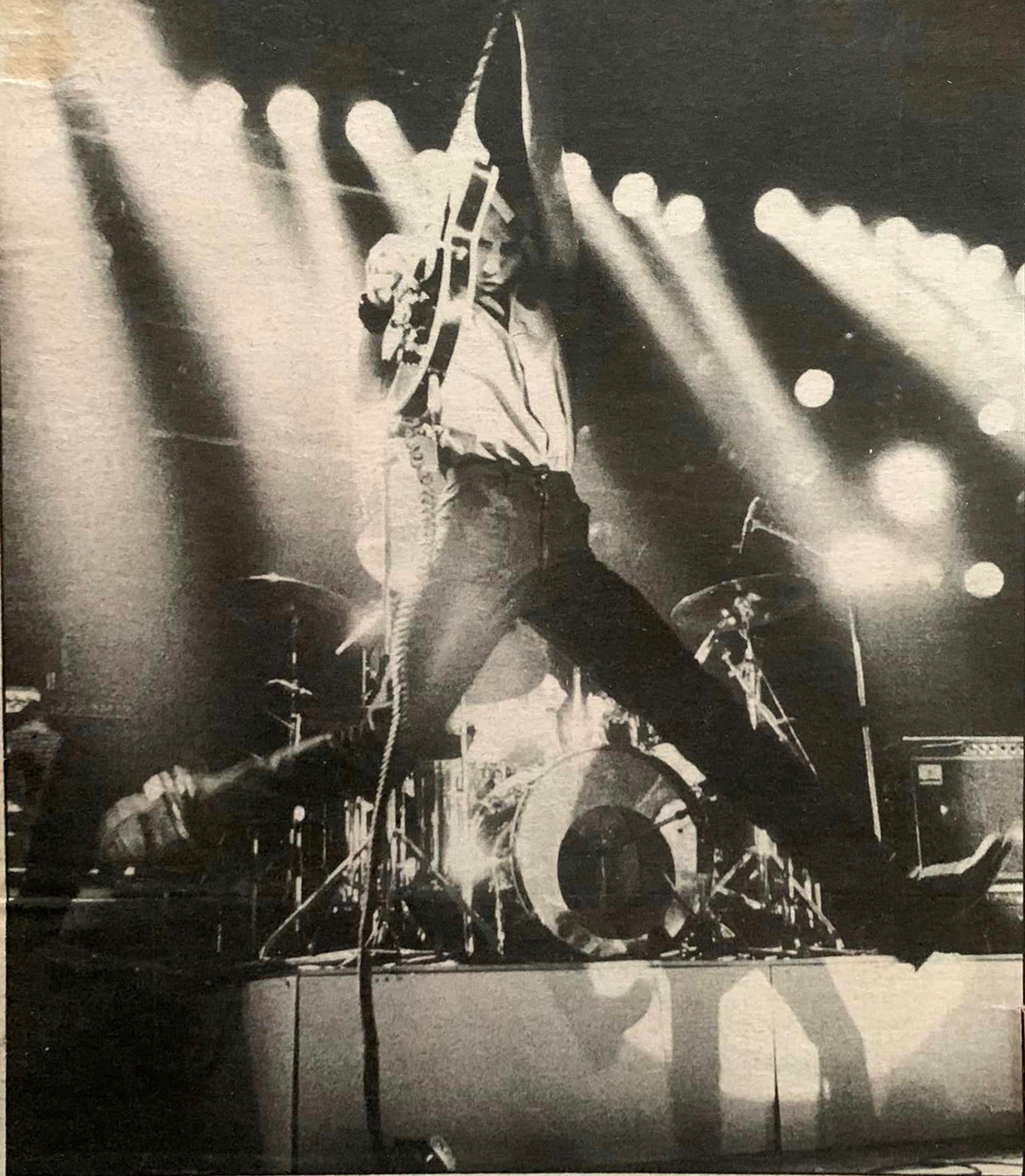




MICK JONES attempts a guitar pose never before seen on an English stage

Justice tonight

The Clash/ Ian Dury/ Vice Creems Aylesbury

THIS IS what we find: even the nervously yelled overtures of Kris Needs' Vice Creems, hauled together in the last 24 hours, minus lead guitarist, and presently delivering an excruciatingly silly version of Art Carfunkle's 'Bright Eyes' (how long can I slag 'em off for this bit of cruel genius?) to a horde of fascinated Friars locals, cannot dispel the fact that tonight we get to see not just the Clash, but Ian and the Blockheads too.

Might be a last minute arrangement, but a strategically placed stool next to the onstage mike ensures that every last fan is in the know — and waiting . . .

No seats. No armchairs. And, in this welcome return to what Blockheads gigs used to be like,

I'd swear that gleeful Dury grin is wider than ever. Squashed onto the front half of an overloaded stage, the Blockheads are having a party: they're playing 'cos they like the Clash and there's no need to resort to the oft-annoying Cockney cabaret or any forced banality.

Smashing out glorious anthems like 'Plaistow Patricia' and dragging a totally willing Mick Jones on to decorate the sweeter than 'Sweet Gene Vincent'; rapping out the rhythm of a tatty but overcharged 'Rhythm Stick' against Davey Payne's superb saxophone swoops (no-one ever made me feel such envy) and tumbling back en masse for the celebration of 'Clever Trevor'.

So the sound was suspect and time was short, but Dury and the Blocks made no mistakes. If oldies were what was wanted, then oldies were what we got and the boots and panties sparkled just like new.

First date on the first tour

since God-knows-when and the Clash are proving the 'forgot how good they were till I saw them again' theory to order though it's more a case of coping than setting a showcase. Quirky, muggy sound making mincemeat of Jones' sensitive vocals while even Strummer has to holler to sometimes be heard on new songs that'll need a few more live airings before they achieve the accepted greatness of 'Garageland'.

But this is the Clash. They reward the young believers with an assortment of over 20 takes and a stage show so simple and effective that its only parallel is there, sparkling in the music.

Mick flicks into Townshend leaps and asks the audience if they saw Tiswas, Strummer twists himself into giving more of his voice than he probably thought he'd got while Paul grins non-stop and Topper pulls all the ragged moments into rhythmic unison. Yet there's no arrogance, no spite. If the Clash

are stars in others' eyes, they're not so in their own.

Punk is far from dead for Aylesbury inmates and the floor rattles under pogoing monkey boots and 'Janie Jones' but the Clash's progression from '77 outrage to what will surely be Eighties enormity is merely poking its nose around the corner. Aylesbury's teething troubles are the beginning of what could well be an incredible tour; the menacing crunch of 'Guns Of Brixton' side-by-side with the mighty 'Clampdown', Lew Lewis' harp humming through 'Jimmy Jazz' and not a hint of nostalgia clouding 'Stay Free'; but you'll have to see it for yourselves.

Dimmed lights and eerie jungle screams — 'Armageddon Time' ends a timeless adventure in one uncluttered sigh.

Did someone say that the Eighties start here?
I hope so . . .

ROBBI MILLAR