're not supposed to say that when you're talking about The Clash — and it's got that ominous feel, that juice at the beginning. It was them coming back and establishing themselves as *the* British rock band, the only serious contenders for that crown. I just like it because it's world class.

JAKE BURNS: When I heard The Clash had made a double album I thought, "Oh my God, don't tell me they've gone all *Tales Of Topographic Oceans* on me!" But it was a huge leap forward. Their first two albums were just punk albums, albeit absolutely vital, but *London Calling* was a whole different ball game. The title track is such a fantastic song. It's the whole construction of the thing, the rhythm of it, everything. It's proved to be incredibly enduring.

MARK PERRY: It's almost like a later "London's Burning", isn't it? It's just a superb opener to a classic album. It was that moment when they matured, when they grew out of being a UK punk band. When I heard "London Calling" I thought, literally, this is the best band in the world.

DON LETTS: This was the first music video I ever directed. I'll tell you a secret: it was all done by mistake. Because it was the first one I'd ever done, I was sort of making it up as I went along. We went down to the Thames to shoot the bloody thing but we didn't know the Thames had a tide. You're talking to a man who can't swim here! So we got there and the river had gone down 10 feet. Then we had to fill things on the boat to get it up. Then it started to piss with rain, all by chance. But if those things hadn't happened, it wouldn't have been the video that it was. Like everything with punk rock, we made our problems our assets.

ALEX COX: It suggests the possibility of revolution, which is tremendously enticing. "English Civil War" does too; it's definitely a rallying call for something, but "London Calling" is a bit more advanced – the war is about to take hold.



ROBERT ELMS: It's almost the national anthem of my city. They play it at QPR games, and as Mick Jones is a fan, that must be a great thrill. We all live by the river. JEFF HOLMES: You know the video clip, on the dock? Paul Simonon has a six-shooter tucked in his belt, and after the shoot they chucked the gear in the river. The Clash were many things, but they weren't messing around.

ADAM SWEETING: Brilliant keynote track to possibly the best double album ever made (after Exile On Main St, anyway). It sounded like nothing they'd done before, but its two-chord structure and ominous pulsing motion gave them space to amass quivering tension and a stark sense of threat. This threat seemed to take many forms – nuclear apocalypse, political insurrection, war, Biblical plagues, maybe even the coming of Duran Duran – but Strummer obviously knew something we didn't. London was burning, and he lived by the river. PAUL WESTERBERG: Maybe their best. My younger sister was really into them and I would listen to London Calling through her bedroom wall. I went to

see them on a triple bill with David Johansen and The Undertones. The sound was awful but they came on and it was probably the perfect thing I needed to see. It was before I was in The Replacements and was still listening to hippie music. I went to see them and everything changed overnight. I was right up front in a big crush of people. I liked the aggression of their music but I didn't give a damn what they were talking about because it didn't relate to my life and by Sandinista! I had no use for any of that crap. But I thought they looked very cool and they were a very capable rock band, more than they were a punk band. TIM BURGESS: When I first heard that song, it was the weirdest thing I'd ever heard. It was rough, but really melodic. Every line just seems to make so much sense, and again with the video, just the classic group thing. I remember Mick Jones saying about London Calling, "Half of it's brilliant, half of it's rubbish." Not sure

MARC CARROLL: This album's absolutely timeless. I could have chosen anything from it, but I've lost count of the times I've soundchecked "London"

Calling". I love everything about it: the riff and the lyrics. And that video in the rain.

STEVE ERICKSON: An obvious choice, I know, but sometimes things are obvious for a reason. Of course this has to be No 1 – what else can be? In the closing days of the '70s, at the juncture of where they had come from and where they were going, they sounded so utterly in charge of their destiny, and this staked such an incontestable claim to their being the best band in the world at that particular moment that even mere apocalypse wasn't going to stop them. With the wasteland of the world laid out at his feet – "London is drowning/And I live by the river" – Strummer isn't so much howling as crowing. This was a call to arms that rendered irrelevant anyone who was deaf to it.

TOMMY STINSON: It's a great song and album — I'm pretty sure it's the first piece of vinyl I bought for myself. I remember making the pilgrimage to the record store to buy it. And the inside of the record I got had these two pull-out pieces of paper with photos on both sides and, like, all the liner notes and stuff, and I must have read that stuff a thousand times. There were all those great pictures of them playing on their US tour for *Give 'Em Enough Rope* with The Undertones and shit and I'm pretty sure that was the first record I ever bought. I love the video too for "London Calling". I thought, man,





today), but by the time this song is over it's pretty apparent that the table had been set for greatness. This was the sound of a band that had set the stakes impossibly high and is just arrogant and insane enough to have no doubt that they can pull it off. You can hear their confidence and fearlessness in every second of this song. And the rest of the album lived up to the promise. I'm sure this will be the consensus No 1 choice for the band's best song, and it's a testament to this incredible band that I could think

### COMPLETE CONTROL Single A-side, September 1977

BOBBY GILLESPIE: I remember buying NME when The Clash were on the cover in April '77 and shortly after that I bought their first album. I went to see them in October of the same year and they were breathtaking. "Complete Control" had just been released as a single and they played the most scorching version I've ever heard. Bob Dylan has that line about "the ghost of electricity", and that's exactly what it felt like that night. The whole set had this sensational impact that stayed with me for weeks. They came back to Scotland two months later and played an equally amazing set at the Glasgow Apollo

> with Richard Hell And The Voidoids. PETEWYLIE: If I could go back in time and pick any song to see live in any setting, including Elvis' first gig, The Beatles at The Cavern, Happy Mondays at The Hacienda... if I had to choose just one more song to see live I'd pick "Complete Control" by The Clash, anywhere, any venue. It's the definitive Clash record. When they played Deeside on the On Parole tour, I had me plus-20 on the guest list. So

that line "On the last tour, my mates couldn't get in", that was literally me! As a fan, when that song came out, life was better and it always is when I play it today. It's a raw record and an absolutely combustible performance. It screams out at you. I was playing it last night, in me living room, shouting the song out, and halfway through I remembered that Joe was dead. All of a sudden it hit me. How can somebody who does this not be here, y'know? For me, "Complete Control" is just their finest hour.

STEVE DIGGLE: The production sound on "Complete Control" is completely all over the place, but it's still one of the best fucking tracks I've ever heard. It's got a killer chorus and the lyrics reinforce the fact The Clash weren't prepared to take any prisoners. They might have signed to a major label but it was definitely on their terms: they knew you had to work hand in hand with the devil to get anywhere back then.

JAMES KIRK: A very memorable moment came during "Complete Control" at the Apollo in Glasgow when >>

LYNDON MORGANS: The band's Great Leap Forward, and the record that got America moist and gave rock'n'roll its good name back. Couched in the mother of all album sleeves, and in Elvis' colours! Guy Stevens is famously credited as the midwife that delivered their masterpiece but I read that Stevens was too far gone to function and that it was mostly the band's own work. Which, if it's true, adds all the more to their glory. Plus I'm a sucker for a bit of imminent apocalypse.

BUTCHVIG: I love London Calling. I first got it when I'd just graduated from college and used to play all four sides back to back non-stop for months. There was a huge buzz about The Clash in the US at the time and I remember driving over to Chicago with six of my buddies to see them play The Oregon Ballroom. The atmosphere was so charged you could feel the electricity in the air. Everything they played sounded amazing that night, but when they played "London Calling", the audience just exploded. A lot of other musicians I know went to see that show and they remember it being just as mind-blowing.

MARK RODGERS: You've got to give it to them -The Clash knew how to open an album. Strummer's lupine howl is a wake-up call to arms, a worldwide announcement of impending doom driven by an apocalyptic rhythm section and the six-string swagger of Jones' martial chops - a rock'n'reggae fusion of monumental proportions. As Joe's staccato take on "Singing The Blues" brings it to a close, you just know the future didn't look too bright.

THURSTON MOORE: Another genuine revolution reggae song that hooked you in and made you daydream about London. Great chorus, great rumbling bass line, and a totally authentic overall feel to it.

NICK JOHNSTONE: The first time I heard "London Calling", I still thought rock'n'roll could change the world. Now I know that's not true, that rock'n'roll can only change one person's life. But that's enough. And God knows, The Clash changed mine.

STEVE WYNN: One of the best lead-off tracks ever. Give 'Em Enough Rope had been seen as a bit of a

Suicide supported The Clash; a three-quarters-full can of Tennents, making a pretty arc of light before it landed on the head of a very cool Alan Vega. RODDY FRAME: A great, great guitar riff. Really exciting. I always thought that the singles they brought out around then were much more juicy and exciting-sounding than the first album. The message of "Complete Control" was a bit confusing to me at the time, it was a bit beyond my grasp. I thought that if anyone seemed autonomous and able to determine their own future, to me and the other kids going to school every day, The Clash seemed those kind of people. So to hear them complaining about their record company, it took the edge off the glamour a little. But more than anything I just thought of it as a great rock'n'roll record with a great riff. I remember learning it, sitting with a little amp, trying to work it out. I think it's the song where Mick Jones came into his own as a sort of Keith Richards of his generation. JOHNNY GREEN: When roadies were setting up before the show, even those who weren't too bothered about The Clash's music, they'd all be singing that "Ooooh" chorus. It was like a gathering call.

MARK PERRY: I still see The Clash as the closest a band can be to the urban terrorist guitar slinger. Without a gun, but with a guitar. That's the early Clash to me. I was the one who actually said that the day The Clash signed to CBS was the day punk died. It sounds dramatic, but at the time The Clash meant so much to us. More than the Pistols, they were OUR band, y'know. So I wondered how you could reconcile something like "1977" with being on one of the biggest record companies in the world? I thought "What's all that about?" But looking back more realistically, they were a very ambitious group, they just wanted to be rock'n'roll stars like any band does. I was probably a bit too earnest to appreciate that. So when they did "Complete Control" I thought it was brilliant, for The Clash to actually be able to tell people that they'd signed to a label who'd released "Remote Control" as a single without their consent and make a song about that whole dilemma. That was one of the enduring qualities of The Clash, that if they'd made a mistake they'd be able to talk about it. GARY CROWLEY: It's a great song anyway, the tune, the production, it's absolutely top drawer. But I love the lyrics, the honesty and realism of it, singing about all these things that were beyond their control. It just made you feel it was 'us', The Clash and the fans, against 'them', the record company.



DONLETTS: As Joe told me when I interviewed him for Westway To The World, Bernie Rhodes had come up to them after a meeting with Malcolm McLaren and said, "Look, we want complete control of the band." They, of course, just cracked up laughing. So I think he translated that into not just Bernie but the record company in general wanting complete control, so it was their reaction to that. When they signed to CBS there was all this stuff about selling out – but the way I saw it, if The Clash hadn't done what they did, punk rock wouldn't even be a fucking

# "'Complete Control' is a cocksure roar of satisfaction from a band who knew they were in perfect sync with their times" - Lyndon Morgans

movement. God bless the Pistols for starting it all off, but it was The Clash who really gave the thing its bollocks, its depth. They took it upon their shoulders to take it on to the next level because they didn't want to be stuck with this fucking three-chord thing. That ended at the bottom of their street. They were ready to take on the world.

**STEVE ERICKSON:** There are so many great early songs, and at least four – "London's Burning", "What's My Name", "White Riot", "Janie Jones" – I could have

put on this list. But whereas they all seem like chapters of a novel, this is the one that sounds like its own little universe, from the great opening guitar to the finale that slams the song shut. In a way, it sums up The Clash better than any, and the paradox is that thematically it's the most trivial, discarding the incendiary social commentary for a careerist complaint. Except, of course, it's not just a careerist complaint, but the best evidence of how, if the personal isn't always political, the political is always personal. Not to mention that, as with most great bands, here their identity exists as much in the calamitous racket they made as in the words they sang.

arguments about the relative merits of records, this is the Great Punk Rock Single. It also gives a lie to that hoary old utterance on the part of '76 stalwarts that "punk rock died the day The Clash signed to CBS". Without them putting pen to paper with the big boys and then getting pissed-off over the proposed release of "Remote Control", they might never have delivered this. How would we have survived without hearing that intro, Jones' guitar solos and Strummer barking out "This is Joe Public... SPEAKING!" As a measure of just how magnificent this record is, I find it very hard to write about it without immediately wanting to hear it. Again and again.

LYNDON MORGANS: I'd say this track vies with "God Save The Queen" or "Anarchy In The UK" as the supreme expression of what that particular moment in British music was all about. It's a squall of manic >>>

# THE WRONG PROFILE

# Rude Boy star RAY GANGE on his part in The Clash movie

"I FIRST MET Joe Strummer at a pub in Putney at some punk gig around 1977. We just got chatting and he asked me what I did. I told him I was working in a record shop off Dean Street in Soho. A few days later he came in with this young girl and asked me if we had the original 'Police & Thieves' by Junior Murvin. He'd been telling this girl that it wasn't a Clash song, it was a reggae thing, so he wanted to play it to her.

After that we used to hang out a lot, go down The Speakeasy, go back to his squat, play records, have a few drinks. So it was because I knew Joe that I ended up getting a part in Rude Boy.

"I think the best description of the film is that it's a 'fakeumentary'. I had no idea how it was gonna end up looking. I was under the impression that the bulk of the stuff was gonna be about The Clash and all these other

things with me were just gonna be inserts. But during filming something happened between the film-makers and The Clash's management and it became much less of a smooth journey. Ultimately it affected my relationship with the band and with Joe.

"I had no experience of films, I didn't know what to expect. Some aspects of my character are honest. I really couldn't give a fuck about politics, still can't. But the rest of it was fake. I didn't work in a sex shop. I wasn't really a roadie, either. So it's strange watching myself now. Actually, I was watching a bit the other day and there was a scene where I was supposed to be watching them in this

club and I'm kind of like standing at the back nodding my head. But if I hadn't been there for them to film me, I'd have been there anyway jumping around down the front. I mean that's the stuff that used to feel weird to me. 'Why am I standing here with a light shining in me face at 120 degrees when

I should be enjoying
The Clash?'

"I only watch Rude Boy for the band footage now. That live stuff you can't fault. Joe's death was especially sad because I hadn't seen him for a long time, over 10 years. So I'd always just assumed that one day I'd bump into him again. Obviously that's not gonna happen. It gives it a real air of finality." INTERVIEW: SIMON GODDARD The Rude Boy Special Edition DVD is out now on Fremantle Entertainment



### **★THE CLASH★**

energy, a cocksure roar of satisfaction from a band who just knew they were in perfect sync with their times. And their place. And it's funny too – Joe's "You're my guitar hero!" a few bars into Mick's solo. And the drop-outs near the end are brilliantly done.

ADAM SWEETING: Rousing cri-de-coeur of rebel rock combo trying to square their political stance with falling into the clutches of CBS Records – something they never quite achieved to their satisfaction. Probably because it wasn't possible. "They said we'd be artistically free/When we signed that bit of paper," wailed our stitched-up heroes, but the tension and frustration fired them up to produce this spitting, splenetic chunk of aggro-punk.

STEVE WYNN: This just shouldn't have worked. I mean, what could possibly be more annoying, self-indulgent and whiny than a band bitching about a disagreement with their label over which songs would and wouldn't be released. But somehow it all turns into a springboard for a manifesto about integrity, selling out, defiance and a shifting scale of values and expectations. And it's delivered with humour, terror and fearless conviction – not an easy balance to pull off. And when Strummer brings it down and grumbles, "I don't trust you, why should you trust me?" I get chills every time. In that one moment, The Clash went from being one of the better punk rock bands to being, well, the only band that mattered.

MICKEY BRADLEY: Self-mythologising again, but when your story's as good as The Clash, it can't be helped. The music press adverts showed a youth in Derry watching a burning building while sitting on a fire extinguisher. We didn't mind.

MATT FRIEDBERGER: A great rock song with great vocals and a flawless switch in the middle. "I don't trust you, why should you trust me?" That should be the starting point of your relationship with all of your records. Or anything else you might buy, I suppose.

**ALAN PARKER:** The first Clash single I ever bought on release day, and an anthem that got played till it wouldn't play no more.

### (WHITE MAN) IN HAMMERSMITH PALAIS Single A-side, June 1978

NORMAN COOK: This was very influential on me; the way the Clash used reggae, but were never a cod reggae band. I also identified with being the only white face in a crowd. Key line would be: "Ha you think it's funny turning rebellion into money." It came absolutely out of nowhere, it was like nothing I'd ever heard before. I was born in 1963, and I'd have been 15 or 16 when I heard this. My brother had brought home the first Damned album and "White Riot" and I'd bought them off him by the time the records finished playing. At school, you were either a Clash fan or a Jam fan, but I found the Jam a bit humourless and po-faced. The Clash had the swagger. If you were looking for rock'n'roll idols, they were it. I saw them 13 times, saw every line-up.

MOBY: It's funny, with a lot of bands, people's choice of favourite song tends to be very subjective, but with The Clash I feel there's almost a universal consensus



among friends I talk to as to what that best song is. And it's "White Man In Hammersmith Palais". It's like, you get a bunch of Clash fans together, at the end of the day and, after one or two minor rows, everyone will probably agree that's their finest hour.

It's definitely their most EPIC song. If anything it's almost like a weird prog rock number. In the sense that it begins one way, develops another way, and ends in another way again. It just has so many different facets. It starts out kinda light-hearted, then gets very intense and emotional, then has this big build, then ends quite, well, delicately. And it tells a great story.

RODDY FRAME: It's the obvious classic Clash song. People like my brother, who was 10 years older than me and he hated the whole punk thing – he liked Bob Dylan – even he liked "(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais"!

It was the first time The Clash had actually been well-recorded. The first album was a bit tinny, but by the time they did this, they'd got their head round the recording process a bit better. It was so melodic, it had harmonies, a middle eight, a reggae beat. It was much slower than any punk record I'd ever heard up till then. It wasn't really a punk record, but it seemed to encapsulate everything about The Clash and what they were gonna do.

Being in Scotland, of course, the whole London thing sounded exotic. God, I must have been about 13 at the time. We used to read the *NME* from cover to cover and backwards again. They had great writers in those days, people like Julie Burchill, Tony Parsons. So you'd be reading it and wishing you were in London the whole time. When you heard The Clash sing about "Hammersmith Palais" it did seem exotic—it seemed like London was the place where you wanted to be.

It's funny now that I live in Notting Hill,

I remember when I first came down in the early '80s, when Aztec Camera were on Rough Trade, you used to see Joe Strummer walking around in the street. I used to think "Wow! That's really weird!" I remember once having to restrain my dad when we saw him in the pub. "Oh look – it's Joe Strummer, I'll just go and have a wee word." I went, "Nah, just leave him alone!" That was the great thing about Strummer. I can see him standing in the Earl Of Lonsdale

pub wearing all that amazing Clash stuff – those cut-off sleeveless jackets with the epaulettes – it was fantastic. Joe Strummer looked like Joe Strummer wherever he went.

ED HAMELL: I once opened up for The Clash in some band I was in. It was the *Cut The Crap* era, no Mick Jones or Topper Headon, so I guess it doesn't count, but Strummer was very cool, letting me play the "Question Authority" Telecaster during soundcheck, and I was in awe. But what was brutally apparent, particularly during the check where they were warming up and you could hear them playing solo and individually, was what a distinctive and unique bass player Simonon was. There were four forceful

### "'Complete Control' is delivered with humour, terror and fearless conviction" - Steve Wynn

personalities in that band (when Topper was aboard), and Paul's came through in his instrument. This song rocks hard and the bass player, amateur though he might have been at that time, carries the band. He also brought the reggae, and though I've always been suspect of white pop bands doing the reggae thing (read: The Police), these guys pulled it off. Some maintain that the morphing of the two styles was their greatest contribution, but I ain't buying it. CLINT BOON: The thing about "Hammersmith Palais" is that after Joe died, it seemed to become more poignant. It was the mood of the track. The week he died, that was The Clash record that I used to play out in the clubs. I'd stick it on at the end of the night. It was like "Fookin' hell" - hairs on the back of your neck, y'know? It was like we all realised that we'd lost somebody really important. Certain people you > §



don't imagine ever dying, and Joe was one of them. GARY CROWLEY: An incredible record, and one that always makes me think of being at school just off the Edgware Road. It was mainly all black kids so when we used to go away on organised trips, they'd bring their reggae albums and I'd bring some punk records to play 'em, and they really liked "White Man..." It was around this time that I actually got to interview them for the school mag, which I'd turned into a

throw in one line that made it stunning. In some ways, it sums up The Clash in one record. The reggae, Joe bringing in his Dylan thing with the bit with the harmonica, Strummer's great yowl and Mick's great backing vocals. A microcosm of everything there is to love about them. And what great lines. "If Adolf Hitler flew in today, they'd send a limousine anyway"—you could take them out and have them on Quote Of The Week on bloody Teletext.

### "Maybe the greatest song ever written by white men. The greatest lyrics ever. It's why the Clash were a religion" - Alan McGee on "White Man..."

punk fanzine called *The Modern World*, after The Jam song, obviously. I used to go to Mickey's Fish Bar every lunchtime, and one day I saw Joe over the road coming out of the Metropolitan Café. I thought, "Fucking hell, there's Strummer!" So I went up to him, still in me school uniform, and asked if he'd give me an interview. He said "yeah" and told me to come down to Rehearsal Rehearsals in Camden the next day. About eight of us ended up going, me to do the interview and seven mates to hold the tape recorder! When we turned up, Roadent – a rather intimidating Clash roadie – took one look at us and said, "What the fuck is this? A school outing?!" "White Man..." just takes me right back there.

**PETE WYLIE:** The dynamic of the song, it's almost like a novel. And that last bit – "I'm the all night drug-prowling wolf" – the lyrical imagery is great.

Strummer could sing the telephone directory and

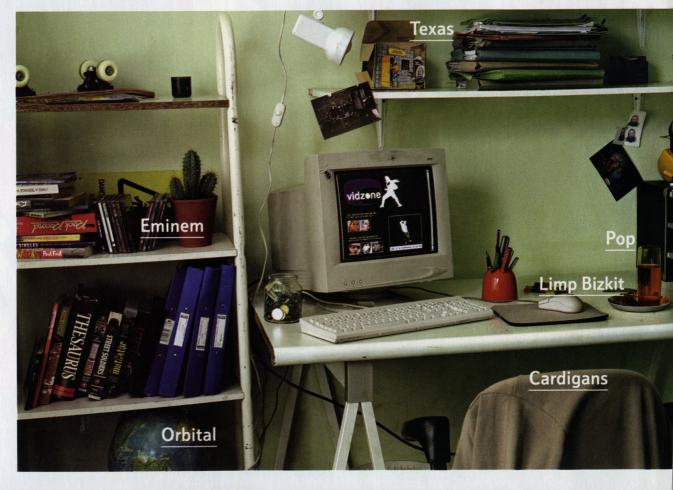
JAKE BURNS: This isn't just my favourite Clash song. It's my favourite song, period. It's the perfect record and I'd have killed to have made it. Because it's unorthodox, because it's a weird structure it holds your attention all the way through. I mean, there isn't even a chorus as such, but it still manages to be big and anthemic. Even now, just that little guitar click at the beginning before they've even started playing and the "One, two, a one-two-three-four", it just sends the hairs on the back of my neck shooting up. The lyrics are fantastic, they really evoke that whole era. I know exactly what he means because even though I never went to the Palais, I did go and see Dennis Brown at The Rainbow and I felt like the only white guy in there. The whole thing was so obviously written from the heart, y'know. And that was The Clash's big strength. That honesty, that commitment.

MARK REFOY: I remember the first time I heard John

Peel play this in the summer of '78, saying, "Here's the new Clash single," and then on came this thing that at the time I thought was nothing like The Clash, but was still great. Then hearing the mouth organ and thinking, "Wow!" I know it sounds a cliché, but it was one of those musical epiphanies.

LAURENCE BELL: Reggae was such an enormous presence back then. If you were a punk rock kid, you'd normally end up at a blues dance or something where there'd be people toasting and everyone drinking cans of Red Stripe. It was a really cool period and "White Man..." seemed to sum it up. It's very Dylan, very "Positively Fourth Street". You're so entranced by it that by the end of it, it's your personal anthem. It's a song without a chorus, but by the end of it you realise the whole song is the chorus.

MARK PERRY: It was the first proper attempt at punk reggae. I mean they'd done "Police And Thieves" before, which I thought was a bit half-arsed, but musically "White Man..." is just brilliant, that whole stuttery rhythm. Again, its great that they're creating their own mythology, Strummer writing about being down the Hammersmith Palais at a reggae show. Lyrically it's self-effacing, it's humorous, it's about a dilemma which we were all suffering at the time. JOHNNY GREEN: A good tune always wins out and a good tune with a good message is always, always gonna win out. It was a kind of crummy recording to do when we made it. The studio was behind The Marquee, so we'd be slinking around in the dark, trying to avoid the crowds queueing up outside, crouching behind cars so as not to get noticed. But out of that came this terrific song. The way Joe turned





what was a conversational anecdote into a song that touches everybody is a remarkable testament to the man. I thought it was very nice when they played it at Joe's funeral, too.

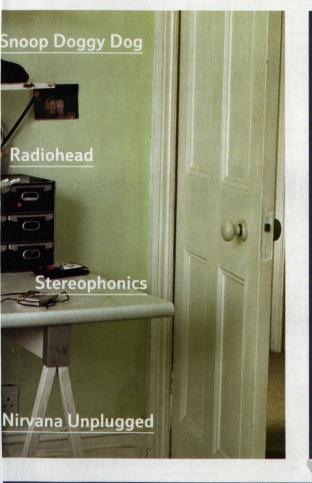
ADAM SWEETING: Most of the Clash's DNA was encoded in "White Man" – it was drenched in their west London roots. Musically, it was a perfect mix of garage-band racket and ramshackle reggae – the punks-meet-rasta lyrics amounted to a Clash manifesto, and it even has a classic "1-2-3-4" intro from Jonesy. Strummer, as usual, sang as though he'd

got a Red Stripe bottle wedged in his oesophagus, but you couldn't miss those blinding images of the "drug-prowling wolf who looks so sick in the sun", or the piercingly acute observation that "If Adolf Hitler flew in today, they'd send a limousine anyway". They had rrrrooots rrrrock rrrrebel to burn.

**ALEX COX:** We've all been in that situation, where we find ourselves the only punk present.

JON LANGFORD: A great-sounding, great-looking punk rock seven-inch I spied in the window of Jumbo Records in Leeds, took home on the bus and played to death at the threshold of aural pain. Around that time, The Mekons were doing gigs with Misty In Roots, The Ruts, local reggae bands and sound systems at the R.A.R. club at Leeds Poly, the West Indian Centre and Roots in Chapeltown, and for a while the whole punky reggae party thing made perfect sense, crystallised in the grooves of this single. ALAN McGEE: Maybe the greatest song ever written by white men. The greatest lyrics ever. It's why The Clash were a religion to people from Scotland or any other shithole the government has forgotten about. SIMON MORAN: If people want to understand why The Clash were such a brilliant band they should listen to "(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais". From what he said to me, I think it was one of Joe's favourites, too. It was always a highlight of his solo sets. JESSE MALIN: Phenomenal. It's so raw, the guitars are so nasty. And the idea of mixing a reggae feel with a punk thing is just fucking genius. When I saw Joe play it, that was a special moment. But that was what Joe was all about. When I was in D Generation, I had a club in New York called Coney Island High and Bob Gruen, the photographer, brought Joe over and we hung out and talked about Scorsese movies and drank tequila until the sun came up. I watched Joe do that with so many people. He would sit and drink all night and talk to you and give a thousand per cent of himself and tell you every story behind every lyric. The Clash were so real with their fans. MICKEY BRADLEY: Part of a trio of brilliant singles

MICKEY BRADLEY: Part of a trio of brilliant singles (along with "Complete Control" and "Clash City Rockers") released within the space of exactly nine months – a run that only The Sex Pistols could match. >>



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GIDEON COE: Inspired, of course, by Strummer's trip to the venue now known as Poo Na Na, and it contains some of his finest, most pithy lyrics and clever couplets. It's also the classic example of the way The Clash used backing vocals to such great effect. I recently read something by Michael Stipe in which he said seeing the Clash showed him how well a band could use background vocals. R.E.M. do it well and now it makes sense, given their main source of inspiration. Jonesy's "oh oh oh oh's" never sounded better. What was the Palais now hosts The School Disco among other things. I'm thinking of going along and writing a pastiche entitled "Old Man at Poo Na Na" but I think I'll leave it.

**ALAN PARKER:** From my first listen to this song, right through to this day, it's still one of the most important slabs of vinyl in the world ever.

BOBBY GILLESPIE: A lot of bands pretend to be anti-authority and anti-capitalism, but they don't actually do or say anything political. The Clash made a deliberate stance against the system and tracks like



### "You don't get bands like The Clash any more. Then again, they were a tough act to follow. Make that damn near impossible!" - Don Letts

"(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais" remind people what a horrible, racist country '70s Britain was. The Clash were – and still are – one of the genuine outsider bands, and their music was a force for good.

JAY FARRAR: The Plebes played this one, too. The lyrics were great from the observations of "turning rebellion into money" to the Keith Richards-meets-Charles Bukowski vibe of "I'm the all night drug-prowling wolf who looks so sick in the sun". The song's also a great primer for checking out Jamaican music. "Dillinger and Leroy Smart/Delroy Wilson, your cool operator". ROBERT ELMS: I'd grown up a reggae fan on a north-west London council estate, my mum and dad met at the Hammersmith Palais, I'd been the white boy at loads of reggae gigs and it just felt as if this song was part of me, the bass line of my life. DON LETTS: This song is particularly poignant

to me because I was the one that took Joe to Hammersmith Palais on that night. Like the song says, he was the only white man in the house. He went there expecting to see a roots reggae show, not realising that all the people down the ghetto in Jamaica, what are they trying to do? They're trying to get out and be glamorous! So when he went there, instead of this roots ghetto rebel show, what he saw was more Las Vegas glamour, which I think threw him. That was his own misunderstanding, I think. As I often say to people, the ghetto isn't something you get in to, it's something that you get out of. That whole ghetto chic thing is a misconception for a lot of people, so I think it was an eye-opener for him.

It was a brilliant evening for me, because I was there to see all my reggae heroes like Dillinger, Jah Stitch and

Leroy Smart. But Joe was going through a bit of a dilemma about what he was expecting and what he was seeing, which I think was something he came to understand later on, obviously. It was so unexpected for a band to do something like "White Man..." The groove was slower, it had that reggae feel, it was a complete left turn to what everyone thought they would have come out with, which was another great thing about The Clash. But, literally, when I hear this song I get goose pimples, every fucking time.

I'll tell you one last thing about The Clash, and what made them special. Doing this poll for *Uncut* made me rethink about the whole thing, especially in light of music today, and it struck me that when we – Joe, Mick, myself, our generation – all got into music, it was really an anti-establishment thing. It seems to me nowadays that people seem to get into music today to be a part of the establishment. That's the essential difference between a band like The Clash and all the shit that's going on now. You don't get bands like The Clash any more. Then again, they were a tough act to follow. Make that damn near impossible!

# WIN CLASH GOODIES!

NOW YOU'VE READ SOME of *Uncut's* favourite stars choosing their favourite Clash songs, it's time to lay your sticky mitts on some cool Clash goodies.

We've got 10 copies of The Essential Clash, a storming two-CD compilation containing 41 of the band's greatest tracks. We've also got 10 copies on DVD of Rude Boy – the classic movie from 1980 that follows Ray Gange as he sets out to become a roadie with The Clash. As well as boasting a newly remastered soundtrack, the DVD contains rare footage of The Clash in the studio during the recording of their *Give 'Em Enough Rope* album, new interviews and additional live footage of The Clash. And, as they say, much, much more.

In addition to all that, we've also got 10 copies of Keith Topping's brand new Clash biography, The Complete Clash. Including a song-by-song analysis, a study of the band's TV and film appearances and their 600-plus live performances, this is the kind of book the adjective "exhaustive" was created for.

To be in with a chance of winning a set of prizes, just answer the following question. The first 10 correct entries pulled out of the editor's hat will each receive a CD, DVD and book.



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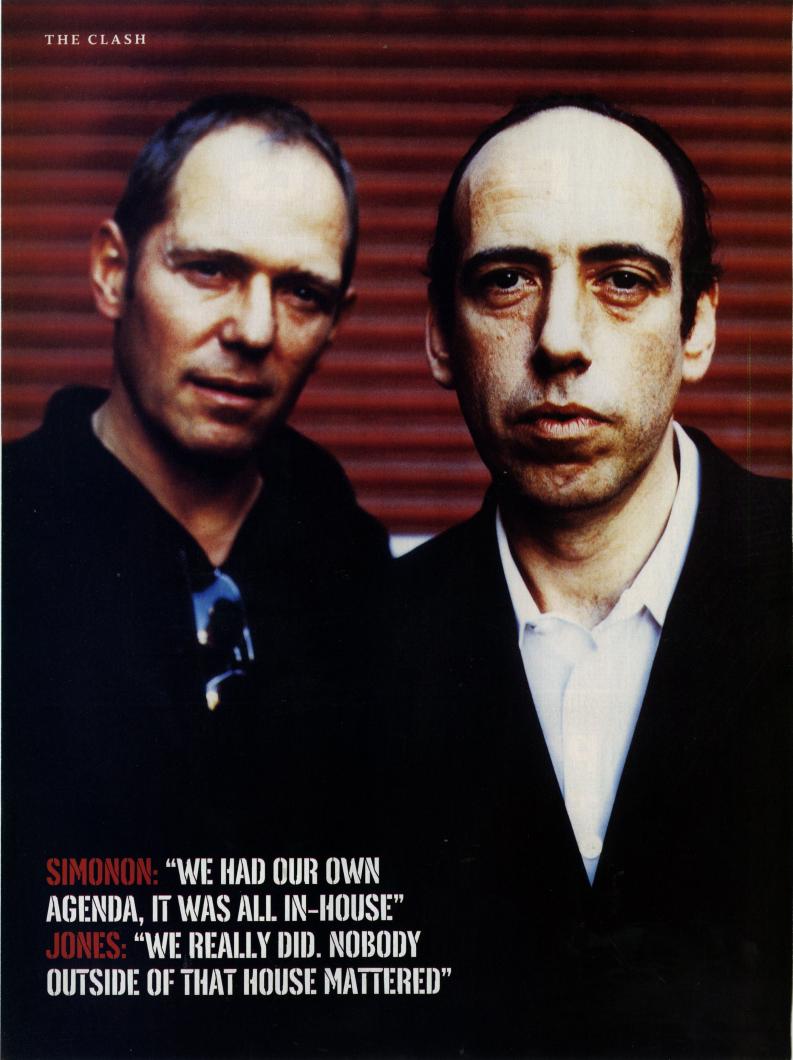
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# THE CLASH COVERED "TIME IS TIGHT" ON THEIR BLACK MARKET CLASH ALBUM. WHO RECORDED THE ORIGINAL VERSION?

# WAS IT: A) THE BAR-KAYS, B) BOOKER T AND THE MGS OR C) EDDIE FLOYD?

Answers on a postcard or sealed-down envelope by Monday, December 15 to: Clash Competition, Uncut, IPC Media, 25th Floor, King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE1 9LS. The editor's decision is to play 101'ers records.





Interview: Simon Goddard Portrait: Steve Double

# Our panel has spoken. Now **MICK JONES** and **PAUL SIMONON** have their say on *Uncut*'s Clash Top 10

HOEVER SAID YOU SHOULD never meet your heroes couldn't have been a Clash fan. Our afternoon with Mick Jones and Paul Simonon, the last survivors of The Last Gang In Town (bar Topper Headon, who's unavailable, and Terry Chimes, who's busy realigning spines as a qualified chiropractor) is no let-down.

It begins with a spooky coincidence. Paul Simonon, the coolest man ever to strap on a bass guitar, is already waiting at our designated Soho rendezvous. Mick Jones, never one for punctuality (Clash rehearsals included), is a good 20 minutes late. So Paul and I talk about, of all things, the Isle of Skye off north-west Scotland, where Simonon (now an artist) has just spent the past week painting a

landscape of the forest that's been planted there as an eco-friendly memorial to their dear departed comrade, Joe Strummer.

Now, Skye just happens to be where your humble correspondent spent his teenage years, squandering school evenings miming fantasy Clash gigs to four walls and a duvet as a box-bedroom Strummer wannabe. Had anybody told me back then that one day I'd be comparing notes with the Clash bassist about Skye's notoriously volatile climate, or the neighbouring Isle of Raasay where, weirdly, Strummer's great grandfather built a house, well, I'd still be in a coma now.

Forward to an hour or so later, once the interview is over. It's one

of those glorious sunny September afternoons in the heart of London. The crowds are out in force, though nobody stops to notice that half of what was once the greatest rock band on the planet are stood on the corner of Berwick Street having a tête-à-tête.

Jones to Simonon: "Where you off now?"

Simonon: "I'm heading west."

Jones: "West? Okay. Give me a call when you get to Santa Fe. [smiling] I'll come and meet you in San Bernardino."

And off they go, laughing like drains, strolling towards the setting sun like Redford and Newman the moment before the credits roll.

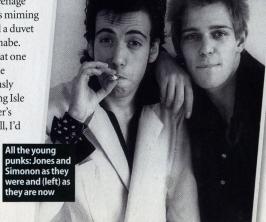
Actually, these days Jones looks not unlike an extra in a Coppola mafia saga (slick hair, fine tailoring). Simonon? Well, he still looks like the coolest man ever to have strapped on a bass guitar. As the

pair of them dissect our Clash Top 10 like a couple of high-spirited if slightly mischievous schoolboys, *Uncut* solicits their first impressions.

"I thought 'Janie Jones' might be in there," says Jones, "maybe 'Spanish Bombs', too." Simonon nods sagely, voicing his mild disappointment that "Bankrobber" missed out. But apart from that?

"Hmmm," offers Jones cautiously, giving the list a final once-over.
A quizzical eyebrow. A critical pursing of the lips. Then that get-away-withmurder grin of his.

"Yeah," his eyes twinkle. "It'll do." >>



# 10 WHITE RIOT

another song afterwards.

JONES: Number 10? I'm surprised this is so low. A lot of people really love this one. Not me.

SIMONON: I seem to remember, yeah!

JONES: We used to have a few rows about playing it. I dunno why, really. I think I just thought we should be moving on. Sometimes it didn't seem right.

SIMONON: It was just that thing of, when we were gonna do the encore, thinking, "Are we gonna give them what they want or are we gonna take it to another level?" Generally it was "White Riot" they wanted. Everything would go haywire. Guitars would

go out of tune. There'd be no way you could play

# 9 CLASH CITY ROCKERS

SIMONON: I seem to remember that, when we did "Clash City Rockers", him and me had had a row. I was in one corner of the studio and Mick was in the other. He had to tell Joe what the chords were so he could come over and tell me. The guy who was recording it didn't know what was going on cos of this weird communication breakdown.

JONES: It was one of the first numbers we did where we really began to stretch and experiment. There was a lot of different stuff in it; we had bells and piano. The Gary Glitter lyric? Yeah, well that was before the Internet [grins], we didn't know such a thing was coming. It's a shame you don't get non-album singles

Generation X], he used to say, "You lot are too soft so you've gotta go spend your Christmas with two hookers and learn from the streets!" So it was the same kind of thing. He said, "Where d'you wanna go?" So we said, "Jamaica."

I can still remember sitting in the Prince Charles Cinema in Soho watching some film thinking, "I'm going to Jamaica tomorrow." It was totally unreal. But the most exciting thing we did when we got there was going to the pictures. It was amazing because it was open air and there were people dancing on the stage and shouting at the screen. It was a film called *Zeppelin*.

That was the biggest thing we did, walking to the cinema, but it was all a bit scary. We were staying at The Pegasus, which was like the British hotel. We didn't realise all the action was over at The Sheraton until the last night when we had to come home. I was glad, actually.

# "WE USED TO HAVE A FEW ROWS ABOUT PLAYING 'WHITE RIOT'. I THINK I JUST THOUGHT WE SHOULD BE MOVING ON" MICK JONES

JONES: But I loved it when we first did it, I loved the single. I said we should have people running around on the solo, so there was five or six of us stomping round this microphone during the guitar break. SIMONON: It was a call to arms, really. Joe wrote it after the Notting Hill Carnival riot. Me and him were there when it all kicked off under the Westway. It started with paper cups, then next minute we were running around with bricks and trying to set cars on fire. I remember we went back to the squat where Sid [Vicious] was. He'd missed it all so he wanted us to take him back down that night and see the riot. So we was walking up Tavistock Road with Sid when this bloke stopped us and said, "I wouldn't go up there if you wanna keep your life." At that point we realised it might be wise to turn back!

like "Clash City Rockers" so much these days. We didn't even want the singles on the albums in the first place – that's why we put a different version of "White Riot" on the first LP.

# 8 SAFE EUROPEAN HOME

JONES: Me and Joe wrote this in Jamaica. We were way out of our depth, to tell you the truth. Obviously he [nods at Paul] was really pissed off because he didn't get to go. It wasn't our fault. Bernie [Rhodes, Clash manager] said, "You gotta write a record so go and have a holiday somewhere." We didn't take him seriously because he was always saying things like that. Before, when I was with Tony [James,

7 1977

**JONES**: I'm surprised this is in there, what with it only being a B-side.

**SIMONON:** It's got a certain swagger, that don't-give-a-damn attitude that I really like. At the time it summed up that thing of "let's wipe the slate clean".

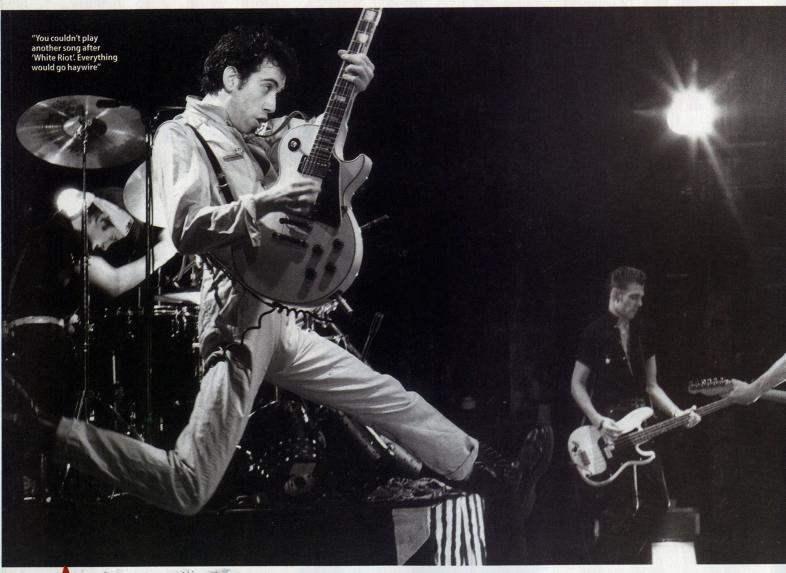
JONES: I'm still very comfortable with the lyrics. It shouldn't be taken so literally just because Elvis died in '77. We didn't know that was gonna happen.

SIMONON: That's why it had a bit of a weird vibe [grins]. Everybody was going, "Are we next? Mick? Keef? Are we next?" Heh, heh. But you notice we didn't mention The Kinks or The Who.

JONES: Cos there'd be too many words. >>



OB GRUEN/STARFILE



# 6 GARAGELAND

**SIMONON:** We all read that review ["The Clash are the kind of garage band who should be speedily returned to the garage, preferably with the motor running" – Charles Shaar Murray in *NME*, 1976] because it was a big slag-off and it was only our third gig, I think.

JONES: In those days if somebody said something like that we'd all go, "Let's sort him out." That was the attitude. "We're not having that!"

### "YOU KNOW THAT BIT ON 'I FOUGHT THE LAW' THAT SOUNDS LIKE A URINAL? WELL, IT IS" PAUL SIMONON

SIMONON: Also, in a way, that song does pronounce that the next step is about to be taken. To me that song almost, I dunno, it puts an exclamation mark at the end of the punk period. I mean, we signed to the record company and, like the song says, my mates have got new boots, that's what it was like.

JONES: But we were very steeped in that garage band

thing as well. We loved all the stuff on Nuggets, that late-'60s American stuff. We really saw ourselves as a garage band.

# 5 I FOUGHT THE LAW

JONES: We were in San Francisco doing overdubs on *Give 'Em Enough Rope* and they had the original of this on the jukebox. So when we came home we just started playing it. That's a really good clip of us doing "I Fought The Law" in *Rude Boy*. I bought the DVD of it the other week and there's a bit where the director or somebody says they told us to wear black on stage. I never remember that. We wore what we wanted, nobody told us. Bloody cheek!

**SIMONON:** That's it, we had our own agenda, it was all in-house.

JONES: We really did, beyond anybody else, any record company. Nobody outside of that house mattered.

**SIMONON**: You know that bit on "I Fought The Law" that sounds like a urinal? Well, it is.

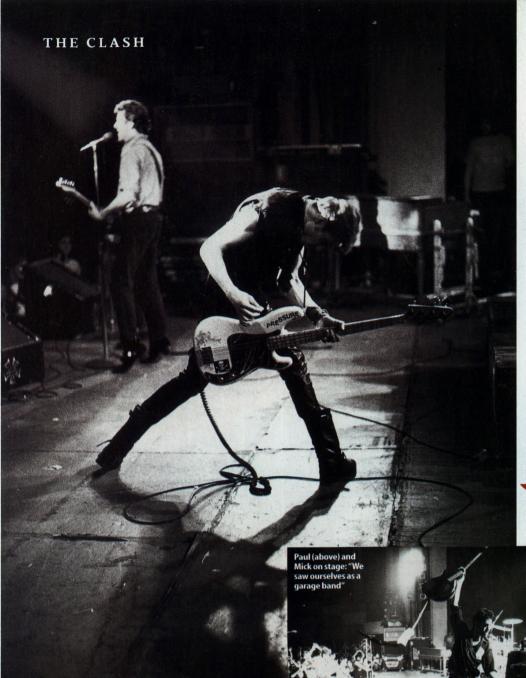
JONES: Yeah, we went into the toilets and banged on the pipes with hammers to make it sound like a chain gang. Y'know, that "clang! clang!" at the end? And then at the very end you can hear a "sssszzhhh!" That's it flushing! We used to do a lot of that. Like for "Somebody Got Murdered" when Topper brought his dog in and we kicked it round the studio [gurgles]. Only joking. There was a disclaimer. "No animals were harmed during the making of this record. Only humans."

SIMONON: Like the sounds on "Armagideon Time", too. It was November 5 so we got a load of fireworks. JONES: Then invited all the kids down to the studio [cackles]. And blew 'em up!

# 4 STRAIGHT TO HELL

JONES: The lyrics are great. I think part of "Straight To Hell" was what was going on in El Salvador at the time. It was gonna become like Vietnam. The US were sending advisors in and all that stuff so we were aware of everything. That Latin feel it's got is probably a subconscious thing cos of what was going on in Central America. Not even thinking of it but just being tuned in to things. We never had 'world music' in those days.

SIMONON: The tune was all different bits that we had which came together. "Broadway" was the same, me and him doing something at a soundcheck which would suddenly work out. >>



# LONDON CALLING

JONES: I remember during rehearsals for this we played football, every day, so we were quite fit. Anybody who came along, like any record company guy, they had to play football with us. The teams were normally us against them. It was quite rough cos we used to play on concrete. I was worse than I thought I was.

**SIMONON:** I remember me and Joe were quite good in defence.

JONES: Yeah, right! Hacking away...

**SIMONON:** That was our tactic, running into people deliberately.

JONES: But it was the pivotal track on that album. It's like "London Calling" is at the top and it encompasses all the rest, like an umbrella, like the world in microcosm. With the backwards guitar solo I was thinking of trying to be like The Creation. I was into all that, like playing the guitar with a violin bow which I did on "I'm Not Down".

**SIMONON**: Just shows you how good Mick is. He can play and walk backwards [smirks].

JONES: I just think we really found ourselves at that time and it was a lot to do with the football. No, I'm serious! Because it made us play together as one.

# COMPLETE CONTROL

JONES: "Complete Control" was Bernie's phrase. I think he enjoyed it, really.

**SIMONON**: Put it this way: a song was created out of his catchphrase.

**JONES:** So he was happy enough with that! But we were abused, we were being used.

SIMONON: We was on tour in Europe and "Remote

### "SUDDENLY ALL THESE GUYS STARTED SINGING '(WHITE MAN) IN HAMMERSMITH PALAIS'. I WAS SO MOVED. THAT SONG REALLY MEANS SOMETHING" MICK JONES

Control" was put out behind our backs. We were angry, yeah, but "Complete Control" was funny as well. Like "Know Your Rights", which was also supposed to be tongue in cheek.

JONES: It was very funny. Like we went to Amsterdam for the first time and it was like this circus around us, which was so amusing. We were just trying to make sense of it all. At that point it was the only non-reggae record Lee Perry had made. When me and Joe went to Jamaica we spent a whole day in this cab trying to find his Black Ark studio. We knew he had this picture of us and it was the only band that wasn't a reggae band on his wall. But we got totally lost and never found it.

SIMONON: It's a bit difficult for me to talk about Lee Perry because by the time he was there I had really bad flu. I recorded my bass part, only saw him for half an hour then had to go and lie down. Missed the whole thing.

# (WHITE MAN) IN HAMMERSMITH PALAIS

JONES: Really? That's Number 1?

SIMONON: I think this is the overall Number 1 for me, too. It was such a change from what we'd been doing, from what the audience was expecting. They thought we were just gonna charge along with another bunch of numbers and then we came out with this. It's like a couple of songs in one. Same with "Complete Control" and "Clash City Rockers". They're almost like mini operas. It's got that reggae element, but it's also a rock song. It's not a punk song but then again it is. It's a combination of all those elements.

JONES: I knew the moment we came up with the music it was gonna be a big number. Then taking it home

after we'd finished it and listening to it the next day thinking, "Wow!"

**SIMONON:** It became one of those sing-song sort of tunes, really, one where everyone sways along when they've had too much beer on New Year's Eve. It's a Hogmanay song!

JONES: I remember some years ago I was up in Liverpool at this party after The Farm did a gig. Suddenly all these guys started singing "(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais". They knew all the words. I was so moved. It was so entrenched in them, y'know. That song really means something.

For information on The Joe Strummer Memorial Forest on the Isle of Skye, visit www.futureforests.com. Special thanks to Tricia Ronane and Pete Wylie

# toe Strumer

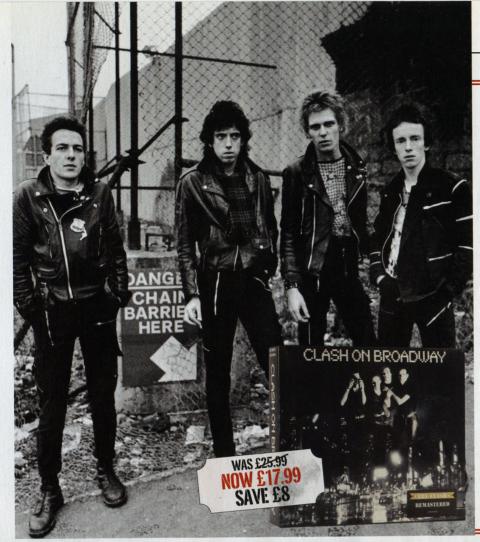


Recorded just weeks prior to the beloved rock legend's death on 22 December 2002, Streetcore features Joe's most immediate and accessible material since his early work with The Clash. Includes the single Coma Girl and a version of Bob Marley's Redemption Song, produced by Rick Rubin.

**OUT NOW** 

whatever turns you on!





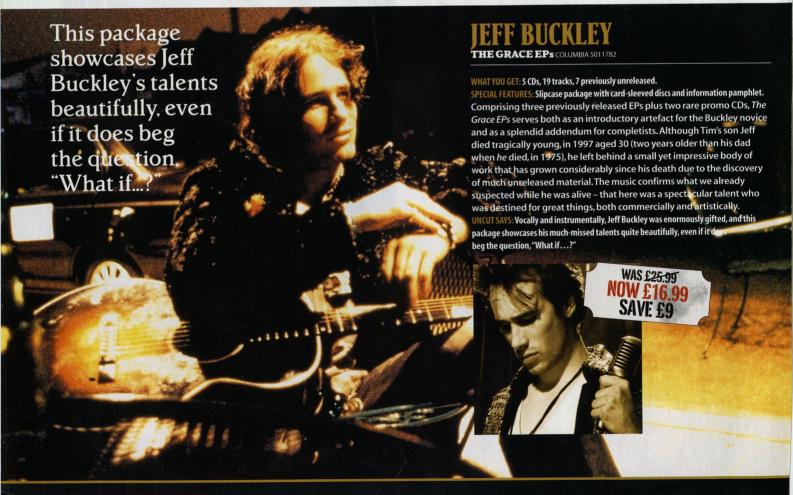
# THE CLASH

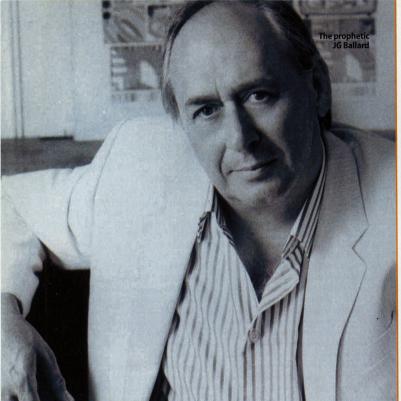
ON BROADWAY COLUMBIA 4974532

WHAT YOU GET: 3 CDs, 63 tracks, some rarities, all digitally remastered. SPECIAL FEATURES: As well as a detailed booklet, there is previously-hard-to-find material, including cuts otherwise only available on EPs, singles and B-sides.

Some have argued that The Sex Pistols were the punk Monkees, assembled with cynical glee by master tactician Malcolm McLaren. To such sceptics, The Clash were The Real McCoy, a genuine Last Gang In Town, four mates drawn together by a mutual love of rock'n'roll and an innate desire to change the world. Unlike the Pistols, they weren't just about controversy and outrage, nor did they merely want to drop the musical equivalent of atom bombs and then clear off forever. No, The Clash were in it for the long haul. They released coherent long-playing records as well as explosive singles. And each of those LPs represented a progression for the band in terms of musical prowess and stylistic breadth. Hence the quantum leaps effected between the amphetamine surges of their debut album and sophomore effort Give 'Em Enough Rope, and the equally giant strides made from Rope to double album London Calling to triple LP Sandinista! and beyond. Although those albums were powerful individual statements in their own right, The Clash On Broadway effectively represents their evolution from garageland heroes to the highest-achieving band

UNCUT SAYS: From 1976 to 1986, The Clash ruled the UK music scene, and here are over five-dozen reasons why, sans frills: cut the crap, indeed.





# Middle-class revolt

upholstered

revolution"

Ballard turns his penetrating gaze on the suburban timebomb



### Millennium People

J G BALLARD
FLAMINGO

THERE'S NOTHING QUITE like a JG Ballard novel; even at 73, he has the power to provoke and

challenge. His 17th novel opens with a bomb exploding at Heathrow's Terminal 2; later, the NFT, Tate Modern and London Eye are all subjected to similar atrocities. A blonde TV presenter is assassinated on her doorstep. This isn't the work of sinister Middle Eastern terrorists or a lone psychopath but the well-to-do occupants of an exclusive Chelsea housing complex. The middle classes, it seems, are revolting. Symbols of Driven to the brink by the middle-class never-ending paraphernalia convention become of consumer society school fees, BUPA targets of what subscriptions, nannies, Ballard calls "the

disquiet escalates into acts of terrorism as symbols of middle-class convention become targets of what Ballard calls "the upholstered revolution" – it's "Kropotkin with pink gins and wall-to-wall Axminster... whiskey sours and armageddon."

maintenance charges -

they're staging their own

rebellion. Middle-income

This is familiar Ballard territory. The rarefied enclave of Chelsea Marina holds echoes of Estrella del Mar from Cocaine Nights or Super Cannes' Eden-Olympia, while renegade paediatrician Richard Gould, the eminence gris masterminding the rebellion, is another fine study in psychopathology to rival previous

Ballard monsters like Bobby Crawford or Penrose Wilder.

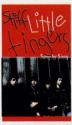
Psychologist David Markham is a typical Ballard narrator — a well-intentioned, if slow-witted liberal drawn into the orbit of a beguiling, charismatic idealist. Soon Markham's quest to discover who was responsible for his wife's death in the Heathrow explosion becomes "a search for a more intense and driven existence", and he becomes complicit in acts of terrorism, joining Gould in his attempts to rouse the middle classes from their social docility.

Ballard has always been a prophetic writer. His first novel, 1962's *The Drowned World*, addressed the devastating effects of global warming long before the phrase became common parlance. In 1967, in a short story called *Why I Want To Fuck Ronald* 

Reagan, he predicted Bonzo's best

buddy would end up in the White House. One of the central characters in *Crash* fantasised over Elizabeth Taylor as the ultimate celebrity crash victim 24 years before Princess Diana's death and our own subsequent obsession with it. Here he picks apart Britain's

floundering search for a post-millennial identity, a national crisis in the making. His trademark droll humour is on display here (one chapter is called "The Bonfire Of The Volvos") but gives way to darker concerns about society on the brink of collapse. "We're tired of being taken for granted," one character says. "We're tired of being used. We don't like the kind of people we've become." And perhaps, as Ballard claims, all it will take is one too many parking tickets to tip the suburban masses over the edge. MICHAEL BONNER



### Stiff Little Fingers: Song By Song

JAKE BURNS WITH ALAN PARKER

SANCTUARY,£12.99

Enlightening overview of a life and career Alan Parker is an original

fan and long-time friend of SLF frontman Jake Burns, and the informality of their relationship is ideally suited to the format tested so effectively by Victoria Mary Clarke in A Drink With Shane MacGowan.

Parker and Burns sit down together and chat, for ages. They tape everything, transcribe it, and publish it as a book. Simple. Well, it is if you have the right characters.

Jake Burns has always been a forthright and witty conversationalist, and Parker's personal interest in him has generated a dialogue that offers much more than it promises. Chewing over the songs and the albums of the incendiary punk outfit, from the early, primal howls of "Suspect Device" and "Alternative Ulster" to the recent, optimistic variety of And Best Of All.. Hope Street, Burns not only reveals the passions, the politics and the social injustices that have burned deeply at the heart of the band, but by way of anecdote and incidental detail, he also charts the human story of Stiff Little Fingers – their rise from a desolate Belfast to the triumph of world tours, the problems, the split, and their subsequent return to major venues. CAROL CLERK



# The Complete Clash

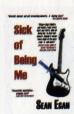
KEITH TOPPING
REYNOLDS & HEARN, £14.99

The Westway Wonders, song by song It's surprising that

nobody's attempted such a book before, and a shame that it took Strummer's death to alert the publishing world to its absence, but a meticulous companion to the music of The Clash has been long overdue. Enter Keith Topping with The Complete Clash. Barits mundane generic title (a band as slogan-conscious as they were surely deserve something much less pedestrian), this is as inspiring and informative a directory of their canon as could be hoped for. Every song from A to Z (yep, the Cut The Crap repertoire included), plus a concert and film history and a separate chronological study of the studio albums.

As a reference work, it's incredibly agile, while the text itself is a joyous blend of diligent research, revelatory trivia, articulate criticism and salivating fandom that's hard to fault. If pushed, maybe the lack of fresh interviews and Topping's reticence to expand upon some unreleased material are regrettable (eg; "Kill Time" – a common enough Combat Rock outtake worthy of more than the two terse sentences he affords it).

But let's not split hairs. Any tome canny enough to recognise"The Card Cheat" as the greatest song they never played live is obviously hitting the bullseye. A veritable bible for Clash City Rockers the world over.



### Sick Of Being Me

SEAN EGAN
ASKILL PUBLISHING, £9.99

Rock'n'roll dream turns sour in *Uncut* writer's powerful fictional debut Rock'n'roll novels usually miss the mark with

woeful predictability. Most of them are badly written in a horrible pulp-fiction version of NME-speak. Those that aren't, such as Salman Rushdie's sprawling The Ground Beneath Her Feet, tend to lack verisimilitude and sacrifice passion in pursuit of lit-crit credibility. Uncut contributor Sean Egan has written an excellent first novel that is both well-crafted and authentic, as he traces the fictional but all-too-real career of an aspiring quitarist from unbridled youthful optimism through small-time success into inexorable disappointment and decline. Sick Of Being Me may lack the warm humour of High Fidelity, but Egan also avoids Nick Hornby's middle-class smugness as he paints a far darker and less romanticised picture. Nor does he litter his prose with obscure musical references that only fellow rock scribes and trivia-obsessed anoraks will get. A playlist of Beatles, Stones, Sex Pistols, Jam and Clash soundtracks his narrative adequately and accessibly. There's something of Roddy Doyle's gritty realism in the dialogue, and his harrowing descriptions of junkiedom rival Irvine Welsh. Cleverly plotted with plenty of social context, it's what in pre-rock'n'roll times the Victorians would have called a cautionary tale. But Egan doesn't moralise, and his dénouement is genuinely shocking. A snorting good read. NIGEL WILLIAMSON



### The Walrus Was Ringo: 101 Beatles Myths Debunked

ALAN CLAYSON AND SPENCER LEIGH CHROME DREAMS, £12.99

for all a bold biotom.

Playful revision of a fondly-held history With an amusing idea for yet another take on Beatle history, Clayson and Leigh circle the one big obstacle that existed from the outset. The Beatles have been so exhaustively researched, and have spoken at such great length about themselves, that there can't possibly be as many as 101 genuine myths to demolish. Still, Clayson and Leigh have posed some fascinating challenges to The Fabs' textbook story. It's certainly interesting to consider that Paul McCartney may not have written "Hey Jude" for Julian Lennon, or that the Merseyside groups never did get their American records from sailors returning to Liverpool, contrary to the accepted wisdom.

However, since the authors base their findings largely on biographies and interviews, and since the books have been as contradictory as The Beatles themselves down the years, it's only a matter of time before someone emerges to debunk the debunking. Elsewhere, Clayson and Leigh present as myths a series of facts that any fan would know to be untrue, along with some that could never be proven and others that are simply a matter of opinion – like "Revolution 9' was a self-indulgent waste of needle-time."

Great fun for the pub, though.