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VIVE LE ROCK

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BELFAST
NORTHERN IRELAND'S
PUNK EXPLOSION

FROM CLASH CITY ROCKERS
★
THE
CLASH
★
SANDINISTA!
★
TO NEW YORK CITY REBELS

WALTER LURE & TOOTS HIBBERT REMEMBERED

THE BOYS HUNG LIKE HANRATTY DANSE SOCIETY WILLIAMSON/TEK THERAPY

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VIVE LE ROCK!

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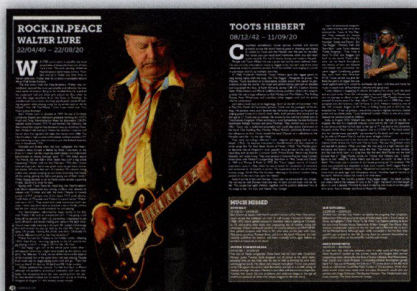


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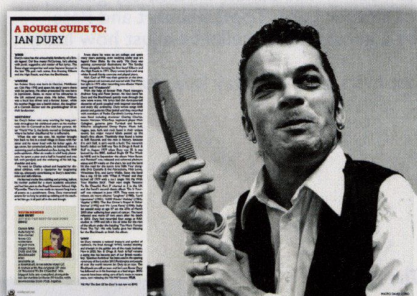


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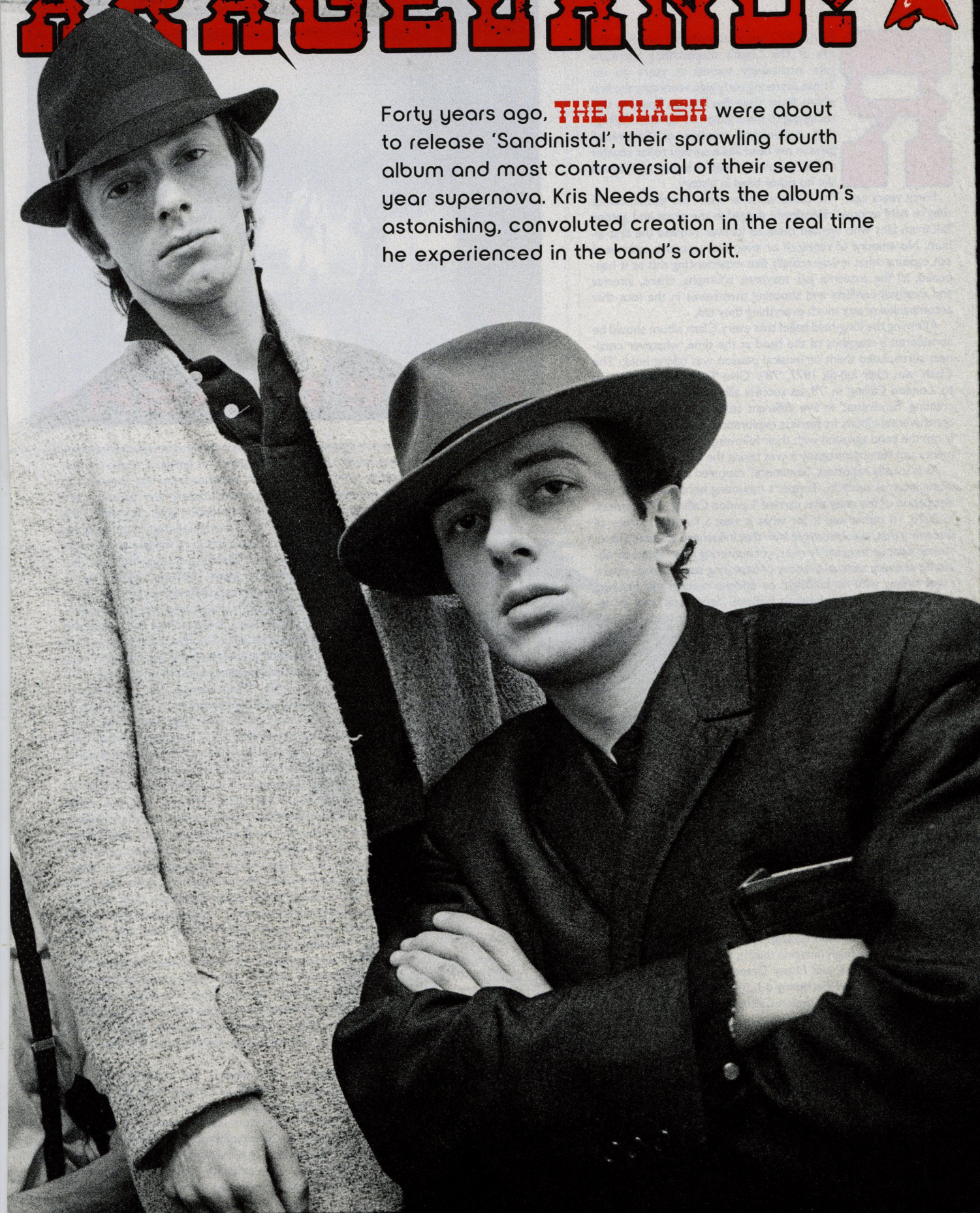


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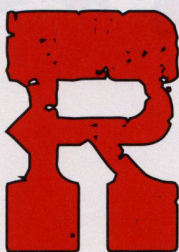
ARRAGELAND! ★

Forty years ago, **THE CLASH** were about to release 'Sandinista!', their sprawling fourth album and most controversial of their seven year supernova. Kris Needs charts the album's astonishing, convoluted creation in the real time he experienced in the band's orbit.



"We never wanted to be totally up in a box. We didn't care. We just tried anything we wanted. We always took on the music that was going on around us and made it our own."

Mick Jones



RECALLING seven tumultuous years in the eye of The Clash's shapeshifting hurricane gets increasingly surreal as years go on. Those blistering early gigs, recording the first album, from 'Give 'Em Enough Rope' to skyrocketing to the triumph of 'London Calling', then convoluted creation of 'Sandinista!' plays in my head like a surreal roller coaster movie, partnered with a legacy and legend like no other band in history.

Forty years ago, The Clash were far from the deified beings they're held as now, relentlessly slagged in the press and getting flak from fans who wanted them to forever retrace the first album. No amount of research or even retrospective interviews can capture what it was actually like experiencing this as it happened; all the extreme joy, mayhem, triumphs, chaos, internal and external conflicts and shooting themselves in the foot that accompanied pretty much everything they did.

Affirming the long-held belief that every Clash album should be considered a snapshot of the band at the time, whatever craziness surrounded them or musical passion was taking hold: 'The Clash' was their full-tilt 1977, '78's 'Give 'Em Enough Rope' led to 'London Calling' in '79, its success allowing 1980 to be spent creating 'Sandinista!' in five different studios. The Clash's most controversial album, its fearless exploration and indulgence nearly ran the band aground with their following, blinkered press elements and record company it was taking the piss out of.

As is usually reported, 'Sandinista!' captured a splintering band facing internal conflicts, Topper's mounting heroin problem and dissipation of the unity that carried 'London Calling' to greatness. In 2020, I'd rather see it for what it was; a fearless journey of discovery that, like *Apocalypse Now* that influenced it, moved like a stoned boat up its creative river, encountering new visions or obstacles at every turn; an odyssey of exploring sound. From where I was sitting, with no hindsight or endless rantings yet belching from the music establishment's bottom, 'Sandinista!' was an unfettered blast; studded with highs and great songs featuring Joe's fine-crafted lyrics and Mick's burgeoning studio suss transforming its sonic aura into a radioactive dub forest.

Just as it's simply not possible to capture The Clash's live impact in words without having experienced their full-bore charge with Topper on drums, writing with any authority about '70s-'80s New York and the bands it produced can't be done without having experienced the city's high-voltage buzz, beautiful chaos, dangerous edge and unbridled hedonism; often happening all at the same time. Although started in Jamaica and finished in London, 'Sandinista!' is The Clash's New York album, reflecting the city at this seminal, transitional time when hip-hop, post-disco dance music and post-punk were throwing startling new mutants against the ever-changing skyline. Straddling all three, The Clash's sprawling triple album predicted the upcoming decade simply by capturing the state of punk's most forward-thinking band at that particular time; from definitive punk group, they became the ultimate post-punk band.

The road to 'Sandinista!' starts in January 1980 on the 16 Tons Tour promoting 'London Calling'. After support act Toots and the Maytals fell through (Imagine that?!), enter Jamaican DJ-coaster Michael Campbell, aka Mikey Dread. Inevitably, they would work together, Mikey becoming a huge presence on the album. The Clash had to follow 'London Calling' with. Rather than standing still and retreading any formulas, they wanted to take the next step - with Mikey as co-pilot.

I remember when tapes of his Dread At The Controls radio show for the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation started filtering into London around '77, followed by pre-release 45s produced under the wing of King Tubby. We sat there laughing at the bonkers exclamations, jingles and sound effects while grooving to the heavyweight rhythms, the show also featuring rib-rattling dub plates given him by Lee Perry and King Tubby. In some UK circles, Mikey was a legendary figure by the time his show stopped in 1978, compounded by '79's album debuts 'African Anthem: The Mikey Dread Show Dubwise' and 'Dread At The Controls'.



Above: The album's iconic cover was shot by Pennie Smith (who had also shot the London Calling album cover) behind King's Cross Station in London. On the original photograph you can see West Ham graffiti that was removed from the actual Sandinista! LP cover artwork. The group had recently finished shooting a video for 'The Call Up', and Mick Jones is still wearing the helmet he wore for the filming.

Mikey joined the tour a few dates in as Jamaican studio royalty, yet had to contend with racist boneheads hurling abuse as he opened the evening's entertainment toasting over backing track rhythms. It uncannily echoed the reception given Suicide on the '78 jaunt, but they were old hands facing down ignorant violence. With Mikey, The Clash took direct action to validate and protect him from these hapless twerps. During last song, 'Rockers Delight', Mikey would be joined by seven skanking masked men in trilby hats, shades, long coats and bandanas obscuring their faces. The audience usually didn't have a clue it was Joe, Jonesy, Johnny Green, Robin Banks, Jock Scott, Kosmo Vinyl and a skinhead called Don they'd bailed out of jail in Dundee. Joining the tour in Stafford, I got recruited when Joe went down with flu, borrowing his coat, hat and the red bandana hanging there on the wall.

As Mikey told me in 2004, "There were a lot of times I been to places where skinheads and punks wanted to kick my butt, as a black man, and The Clash would warn me, 'Tomorrow, don't go out alone, have one of us follow you.'"

This punky reggae solidarity set the scene for 'Sandinista!'. It also cemented the bond that spilled inevitably into the studio when The Clash took two days off and booked into Manchester's Pluto Studios to record 'The Bank Robbing Song' that'd been gestating on the tour. Joe's original versions followed punk then 'Rudie Can't Fail' ska routes before Mikey suggested his poignant vocal would sound most effective against a slow, heavy dub backdrop. After stoned studio experimentation, they emerged with the classic original, enhanced by Volga boatmen chorale and Mick's perfectly-spaced guitar, plus 'Robber Dub' and Mikey's toast version 'Rockers Galore...UK Tour'.

'Bankrobber' was planned as first shot in what Joe called 'The Clash Singles Bonanza', where a new single would be fired out every month. But CBS boss Maurice 'Obie' Oberstein hated the track, likening it to "all David Bowie's records being played backwards at the same time", storming to Heathrow Airport to tell the band just that as they waited to board a plane for their third US tour.

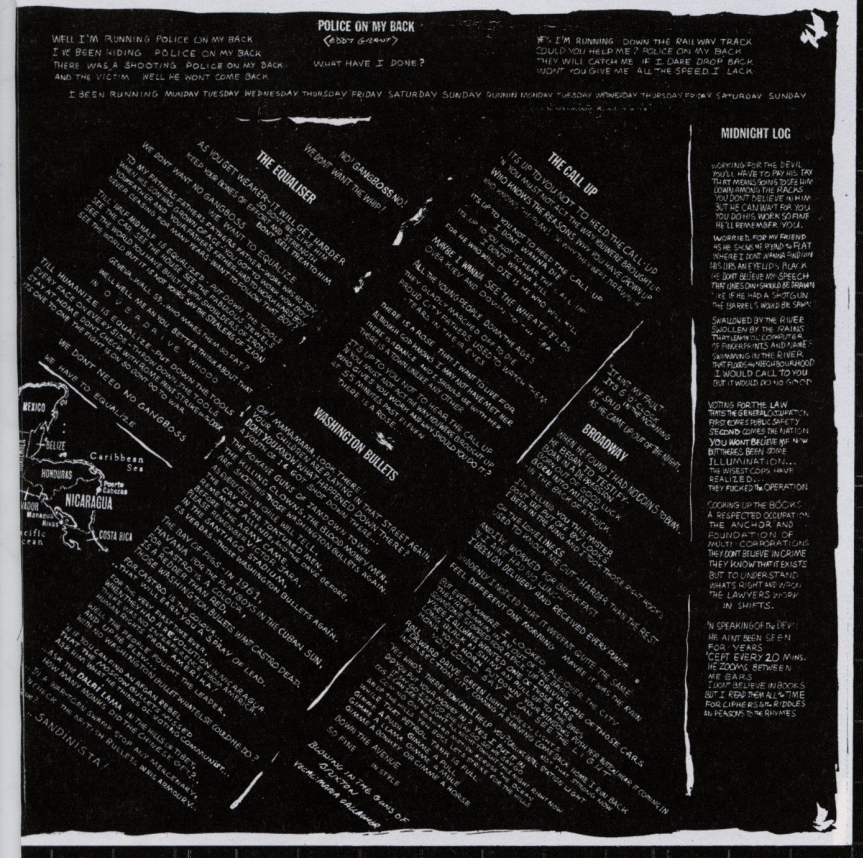
I'd first met Obie in 1973 when I was running Mott The Hoople's fan club and the amiable old school New Yorker was rising through the ranks to become one of the most powerful figures in the music biz. Next time we met was at the 'London Calling' sessions (when Guy Stevens famously lay down in front of his Rolls Royce). The success of the album The Clash had deftly upped to a double was already catapulting The Clash into the big league, so Obie predictably demanded more of the same on its follow up. ▶

"There were a lot of times I been to places where skinheads and punks wanted to kick my butt, as a black man, and The Clash would warn me, 'Tomorrow, don't go out alone, have one of us follow you.'"

Mikey Dread







were blessed to have Topper nailing their grooves with his effortless precision pulses and the amazing flexibility displayed on 'London Calling'. All he had to do was reach back to the soul groups he'd played with a few years earlier. The Clash never could have got so heavily and effectively into this style without him.

"I like to think so," he agrees. "But the hip-hop was Mick more than anyone. What I thought I did was, if Joe wanted to play rock 'n' roll, I could play it. If Mick wanted to play hip-hop, I could play it. If Paul wanted to play reggae, I could play it. Without sounding arrogant, I was also powerful on stage. Again, without sounding arrogant, I think because I was in the band we were able to explore these different avenues of music."

Opening with a scene-setting snatch of New York's WBAI radio station, the clipped JB's funk of 'Lightning Strikes (Not Once But Twice)' spurred Joe's next rap attack, barbed and hilarious. He was obviously enjoying this, settling in by constructing his Spliff Bunker bolthole in the middle of the studio out of flight cases. Complete with window and desk, here Joe wrote most of the album's lyrics, continuing the practice for the rest of his life. "You can't have a load of idiots partying in the control room, because the engineer can't hear and no decisions can be made," he explained. "So, I invented the Spliff Bunker, which was a place where you could smoke weed, hang out and talk – in the main body of the studio as far removed geographically as possible from the control room, so that in the control room sanity could reign, and people could EQ things and get things rewound correctly. The Spliff Bunker was where you could think up your next thing while they were fiddling with your last thing."

"As soon as they'd got a rough mix down, we'd be like 'fresh tape on the reel, get the mikes out because we're gonna go like this and this and this.' We'd just keep doing that, day and night. And that's why it had to be a triple album, even though it would have been better as a double album, or a single album, or an EP. Who knows? The fact is that we recorded all that music at one spot at one moment."

Joe moved out of the Iroquois and slept under the studio piano, writing or recording every waking moment. Since observing the Westway from Mick's balcony inspired 'London's Burning', Joe's lyrics still reflected his immediate environment, his bunker getting a mention in 'If Music Could Talk', the skyline horns-draped reggae lilt evolved from the Pluto sessions' 'Shepherds Delight'. 'Broadway' was inspired by a homeless guy he saw sleeping over a heating vent every night outside the Iroquois. Placing himself as the bitter, disillusioned former boxer on this most subtly-brilliant realisation of The Clash's American dream,

"After I'd done my drum parts I had nothing much to do except get into trouble."

Topper Headon



its smoky mood (brilliantly underpinned by Topper's light reggae pulse) captures perfectly the simmering yellow-light ambience of early hours New York, although the emotional power of Joe's vocal riding its moving piano riff could be any gutter in the world. "It ain't my fault it's six o'clock in the morning" is one of his many immortal lines.

As their creative trickle turned into a torrent, The Clash struck out in diverse musical directions like a masturbatory octopus. New York also imbued 'Corner Soul's' haunted valley gospel chorus, 'One More Time' a rolling noir skank framing Joe's lyrics about youth embroiled in ghetto violence (with 'One More Dub'). On later recorded 'The Sound Of The Sinners', Joe's street wandering could've taken him into a full-on gospel service (or, as happened to me when up to no good in East Harlem, fell in the wrong door).

At Electric Lady, Topper often worked with Mick and Joe on the music, also playing guitar and piano. On 'Ivan Meets GI Joe', he sang Joe's lyrics about superpowers clashing in the disco over wired urban maelstrom and big city piano splattered with video game uproar. 'Stop The World' rose from Joe and Topper jamming around Booker T-style organ vamp, lyrics dealing with global disarmament.

"I loved New York," says Topper now, also citing the perilous thrill of scoring heroin from Alphabet City's corners or shooting galleries (inspiring the roughshod rockabilly of Joe's 'Junkie Slip'). It turns out we both traversed the same burnt-out streets east of Avenue A; gateway to a surreal parallel city that, thanks to landlords setting fire to their old buildings to claim insurance, resembled blitz-ruined Warsaw. Topper experienced the rituals of waiting for the dealer, scoring ten dollar bags stamped with its brand, or infiltrating the more dangerous shooting galleries past gun-toting sentries. If you became known as a white boy spending money, you weirdly became part of their dysfunctional little family, until the inevitable rip-off or getting busted by a patrolling squad car, hauled in to spend a night in the cells then face court next day, let off with a caution. An occupational hazard. Topper got busted a few times but we both remember characters we met with affection (even if they might stick a gun in your back to demand back your purchase).

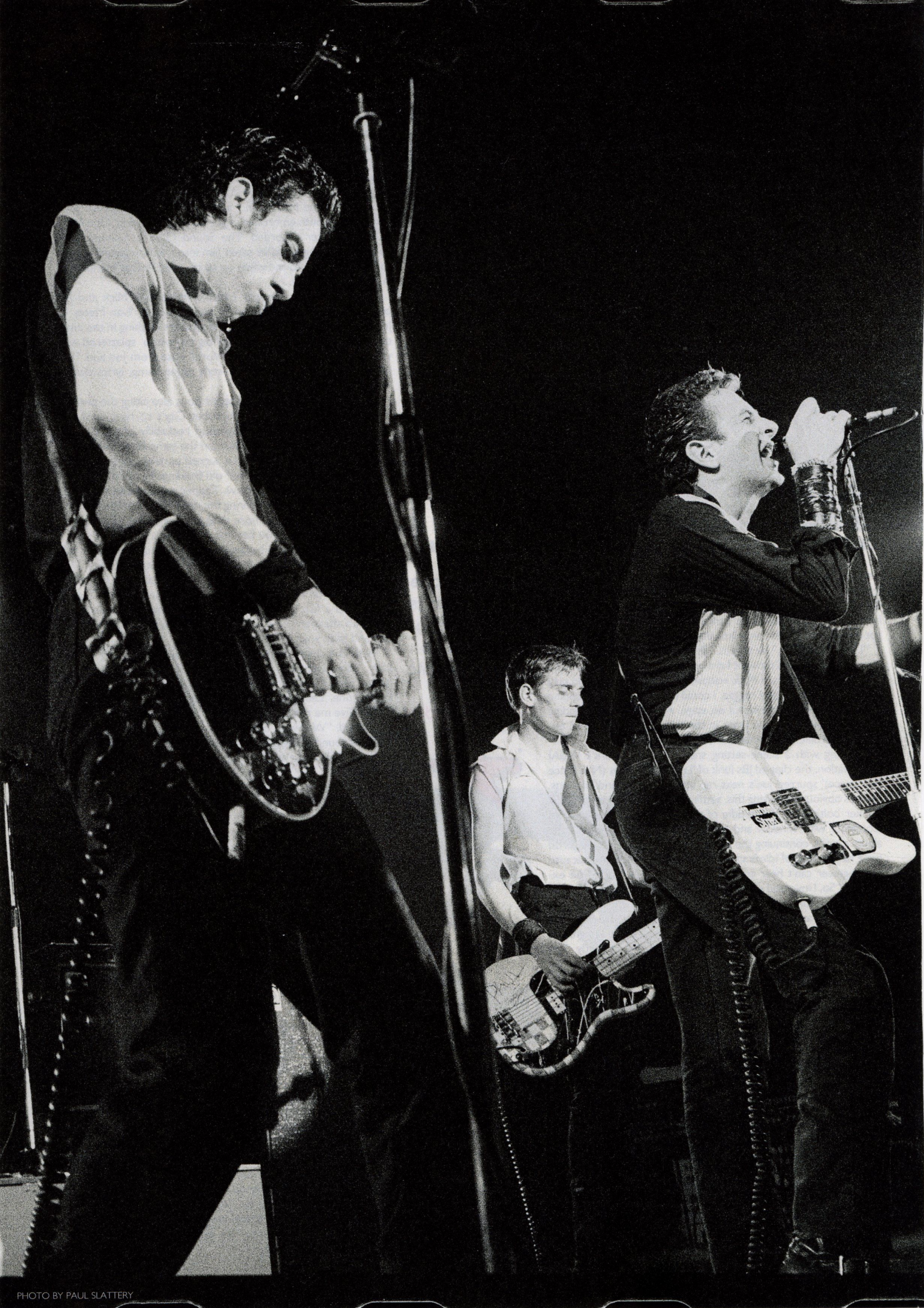
With the dense high-grade ganja smoke enveloping Electric Lady, 'Sandinista!' can also be considered The Clash's druggiest album, as well as their most adventurous. "If someone had come in and gone, 'Let's play this with balalaikas,' everyone would have gone, 'Give me the biggest balalaika!'" recalled Joe in *Westway To The World*. "We were open about stuff. Mick Jones bringing in the new sound of New York... Simmo with his reggae thing, me with my R&B thing and Topper with his soul chops. We could just do that."

With Paul finished filming and 'Train In Vain' chugging up the Billboard charts to number 23, The Clash made their US network TV debut on *Fridays*, ABC's answer to *Saturday Night Live*, and appeared on the cover of *Rolling Stone*. 'London Calling's' success gave The Clash a respectability they could never have imagined, Joe reacting with typical bluster; "To break, crack, storm or blitz America, you have to work as hard as Elvis Costello, shake hands and smile like the Boomtown Rats and sound like Dire Straits. Out of three, we would only make the first and not the rest."

Having split with Viv Albertine, Mick's love life enjoyed a boost when he met Ellen Foley, who'd come up through TV acting, sang counter vocals on Meatloaf's 'Bat Out Of Hell' and just had her first album produced by Ian Hunter. A lovely lady who I'd already interviewed when she appeared on *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, Mick fell in love. It was inevitable they'd make music of a recorded nature together too.

If New York's hip-hop, clubs and the city itself redefined Mick's attitude and his approach to creating music, it also widened the gap between him and Joe. For Mick, the musical traditions Joe clung to were to be deconstructed, genres blurred and new technology deployed – pure punk as the DIY ethic dominated hip-hop and independent labels ruled. With Joe and Paul still favouring reggae and rockabilly, it would inexorably lead to Mick getting booted out of the band he'd formed, free to pursue the glorious B.A.D.. For now, Mick and Joe's evolving musical ideals and attitudes just about cohabited on the same album (before Mick was savagely reined in on 'Combat Rock').

May saw a 16-date European tour, extended by UK 16 Tons tour gigs postponed due to Topper's injury. The Clash were dismayed to encounter sheep-like herds of punky latecomers bellowing for 'White Riot'. "It's become everything it wasn't



◀ supposed to be,” Joe told NME, bemoaning, “junior punks in their expensive designer uniforms with concrete heads and no ears. In Hamburg, he clonked one aggressive crowd moron with his guitar and got dragged off by cops. “I was emotionally shattered... completely disheartened to see what’s happened to the seeds of what we have planted,” he explained to press. “If those pricks and kids like them are the fruits of our labours, then they’re worse than those people they were meant to replace.”

UK shows started in Derby on June 9th, winding up with two nights at Hammersmith Palais, supported by Whirlwind when they couldn't pay for Mikey's whole band (although he joined them for encores). It was undoubtedly monumental seeing The Clash at the venue immortalised in one of their greatest songs, but the sound wasn't brilliant and they seemed knackered; hardly surprising given the last few months' activities.

After June 21st's final show in Reykjavik, Iceland, the band wisely took July off, although hyperactive Joe produced a single for London R&B band the Little Roosters and found a Ladbroke Grove flat with girlfriend Gaby. After 'London Calling's' US success, CBS released ten-inch mini-album 'Black Market Clash' in the US, featuring B-sides and rarities, including NME freebie 'Capitol Radio' and their soundcheck favourite version of Booker T. & The MGs' 'Time Is Tight'. Side two's dub extravaganza included 'Bankrobber', 'Robber Dub' and 'Armageddon Time', with 'Justice Tonight' and 'Kick It Over' versions.

In August, The Clash returned to Wessex studios, recording a further third of 'Sandinista!', while polishing their previously-recorded stash, often working through the night.

Joe's musical lens refocused on reggae, including 'The Equaliser' with its monster-snake-below-the-earth bass rumble, and startlingly hallucinogenic 'Rebel Waltz' revisiting 'English Civil War' turf as a mutant reggae dream waltz with baroque harpsichord and brass band. Balancing New York elements with the his home country's, 'Something About England' saw Joe railing that, despite the wars recalled through an old pensioner in the song, the class system was still in full effect. Along with its burst of "It's a long way to Tipperary", its arcane sepia quality is enhanced by brass band comprising Gary Barnacle on sax, trumpet-playing dad Bill and David Yates; Topper had played in bands with the Barnacles while growing up in Kent, Bill an early mentor.

Mick had sung 'Somebody Got Murdered' as the only 'Sandinista!' track on the tour before recording it at Wessex, although Joe had written it after the car park attendant at his World's End estate was stabbed to death for a fiver. Originally commissioned by Jack Nitzsche for William Friedkin's 1979 *Cruising* movie, it was one of the few recalling previous classic Clash rockers, with multi-story guitars, intricate counter-melodies and, keeping the work-in-progress's ambience, rinky-dink keyboard entrails in the ether, building to an mighty climax. The dog at the end is Topper's Battersea, Joe faking attacking his master to get him barking.

Mick wrote 'Up In Heaven (Not Only Here)' after visiting his gran at her 18th floor flat on returning from New York; appalled by its further deterioration as one of London's rotting tower blocks. Even when I was visiting between 1976-77, the graffiti'd elevators stunk of piss, decay and danger everywhere. It had only got worse and Mick responded with this deeply-resonating, heartfelt rocker, referencing "the towers of London", where "children daub slogans to prove they lived there", its feedback coda glowering like a New York subway train ramming its teetering edifice (The line, "one of these days it will surely fall to the ground" could be predicting Grenfell Tower).

Getting gripped by soca at 1980's Notting Hill Carnival inspired Joe's 'Let's Go Crazy', his lyrical SUS law attack embellished by steel drummers and opening remarks from Ansell Collins, ending with a riot. Although weighted with Mick's juggernaut guitar riff, 'The Street Parade' is another *Apocalypse Now*-style shimmering dream sequence, its loose, jazzy cloud-bursts garnished with Gary Barnacle's sax.

Mick was inspired by his Motown visit to write 'Hitsville UK', transposing the daddy of all indies to the UK's independent label scene. For some Clash diehards, duetting with girlfriend Ellen on this sweetly innocent Motown bassline romp proved too much of a departure from normal Clash fare, bombing as the album's second single. I always loved it, mainly for the love tangibly sparking between the pair, enhanced by Mick's lower counter-vocal highlighted on 'Sound System's' remastering.

Joe had suggested the cover version of jazz legend Mose Allison's 'Look Here', Topper relishing its featherlight bebop groove. He also amped up his rockabilly fixation to attack tabloids

LOSE THIS SKIN

COME WITH ME I WANT RIDE
WE'LL GO MANY ON A RIDE
WE'LL MEET EACH OTHER WHERE WE
GOTTA BE ME YOUNG MANHATTAN FREE
I'VE GOTTA LOSE THIS SKIN
I'VE GOTTA LOSE THIS SKIN
GOTTA LOSE THIS SKIN
IN EMALPINE IN
DOUST TIME ON HAVE TO SEE
ALL THE THUNDERBOLT THUNDER WE GOT
DO NOT TURN ON HAVE TO SEE
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE WIFE OF LOT?

WE'RE ALONE SO THEY SAY
WE'RE NOT OUR OWNERS IN THAT WAY
UNLESS WE'RE ALONE IT'S REAL TOUGH
WE WANT TO TAKE A FART GOING
IN SOMEONE ELSE'S BLAY

COME WITH ME I THOUGHT HE SAID
BUT THAT'S NOT HIM, ANYWAYS HE'S
GREAT

WANTS IT LIKE TO BE SO FREE
SO FREE IT LOOKS LIKE LOST TO BE

I'VE GOTTA LOSE THIS SKIN
I'VE MANHATTAN IN
GOTTA LOSE THIS SKIN
I'VE MANHATTAN IN

FRANK, FIVE DOLL

Come on, Come on

CHARLIE DON'T SURF

CHARLIE DON'T SURF AND WE THINK HE SHOULD
CHARLIE DON'T SURF AND YOU KNOW THAT IT AINT NO GOOD
CHARLIE DON'T SURF FOR THE HAMBURGER MANTRA
CHARLIE'S GONNA BE A NAPALM STAR

EVERYBODY WANT'S TO RULE THE WORLD
WE WANT BE SOMETHING WE GOT FROM BIRTH
ONE TRAIL IF HE NEVER LEARN
SAT'LITE WILL HAVE SPACE BORN

WE BEEN TOLD TO KEEP OFF STRANGERS OUT
WE WANT LIKE EM STRONG TO HAVE BACK
WE WANT LIKE EM OVER TOWN
ACROSS THE WORLD WE'RE GOING DOWN EM DOWN

THE REIGN OF THE SUPERHEROS MUST OVER
SO MANY ARMIES CAN'T FEEL THE EARTH
SON. THE ROCK WILL ROLL OVER
AFRICA IS COOKING ON THEIR COCACOLAS

CHARLIE DON'T SURF AND WE THINK HE SHOULD
CHARLIE DON'T SURF AND YOU KNOW IT AINT NO GOOD
CHARLIE DON'T SURF
FOR HIS HAMBURGER MANTRA
CHARLIE'S GONNA BE A NAPALM STAR

THESE ARE ONE WAY STREET IN A ONE HORSE TOWN

A LOT OF ONE WAY PEOPLE STARTING TO BEAD AROUND
YOU CAN LAUGH PUT 'EM DOWN
THESE ONE WAY PEOPLE GONNA MOVE US DOWN

GUNG HO GUNG HO

JUNKIE SLIP

I WANT GOING THAT PAK
THE JUNKIE SLIP
I SAW IT WOULD GO IT
THE JUNKIE SLIP
YES, THOUGHT I FIND A RHYTHM IN THE JUNKIE TIME
THOUGHT I'D FIND A RHYTHM IN THE JUNKIE TIME
THOUGHT I'D FIND A RHYTHM IN THE JUNKIE TIME
THOUGHT I'D FIND A RHYTHM IN THE JUNKIE TIME

THE JUNKIE SLIP
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THE JUNKIE SLIP
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THE JUNKIE SLIP
YES, THOUGHT I FIND A RHYTHM IN THE JUNKIE TIME
THOUGHT I'D FIND A RHYTHM IN THE JUNKIE TIME
THOUGHT I'D FIND A RHYTHM IN THE JUNKIE TIME
THOUGHT I'D FIND A RHYTHM IN THE JUNKIE TIME

MENSFORTH HILL

(INSTRUMENTAL)

TITLE THESE FROM RICHARD REARL

KINGSTON ADVICE

IN THESE DAYS YOU CAN GET NO RICE
IN THESE DAYS YOU CAN GET NO RICE
IN THESE DAYS YOU CAN GET NO RICE
IN THESE DAYS YOU CAN GET NO RICE

IN THESE DAYS YOU CAN GET NO RICE
IN THESE DAYS YOU CAN GET NO RICE
IN THESE DAYS YOU CAN GET NO RICE
IN THESE DAYS YOU CAN GET NO RICE

THE STREET PARADE

WHEAT WAS WAITING FOR YOUR PHONE CALL
THE ONE THAT NEVER CAME
LIVE A MAN ABOUT TO BURST
I WAS DYING OF THIRST...

THOUGH I WILL NEVER PAIN
ON GET LOST IN THIS DAZE...
...THOUGH I WILL DISAPPEAR
INTO THE STREET PHARE...

ITS NOT TOO HARD TO CRY
IN THESE SAYING TIMES
I'LL TAKE MY BROKEN HEART
AND TAKE IT HOME IN PART...

BUT I WILL NEVER PAIN
ON GET LOST IN THIS DAZE...
...THOUGH I WILL DISAPPEAR
INTO THE STREET PHARE...

"It's a magnificent thing. I wouldn't change it even if I could."

Joe Strummer



on 'The Leader' ("You've got to give people something good to read on a Sunday") and corporate corruption on sinister 'Midnight Log'. After rising organ intro, 'The Sound Of The Sinners' flamed into full-on gospel blow-out with preacher Joe venting about organised religion, wacky Darts vocalist Den Hegarty adding baritone vocals and pulpit patter. 'The Crooked Beat' was Paul's vocal vehicle, swapping 'The Guns Of Brixton' for homaging reggae, bathed in thick ganja ambience.

After their bison's cock of a creative fountain continued spurting like a New York fire hydrant, inter-band camaraderie was markedly different from the buoyant unity of 'London Calling'. I didn't visit so much this time but the vibe was different as Mick performed microscopic mixing and Joe scribbled lyrics or recorded new ideas. One day he'd announce, "We're done, just got to finish the mixing," the next shrug, "Oh, that's a new one that just happened." Our mate Robin Banks was there more than me and backed that up, recalling it as, "quite heavy. They were never in the studio together. Mick and Joe were growing apart, which was just natural. I think Joe and Mick just progressed in different directions. That added to the problem. There were problems with Topper. Everyone was worried about Topper. That whole experience with Blackhill was pretty negative. It didn't do anything to hold the band together. Joe certainly wasn't too enamoured with them."

While, in a weird way, these ructions recalled the occasionally-violent divides between Lennon-McCartney and Jagger-Richards, Topper's ongoing heroin use posed a more real threat, escalating from corner copping maintenance in New York to full-blown junkie squalor when he joined girlfriend Dee shooting up.

"I started using during 'Sandinista!,'" he told me in 2002. "It got regular when we were back in London. After I'd done my drum parts I had nothing much to do except get into trouble. There was me using smack, Paul didn't give a toss, Mick and Joe were at loggerheads. It was a band in name only by now. The four of us were pretty mad at the time. Mick was completely insane. We were four conflicting personalities. The only thing we had in common was *The Clash*."

Having said that, Topper's marimba laid early foundations for 'Washington Bullets' to become another illustration of Joe's advancing lyric-crafting and the band's musical palette, all contributing to the outbreak of moth impersonations (dressing room fave) that erupts during its middle eight. Joe's words dealt with the C.I.A.'s role in overthrowing Central and South American governments, its hook naming the album 'Sandinista!'. Fielding accusations of political chic and all that bollocks, Mick told *Rip It Up* fanzine about Nicaragua's bloody history;



THE SOUND OF THE SINNERS

When The Clash decided to play a residency at New York's Bonds International Casino, near Times Square, in spring 1981, they brought the city to a standstill with one of their most memorable moves of all. One of the most enduring events in the band's history, the Bonds stint also peaked the band's connection to the hip-hop culture that so informed 'Sandinista!'.

Rather than tour coast-to-coast, this time The Clash reasoned playing seven nights at Bonds would be a more economical and eventful method of playing the US.

On May 28th's opening night, fire marshals swooped on the former department store. Next day the New York fire department imposed a restraining order limiting capacity to 1750 when Bonds had sold 3500 tickets for each of the seven nights (possibly a result of inter-promoter skullduggery as 4,000 had attended a recent Plasmatics show). At a summit meeting between band, fire department and Bonds it was agreed upcoming gigs by Gary Glitter and The Stranglers be cancelled so The Clash can extend their residency a further eight days to accommodate all ticket-holders.

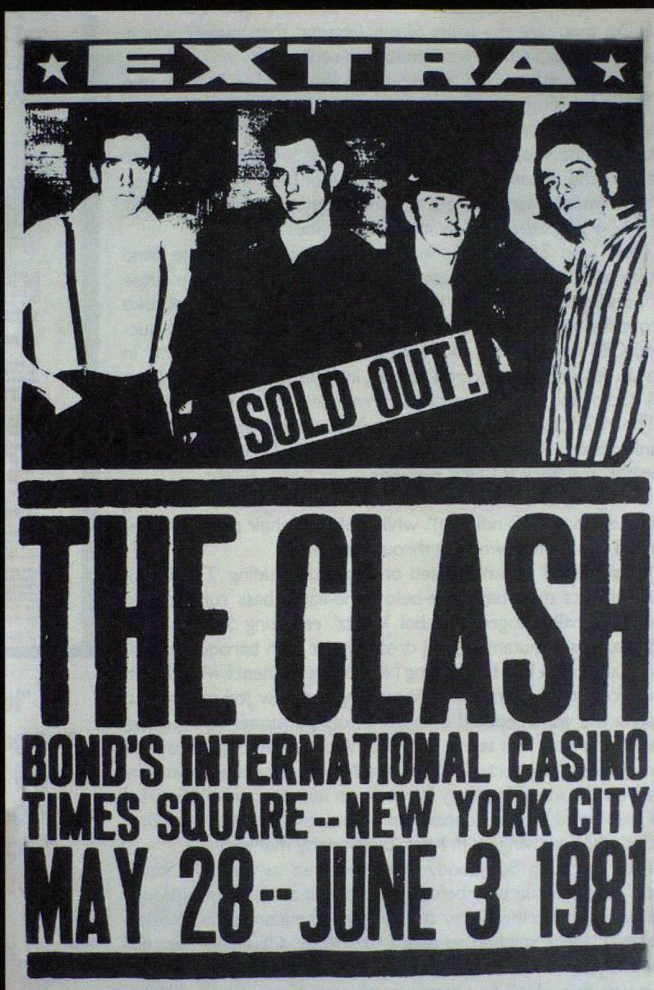
Next day, it's all over TV news and media, 'The Magnificent Seven' hammered on hip radio stations. Riot police are called to deal with irate ticket holders told to come back a week later in scenes not seen since Sinatra in the 50s as the area around Times Square came to a halt in a crush of cars and bodies. Don Letts' surviving footage for a projected film called *The Clash On Broadway* (used on the video for 'This Is Radio Clash'), captures the ebullient crowds, mounted cops, breakdancers and car jam chaos, giving some idea of the glorious mayhem The Clash brought to the Big Apple. "It has to be said, for the time they were in New York, The Clash ran New York," Don recalled.

Further complications arose when the New York Buildings Department slapped an order closing the club completely, further crowd-cop confrontations erupting when Saturday afternoon matinee and evening shows were cancelled. After the media furor, the building commissioner intervened, prodded by his Clash-fan daughters agreeing to let shows proceed if fire restrictions are observed and security improved.

The Clash's choice of support acts was sharp and daring, including Lee Perry, the Slits, ESG, the Fall, Dead Kennedys and yet-to-record Washington DC Rasta-punks Bad Brains, along with some of hip-hop's finest, including Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five and Harlem rap group the Treacherous Three, who met similar disgusting abuse to Mikey Dread in the UK from bridge-and-tunnel punks and rock dullards checking out the latest hot group.

After The Clash took the stage to Ennio Morricone's 'Sixty Seconds To Comply' from Sergio Leone's *For A Few Dollars More*, they played for over two hours every night; always starting with 'London Calling' before rollicking through 'Safe European Home', 'The Leader', 'Train In Vain', '(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais', 'This Is Radio Clash', 'Corner Soul', 'The Guns of Brixton', 'The Call Up', 'Bankrobber', 'Complete Control', 'Lightning Strikes (Not Once But Twice)', 'Ivan Meets G.I. Joe', 'Charlie Don't Surf', 'The Magnificent Seven', 'Broadway', 'Somebody Got Murdered', 'Police And thieves', 'Clampdown', 'One More Time', 'Brand New Cadillac', 'The Street Parade', 'Janie Jones' and 'Washington Bullets'.

The Clash's desire to shove America's black artists back in its face, that

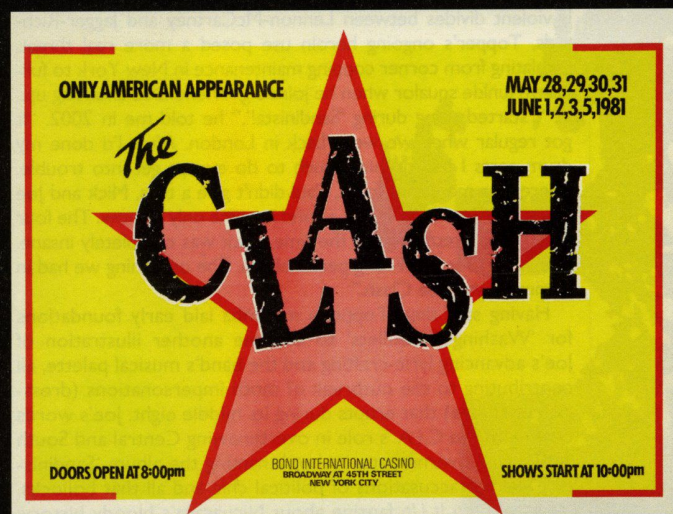


started with Bo Diddley on the first US tour, reached its apogee at Bonds, the bills acting as both consolidation of 'Sandinista!'s panoramic diversity and solidarity with hip-hop artists from a cultural movement poised to globally explode. Holed up at the cool Gramercy Park Hotel, the band were courted by Martin Scorsese, Joe's hero Allen Ginsberg and Blondie, along with hip-hop luminaries Fab 5 Freddy (as immortalised in Blondie's 'Rapture') and graffiti artist Futura 2000, whose rapping they'd back on 'The Escapades Of Futura 2000' 12-inch and would perform live graffiti on their next UK tour.

Again, Mick thought his band's championing of hip-hop as perfectly natural after its influence on Sandinista!, telling me, "I think The Clash's involvement in the start of that whole thing was by luck, really. We were in the right place at the right time. If you travel with a group like that you find out about things that are happening much quicker. It's like a fast track to what's culturally happening in whatever place you go to. We were fortuitous in the fact that we had to be there. We met all these graffiti artists and stuff. They did a banner for us at Bond's. There were quite a few of them. It was a new thing, but clubs always interested us. We attracted all the different, creative people to what we did. They came and checked us out."

"What had started as a punk group turned multi-national. We took on different concepts of what people were doing and tried to make it part of it, but still retaining our own thing. We did it our own way, not by slavishly following fashions. You said yourself it helped some people find a way into these things. You wouldn't have known that, even when hip-hop was in its genesis, that it would become one of the major forces of music later on."

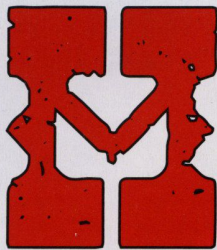
With the Bonds residency, The Clash made their deepest impact on America's popular consciousness. "You can't march into a city like New York and take away the night life," explained Joe. "We were presented with a situation that escalated beyond control. We were on the news. That was fantastic! Doing that fifteen nights in a row nearly killed us. But to go to New York and take New York. That is great."





ART SCHOOL CLASH

Joe Whyte speaks to Ross Sinclair of Soup Dragons fame about shooting The Clash during their guerilla Glasgow gigs as he unearths some unseen Clash Busking Tour photos.



AY 17th, 1985. The faltering Clash had imploded then reignited with a new line-up and without founder Mick Jones (ignominiously fired a short time before) and drummer and heartbeat Topper Headon. Strummer, Simonon and manager and arch provocateur Bernie Rhodes had decided that a back-to-basics route was the best way to re-engage with the original spirit (and obviously drum up some positive press) so they'd set out on a busking tour of British cities

without any of the rigmarole of hotels, transport or an itinerary.

Travelling by train, the now five-piece group pitched up in Glasgow and played some legendary and chaotic gigs in pubs The Rock Garden, Dukes and The Fixx. Absolute mayhem ensued in that pre-internet world with folk in phone boxes calling mates, work and college classes being abandoned and rumour and counter-rumour flying across the city. After the police closed down the Dukes gig, the band stayed with a couple of art students they'd met and tentative plans were made for another guerrilla gig at the Art School the following day.

Ross Sinclair was a young art student who never let his camera leave his side. He recently found his photos of both of those days and here they are for the first time in public.

Ross latterly became drummer in the Soup Dragons and currently is a professor of Fine Art at the place he saw The Clash, weirdly. He's travelled the world as an artist and is hugely renowned among the cognoscenti.

Here are his own words as regards a couple of days that have taken on legendary status in Glasgow...

"I'd seen The Clash before, I think it was the 16 Tons tour, or London Calling, 1979/80, as a spotty 13-year-old - but that was at The Apollo in Glasgow where the stage was 20-foot-high and there was an army of obnoxious bouncers determined to stop you having a good time and pogoing! This just couldn't have been more different.



"When The Clash came back in 1985, most of the photos I took were out of focus because I was literally too close to the band - touching distance, standing right beside Joe at The Glasgow School of Art student Union or downstairs at the Rock Garden in a sweatbox singalong."

"I was in first year at Art School and in a couple of bands at the time, Gods for all Occasions with my mates Neil Menzies and Raymond McGinley (later of Teenage Fanclub) and The Soup Dragons who had just started to take off. It was just a couple of months later we would play our first gig supporting Primal Scream at the legendary Splash One club in Glasgow.

"My memory is that the band just suddenly appeared in a pub on Sauchiehall St and it was lucky that our pal Gillian from Art School randomly bumped into them and suddenly the rumours started spreading like wildfire about gigs and meeting them and no one could believe it. I think they actually stayed in her flat. I saw them first in the middle of the afternoon in the basement of The Rock Garden on Queen St. I had my camera with me everywhere then so I took photos everywhere and I taped it too - immediately gave the tape to someone and never saw it again! I think it was the next day they made it to The Art School. But it was more hanging about! Would they, wouldn't they. They had been spotted the day before at the art school too but no gig transpired but everyone was by now on high alert!

"But then suddenly they were here, hanging about on the steps of the Vic Café, way too cool for school, chatting to everyone that had the nerve to go up and speak to them.

"I think they started off in the downstairs cafe but then so many folk crowded in they had to go upstairs to the bigger hall! It was an amazing gig. The drummer beating hell out of a plastic chair and Joe singing at the top of his lungs to make himself heard above 200 art students! Paul Simonon looking so fucking cool like he's just stepped off Mount Rushmore. To my ears they played all my favourites - 'Straight To Hell', 'Guns Of Brixton', my all-time favourite, 'White Man In Hammersmith Palais', 'Pressure Drop' and I think they finished off with 'White Riot', joined in by a 200 strong Glaswegian punk choir.

"I think after that gig they headed off to get the train to Manchester, disappearing off into the sunset like the last gang in town that they sure were. Ok, so that last album they were trying to promote was rotten, it wasn't even the beginning of the end; it was the end of the end.

"That whole experience of seeing the band, meeting the band in that context reached into a deeper place, a real authentic connection, especially if like me you have been a lifelong fan of the band and their music. It showed you that your heroes were just people too, needing a place to kip and beer money for the road." **VLR**

