PUNKY GIBBON

Punk Hardcore Oi! New Wave Post-Punk

Formed: London, England, UK

The greatest rock and roll band ever. Ever!

"What we wear is dangerous gear
it'll get you picked on anywhere
though we get beat up we don't care
at least it livens up the air"
- The City Of The Dead, 1977

Band Bio 1976-1978 / 1978-1980 / 1980-1983 / 1983-1986 / Lineups / Discography

WHITE RIOT
1977
SINGLE
OUT NOW
HATE & WAR
WHITE RIOT
THE CLASH

Note: All images from Smash Hits on this page have been grabbed from the Like Punk Never Happened blogspot. Check it out, it is very good indeed.

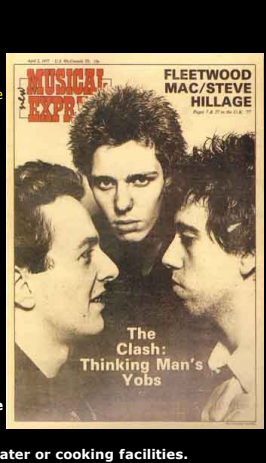
Now, this lot had class. Contrary to popular opinion, which states that The Clash recorded a LOT of crap, the vast majority of their music is excellent, including their much maligned, though actually quite good, final album in 1985. They may have stopped playing what we would perceive as standard punk in early '78, going on to exhibit the widest musical palette of any band of the era - reggae, funk, soul, jazz, rock, rap, rockabilly, ska influences abound - but they never lost their punky edge and never sold themselves short. They were the best, most adventurous and most exciting band of the period.

Managed by Malcolm McLaren wannabe Bernie Rhodes, The Clash were, like the best bands, a mass of contradictions. They were perceived by some as the ultimate working class band, but singer Joe Strummer was actually the son of a middle class businessman, and the core lineup were all former art school students. They may have said they were "bored with the U.S.A." but they ended up living there. So what? Are people not allowed to change their minds?

They spoke of riots, used images of dead cities and flirted with left-wing terrorist chic, but chickened out of playing Belfast (though, to be fair, someone did threaten to blow them up). They tried suppressing their own film, Rude Boy, because they did not want to be seen as a political group, yet their fourth album, released the same year, was swamped with references to worldwide political and social upheaval. Unlike the Sex Pistols, who were seen in some quarters as money-makers, they seemed to embody a spirit an independence and rebellion, even though they were, to an extent, as manufactured as the Pistols: Rhodes was no less controlling than McLaren, and the band certainly echoed his sentiments in interviews. By 1985, Rhodes (who had been sacked and re-hired) was virtually the driving force behind the group.

They came across as urban guerrillas on a mission to bring down the government, sporting boiler suits decorated with Jackson Pollock-style paint splats and eye-catching slogans. But they were simply a rock and roll band. Though later to find huge popularity in America, their world was not - initially at least - of endless highways and fast cars but of riots, tower blocks, boredom, and unemployment. None of which detracts from this simple fact: they were brilliant. And only the hopelessly naive genuinely believe that musicians mean everything they say. As Strummer pointed out:

"I believe in this and it's been tested by research
He who fucks nuns will later join the church."



Also contrary to common belief that the first wave of British punks were absolute novices, singer/guitarist Joe Strummer and guitarist Mick Jones both had previous. The former played with a band in 1973-1974 called The Vultures, and in 1975 sang for The 101ers, a R'n'B combo who were, to my eyes, far superior to Dr Feelgood, while Jones had played in The Delinquents and London SS. The worlds sexiest bassist bassist, Paul Simonon, however, was a total amateur who had never picked up a bass before joining the band and in the early days had to have it tuned for him. Together, they formed a totally cogent whole.

Clash Story Part 1: 1976-1978

Jones, Simonon and guitarist Keith Levene were actually the founding members, with Strummer joining after the others had checked him out at a 101'ers gig and also the dole office.

This is how Caroline Coon described the formation of the band in a November 1976 issue of Melody Maker:

Laughter is a cheap luxury when, like Clash, you never have the money for a square meal and when, like Joe, you live in a squat – or like Paul, you "crash" in your manager's vast unheated, rehearsal room (where this interview took place) with no hot water or cooking facilities.

After Paul and Mick left school, they both eventually ended up as casual art students. Mick was already in a group when a friend of his dragged Paul down to a rehearsal. "The first live rock'n'roll I can remember seeing was the Sex Pistols, less than a year ago. All I listened to before then was ska and bluebeat down at the Streatham Locarno.

"But when I went to this rehearsal, as soon as I got there Mick said: 'You can sing, can't you?' And they got me singing. But I couldn't get into it. They were into the New York Dolls and they all had very long hair so it only lasted a couple of days."

Ten days later however, Paul had "acquired' a bass guitar, Mick had cut his hair, they had formed a group called the Heartdrops (although the Phones, the Mirrors, the Outsiders and the Psychotic Negatives were also names for a day).

Then walking down Golborne Road with Glen Matlock of the Sex Pistols, they bumped into Joe.

The meeting was auspicious. "I don't like your group [the 101ers]," said Mick. "But we think you're great."

"As soon as I saw these guys," says Joe "I knew that that was what a group, in my eyes, was supposed to look like. So I didn't really hesitate when they asked me to join."

(This was written after Levene left. Note how she completely writes him out of this story - a typical example of the band's Stalin-esque habit of erasing former friends from the Clash history.)

One of Joe's public school friends Peter Buck was roped in as drummer, but he lasted just a couple of rehearsals. Buck later changed him name to Pablo Labritain and joined 999. He was replaced by Terry Chimes, who had played briefly in London SS.

This five-piece band debuted on 4th July supporting the Sex Pistols at the Black Swan in Sheffield. The night after the show Simonon scuffled with The Stranglers at a Ramones concert, causing an early rift in the scene, and the band went into extensive rehearsals, shying away from gigs until they were tighter. The fruits of the rehearsals were revealed in late August when The Clash, Buzzcocks and Sex Pistols played a show at the Screen on the Green. Levene, however, was ejected from the band soon after, prior to their appearance at the 100 Club Punk festival in September. Levene had not been getting on with Jones, allegedly because Jones had discovered that Levene was three years younger than him, and also because of Levene's unreliability.

Levene: My heart wasn't in The Clash sound at all - I remember going to rehearsals and just being so depressed about their sound. They got it so wrong man, they thought I was depressed because I was having a bad amphetamine come down. So it happened like this: one day, I get to the rehearsal room which is this dark, damp room - the band are sitting around, playing tunes from The Stooges and The MC5 and King Tubby's Hi Fi on their little cassette machine, waiting for me to arrive cos I'm late as usual. We plug in and start playing, and I remember Joe Strummer poking me in the arm and going, "Look Keith, just what is wrong with you man, are you into this or not". I'm not into it, so I just leave my guitar up against the amp, feedback howling back like mad, like white noise, and I just walk out." - as told to Punk '77

The band carried on a four-piece, and recorded their first demo in November, for Polydor, with Guy Stevens (legendary 60's producer) at the knobs. Five songs were committed to tape, and nobody was happy with the results.

Chimes too left in November, having tired of working with Bernie Rhodes and no longer able to withstand the group's pseudo-revolutionary claptrap. And so that December The Clash played on the Anarchy In The U.K. Tour with stand-in drummer Rob Harper. Surprisingly, Chimes rejoined in early '77. This lineup remained sort-of stable until March/April 1977, by which time they had signed to CBS and released the dynamic White Riot 45, the best fast single since 'New Rose'.

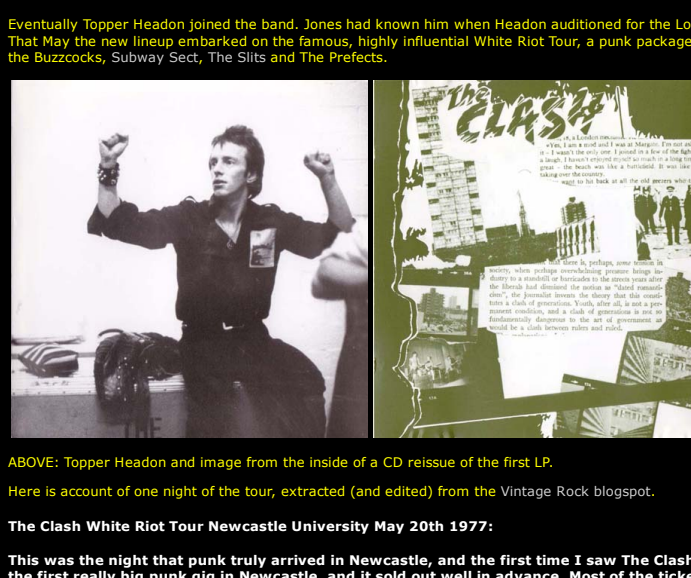
The Clash followed in April and can be considered the quintessential British punk album, down to the ragged (but highly suitable) production by their sound man Mickey Foote, photocopied/typed artwork, and subject matter. Recorded in a matter of days and fuelled by speed, the presence of a few bum notes did nothing to dilute its power. Indeed, CBS considered it too raw for American ears and refused to release it there.

In March, just before the LP's release, auditions were held for a new drummer, Chimes clearly being considered nothing more than a stand-in. (When the band released their debut album they nicknamed him Tory Crimes without his knowledge.)

Chris Bashford (pre-Chelsea) and Jon Moss (pre-London) were amongst those who auditioned, and Moss actually turned the job down. The auditons were shrouded in a mystery typical of The Clash, or least were supposed to be.

Jon Moss, Smash Hits October 1982: Joe Strummer said he couldn't tell me what band it was. So I said, "you're The Clash" "How do you know", he asked. "Because it's written on your jacket".

Eventually Topper Headon joined the band. Jones had known him when Headon auditioned for the London SS. That May the new lineup embarked on the famous, highly influential White Riot Tour, a punk package including the Buzzcocks, Subway Sect, The Slits and The Prefects.

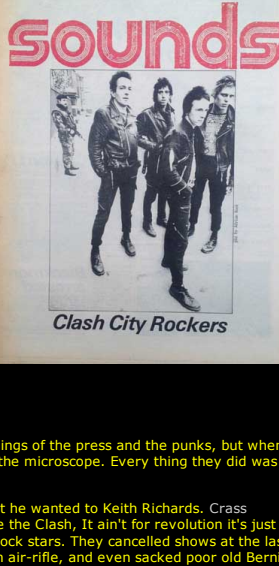


ABOVE: Topper Headon and image from the inside of a CD reissue of the first LP.

Here is account of one night of the tour, extracted (and edited) from the Vintage Rock blogspot.

The Clash White Riot Tour Newcastle University May 20th 1977:

This was the night that punk truly arrived in Newcastle, and the first time I saw The Clash. It was the first really big punk gig in Newcastle, and it sold out well in advance. Most of the tickets had been sold to students through the students union; in fact if I remember correctly you had to be a student to buy tickets, which was the source of some aggro and trouble on the night of the gig. There were a few scuffles between the doormen and the punks, who were angry because they couldn't get in to see "their band" who (in their eyes) were playing for a group of middle class students. The first Clash album had been released a few weeks before the gig, and the audience were there as much out of curiosity and because of reports that they had read in the NME and Sounds than as result of the music. Support came from The Prefects (replacing The Jam, who had just left the tour) Subway Sect, and The Slits. The sound wasn't great for any of the support acts, who all seemed a bit amateur and ramshackle to be honest; but I guess that's what punk was about in those early heady days. There was lots, and I mean lots, of spitting at the band. This was one of the first times I'd seen the crowd spit at the stage; its difficult to imagine how prevalent the practice was in those days. The Clash were just streets ahead of the support acts. For their set there was lots of pogoing and the spitting was relentless. Poor Joe Strummer was covered in spit. They looked great; just like their pictures on the cover of the first album. The set was short, as were each of the songs, and consisted of tracks from their great first album. The sound was a bit murky, but the atmosphere, the band's passion, and the power of delivery made up for it. We'd seen a few punk bands during 1976, including The Sex Pistols at a small gig in a pub in Whitby, but this was the first sold out and wild punk gig that we had attended, and it was just great. It set me off going to lots of punk gigs over the next few years. Don Letts, who managed The Slits at the time, was wandering around with a massive video camera, filming the event. The music between the bands was very heavy, loud dub and reggae, which was quite new to all of us. There were further scuffles around the entrance area throughout the night, with punks fighting with the guys on the door to get in, and there were a few fights inside the gig. As I had very long hair at the time, so I could easily have been a target. I was always careful to avoid trouble, and always managed to do so. I can't find any record of the set list, but based on reports from other gigs on the tour it is likely that is was something like this: London's Burning; 1977; I'm So Bored With the U.S.A.; Pressure Drop; Hate and War; Cheat; Police and Thieves; 48 Hours; Capital Radio; Deny; Remote Control; Career Opportunities; White Riot; Janie Jones; Garageland; 1977. The day after the gig Joe Strummer and Topper Headon were arrested, in true punk fashion, for stealing pillowcases from a hotel room in Newcastle (!), and spent some time in the cells".


SKYNYRD / PISTOLS / HILLAGE / IGGY / BEBOP
SPARKS / SHAM 69 / JAGGER
sounds
Clash City Rockers

They were appalled when CBS released Remote Control as a single in May without their permission (they considered it a weak song), and in response recorded the brilliant and audacious Complete Control, with Lee Perry producing. You have to hand it to the label for releasing a song so blatantly attacking it:

"They said release 'Remote Control'
but we didn't want it on the label
They said, "Fly to Amsterdam"
the people laughed but the press went mad
Someone's really smart
Complete control, that's a laugh
Have we done something wrong?
Complete control, even over this song
They said we'd be artistically free when we signed that bit of paper
They meant let's make a lotsa money and worry about it later"

Two more great singles followed. First off was the self-mythologising Clash City Rockers, which came out in March 1978, backed with an old 101'ers song, 'Jail Guitar Doors'. Its release saw the immediate exit of Mickey Foote, who had sped up the master tapes without telling the band. That June saw the release of (White Man) In Hammersmith Palais, a strong contender for their Best Single award, an ebullient and lyrically adroit punk-reggae crossover smash, which came out with no less than four different sleeves.

Clash Story Part 2: 1978-1980

Throughout 1977 and even during early '78 they had been the darlings of the press and the punks, but when the backlash started, it was relentless, and they were truly under the microscope. Every thing they did was brought into question and/or ridicule.

Jones cultivated a gyppo haircut that added fuel to accusations that he wanted to Keith Richards. Crass slagged them off on their first LP, on 'Punk Is Dead': "CBS promote the Clash, It ain't for revolution it's just for cash". They were accused of betraying their ideals and becoming rock stars. They cancelled shows at the last minute, got arrested for stupid things like shooting pigeons with an air-rifle, and even sacked poor old Bernie Rhodes.

SMASH HITS
CLASH
TOURISTS
WINGS

Joe Strummer: "Bernie lost control of us. His scene was not to give us any money in case it ruined us, which is the way you deal with kids – which he thought we were. But he underestimated us. Like people say Bernie wrote our songs, but that's not true at all. All he said was, "Don't write love songs, write something that you care about, that's real." And it's a pity we fell out with him cos we made a good team. But he got really funny when The Clash all started to happen. We wouldn't see him from week to week. If he wanted to communicate he'd just send a minion – inferring he was too busy elsewhere to deal with us. You know 'Complete Control' which Mick wrote about the record company, in fact we got the phrase off Bernie one night in that pub in Wardour Street, The Ship. I remember him going – he'd obviously been talking to Malcolm and was trying to be the master puppeteer – going "Look, I want complete control, I want complete control.' And we were just laughing at him." - as told to Paul Du Noyer, NME, 1981

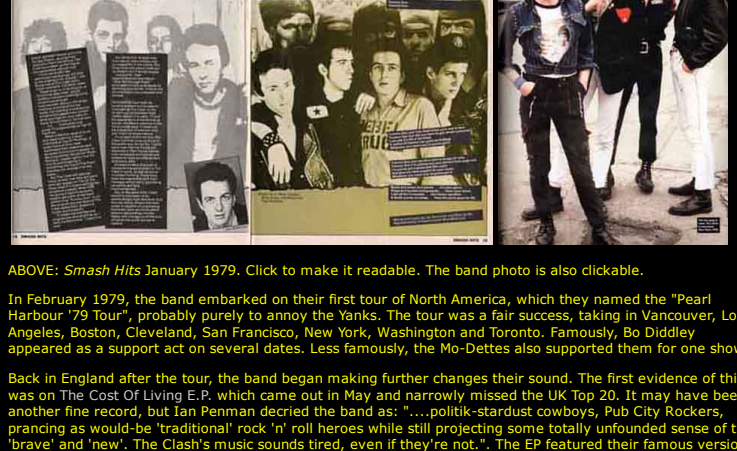
The absolute nadir for both them and their fans was a show at the Glasgow Apollo, which ended with the band looking on helplessly as the venue's notoriously violent "security" beat up kids in the crowd, even taking the time to drag hapless victims to the back of the venue to administer beatings. The Clash was moving further away from punk and closer to being a stadium rock band.

LP No. 2 Give 'Em Enough Rope (1978) proved something of a problem for many. Strummer and Jones had jetted off to Jamaica to write it, came back after a few months and ended up doing the whole thing in London and America, with corporate rock producer Sandy Pearlman on board. Best known for his work with Blue Oyster Cult and also The Dictators, Pearlman's sound was rockier, cleaner and bigger, but still very powerful. The critics were appalled by the lapse of judgment and some sharpened their knives accordingly. What a betrayal of everything they stood for!

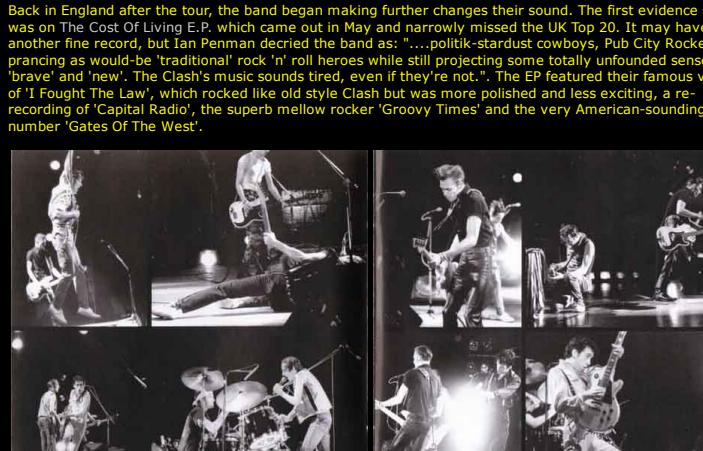
When Tommy Gun was issued as a single, Danny Baker of the NME wrote:

"I thought the Clash were untouchable but this is a sad report on the state of things".

It was of course a great single, with one of Strummer's best lyrics.



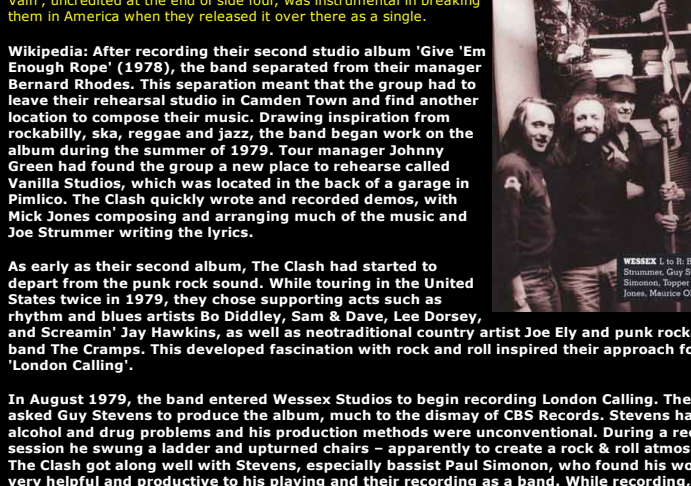
ABOVE: Images from *Smash Hits* November and December 1978. Both can be clicked to enlarge.



ABOVE: *Smash Hits* January 1979. Click to make it readable. The band photo is also clickable.

In February 1979, the band embarked on their first tour of North America, which they named the "Pearl Harbour '79 Tour", probably purely to annoy the Yanks. The tour was a fair success, taking in Vancouver, Los Angeles, Boston, Cleveland, San Francisco, New York, Washington and Toronto. Famously, Bo Diddley appeared as a support act on several dates. Less famously, the Mo-Dettes also supported them for one show.

Back in England after the tour, the band began making further changes their sound. The first evidence of this was on The Cost Of Living E.P. which came out in May and narrowly missed the UK Top 20. It may have been another fine record, but Ian Penman decried the band as: "....politik-stardust cowboys, Pub City Rockers, prancing as would-be 'traditional' rock 'n' roll heroes while still projecting some totally unfounded sense of the 'brave' and 'new'. The Clash's music sounds tired, even if they're not.". The EP featured their famous version of 'I Fought The Law', which rocked like old style Clash but was more polished and less exciting, a re-recording of 'Capital Radio', the superb mellow rocker 'Groovy Times' and the very American-sounding Jones number 'Gates Of The West'.



Now, if 'Give Em Enough Rope' made a few people scratch their heads as to their next step, London Calling (1979) put them back in everyone's good books, as it was a double set of outstanding quality, with their sharpest songs and best playing yet. The soulful 'Train In Vain', uncredited at the end of side four, was instrumental in breaking them in America when they released it over there as a single.

WESSEX: L to R: Bill Price, Joe Strummer, Guy Stevens, Paul Simonon, Topper Headon, Mick Jones, Maurice Oberstein

Wikipedia: After recording their second studio album 'Give 'Em Enough Rope' (1978), the band separated from their manager Bernard Rhodes. This separation meant that the group had to leave their rehearsal studio in Camden Town and find another location to compose their music. Drawing inspiration from rockabilly, ska, reggae and jazz, the band began work on the album during the summer of 1979. Tour manager Johnny Green had found the group a new place to rehearse called Vanilla Studios, which was located in the back of a garage in Pimlico. The Clash quickly wrote and recorded demos, with Mick Jones composing and arranging much of the music and Joe Strummer writing the lyrics.

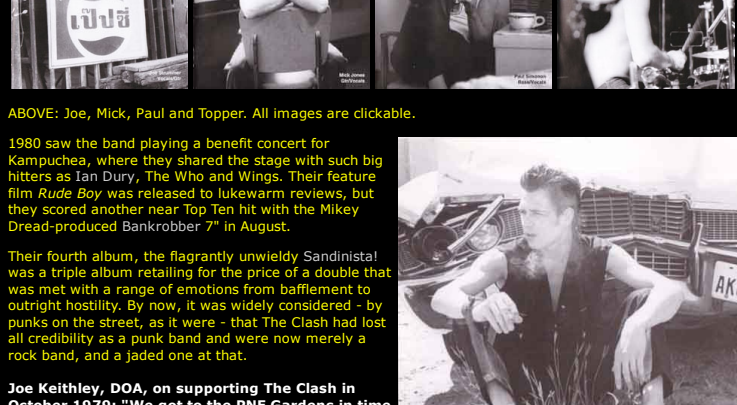
As early as their second album, The Clash had started to depart from the punk rock sound. While touring in the United States twice in 1979, they chose supporting acts such as rhythm and blues artists Bo Diddley, Sam & Dave, Lee Dorsey, and Screamin' Jay Hawkins, as well as neotraditional country artist Joe Ely and punk rockabilly band The Cramps. This developed fascination with rock and roll inspired their approach for 'London Calling'.

In August 1979, the band entered Wessex Studios to begin recording London Calling. The Clash asked Guy Stevens to produce the album, much to the dismay of CBS Records. Stevens had alcohol and drug problems and his production methods were unconventional. During a recording session he swung a ladder and upturned chairs – apparently to create a rock & roll atmosphere. The Clash got along well with Stevens, especially bassist Paul Simonon, who found his work to be very helpful and productive to his playing and their recording as a band. While recording, the band would play football to pass the time. This was a way for them to bond together as well as take their mind off of the music, and the games got very serious. Doing this helped bring the band together, unifying them, making the recording process easier and more productive. The album was recorded during a five- to six-week period involving 18-hour days, with many songs recorded in one or two takes.

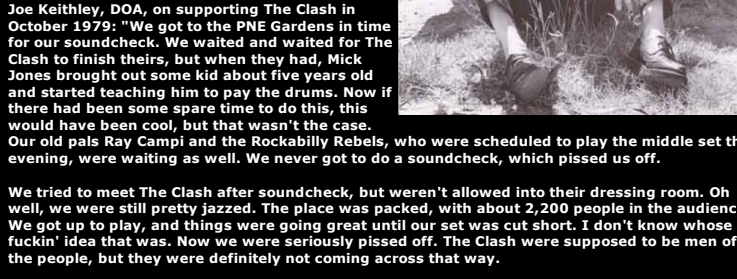
The only people the LP didn't seem to please were the hardcore UK punks, who were now being served by the likes of U.K. Subs and Angelic Upstarts and were growing ever more vociferous in their condemnation of The Clash for "selling out".

Late '79 saw another North American tour, where they were supported by the acts as disparate as The Members, The Undertones, David Johansen, Joe Ely and The Cramps. DOA played at the Pacific National Exhibition Coliseum in Vancouver on October 17th.

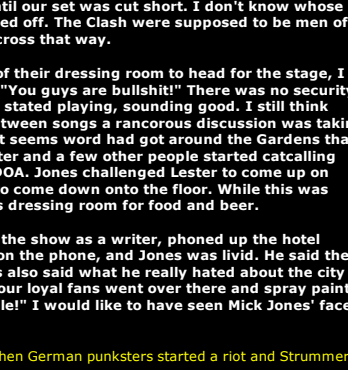
Clash Story Part 3: 1980-1983



ABOVE: Joe and Mick; and *Trouser Press* magazine cover. All images are clickable.



ABOVE: Joe, Mick, Paul and Topper. All images are clickable.



1980 saw the band playing a benefit concert for Kampuchea, where they shared the stage with such big hitters as Ian Dury, The Who and Wings. Their feature film *Rude Boy* was released to lukewarm reviews, but they scored another near Top Ten hit with the Mikey Dread-produced Bankrobber 7" in August.

Their fourth album, the flagrantly unwieldy Sandinista! was a triple album retailing for the price of a double that was met with a range of emotions from bafflement to outright hostility. By now, it was widely considered - by punks on the street, as it were - that The Clash had lost all credibility as a punk band and were now merely a rock band, and a jaded one at that.

Joe Keithley, DOA, on supporting The Clash in October 1979: "We got to the PNE Gardens in time for our soundcheck. We waited and waited for The Clash to finish theirs, but when they had, Mick Jones brought out some kid about five years old and started teaching him to pay the drums. Now if there had been some spare time to do this, this would have been cool, but that wasn't the case. Our old pals Ray Campi and the Rockabilly Rebels, who were scheduled to play the middle set that evening, were waiting as well. We never got to do a soundcheck, which pissed us off.

We tried to meet The Clash after soundcheck, but weren't allowed into their dressing room. Oh well, we were still pretty jazzed. The place was packed, with about 2,200 people in the audience. We got up to play, and things were going great until our set was cut short. I don't know whose fuckin' idea that was. Now we were seriously pissed off. The Clash were supposed to be men of the people, but they were definitely not coming across that way.

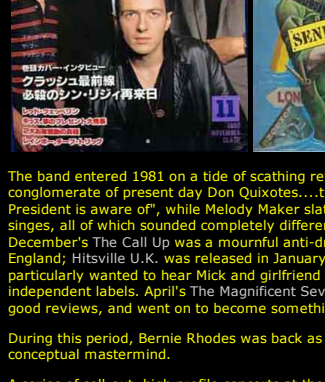
Then it was time for The Clash. As they came out of their dressing room to head for the stage, I blocked each one's path and yelled in their faces, "You guys are bullshit!" They must have got the point; they cowered and scurried away. They stated playing, sounding good. I still think they're one of the best bands of all time! But in between songs a rancorous discussion was taking place between Mick Jones and some of our fans. It seems word had got around the Gardens that the Clash had been none too gracious to DOA. Lester and a few other people started catcalling Jones, who in turned disparaged Vancouver and DOA. Jones challenged Lester to come up on stage and fight him. Lester yelled back for Jones to come down onto the floor. While this was going on, we ran backstage and raided the Clash's dressing room for food and beer.

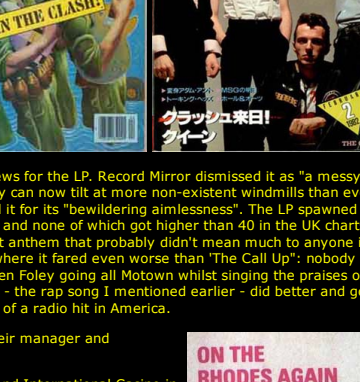
Later that night, David Spaner, who was covering the show as a writer, phoned up the hotel where the Clash were staying. He got Mick Jones on the phone, and Jones was livid. He said the Clash would never come back to Vancouver. Jones also said what he really hated about the city was that crappy heavy metal band DOA. A few of our loyal fans went over there and spray painted the band's tour bus with "The Clash Suck! DOA Rule!" I would like to have seen Mick Jones' face when he walked out the next morning!"

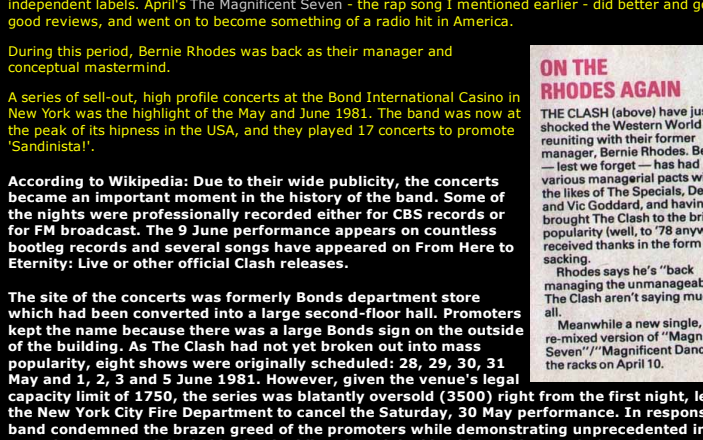
That hostility reached its height in Hamburg that year when German punksters started a riot and Strummer bashed one of them over the head with his guitar.

Joe Strummer: "In Berlin, there's some German skinheads and they were saying "Oh, my grandmother likes The Clash." Understandably, they were pissed off about that. But in Hamburg these kids attacked us, going "You've sold out, you've sold out." But I figured that they hadn't come to that conclusion, it was rather a trendy supposition that they thought "Oh, we'll follow that." I don't think they worked it out using their own brains. A tough year. I mean, it's changed my mind a lot. That Hamburg thing was kind of a watershed, y'know? It was like nothing you've ever seen. They were all down the front, and if they could grab hold of a microphone lead they'd pull, and it was a tug o'war. And then it started getting really violent – and that was my fault in a way. How much can a man take, y'know? I was playing and I saw this guy, sort of using the guy in front of him as a punch-bag, trying to be all tough. So I rapped him on the head with a Telecaster, I just lost my temper. And there was blood gushing down in front of his face. It wasn't much of a cut, but it looked real horrorshow. And the howl out of the audience – you shoulda heard it. From then on it was jump in and punch" - - as told to Paul Du Noyer, NME, 1981

The LP still sold well, and although very little of it sounds like punk, at its best it proved they were far from dinosaurs but actually at the cutting edge: check out their early stabs at rap.

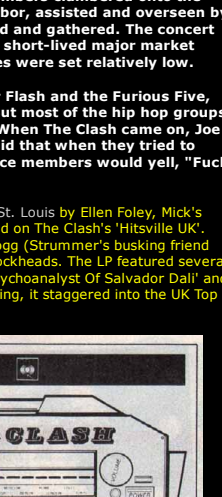






The band entered 1981 on a tide of scathing reviews for the LP. Record Mirror dismissed it as "a messy conglomerate of present day Don Quixotes....they can now tilt at more non-existent windmills than even the President is aware of", while Melody Maker slated it for its "bewildering aimlessness". The LP spawned three singles, all of which sounded completely different, and none of which got higher than 40 in the UK charts: December's The Call Up was a mournful anti-draft anthem that probably didn't mean much to anyone in England; Hitsville U.K. was released in January, where it fared even worse than 'The Call Up': nobody particularly wanted to hear Mick and girlfriend Ellen Foley going all Motown whilst singing the praises of UK independent labels. April's The Magnificent Seven - the rap song I mentioned earlier - did better and got some good reviews, and went on to become something of a radio hit in America.

During this period, Bernie Rhodes was back as their manager and conceptual mastermind.



ON THE RHODES AGAIN

THE CLASH (above) have just shocked the Western World by reuniting with their former manager, Bernie Rhodes. Bernie – lest we forget – has had various managerial pacts with the likes of The Specials, Dexys and Vic Goddard, and having brought The Clash to the brink of popularity (well, to '78 anyway), received thanks in the form of a sacking. Rhodes says he's "back managing the unmanageable". The Clash aren't saying much at all.

Meanwhile a new single, a re-mixed version of "Magnificent Seven" ("Magnificent Dance" hit the racks on April 10.

A series of sell-out, high profile concerts at the Bond International Casino in New York was the highlight of the May and June 1981. The band was now at the peak of its hipness in the USA, and they played 17 concerts to promote 'Sandinista!'.

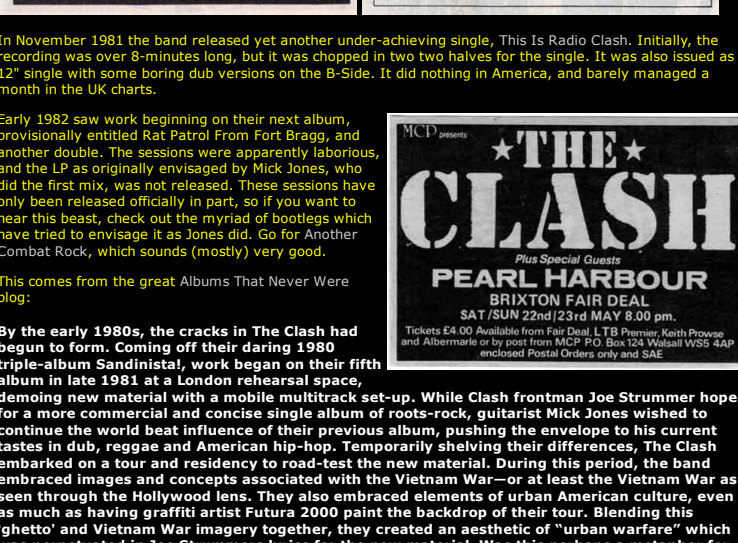
According to Wikipedia: Due to their wide publicity, the concerts became an important moment in the history of the band. Some of the nights were professionally recorded either for CBS records or for FM broadcast. The 9 June performance appears on countless bootleg records and several songs have appeared on From Here to Eternity: Live or other official Clash releases.

The site of the concerts was formerly Bonds department store which had been converted into a large second-floor hall. Promoters kept the name because there was a large Bonds sign on the outside of the building. As The Clash had not yet broken out into mass popularity, eight shows were originally scheduled: 28, 29, 31 May and 1, 2, 3 and 5 June 1981. However, given the venue's legal capacity limit of 1750, the series was blatantly oversold (3500) right from the first night, leading the New York City Fire Department to cancel the Saturday, 30 May performance. In response, the band condemned the brazen greed of the promoters while demonstrating unprecedented integrity to its audience and to every ticketholder by doubling the original booking with a total of 17 dates extending through June.

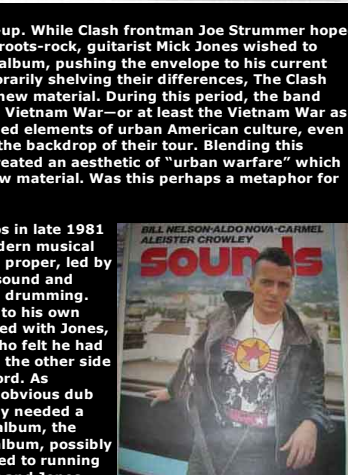
Strict interpretation of the fire laws meant that audiences were relatively small and resulting in a sense of intimacy between the band and the audience. Audience members clambered onto the stage to join in singalongs. New York musicians, including Pearl Harbor, assisted and overseen by Andy Dunkley, provided disc jockey services as the audience entered and gathered. The concert captures The Clash on the cusp between being a cult band and their short-lived major market penetration. As always with The Clash, ticket and merchandise prices were set relatively low.

Every night, the band had a new opening act: The Fall, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, Dead Kennedys, Bad Brains, Lee "Scratch" Perry, and many more. But most of the hip hop groups that opened up for The Clash were picketed or booed off the stage. When The Clash came on, Joe would chide the audience for doing what they did. Melle Mel later said that when they tried to perform the section of "Beat Street" with the, "Say Ho!", the audience members would yell, "Fuck you!".

1981 saw the release of one of the weirdest Clash-related albums: Spirit Of St. Louis by Ellen Foley, Mick's girlfriend. Foley had previously been heard on Meat Loaf's *Bat Out Of Hell* and on The Clash's 'Hitsville UK'. For her second LP, she enlisted the help of the whole of The Clash, Tymon Dogg (Strummer's busking friend from the mid-70's and guest singer on 'Sandinista!') and members of The Blockheads. The LP featured several Strummer/Jones songs, including the memorably titled 'The Death Of The Psychoanalyst Of Salvador Dali' and the delightful 'The Shuttered Palace'. Hardly essential, but generally interesting, it staggered into the UK Top 60 and stayed there for 2 weeks.



In November 1981 the band released yet another under-achieving single, This Is Radio Clash. Initially, the recording was over 8-minutes long, but it was chopped in two halves for the single. It was also issued as a 12" single with some jarring dub versions on the B-Side. It did nothing in America, and barely managed a month in the UK charts.



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Early 1982 saw work beginning on their next album, provisionally entitled Rat Patrol From Fort Bragg, and another double. The sessions were apparently laborious, and the LP as originally envisaged by Mick Jones, who did the first mix, was not released. These sessions have only been released officially in part, so if you want to hear this beast, check out the myriad of bootlegs which have tried to envisage it as Jones did. Go for Another Combat Rock, which sounds (mostly) very good.

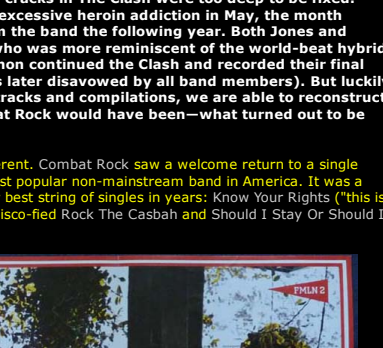
This comes from the great Albums That Never Were blog:

By the early 1980s, the cracks in The Clash had begun to form. Coming off their daring 1980 triple-album Sandinista!, work began on their fifth album in late 1981 at a London rehearsal space, demoing new material with a mobile multitrack set-up. While Clash frontman Joe Strummer hoped for a more commercial and concise single album of roots-rock, guitarist Mick Jones wished to continue the world beat influence of their previous album, pushing the envelope to his current tastes in dub, reggae and American hip-hop. Temporarily shelving their differences, The Clash embarked on a tour and residency to road-test the new material. During this period, the band embraced images and concepts associated with the Vietnam War—or at least the Vietnam War as seen through the Hollywood lens. They also embraced elements of urban American culture, even as much as having graffiti artist Futura 2000 paint the backdrop of their tour. Blending this 'ghetto' and Vietnam War imagery together, they created an aesthetic of "urban warfare" which was perpetuated in Joe Strummers lyrics for the new material. Was this perhaps a metaphor for the band's own internal warfare?

sounds
COMBAT

Reconvening in New York's Electric Ladyland Studios in late 1981—Mick's choice as he felt that was the center of modern musical activity—The Clash got to work recording the album proper, led by Jones' vision of a more funk/reggae/dub-inspired sound and fueled by Topper Headon's appropriately globalized drumming. Sides were drawn as Headon's heroin addiction led to his own perception as being an outcast in the group and sided with Jones, leaving Joe Strummer and bassist Paul Simonon (who felt he had been forced to take a creative backseat) to unite on the other side of the battle field and vie for a single disc punk record. As sessions progressed, the songs became longer—an obvious dub influence—and despite Strummer's worries that they needed a single-LP for CBS Records to properly promote the album, the project was steadily becoming yet another double album, possibly doomed to distribution limbo. The situation amounted to running two studio rooms simultaneously so both Strummer and Jones could work independently on their vocals and guitar overdubs respectively, without having to actually interact with each other.

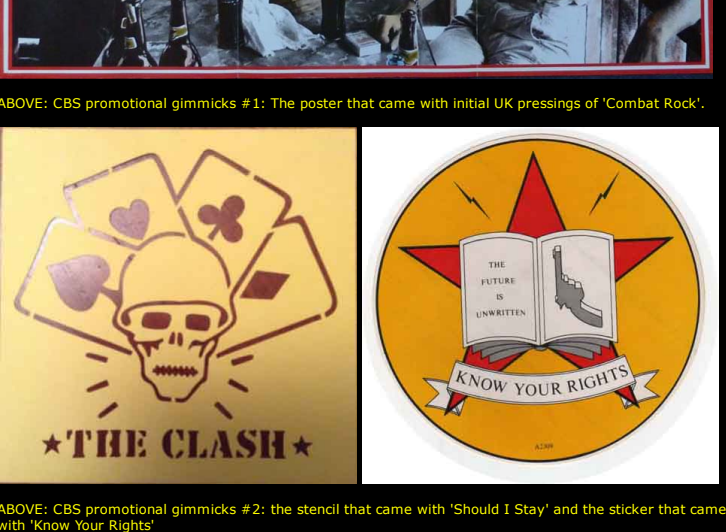
Just before leaving to tour Asia in early 1982, Mick Jones prepared his vision of the double album, provisionally titled Rat Patrol From Fort Bragg. Long-winded, indulgent and sometimes even superfluous, the album contained 15 songs and ran over 65 minutes—and that was excluding at least four outtakes ("Overpowered By Funk", "Walk Evil Walk", "Midnight To Stevens" and "Long Time Jerk" did not make the cut on Jones' sequence). The rest of the band hated it and Joe Strummer championed to have the album remixed and edited into a more commercial product. Strummer's wishes eventually won and producer Glynn [sic] Johns was brought in to fix the album (note this is the third time this blog has covered an Album That Never Was that Glyn Johns was supposed to produce and/or clean-up, including The Beatles Get Back and The Who's Lifehouse!!).



That April, Strummer and Johns reviewed the material at Wessex Studios in London and remixed the songs to emphasize its guitar elements and begin whittling the songs down to their basic necessity, eliminating their unneeded near raga-lengths. "Know Your Rights", "Red Angel Dragnet", "Ghetto Defendant", "Sean Flynn" and "Inoculated City" all lost approximately two minutes each. The songs earmarked as singles, "Should I Stay Or Should I Go" and "Rock The Casbah" (the latter actually referencing the raga-lengths of the Rat Patrol songs), were treated to new vocal tracks. Four songs, "The Fulham Connection", "First Night Back In London", "Cool Confusion" and "Idle In Kangaroo Court W1", were dropped entirely, while "Overpowered By Funk" was curiously added back into the running order. Despite Mick Jones and allegations that his art had been tampered with, the album was appropriately retitled to Combat Rock and CBS Records had their more commercial, single-disc album, rush-released that May.

Even though the more concise album was commercially successful—both "Should I Stay or Should I Go" and "Rock The Casbah" became hits—the cracks in The Clash were too deep to be fixed. Topper was removed from the band due to his excessive heroin addiction in May, the month Combat Rock was released; Mick was fired from the band the following year. Both Jones and Headon went on to form Big Audio Dynamite, who was more reminiscent of the world-beat hybrid found on Rat Patrol, while Strummer and Simonon continued the Clash and recorded their final album ironically titled Cut The Crap (which was later disavowed by all band members). But luckily through bootlegs and an assortment of bonus tracks and compilations, we are able to reconstruct what this less-commercial and raga-like Combat Rock would have been—what turned out to be The Clash's unreleased swansong.

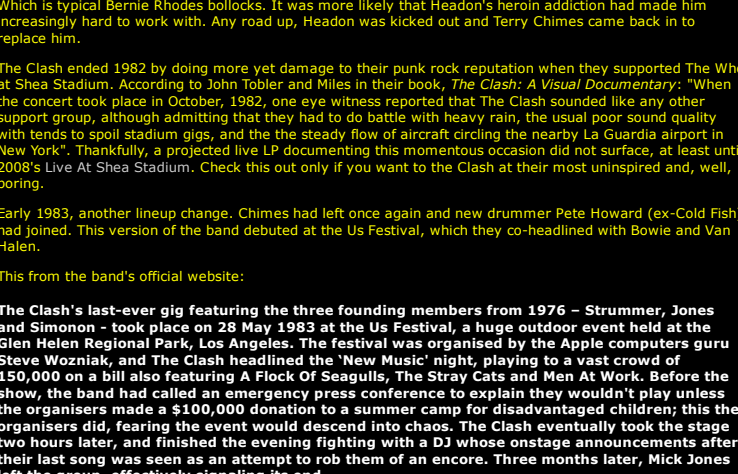
The LP that *did* come out, in 1982, was radically different. Combat Rock saw a welcome return to a single album format and cemented their position as the most popular non-mainstream band in America. It was a massive hit in the UK too, aided and abetted by their best string of singles in years: Know Your Rights ("this is a public service announcement...with guitar!"), the disco-fied Rock The Casbah and Should I Stay Or Should I Go (the latter a love song, of all things!).



ABOVE: CBS promotional gimmicks #1: The poster that came with initial UK pressings of 'Combat Rock'.

THE CLASH
THE FUTURE IS UNWRITTEN
KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

ABOVE: CBS promotional gimmicks #2: the stencil that came with 'Should I Stay' and the sticker that came with 'Know Your Rights'



ABOVE: Joe, Paul and Mick; NME May 1982; *Smash Hits* June 1982. All images can be clicked to enlarge.

Just before the release of the LP, Strummer did an infamous vanishing act for several weeks, hiding himself away in Paris in what some people called a cynical publicity stunt. In May, it was announced that Headon was no longer in the band, "due to a difference of opinion over the political direction the group will be taking". Which is typical Bernie Rhodes bollocks. It was more likely that Headon's heroin addiction had made him increasingly hard to work with. Any road up, Headon was kicked out and Terry Chimes came back in to replace him.

The Clash ended 1982 by doing more yet damage to their punk rock reputation when they supported The Who at Shea Stadium. According to John Tobler and Miles in their book, *The Clash: A Visual Documentary*: "When the concert took place in October, 1982, one eye witness reported that The Clash sounded like any other support group, although admitting that they had to do battle with heavy rain, the usual poor sound quality with tends to spoil stadium gigs, and the the steady flow of aircraft circling the nearby La Guardia airport in New York". Thankfully, a projected live LP documenting this momentous occasion did not surface, at least until 2008's Live At Shea Stadium. Check this out only if you want to the Clash at their most uninspired and, well, boring.

Early 1983, another lineup change. Chimes had left once again and new drummer Pete Howard (ex-Cold Fish) had joined. This version of the band debuted at the Us Festival, where they co-headlined with Bowie and Van Halen.

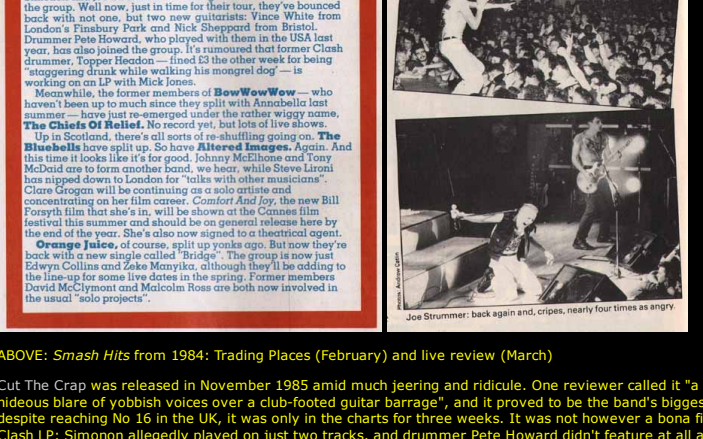
This from the band's official website:

The Clash's last-ever gig featuring the three founding members from 1976 – Strummer, Jones and Simonon - took place on 28 May 1983 at the Us Festival, a huge outdoor event held at the Glen Helen Regional Park, Los Angeles. The festival was organised by the Apple computers guru Steve Wozniak, and The Clash headlined the 'New Music' night, playing to a vast crowd of 150,000 on a bill also featuring A Flock Of Seagulls, The Stray Cats and Men At Work. Before the show, the band called an emergency press conference to explain they wouldn't play unless the organisers made a $100,000 donation to a summer camp for disadvantaged children; this the organisers did, fearing the event would descend into chaos. The Clash eventually took the stage two hours later, and finished the evening fighting with a DJ whose onstage announcements after their last song was seen as an attempt to rob them of an encore. Three months later, Mick Jones left the group, effectively signalling its end.

Jones went on to form General Public and the unspectacular but initially intriguing Big Audio Dynamite. (The image below on the left is how *Smash Hits* reported the split in September 1983.) (In fact, all the images below are from *Smash Hits*.)

CLASH
Should I Stay Or Should I Go
touchdown
SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO
STRAIGHT TO HELL
ROCK THE CASBAH
KNOW YOUR RIGHTS
THEY'RE ALL ON
4 HIT SINGLES ON ONE HIT ALBUM
It's all change in the Clash camp. Joe Strummer and Paul Simonon have sacked guitarist Mick Jones.

Clash Story Part 4: 1983-1986



By 1984. Strummer, Simonon and Howard had been joined by two new guitarists: Nick Sheppard (ex-The Cortinas) and an unknown called Vince White . The reinvigorated band began upping the punk content of their shows and toured constantly throughout 1984 and 1985, embarking on a "busking tour" of England in May '85 to promote the idea that The Clash were a) a roots band and b) mates.

White: The biggest shock, for me, was the discrepancy between the image that I had, and the reality of who these people were. On the one hand, you're represented as a member of the Clash. This is how everyone is perceiving you, when, in reality, I had almost zero control, or any power in what went on, apart from when we played live, or rehearsed in soundchecks. I think that's where we were a band, as a live unit.

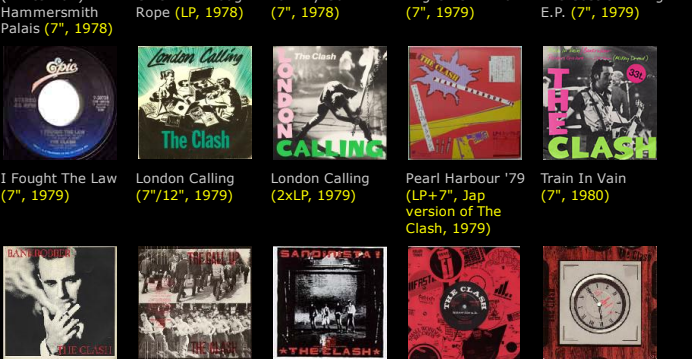
(I urge anyone to read White's eye-opening, hilarious, incredulous, bitter and utterly entertaining account of his time in the band: *Out Of Control: The Last Days Of The Clash*.)

TRADING PLACES
The Clash: (l-r) Paul Simonon, Pete Howard, Joe Strummer, Vince White, Nick Sheppard.
THE CLASH
LONDON
Joe Strummer: he's back and twice as angry
Joe Strummer: back again and, cripes, nearly four times as angry

ABOVE: *Smash Hits* from 1984: Trading Places (February) and live review (March)

Cut The Crap was released in November 1985 amid much jeering and ridicule. One reviewer called it "a hideous blare of yobbish voices over a club-footed guitar barrage", and it proved to be the band's biggest flop: despite reaching No 16 in the UK, it was only in the charts for three weeks. It was not however a bona fide Clash LP: Simonon allegedly played on just two tracks, and drummer Pete Howard didn't feature at all as he was replaced by bloody drum machines. Strummer had pretty much left Bernie Rhodes to finish the LP, and Rhodes remixed the hell out of the half-recorded songs, using samples, blaring horn sections and kinds of badly incorporated studio tricks.

The press fucking hated this period of the band's existence, declaring that the band had become a parody of itself, but naysayers should listen to the Patriots Of The Wasteland bootleg and clap their ears around a completely revitalized band. They'll get an idea of how different the final Clash LP could have sounded. The band, live at least, was firing on all cylinders.



ABOVE: Poster sleeve for the 'This Is England' 7", and another image from the reverse of the sleeve. Click them.

Following the band's collapse, Simonon formed the short-lived Havana 3AM before turning to painting; Chimes cropped up later in the Cherry Bombs; and Strummer entered what is now known as "the wilderness years": he formed The Latino Rockabilly War, embarked upon an ill-fated solo career, and did bits of soundtrack work and acting roles, before forming The Mescaleros in 1999.

"We tried to do something else, we thought there was some truth to be said in music. We were definitely trying to usher in a new age, and it hasn't happened, that's why we're dodos, anachronisms. Perhaps we've been blowing the trumpet where no note is called for, maybe all the western world has to offer is a pretty tune and a few words that don't mean anything. I feel high and dry and beached though I know we're still the best live band and we can still blow anyone offstage." - Joe Strummer, 1982

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Singles / Albums

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Clash City Rockers (7", 1978)
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I Fought The Law (7", 1979)
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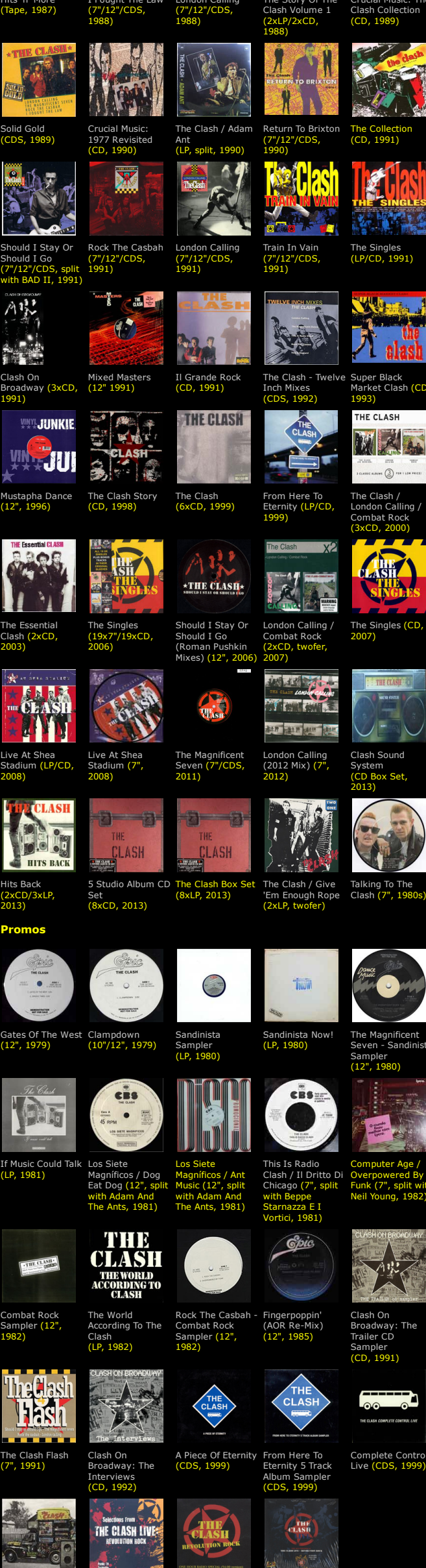

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The Collection (CD, 1991)
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London Calling (7"/12"/CDS, 1991)
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Jamaica (CD, 1990)
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Clash City Rockers Leuven Belgium Oct. 19th 1978 (CD, 1999)
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Burning Tokyo - Live Clash '82 (2xCD, 2000)
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Two 77's Clash E.P. (7", 2011)
First Night White Riot Tour (LP, 2011)
Harlesden's Burning (LP, 2012)
Ties On The Line (Demos And Outtakes) (LP, 2013)
16 Tracks (LP, 1980s)
Combat Rock Outtakes (LP, 1980s)
Death Or Glory (LP, 1980s?)
City Rockers (2xLP, 1980s)
Clampdown USA (LP, 1980s)
När Djurgår'n Fick Flytta Ut Fr Djurgår'n Igens (2xLP, 1980s)
All Or Nothing (LP, 1980s)
Live USA (CD, 1990s)
Live (LP, 1980s)
One More Time (LP, 1980s)
Jamaican Affair (CD, 1990s)
For Fxxks Sake (CD, 1990s)
Blitzkrieg Bop E.P. (7", 1990s)
Give 'Em Enough Dope (CD, 1990s)
Atlanta's Burning (CD)
For All The Young Punks Demo Collection (CD)
D.O.A. (Demos, Outtakes, Alternates) (3xCD)
Rat Patrol From Fort Bragg (LP)
Live In Amsterdam (LP, 2009)
The Rat Patrol (CD)
Mickey Foote Demos (CD)
The Burning Studios (CD)
Despatches From The Clash Zone (LP)
Chaos In New York (2xCD)
The 16 Tons Tour (LP)
Patriots Of The Wasteland (2xCD)
Tokyo Sun Plaza Hall 1982 (CD)
Bored With The USA: Live At The Music Machine, London 1978 (LP)
Clash Songbooks (2xLP)
This Is Live Clash (CD, 1990s)
The Boston Tapes (LP)
The Sounds Of Sinners (LP)
18 Flight Rock (LP)
London Calling Sessions (LP)
Red China (LP)
Interview With Joe Strummer (7")
Denmark Burning (7")
The Clash - Give 'Em Enough Rope Demos
Give 'Em Enough Rope Demos (7")
The Sound Of The West (7")
Rude Boy Outtakes (LP)
Anarchy In The U.K. Tour 1976 (LP)
Live In NYC 1979 (7")
Elvis Has Left The Building (CD)
Punk Festival Bataclan 29 September 1977 (CD)
Complete Chaos In New York (2xCD)
T.V. EP (7")

Various Artists

Concerts For The People Of Kampuchea UK 2xLP 1981 (Atlantic): Armagideon Time
Life In The European Theatre UK/US LP 1981 (WEA/Elektra): London Calling
Symphonies For The Disaffected UK Tape 1985 (Beer Belly Tapes): White Man
Pogo A Gogo! UK Tape 1986 (New Musical Express): 1977 (Demo)
Virgin Hormones EP US 7" 1980s (Virgin Hormones): Koka-Kola [Live September 21, 1979]
Lipstick Traces UK CD 1993 (Rough Trade): Stage Talk, Roundhouse
1-2-3-4 Punk & New Wave 1976-1979 UK 5xCD 1999 (Universal): Complete Control
Midnight Special At Screen On The Green UK 2xCD 2001 (Punk Vault): many songs!
No Thanks! The '70s Punk Rebellion US 4xCD 2003 (Rhino): White Riot
Sniffin' Glue: The Essential Punk Accessory UK CD 2003 (Castle): White Riot
Rebel Music - Songs Of Protest And Insurrection UK CD 2008 (Mojo): Tommy Gun (Live from Shea Stadium) / Clampdown (Live from the Lewisham Odeon)
Sisko Tahtosin Jäädä Finland CD 2010 (Sony Music): Should I Stay Or Should I Go

Links

THE CLASH - OFFICIAL WEBSITE
THE CLASH BLOG
PUNK 77
NOAM CITY ROCKERS
DON J. WHISTANCE'S CLASH SITE
THE CLASH BOOTLEG SITE
CLASH CITY ROCKERS
WIKIPEDIA

You can add stuff and make comments/corrections by emailing me at:
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COMMENTS