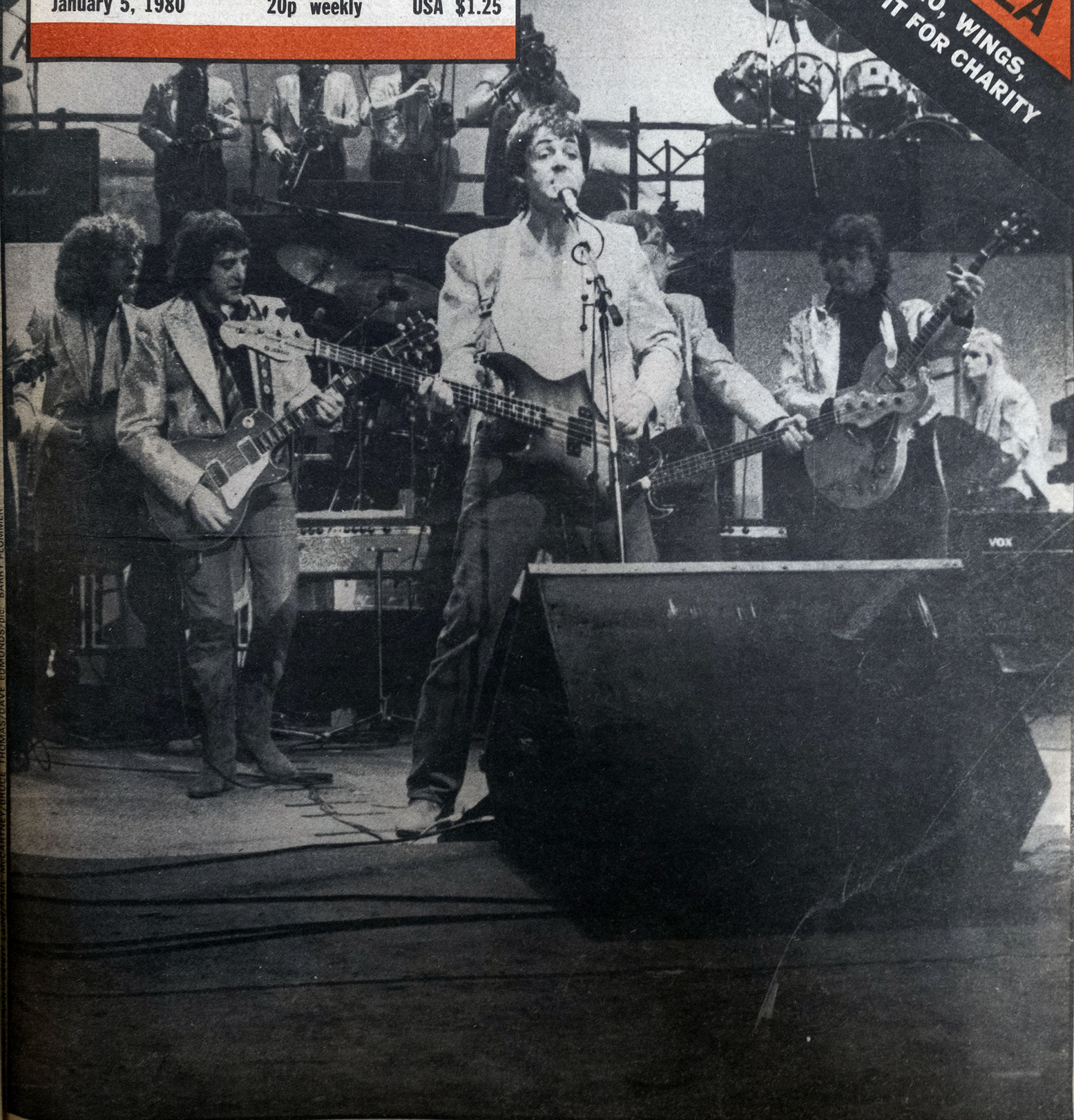


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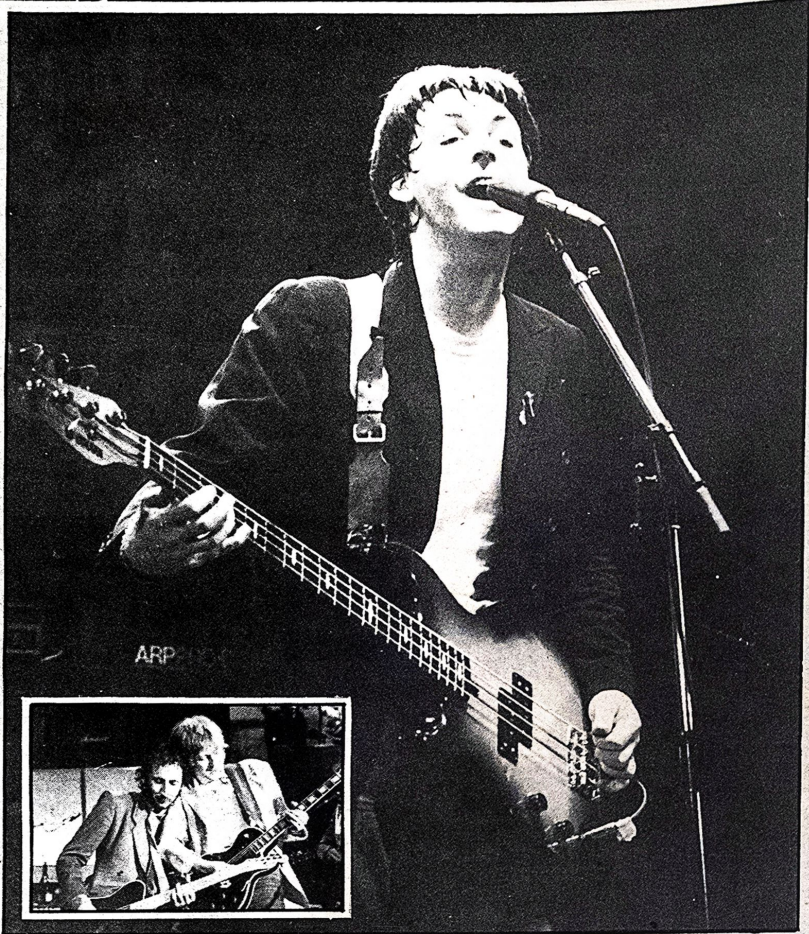
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**COLD TURKEY
FOR KAMPUCHEA**
NO BEATLES REUNION—BUT WHO, WINGS,
ELVIS, CLASH, DURY & QUEEN DO IT FOR CHARITY
(p. 20-21)

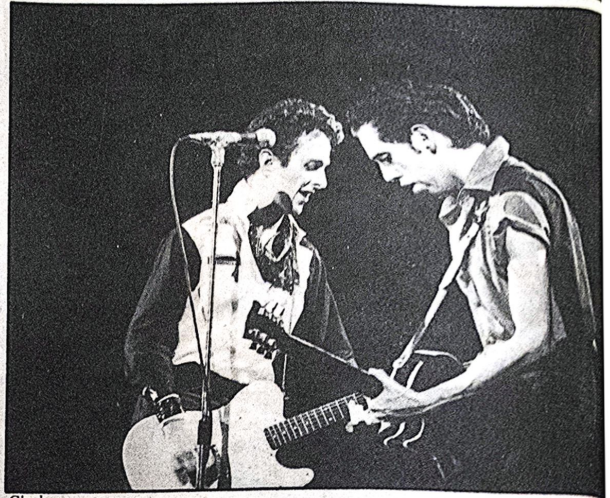


W. MARTINEY/BRUCE THOMAS/DAVE EDMONDS/DIS. BANKY P. FORUM/RET.

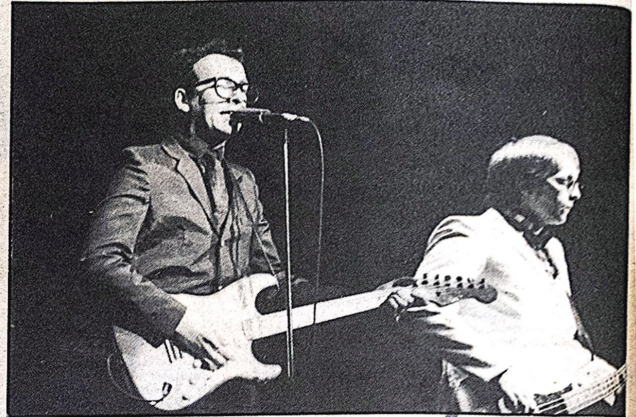
Caught in the act



Townshend and Pretender Honeyman-Scott



Clash



Macca Costello

KAMPUCHEA BENEFITS Hammersmith Odeon

Wednesday: QUEEN

IF, AS is promised, the new technology makes style and presentation the criteria for success, Queen will be assured of a place in the vanguard, alongside the Blondies and Boomtown Rats of this artificial world, where video becomes the new perfection.

They have a head start. As long ago as 1975, having worked their way up through the usual tour/publicity process, Queen had unleashed "Bohemian Rhapsody", a groundbreaking piece of film, much better than the record, which succeeded in encapsulating an entire career.

Given the concept, the career became secondary. By a curious inversion of the accepted procedure, Queen, like Blondie, have to face the challenge of recreating their videos live, where details are lost to a wider whole.

Queen compensate with spectacle. Gushing orchestral overtures spill out across the theatre and subside into darkness: a canopy hanging over the stage is hoisted up and overturned to reveal a vast bank of overhead spotlights, laid out in parallel lines of colour. A thunderflash explodes and we listen to a hammy production of "Jailhouse Rock".

Queen themselves are an odd spectacle, their visual contradictions reflected in a set that both sent itself up and was overbearingly itself. Arranged in braces and crew cut, John Deacon could be any thick bass player; the frequently divine Roger Taylor looks like a refugee from Biba's Powder Room, all bleached hair and cute features; Brian May displays all the symptoms of a severe guitar fixation but is too precious to indulge them; and then there's Freddie, kitted out in regulation gay fantasy leather wear.

The clothes are crucial, of course. The preening prima donna of the TV

video is replaced by a more rugged, aggressively macho stance: it's less extreme than Judas Priest's pathetic flirtations with sexual fetishism, but insufficiently camp to deflate Queen's tenacity towards oppressively masculine heavy metal. Perhaps they should add a 15-foot plaster of Paris penis to their stage set.

As with all good pornography, the essence of a successful Queen event seems to lie in glossing over a calculated aim with an approximation of spontaneity. On Wednesday night this involved dragging out at the beginning and endings of the songs till the middle disappeared in a blaze of technical virtuosity. At times it felt like education.

At other times, especially on "Bohemian Rhapsody", and the second encore, when Freddie sat on the shoulders of a passing Superman to sing "We Will Rock You", there were enough distractions to disguise the preposterous hodgepodge of glam, heavy metal and Gilbert & Sullivan that forms the basis of Queen's classic hits.

But let's not gripe. Heads were shaken in earnest, badges were bought and only the journalists defected before full-time. What's more, the biggest turkey was still at home. — JAMES TRUMAN.

Thursday: IAN DURY & THE BLOCKHEADS/CLASH MATUMBI

IT'S funny how things change. A couple of years ago, these three bands, billed together, would have generated an across-the-board appeal at a roots level, despite very different styles and musical approaches. On Thursday night, the audience was there for one thing: self-celebration through the medium of Ian Dury's Cockney anthems.

Yet this concert demonstrated that if Ian Dury has, despite salient attempts on his own behalf to reverse the trend, become a victim

of his own persona, both Matumbi and the Clash have developed in such interesting and satisfying directions that they can provide stiff competition on the home turf. Whatever their prejudices, the assembled Dickies, Trevers and their respective extended families gave credit where credit was due: both the Clash and Matumbi were called back for more.

Matumbi began it all, breaking down initial lack of interest through some smooth fusion reggae from their most recent output, but delving now and again into the past for a gem or two — like "Guide Us".

The ten-piece Matumbi seem intent on carving their own, special niche in British black music, pursuing a form that's sweetly commercial yet never strays too far from the backstreet. On stage, they drive the point home: a reggae-fied ballad is introduced in thick patois, and a strident dub's slotted in here and there. Two years ago, Matumbi were proud and unknown. Today, most have heard "Point Of View" — and Dennis and the guys are prouder still. With good reason.

The Clash followed an interval of frantic neck-oiling in the upstairs bar. They'd been announced as special mystery guests only minutes before the concert started, to applause that indicated pleasure if not total rapture. However, they whammed into their set with a vigour and panache that was quite breathtaking.

The Clash have always been flash, but now they almost define the term. They succeed as an idea — even now, after the giant musical strides of "London Calling", their music isn't anything like wholly satisfying. In live performance, though, all disbelief is suspended: the Clash epitomise rock 'n' roll.

It's gratifying to see how much they've all developed, yet without being seduced by technique for its own sake. The Keith Richard comparison's still valid: Mick's guitar playing has that garbled roughness, and he moves about in that same long-legged fashion, but there's none

of the grossness in his manner. When a kid jumps up alongside him to sing a chorus of two of "Janie Jones", he's encouraged, not ignored like some terminal leper. Topper's drumming is honest and solid, Joe shouts and yowls himself hoarse, and Paul hammers out his bass line while crossing his legs in the air. A couple of songs into the set, they bring on the Blockheads' keyboard player, Mickey Gallagher, who unobtrusively fills in some of the gaps, and reproduces his lines from the new album to great effect.

The Clash turn their collective shortcomings on their heads: they make a virtue of simplicity and inject tension through the most ingenuous devices. That's what makes them so exciting.

And Ian Dury and the Blockheads? At the same time brilliant and banal, offering alternately the most inspired music of the evening and the most boorish.

Perhaps an event such as this isn't really the time to offer "state of the nation" critiques. In no way were the Blockheads attempting anything new and it's doubtful that anyone was expecting anything radically different, especially on a one-off engagement. Still, it's tantalising to speculate on the effect of the departure of Chas Jankel, thoughts which were further stimulated by the lack of anything new in the repertoire.

Of all the bands present, the Blockheads made the best use of the excellent sound system: the rhythm section of Norman Watt-Roy and Charlie Charles not only created a deep and strong foundation, but sounded simply incredible. And on top, the crazed intonations of Dury himself, paralleled by Davey Payne's anarchic (for this form of music, at least) sax. At their best, on Thursday, the Blockheads were wonderful, but, allowing for the fact that this event was rather special, they delved a little too deeply into Dury's past. Kilburns songs, even by the Blockheads, don't hold a candle to the more recent stuff.

It's hardly worth recording that the audience loved every minute of

it, but one gets the impression that Dury could stand up there and blow raspberries all night to the same response. There's also a feeling that his audience really don't want him to develop, that they'd be much happier with an endless succession of naughties. I don't think that's what Dury wants, and his announcement that Thursday's "Sex & Drugs..." was to be the last is evidence.

An evening of fine music and performance, and of generosity between bands (lots of jamming) and audience. Even if those qualities are somewhat tangential to the plight of Kampuchea, one hopes there'll be some material feedback, too. — JON WALL.

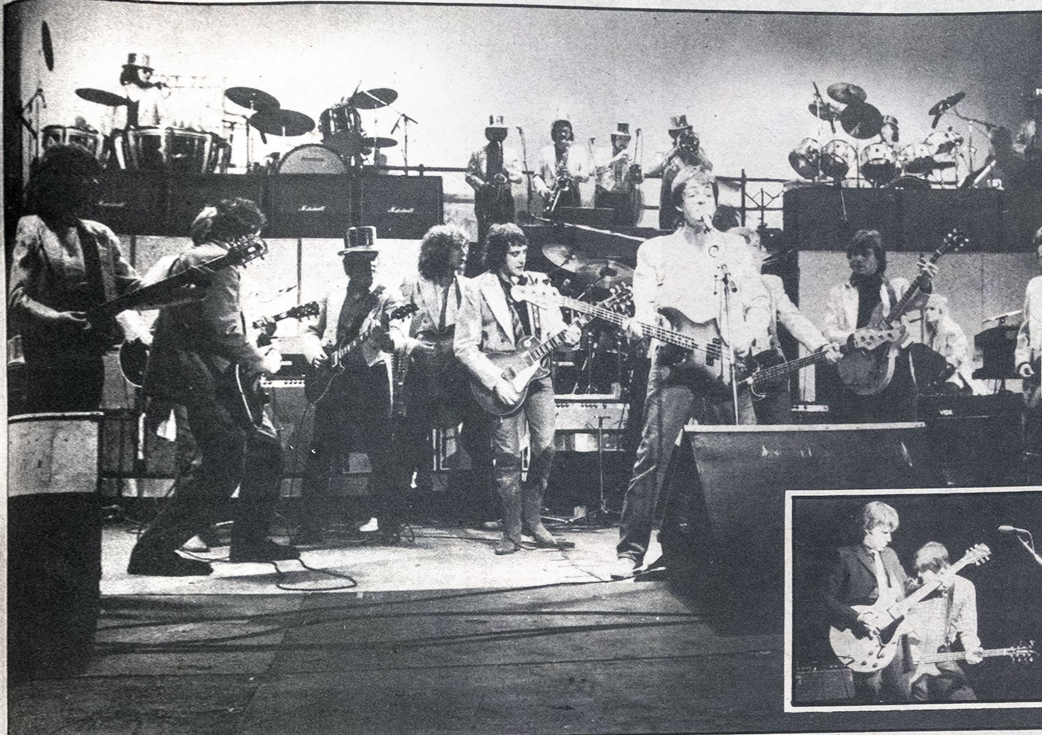
Friday: WHO/SPECIAL PRETENDERS

IT might have been billed might not, but the bill contained three appropriately-named instances.

First, a surprise appearance by the Pretenders — they've been rooting, like ever since the emergence of singles. Exposure to though, is something from the aforementioned songs, the rest of suffered by comparison. does those essential of surprise and magic.

As a live force, they possess one distinct advantage. Hynde, who is possibly the most captivating instance. Given that which is so-o-o-o magnetise an audience while her breathy, cover up effectively. For that she is special. Pretenders are going to contribute more than and a pose to the things, which is what

Obesity and light relief



Rockestra

are the usurpers they think they are. But if it's usurpers you're after, of course, then you probably need no introduction to one of the bands of '79. Acting as catalysts to a whole new dance, and also as guides to record company dealings, they have evolved as something. In fact they are... the Specials.

Seven youthful musicians, who through their vitality, strength and wit were able to transform the Odeon into one rocking, jumping, nightclub. Seven concerned individuals with rock-hard messages of unity and sensibility, that have to be broadcast, and heard by the right people.

And how they go about their business! Whilst one singer displays his enthusiasm in a vibrant show of athleticism, his counterpart acts as the perfect foil in an almost cynical stance of fake boredom and disinterest. The perfect double-edge.

But let's not forget that the real success of this band lies in the perfect understanding these guys (including Rico and Dick Cuthell on horns) have of their musical roots. In fact at times their direction flirted into interesting areas of dub-land, causing, along with their ska heritage, an exciting fusion of cultural bridges. And you could dance, which is more than you can say about the Who these days.

Unwittingly, the Who have suddenly become a musical dinosaur, trying desperately to come to terms with their own history. They know that, in terms of integrity and honesty (qualities I've always admired in Townshend), they take a huge risk every time they step on stage, but they also understand that great rock 'n' roll can only be made through risks, risks which would now seem tedious for them to take.

The whole middle section of their set consisted, to a large extent, of endless, pointless jams between Townshend and the musical extras of horns and keyboard, in a futile attempt to prove that the band could still cut it with the best of them. What made it even sadder, though,

was that the audience neither expected or wanted such pyrotechnics, just the Who of maybe four years ago, whose arrogance and power made them, on their night, one of the best-loved bands of all time. The music must change right now, though, if the Who are going to regain any sense of direction or purpose. If it doesn't, Peter Townshend and cohorts will be doomed to self-parody — and "Quadrophenia". — PAULO HEWITT.

Saturday: WINGS/ELVIS COSTELLO & THE ATTRACTIONS/ROCKPILE

AT 6.30 pm, it was said, by "reliable sources", that a certain Mr Lennon had checked into the Dorchester Hotel.

The forecourt of Hammersmith Odeon on this dry, crisp cold Saturday evening was throbbing in expectation. The billboard said Wings, Elvis Costello and the Attractions, Rockpile and Billy Connolly, but each of us stored the hope that the evening would have its little surprises.

Or maybe Geldof had it right: "Don't believe what you read."

We got in — eventually — and sat in buzzing anticipation. By this time, music business people were popping up and swopping Christmas tales of gluttony. The subject of a schid — Beatles reunion was talked around with knowing secrecy. Meanwhile, the lights went down and Billy Connolly, our host for the evening, fell onto the stage. Even Billy had been reading the papers, but evidently not talking to the light people backstage. "Ah, dinnae wantae build yer hopes up," he drawled surreptitiously, "but ah've just seen three a'the Applejacks backstage."

A burst of nervous laughter. This joke obviously knew something. He introduced Rockpile.

Strange it was that the best band sound go on first, but there you go.

Jake Riviera has cornered the market in underdogs. Rockpile flicked through an hour-long set with the ease of Joe Jordan going over the top in a tackle, and with just as much bite.

Drummer Terry Williams — he only has two feet — managed to give three people — Nick Lowe, Dave Edmunds and Billy Bremner — kicks up the ass simultaneously and the Rockpile sustained the pace for the entire set. But the audience, made up of the silent majority, i.e. Wings' fans, was unmoved by the nation's best dance band.

The boys themselves seemed to enjoy it — as I did — and when they wheeled on Robert Plant to take vocals on a raucous version of "Little Sister" (Ry Cooder would have been shocked), one might have expected the audience to rise in acclaim. But not a flutter. To his credit, Plantie tried hard not to bare his chest, though at one stage he did lift the mike stand and give us a "typical Zep pose". Elvis Costello would later remark that he never thought he'd see Rockpile play "Stairway To Heaven". Six people laughed.

The interval. Gossip is rife. HE hasn't arrived yet — but Pete Townshend has, and John Bonham and John Paul Jones, and Kenny Jones. I remembered reading something about the Rockestra, the "galaxy of stars" who played on one track on Wings' "Back To The Egg", making an appearance, but that story had been shelved in favour of the "Beatles To Reform" revelations.

After a short break, Billy Connolly humoured us again. He was funny, but hardly hilarious. There was one gag about New York being the only place in the world that would look the same as before after a nuclear attack. Then he changed his mind. Glasgow would look the same, too. Mr. Connolly is a Glaswegian. He introduced his "good friend", Elvis Costello.

Elvis seems a much more affable chap these days. Despite the fact that the audience treated him with the same irritating indifference they

accorded Rockpile, he was prepared (for charity?) to tolerate their lethargy, and even managed to crack a few jokes along the way.

I'm still not totally convinced, though, of Costello and the Attractions' pedigree as a live band. Given the freedom of a studio, his songs emerge as remarkably full entities. In the transition from studio to stage, something gets lost and the band just don't sound solid and convincing enough.

It's a criticism that pertains mostly to the older songs, like "The Beat", and one that Elvis has killed on the new material, where he aims for a full, unbroken sound behind his vocal.

Costello's association with ska, via the Specials (one of the better rumours on Saturday night was that his next single would be on 2-Tone), has brought a more danceable quality to the new songs and given fresh life to some of the old stuff. "I Don't Want To Go To Chelsea" was a dramatic jam, and new songs like "Possession", "The Impostor", "High Fidelity" and (the next single) "I Can't Stand Up For Falling Down" were eminent toe-tappers and heavy on the old Farfisa in the Attractions' tradition.

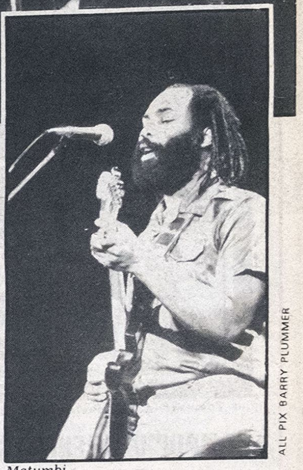
Not surprisingly, as soon as Costello and cohorts quit, rumours abounded again. By now, "people in the know" were convinced that Lennon wasn't there — but said so with a slight wink that kept them safe just in case.

What were we to think when McCartney's four-man brass section pumped out the opening bars of "Got To Get You Into My Life"? When McCartney and the rest of his hacks came on to deliver a sizzling opening to the set, one and all's hopes for a reunion went into orbit. This was a definite pointer. Why else would McCartney, after all these years and all those solo albums, open up with an old Beatles song? No particular reason, as it turned out.

A little later into the set, I spotted a banner hanging from the balcony. "Hello From New York," it said.



Dury



Matumbi

Lennon had obviously decided to send a message in lieu of personal appearance. Maybe that explains why Wings' set suddenly went flat. Pop without the fizz. We had just seen two four-pieces provide excellent sets. Wings, with a personnel of nine including brass section (the Fab 4x2) tailed dismally to match the pace set first by Rockpile and almost sustained by Costello.

There were rare highlights — "Every Night", "Maybe I'm Amazed", "I've Had Enough", "Spin It On" and an off-the-cuff tribute to Eddie Cochran with "20 Flight Rock" — but the norm was sedate, harmless and invariably tedious.

Paul himself sussed that this audience was anticipating "something else", and bitterly informed us that his three former colleagues were nowhere near Hammersmith; then, acknowledging the drowsiness of the occasion: "I don't know about you, but I'm nodding off."

With Wings' unspectacular set over, it was fun-time and the curtain was upped to reveal the Rockestra, a motley crew if ever I saw one. Some Whos (Townshend and Jones), a Pretender (Honeyman-Scott), an Attraction (Bruce Thomas), lots of Wings, three Zeppelins (Plant, Bonham and Jones), and two Rockpiles launched into "The Rockestra Theme", which involves the arduous task of playing the same riff over and over.

Townshend did it beautifully — and while McCartney appeared intent in exercising a bit of discipline, Peter was having none of it. Only Pete Townshend could windmill-thrash his guitar during "Let It Be". After one more song, "Lucille", the Rockestra was gone. For ever.

One last look, just to make sure. No luck. No sign of a balding, pointy-nosed, thin-lipped farmer with Jap boiler in tow.

Oh well, if John had been there, he might have said: "On behalf of the group and myself, I'd like to say thank you and I hope we passed the audition."

This time, though, they would've failed. — HARRY DOHERTY.

ALL PIX BARRY PLUMMER