

Sex Pistols Heartbreakers The Clash

MANCHESTER

THREE DANCE bands playing the Electric Circus for the second time in ten days. They're back because the Circus is one of the very few venues in the land that will accommodate them.

The Clash appeared first, and they're a band for jiving to. They play vicious — vicious as in raw, edges jagged. Joe Strummer plays a crushing consistent rhythm guitar, sings a little anonymously, but plenty intently — and he was once with nostalgic bores The 101ers, knows his rock'n'roll. That's rock'n'roll as in Eddie Cochran.

Fighting through the high energy surges of that type of tight arrangement that makes The Ramones kingpins; The arrangements that in the Clash's case are surprisingly only a few steps removed from Showaddywaddy, the band played tight, rhythmically strident, totally belying the resultant sound; grated rock'n'roll.

Visually they are on top too. Concentrated, intent they look as aggressive as they sound, all of them moving just right. No perfunctory performances for these boys.

From where I'm sitting (*The North-Ed.*) they are London's best rock'n'roll band.

The tourist Johnny Thunder and the Heartbreakers pop up next, and they're a band for twisting to — more New York Dolls than the New York Dolls, whispers a voice in my

ear. Which can only be a good thing.

A great deal more together than ten days ago, they go down a treat and are my favourite on the evening. Their music is a mishmash of all the New York bands you've ever heard, not just the Dolls. Regular rock'n'roll, lyrics about love and going steady, a lotta beat, no glitter, no choir, no synthesisers, no shit.

They move like they oughta, casual, play simple, hard and driving, not so much minimalistic as . . .

Buy their singles. And dance.

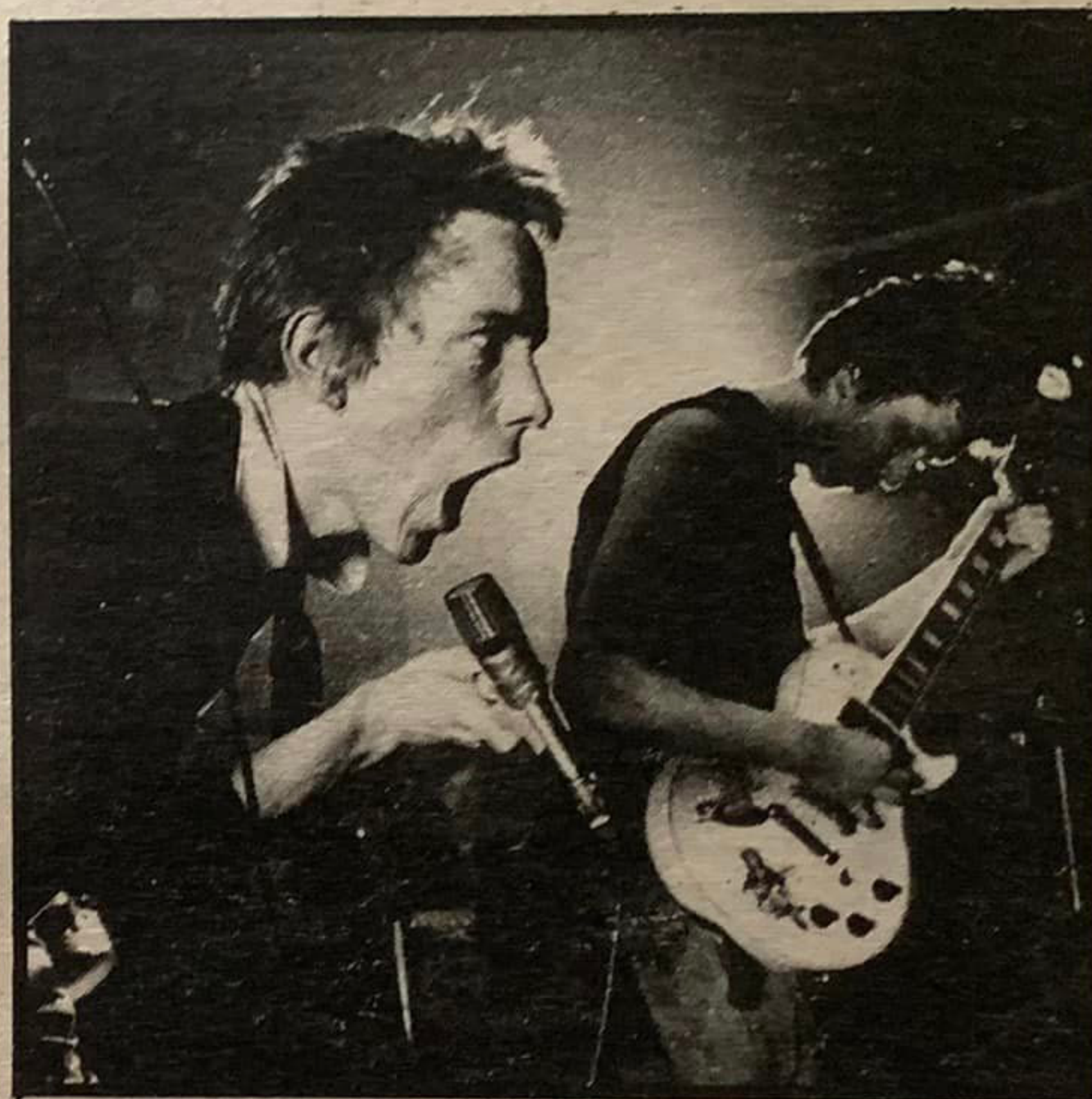
Finally, the Sex Pistols, a band for jumping up and down to. A pop group to the Clash's rock'n'roll and the Heartbreakers' bop rock, musically self-conscious enough for Johnny Rotten to get snobbish about lacking Damned musical attributes, and for Steve Jones to paint GUITAR HERO on his amp and get flashy with fingers during "Substitute".

Let's be honest, tonight after three or four tunes they begin to bore. I really hate to have to say it, but yeah, boring. Almost lackadaisical. Only volume and speed disguising basic malfunctions.

Each song, taken as a separate entity, is relentless, but anonymous, gut-wrenching rock'n'roll. Strung together, though, the whole thing drags, a definite feel of laziness seeping from the stage.

Rotten, though, was for much of the time naturally magnificent. Demented Pinnocchio type tactics, his ten year-old Hunter/Marriott

Do these chaps want to be pop stars?



vocals skidding wickedly.

He bored with his pathetic crowd-baiting moans.

"All you do is stare," he whined at one point, which is hardly surprising because all that was happening was Jones yet again tuning his guitar and Rotten himself blowing his nose . . . with a clean handkerchief.

Hey, but they did "Anarchy" at the very end after a churn-out version at the beginning, and it was a really great way to go, all frustrations channelled, it seemed, into this

one version. It showed how they could and should have been: instead of being the disappointment of the evening they should have murdered us.

Previously the Pistols have set high standards of musical torment. They seem reluctant to sustain it; they were normal tonight, musically, sloppy even.

Lack of match practice, maybe, but at this rate that telly series can't be too far away. They want to be pop stars and boy, tonight the harmonies were spot-on.

Paul Morley

Generation X The Drones

MANCHESTER

THE 'DRONES play their second gig in another do-it-ourselves affair at the Houldsworth Hall. A pitifully small turn-out, fifty at the very most, sit cautiously at the back of the hall, leaving a sixty foot gap between applause and stage. Bet it's like playing to no one.

Generation X turn out to be the pretty side of punk. I caught them a few weeks back when, as Chelsea, they struck me as being a "they can do it — we can do it too" Pistols tight surge copyist. They pleaded not guilty: "Our sons are more melodic than the Pistols' — the Beatles to the Pistols' Stones type of thing.

Tonight, with a slightly better PA set-up, the melodies are more in evidence, also the careful arrangement of each song apparent. The band is now Billy Idol no longer guitaring but crooning manfully; new guy Bob Andrews on chunky guitar and occasional whizzing solo (over before you've realised they've started); and the old rhythm section, Tony James on bass and John Towe on drums.

Basically they're a Pop Group, y'know, The Searchers, Billy J. Kramer and the Dakotas, that kind of thing. Playing short, fast, simple, catchy tunes, all with a hook. Towards the end the tunes got a little samey; also the words tend to be aggressive anti-statements or rambles about new orders and such, when the melodies cry out for candy