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# MOJO

*The Music Magazine*

OCTOBER 2004 · £3.95

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# MOJO

LONDON • MEMPHIS • SWARKESTONE

October 2004

Issue 131

## FEATURES

**42 TOM WAITS** The gravelly enigma's most revealing ever interview. Including: the inside track on his wayward dad, his exacting wife and, oh yes, the day he shot his best friend in the hip. Your inquisitor: Sylvie Simmons.

**48 THE CLASH** 25 years on, *London Calling* and the madness beyond. How "success" led to punch-ups, a frozen boar's head for dinner in Detroit and – craziest of all – the commercial suicide of *Sandinista!* The full, exclusive story by Clashographer Pat Gilbert. Perspectives by David Fricke, Don Letts and Ray Lowry.

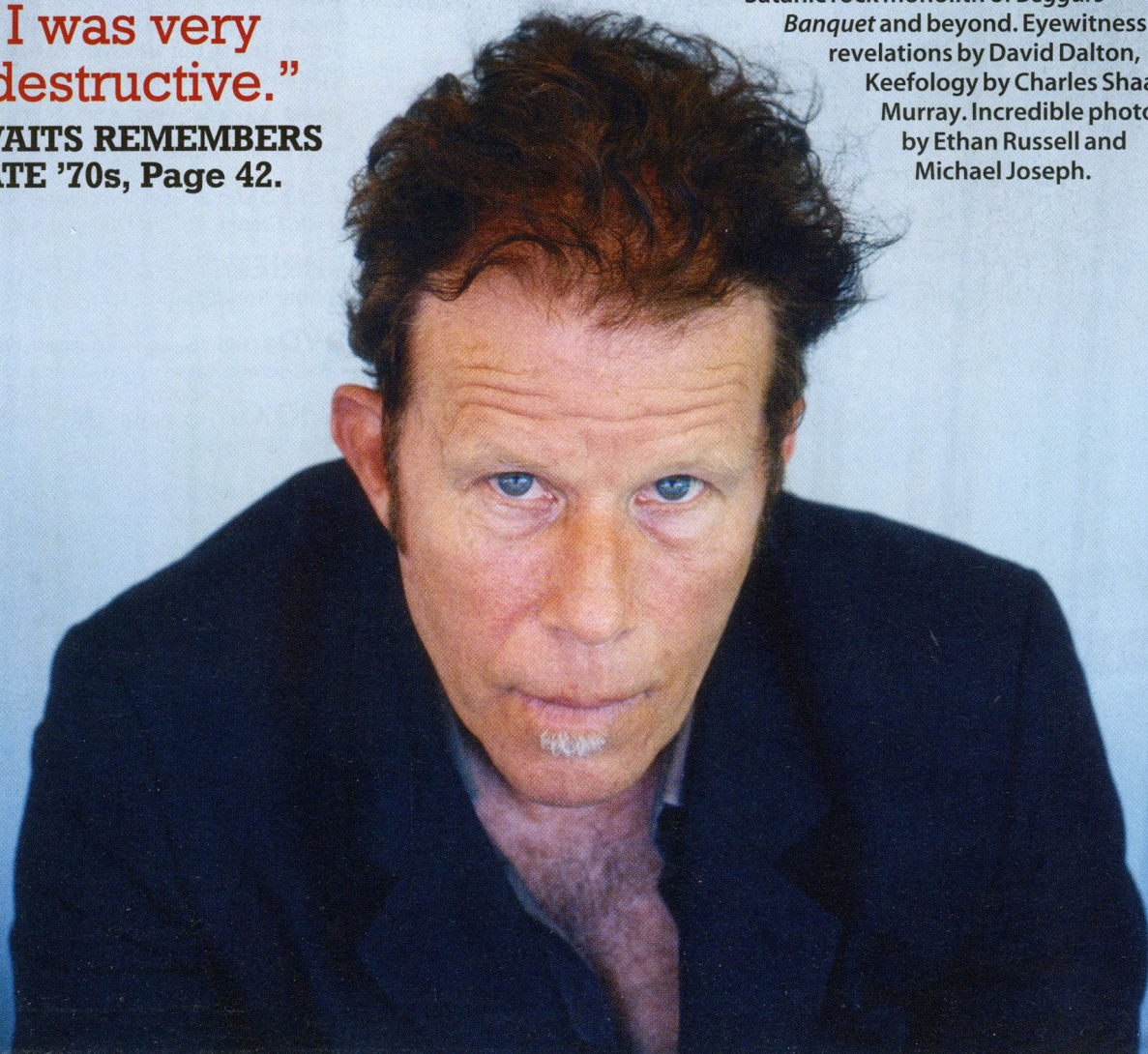
**"I was like a wound-up toy car who's hit a wall. I was very self-destructive."**

**TOM WAITS REMEMBERS THE LATE '70s, Page 42.**

**64 MARK LANEGAN** Sucked in by crack, run over (literally) by a tractor – he should be dead. Instead he's making the best alt blues east of the Mississippi. How the "grunge Leonard Cohen" survived, by Keith Cameron.

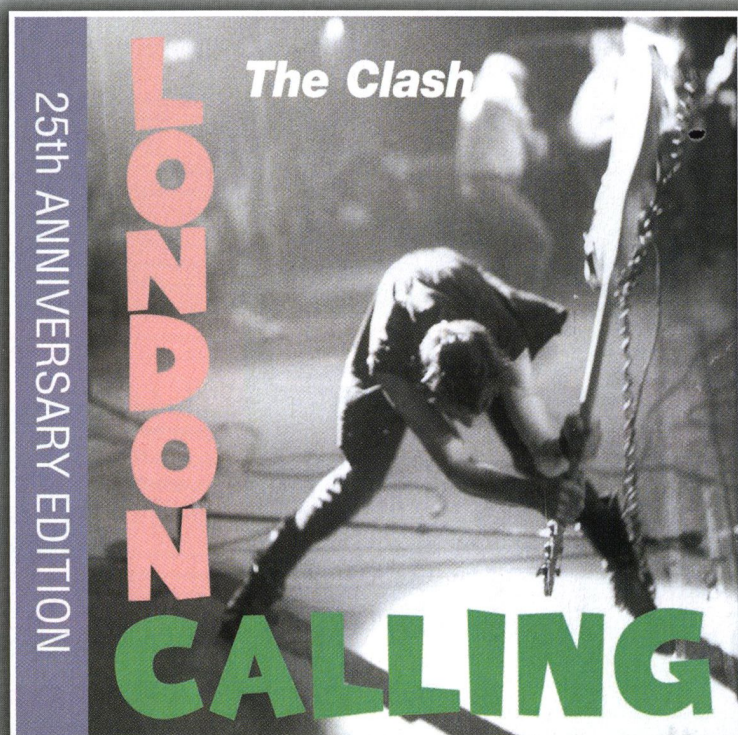
**68 BUDDY HOLLY** A blinding insight into the geek genius of rock – icon to The Beatles, songwriting tutor to the Stones – by legendary writer Greil Marcus. Plus: the surviving Crickets remember Buddy the unlikely style guru: "He used to taper his jeans, man!"

**76 COVER STORY**  
**ROLLING STONES** Finally available on DVD, the Stones' Rock And Roll Circus TV Special marked the peak of hippy lunacy and the metamorphosis of the band into the Satanic rock monolith of *Beggars Banquet* and beyond. Eyewitness revelations by David Dalton, Keefology by Charles Shaar Murray. Incredible photos by Ethan Russell and Michael Joseph.





# complete clash



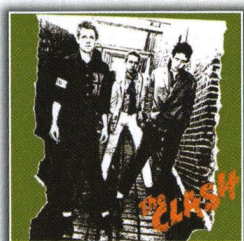
## LONDON CALLING: 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Three disc Legacy edition celebrating the 25th anniversary of the release of The Clash's seminal third album. Disc one features the remastered original album. Disc two contains 21 previously unheard tracks from the band's rehearsal sessions including 4 new songs and the fabled cover of Bob Dylan's The Man In Me. The final disc is a DVD with a 30 minute Don Letts directed documentary including never before seen home video footage of the band recording in Wessex Studios.

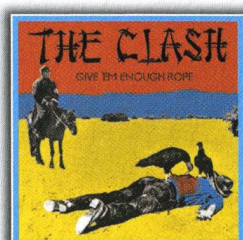
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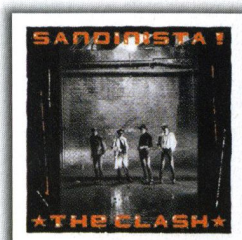
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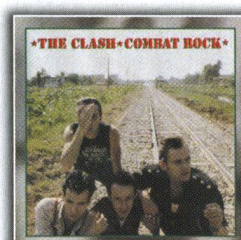
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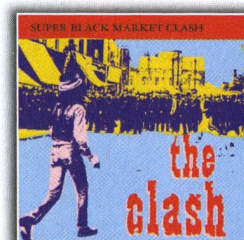
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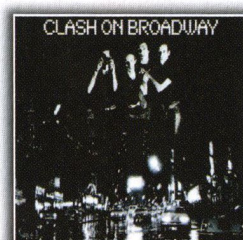
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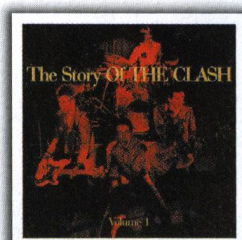
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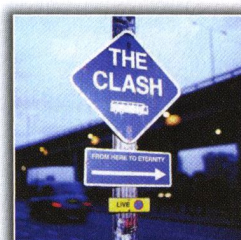
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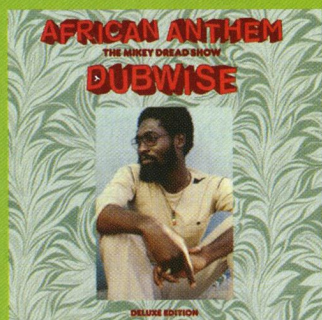
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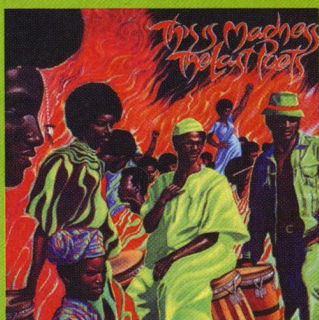
# THIS IS ★ RADIO ★ CLASH



## 1 SATURDAY NIGHT STYLE MIKEY DREAD

**Available on:** African Anthem Deluxe Edition (LUXX005CD)

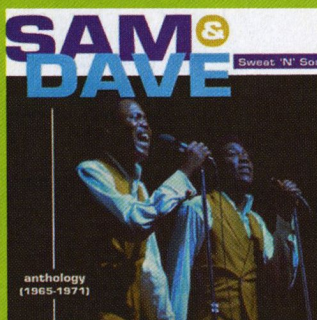
By 1979 broadcaster, reggae artist and producer Mikey Dread was already a legendary figure both in his native Jamaica and in the UK. Receiving a call to support The Clash on their British tour in early 1980, he joined them and ended up producing their seminal Bankrobber single, adding an authentic dub edge to the tune. Mikey contributes to this issue's Clash feature. The reissue of his *African Anthem Dubwise* is reviewed on page 124.



## 2 ON THE SUBWAY THE LAST POETS

**Available on:** *This Is Madness* (VAMP011)

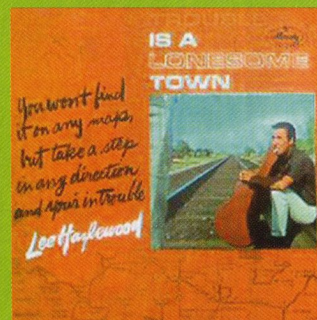
The full page advert for *This Is Madness*, The Last Poets' second album in the April 1, 1971, edition of Rolling Stone read: "If you're white, this record will scare the shit out of you. If you're black, this record will scare the nigger out of you." It confirmed the New York crew as the most confrontational act of their generation. On *The Subway* – a track selected by Paul Simonon – illustrates their incendiary, proto-rap delivery.



## 3 HOLD ON! I'M A COMIN' SAM & DAVE

**Available on:** *Sweat & Soul: An Anthology 1965-71* (WSA 8122712532)

An early Clash rehearsal favourite, this driving, sulphurous 1966 classic provided Sam Moore and Dave Prater with one of their biggest hits. The Clash further acknowledged their affection for the duo by taking them out on the road as one of their support acts when they toured the US in 1979. By then Sam & Dave were riding high once again thanks to the use of their signature tune, *Soul Man*, in *The Blues Brothers* movie of the same year.



## 4 RUN BOY RUN LEE HAZELWOOD

**Available on:** *Trouble Is A Lonesome Town* (SLR 037 CD)

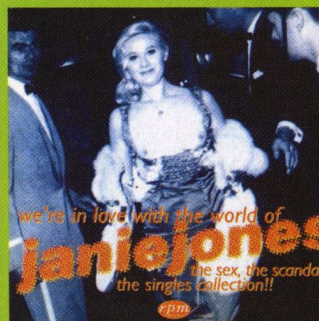
Radio DJ, producer, label mogul, composer and recording artist, Lee Hazelwood is a genuine latter day renaissance man. This track – taken from his remarkable 1964 album and hand-picked for inclusion here by Paul Simonon – showcases his ability to deliver melodrama with a message. The album has been reissued along with five other Haze classics on the Smells Like Records label whose CEO is Sonic Youth's Steve Shelley.



## 9 PART TIME PUNKS TELEVISION PERSONALITIES

**Available on:** *Yes Darling, But Is It Art* (FIRE SPRE024CD)

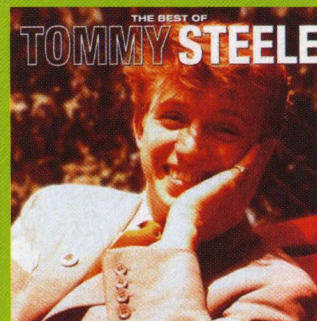
Dan Treacy's wry commentary on the identikit aftermath of punk, this lo-fi King's Road classic namechecks a host of luminaries including Siouxsie And The Banshees, the O Level and The Lurkers. It also features the immortal line, "They've got £2.50 to go and see The Clash. Tonight." Top value. In more ways than one.



## 10 HOUSE OF THE JUJU QUEEN JANIE JONES

**Available on:** *We're In Love With The World Of Janie Jones: The Sex, The Scandals, The Singles Collection* (RMP177)

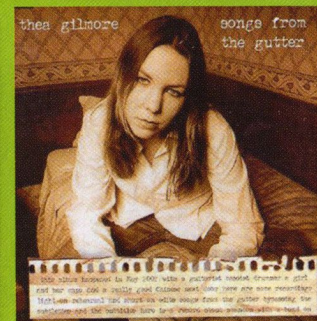
Having eulogised Janie Jones on their debut LP, The Clash teamed up with the ex-madam on her release from jail to record this track. Jones herself had previously enjoyed a recording career and turns in a spirited performance on this Strummer-penned cut where the band are fittingly re-dubbed The Lash.



## 11 SINGING THE BLUES TOMMY STEELE

**Available on:** *The Best Of Tommy Steele* (SPECTRUM 544 172-2)

Hailed as "Britain's answer to Elvis Presley", fresh-faced Tommy Steele was the UK's biggest rock'n'roll star of the '50s, with *Singing The Blues* topping the charts in 1957. Selected for inclusion here by Mick Jones, this track underlines the manner in which The Clash plugged into a tradition of British rock'n'roll while simultaneously boasting a universal appeal.



## 12 I'M NOT DOWN THEA GILMORE

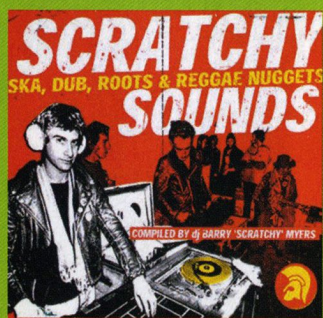
**Available on:** *Songs From The Gutter* (HUNGRY DOG YRGNJH4)

Fiercely independent and once described as "the one woman folk Clash", Thea Gilmore was born in Oxfordshire in 1979 – coincidentally the year of *London Calling*'s release. Her tribute to Strummer and co, with this cover from that album, is a spontaneous and understated *tour de force* revealing the track's multi-layered appeal. For more info on Thea log on to [www.theagilmore.com](http://www.theagilmore.com)



**I**N 1979 THE CLASH KICKED DOWN THE BARRIERS that had sprung up around punk rock and admitted their vast range of influences with the release of their third album, *London Calling*. Unleashed, they delivered an album that celebrated musical freedom while exhibiting a romantic sense of classicism. Twenty five years on from that landmark album, MOJO is proud to present *Radio Clash* – a 15-track collection of tunes that echo the spirit of '79 as well as the wider world of The Clash.

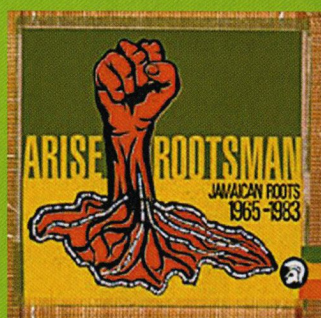
A number of the tracks included on this collection have been selected by bassist Paul Simonon and guitarist Mick Jones, others are rarities, influences or associated with the band. We are also proud to include an exclusive unreleased Joe Strummer track, and we dedicate this CD to his memory and to the ongoing power and influence of The Clash.



## 5 RIDE THE DONKEY THE TENNORS

**Available on:** *Scratchy Sounds: Ska, Dub, Roots And Reggae Nuggets* (TROJAN TJDD0218)

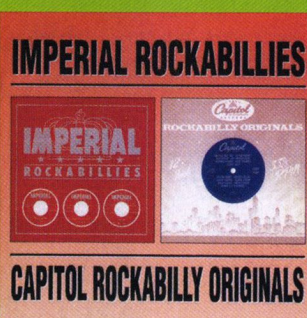
Between 1978 and 1980 Barry 'Scratchy' Myers was The Clash's tour DJ, warming up crowds and spinning tunes that the band either loved or were happy to be turned on to. Some 25 years later 'Scratchy' is set to release a compilation of some of that music. From that fine collection – due out on October 25 – comes this earthy hit by Jamaican rocksteady crew The Tennors. Check out Scratchy's on-tour Clash playlist on page 60.



## 6 BLACK MAN TIME I ROY

**Available on:** *Arise Rootsman: Trojan Roots 1965-1983* (TROJAN TJDD00118)

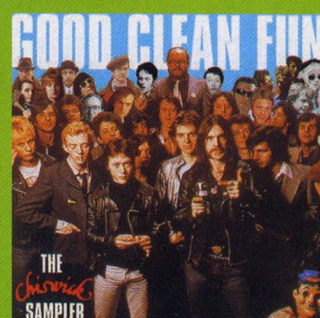
Originally a civil servant, I Roy set up his own sound system and made his name as one of Jamaica's most innovative and intelligent '70s DJs. His distinctive vocal styling is clearly evident on this all-round roots reggae classic, *Black Man Time* – a track included here at Paul Simonon's request. Tragically, after a protracted illness, I Roy died penniless on the streets of Spanish Town on November 27, 1999, aged 55. His spirit, however, lives on.



## 7 EVERYBODY'S GOT A BABY BUT ME WARREN MILLER

**Available on:** *Imperial Rockabillys/Capitol Rockabilly Originals* (BIGCDD468)

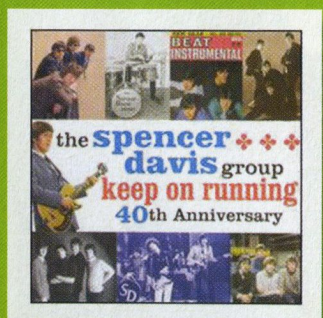
Alongside reggae and soul, early rock'n'roll and rockabilly fuelled *London Calling* as well as the band's greased-back image. This blasting track by the little known Warren Miller showcases the up-and-at-you rockabilly tunes that found themselves into The Clash's tape box – a box largely compiled by Paul Simonon who has chosen this track.



## 8 SWEET REVENGE 101'ERS

**Available on:** *Good Clean Fun – The Chiswick Sampler* (CHISWICK CDDW10X162)

"Like Doug Sahm impersonating Van Morrison after a night on the tiles" is how Chiswick label boss Roger Armstrong describes this rare track by Joe Strummer's short-lived pre-Clash combo the 101'ers. Formed around Labroke Grove, the 101'ers specialised in gritty R&B-flavoured pub rock. Sweet Revenge allows Joe – then known as Woody – to showcase his raw-throated and supremely passionate vocal approach, which he would develop further in The Clash.



## 13 EVERY LITTLE BIT HURTS (LIVE) THE SPENCER DAVIS GROUP

**Available on:** *Keep On Running 40th Anniversary* (CHERRY RED CDDMR250)

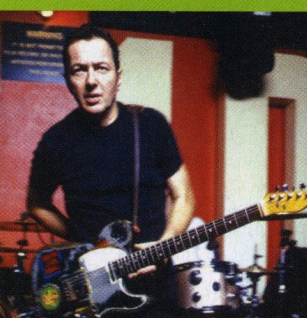
Every Little Bit Hurts is one of the many covers recorded by The Clash – their version appearing on the third disc of *The Clash On Broadway* box. This live version highlights lead singer Stevie Winwood's highly-charged, emotive delivery.



## 14 WRONG EM BOYO THE RULERS

**Available on:** *Revolution Rock* (TROJAN TJDD00214)

The Clash's version of this rootsy ska classic appeared on *London Calling*, hence this Paul-approved selection. The Rulers' original comes with a false start that sees them tipping their hats in the direction of Lloyd Price's Stagger Lee. This track is taken from *Revolution Rock* – collection of artists that influenced The Clash compiled by Paul Simonon which is out on October 25. We recommend you check it out.



## 15 WHITE MAN LIVE AT THE 100 CLUB JOE STRUMMER

**Exclusive to this CD. Not otherwise commercially available.**

Back in 2000 Joe Strummer took his Mescaleros back to the 100 Club for a special show put together by MOJO's sister publication Q. From that memorable night comes Joe's remarkable take on (White Man) In Hammersmith Palais which has remained unreleased up until now. It's a fitting final track on this *Radio Clash* collection.

# NEXT MONTH

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# WHAT ARE GONNA





# WE DO NOW?



**IT'S 1979 AND THE CLASH HAVE JUST RELEASED A  
WORLD-BEATING DOUBLE ALBUM. THE ONLY  
PROBLEM: THEY'RE SKINT, KNACKERED AND  
HEADING FOR AN APOCALYPTIC PUNCH-UP.  
25 YEARS ON, PAT GILBERT EXPLORES THE AFTERMATH  
OF LONDON CALLING AND FINDS THE SEEDS OF  
THE BAND'S DESTRUCTION ALREADY SOWN.**



**T**HE MORNING BEFORE *London Calling* hit the shops, Joe Strummer walked out of the council flat on the World's End Estate in Chelsea where he was living with his girlfriend Gaby and her mum, and bought a copy of the NME. He shook it open to find that Charles Shaar Murray, the journalist who three years earlier had suggested The Clash should be locked in a garage full of car fumes, had written the review that virtually secured the band's status as the most important rock group of their generation.

Though not uncritical, it lavishly praised the record's experiments with rockabilly, soul, reggae, jazz and funk. The review concluded: "This is the one."

Joe was chuffed. "Up until then, we knew we'd got what it takes, but it had never really come out right," he explained. "That was the record where we said, Fuck you, to everyone who'd pigeonholed us as a crappy punk band."

Sales for the album, a low-price double, proved healthy. In the week before Christmas, *London Calling* climbed to Number 9 and the title track, lifted as a single, reached Number 11. It was a two-fingered gesture to critics who'd written off The Clash after their heavy and graceless second LP, *Give 'Em Enough Rope*, cut with Blue Öyster Cult producer Sandy Pearlman the previous year.

Yet The Clash's victory was in some ways a Pyrrhic one. After three years signed to CBS, and with three Top 20 albums under their belts, life for the group didn't ostensibly appear any easier or better. None of them owned a flat. None of them had a car. On the streets of London, they were more likely to be jeered for "selling out" than cheered for being musically adventurous and eclectic.

A just-about-to-fall-apartness had always been a characteristic of the group. There had never been a plan. But as Christmas loomed in 1979, the band's management sensed that the world was there for The Clash to take. A 23-date tour of the US in September and October saw riotous scenes reminiscent of the group's early shows in Britain. *London Calling* was expected to crack open the American charts when it was released there in the New Year. But within the next 12 months, far from capitalising on their position, The Clash's situation would get even worse. Not only would a 3-LP set titled *Sandinista!* cast them as figures of ridicule in their own country, but they would find themselves in even greater debt. These were the least of The Clash's troubles. By the end of 1980, the mood of unity and purpose that had created *London Calling* had evaporated, and the friendship between Joe Strummer and Mick Jones almost irrevocably broken down.

**O**N DECEMBER 27, 1979, THE SOVIET ATTACK ON Afghanistan officially became an invasion. The US telegraphed its concern to the rest of the world. The hawks in the White House rattled their sabres. The mood across the world suddenly darkened as the 1980s started under the shadow of the Bomb.

The same day that tanks rolled into Kabul, The Clash played one of



The Clash (above) fired up on their first US tour, February 1979. Joe Strummer (left) and Ian Dury share a smoke backstage at the Concert For Kampuchea benefit, December 27, 1979. Mick Jones (right) unleashed in Aylesbury, January 5, 1980.

a series of benefit concerts at Hammersmith Odeon to highlight another global disaster. Refugees were pouring into Thailand following the fall of Pol Pot in Cambodia: a humanitarian crisis was looming. The Clash shared the bill with Ian Dury And The Blockheads. Mick joined them on guitar for Sweet Gene Vincent. Joe and Paul looked on disapprovingly. "Mick wouldn't mind going off and jamming with Ian Dury," says Paul. "But me and Joe didn't go in for that. We were incapable of jamming anyway,

but we also wanted to create a bit of mystery. It all came from [estranged Clash manager] Bernie Rhodes — you keep your cards close to your chest."

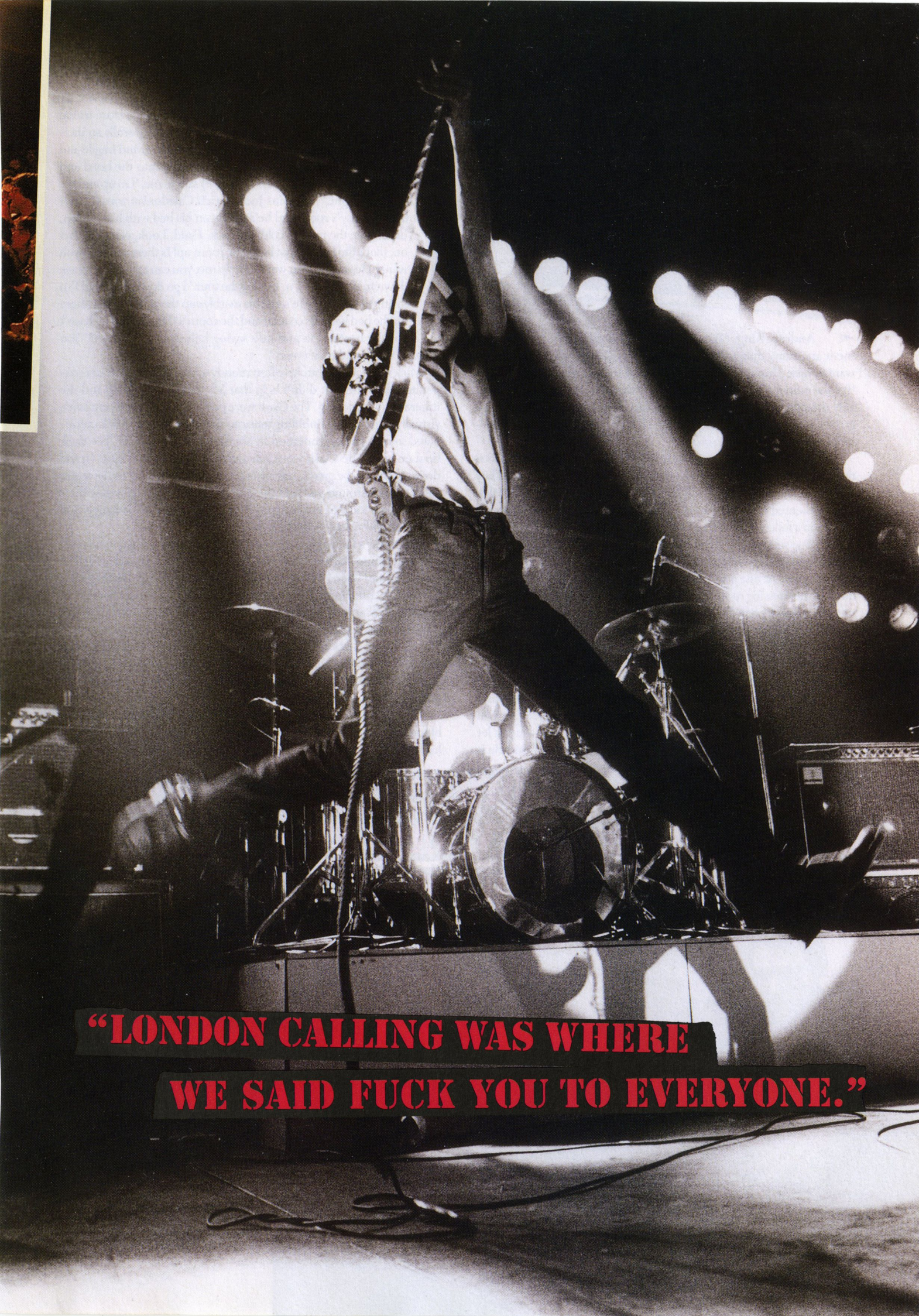
The gig doubled as a warm-up for The Clash's 35-date assault on the UK, scheduled for January and February 1980. These first major shows in Britain for over a year seemed designed to assuage any fears that The Clash had forsaken Britain to conquer America: it visited virtually every major town and city in the country. The tour's title was taken from the old Tennessee Ernie Ford song, 16 Tons, a comment on the group's unrelentingly dire financial situation: "Sixteen tons and what do we get? Another day older and deeper in debt..."

The dates were organised by their new management, Blackhill Enterprises, who also represented The Blockheads. Peter Jenner and Andrew King were adamant that the tour should make money. This was difficult because The Clash insisted on low ticket prices: £3 at most venues. Blackhill tried to reason with the group but found them reluctant to address their fiscal predicament. A number of meetings were scheduled, including one mid-tour at Crawley Leisure Centre on Saturday, January 12.

"It was very hard to talk sensible business with them," says Peter Jenner. "Which is why I never got a contract. They were hard to get together — then, when they were all in one place, everyone would start rolling joints and cracking jokes. Their attention spans were so short because they'd start smoking dope. We'd all laugh, but it lost the chance of trying to resolve these problems. The Clash was a big business which was turning over hundreds of thousands, if not millions, at the box office," he continues. "The group wouldn't come to grips with this. They wanted the money, they wanted to live the life, but they didn't want to relate to the business issues. You'd try to have a serious conversation about the production — the crews, hotels, support bands — and you'd just get poo-poo'd for being an old fart."

➤ Bob Gruen (2), Paul Slattery





**"LONDON CALLING WAS WHERE**

**WE SAID FUCK YOU TO EVERYONE."**





Joe and Mick prior to their Sheffield punch up. "There was blood everywhere..."

Andrew King: "Band meetings with management are funny things. We're interested in the money and the band want to raise a hundred other issues. I used to wear a badge which said, 'It's the money I'm after.' They used to wind us up terribly. They probably thought we were boring and square. But it wasn't our job to be groovy, it was their job to be groovy. What they needed was some boringness to balance out the chaos."

The 16 Tons tour showed how much The Clash had evolved since they'd last toiled around Britain on the Sort It tour in late 1978. They were loud, heavy and well-drilled. On the September US tour, Mick had augmented his guitar sound with echo and chorus units. This gave the group a fuller, richer tone. Songs now featured extended codas and Paul adding subtle licks on the bass.

The group were filmed for Nationwide, BBC 1's flagship early evening show. At one gig, fans can be seen climbing through the windows of the dressing room. Joe is relaxed and avuncular, wearing a dark suit and homburg hat. He stresses the musical dimension of the shows. "We've spent four years together playing, so we must be four times better than before. Otherwise we'd be idiots, huh?"



"They were fucking brilliant live," says Jenner. "All you needed was a decent PA and some lights so you could see them, and then you just let them get on with it. It's a miracle it

happened sometimes with all the chaos. They weren't an easy group to get a soundcheck from — God knows how the road crew coped."

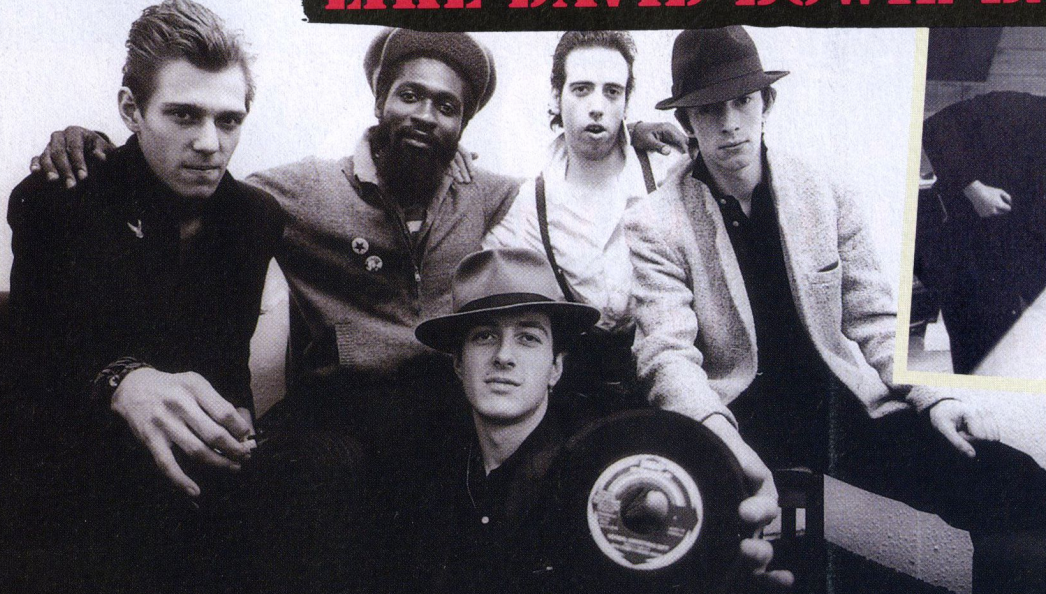
The excitement and energy began to fray the group's nerves. By this time Mick was already weary of touring. Jock Scot, a close friend of the group via his connections with the Blockheads, recalls an incident early in the tour when the guitarist felt withdrawn and fragile and unable to face the task ahead. "We'd just checked into the hotel and [Clash 'ideas person' and PR] Kosmo [Vinyl] said to me, 'Go up and see that Mick's all right,'" explains Jock in rich Caledonian tones. "So I went up to Jonesy's room and he's sitting on his bed with his coat on, his hat on, the room's cold, it's dark. I said, Look, you turn that on, that's the heater, that heats the room up! Is there anything you want? He says, 'If you want to help me, you can take my suitcase down to reception. I'm leaving the tour.' I go downstairs and I'm saying to Kosmo, 'He's lost his marbles up there. He's lying there on the bed with his coat on and the room's freezing and he hasn't got the heating on and he's saying he's leaving the tour!' You wouldn't believe the carry-on."

Mick was pacified but his often moody and erratic behaviour exasperated the others. It didn't help that Mick disliked touring and the itinerary was gruelling. The Clash were performing in a different town virtually every night. Bubbling tensions between Joe and Mick culminated in an ugly confrontation in Sheffield, on January 27. For their final encore, The Clash were scheduled to play White Riot. In the dressing room, the group, exhausted, prepared to return to the stage. Mick turned around and told the others he wasn't going to play their '77 anthem. He was staying put. There was a heated exchange: Joe exploded and swung violently at Mick.

"That was a fucking good punch," beams the band's personal road manager Johnny Green. "You wouldn't take Joe as a particularly good fighter, would you? But he put everything into it. Bang! Right against the wall, splatted him. Mick was in great shock, and I think Joe was in shock as well at what he'd done. There was a kind of disbelief there: 'Where did that come from?' I think it was pent-up rage against Mick for calling the shots all the time. Joe couldn't compete with him on a directorial level, he didn't have that constant drive. So Mick ain't going to play White Riot, so the band ain't going to play White Riot. Joe can't out-argue him, all he can do is hit him."

"It's a pivotal moment," he adds. "He whacked him, there was blood everywhere. Cut lip. Bloody teeth. We bandaged him up, you know, bandana'd him to cover it up. Mick was in a state of shock, just

## "CBS DIDN'T UNDERSTAND BANKROBBER. THEY SAID IT SOUNDED LIKE DAVID BOWIE BACKWARDS."



Pressure sounds! The Clash and Mikey Dread during the 16 Tons UK tour that yielded the controversial Bankrobber 45 which he produced. Strummer skanks on with Bill Price (above) while recording that single in Manchester, February 1980.



doing what he was told. 'Come on, out you go.' He went out and he didn't finish the song. He put his guitar on its stand halfway through, so he made his point as well. They both made their point and the matter was settled. But it's interesting: the only way that Joe, Mr Articulate, can respond is in a physical manner." The Clash didn't play White Riot live again until the last night of the tour, two weeks later.

There's no doubt Joe and Mick's first proper punch-up created a corrosive stain on their relationship. It certainly left a deep impression on Strummer: asked in 2001 who the last person he punched was, Joe responded, not entirely truthfully, "Mick Jones." After the gig, the matter was dropped. "It was never mentioned again, as far as I know," recalls Johnny. "They weren't a niggly band. On the road there was always a new crisis to deal with."

The chief support act on the 16 Tons tour was the Jamaican artist, Mikey Dread. In 1979, Dread – born Michael Campbell – had been in London promoting his *Dread At The Controls* album. In Jamaica, Mikey was a legend for radically challenging the way radio was programmed on the island. His graveyard-shift show played exclusively Jamaican music, not foreign pop hits, and featured innovative, pre-recorded links and a female narrator. Mikey was also an early champion of Althea & Donna's Uptown Top Ranking and was instrumental in turning it into an international hit. On his return to Jamaica from London, Dread was approached by Kosmo Vinyl to work with The Clash.

"I didn't know what they were, or who they were," says Dread, speaking from his Miami home. His is instantly recognisable as the voice that toasted with The Clash on tracks like One More Dub. "But they kept calling me so I came to England. It was cold and raining all the time. I preferred Jamaica."

Dread joined the tour in Scotland. It was snowing. The Clash's audiences generally were hostile to his lengthy dub support sets, performed to a backing track. To defuse tension, The Clash and crew would emerge from the wings as "The Mystery Skankers", dressed in long overcoats and trilby hats, with handkerchiefs masking their faces, bandit-style. For Dread, the tour was a culture shock. "It was scary, man," he chuckles. "The audience wanted to destroy all the theatres we were playing in. If you see what a hurricane does to an island in the Caribbean, then that's what the theatres looked like after The Clash played. People used to get on the stage, then jump back into the audience. I thought, Are these people crazy or what?"

Mid-tour, on February 2, the group booked into Manchester's Pluto Studios to work on a ska song Joe had written before Christmas called Bankrobber. Mikey Dread took charge. He slowed it down and developed into an authentic-sounding roots reggae number, with low, portentous harmonies and a complex rhythm. "When I found a white group who wanted to play reggae, I wanted to get 100 per cent behind it," Dread explains. "But they needed someone to show them how we do it. It's like if you get a new recipe, it's better to go to someone who's been cooking it for a while, and they can show you how to measure it out properly rather than just throw the ingredients in the pot. I showed them what our approach was."

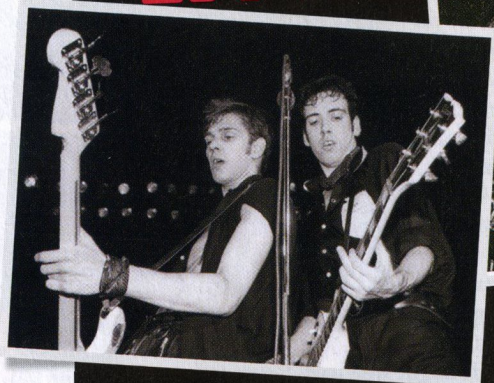
The single London Calling/Armageddon Time was The Clash's biggest chart success yet. The group hatched a radical plan: they would bang out a new 45 every month in 1980. CBS were sceptical. Then they heard Bankrobber and scepticism turned to horror. "They didn't understand it. They said it sounded like David Bowie backwards," smiles Paul.

CBS refused to release it; The Clash insisted they'd deliver no substitute 45. This resulted in another breakdown in the brittle relationship between label and group. CBS's promise of "artistic control" had been exposed as a charade back in 1977, when Remote Control was released without The Clash's permission. Now The Clash could stand their ground. There was a face-off. Both parties seemed willing to sacrifice a potential Top 10 follow-up to London Calling on a point of principle. The year-long singles campaign idea evaporated.

In March, The Clash returned to the States for an eight-date trip. *London Calling* had reached Number 27 there, while the funky Train In Vain, lifted as a single, hit Number 23. This success suggested their two US tours of the previous year were paying dividends. Support ➤

EYEWITNESS

# THE AMERICAN INVASION PT.1



On February 17, 1979, The Clash

played The New York Palladium, their first show in the Big Apple. **David Fricke** thought it was "the best fucking show I've ever seen in my entire life." Well, that's what he told Joe Strummer.

WHEN JOE Strummer, Mick Jones, Paul Simonon and Topper Headon strode on to the stage of the New York Palladium that February evening in 1979 we didn't stand a chance. The Clash rushed right into our faces with the perfect, opening insult grenade, I'm So Bored With The USA, and stayed there, without mercy, for the next two hours.

I only recall a few, specific musical details: Headon's machine-gun drum intro to Tommy Gun shattering the air and my eardrums; a White Riot that was faster and even more enraged than the single; the compact, atomic triumph of Complete Control. I clearly remember this: I was on my feet and out of my head the entire time.

I was still raving deliriously the next day when I sat down with Strummer over a tape recorder (above right). "You played the best fucking show I've ever seen in my entire life," I blurted after we shook hands. "Maybe you should see a good show," Strummer cracked a rascal's smile.

In a way, February 18 was an even rougher gig: a performance for the New York press corps. The Clash were shepherded around a large, rather chilly Manhattan hotel dining room, from table to table, for blitzkrieg one-on-one chats. I was writing for Circus magazine at the time, and got Simonon first, then Strummer. The bassist was cordial and relaxed.

"I quite like it," he said of the commotion, smiling. "It's the first time I've ever been in a restaurant and almost sat at every table in the same evening." Simonon talked about the pre-history of The Clash – noting that he once played The Kinks' Dead End Street in an early rehearsal with Jones and guitarist Keith Levene – and revealed that he was thinking about writing songs. "It's getting nearer the time," he said, dragging on a cigarette. "It's a question of how to use words."

School, he claimed, "always put me off books. But I've started picking up books and reading, because I want to." By the end of '79, Simonon's first song, Guns Of Brixton, was on *London Calling*.

By contrast, Strummer was more intense, speaking with disarming honesty about The Clash's future in America.

"Look at the history," he said, "all the British groups coming over here, acting arrogant and ending up in the dust bin – Slade, T.Rex, big groups who were at their peak. And fucking down the chute."

"I didn't know if people were going to think we were too English. Or maybe Americans ain't interested; they don't want to know. People had been telling us that crap for two years."

Then he lit into American radio. "Yellow-bellied cowards," he snarled, "playing nothing but safe crap. This city has 10 million people in it, or near enough, and there ain't no decent radio station. Where's Murray The K? Where's all the stuff I heard about in all my rock'n'roll history books?"

"I don't expect to hear my songs on the radio," Strummer went on heatedly. "You have to arse-lick. And we are fucking useless arse-lickers. We hate it, and we won't do it. We will throw everything we have away just to avoid licking one arse. Because we've got no sense. If you had some, you'd butter 'em up, you'd smile, to get 'em to play your record. We ain't gonna do that. We'd rather die a thousand deaths. I'd rather be a total failure in the States than lose my self-respect."

"We've got to go meet Americans," he declared. "They've gotta come and see us – see what a mean bunch of mothers we are when we play. You gotta fucking hear that. Maybe then we can get something going here."

"And I think there's going to be a renaissance in radio, even though we're going through the Dark Ages now. In a year, I can see some light."

He was right. In a year, The Clash would be on Top 40 radio and in Billboard's Top 30 with *London Calling*.



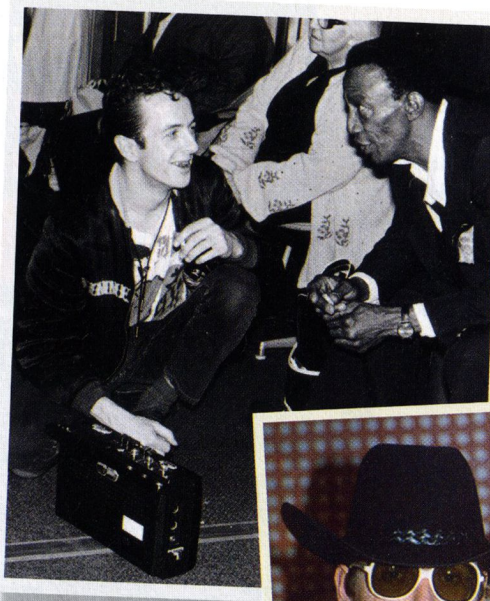
◀ was provided by Mikey Dread and, in keeping with the policy of opening with a black R&B legend, Lee Dorsey.

It was to be Johnny Green's last tour. "I think the rot had set in," he says. "I thought there was a relaxation of values, an ability to come to terms with their success in America on a corporate level. That tour was sweet and effortless. It felt bland to me. I started knocking round with Lee Dorsey. He was wonderful. I'm down in the bar drinking with him, a living soul legend, pissed as a fart, and The Clash are upstairs in their suites watching television. My boys are getting a bit boring!"

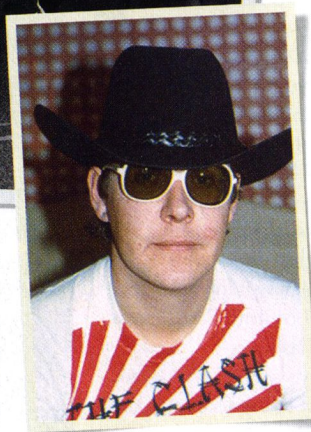
Johnny cites the last straw as Paul sitting by the pool, sipping a Brandy Alexander, instructing him to wash his socks for him. It might well have happened. It's unlikely The Clash would remember it like that. The truth was that Johnny was getting restless. "There were numerous reasons why I left," he says. "But, if I had to choose one, it was the fact it was becoming safe." Green handed in his cards at the conclusion of the US tour. He divorced one love and married another: his girlfriend Lindy. He then headed out for Texas, where he got a job working with Joe Ely.

The luxuries of America may have softened the group, but they hadn't whole-heartedly embraced them. Their riders were a source of particular exasperation. "The local promoters used their imagination, for sure," recalls Simonon. "All very nice, but highly impractical and a waste of time. Who wants mushrooms with a bit of bacon wrapped around its head when you've just got off stage? It was ridiculous."

The most extravagant backstage folly appeared at the end-of-tour party at the Motor City Roller Rink in Detroit on March 10. The gig was a benefit for Jackie Wilson, lying in a coma since collapsing on-stage in 1975. "There were all these massive dressing rooms that the



Joe Strummer (left) and Lee Dorsey on the road in the US, March 1980, and the band's legendary personal road manager Johnny Green (below) in full cowboy mode. "Lee was wonderful," he recalls.



sports teams used," says Andrew King. "There was an incredible meal laid out for us, with a whole boar's head and some suckling pigs and whole sides of beef, an absolutely terrifying spread. We went up to this massive bit of meat and stuck a fork in. It was frozen solid! The whole thing looked fantastic and gleaming and it was a fucking lump of ice. Only in America..."

The Clash stuck to their usual post-show refreshment: cans of Red Stripe and jellybean cocktails – all the white spirits plus blackcurrant cordial and lemonade. Not only weren't they hungry, they were all vegetarians.

**A**FTER BANKROBBER, THE Clash were keen to record more reggae. It was decided to travel with Mikey Dread to Kingston, Jamaica and cut a few tracks at the legendary Channel One studio. In mid-March, they flew to the Caribbean and checked into the Sheraton hotel. There was, as usual, a cash-flow problem. Kosmo Vinyl and Blackhill had to go cap in hand to CBS managing director

Maurice Oberstein for money to cover the studio bills. Negotiations were difficult: CBS and the band were still in a war of attrition over Bankrobber. The group lived off Paul's girlfriend's credit card.

In 1980, the economic situation in Jamaica was even worse than in 1978, when Mick and Joe had first visited the island. Prime Minister Michael Manley's democratic socialist policies and political links with Cuba had isolated the country from the US. The lack of American investment was pinching hard. Inflation was spiralling and unemployment rising. Shops lacked basic supplies. An election later that year would see Manley deposed by his ➤

## SMASH IT UP!

Ray Lowry's *London Calling* sleeve echoed Elvis and became instantly iconic. **Lois Wilson** finds out how.

IT'S ONE of the most striking LP cover designs created, yet the conception of Elvis Presley's 1956 debut album (*Elvis Presley in the US, Rock 'N' Roll in the UK*) sleeve remains one of the least celebrated.

"That's what appealed to me most," explains Ray Lowry, the then resident NME cartoonist and designer of The Clash's *London Calling* sleeve, his homage to the Presley artwork. "No one actually knew who had taken the photo that adorned it or where."

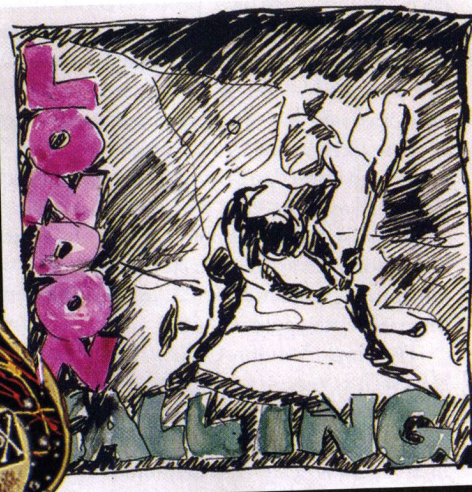
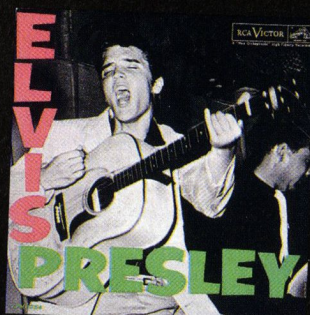
Commissioned by Colonel Tom Parker to take a series of live shots, paparazzo lensman William S. Popsie Randolph captured The King in black and white at Fort Homer Hesterly Armory in Tampa, Florida on July 31, 1955. Parker then chose what he deemed the most exciting portrait from the bunch and delivered it to RCA, demanding an art director namecheck.

Lowry, who had first met The Clash backstage in Manchester in 1976 – "I

blagged my way in, I was so impressed with Joe, we kept in touch by letter" – picked up the Elvis disc while in Chicago with the group on their 1979 US tour. "I'd been doing some sketches for their third album sleeve. The Clash were mutating from punks to rockers and this seemed a perfect way to encapsulate the collision of rock'n'roll with punk in their music and image."

Pennie Smith, the group's photographer, captured the infamous snap of Paul Simonon smashing his bass at New York Palladium on September 21. "She wasn't happy with the shot because it was blurred but we convinced her it was the right one to use. After all the cover of Dylan's *Blonde On Blonde* had been out of focus so why couldn't The Clash's?"

The album title's lettering was copied from the Elvis cover by Lowry in the back



of the tour bus. "It was hand drawn, coloured in black and then sent to the printers who added the pink and green." The finishing touches were added at the CBS art department. "We cropped the picture, slapped on The Clash logo. Joe insisted it be matt not gloss. But working at CBS was a nightmare. They were designing Shakin' Stevens' single Hot Dog. I was the flaky shit in the corner they ignored."

For the reissue package, Lowry has found his original rough sketch for the sleeve and several illustrations and doodles from the time. "Mainly of Joe and Mick rehearsing, or playing on-stage. I wanted to capture the moment in a unique, thrilling and spontaneous way."





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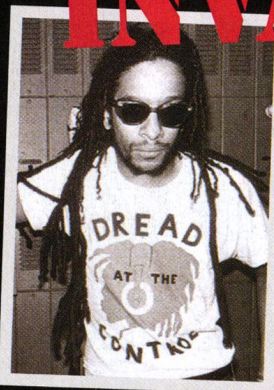
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ROUGH  
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# THE EYEWITNESS AMERICAN INVASION PT.2



But where to go after *London Calling*? Clash DJ and documentarist **Don Letts** (left) takes us on the road to *Sandinista!*

"IN THE summer of '81, I went to New York to film The Clash and the hip hop thing was bubbling. When we came to town, it was still only happening in the Bronx and Harlem, but The Clash realised – just like they realised with reggae in London – that they could align themselves to this growing rebel sound. When we heard The Adventures Of Grandmaster Flash On The Wheels Of Steel for the first time, I can't tell you how amazing it was. I remember me and the

guys almost dropping to our knees, it was like, What the fuck is that? Total trip.

"The Clash were there to do a couple of gigs at Bonds in Times Square, the gigs got sold out and they ended up having to do 17 shows back to back. In amongst all this mess and palaver, there was a riot because some of the fans thought they wouldn't get in. It wasn't tear gas, it wasn't the Notting Hill Riots, but it made the front page of The New York Post. They said it was the first riot in Times Square since the bobby soxers rioted for Frank Sinatra in the 1950s. We're talking about punk kids jumping up and down on cars and screaming and police on their horses chasing them back and forth. I don't think there was any blood drawn.

"One of the bold things The Clash did at Bonds was to put Grandmaster Flash on as one of their supporting acts. But the audience at those shows, they didn't wanna hear no rap, they didn't wanna see no black people, period. You could tell that was the case by the amount of bottles and beer cans that were flying through the air.

"Obviously, for the band, the hip hop influence fed into things like The Magnificent Seven and This Is Radio Clash. The hip stations at that time were Kiss and WBLS and they picked up on the B-side of Magnificent Seven [The Magnificent Dance] and put some dialogue over it and they were kicking this track ten times a day.

"As the Bonds thing went on, The Clash had on Lee Perry and Allen Ginsberg and you had De Niro and Scorsese turning up to the gigs. It has to be said, for the time The Clash were in New York, they ran New York."

◀ CIA-friendly rival Edward Seaga. The violence before and after the voting claimed over 1,000 lives. Jamaica was a war-zone.

The Clash hired a couple of beaten-up cars and drove downtown to Channel One. Opened in 1972, the studio had been used by scores of reggae greats, from Gregory Isaacs and Alton Ellis to Big Youth and The Mighty Diamonds. It was located on Maxfield Avenue in the notorious Maxfield Park ghetto. Paul, who had grown up in Brixton and Notting Hill, had been incensed at being excluded from Mick and Joe's 1978 writing trip to Jamaica. Now, he was thrilled to be in the bosom of his beloved reggae. He was, however, under no illusions about the everyday realities of Kingston life.

"It was fucking frightening," recalls Simonon. "It was like Dodge City. Especially Kingston. More extreme than The Harder They Come. We were lucky, we had Mikey Dread. I got on really well with him. My musical upbringing meant we could cross-reference on records. He took me on a tour of Kingston and introduced me to a guy who'd been shot 17 times, and a guy with revolvers strapped his ankles. He'd caught someone robbing a bank and made them crawl all the way back to the police station – he was famous all over the island."

Blockhead Mickey Gallagher, Topper Headon, Mick Jones and Mikey Dread will all agree that, while never the flashiest bass player in town, Simonon had a natural feel and aptitude for reggae. "Paul was a good reggae bass-player," says Dread. "He was deep into reggae music and understood reggae music."

Paul and Mikey became fast friends. "I liked him as a person," says Dread. "We have a very special relationship. He was very friendly and tried to make me feel comfortable. They came over to my house. Topper was a good drummer. Strummer was on top of things, being a politician – he was interested in the issues facing black people and white people. Mick I couldn't figure out in all the time I was there. He was the one who was picking on everyone else. I'm not being negative. He was a very chilled guy. But he was more like a superstar, you know?"

The group set up their gear and got to work on a reggaefied version of the old New Orleans standard Junco Partner, which Joe had first performed in his pre-punk group The 101ers. Word got around that a white, foreign group were working in Maxfield Park. Crowds began gathering in and around the studio.

Mikey Dread: "The studio was full of people every day, Rasta! I didn't even recognise The Clash in there because it was like a big house party. There were a lot of beers. Everyone was partying, there was no control. They came to look at what was going on, not to be disrespectful, but to see for themselves.

"Then other elements took place," he continues. "We had some rental cars. Everyone knew Mikey Dread, so when I came outside to leave, there'd be people who'd say, 'Mikey, we washed the cars.' But I didn't leave anyone outside to wash the cars. They wanted me to get some money from The Clash, they knew they were foreigners. All right, so we paid the guys to wash the cars. Then there are guys who are *watching* the cars, like security, so they want some money too. So we're paying them and every day it's worse. I had to explain it wasn't in the budget. It was going crazy. People are threatening me. I don't think anyone in Jamaica was gonna harm them, but I didn't want to risk anybody's life in the ghetto. It was money, money, money."

The mood became heavy and dangerous. Mikey Dread advised The Clash to pack their things into the hire cars and get out of town quick.

They did. The group did a runner from the Sheraton and holed up in Montego Bay, waiting for Blackhill to telex them some more cash. After they'd escaped from Jamaica, Paul went to Vancouver for a month to work on a Lou Adler-produced film which would eventually surface as *Ladies And Gentlemen*, *The Fabulous Stains*. Meanwhile, Joe, Mick and Topper flew to New York. The idea was to get some new material down on tape. Joe and Topper checked into James Dean's old haunt in New York, the Iroquois Hotel on West 44th Street.

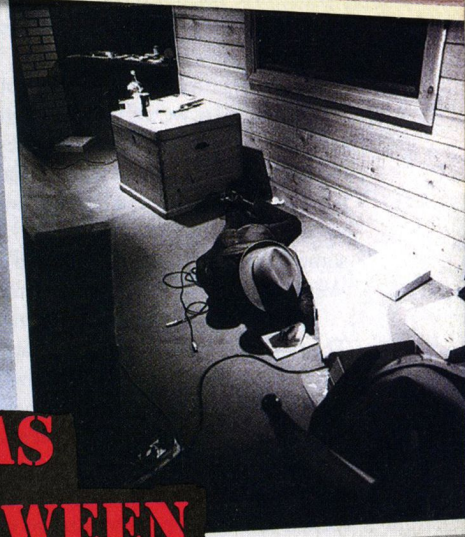
Blackhill adhered to the prevailing management strategy of that time – record an album every year and tour as much as possible. Everyone was keen for a follow-up to *London Calling* for the pre-Christmas market on both



King of New York!  
Joe with Blondie's  
Chris Stein and  
Debbie Harry.



The Clash in session at Wessex (top left and right), and Channel One studio, Jamaica. "It was fucking frightening!" says Simonon.



## **"THERE WAS MAGIC BETWEEN JOE AND MICK. THE FRICTION MADE EVERYTHING INTERESTING."**

sides of the Atlantic. Joe and Mick found a free slot at The Power Station on 53rd Street in midtown Manhattan. Mikey Dread was in tow. According to Dread, the idea at that time was still for the group to cut a reggae/dub record.

It was accepted that Mick and Joe would oversee the sessions, with their regular engineer from Wessex Studios in London, Bill Price, operating the desk. Mikey initially assumed he was the producer. But Price states, "He was never introduced to me or anyone else as 'the producer'." This confusing arrangement would later result in bad feeling between Dread and The Clash's management. But it was typical of how The Clash operated: chaotically.

The Power Station worked on 12-hour shifts, starting and finishing at 10 o'clock. The Clash shared the studio with Chic and Diana Ross. The main room was in the shape of a huge, wooden tetrahedron, which supposedly produced a "New Age sound". A microphone was placed where all the surfaces met to capture the studio's magical vibrations.

"We were scheduled for the 10am to 10pm slot," recalls Bill Price. "It wouldn't normally have suited The Clash but they were so tour-lagged that it really didn't matter which time of day you were working. Then after a week, everybody was so wiped out from being in New York it was actually easier to get people in the studio at 10 in the morning, because they were still up from the night before."

"Then, at 10pm, Nile Rodgers from Chic would float in three or four feet above the ground in a blurred haze. He'd tell everyone how much he loved them, then fall into a chair in the back of the control room. Normally he was wearing a yellow tracksuit and huge pair of orange headphones with a radio aerial sticking out of them. He was a very nice chap. And quite brilliant, of course."

Mick, Joe and Topper started by recording a few covers: The Equals' Police On My Back, Louie Louie, Prince Buster's Madness, Roger Miller's King Of The Road. Mick played bass. After a few days, the money ran out. The Clash wanted to continue working in New York.

There were frantic calls to Soho Square and negotiations with Oberstein and Epic to acquire more funds. Eventually, Kosmo secured the group a cut-price, three-week block-booking at Electric Lady, the studio Jimi Hendrix had built in the late '60s at 52 West 8th Street. Psychedelic starship murals still adorned the walls. Upstairs, The Rolling Stones were working on *Emotional Rescue*.

The covers recorded at the Power Station exposed the alarming fact that The Clash hadn't written one new song. This seemingly didn't present a problem: with a cavalier flourish, Joe and Mick declared they'd write the album there and then. It would be an experiment in naked creativity. The vibe was to be inclusive and fun. *London Calling* had widened their palette to include R&B, jazz, soul and funk: now, stylistically, nothing was ruled out. The free-for-all atmosphere inspired Mick to track down Richard Hell & The Voidoids' guitarist Ivan Julian, whom the group had befriended when Hell had supported The Clash in 1977. "They put the word out that they were looking for me, and I thought it was just to hang out and say hello," says Ivan. "But I think they were looking for some inspiration. We were sitting around talking and they were playing back the basic track of The Call Up. I thought, I gotta play on that! So I jammed some chord changes over the main riff for about an hour and a half."

Ivan felt the Joe-Mick axis was firing on all cylinders. "They worked very well together," he says. "There was a little tension, but only the kind any two people who spent hours together would have. Perhaps Mick would push people when it was sometimes uncalled for. But there weren't rows as such."

On Easter Monday, April 7, 1980, the Blockheads' keyboardist Mickey Gallagher and bass player Norman Watt-Roy arrived from London. Mickey had contributed to *London Calling* and was now an integral part of The Clash set-up. Norman was there to deputise for the absent Simonon. According to Gallagher, Watt-Roy agreed to the trip only "under great duress". What they discovered was mayhem. ➤



# “ON SANDINISTA! THERE WEREN’T MANY OCCASIONS WHEN YOU HAD THE WHOLE BAND IN THE STUDIO AT THE SAME TIME.”

“We got out there and went to the studios,” recalls Mickey. “The engineer and Mick were there. We said, Right, let’s hear your songs, and Mick said, ‘We’ve only got one’ and they played some cover. I said, It’s not even your fucking song! The second day we arrived at the studio. Right, what’ve we got? The engineer said, ‘Fuck all, they haven’t arrived yet.’ So Norman and I sat down and started jamming, and played what became *The Magnificent Seven*. Then the guys started rolling up and said, ‘Oh yeah, that’s good.’ Topper came in and put some drums on and Joe disappeared and started writing lyrics. We did a few more like that, just jamming off the cuff.”

The downtown New York setting infected Joe and Mick. The city was buzzing with a new form of music: rap. Joe and Sylvia Robinson’s Sugarhill label was revolutionising dance music. Kool Herc’s experiments with break-beats a couple of years earlier had created a whole new vocabulary. Funk and dance music was everywhere. So was graffiti art. Joe and Mick locked into the vibe, encouraged no doubt by their meeting with Chic, who had assumed the mantle of the rap progenitors after The Sugarhill Gang had appropriated the bass line of *Good Times*.

With the help of Gallagher and Watt-Roy’s talent for funk, The Clash’s *The Magnificent Seven* and *Lightning Strikes* became the first rap tracks cut by a white British group. “The rap thing was Mick Jones,” explained Joe. “He got heavily into it. He ended up doing a dance mix of *The Magnificent Seven* which became a big hit on WBLS, a black music station in New York.”

Meanwhile, The Clash were roping in more old friends to help out. Joe’s compadre from his busking years, Tymon Dogg, was in town. He’d bumped into Mick in Greenwich Village, where he was performing at Folk City. Times had changed since Tymon had been warned off The Clash camp in 1976 during Bernie Rhodes’ first anti-hippy purges. The last time they’d met, Tymon had been wearing a military uniform. One side of his head had been shaved army-short; on the other his hair was long and unkempt. “I was in a right state, wasn’t I?” Tymon laughed. Mick whipped back: “Half of you was.”

Jones told Tymon he was in the process of switching hotels. The one Blackhill had booked him into had apparently been too crummy. He ribbed Tymon, “You and Joe would have liked it.” Mick was trying to snaffle a suite at the Gramercy Park, where John F. Kennedy had lived as a boy and where a 27-year-old Humphrey Bogart had married actress Helen Mencken on the roof garden. Mick played Tymon some of the material they’d recorded at Electric Lady, and said, “What d’ya reckon?” Tymon replied, “It sounds like your new hotel room.”

Tymon, meanwhile, played Mick a Cajun-flavoured reel of his called *Lose This Skin*. The next day, he got a call from Joe asking him down to the studio to record it properly for the album. Joe and Tymon’s meeting was symbolic: it was as if the mind-fuck of punk hadn’t happened. Gone were the ideological and personal divisions created by Bernie. The two instantly renewed their friendship. “Had Joe changed? No,” says Tymon. “Joe was always somewhere between Woody Guthrie and Elvis Presley.”

New York’s 24-hour madness meant there were plenty of distractions. Joe claimed to have spent the whole three weeks holed up in the “spliff bunker” he’d built in the main studio. Topper, however, became a man about town. Bill Price remembers him simply not showing up on a number of days. If he over-indulged on drink and drugs, he wouldn’t



The Clash at Electric Ladyland (above), to which they returned in ‘81, and on the road with Mickey Gallagher (second left).

leave his room. Several times he had to be bailed out of police custody. “I had the misfortune of being in the hotel room next to his,” says Price. “You’d be banging on his door for hours. It would be like, ‘Where’s Topper?’

‘Oh, unfortunately he’s in the tank – the police holding cell.’”

The sessions became chaotic and dissipated. Often, Bill would be sitting around on his own waiting for the group to arrive. When he got bored he popped upstairs to see his old mate Chris Kimsey, experiencing an even more lonely and fragmented life recording *Emotional Rescue*. “To be honest,” says Price, “on *Sandinista!* there weren’t many occasions when you had the whole band in the studio at the same time. The only person there the whole time was me. A lot of the songs were started as ideas by one or two people on bizarre instruments, quite a lot by Topper, actually. He’d wander over and find a marimba in the corner and play a little something which eventually became a song. The whole process of piecing stuff together was made possible because Topper was such a fabulous musician.”

The songs kept coming. Joe and Mick were intoxicated by their new environment. It was the most time they’d spent in a city that wasn’t London. At a time when England had only three TV stations, they were wowed by America’s seemingly endless number of channels. They absorbed American issues, culture and politics. They attracted radicals and crazies, Vietnam vets and college intellectuals. They rode the A-train. As dedicated nightbirds, they stayed up till dawn in bars and illegal drinking clubs around Greenwich Village and on the Lower East Side. Mean Streets imagery seeped into the songs. Joe soaked in the *Zeitgeist*: his political interests were broadened by radical American friends like Moe Armstrong. He was developing an international vision. Joe had been writing about Vietnam as far back as 1977’s *I’m So Bored With The USA*, but now he was passionately embracing other American causes. The *Call Up* was written about the draft, still an issue in the States. *Washington Bullets* listed trouble spots around the world destabilised by CIA black ops – Joe’s “*Sandinista!*” ad lib referred to the Nicaraguan people’s army who’d overthrown their right-wing government in 1979. *Charlie Don’t Surf* referenced Robert Duvall’s famous line in *Apocalypse Now* – Francis Ford Coppola’s psychedelic jungle odyssey would nourished the group’s Vietnam jag for the next two years. ➤





"Listen to this!" Barry 'Scratchy' Myers, Clash tour DJ from '78-'80, indulges in a spot of, er, scratching on the band's first US tour.

◀ The Clash returned to London for a couple of weeks before heading out for the European leg of the 16 Tons tour. In a gesture of solidarity with 2-Tone, Paul and Joe dispensed with their Hollywood quiffs and each had a brutal skinhead cut. The dates would be the last Clash shows for over 10 months.

**A**UGUST 2003. THE CLASH'S former tour DJ Barry 'Scratchy' Myers and I are wandering around Wessex Studios. The facility is in the process of being broken up and moved to another location. The studio is in the former church hall of St Augustine's on Highbury New Park, a wide, tree-lined thoroughfare five minutes' walk from Arsenal's ground in north London. Even though workmen are dismantling baffles and unplugging sound equipment, it still has the atmosphere of a theatre stage: lone piano, high-vaulted roof, long drapes, empty floor-space. It looks as if it's vainly waiting for the ghosts of The Clash to saunter in and bring it to life one last time. Little has changed since turn of the '80s – certainly not the threadbare carpets. The plastic chairs Guy Stevens hurled around in the *London Calling* sessions are still here.

Sessions for *Sandinista!* re-started in Wessex in mid-August 1980 and continued until the end of September. CBS had finally capitulated to the group's demand to release *Bankrobber* and in August it reached Number 12. The group's continuing refusal to appear on *Top Of The Pops* resulted in the amusing sight of the programme's then resident dancers, Legs & Co, skanking to it behind handkerchief masks.

At Wessex, there was more puzzlement than ever about who was in charge. Mikey Dread felt he was gradually being marginalised. "I think it was management decision," he says. "I wanted to take it to a higher level. Nobody said anything, but I got the feeling the management wanted to take them away from the reggae. When I went to New York everything changed. They wanted to bring in all these different producers and take away the project from Mikey Dread.

"This was another hurdle because we had a project to do. They selected me, I never selected them."

Bill Price: "Mikey Dread got involved in specific songs and was very instrumental in certain things. But maybe he didn't realise there were another 40 songs besides the ones he was working on. Nobody ever explained to me what Mikey's official role was."

Mick: "There was never a plan. We never knew what was going to happen next."

Naturally, Paul was interested in pursuing the reggae/dub tack. He wrote and sang *Crooked Beat*, about a midnight run to a blues party

# TUNE!

Top five Clash tour sounds. By DJ Barry 'Scratchy' Myers.

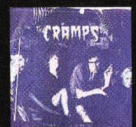
**Dr. Alimantado Born For A Purpose/Reason For Living** (CHANNEL ONE 7"/GREENSLEEVES 12" 1977)



Ska and reggae figured massively in the Clash camp, along with the best in R&B, rock'n'roll and spaghetti western soundtracks. From a towering pile of 45s, 12-inches and LPs I have to go with this eternal fave and sometime show closer. Says it all.

**Available on:** *Scratchy Sounds: Ska, Dub, Roots And Reggae Nuggets* (TROJAN CD)

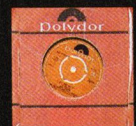
**Cramps Human Fly/Domino** (VENGEANCE 7-IN 1978)



On tour The Clash had local bands as openers. In New York it was The Cramps – the wildness of The Stooges with a garage screech and a rockabilly yelp.

**Available on:** *Gravest Hits* (EMI CD)

**Jamo Thomas & His Party Brothers Orchestra I Spy (For The FBI)** (POLYDOR 7-IN '66)



The Clash subjected their audiences to their various musical influences. That's why Bo Diddley, Sam And Dave, Lee Dorsey and Screamin' Jay Hawkins featured on the first three US tours and why I had the freedom to play this 1966 soul stomper.

**Available on:** *The Curtom Story* (UNION SQUARE CD)

**Dr. Feelgood Take A Tip** (UA 7-INCH 1978)



Powerhouse Canvey Island R&B, this B-side to *Down At The Doctors*, contains the immortal lines: "Take a little tip from Mr Johnny Green/ Keep your rear-view mirror clean," penned with The Clash's personal road-manager in mind.

**Available on:** *Private Practice* (GRAND CD)

**Little Junior Parker Feelin' Good** (SUN 7-IN 1953)



There was a constant air of "Listen to this!" around the Clash, a mutual desire to be turned on to great sounds. This utterly infectious R'n'B/rockabilly hybrid had all the right ingredients and certainly makes you wanna "boogie 'til the break of day."

**Available on:** *The Legendary Story Of Sun Records* (UNION SQUARE CD)

*Barry Myers' CD compilation, Scratchy Sounds: Ska, Dub, Roots and Reggae Nuggets is due for release on Trojan Records on October 25, 2004.*

south of the river. A humid, soulful Jamaican vibe permeated *Living In Fame*, *Shepherd's Delight*, *The Equaliser*, *Corner Soul*. Dread also produced dub and version mixes of *One More Time* and *Junco Partner*.

Topper was pleased to have Simonon back in the studio. "Paul was brilliant," says Headon. "When I played with Norman Watt-Roy, he'd go off somewhere on the bass, I'd go off on the drums, and you sometimes didn't know where you were. With Paul, he played so solidly you could just lock back in with him. I loved his bass playing."

A small army of friends and musicians pitched in to help: The Darts' Den Hegarty, the Barnacle brothers, various Blockheads, Mick's girlfriend Ellen Foley, Topper's dog Battersea. Tracks were fleshed out with piano, Hammond, sax, harmonica, bells, vibes, melodica.

Getting a handle on the mood of the sessions is difficult. It's indicative of The Clash's unique internal physics that some recall it as a swinging party, others as a moody, volatile marathon. Pearl Harbor, the group's friend from San Francisco and an ex-Tube, had moved to London in January 1980 and was now romantically involved with Paul.

"I was sitting in there while they were creating [the album] and they were having so much fun," Pearl says. "Paul was becoming a much better bass player and his influence on their music was growing. Topper was one of the greatest musicians ever, really, so I think he was enjoying the experimentation. Joe definitely was."

Bill Price was witness to darker moments. These largely concerned the volatile songwriting partnership at the heart of The Clash. The situation he describes is one of a creative marriage already showing signs of burn-out.

"Mick and Joe were up and down about lots of things," Bill explains. "Their fights used to get really bad, and if they could maintain a musical relationship that was pretty much all that could be expected. Occasionally,

it got so bad they couldn't even really do that."

"Me and Joe were the greatest collaborators and partners, but we were also our greatest rivals," explains Mick. "It's only natural for the songwriters in a band. It needs that to push it forwards all the time."

The problems were compounded by the ideological framework the group operated in. "Musical differences would escalate into political differences," Price says. "The sound of a guitar note would grow until it represented capitalism for one and socialism for the other. It was never shouting matches. More like silences and withdrawals."

Bill stresses, however, that on other days Joe and Mick were the best of pals. It was an unstable chemistry, he says, that "was best not poked at if you were working with them".

Peter Jenner: "There was magic between Joe and Mick, a Lennon-McCartney thing. They complemented each other: the toughness Joe had and the musicality that Mick had. It was the friction between them that made everything interesting."

The long, muggy summer provided the group with plenty of opportunities to soak up the atmosphere of their hometown. They attended Carnival together. Their west London habitat provided the final ➤



# "IT WAS ALL GETTING A BIT WEIRD. DRUGS WERE FLYING AROUND. WHITE POWDERS OF SOME SORT."

◀ psycho-geographical charge: *Sandinista!*'s invisible tag-line was Kingston JA-New York-Ladbroke Grove. But there were problems. The inevitable downtime between sessions

gave Topper every chance he needed to get into trouble. He'd moved into a two-bed flat down by the Thames on the corner of Hestercombe Avenue and Fulham Road. His intake of cocaine and heroin increased.

Peter Jenner was concerned enough with his condition to bring it up with the group. "It was all getting a bit weird because the drugs were flying around. I said, Let's go easy on the drugs front. There were white powders of some sort. I didn't know what, and I didn't want to know. We have some drug problems here, I explained, but I was told to fuck off and mind my own business."

"I get bored easily, that's my downfall," says Topper, who these days is clean, and back living in the village near Dover he was brought up in. "I was gradually losing any sense of reality with the drugs and air guns and throwing things out of windows. It was just live fast and smash everything up."

Drugs were beginning to affect Topper's reliability, but not his performances. If anything, he was rising to the challenge of The Clash's stylistic freedom. "When we started covering Mose Allison I knew we weren't a punk band any more," he laughs. "I enjoyed playing all that stuff and it brought out the best in me."

By the end of September, it was clear there was enough material for at least a double album. In an act of defiant bravado, The Clash decided they wanted to release *Sandinista!* as a triple. It seemed a ludicrously extravagant move considering their Spartan punk origins. "I remember thinking, Is this some kind of bloated arrogance?" Strummer told Paul Du Noyer early in 1981. "I could imagine some US group doing it, Styx or Foreigner, all them overblown outfits. But then I figured that if we could get it for the same price as one, then more power to us."

Jenner and King strongly advised the group against a 3-LP set. They believed a low-priced triple would be fiscal suicide. It would make it even harder for the group, now around £500,000 in the red, to free themselves from debt. They also thought the album was "full of padding". Their protests fell on deaf ears (Jenner: "They told me to fuck off"). Kosmo was dispatched to negotiate a deal with Muff Winwood and Maurice Oberstein at CBS. An agreement was struck whereby The Clash could have a triple that retailed at £5.99 – if they waived their performance royalties on the first 200,000 copies.

Since *London Calling* had sold around 180,000 in the UK, this amounted to writing off all their UK sales. The deal marked the beginning of the end of The Clash-Blackhill relationship. Jenner and King felt there was little point in carrying on if their advice was being ignored. They also believe to this day that the group were unsuspecting pawns in a secret plot by CBS to remove Blackhill as The Clash's management.

"Maurice Oberstein was brilliant with the group and went behind our backs after we realised we could shorten their contract," opines Jenner, who'd twigged The Clash's contract wasn't for five albums, as they'd thought, but for as many as 13. "The speed with which we got blown out was remarkable. The key was that Christmas when everyone was skint and Obie personally gave them £1,000 each. He suddenly became Uncle Obie, a person whom they could go to and sort out their problems. They didn't realise he was the problem."

*Sandinista!* was released in the UK on December 12. It wasn't an easy album to get your head round back then, and still isn't now. Over three discs, there are some 145 min-

utes of music. That's an hour and a half more than on *The Clash*. Taken individually, most of the tracks proudly pass muster; some (Broadway, Somebody Got Murdered, Something About England) are clearly among the group's very best. The range of styles is disorientating: calypso, waltzes, jazzy laments, gospel, bebop, dub and rap. These joined the existing armoury of funk, reggae, jazz, rockabilly and rock. There's also some silly nonsense: Mickey Gallagher's kids singing Career Opportunities.

Jenner argues, "It would have made a great double or a killer single."

Deadlines were so tight for the release date that Kosmo hand-delivered the three discs to NME's Nick Kent, so he could write his review over the weekend of December 7-8 for inclusion in the following week's paper. Kosmo probably wished he hadn't bothered. Kent gave it a royal kicking. Words that stung included "tepid" and "demoralised"... "the record simply perplexes and ultimately depresses," he wrote. The savage *coup de grâce* was his remark that he wondered why The Clash bothered carrying on. This from the man who had so loyally stuck with them through their previous evolutions.

As Christmas 1980 approached, Joe couldn't help feeling that they'd blown it. Their crazy, magnanimous, 3-LP gesture had backfired – in the UK, at least. The Call Up, released as a single in November, stiffed at Number 40 and the album itself peaked at a disappointing 19. The adulation heaped on *London Calling* a year earlier counted for little in a business that judges you by your last record.

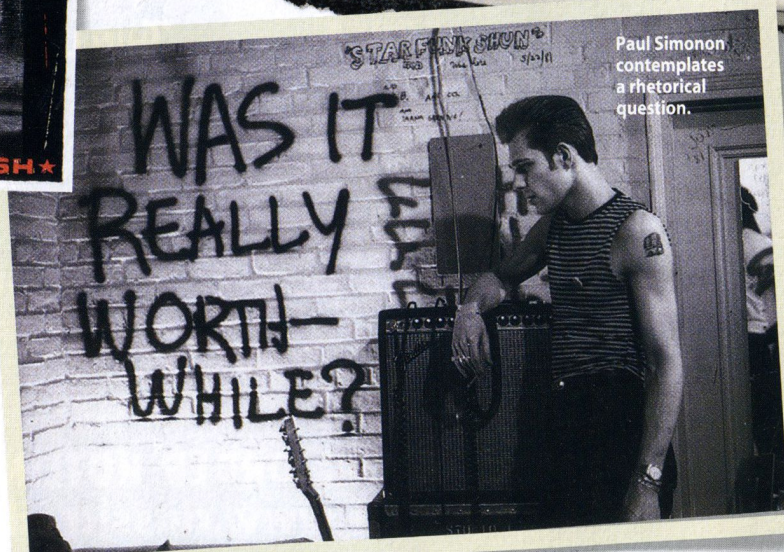
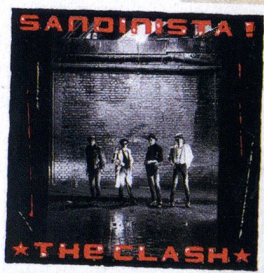
It was while pacing the frosty streets of Notting Hill in January 1981 that Joe bumped into Bernie Rhodes outside a Wimpy bar. Joe took Bernie's number and said he'd give him a ring. The reconciliation would be against the wishes of Mick Jones. Ultimately, it would spell the end of The Clash. M



This is an edited extract from *Passion Is A Fashion: The Real Story Of The Clash* by Pat Gilbert, to be published in October by Aurum Press at £18.99. MOJO readers can pre-order a copy at a special offer price of £16.99 (£18.99 to overseas readers) including postage and packing by calling 01903 828503 and quoting reference AUR162.

Pennie Smith

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