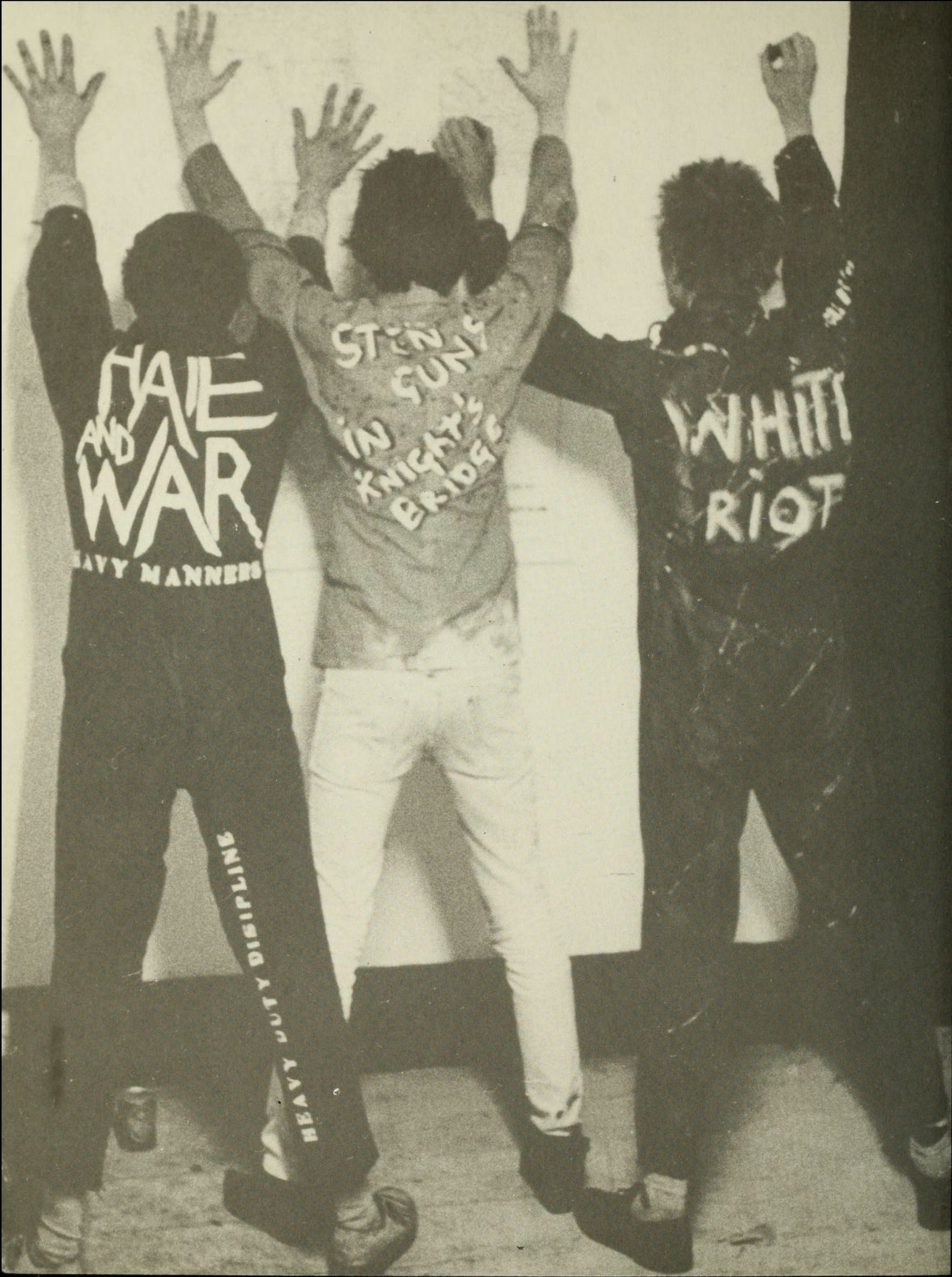


1988



JOHNNY ROTTEN

THE NEW WAVE
PUNK ROCK
EXPLOSION
Caroline Coon



HAIL
AND
WAR

HEAVY MANNERS

HEAVY DUTY DISCIPLINE

STON
IN SUNS
KNIGHTS
BRIDEG

WHITE
RIOT

**1988:
THE NEW
WAVE PUNK
ROCK
EXPLOSION**

CAROLINE COON

Omnibus Press

London/New York/Sydney/Cologne

1976 ₃

ROCK REVOLUTION ₁₀

**THE FIRST
EUROPEAN PUNK
ROCK FESTIVAL** ₂₃

**THE 100 CLUB
PUNK ROCK
FESTIVAL** ₃₃

THE SEX PISTOLS ₄₇

THE CLASH ₆₁

THE DAMNED ₈₁

**'GUARDIAN OF THE
NATION'S MORALS'** ₈₉

THE STRANGLERS ₉₂

THE SLITS ₁₀₂

**THE PUNK ROCK
EXPLOSION** ₁₁₅

1988 ₁₂₆

Acknowledgements

1988 was inspired by punk rock musicians and fans. I thank them for tearing the stultifying wraps off rock 'n' roll and then sharing their experiences with me.

At the start, John Ingham understood what was going on and we became partners. Without his technical advice and friendship, writing about punk rock would have been much less fun. We co-wrote Chapter 2. His contribution to 1988 is considerable.

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Lyrics

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1976

The Sex Pistols made their debut at St Martins School of Art on Friday 6th of November 1975. The irate social secretary cut the power after five numbers. Only ten minutes on stage and the band had created the first Them and Us rock schism in over a decade. In the following months most people who heard their music found it repulsive. They booed accordingly. The Pistols just jeered back, branded the opposition 'boring old farts', and carried on regardless.

Not that they had many places to play – the alienated older generation included club and rock concert promoters. When they did appear, news was spread by word of mouth and hurriedly printed hand bills. Early fans were mostly friends of the band, those on the Sex Pistols' grapevine or isolated nonconformists who had stumbled across them at gigs. At last four belligerent teenagers were shaking up the stagnating rock scene. The first months of belonging to a new movement which everyone else reviled was like being at a wonderful, subversively bizarre private party.

By September 1976, when over 1000 fans from all over the country came to see the Sex Pistols and seven other new bands at the 100 Club's First London Punk Rock Festival, the party had swelled to a nationwide celebration.

With very few exceptions, however, the musicians, critics, and record company executives of the rock establishment, condemned the growing phenomenon with attitudes ranging from indifference to apoplexy. They felt assured that if punk rock was ignored it would go away.

Dave Dee, A&R, WEA Records: *As a musical thing I found it very unmusical. The fact that it isn't disciplined prevents me from liking it. I can't see it going any further than it is right now.* (Sounds, October, 1976)

John Martin, Cowbell booking agency: *I just don't see any appreciable future . . . I can't see them outside a club.* (October 1976)

Dan Loggins, A&R, CBS Records: *It's a fad.* (Melody Maker, November, 1976)

Phil Collins, lead singer, Genesis: *A friend videoed the group on the 'So It Goes' tv programme (August) and following all this publicity we played it over out of curiosity and all we found was a lack of talent.* (Melody Maker, December, 1976)

Eric Burdon, former lead singer with the Animals: *Their music is not important.* (Melody Maker, December, 1976)

Derek Jewell, music critic, Sunday Times: *The latest musical garbage . . . Punk will fade . . . Its apologists are ludicrous . . . When it dies it will not be mourned.* (Sunday Times, November, 1976)

The older generation's reaction to the new era was understandable. It made them feel redundant.

The seeds of punk were sown when the live rock circuit almost died in the early seventies. Discos took the place of live acts – it was cheaper to play records than pay a band. Touring became a marketing device to promote a band's latest album. The bands who couldn't afford the large sums needed to buy themselves onto these tours were forced to play in pubs to audiences over seventeen who were there as much for the drink as the music. To please the punters in such an unselective atmosphere it was necessary to trot out oldies. Even original songs had to sound like classics. The emphasis was on well tried R&B formulae rather than innovation. And basically if you weren't a boozier it was very boring.

Of all the bands that churned around the pub circuit between 1972 and 1976 less than ten were given the opportunity to record. Only the Kursaal Flyers, Dr. Feelgood and Eddie and the Hot Rods made any impression in the charts. In early 1976 the Hot Rods' energy and high-speed rock began to attract the same teenagers who were going to Sex Pistols' gigs. But just at the point when they

were capable of filling the Marquee twice in one night they dissociated themselves from the New Wave and Punk rock.

As for the hot industry tips for success like Nasty Pop, City Boy Burlesque and Deaf School – who's even heard of them now?

The Sex Pistols were a dramatic break with the past. For a start they wouldn't play pubs. They promoted most of their gigs themselves and to those who understood what they were doing, it was obvious that a new rock generation and youth culture was emerging that would be artistically and commercially significant for many years to come. Its power, contrary to later allegations, lay in the fact that it was not created by the media but by teenage musicians and the kids themselves. Their music had a new rhythm and an abrasive style expressing a hunger and need which was no longer satisfied by antiseptic r'n'b and art school burlesque. Detractors, thinking they had stuck a knife in a vulnerable spot, drivelled on about musical incompetence – an argument as irrelevant as it was untrue.

Said Chris Spedding, a world class guitarist who had been to many of the early Sex Pistols' gigs: "The Sex Pistols looked and sounded good. Most groups are pretty boring; they weren't. I find it very weird, all that about them not playing music. If they are notable for one thing, it's that. They're always in time and in tune. I can't understand why some people have chosen to attack them on the very thing which is their strength. Obviously, they've got cloth ears." (Sounds, October, 1976)

Creating the space in which the scene could develop was twenty-eight year old Malcolm McLaren, a trend-setting anti-fashion couturier and owner of the Kings Road boutique, 'Sex' (currently, 'Seditionaries'; formerly, 'Let It Rock').

Physically rather ethereal and unassuming, he was nevertheless possessed of boundless zeal. He became the Diaghilev of Punk.

A Londoner with an art school background, Malcolm went to New York in 1975 and ended up managing the New York Dolls for seven months.

On his return he set about making his vision of a rumbling, anarchic, energetic and noisy rock scene, the

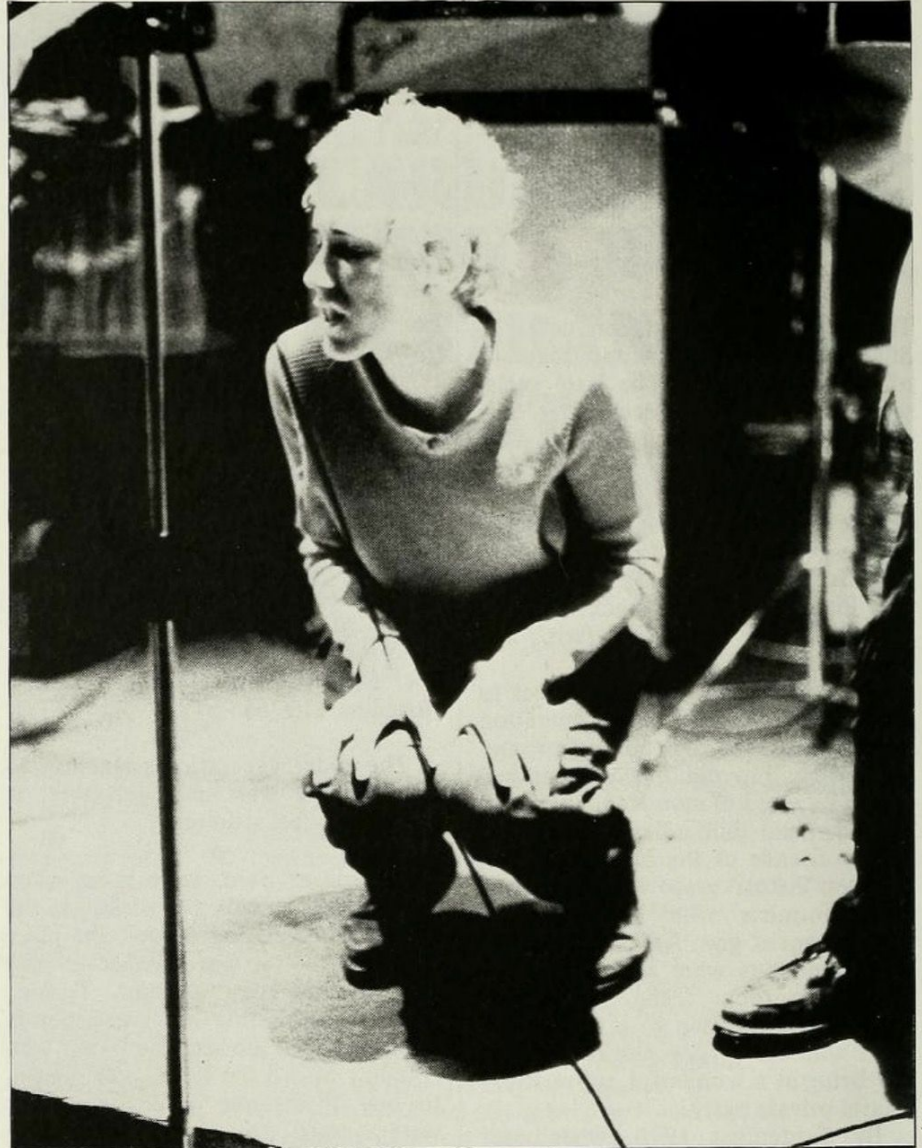
like of which hadn't been seen in Britain for ten years, a reality. This ambition, coupled with his sense of fun and adventure, made him the ideal person for aspiring musicians to approach. Their first contact with him was usually when they drifted into Sex to buy, or otherwise acquire, one of his infamous t-shirts. Malcolm would chat to anyone interesting, and if asked for advice he gave it. He seemed to have a canny knack of dealing with the practical details of rock, and as a no-strings-attached matchmaker, career guidance councillor and creative critic, he was much in demand. He manages the Sex Pistols, but many bands including the Clash, the Damned, the Buzzcocks and Siouxsie and the Banshees have benefited from his advice and encouragement.

The first time I heard the Sex Pistols was on the night they first played the Nashville in March 1976. Already I felt excited. For one thing, their name alone invited higher expectations than I would have going to see a group calling themselves Jim Custard Pie. Further, since I occasionally brought clothes from Sex, I had some idea how they would present themselves.

Exactly two years previously I started writing for the *Melody Maker*. I had interviewed stars as diverse as Alice Cooper and the Bay City Rollers, and I had seen scores of new bands. The Sex Pistols, however, wiped the board. Their performance that night exceeded the sensually ballistic promise of their name. They weren't responsible for being born with that intangible quality, 'natural charisma'. But they had it in rather unfair quantities. What impressed me most, however, was their total disinterest in *pleasing* anybody except themselves. Instead, they engaged the audience, trying to provoke a reaction which forced people to express what they felt about the music. Quite apart from being very funny, their arrogance was a sure indication that they knew what they were doing and why.

I hadn't expected to be so impressed. And yet, in a strange way, the Sex Pistols were what I had been looking for in rock 'n' roll for ages.

A few days later I went to *Melody Maker* dead keen to write a feature about the band and what I believed to



Johnny Rotten at the 100 club, April 1976.

be the importance of the punk scene emerging around them. To say my suggestion was considered premature, if not ludicrous, would be an understatement. And fair enough. A journalist's job is to convince an editor of a story's significance. All I had to do was keep tabs on developments and persist with my case. Five months later, in August 1976, I managed to get a feature in the *Melody Maker* on punk rock.

From the start I sensed that the Sex Pistols represented more than just a potentially great rock 'n' roll band. But only because I still had a vivid recollection of something very similar happening before, in 1967, when a

new music emerged in the Hippy underground.

The Hippy movement focussed around Psychedelic Rock, played by a new generation of musicians. Like Punk Rock a decade later, Psychedelic Rock polarised first the music industry and then society at large. To start with, the Pink Floyd and the Soft Machine were the most important bands. They couldn't get bookings at 'normal' rock venues. When the Soft Machine played Tiles in Oxford Street early in 1967, they were thrown off the stage after four numbers. In order to play in peace, as it were, psychedelic bands had to promote their own concerts. U.F.O. was the name of the



JO FAULL

Steve Jones, Sex Pistols' lead guitarist in his room in Soho where the band used to rehearse. April 1976.

main club, but its actual location moved from one West End basement to another as either the police or the landlord closed it down.

In the early days, Hippies went 'underground' because their philosophy, political beliefs, 'freaky' music, weird fashions and permissive life style were considered a threat to society. To survive, an alternative network of clubs, small records stores, newspapers devoted to the political and musical interests of the scene, 'head shops' and boutiques, soon sprung up.

Punks are the antithesis to the Hippies in every way, and yet there are similarities. They too are a protest against the Establishment. They have a

network of sympathetic promoters, record stores, fanzines and boutiques. Comparisons between the structures of the two movements became strikingly evident. No one ever talked openly about a punk 'underground'. But to me, that was what it felt like. By August 1976, I was convinced that the Sex Pistols were the vanguard of a new youth culture which would sweep the country — if not the, er, whole rock appreciating world . . .

This was *not* news everyone wanted to hear. Many musicians would have a tough time, and record companies would have to write off hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of investments in bands they had signed just



SHEILA ROCK

Fans at Boy, another punk boutique, Spring 1977.

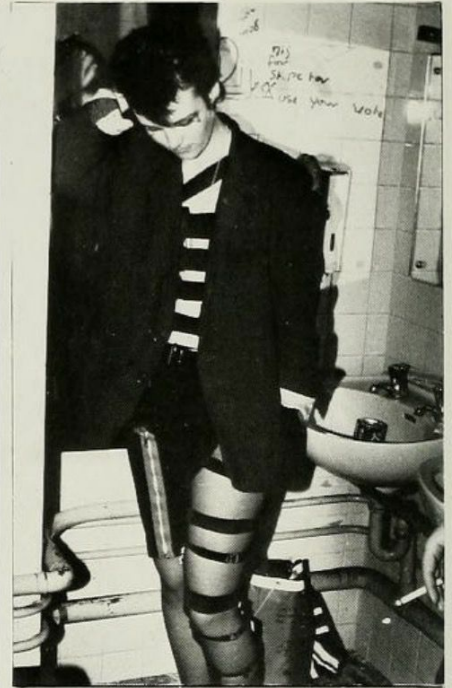
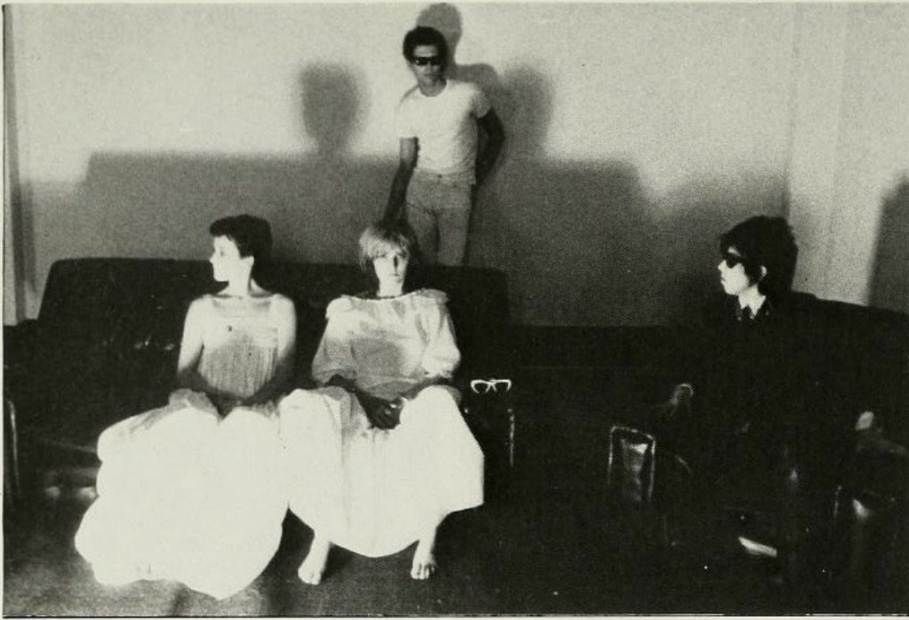


RAY STEVENSON

Cat Woman and Andy (from Eater) at the Roxy, Spring 1977.

before the new era. For a while a hostile breeze blew in my direction, but as more punk bands formed and the Sex Pistols' following grew, the commercial prospects of the new scene suddenly gave it a more appealing face.

JANE ASHLEY



ANNETTE WEATHERMAN

At the Roxy 1977.

JANE ASHLEY



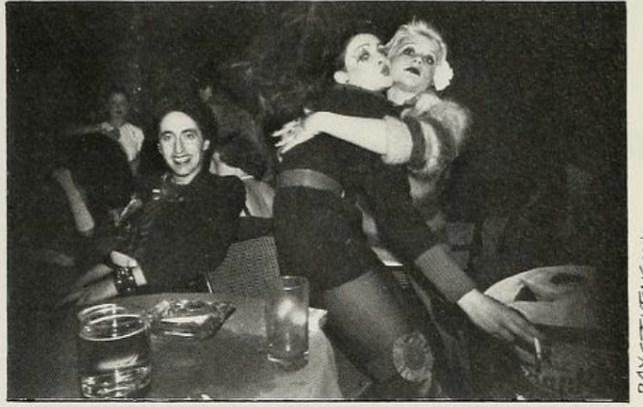
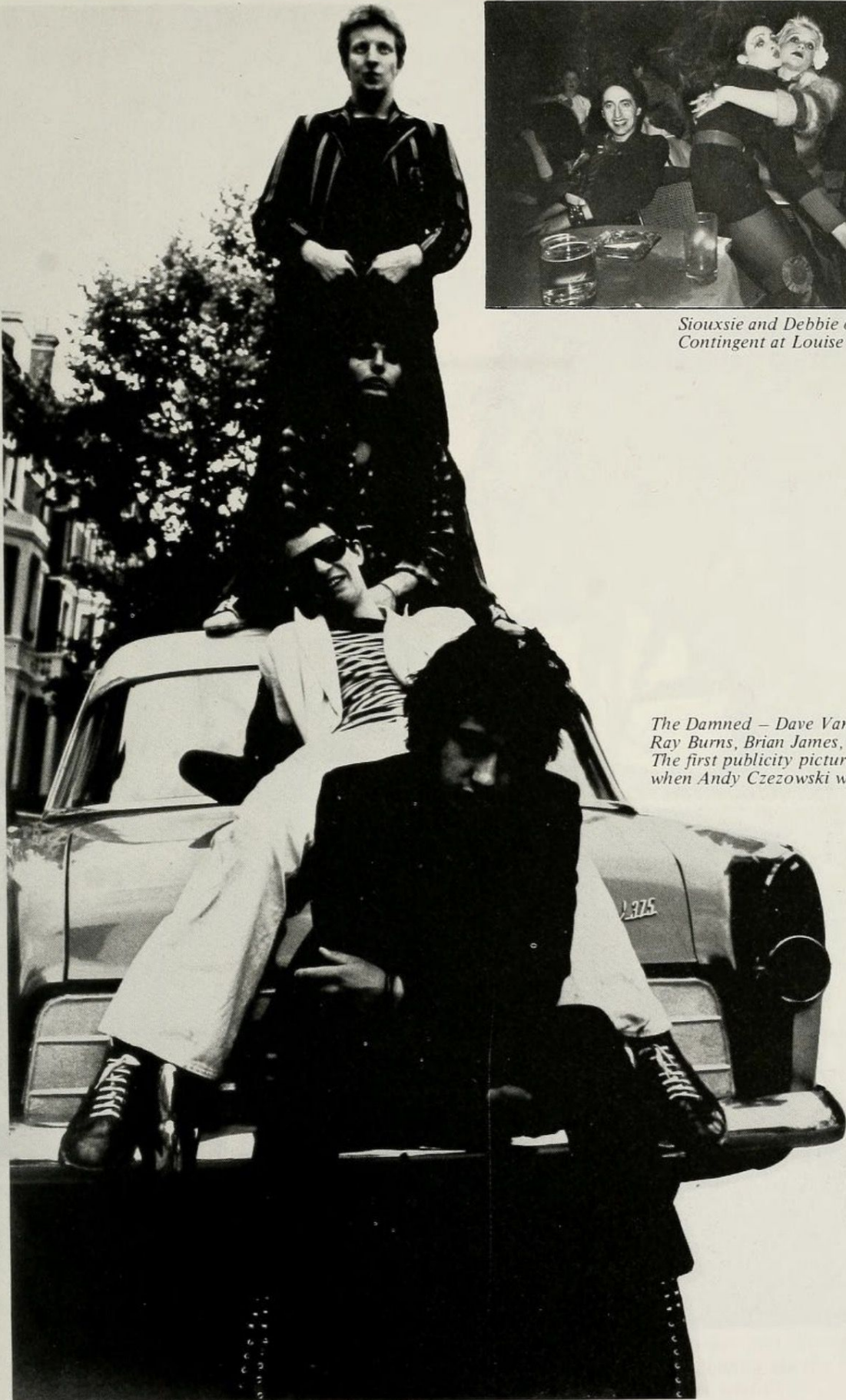
Summer 1976. Paul Simonon and Mick Jones (The Clash) at their Chalk Farm rehearsal studio with Viv Albertine (later of the Slits) and friend.



RAY STEVENSON

Madame Louise, whose club in Soho became the favourite hang-out of the Pistols and their fans in the Autumn of 1976.

THE DAMNED



RAY STEVENSON

Siouxsie and Debbie of the Bromley Contingent at Louise's with friends.

The Damned – Dave Vanium (bottom), Ray Burns, Brian James, and Rat Scabies. The first publicity picture, August 1976, when Andy Czezowski was their manager.



KNOX/RICCON



ANNETTE WEATHERMAN

The Roxy, 1977.



ANNETTE WEATHERMAN

The Roxy, 1977



KNOX/RIDDON

The Roxy, 1977

The interviews in the following chapters were written from month to month amid all the controversy and pressures of the developing Punk scene, between July 1976 and June 1977. They reflect my enthusiasm and

commitment, and the changing mood as the New Wave gathered momentum. The chapters are arranged in chronological order, and the dates at the head of each chapter are the dates on which they were written.

ROCK REVOLUTION

28th July 1976

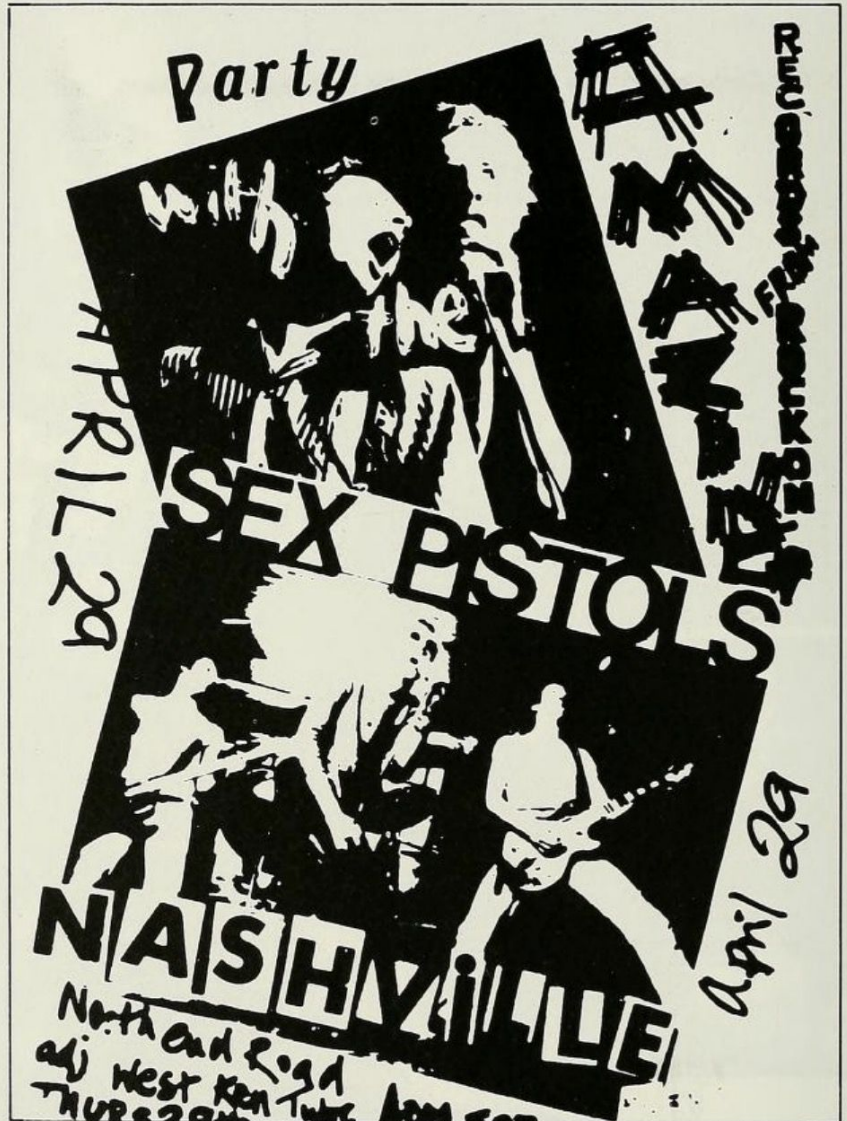
Johnny Rotten looks bored. The emphasis is on the word looks rather than, as Johnny would have you believe, the word bored. His safety-pinned-together clothes fall around his slack body in calculated disarray. His face is an undernourished grey. Not a muscle moves. His lips echo the downward slope of his wiry, coathanger shoulders. Only his eyes show the faintest trace of life.

This malevolent, third generation child of rock 'n' roll is the Sex Pistols' lead singer. The band play exciting, hard, basic punk rock. But more than that, John is the elected generalissimo of a new cultural movement scything through the grass roots disenchantment with the present state of mainstream Rock.

You need look no further than the letter pages of any recent rock weekly to see that fans no longer silently accept the disdain with which their heroes, the rock giants, treat them. They feel deserted. The millionaire rock stars are no longer part of the brotherly rock fraternity which helped create them in the first place.

To see and hear rock and roll giants like Bowie, the Who or the Stones is to make them and the promoters ever richer while you wait in queues for days to get tickets, brave a sea of mud and a deluge of beer cans or sit in gigantic garages vainly trying to see the stage let alone who's on it - which wouldn't be too bad if you could hear something other than a distressingly mangled version of your favourite songs.

To see and hear rock giants like Yes, Rick Wakeman or the Pink Floyd doesn't involve such guerilla tactics, and the quality of the sound is often



exemplary, but the music they play smacks of higher education and technical expertise.

Rock was meant to be good fun. The inability to see the stars, or to play their music, is making a whole generation of rock fans feel depressingly inadequate.

Enter Johnny Rotten. Not content to feel frustrated, bored and betrayed, he and the Sex Pistols, Glen Matlock (bass), Paul Cook (drums) and Steve Jones (guitar) have decided to ignore what they believe to be the elitist pretensions of their heroes, who no longer play the music they want to

hear. The Pistols are playing the music they want to hear. They are the tip of an iceberg.

Since January 1976, when the Sex Pistols played their first gig, there has been a slow but steady increase in the number of musicians who feel the same way. Bands like **the Clash**, the Jam, Buzzcocks, and the Damned. The music they play is loud, raucous and beyond considerations of taste and finesse.

reflect each other's street-cheap, ripped apart, pinned together style of dress. Their attitude is classic punk: icy-cool with a permanent sneer. The kids are arrogant, aggressive, rebellious. The last thing any of the bands make their audience feel is inadequate. Once again there is the feeling, the exhilarating buzz, that it's possible to be and play like the bands on stage. Indeed, some of the new bands owe their existence to seeing the Pistols and not

the Beatles, Stones, Kinks, Who, Them, Animals and the Yardbirds — in effect, a new wave — blasted out of the national charts the showbiz pop of Adam Faith, Bobby Vee, Cliff Richard, Paul Anka, Annette Funicello etc., which had replaced the initial vibrant explosion triggered by Bill Haley's *Rock Around The Clock* and Elvis' *Heartbreak Hotel* in 1956.

The last five years of rock can be compared to the early Sixties when the rock stars of the Fifties were wiped out. Buddy Holly's plane crashed, Elvis was drafted into the Army, Chuck Berry was jailed, Jerry Lee Lewis was finished the minute he admitted his new bride was 13 and his cousin to boot. Car crashes killed Eddie Cochran and hospitalised Gene Vincent and Carl Perkins. The field was left open to the businessman.

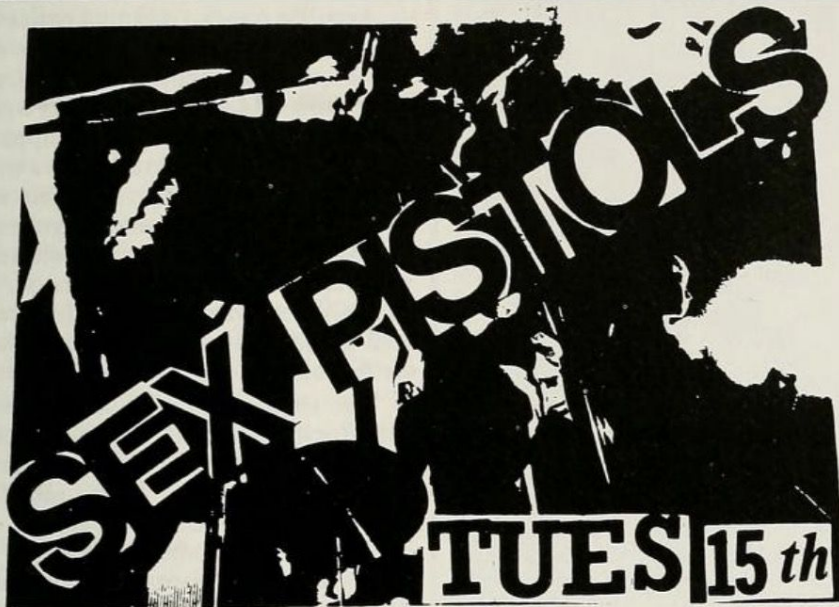
The parallels with today are uncanny.

What happened to the rock stars — that New Wave — who revolutionised the scene from 1964-67? Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Brian Jones and Janis Joplin are dead. Clapton retired in a heroin haze. Dylan rested up for several years with a broken neck. Those who are left — the ex-Beatles, Stones, Who, Kinks — have become businessmen.

When these bands first shook the foundations of the established musical order they revelled in their image as rebels, misfits, outcasts. The Beatles played in Hamburg with toilet seats around their necks, the Who smashed expensive equipment they could ill afford every night, The Rolling Stones, with their long hair and tieless shirts were chucked out of hotels and restaurants wherever they went.

These rock and rollers were the heroes of their generation because they rejected and broke through the restrictions which had kept teenagers bound to the outdated authority of their parents. Their music was loud, the clothes were outrageous. They despised the Puritan work ethic and discovered pleasure for pleasure's sake. They lived for now, rather than for future rewards.

Most important of all, they were anti-elitist, voices from and of the people or so we believed. They spoke our language. Every kid who sang along to *My Generation*, *All Day And All Of The Night* and *Let's Spend The Night Together* felt that he was as



100 CLUB

100 OXFORD ST, W1

**sartorial
correctness**

Sex Pistols

and a CAST (PLASTER)

7.30 till LATE. bars

These bands' punk music and stance is so outrageous that, like the Rolling Stones in the good old days, they have trouble getting gigs. But they play regularly at the 100 Club which is rapidly becoming the venue where they cut their teeth.

The musicians and their audience

a week goes by without more of the audience deciding to get up and play this music too.

We're back where we were in 1964 when, as Greil Marcus, in *Rock And Roll Will Stand*, says, there was a revolution in rock, "bringing it back to its sources and traditions". Then

Melody Maker

AUGUST 7, 1976 15p weekly USA 75 cents

CORYELL CUTS CLAPTON

Lennon wins US battle

JOHN LENNON, who has made more than a dozen appearances with the American rockers, now joins in Britain for the first time in five years. He was granted his "green card" last Tuesday in a court hearing in New York. Arranged for Lennon were the couples...



SEX PISTOLS: no time for elitism... their music is beyond considerations of taste and finance

● **Out of the gloriously raucous, uninhibited melee of British punk rock will emerge the musicians to inspire a fourth generation of rockers** ●

Punk rock: crucial or phoney? Pages 24/25

LARRY COREYLL, the brilliant American guitarist, almost stole the show when he jammed on stage with Eric Clapton at last Saturday's Crystal Palace Garden Party. His surprise appearance provided a spectacular climax to the show and threatened to eclipse Clapton's subdued performance. Coreyll played some immaculate blues choruses before joining Clapton — pictured below — blues



giant Freddie King and the Rolling Stones' Ronnie Wood, for a jam. Coreyll, who only last week said the Melody Maker he was reverting to his blues roots, was not invited to appear. He was in London for a solo concert at the Roundhouse on Sunday. The Garden Party also heralded the breakthrough for the jazz fusion band. The big disappointment, however, was Steve Marriott's failure to appear with Dick And The Dominoes, an occasional band which featured Bob Dylan and Simon Starke from Band Company, keyboard player Tim Hinkley, and drummer Mark Mitchell. Photographers Michael Ainfandary and Harvey Goldsmith are now planning a second 'Garden Party' scheduled for September 11.

● Full report, see pages 8 and 9

Roxy rows

ALTHOUGH Roxy Music have not actually split, one member of the band now claims that the band has stopped performing together after internal dissensions. Sexologist Andy Mackay is an observer of the week with Melody Maker, says that even if Brian Ferry left, Roxy would still survive. It would be the same, but he would have to be a 'solo' vocalist. The split will see the band's solo making Roxy a success, and it is not prepared to admit that over some squabbles with Bryan Ferry's mother he'll never find anyone better to produce than Roxy. By general agreement, the group will not re-form until Spring 1977 at the earliest. Mackay, meanwhile, is working on a new television series of Rock Fables, whose album for which he wrote the music, went to number one. Ferry has a new solo album in the air, and it is not clear when he will be touring. And some Roxy members have also departed. Phil Manzanera, the band's first lead guitarist, is leaving the band. Photographers with Melody Makers and Eric, page 27

involved with the music as the musicians. For the first time in entertainment our heroes were wearing the same clothes on stage as us — that's how close we all were. It was implicitly understood that the people on stage were the same as those in the audience. We were a fraternity of rock and roll. It was romantic, maybe, but infinitely exciting. Rock was no longer showbiz pop. It was once more a way of life.

And adults hated it. And the bands tried to keep it that way. When the Beatles felt they were becoming the acceptable face of rock with songs like *Michelle*, *Norwegian Wood* and *Yesterday*, they zapped it back to the true believers with a mind-blowing concoction of backward tapes, multitracking and psychedelic weirdness that only youth could really understand. Or, as Marcus says, 'The exclusiveness of rock and roll is always well guarded. If the adults can take it, we'll probably reject it.'

The trouble is, in the last five years, the Rock stars have become 'adults', they have forgotten that, crucial to their appeal, was their rebellious stance. Instead, they are bending over backwards to become acceptable.

Mick Jagger, once the arch-deacon of iconoclasm, now couldn't be further removed from his fans. It's no longer possible to imagine him as a man of the people, if he ever was — his yobbo accent doesn't wash any more. He's elitist, vogueish, the aristocracy's court jester, royalty's toy. How long before his name appears on the Queen's honours list?

The Who are becoming Pete Townsend's private nightmare, trotting out their musical history, the 70's Chuck Berry.

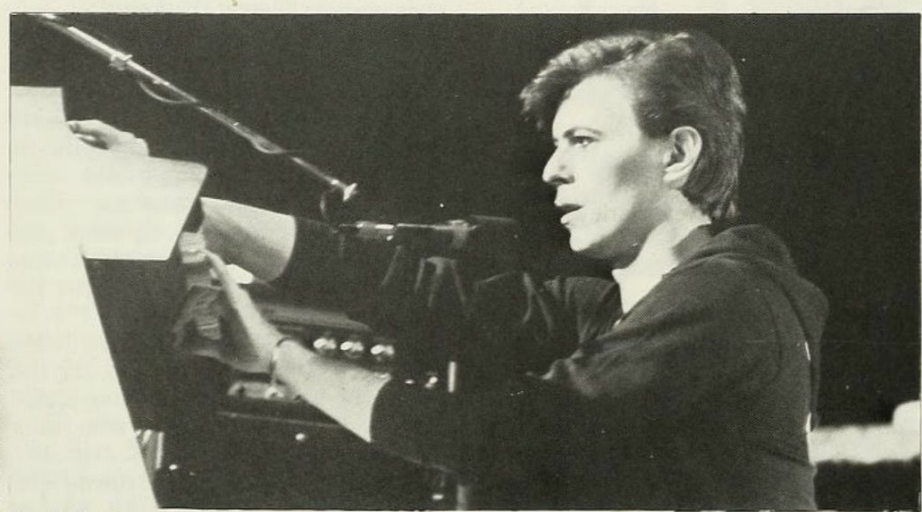
The Beach Boys and the Byrds, America's initial reply to the British eruption, haven't been a vital force in rock for eight years.

The Beatles are the fastest expanding nostalgia industry yet conceived. On an individual level Paul McCartney and Wings is the only one to have maintained the tradition of an artist consistently performing for an audience, and he speaks mainly to the generation he grew up with.

To his credit, although Lennon is now a quiet family man, he with Yoko was the only rock giant to attempt to bring the rebellious protest of his

JOE STEVENS

BARCY PLUMMER



David Bowie plays for Iggy at the Rainbow, London, 1977

generation to a political level which transcended the rhetoric of rock.

With few exceptions the interim bands, the ones who sprang up while the old wild men were moving from cellar to penthouse, never transcended their music to become cultural heroes. The psychedelic bands like Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, the Soft Machine, Pink Floyd, were musically important until they disintegrated along with the Underground or disappeared into their own insularity. Basically middle class, affluent or university academics, they set the stage for bands like Genesis, Jethro Tull, E.L.P., Yes, Rick Wakeman, Roxy Music and Queen, whose 'Progressive Rock' uses an increasing amount of technical apparatus, has become increasingly quasi-orchestral and quotes liberally from the classics.

All these bands have been acclaimed by the critics. But the crucial element is missing. These musicians have always been *gentlemen rockers* and their music can only be played by people with similar academic temperaments. The music, although inspired, is far beyond what the average teenager can reproduce in his own front room.

David Bowie is the one person the growing wave of third generation rock fans seem to identify with. As a musical stylist he has captured their imagination with a film and a stage persona suggesting a mutant alien from another planet. He has detached himself from the conventional jet-set, rock star establishment. Unlike other stars, whose private lives are so different from their rock stance, his private life seems freaky, weird and secret enough to get him elected the first Punk Space Cadet.

And although there was a time when Led Zeppelin and Bad Company might have carried the torch for raw, raunchy rock and roll, they became multi-national corporations, casualties of the business ethic which keeps bands like this as far away from fans as possible.

It's as if the whole world of rock has evaporated in a greenbacked cloud of refined gentility and Establishment conventionality, the antithesis of the rebellious disregard for everything once so joyously cultivated. This transformation came to a dramatic climax in May and June, 1976, at the

Princess Margaret and Mick Jagger, backstage at Earl's Court, 1976.



P.A.



MICHAEL PUTLAND

series of businessmen's conventions held at Wembley, Earls Court and Charlton.

The Who, the Stones, Elton John, David Essex, Steve Harley, David Bowie, Uriah Heep, all put on shows which, whatever they may have said, had little to do with music and everything to do with the kind of gestures they think is needed to keep their fans happy. They revealed just how prepared they were to reduce rather than heighten the experience of Rock and Roll.

The fans, wanting to give their

The Queen and Elton, Windsor, 1977. "Most rock albums sound so boring to me now. All the big established acts seem to have got into a dreadful rut. It's just become a business." Elton John (Rolling Stone, 1977)

heroes the benefit of the doubt, weren't as angry as they had the right to be. But a great many were heart-sick, disillusioned and bored rotten. They saw their heroes photographed in cosy tete-a-tetes with royalty, saw them flaunting their wealth, moaning about tax. Never before was the difference more glaringly obvious between their life styles and those of their fans.

Anarchy in the U.K.

Right now! I'm an Anti-Christ
I am an anarchist.
Don't know what I want but I know where to get it
I wanna destroy passers-by
Because I wanna be Anarchy.
No dog's body!

Anarchy for the U.K.
It's coming sometime, maybe.
Give the wrong time
Stop a traffic line
Your future dream is a shopping scheme,
'Cause I wanna be Anarchy in the city.

Not many ways to get what you want,
I use the best, I use all the rest,
I use the N.M.E., I use Anarchy,
'Cause I wanna be Anarchy,
It's the only way to be.

Is it the M.P.L.A.?
Is it the U.D.A.?
Is it the I.R.A.?
I thought it was the U.K.
Or just another country,
Another council tenancy.

And I wanna be Anarchy
And I wanna be Anarchy
Know what I mean?
And I wanna be Anarchist
Get pissed
Destroy...

(Jones/Rotten/Matlock/Cook)

Of course, thousands of people, especially those who grew up with the rock giants, are still buying the albums and having a good time. But the atmosphere is not one in which a new generation of rock musicians can thrive or have any desire to carry on from where the old guard has left off. There is a growing, almost desperate, feeling that rock music should be stripped down to its bare bones again, taken by the scruff of its bloated neck and given a good shaking.

The time is right for an aggressive infusion of life blood into rock.

It's no coincidence that the week the Stones were at Earls Court, the Sex Pistols were playing to their ever-increasing following at the 100 Club. The Pistols are the personification of the emerging British punk rock scene, a positive reaction to the complex equipment, technological sophistication and jaded alienation which has formed a barrier between fans and stars.

Punk rock sounds basic and raw. It's meant to.

The equipment is minimal, usually

cheap. It's played faster than the speed of light. If the musicians play a ballad, it's the fastest ballad on earth. The chords are simple, numbers rarely last longer than three minutes. In keeping with the clipped, biting cynicism of the lyrics, there are no solos; no indulgent improvisation. They power their way through sets like a raging primal rock scream. They are great!

The atmosphere among the punk bands on circuit at the moment is positively cut-throat. Not only are they vying with each other but they all secretly aspire to take Johnny Rotten down a peg or two. They use him as a pivotal point against which they can assess their own credibility.

It's the B.S.P./A.S.P. Syndrome. The Before Or After Sex Pistols debate which wrangles thus: 'We saw Johnny Rotten and he *changed* our attitude to music' (the Clash, Buzzcocks) or; 'We played like this *ages* before the Sex Pistols' (Slaughter and the Dogs) or; 'We are *miles* better than the Sex Pistols' (the Damned). They are very aware that they are part of a new movement and each one wants to feel

that he had a part in starting it.

The audience, too, are conscious that they are witnessing something new and important. They collectively deal out a no bullshit vibe, underpinned with good humour. They jeer and boo at the bands as much as the bands feel free to insult the audience, and no-one is letting this golden opportunity to enter into the spirit of the occasion slip by. Participation is the operative word. The audience revels in the idea that any one of them could get up on stage and do just as well, if not better than the bands already up there. Which is, after all, what rock and roll is all about.

When, for months you've been feeling that it would take ten years to play as well as Hendrix, Clapton, Richard, (insert favourite rock star's name), there's nothing more gratifying than the thought, 'Jesus, I could get a band together and blow this lot off the stage!'

The growing punk rock audiences are seething with bolshie young dreamers who want to put the boot in and play music, regardless. And the

1977

In 1977 I hope I go to heaven
'Cos I been too long on the dole
And I can't work at all.
Danger stranger
You better paint your face.
No Elvis Beatles or the Rolling Stones
In 1977.

In 1977, knives in West Eleven
It aint so lucky to be rich
Sten guns in Knightsbridge.
Danger stranger
You better paint your face.
No Elvis Beatles or the Rolling Stones
In 1977.

In 1977 you're on the never never
You think it can't go on for ever
But the papers say it's better.
I don't care 'cos I'm not there.
No Elvis Beatles or the Rolling Stones
In 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981,
1982, 1983, 1984!

(Strummer/Jones)

more that people feel 'I can do that too,' the more there is a rush on to that stage, the more cheap instruments are bought, fingered and flayed in front rooms — the more likely it is that there will be the 'rock revival' we've all been crying out for.

There's every chance, although it's early days yet, that out of the gloriously raucous, uninhibited melee of British Punk Rock, which even at its worst is more vital than most of the music perfected by the Platinum Disc Brigade, will emerge the musicians to inspire a fourth generation of rockers.

The arrogant, aggressive, rebellious stance that characterises the musicians who have played the most vital rock and roll has always been glamourised. In the 50's it was the rebel without a cause exemplified by Elvis and Gene Vincent, the Marlon Brando and James Dean of Rock. In the 60's it was the rock-'n'-roll-gypsy-outlaw image of Mick Jagger, Keith Richard and Jimi Hendrix. In the 70's the word 'rebel' has been superceded by the word 'punk'. Although initially derogatory it now contains all the glamorous connotations once implied by the word 'rebel'.

'Punk Rock' was initially coined about six years ago to describe the American rock bands of 1965-68 who sprung up as a result of hearing the Yardbirds, Who, Them, Stones, etc.

Wayne County and some Electric Chairs, backstage at the Roxy, London, 1977.



BARRY PLUMMER



RAY STEVENSON

Johnny Thunders, London, 1977

Ability was not as important as mad enthusiasm but the bands usually dissipated all their talent in one or two splendid singles which rarely transcended local hit status. Some of the songs however, like *Wooly Bully*, *96 Tears*, *Psychotic Reaction*, *Pushin' Too Hard*, have become rock classics. It was this loser, instant fame/instant obscurity aura about these American bands which led to the use of the term punk.

In Britain, as 'punk rock' has been increasingly used to categorise the vivid, exciting energy of bands like the Sex Pistols, there has been an attempt to redefine the term. In *Sounds* recently, Giovanni Dadomo estab-

Devastating New

RAY CITY ROLLERS
DEEDS

RAT SCABIES

"Who Is the Pope?"

MARK P RENEWING

DEBBIE

HEARTBREAKERS

escape

TWO WORLDS

'77

history

Rotten

GABBA
GABBA
HEY

LOU

after all these years

JOEY

'NEW YORK DOLLS'

Hot Rods

IM WITH THIS
IDIOT

IGGY

THE RAMONES'

SHARON

ANDY & SUSAN



PUNKS *Clash in*

British Foul-Ups

- a legend in the making

at Earls Court



Punk Rules OK

very wild!

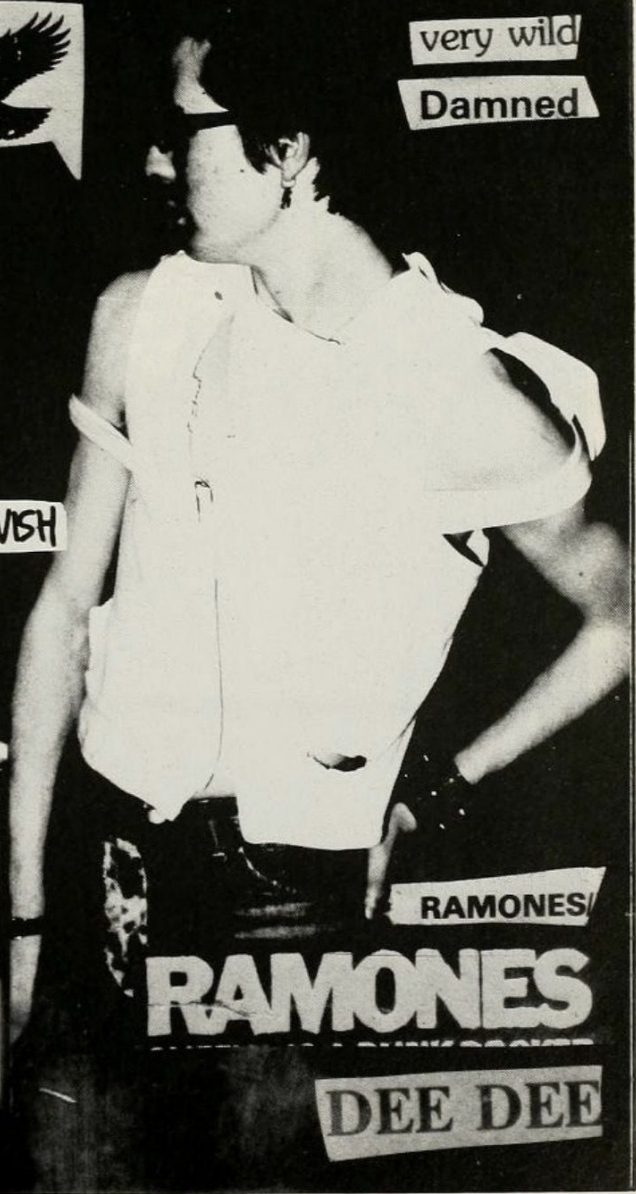
Damned



BRANLEY CONTINENT



SIDNEY VISH



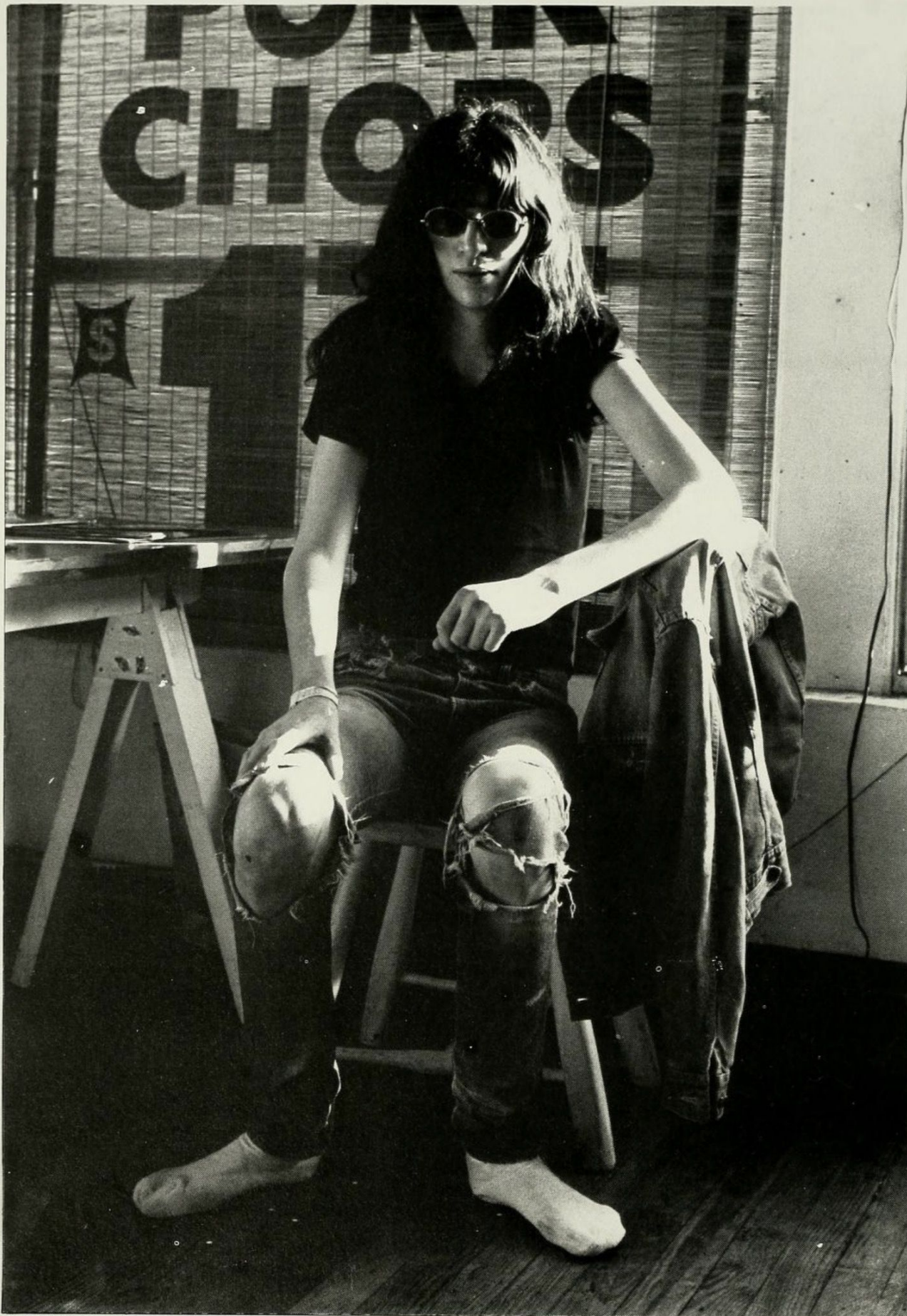
RAMONES!

RAMONES

DEE DEE



Recognition wanted



CAROLINE COON

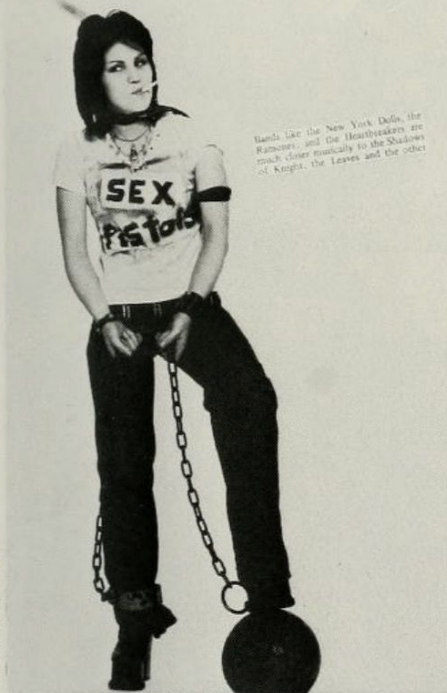
Joey Ramone at home in his loft, New York 1977.

SHEILA ROCK



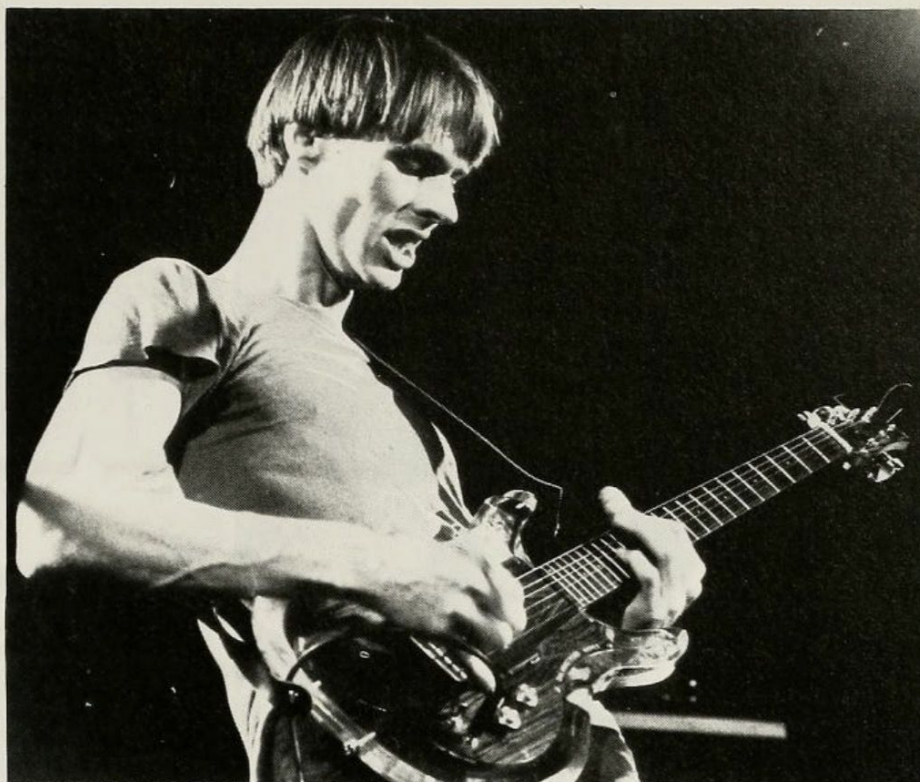
Cherry Vanilla and Debbie Harry, London 1977.

RICHARD YOUNG



Sex Pistols' fan, Joan Jet of the Runaways

Bands like the New York Dolls, the Runaways, and the Heartbreakers are much closer musically to the Shadows of Knight, the Leaves and the other



BARRY FLUMMER

Tom Verlaine, Hammersmith Odeon, London, 1977.

is used to label the new British bands. These emerging bands have only the most tenuous connections with the New York Punk Rock scene, which has flourished for some four years. Bands like The New York Dolls, The Ramones, and The Heartbreakers are much closer musically to The Shadows Of Knight, The Leaves and the other punk rock bands of the 60's. And they dress almost exclusively in the classic Punk uniform. Those not in Levis, sneakers, t-shirts and leather jackets are still pretending to be English rock stars circa 1965.

On the other hand, the British punk scene, far from glorifying the past, is disgusted by it. Nostalgia is a dirty word. The music's only truck with yesterday's rock is an affection for one or two classics: *Substitute*, *Whatcha Gonna Do About It*, *Help*, *I Can't Control Myself*, *Stepping Stone*, all vitriolic outbursts mirroring the spirit of the bands' own songs, which have titles like: *Pretty Vacant*, *No Feelings*, *Anarchy In The U.K.*, *I'm So Bored With the U.S.A.*, or *Born to Kill*.

While New York cultivates avant-garde and intellectual punks like Patti Smith and Television, the British teen-

ager, that much more alienated from rock than America ever was, has little time for such aesthetic refinements. British punk rock is emerging as a fierce, aggressive, self-destructive onslaught. Johnny Rotten stubs out cigarettes on his forearm. His band's motto is, 'We Hate Everything'.

There's an age difference, too. New York punks are mostly in their mid-twenties. The members of the new British punk bands squirm if they have to tell you they are over 18. Johnny Rotten's favourite sneer is, 'You're too old'. He's twenty.

Your Generation

Trying to forget your generation
Using any way I see
The end must justify the means
Your generation don't mean a thing to me.

GENERATION X (Billy Idol/Tony James)

Quick Step

You work work work
You can't lag behind...
I don't want to die in pain.

THE ADVERTS (T.V. Smith)

Freeze

You better toe the line between right and wrong,
This revolution's been going too long,
If you think they're goin' to let you play,
You better think again.

MODELS (Fox Pirroni)

lished that it should generally be understood to mean 'a question of attitude, dress, style - whatever, as much as musical content'. Then, probing deeper, he came to a simple conclusion. Punk? 'It's Rock 'n' Roll, ennit?'

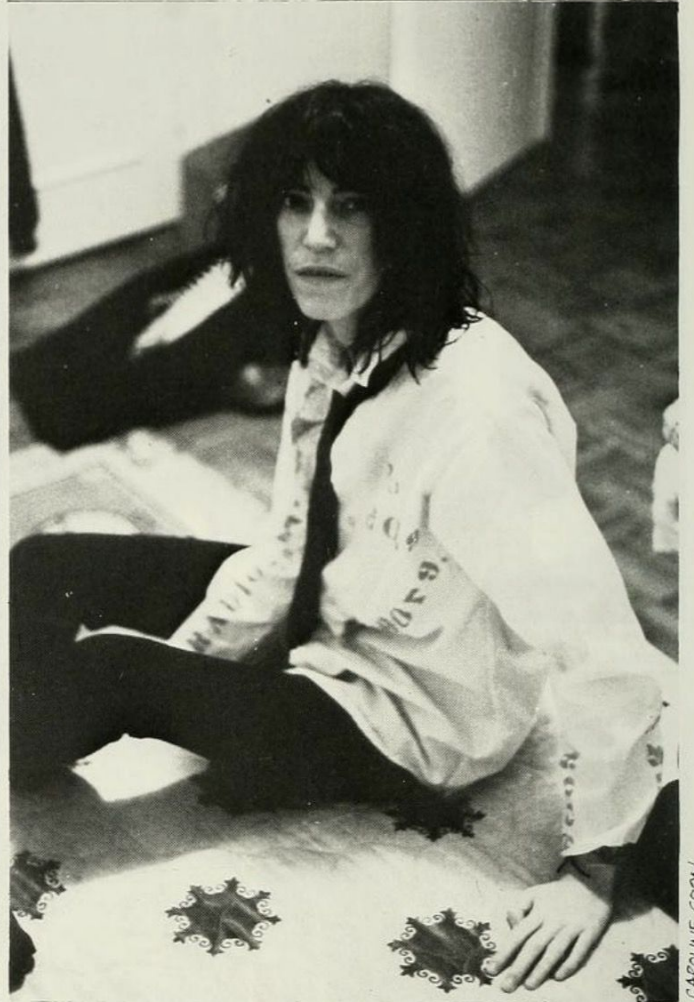
This truism has done little to resolve the unease whenever this word

Lenny



CAROLINE COON

..... and Patti at home, New York

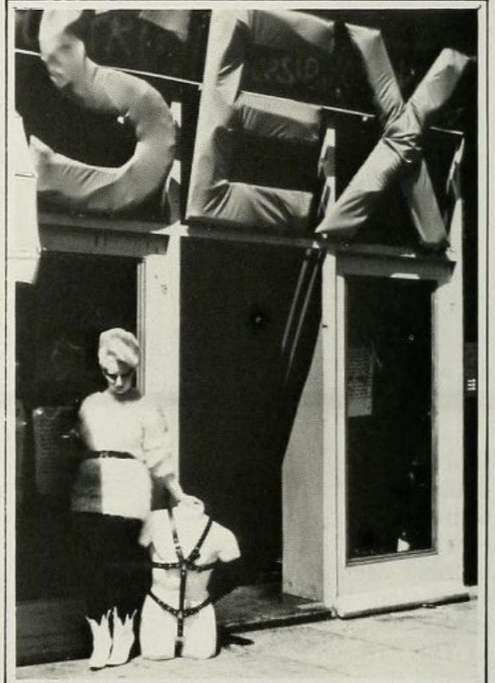


CAROLINE COON



EVE DADOMO

Johnny Rotten and Steve Jones: 'I hate Pink Floyd'; the Nashville, April 1976.



SHEILA ROCK

Jordan outside SEX, King's Road



Iggy at the Rainbow, 1977

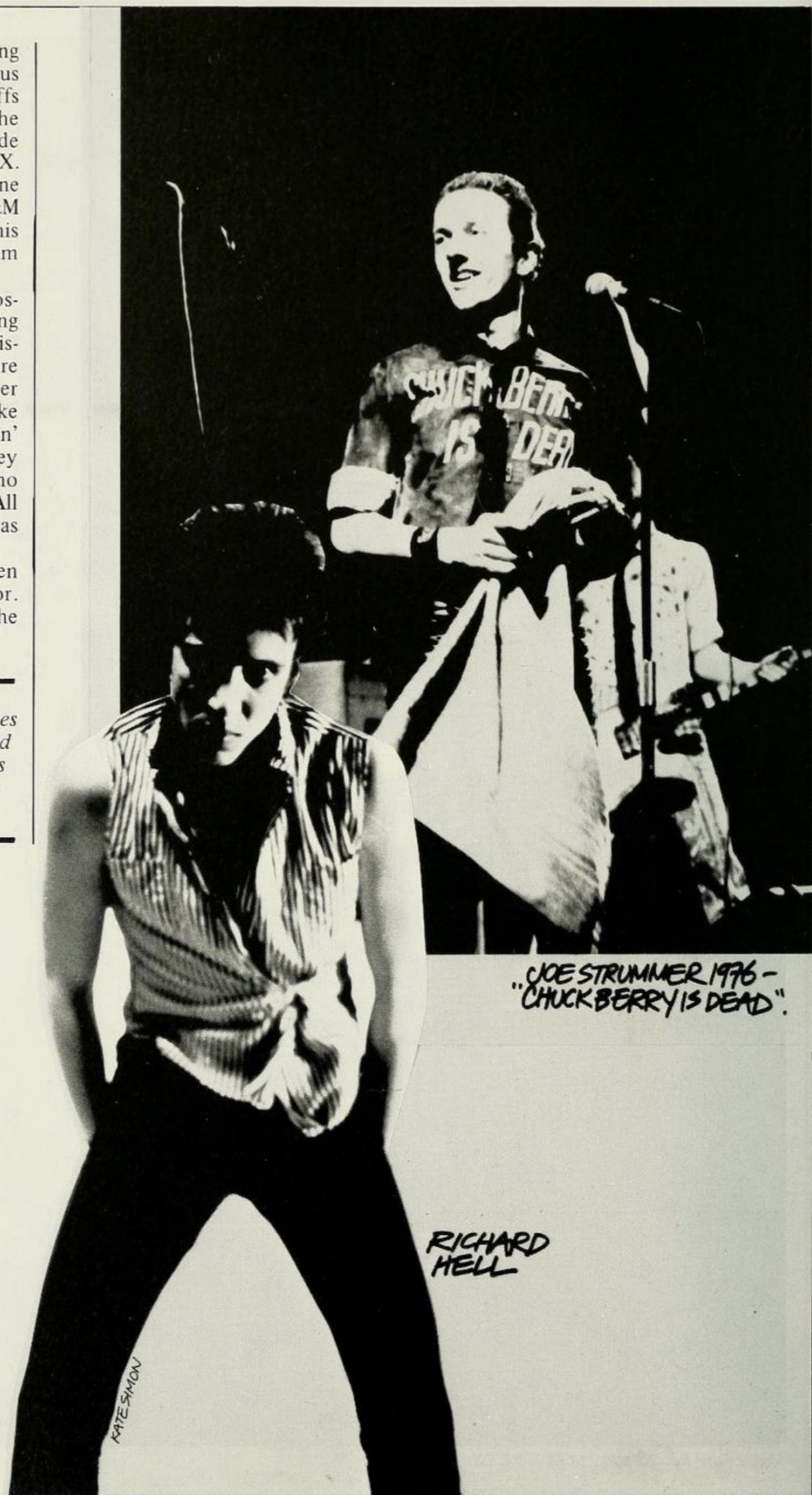
BARRY PLUMMER

British punk rock garb is developing independently, too. It's an ingenious hodgepodge of jumble sale cast-offs safety-pinned around one of the choice, risqué T-shirts especially made for the Kings Road shop, SEX. Selling an intriguing line of arcane fifties cruise-ware, fantasy S&M ware, and the odd rubber suit, this unique boutique is owned by Malcolm McLaren.

SEX had a mysterious atmosphere which made it the ideal meeting place for a loose crowd of truant, disaffected teenagers. Three of them were aspiring musicians who, in October 1975, persuaded McLaren to take them on. They wanted to play rock 'n' roll. They weren't to know what they were about to start, and even now no one is sure where it will lead. All Steve, Glen and Paul needed then was a lead singer.

A few weeks later Johnny Rotten strayed into this same murky interior. He was first spotted leaning over the juke box, looking bored . . .

The Patti Smith Band and the Ramones played at the Roundhouse in May and July, 1976, respectively. The impetus they added to the growing scene was considerable.



JOE STRUMMER 1976 -
"CHUCK BERRY IS DEAD".

RICHARD
HELL

KATE SIMON

KATE SIMON

THE FIRST EUROPEAN PUNK ROCK FESTIVAL

Very little about the festival turned out as planned. Initially the Heartdrops (now [the Clash](#)), Richard Hell, the Sex Pistols and Graham Parker and the Rumour were to be the star attractions. None of these bands eventually played. The final line up was: Eddie and the Hot Rods, the Pink Fairies, Roogalator, the Tyler Gang, Nick Lowe and the Damned. The French bands were Il Baritz, Kalfont Rockchaud, Bijoux, Shakin' Street, Little Bob Story and Pashion Force.

The Sex Pistols pulled off the bill because they had been locked in verbal battle with the Hot Rods ever since the night they both played [the Marquee](#). Rotten threw chairs. The Hot Rods were not amused. [The Clash](#) also withdrew from the festival in solidarity with the Pistols

28th August 1976

Twenty musicians, managers, journalists and record people and a pile of outlandish luggage, merge in a bleary line alongside a National Coach at Victoria Coach Station. A mysterious question mark hangs in the air like a phantom boom-mike. It's 10.00am, too early in the morning for rational answers, but eyeing each other with heavy-lidded suspicion, at least 90% of the motley assembly look doubtful about the sanity of this exotic enterprise which is about to plunge, rattle and roll its way to the South of France.

We are all trucking under a debatable banner: The First European Punk Rock Festival – a one-day concert, on Saturday 21st August, fifty miles

south of Bordeaux in the Mont de Marsan bullring! Yes, if it exists, the venue itself, with its overtones of ritual battle to the death, adds to the forbidding atmosphere.

The Festival was the brainchild of French promoter and Skydog record executive Marc Zermati. A small fleshless man, he runs France's equivalent to the pub-rock circuit. His dingy-dive aura, greased-black hair, pasty skin and lip curling moustache is a fair example of what the French consider the essence of punk. But if Monsieur Zermati has no qualms about cultivating a 'punk' image then he is alone in present company.

With few exceptions, the musicians clambering into the coach view the

idea that they are punks or play punk-rock with varying degrees of amusement and loathing. The very word 'punk' is likely to set the pub-rock stalwarts frothing at the mouth like rabid dogs.

Right from the start of the two-day journey, the musicians divide into two camps. Occupying the front of the coach are the Pink Fairies minus Russel 'septic arm' Hunter who is convalescing in Bermuda – or was it the Bahamas? There's Duncan 'Sandy' Sanderson (bass), Larry Wallis (lead guitar) and Martin Stone (guitar). They are all thirtyish – a laid-back mass of tangled, flowing locks, a knitted hat and faded blue denim. The Fairies, one of the Underground's first



CAROLINE COON

Front end of coach. Danny Adler and Nick Lowe reminiscing.

psychedelic rock groups epitomising the 'peace and love' ideology of the hippy era, will never lose their Flower Child aroma. They represent the antithesis of the punk ethic, the other extreme of the musical pole to the band which takes up positions at the back of the coach.

The Damned are all short-haired

and under twenty two. They sit along the back seat, their lips flickering with vestigial sneers, their bright eyes burning holes in the backs of the heads of all the musicians who dare to sit in front of them. They were formed two months ago and although they are unhappy with the punk label they accept the need for a term to dis-

tinguish their music from other styles of rock.

This is to be their fifth gig but, as Rat Scabies, their loud-mouth drummer announced with punk logic, 'if we had formed six months ago they'd be writing about us like they are the Sex Pistols'.

Yes, Rat Scabies (after his first gig he'd introduced himself to me as Chris 'with a K' Millar) believes the Damned are a thousand times better than The Sex Pistols although this chest-thumping boast, often repeated in Johnny Rotten's hearing, is accepted as a punk-front taunt, rather than a serious statement of the truth.

Collectively The Damned and their manager Andy (Czezowski), fester in a resplendent array of punk-finery. Their lead singer, seventeen-year-old grave digger, Dave Vanium, rarely wears anything but black. His hair, dyed jet black, is dead straight, smoothed back and then lacquered down like a shiny ebony skull cap. He wears shades, of course, a razor blade earring, purple eye make-up and his nails are filed to points. He only speaks in response to a direct question.

Bryan James (lead guitar), equally blacked-up but with mature, sultry looks, is the band's paternal figure-head. He steps in when the mad antics of Ray Burns (bass) or Rat Scabies threatens to trigger off more lunacy than even rock musicians can tolerate.



CAROLINE COON

Bizarre Boys - Derek and Steve

Ray Burns wears grubby white delapidated trousers and shirts, tear-drop shades, and in his suitcase is a pastel range of make-up with which he often tints his rose-pink lips and cheeks.

Rat Scabies wears old shirts, a beat-up brown leather jacket, and his pale hair sticks up off his head like the fur

on the back of a mangey ginger tom-cat. A month ago he was rehearsing in some basement, scratching his skin until it bled, as one is wont to do when suffering from scabies, and a huge rat ran across the floor – hence the name. He is peering over the top of the seat in front of him in an early-morning daze of momentary calm.

Sitting behind the Pink Fairies are the Tyla Gang, looking about as punkie as Devonshire cider makers. There's Peter O'Sullivan (bass), George Butler (drums), Tweke Lewis (guitar) and the dour Sean Tyla himself who, although larger around the girth than the rest of the gang, is just as hairy.

Roogalator's Danny Adler (guitar) has chosen to sit up front, too. He is



Sean Tyla eating

battle free, no-mans land between the two opposing forces. The Hammer-smith Gorillas sit here. Alongside them is coach commander, Jake Riviera of Stiff Records (Marc Zermati's English connection), and the definite elements in Nick Lowe's as yet undecided jam outfit – Paul Riley (bass) and Will Rodgers (mouth harp).

Nick Lowe is a self confessed 'bandwagon climber' and his just released single, *So It Goes* is a stylish celebration of fast and loose high-energy rock. He is an obvious choice for a Punk Rock Festival, but what side he's on isn't yet apparent.

With Lowe and the Damned as exceptions, quite what the other musicians are doing on the coach is mystifying! Half of them haven't yet decided whether they are actually going to bother to play, and since there are six guitarists on the coach and only three guitars, who plays what will depend on a generous, interband

Ironically, considering the 'violence' in punk-rock, it was the musicians, the experienced old-timers occupying the front of the coach, who set the aggressive, competitive pace. They wore their rock life style, their minimum-10-years-on-the-road-as-rock-musicians like armour. From the start, before they got on the coach even, they ganged together in a We're-The-Men-Around-Here clique, pulling rank and freezing out the young musicians like army camp officers getting kicks by making life hell for the new recruits.

Punk sneers nothing! The long-haired, denim clad Old-timers not only had superiority plastered over their faces. All that looking down their noses gave them curiously boss-eyed features as well.

Their attitude, their unfriendly exclusivity, took me completely by surprise. It must have dented the younger musicians' confidence like a



Ray, Dave and Rat on the ferry to Calais

known more for his studiously pseudo-academic, jazz-rock virtuosity rather than basic raw energy, and with two new band members, a spritely pair named Julian Scott (bass) and Justin Time (drums), their penchant for '50's American base-ball attire, has them looking more like Slik than punks.

The centre seats of the coach are a

camaraderie not yet in evidence. They clearly have no time, no respect for, and no interest whatever in anything or anybody who has anything to do with the punk-rock scene. They have written it off (although none of them has heard it) as media trumped-up, musically uninspired, incompetent rubbish.

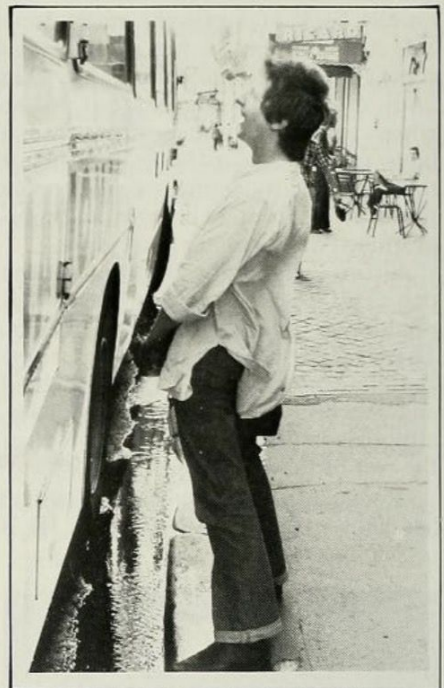
ton of bricks.

The Gorillas reacted by cutting off all contact with the rest of the coach, glueing themselves into an introverted, inseperable threesome. Rat Scabies however, as soon as he had scraped his ego together, had a more extrovert solution. Like the rest of the Damned, except Bryan James who's toured



CAROLINE COON

Nick having lunch with the Damned



CAROLINE COON



CAROLINE COON

Nick, Rat and the ill-fated T-shirt

Germany, he has rarely ventured further from home than Wapping Forest. But he's already learned more about blagging your way to the top of the pile than Sean Tyla or Danny Adler ever will.

For a start, he knows the Millwall terraces better than the new, lovingly painted 'Damned' logo on the back of

his leather jacket. He is an expert in the art of those bloodcurdling chants which boost your own side's confidence while undermining the opposition. If necessary, Scabies could intimidate Mohammed Ali.

By the second day, after an overnight stop in Tours, Rat is fighting fit. As we trundle off, the front of coach

party settles into another round of raucous reminiscences about past on-the-road glories. No one tries to break down the barriers to discover what makes the young musicians at the back of the coach tick. Until, that is, Rat leaps up from behind his seat. He has had enough. It's time to retaliate. An ear piercing volley of football songs, adapted to extol the unbeatable virtues of the Damned and especially his own capacity as a drummer, issues from the depths of his very powerful larynx. He starts rampaging up and down the isle, butting into conversations with ego-blazing details of his natural genius. They, he taunts, are hopelessly redundant leftovers.

The oldtimers are not amused. Roogalator's Danny Adler, thinking he can expose Rat as a dumb fool, takes on the counter-challenge by asking supercilious questions and making pretentious statements about Music as Art. Scabies holds his own, and singles out Nick Lowe for special attention because he's obviously the ringleader of the front coach party.

"Nicky is a Hippy," yells Rat, a voice like a fog horn, adding for good measure "a DIRTY hippy" etc, etc... Now the oldtimers stew with rage. Nick however is rather enjoying the outburst. He crosses over into enemy territory, has lunch with the Damned,



JONH INGHAM

Nick and Rat shirt-shredding

and on the last leg of the journey, sits at the back of the coach giving Rat as good as he gets.

Finally the ritual slugging match reaches a climax. The insulting verbals suddenly explode into physical combat. Rat lunges at Nick's Eddie Cochran T-shirt. Nick grabs a handful of Rat's and in seconds they are a shirt-shredding blur. In a minute they are both stripped to the waist, puffing, scratched and bruised. A little stunned too. Rat because he doesn't know whether he has gone too far, breaking a sacred on-the-road taboo. And Nick because he has felt real anger from Rat, and now realises how close the play-acting was to real disaster.

Phew! With the top ripped off everyone's wound-up emotions, a calm truce descends on the coach. For the

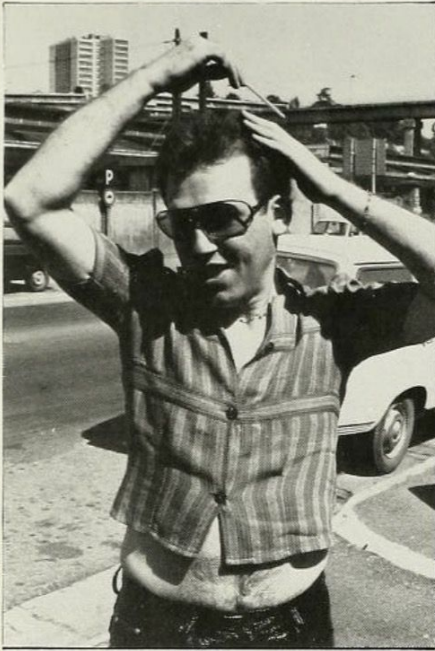
musicians, both sides of the punk demarcation line, the human drama has laced the coming event with more significance than they bargained for. Those who came along for the ride with only half-formed ideas about playing music, now find it imperative that they put everything they can muster into their performance. A modicum of foot-tapping and knee slapping filters down the isle. The musicians upfront are rehearsing. On the back seat, the Damned, who from the start were raring to get up and play, are now pondering with as much fear as glee, the opportunity to show the others some musical grit.

A gaping generation gap has been exposed. For the first time the musicians who were young a decade ago have been confronted with the



CAROLINE COOK

Waiting to check into hotel, Mont de Marsan.



CAROLINE COON

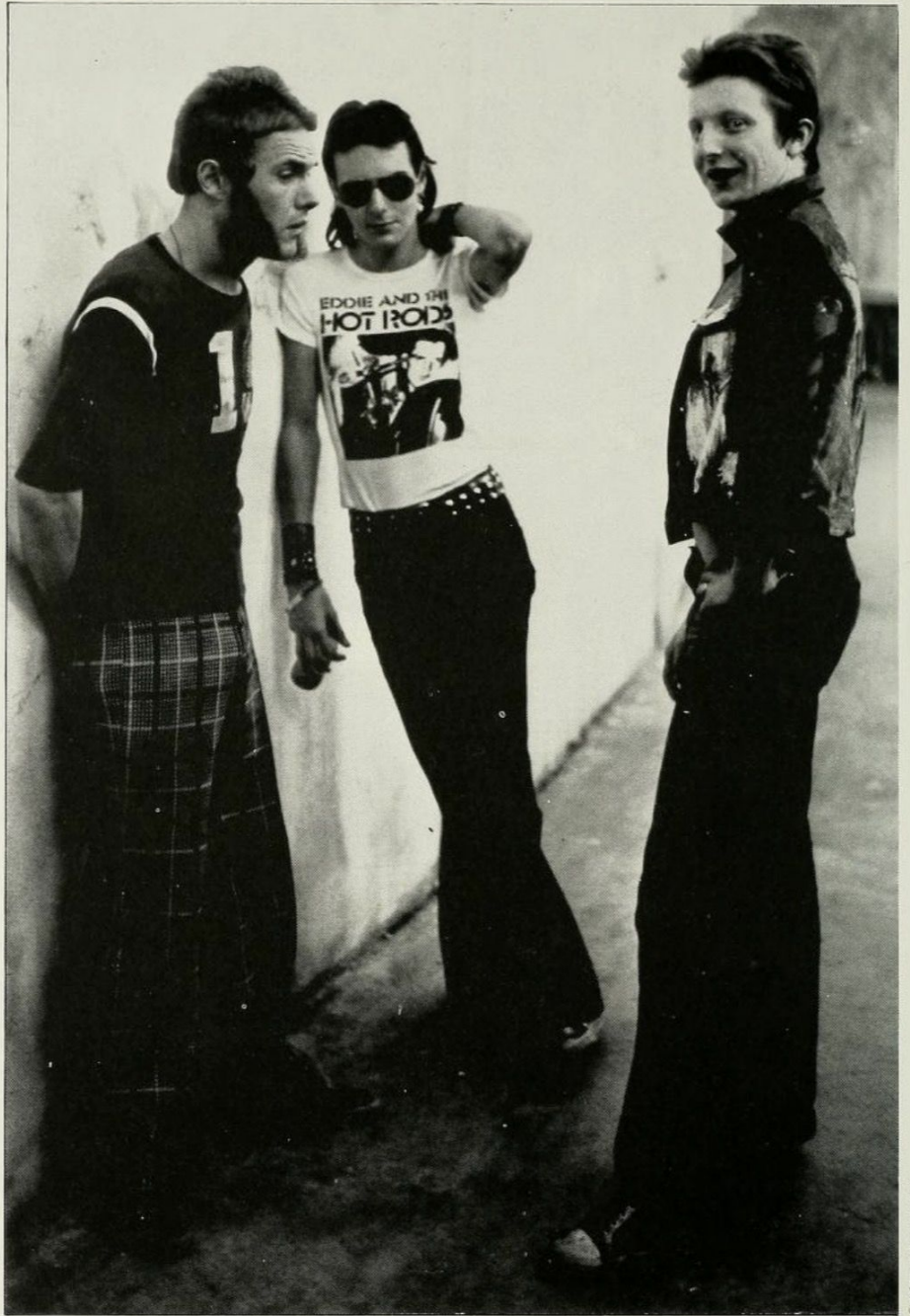
Andy on the road to Mont de Marsan

all-too-vivid reality that they are no longer at the creative centre of Rock 'n' Roll. They are on the side lines. Ironically, it's the oldtimers again, by insisting that they define their music (which they have no hesitation in calling 'the best') as a creative ART, with all the pretentious rules a shallow understanding of that word implies, who are responsible for digging their own graves. If they really had any feeling for creativity their attitude to new talent would be a thousand times more positive. If they could forget their own fragile egos for an instant and encourage the younger generation, their own jaded ideas might be revitalised. As it is, their arrogant dismissal of anything which threatens or experiments with their age worn premises, smacks more of a competitive back-biting common to the wash-room of a fourth division football club than the attitude of self-professed artists.

O.K., so it was Rat Scabies who first used football songs to boost his band's ego, but with the oldtimers stomping all over his youthful energy and enthusiasm he had no choice but to stuff their attitude back up from whence it came. Rarely have I been more pleased to see young musicians fighting for the space to breath.

•

Mont de Marsan was deserted when,



CAROLINE COON

A Gorilla, a Rod and a Damned

next day, the coach parked in the typically French small town square. There wasn't a black leather jacket in sight. Nor was there any more evidence of anything unique or untoward occurring when I sauntered across the road to the bullring. Yes, it did exist. It was white and chocolate brown with tiers of concrete seating and a vast expanse of clean, bright orange sand. There wasn't a trace of blood anywhere. It made a perfect

rock venue and about three hundred rock fans, mostly dressed in patched denims, were enjoying the space.

The sound emanating from the stage, a cunning cheapo-cheapo affair balancing on trestle tables, was remarkably familiar. For a moment I thought Status Quo was here. But no, the band is Rail Road. They are from Switzerland where Quo outsell all other rock bands, and they play note perfect, but rather less energetically

Dave, Ray, Brian and Rat



CONJ INGHAM



CONJ INGHAM

Ray and Dave



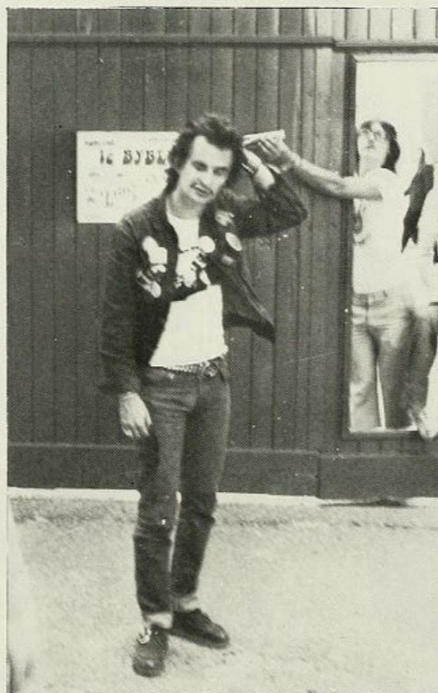
Rat and Shakin' Street's drum-kit prior to demolition.

Mark Zermatti – festival organiser

than their idols. To be original, their manager tells me, they sing in French.

Back stage, in the cool tunnel under the arena, there is an air of casual bonhomie. The rather dilute French beer is flowing as Eddie and the Hot Rods, and the French bands, Shakin' Street, Il Baritz, Kalfont Rockchaud, Bijoux, Little Bob Story and Pashion Force join the party. Almost everyone has heard lurid stories about the Damned's 'outrageous' behaviour on the coach. They peer at Dave Vanium's immaculate, polished black appearance with horror and admiration. The Damned make the other musicians look positively prehistoric. The Scabies himself, fractionally tuned down, after various interested parties have advised him to cool it, is buzzing about as if he's been backstage all his life.

Then the whispered words – the Damned are on next! What? Already! It's 90° in the shade, the stage is about to spontaneously combust and there's



CAROLINE COON

hardly an audience to speak of. They've been given the punishment spot, but they don't complain.

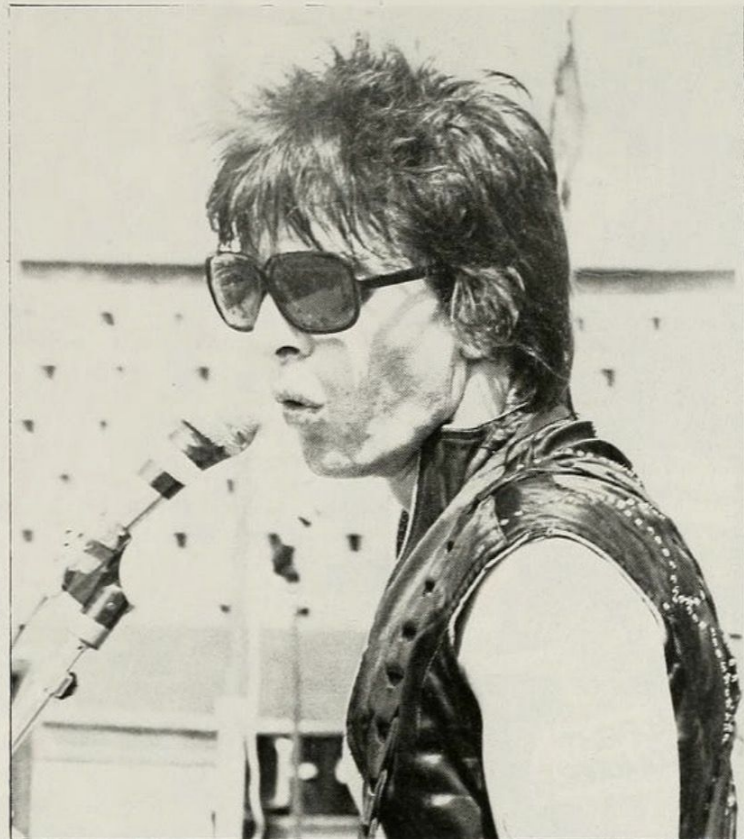
As the Damned stand ready to walk the plank on to the stage, the other musicians don't exactly rush to catch their set. Their interest is more subtly expressed. All at once a whole lot of backstage people appear nonchalantly in front of the stage.

It takes one number for the Damned's guitars to be mixed high enough and they make a valiantly scalding attempt to hang together. Rat is attacking his drum kit (no, Shakin' Street's drum kit) with the guts of a demolition expert but he's finding it difficult to whip up the usual speed since the scorching sun is evaporating his energy fast.

They pitch into the Beatles *Help* and their sound is a fantastic blaze ground along by ambitiously swooping bass lines and strong, staccato guitar. It's evil, dry and very soon it's going



Dave at the start of their set



Brian in the bullring

to be as solid as a coal seam, all fun and raw power.

The crowd spread out in the stands, all 350 of them, and descend into the sand pit for a closer look. The French are ardent Iggy fans and leap skywards when Vampire Vanium, not a man to relish exposing himself in daylight, rips off first his black shirt revealing paper-white skin, and then his shades (a gasp as the audience sees his macabre eye make-up) and starts to move. He crawls and jumps satanic and crablike across the stage, the very essence of Iggy, but less self-conscious. His interpretation of *Feel Alright*, with the guitar sound skewering through your body is like being roasted on a spit.

They leave the stage after Scabies has pounded the drum kit into the floor. But I can't report that London's satanic majesties received a standing ovation. The audience was just taken aback. Later in the evening, however, when a summer storm burst over the arena enough fans swept their drenched hair smoothly back off their faces, à la Vanium, to indicate the impression the band had made.

The three French bands who play before dark are surprisingly good. Il Baritz is workman like, if not really inspired; Kalfont Rockchaud with a lead singer in pink trouser and a black diamante garter around one knee is an avant-garde actor's joke; and Bijoux, three gentlemen dressed in black and white, set up a fine wall of wailing guitars.

The Count Bishops arrive, wanting to play and they do. But Roogalator, unable to find the electric piano which was promised them, don't.

The Gorillas took everyone by surprise with a set which will brand them the Troggs of the punk-rock circuit. Sean Tyla and his Gang injected some welcome, laid-back lyricism into the event as Tweke Lewis played simple but haunting guitar solos. And by the time (2.00am) Eddie and the Hot Rods made the stage, nothing but good vibes had everyone grinning from ear to ear.

As far as punk-rock goes, there was no contest. The Damned wiped up. Their music may not be tidy, technically polished or complex, but it is an

authentic expression of a life style with poetry and motion inspired by a forward looking present rather than a rapidly fading past. Their music is exciting because of the bands' intense commitment to it, a refreshing change from hearing bands who have been on stage so often that they have it all down pat and have forgotten the fundamental quality needed to make anything creative transcend the ordinary — the element of risk.

At three-thirty, while most other musicians were trailing off to the hotel bar, the Damned were leaping about the stage, demanding that the sound man keep the electronics plugged in so that they could play another set. The concert finally ended as Rat, perched on his stool, flailed away at a drum kit until it was dismantled from under him by the stage hands.

Back in England, the Damned part with their manager Andy, are briefly looked after by the 100 Club's Ron Watts, and then sign with Stiff Records. Nick Lowe becomes their producer and friend.



THE BULL RING MONT DE MARSAN, 1976.

THE 100 CLUB PUNK ROCK FESTIVAL

Monday, September 20th: *The Sex Pistols*, *the Clash*, *Subway Sect*, *Siouxsie and the Banshees*.

Tuesday, September 21st: *The Damned*, *Chris Spedding and the Vibrators*, *the Buzzcocks*, and *Stinky Toys (from France)*.

The first mass exposure of Punk Rock to the music press and record industry. On the second day, after an accident in which Dave Vanian's friend lost her eye, Sid Vicious was arrested. When I tried to find out why, I too was arrested. During most of Chris Spedding's set I was in the police station with Sid but I was released (and later given an absolute discharge) in time to see the festival end.

24th September 1976

Nothing quite so collectively out of context as last Monday's queue outside the 100 Club has gathered on Oxford Street for nearly a decade. When the Hari Krishna chanters stopped rush-hour traffic in their saffron robes and bald heads and started ping-pong finger cymbals, there was no denying that the hippy era had arrived.

The six-hundred strong line which straggled across two blocks waiting for the Punk Rock Festival to start was again indisputable evidence that a new decade in rock is about to begin.

Two eighteen-year-olds from Salisbury were at the head of the queue. 'I've been waiting for something to identify with,' says Gareth enthusiastically. 'There's been nothing for years. I just want to be involved, really.'

Michelle and Bruno are both six-

teen. Their hair is short and neat. Their attire, shirts and ties, leopard skin jackets, stiletto heels, pointed toes and dramatic make-up, is echoed down the line — in various home-made and inventive variations.

'They're the best bands around,' says Michelle, who's a seasoned fan already. 'They're playing the music of the people.'

Over the last eight months, a generation of rock fans has been developing an extraordinary sense of belonging together. Excited by the blast of direct energy in the music of the bands playing on the Punk Rock Festival bill, they are creating a new cultural identity for themselves. They have their own clothes, language, 'in' jokes and fanzines. There is a healthy comradeship and competitiveness in equal doses. The established bands share their equipment and rehearsal

space, and most of the established musicians are encouraging friends to form bands of their own. Apart from the thirty musicians actually playing in the Festival, the audience itself is seething with new talent.

Tim, Pete, George and Bill — all seventeen — are from North London and Southend. 'We listen to everything from Weather Report to MC5,' says school boy Tim. 'But we come here to pick up tips. Our band's called "1919 Ulterior Motive Five" 'cause there's four of us, see.'

Johnny Moped is there looking to find musicians for his band 'The Morons'. Chaotic Bass is on the loose. Fat Steve of the 'Babes' says he's rehearsing. Fourteen year old Rodger Bullen, Rat Scabies' protégé, has just joined 'Eater'.

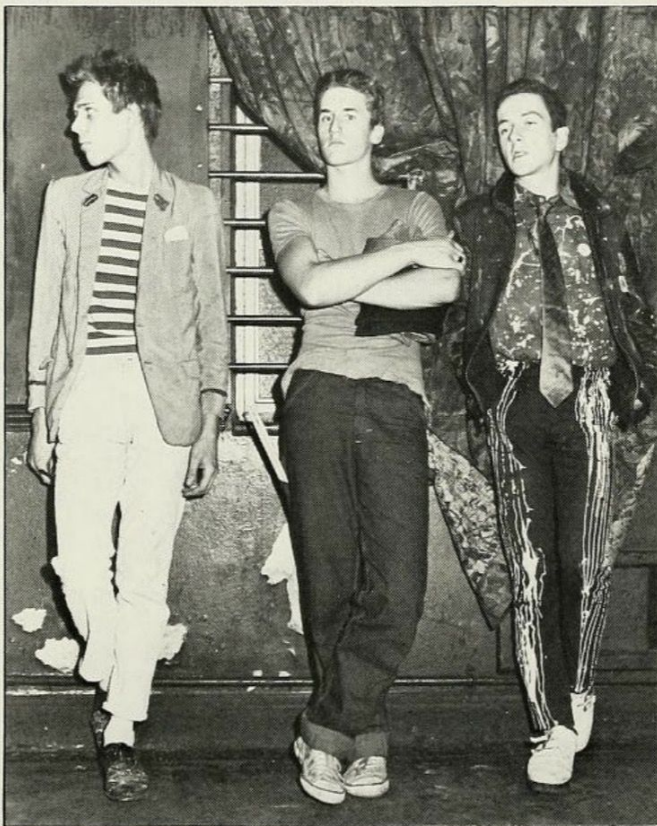
The creative buzz and exciting feel that something is 'happening' is infec-

CAROLINE COON



Michelle and Bruno at the head of the queue on the first night of the festival

BARRY PLUMMER



Paul Simonon (the Clash), Paul Smith (Subway Sect), and Joe Strummer (the Clash), before the show.

tious. There is a continual stream of criticism and rude abuse poured over each other's favourite enterprise, but having and giving back that kind of attention is part of the fun. 'Do It Yourself' could be the motto down at the 100 Club. Everyone wants to get in on the act. Everyone can.

The Subway Sect. It's their first-ever gig. There's Vic Godard (19) and Paul Myers (bass). Paul Smith (18) has played for five weeks and Robert Miller (lead guitar) for three months. They are familiar faces, having been in the audience at many Pistols gigs. It's been tough for them to find rehearsal rooms, but after a weekend at the Clash's spacious studio, their set is debut ready.

They stalk purposefully on stage and without looking at the audience start a lengthy, foot-finding, tuning-type warm-up. Already they look like they belong together.

'We're the, er, Subway,' pause 'Sect' pronounces Vic, turning at last

ANARCHY

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CLASH

**SUB WAY SECT
SUZIE AND THE BANSHEES
AND FROM FRANCE**

STINKY TOYS

**OPEN 7 PM LATE BAR
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(£1.00 NUS ETC.)**

7PM LATE BAR

Sex Pistols

BARRY PLUMMER



Marco, Viv Albertine, Sid Vicious, Siouxsie and Steve Havoc during the sound check

The Clash planned to let Siouxsie and the Banshees use their equipment at the 100 Club festival, but when their manager, Bernard Rhodes, saw Siouxsie wearing a swastika arm band (which she refused to remove), they withdrew their consent. Why?

'I felt she wasn't aware of what she was letting herself in for' said Bernard. 'Our equipment is very distinctive - we've painted it luminous pink. If she used it, we too would be associated with the swastika. I felt she was mucking about with a loaded gun and we didn't want to have anything to do with it.'

'The whole swastika thing is quite funny really. When I was working with Malcolm he went up North and came back with a whole load of bits and pieces with swastikas on them which someone had given him. Eventually

Siouxsie wore one of the shirts, more because it was there than anything else. She said that as a symbol of shock, the swastika was the only thing around. I don't think she thought very much about it. As a symbol, or an emblem it was a random choice. A bad accident. A bit of a red herring. But the Clash are into specifics, not red herrings. If we're going to use emblems, then they should be nearer the mark. People can do what they want. But we don't think the swastika means anything relevant to us.'

London's Burning

London's burning with boredom
London's burning - dial 999!

All across the town, all across the night
Everybody's driving with four headlights
Black or white, turn it on, face the new religion
Everybody's drowning in a sea of television.

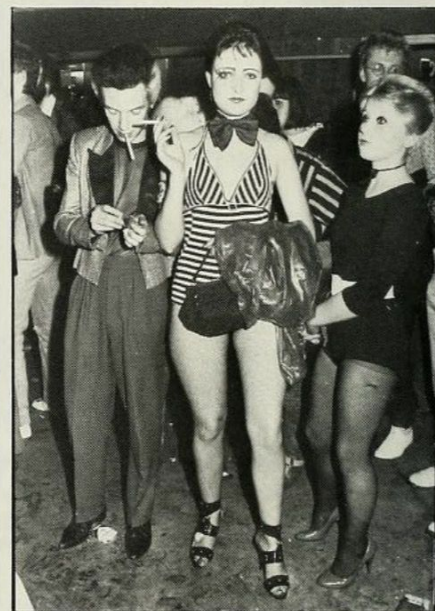
London's burning with boredom
London's burning - dial 999!

Up and down the Westway, in and out the lights
What a traffic system, it's so bright.
I can't think of a better way to spend the night
Than speeding around underneath the yellow lights.

But now I'm in the subway looking for the flat
This one leads to this block, that one leads to that
The wind howls through the blocks, looking for a home
But I run through the empty stone 'coz I'm all alone.

London's burning with boredom
London's burning - dial 999!

CLASH (Strummer/Jones)



Siouxsie back with the Bromley Contingent on the second day of the Festival

BARRY PLUMMER

Nobody's Scared

Nobody's scared
Everyone's a prostitute
Singing the song in prison
Moral standards the wallpaper
The wall is a bad religion

Media teach me what to speak
Take my decisions
It's how to find your inner self time
On the television

No one knows what they're for
No one even cares
We'll shout out publicity handouts
Nobody's scared

The language we use is what we want
Does it not project the force
The subject to object journeys mean
That a word loses course

So take me talking with cliches
Betray yourself for money
Having is more than being now
Nobody is sorry

No one knows what they're for
No one even cares
We'll shout out publicity handouts
Nobody's scared

SUBWAY SECT (Viv Myers)

to face the sea of people before him. And with an abrasive kick, their first number *No Love* sucks the silence out of the expectant vacuum in the club.

'Love is not what we need, we're part of the U.K.' sings Vic, his voice medium pitched and clear. They are unashamedly Pistols inspired. Vic stands before the mike, both arms stretched behind his head just like Rotten used to do. Half way through the set he thrusts his left hand deep into his trouser pocket and stuffs his mouth with little pieces — like pills, or nuts. That's original.

Their sound is a grind of frantic, jagged dischords which, whether by chance or design, mostly resolve into acceptable patterns of unadorned simplicity. Paul and Robert, standing each side of Vic, their faces screwed up with pungent intensity, flash their fingers across their guitars as fast as white lightning. Drummer Paul, though, seems to float his drumsticks through the air. He chews gum and pounds away with the studied, calm, saute of a young rating leaning against

a wall on his first day of home leave.

They're all dressed in underground grey jerseys and casual grey trousers. The effect is utilitarian and bland. It suits their nail-sinking rhythms and doomy lyrics. 'Everyone's a prostitute and everyone's in prison', are words caught from one number. 'Nobody's scared', 'Seen it all before', 'Beautiful plastic', are some more. And then, in one of the last numbers, a surprising juxtaposition of positive negatives, 'We're splitting. The end. Take hold of your life. There's something you've got to prove.'

At the bar where all through the festival record company P.R.'s, executives, T.V. and radio personalities, musicians, the press and punk scene regulars swap opinions on 'form' like Jockey Club stewards, feelings are mixed. Great! Terrible! But Debbie (15) from Bromley, gets it right. In the last two months her hair has been mauve, yellow and raspberry pink. 'They're good! There I said it,' she confesses. 'They're good!'

Subway Sect — Rob, Vic, Paul and Paul



Siouxsie and the Banshees. It's never the same at a Pistols' gig nowadays if what is known as the 'Bromley Contingent' isn't there. This inseparable unit are Steve (21), Bill (22), Simon (19) — he sells hot-dogs off a mobile stand during the day — raspberry-haired Debbie and Siouxsie herself.

They first heard the Pistols at their local Tech in January, and they've been faithful followers ever since. They made the trip to Paris in a ropey old car to see their heroes' first overseas performance, and Siouxsie, shocking in her semi-nudity, got punched on the nose.

She is nothing if not magnificent. Her short hair, which she sweeps in great waves over her head, is streaked with red, like flames. She'll wear black plastic non-existent bras, one mesh and one rubber stocking, suspender belts (various), all covered by a polka-dotted, transparent plastic mac. Over the weeks the Bromley Contingent's continuous parade of inventive dress (it's rarely the same two weeks running) has set the fashion. It was only a matter of time before they took their street theatre to the stage.

Apart from Siouxsie, membership of the band was not settled until the day before the festival. Everyone thought, though, that they'd carry out their much advertised plan to sing *Goldfinger*. It was not to be. At the last moment, in an orgy of rock iconoclasm they decided on *The Lords Prayer* spiced up with 'the most ridiculous rock songs ever written'.

Two-tone Steve (his hair is black on top, white at the sides) was on a bass he picked up for the first time the night before. Sid Vicious, Johnny Rotten's friend, and inventor of the pogo dance, was on drums. He had one rehearsal. A mature gent called Marco was lead guitarist.

The prayer begins. It's a wild improvisation, a public jam, a bizarre stage fantasy acted out for real. The sound is what you'd expect from, er, novices. But Sid, with miraculous command, starts his minimal thud and doesn't fluctuate the beat from start to finish of the, er, set. Against this rough corrugation of sound, Siouxsie, with the grace of a redeemed ghoul, rifles the senses with an unnerving, screeching recitative. *Twist and Shout* and *Knocking On Heaven's Door* creep



Siouxsie and the Banshees

into the act. Sid flickers a smile, Marco, his guitar feeding back, rolls up his sleeves, and Two-tone Steve two-tones.

The audience, enjoying the band's nerve and audacity, eggs them on, gets bored, has a laugh then wonders how much more it can take. Twenty minutes later, on a nod from Marco, Sid just stops. The enthusiastic cheering is a just recognition of their success. If the punk rock scene has anything to offer, it's the opportunity for anyone to get up and experience the reality of their wildest stage-struck dreams. The bar-flies are horrified.

'God, it was awful' says Howard Thompson, an A&R man from Island.

But Siouxsie is not interested in contracts.

'The ending was a mistake,' she says. 'I thought we'd go on until they pulled us off.'

The Clash 'They're Great!' shouts a bespectacled youth half way through this band's set. 'I used to listen to Yes and Genesis.' At last, after three months intensive rehearsals and three gigs, **The Clash** hit close to top form. We see a glimpse of their very considerable potential.

They have reduced their line-up. Rhythm guitarist Keith Levine is off forming a new band. This has left Joe



BARRY FLANNERY

The Clash



LILIANE VITTORI



LILIANE VITTORI

Joe and Mick



LILIANE VITTORI

Paul

Strummer (lead vocals and guitar), Mick Jones (lead guitar), and Paul Simonon (bass), more room to move. And this they do, powering through their first number, *White Riot*. The audience is instantly approving. The band is fast, tough and lyrical, and they've mastered the way of dovetailing Joe's mellow approach with Mick's spikey aggression. They blaze through *London's Burning* with raging intensity. Terry Chimes (drums) uses the opportunity to undercut his solid bass drum surge with candescent splashes over the high hat. They play eleven of their eighteen songs including *I'm So Bored with You*, *Protex Blue* (with Mick on lead vocals), *Deny*, and *Janie Jones*. They end the set with 1977.

Career Opportunities

Career opportunities
The ones that never knock
Every job they offer you
Is to keep you out the dock
Career opportunities, career opportunities...

They offered me the office
They offered me the shop
They said I'd better take anything they'd got.
'Do you wanna make tea at the BBC?
'Do you wanna be, do you really wanna be a cop?'

I hate the army and I hate the RAF
I don't want to go fighting in the tropical heat
I hate the Civil Service rules
I won't open letter bombs for you.

They're gonna have to introduce conscription
They're gonna have to take away my prescription
If they wanna get me making toys
If they're gonna get me - well, I have no choice.

Career opportunities
The ones that never knock
Every job they offer you
Is to keep you out the dock
Career opportunities, career opportunities...

CLASH (Strummer/Jones)

Later, I ask Paul Simonon, who has played bass for only six months, how he feels about the set. 'I've got to get better. I'm never content. I know I can do a lot with the bass. Most of them stand still like John Entwistle. I want to move around and give the audience a good time. And give myself a good time too.'

Joe Strummer, who's last band was the now fabled 101'ers, has played with very experienced musicians. What was it like playing with someone like Paul who's learning as he goes? 'It's really great,' he says. 'When a musician knows all his oats it gets boring. It's not exciting for them and they start playing for playing's sake and the emotion disappears. It's really exciting playing with Paul because there are no



Steve

BARRY PLUMMER

rules. My guitar style is really rudimentary and Mick's is great, so the combination is really interesting.'

The Sex Pistols. The atmosphere in the club is feverishly high pitched. This is the band everyone's been waiting for. Not everyone, however, is happy about the Pistols' growing success and notoriety. The private party is over. The band is public property. It had to happen. But with mixed feelings the band's throbbing nucleus of fans are holding their breath as their champions start a

steady climb to the ethereal reaches of stardom and rock immortality. Will the businessmen spoil them?, is the anxious question.

Already the band has changed — especially Johnny Rotten and Steve Jones. Once Rotten would poke his pretty mug into any camera lens and leer. Now he's likely to sweep his arms across his face with an Ava Gardner gesture of exclusivity.

Jones, once the brooding loner unsure of his sex appeal, is now exuding a magnetic confidence which guarantees a screen of exotic women



BARRY PLUMMER

Johnny

around him. Glen Matlock and Paul Cook, perhaps because they've been less 'visible', have yet to zip into their rock star mantles. They will, once their partnership – Glen's driving fluid bass lines and Paul's billowing drum storm – is recognised as the superb bed-rock of taut rhythmic structures it is.

The band's fanatical following is growing fast. Fans follow them all over the country from gig to gig. They are the unquestioned stars of the Punk Rock Festival and as they step on stage they are greeted with lung bursting cheers.

'We've got another Underground at last,' shouts an ecstatic youth, 'I've waited seven years for this.'

Over the nine months that the Pistols have played together, Rotten has developed his stage presence beyond the realms even his most ardent fans imagined possible. He is still prying open the nether reaches of his personality and presenting audiences with yet another dark fragment from his psyche. Once he moved over the stage squirming and jiggering around like a spindery, geigercounter needle measuring radio activity. Rarely was he motionless. Lately, he rarely moves. He can be quite sickeningly still. This deathly, morgue-like stance sets skin crawling, and his lyrics are as suffocating as the world they describe.

He wears a bondage suit for the festival. It's a black affair, dangling with zips, chains, safety pins and crucifixes. He is bound around the chest and knees, a confinement symbolising the urban reality he sees around him.

The set begins. The band hit their instruments in unison. It's the fanfare intro to *Anarchy in the U.K.* SMASH – and their instantly identifiable, careering, evisceral splurge sears the air. The fans go wild. Johnny strains at his jump-suit prison. He breaks loose and burns into *I Wanna Be Me*. The crowd sprawls at his feet, a struggling heap of excited bodies.

'Alright,' says Johnny calmly disengaging his feet from the mêlée, 'all off the stage, chuckies . . .'

The photographers fight for better shots, the pogo dancers leap above the crowd, sweat pours and the crush rolls forward and back from the stage like a tidal wave.

The band, lifted by the positive vibes, delivers pin-perfect versions of



The Pistols



Johnny

Seventeen, I'm a Lazy Sod, New York, Pushing and A Shovin' – the fans call out for *Sub-Mission* – 'next number' drawls Johnny. It's the Monkeys' *Stepping Stone*. Then *I Love You*, their cynical anthem to suburbia.

Steve breaks open, flinging his guitar diagonally across his chest and gluing up his fret, he leads the band with power and imagination through a

breathless one hour and fifteen minutes of thunderous rock 'n' roll. They play *Sub-Mission, Liar* – a favourite with the audience – *No Feelings, Substitute, Pretty Vacant* and they finish the set with *Problems* and *No Fun*. They are called back for a triumphant encore.

The Sex Pistols were terrific. Compulsively physical. Frightening in their teenage vision of world disintegration. And refreshing in their musical directness and technical virtuosity. Whether their music will make the Top 20 or not is irrelevant. They're doing it for a new generation of rock fans who think they're fantastic.

The audience on the second night of the festival is conspicuously longer haired and more denim clad. The atmosphere is competitive still but without the reigning kings there's not the same buzz.

Stinky Toys. Ellie (20), the Stinky Toys' singer, has calmed down. The night before, when she realised there was no time for the band to play, she'd made a not-too-successful prima-donna exit – kick, push, tut-tut at tables as she ran out into Oxford Street where, it is said, she was saved from wounding herself under a bus.

ORGE MELLY
THE FEETWARMERS
X COLLIE
YTHM AC
ALL
PIST
FIGARD
ID
ROSS
BROWN BLUE
COL
TME



BARRY PLUMMER

Stinky Toys - Ellie

Her band is very French, i.e. very, very serious. They've frowned for two days and they frown even more when, after three very short numbers, including *Under My Thumb* they get nil reaction from the crowd. There's Bruno Carone (lead guitar), Jacno (rhythm), Oswald (bass), and Harve on drums. They play completely out of tune even though they spend minutes between numbers 'tuning-up'.

Ellie's voice, a high pitched whine, has 90% of the older male population diving back to the bar. And yet? Well, even though she sings in English and not one of the words from songs like *Pe Pe Gestapo* or *Kill The Pain* are intelligible, she has presence. You have to watch her. As the band liven-up with petulant anger at the impassive crowd, Ellie, frisking her blond hair out of beautiful blue eyes, does a frenzied dance before the mike. If only the rest of the band didn't give the impression they want to get off the stage as fast as they can.

Which singers, I ask Ellie, before she dashes off after the set to catch the last train to Paris, have influenced her most? 'Brenda Lee,' she says 'and Glenda Jackson . . .' Umm.

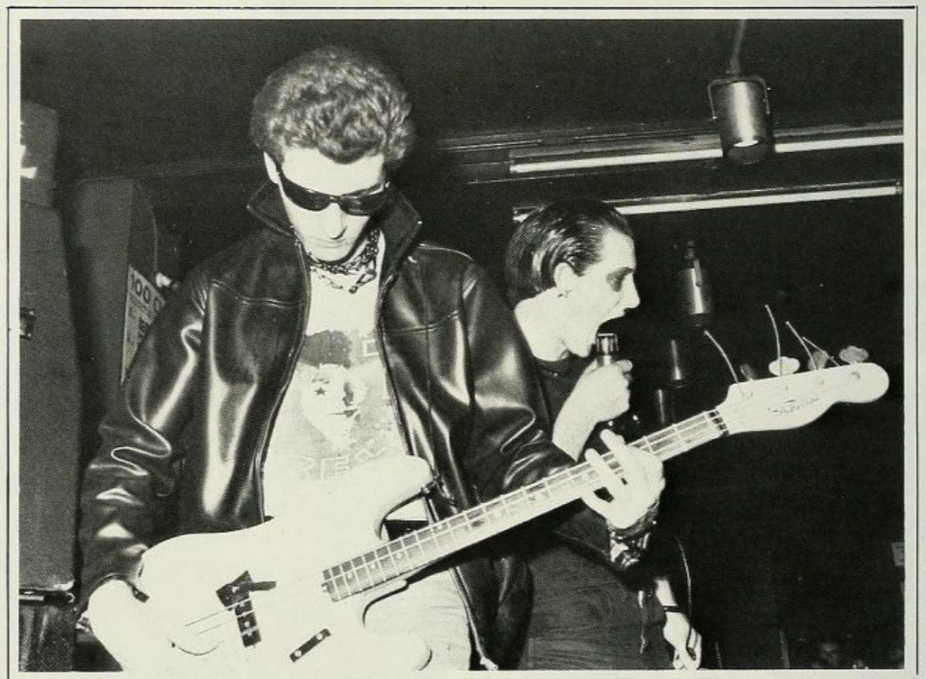
The Damned. There's something very special about this band. They've come a long way fast from the night, three months ago, when they played their first gig at the Nashville. Not that they actually played *together* that night. Each one of them did his own number in a private daze. Out of time, out of key, the cacophony was terrible enough to be great. The band took to the stage like famished maggots to an over-ripe cheese. They are all born performers, without a shred of inhibition. They are more voluptuous, both musically and physically, than the Pistols, and less classically musical than **the Clash**. But, with these two bands they are the third key-stone to emerge and they are holding up a corner of the canopy loosely covering the punk rock scene.

Rat Scabies is already being tagged a nubile John Bonham. He drums as solid as an express train. Ray Burns, whose lips always glisten with Woolworth's best pearly pink Tu lipstick, plays bass as if he were Marc Bolan on lead guitar. He's articulate and sensitive but he chooses to fool everyone with a front as benevolently mad as a



Dave

BARRY PLUMMER



Ray wearing his favourite T-shirt

BARRY PLUMMER

village idiot's. Bryan James (lead guitar), the band's 'elder', is likely to look up from his guitar, catch Rat and Ray acting out their star trips, and crack up with spontaneous laughter.

Their lead singer, Dave Vanium (he gave up his daytime job as a gravedigger last week), looks as if he's immaculately risen from Dracula's

crypt. On stage he hisses like an angry bat. And, for one so new to the game, he can keep a show going through appalling obstacles.

As they steam blissfully through *Neat, Neat, Neat* and their soon-to-be-released single *New Rose*, the sound is atrocious. Vanium's mike keeps crackling and cutting out, but the show goes



Rat leaps from his drumkit to find out who threw the glass

on with the minimum of fuss.

Half way through *Fan Club* they take off, pile-driving and crazy fierce, with Bryan pounding the coagulation with a fine treble texture. They are having fun but after their non-revivalist version of the Beatles' *Help* the music staggers to a halt.

'Who's come here tonight to listen to music?' challenges Rat as he spars with his drum-sticks on Ray's bass. It is always difficult for Rat to keep sitting at his drum kit for more than a few numbers at a time. Bryan, meanwhile, has broken a string. After ten minutes the roadie still hasn't fixed it. Chaos on stage. The show starts again.

'We're sorry to sound just like the last band,' leers Dave, 'but we can't help it,' and he rips into the Stooges' *Feel Alright*. He leaps and scrabbles at the torrid air and flinging back his glossy black head he spits out lyrics in a style which is developing into a show-stopper.

Suddenly he jumps into the audience. O.K. that's par for the course. But when he gets back up on stage again he screams with a conviction which transcends a stage act, 'Someone has just hit one very near and dear to me'. The show goes on, but Dave is on the verge of freaking.

Minutes later three people appear at the back of the club. There is no commotion but they are bleeding. The

atmosphere chills perceptibly. Onto the stage leaps Mr. Hunter, the club's manager. 'If there's any more glasses thrown,' he yells, 'you'll all have to go home.' The show starts again for *So Messed Up*, the last number. The band screams through it, black and moody, slamming out the last riffs before they make a dash to the dressing-room. Dave, whose girl-friend was one of the injured people, heads straight for the street in time to sit in the ambulance as it heads for hospital.

A glass lobbed at the stage, hit a pillar, shattered and sprayed the audience instead.

Malcolm McLaren, the Sex Pistols' manager, tries to buy a drink and is refused because the barman doesn't want any more missiles flying through the air.

'Why don't you serve drinks in plastic cups,' asked Malcolm.

'Who do you think we are!' is the reply. 'We're civilized down here.'

The Vibrators — and Chris Spedding. The show goes on. The first time the Vibrators, John Ellis (lead guitar), Knox (lead vocals) and Jon Edwards (drums) played at the 100 Club, their manager-cum-bassist, Pat Collins, told me, 'We don't really go along with the Punk Rock thing, but it's the fashion isn't it?' Since then they've cut off their long hair. However, they still

play very few original numbers. They're a punchy little R&B outfit. And since Chris Spedding hasn't managed to form a band they are the ideal bunch for him. He wants to play it safe. They know all the old classics.

Their first number (Spedding joins them later) is a bluesy carnage of *I Saw You Standing There*. Then they spew into *Jumping Jack Flash*.

By this time, policemen, plain clothes and in uniform, are mingling with the audience. Everyone feels uncomfortable. People have been hurt quietly. There wasn't a fight, and nobody knows exactly what happened.

Suddenly, with no more impact than a moving dark blue flash, five uniformed police surround a figure by the bar. He looks surprised. Blank. He's guided to the exit and arrested. It's Sid Vicious, Siouxsie and the Banshees' drummer.

The Vibrators play on. Spedding joins them. He's dressed in black from head to foot and his eyes are like coal-holes in his white face. He humps into *Motorbiking*. Ray Burns, who's standing at the side of the stage, can resist no longer. Up to the mikes he leaps. They are turned off until he reaches the other side of the stage. Spedding's cool. Ray sings the choruses and the audience seeing that Spedding is trying to slip away cheer him back again. They all mash into *Great Balls Of Fire* and for good measure — with half the audience groaning 'boring', 'old', and the others leaping about — they wring life into *Let's Twist Again*. Well, they did it! In the dressing room, dripping

New Rose

Got a feeling inside of me,
Kinda strange like a stormy sea,
I don't know why, I don't know why,
I guess these things have gotta be.

Got a new Rose, got her good,
Just like I knew that I always would,
Aint got time to mess around,
Got a brand new Rose in town.

See the sun, see the sun it shines,
Don't get too close, it'll make you blind,
No don't you run away that way,
We can come back another day.

Got a new Rose, got her good,
Just like I knew that I always would,
Aint got time to mess around,
Got a brand new Rose in town.

I don't believe that it's happening to me,
It's not true, why should it be,
I don't deserve someone this great,
I'd better go or I'll be late.

DAMNED (Brian James)



BARRY PLUMMER

The Vibrators – and Chris Spedding

Boredom

Well I say what I mean
 I say what comes to mind
 I never get around to things
 I'm living a straight, straight line

You know me - I'm acting dumb
 You know the scene - very humdrum
 Boredom - boredom - boredom

Now I'm living in a movie
 Which doesn't move me
 I'm the man waiting for the phone to ring
 Ring-a-ring-a-fucking-ding

Now there's nothing behind me
 And I'm already a has-been
 My future ain't what it was
 I think I know the words that I mean

I've taken this extravagant journey
 Or so it seems to me
 To arrive here from nowhere
 And to go straight back there

Now I'm living in this movie
 But it doesn't move me
 Tell me - who are you trying to arouse
 Take your hand outta my trousers

You know me - I'm acting dumb
 You know the scene - very humdrum
 Boredom - boredom - boredom

BUZZCOCKS (Devoto/Shelley)

with sweat, Spedding is actually grinning. He enjoyed himself.

The Buzzcocks. This Manchester band was formed less than two months ago. The front line – Howard Devoto (vocals), Peter Shelley, who plays a chopped in half, second-hand 'Starway' and Steve Diggle (bass) are pint-sized. Howard, who doesn't speak to the audience – much – has just dyed his mousey hair orange. All the band's energy implodes around John Maher's drum kit. But like sparrows in a sand bath, they throw up a gritty cloud of sound. Through numbers like

Breakdown, Organ Addict, Boredom and Oh Shit, their sound is quaintly compact. But their approach, though very energetic is unnecessarily defensive and calculating. Devoto insists that he is only in a rock band 'temporarily' and his self-conscious lack of commitment comes across. He doesn't laugh much and he hates being on stage.

The festival ends with the Buzzcocks fluttering into the audience and Peter Shelley's guitar still on stage feeding back. It pounds out a gut-wrenching lub dub, lub dud like the no-feeling sound of a robot's heart-beat.

The 100 Club had become the 'home' of punk rock, but after the tragic accident, punk rock was banned. The scene lost its focus until Andy Czewowski opened the Roxy club in December, 1976. Meanwhile . . .



The Buzzcocks – John, Steve, Pete and Howard Devoto.

Outside the Roxy



ANNETTE WEATHERMAN

THE CLASH

When I first interviewed the Clash, in their barrack like studio in Chalk Farm, they had yet to sign a record contract, although they were already one of the punk scene's favourite bands.

5th November 1976

Three weeks ago at the I.C.A., Jane and Shane were sprawled at the edge of the stage. Blood covered Shane's face. Jane, very drunk, had kissed, bitten and, with broken glass, cut him in a calm but no less macabre love rite.

The Clash were not pleased. 'All of you who think violence is tough — why don't you go home and collect stamps. That's much tougher,' roared Joe Strummer. Then he slammed into the band's anthem *White Riot*.

All the power is in the hands
Of people rich enough to buy it,
While we walk the streets
Too chicken to even try it,
And everybody does what they're
told to,
And everybody eats supermarket
soul-food.
White riot, I wanna riot.
White riot — a riot of my own!

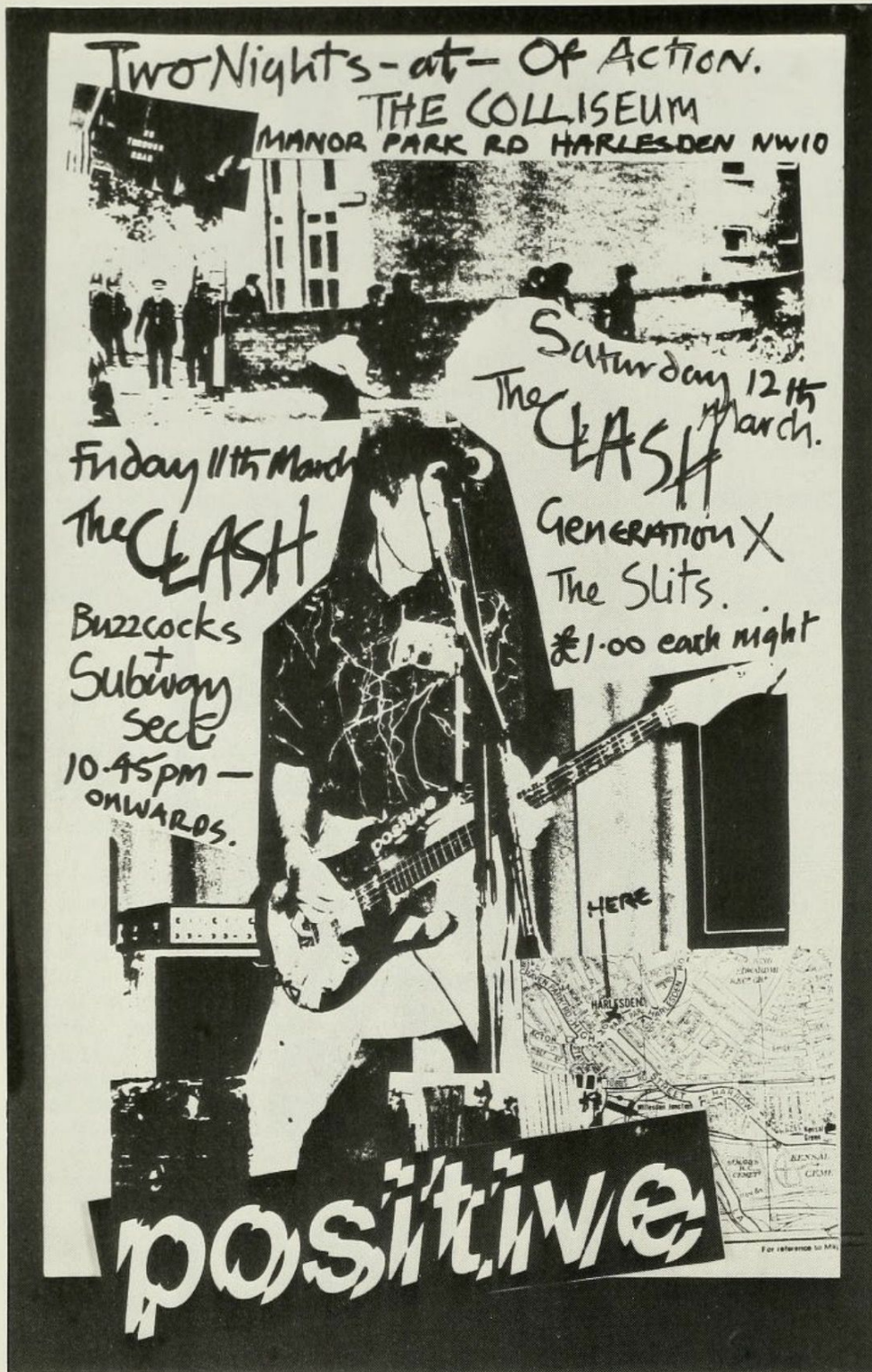
The song, played with the force of an acetylene torch, is as uncompromising as the other numbers in the band's repertoire — numbers like *Deny*, *Protex Blues*, *Career Opportunities* and *1977*. To hammer home their impact, the Clash play with enough committed force to bring down the walls of Babylon, Jerico — Heaven and Hell if necessary. And their audiences go wild.

But far from wanting people to hurt each other, Joe Strummer (vocals, guitar), Mick Jones (guitar), Paul Simonon (bass) and Terry Chimes (drums) insist that their aim is to shake audiences into channelling their frustrations into creative outlets. It's difficult, however, trying to maintain a balance between positive reaction and violence.

How easy it is, though, when you

The collage features several elements:

- A large, stylized '1977 Starts' graphic at the top.
- A central black and white photograph of the band The Clash, with the names 'TOM LAUGHLIN' and 'STEFANIE POWERS' printed above them.
- A banner across the photo that reads 'SEXUAL FREEDOM!'.
- Handwritten text below the photo: 'at the ROXY 41-43 New St Covent Garden'.
- A poster on the right side: 'SATURDAY 1st JAN '77 bar Open 8pm-2am'.
- A large handwritten sign at the bottom: 'With The CLASH + Chelsea + Sounds. ADM £1.25'.
- Smaller handwritten notes at the bottom right: '2 sets 9:30 and 12:30'.
- Various other text fragments and graphics scattered throughout the collage.



examine the Clash's background to explain their emotional intensity.

Aware that, like the rest of the band, he'd rather not talk about his childhood, I asked Joe where he came from.

'The only place I considered home was the boarding school in Yorkshire

my parents sent me to. It's easier, isn't it? I mean it gets kids out of the way.' Then he adds defiantly, 'It was great! You have to stand up for yourself. You get beaten up the first day you get there.'

'And I'm really glad I went because my Dad's a bastard. I shudder to think

what would have happened if I hadn't gone to boarding school. I only saw him once a year. If I'd seen him all the time I'd probably have murdered him by now. He was very strict.'

While Joe is talking, Paul is sitting next to him pointing and shooting a realistic, replica pistol — bang — at the posters on the walls — bang — at Mick across the room — bang — at Gertie the roadie's dog — bang, bang — anywhere at all.

'I get on alright with my parents,' Paul says. 'But I don't see them very much. They split up when I was eight. I stayed with my mum but I felt it was a bit soft with her. I could do whatever I liked and I wasn't getting nowhere, so I went to stay with my Dad. It was good training because I had to do all the launderette and that. In a way I worked for him — getting money together and that — working down Portobello market and doing the paper rounds after school. It got me sort of prepared for when things get harder.'

Paul liked school. 'I never learned anything. All you done is played about and pissed on the teachers and that. There were forty-five in our class and we had a Pakistani teacher who didn't even speak English.'

Mick, like Paul, comes from Brixton. His father is a taxi driver and his mother is in America. 'They kind of left home, one at a time. I was much more interested in them than they were in me. They decided I weren't happening, I suppose. I stayed with my gran for a long time. And I read a lot.'

'Psychologically it really did me in. I wish I knew then what I know now. Now I know it isn't that big a deal. But then at school I'd sit there with this word "divorce, divorce" in my head all the time. But there was no social stigma attached to it because all the other kids seemed to be going through the same thing. Very few of the kids I knew were living a sheltered family life.'

When he was sixteen, Mick believes, he had two choices — football or rock 'n' roll. He chose rock. Why? 'Because he couldn't afford toilet rolls,' quips Joe. Mick explains: 'I thought it was much less limiting. And it was more exciting. I got into music at a very early age. I went to my first rock concert when I was twelve. It was

free, in Hyde Park, and Nice, Traffic, Junior's Eyes and the Pretty Things were playing.

'The first guitar I had was a second-hand Hofner. I paid sixteen quid for it and I think I was ripped off. But I tell you something – I sold it for thirty to a Sex Pistol.' Everyone laughs gleefully.

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 with no hot water or cooking facilities.

After Paul and Mick left school, they both ended up as casual art students. Mick was already in a group (the London S.S.) 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 blue-beat 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, and 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, who was lead singer of the 101'ers.

The meeting was auspicious. 'I don't like your group,' says Mick. 'But we think you're great.'

'As soon as I saw these guys,' says Joe, 'I knew 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.'

Joe broke up the 101'ers directly as a result of seeing the Sex Pistols. A few months ago he told me, 'Yesterday I thought I was a crud. Then I saw the Sex Pistols and I became a king and decided to move into the future.'

Today he says: 'As soon as I saw them I knew that rhythm and blues was dead, that the future was here



Joe and Paul at their studio, 13th August 1976 – the first 'performance' by the Clash

EVE PADOVA

somehow. Every other group was riffing their way through the Black Sabbath catalogue. But hearing the Pistols I knew. I just knew. It was something you just knew without bothering to think about.'

What is it about punk-rock which is so important to Joe? 'It's the music of now. And it's in English. We sing in English, not mimicking some American rock singer's accent. That's just pretending to be something you ain't.'

Continues Mick: 'It's the only music which is about young white kids. Black kids have got it all sewn up. They have their own cultural music, reggae. Basically young white kids are relying on a different time to provide for their kicks.'

But what's so different about youth today, then, I probe. And there's silence. Joe stands up and, relishing the drama, he turns to reveal the stark, hand-painted graffiti on the back of his boiler suit: HATE AND WAR glare in red and white across his shoulders. It's the Hippy motto reversed.

'The Hippy Movement was a failure,' is Joe's explanation. 'All the hippies around now just represent complete apathy. There's a million good reasons why the thing failed, O.K. But the only thing we've got to live with is that it failed. At least you tried. But I'm not interested in why it failed. I'll jeer at hippies because that's helpful. They'll realise they're stuck in a rut and maybe they'll get out of it.'



Joe sitting on Terry's drumkit adjusting guitar strap, 13th August 1976

What do they feel about society today? 'It's alienating the individual,' says Mick. 'No one gives a shit about you.'

Says Joe: 'There's nowhere to go. Nothing to do. The radio's for housewives. Nothing caters for us. All the laws are against you. Whoever's got the money's got the power. The Rent Acts are a complete mockery. It's a big joke. I just have to fuck off into the night for somewhere to sleep.'

Adds Paul, with feeling: 'At the moment what the Government should do is put licences on clubs so that kids can have somewhere to go. But they're clamping down on all that. The situation that is beginning to happen now is their fault. If we end up wrecking the

place it's the Government's fault. They'll bring back National Service and we'll all be sent down to South Africa or Rhodesia to protect white capital's interests. And then we'll all be slaughtered . . .'

They may knock society, but they're all living off the dole aren't they? 'Yeah. We get a little freedom from social security. Otherwise I'd have to spend 40 hours a week lifting cardboard boxes or washing dishes or whatever I done in the past. But because we're on the dole - which is £9.70 a week - I can get a rock 'n' roll band together.'

'If I got up at 4.00am and went to Soho and joined a queue I could get a job as a casual washer-up. That's the

other opportunity I've got. Or the opportunity to work in a factory.'

But someone's got to work in a factory? 'Why have they?' demands Mick. 'Don't you think technology is advanced enough to give all those jobs over to a few people and machines? They're just keeping people occupied by making them work.'

'There's a social stigma attached to being unemployed. Like "Social Security Scroungers" every day in the *Sun*. I don't want to hear that. I cheer them. You go up North and the kids are *ashamed* that they can't get a job!'

Aren't they being rather pious when all they are doing is playing in a rock 'n' roll band? 'No,' says Paul. 'It's the most immediate way we can handle it. We can inspire people. There's no one else to inspire you. Rock 'n' roll is a really good medium. It has impact, and if we do our job properly then we're making people aware of a situation they'd otherwise tend to ignore. We can have a vast effect!'

Oh yeah? Rock stars have usually started out saying they're going to change everything. Joe reacts first. 'But you learn by mistakes. The Rolling Stones made mistakes. But I want to do something useful. I'm not going to spend all my money on drugs. I'm going to start a radio station with my money. I want to be active. I don't want to end up in a villa on the South of France watching colour T.V.'

Do they want money then? 'Yes,' says Paul. 'Money's good because you can do things with it. Bands like the Stones and Led Zeppelin took everything without putting anything back. But we can put money back into the situation we were in before, and get something going for the kids our own age.'

If present performance is anything to go by then we can expect the Clash to put any money they make where their mouths are. Already they are playing nearly as many 'benefits' as they are profit-making gigs. Not that there are any profits at all at the moment. The band is struggling harder than ever before to stay on the road.

'We make a loss at every gig,' says Joe. 'It's the promoters who we want to attack. I bet you can only name one or two who really care about music. I'm amazed there isn't one that really cares about what's happening at the



EVE DADOMO

The original Clash line-up, at the 13th August 'performance' for friends only: Mick Jones, Terry Chimes, Joe Strummer, Paul Simonon and Keith Levine

moment. We're really having to get down on our knees and grovel for venues.'

The Clash are more politically motivated than the Damned, perhaps more musically accessible than the Pistols. Their lovingly painted clothes (the same on and off stage, of course) which are acrylic spattered with the ferocity of a Jackson Pollack action painting, have started one of the most creative fashion crazes of the year. And their acute awareness, and ability to articulate the essence of the era which inspires their music, will make their contribution to the history of rock of lasting significance. Happy times are here again . . .



SHEILA ROCK

Joe - 'Fashion is a Fashion'

Perhaps the last word should be left to the manager of the Clash when approached by Beat in an attempt to set up an interview about music: "We know nothing about music. If you want to know about music, ask Miles Davis or somebody like that. We're all trying to find out what it is . . . it's something to do with seven notes, isn't it?"

1977

Old Enemy, New Friend on the outside

THE CLASH

The fantastic thing is that

THE CLASH
THE CLASH
CBS 82000
Sorry boys, this is a music magazine. Teach Yourself Infantile Brain Damage is ten floors down - out the window.

REGGAE



BIG YOUTH

COMBAT

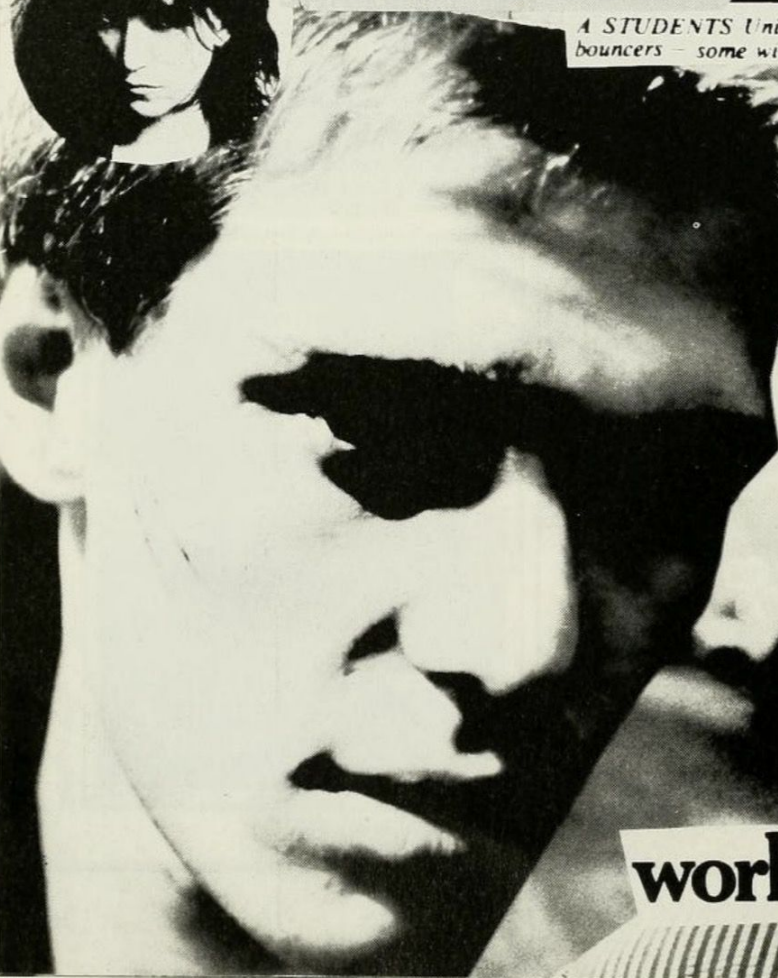
careers

A STUDENTS Union this week hit back at amazing allegations by Clash that the band's f bouncers - some with chains that dancers were warned off because of the band's sup

Terrorists

Reggae Heart Music

ot...



world's fastest

CLASH: 'Student chain gang threatened our fans' claim



...turns out to be the future of rock 'n' roll

Counterattack

CONDITIONING

smash up

connected. If one wanted, for instance, to demonstrate the European context of Jackson Pollock's drip-drawing, one would show the appropriate works by Masson and Ernst, not the empty doodle by Georges Mathieu that hangs next to Pollock's *Number 32*. The dismal efforts of French artists to turn their Dada heritage into American Pop are much

WHITE RIOT

Prisoner,

Experts clash

goes to court

POTHOLES

I been threatened by "Communist" Fascist act. Full details news pages.

Wimp Takes Command

ENTERTAINING IDEAS

TIME THE

reggae vibrations

YOUTH CRIME

GLC presents...

The Failed System

In December the Clash were one of the bands on the Sex Pistols' 'Anarchy In The U.K.' tour. Like everyone else, they came back to London tired, exhausted and stunned at the growing national outcry about the horrors of punk rock which was making it impossible for them to play anything but isolated gigs.

The Clash played the Roxy club on 2nd January 1977, but although the club was still flourishing the atmosphere was beginning to sour. Fights were always part of the scene, and accepted in moderation. The real aggression was reserved for outsiders – the 'boring old farts'. But after Christmas, 1976, there was a significant change in the nature of the aggression. It was as if the bands, especially the Pistols, unable to insult the Establishment without incurring severe retaliation turned in on themselves and their own.

In March the Clash signed to C.B.S. and released their debut single 'White Riot'.

Joe Strummer 26th March 1977

Back in the garage with my bullshit detector

Carbon monoxide makes sure it's effective

There's people ringing up making offers for my life

I just want to stay in the garage all night.

Meanwhile things are hotting up in the West End alright

Contracts in the offices and groups in the night

My bumming slumming friends have got new boots

And someone just asked me if the group would wear suits.

I don't want to know about what the rich are doing

I don't want to go to where the rich are going

They think they're so clever, they think they're so right

But the truth is only known by gutter snipes . . .

We're a garage band and we come from garageland.

Garageland by

Joe Strummer and Mick Jones

Those lyrics, written five weeks ago, are among the many indications that the Clash, even though they have signed-up to a record company only a few tones less 'establishment' than E.M.I., are still reacting.

In the past Joe Strummer would return to his squat from the dead-end gloom of the Lisson Grove dole queue and come up with a sneeringly cynical *Career Opportunities*. When he and Paul Simonon got caught in the racial no-mans' land between charging police and angry black youths at the Notting Hill Carnival riots in 1976, the experience was poured into another rock 'n' roll song – *White Riot*. More recently, *Hate And War* and *Remote Control* (written at the time of the banned Sex Pistols' tour) were reactions to the general condemnation of punk music.

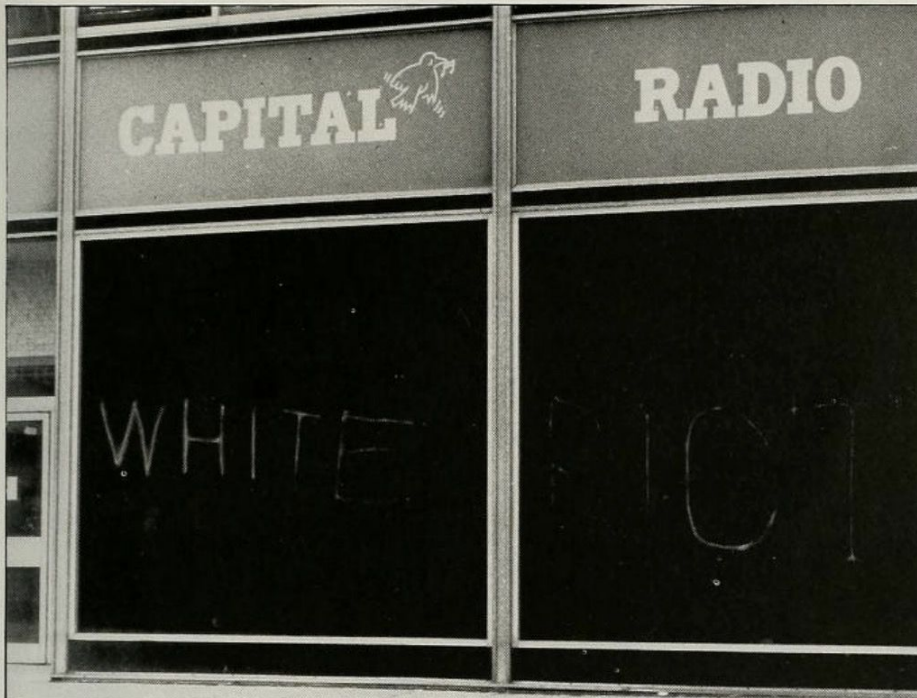
But considering their formidably exciting stage presence and ever improving technique, it was only a matter of time before a record contract lured them away from their squat/starve/steal life style. A pox on the irony! With C.B.S.'s hefty six-figure advance and perhaps two year's guaranteed security, what price songs inspired by street level survival games now? Would they vanish as fast as the ink dries on the dotted line?

'No,' counters Joe Strummer, offering *Garageland* in evidence. 'I never want that to happen. After our second gig a critic in *New Musical Express* wrote that we should be returned to the garage and locked in with a motor running so that we died. *Garageland* is about that. I was trying to say that this is where we come from and we know it, and we're not going to get out of our depth. Even though we've signed with C.B.S. we aren't going to float off into the atmosphere like the Pink Floyd or anything.'

Admirable sentiments which cynics, no doubt, will find hard to believe. But in truth, the band have changed little over the last six months. When I first met them life was tough. Their bright eyes stared out of spotty, unwashed, pallid skins. And no wonder. One night after sticking up posters to advertise an I.C.A. gig they returned to their rehearsal studio so hungry and broke that, over the one bar of their electric fire, they cooked and eat what remained at the bottom of the bucket of the flour and water paste.



Joe in Red Lion Square



SEBASTIAN CONRAN

In tune with London...

Today Joe Strummer, on a basic £25.00 a week, looks a picture of health, but if anything an adequate diet has sharpened his reactive wit.

'The only person who played *White Riot* on the radio was John Peel — and he's gone on holiday,' says Joe, his voice a mixture of amused incredulity and frustration. 'You play our record against any of the other stuff and it just knocks spots off them left, right and centre. They must be cunts for not playing it.'

He is holding a can of spray paint (colour: War Dance Orange) and that night he sprayed 'White Riot' in huge letters over the tinted glass facade of Capital Radio's offices.

'I want to slag off all the people in charge of radio stations,' he continues. 'Firstly, Radio One. They outlawed the pirates and then didn't, as they promised, cater for the market the pirates created. Radio One and Two, most afternoons, run concurrently and the whole thing has slid right back to where it was before the pirates happened. They've totally fucked it. There's no radio station for young people any more. It's all down to housewives and trendies in Islington. They're killing the country by having that play list monopoly.'

'No 2: Capital. They're even worse because they had the chance, coming

Capital Radio

Yes, it's time for the Dr Goebbels show!
There's a tower in the heart of London
With a radio station at the top
They don't make the citybeat
They're making all the action stop.

A long time ago there were pirates
Beaming waves from the sea,
But now all the stations are silenced
'Cos they aint got a Government licence.

Wanna tell your problems
Phone in from your bed-sit-room
Having trouble with your partner
Let us all in on the news.

If you wanna hear a record
Get the word from Aiden Day
He picks all the hits to play
To keep you in your place, OK.
Capital Radio Capital Radio Capital Radio...

(Strummer/Jones)

right into the heart of London and sitting in that tower right on top of everything. But they've completely blown it. I'd like to throttle Aiden Day. He thinks he's the self appointed Minister of Public Enlightenment.

'We've just written a new song called *Capital Radio* and a line in it goes "listen to the tunes of the Dr Goebbels Show."

'They say "Capital Radio in tune with London". Yeah, yeah, yeah! They're in tune with Hampstead. They're not in tune with us at all. I hate them. What they could have done compared to what they have done is abhorrent. They could have made it so good that everywhere you went you took your transistor radio — you know, how it used to be when I was at

school. I'd have one in my pocket all the time or by my ear'ole flicking it between stations. If you didn't like one record you'd flick to another station and then back again. It was amazing. They could have made the whole capital buzz. Instead Capital Radio has just turned their back on the whole youth of the city.'

Strummer may be irked by the radio stations' lack of interest in his music — and there is a rumour current among record companies who have picked up on New Wave bands that certain august programme controllers only have to look at pictures of a band to pronounce their music 'punk' and ban it — but punk itself is having a day of reckoning. What does Strummer think about the punk-scene at the moment?

'I don't think there is one really. The only thing that could count as a "scene" is the Roxy. And the Roxy is a *dormitory*. The last time I went I was feeling really uppity. I stood in the middle and looked around and all these people were slumped around dozing! I threw tomato sauce on the mirror and stormed out. And I haven't been back there. I don't think I will go back there. The sooner it closes the better.'

From the first night, the Roxy has struggled to stay open. But paying the ever-increasing rent was never as damaging to its survival as the back-biting which resulted in the club's recent atmosphere.

However, bad vibes or not, surely it is better to have somewhere to play than nowhere at all?

'No, I think it's better to have nothing than have that,' says Joe, acknowledging that his "selfish" attitude might have something to do with the fact that the Clash are temporarily out of action since drummer Terry Chimes decided to start his own band.

The social scene aside then, what does he think about the way the music has developed?

'All I care about are the groups. If there's good groups then it's got to be good. There's bound to be a lot of rubbish, but I've changed my opinion of the Damned. I've seen them a lot, and I think they're fun to watch. They play good. The only thing I have against them is that they can't play as well as us.'

'Number One for me at the moment are the Subway Sect. They've got some good ideas. The Slits are good, too. Palmolive on drums! She's the female Jerry Nolan. But like everyone, they need to do thirty gigs in thirty days and they would be a different group. Then they'd be great. The same with us.'

How has Joe been affected by the ban on punk music which has effectively kept the Clash off the road since Christmas?

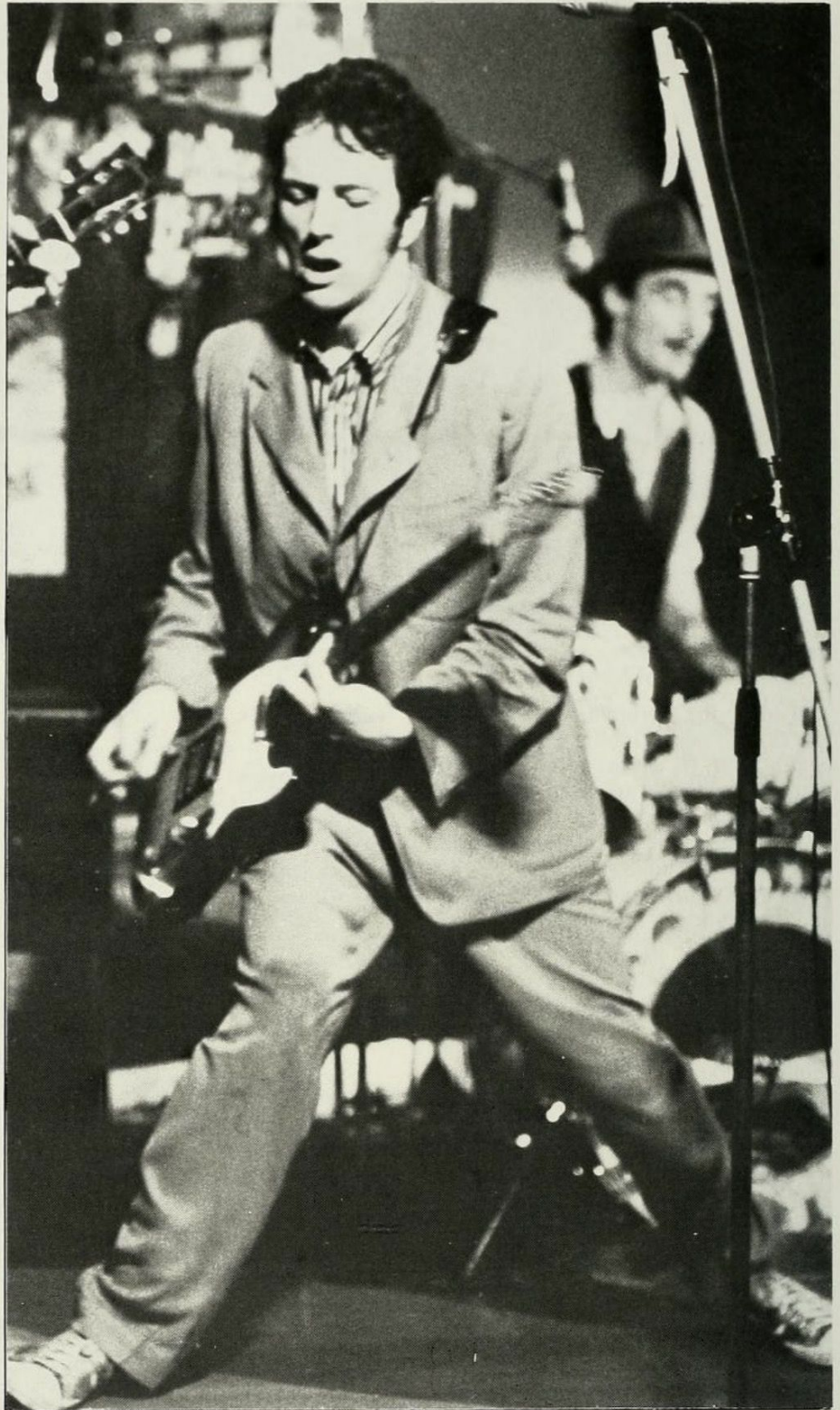
'I feel really bitter. We've tried our hardest and we've worked and slogged at it. Then we've had drummers quitting which was just what we didn't need. We wanted to get going and move forward.'

'All that business on the Pistols' tour! I hated it. I *hated* it. It was the Pistols' time. We were in the shadows in the background. The first few nights were terrible. We were just locked up in the hotel room with the Pistols, doin' nothing.'

'And yet for me it was great, too. We had the coach and we had hotels and we had something to do — even though they didn't let us do it that often — we did it about eight times. It was good fun.'

'But when I got back to London on Christmas Eve I felt awful. I was really destroyed, because after a few days you get used to eating. We were eating Holiday Inn rubbish, but it was two meals a day. And when I got off the coach we had no money and it was just awful. I felt twice as hungry as I'd ever felt before.'

'I had nowhere to live, and I remember walking away from the coach deliberately not putting on my woolly jumper. I walked all the way up Tottenham Road and it was really cold, but I wanted to get as cold and as miserable as I could. Christmas was here and me and Micky Foote, our sound man, had our little bags in our hands and I just felt like the worst thing in the world that the tour had ended. I wanted to go on and on. The coach had been like home in a way and I didn't want to get off it.'

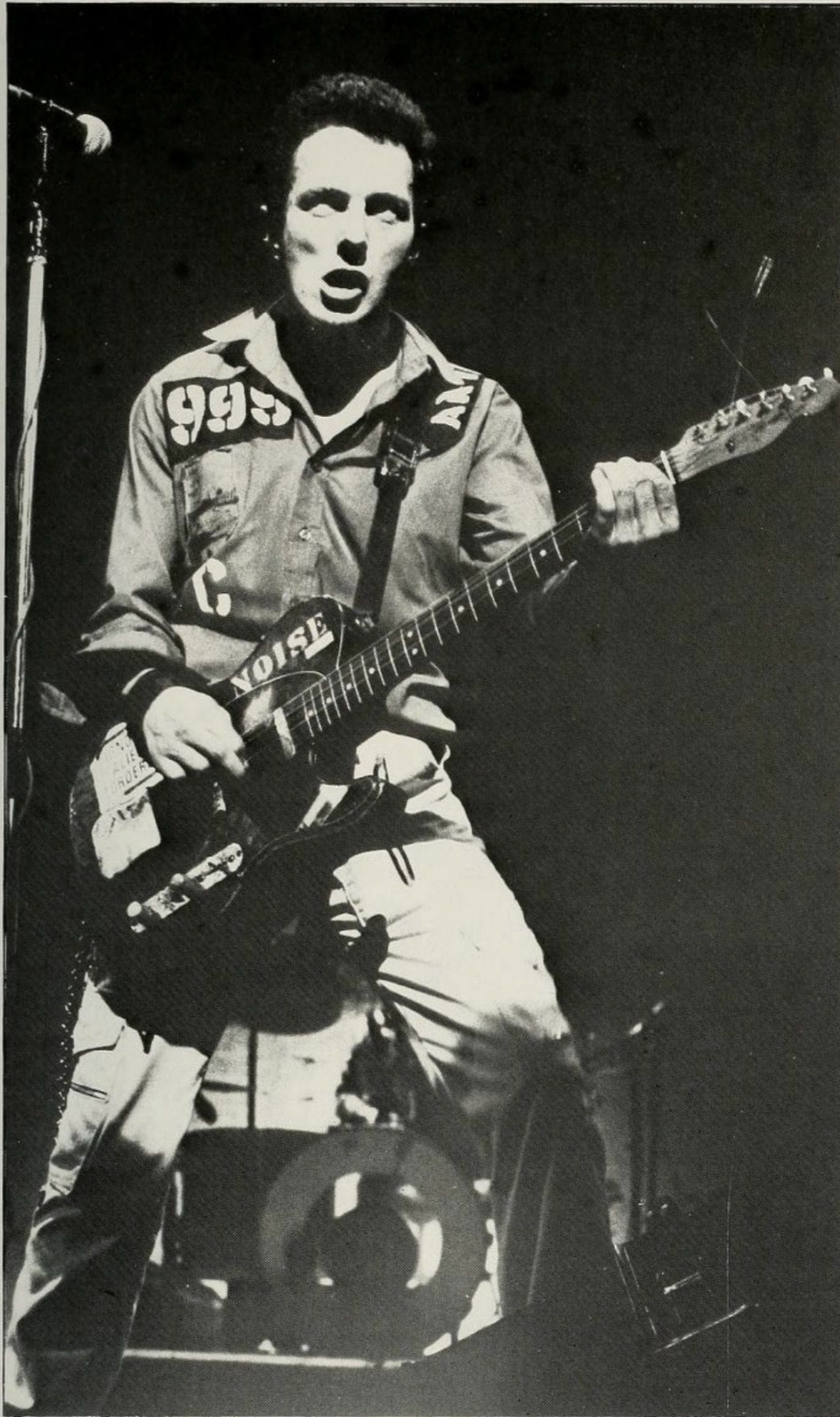


Joe in the 101'ers

On-stage Strummer wires himself up into an inhuman dynamo of sweaty, trembling flesh, fearful enough to have one wondering when the ambulance brigade will rush to his rescue with a

straight-jacket. While he tilts his bullet head at acute angles, his agonising face screwed into an open wound, he weilds his Telecaster like a chain saw.

His magnetism is totally original — more like an Olympic strong man imploding all his energy into a final record-breaking lift than anything seen



Erica Echeverrig
Joe at the Rainbow, 9th May 1977

on a rock 'n' roll stage before.

Off-stage, he's the Clash member with the lowest profile. Guitarist Mick Jones is the most verbal of the trio. He

lives with his grandmother on the eighteenth floor of a high-rise overlooking the Westway. He is dark, even more gaunt than Keith Richard, and

his pop-rock knowledge is encyclopaedic. At the Kinks' London gig the other week he remarked (usefully) to me: 'Andy Pyle, yes. Blodwyn Pig — and any other Mick Abrahams band after that.'

Bassist Paul Simonon, who was 'educated' at schools in Brixton and Notting Hill where 90% of the kids were black, communicates more with animal physicality than with words. Like Joe and Mick, he 'retreated' for a time to art school. He is shy, except on stage, but with a growing reputation as a Sex Symbol. When Patti Smith was here last September she went to the Clash's ICA gig, took one look at him, leapt up on stage and spirited him away with her on the road for two days.

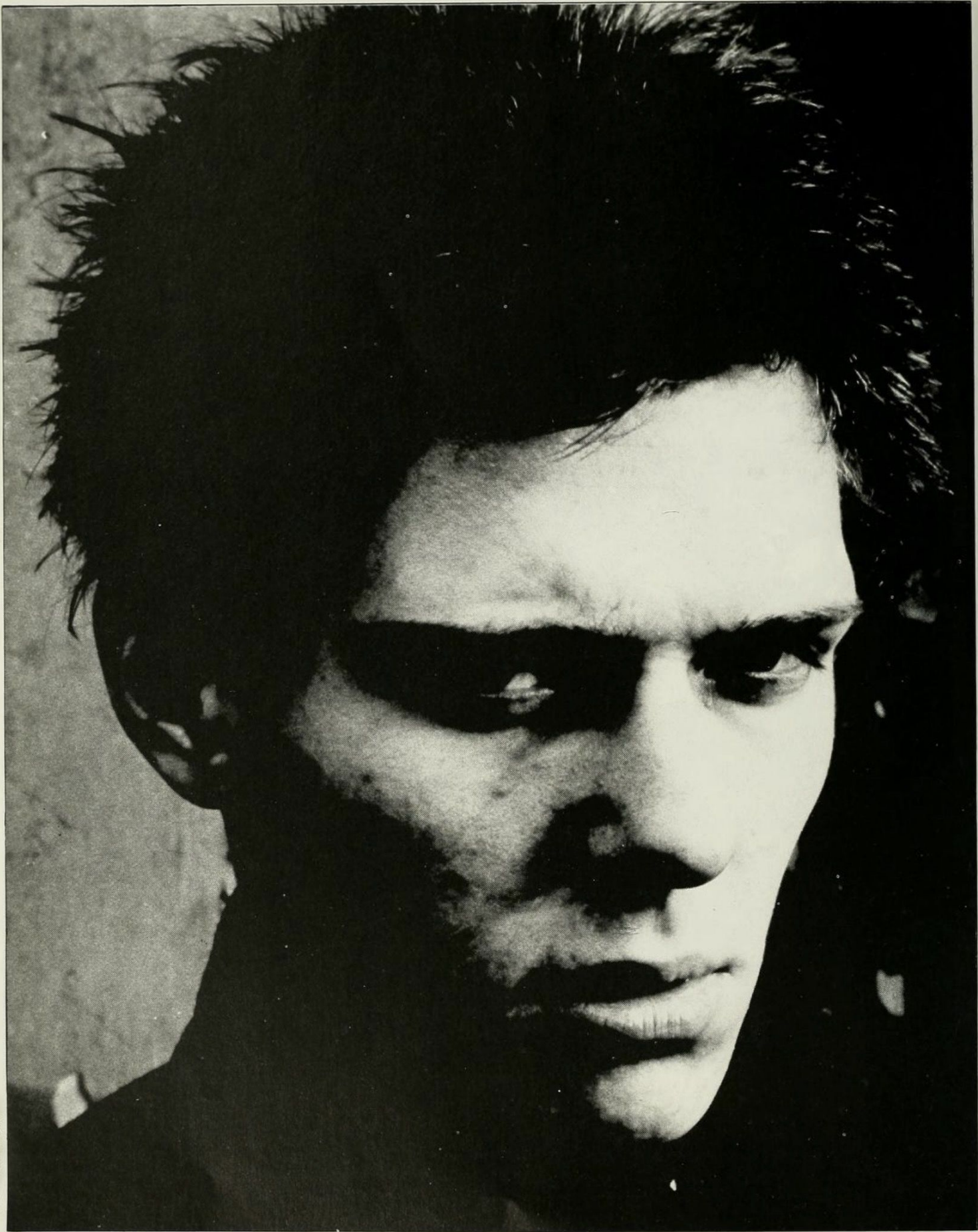
Up until now, Strummer has been mysteriously reticent about his background. Sitting on a park bench in Red Lion Square — in the shadow of an old haunt, Central School of Art — he is more forthcoming than ever before. The interview venue, as I was pointedly reminded, was the site of the International Socialist v National Front demo where student Kevin Brodie was killed. Joe feels comfortable. Trusty Rat Rodent, the band's chef de la route, has supplied some cans of beer.

Much has been made of punk music's tough roots in modern urban dereliction. But Joe is not working class, is he?

'No, I'm not working class at all. My father was born in India. His father died when he was eight, and so he was an orphan. He went to an orphan school. Then, because he was so smart, they gave him a scholarship to University and he was really proud that he'd come from nothing, with no chance, to having a degree — even though it was from the poxy University of Lucknow.

'He came to London and joined the Civil Service as a junior bum. Then he became a not-so-junior bum, and then he reached his high point and became a diplomat going overseas.

'That was my lucky break. He was dead proud of it, and he really wanted me to be like him. But at the age of nine I had to say good-bye to them because they went abroad to Africa or something. I went to boarding school and only saw them once a year after that — the Government paid for me to



CAROLINE COON

Paul



'Don't touch that dial!'



The Clash at the Roxy, Saturday 1st January 1977. 'Danger stranger, you better paint your face'.

see my parents once a year.

'I was left on my own, and went to this school where thick rich people sent their thick rich kids. Another perk of my father's job — it was a job with a lot of perks — all the fees were paid by the Government.

'When I was eight he made me sit all these exams for these flash public schools. But I failed the lot. Finally I got into this other crummy school where they have this thing going, that if your brother passed the entrance

exam, me, his brother, was let in too.'

So Joe has a brother?

'No. I did have but he's dead. He committed suicide in 1971. He was a year older than me. Funnily enough you know, he was a Nazi. He was a member of the National Front. He was into the occult and he used to have these deaths-heads and cross-bones all over everything. He didn't like to talk to anybody, and I think suicide was the only way out for him. What else could he have done.

'Imagine! You're in the world and you're just too shy to even talk to anybody or even go into a cafe to have a cup of tea. I suppose he could have gone to the Hebrides but he was too shy to buy a train ticket. He took a hundred aspirins and some other tablets under a bush in Regents Park. He was the complete opposite to me really.'

It is difficult when talking to Joe not to notice his somewhat decayed excuses for teeth. What happened to them?

'Well, it ain't speed,' he laughs. 'I just never brushed them. I'm a walking advert for brushing your teeth. I've been brushing them for the last month, though. And also, I got punched in the mouth once and all the ends broke off. That's why they're so jagged. They put a false tooth on the front one once, but it fell off.'

The Clash are being accused, you might say, for their 'intellectual' approach to music. They are certainly the most politically aware of the New Wave bands. But I'm suspicious. Until recently Paul thought David Steel was Tommy Steele's brother. Does Joe read at all? Does he know who the Prime Minister is?

'Yeah, I do!' he replies patiently. 'I'm on page 984 of the Rise And Fall Of The Third Reich, and I've read everything that T.E. Lawrence wrote. He was my hero. But I wasn't too impressed by "The Mint" and I thought the Lawrence of Arabia film was better than the book.

'And Jim Callaghan, right! You know I got a T.V. recently and the other day I was punching between him on one channel and Jimmy Carter on the other. Well, it struck me that Jimmy Carter had more going for him than Jim Callaghan. With Callaghan you get the feeling that if you ripped his bit of paper away from him he'd be stuck there going der der der without a thought in his head. Whereas, when I punched over to Jimmy Carter he seemed to have a lot to say and he never looked at his paper. But I know they're both robots. Anybody who makes speeches written by someone else is just a robot.

'I don't know whether this is true, but I heard that Fidel Castro, when the mood takes him, just goes to the market place and starts babbling. All the people gather around him and

RAY STEVENSON



Mick and friends in the lift of the Plymouth Holiday Inn on the last night of the 'Anarchy in the UK' tour, December 1976

listen to him and he talks for five hours and walks off again. And that to me sounds as if he's got something to say. Whereas these cunts like Carter and Callaghan have probably got fifty people around them telling them what to say. They're just robots.'

Would Joe defend the band's position of political awareness then?

'Well, the trouble is the word "political". I just leave it as awareness. You get all these smart-alec young groups coming out - and more power to their elbow - sneering "the Clash, they're too political - who wants to care about that bollocks!" That's, like, the flash thing to say now. But I sit back and think about it, and it strikes me as rubbish. I don't think about Jim Callaghan any more than the newspaper vendor does. Politics, as the word describes itself, means Grey Boredom Talk Long Words Impossible Sentences - Rubbish. I don't think about that stuff. I just think about who's doing what to me and what I'm going to do about it. That's what I call politics.'

Joe would like the lyrics of the Clash's songs to develop a political awareness in his audience. But how potent does he think a rock 'n' roll band is when it comes to changing anything?

'Completely useless,' he replies without hesitation. 'A rock 'n' roll group! None of us is going to change anything. Everyone goes "Punk! Hurrah!" But in three years what do you think I'm going to be doing? What do you think the guys who buy our singles are going to be doing? I'll still be walking around muttering to myself. They are still going to be shovelling shit down some old chute and maybe with their wages they'll buy the Clash's fourth album. Rock doesn't change anything.'



Joe, Nicky, Mick and Paul in their studio at Chalk Farm near the Roundhouse, April 1977. The car-dump mural was painted by Paul.

BARRY PLUMMER



Bernard Rhodes being forced to have his picture taken

CHARLAINTE COON

'But after saying that - and I'm just saying that because I want you to know that I haven't got any illusions about anything, right - having said that I *still* want to try to change things.'

To a certain extent the changes in

society over the last fifteen years have been social rather than political. But reacting against highly personal issues like parental authority, Victorian morality and a Puritan work ethic was easy compared with the kind of protest needed to deal with the imper-



Recording 'The Clash', their debut album, at CBS studios, Whitfield Street, London W1.



Paul at the Rainbow

to me like a shock from the blue. Before, if a guitarist came around, I thought I had to hide in the back room.'

Does Joe think of himself as a guitarist more than a lead singer?

'Well, I did then. When I got the 101'ers going I got in another singer because I thought I was chronic. I thought he was better than me. But when someone told me he sounded just like me I thought, "well, fuck it". And I became the lead singer again.'

Before Joe stumbled into music,

what had he planned to be?

'I went to art school like everybody else. I wanted to be an artist. But when I got there, phew! What a lousy set-up. It just fucked me up completely.'

'I'd walked straight out of this dead strict school environment right into a seething orgy. At the time there was loads of drugs at Central and one day I took about fifty trips in a row. I remember finding my way into the studio and it suddenly struck me that the teachers were conning us. They

were not teaching us how to draw but how to make a drawing *look* as if you knew how to draw — which is an enormous distinction. They were just teaching us how to make all the right arty little marks. You'd stand in front of a nude, do all these little marks, waggle your head a bit, smudge a bit and make it look arty. It struck me then this wasn't drawing, in any way, and I never went back.'

Two years of dissipated youth, of casual jobs and unemployment passed before Joe fell in with a busker.

'I was earning some money holding his hat for him. We were down the Underground and I was watching his fingers, and it suddenly occurred to me that if he could do it then so could I. But I was really nervous about actually playing.'

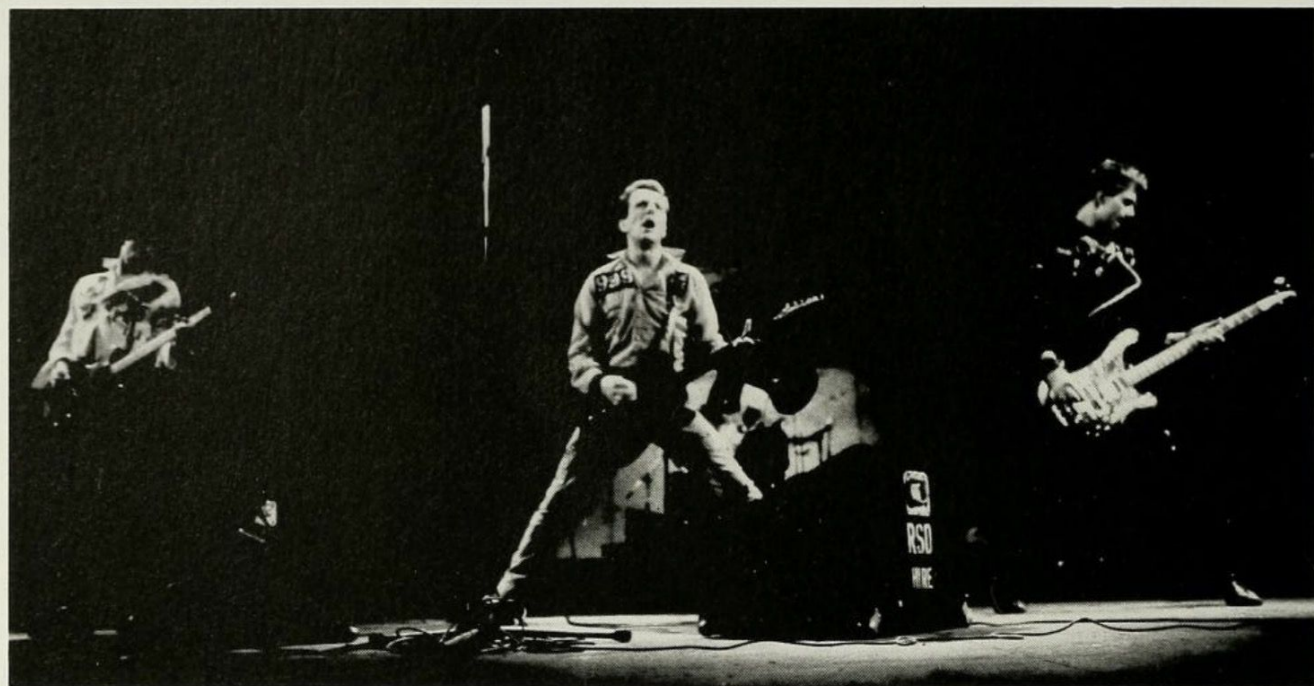
'Now everybody knows it's dead easy. It takes three weeks and you can play every tune in the book. But in them days I thought it was something you had to slog at for years. There was this big mystique. I'm really angry about people who spread that shit about.'

'Anyway, I bought a ukelele. No kidding. I saved some money, £1.99 I think, and bought it down Shaftesbury Avenue. Then the guy I was busking with taught me to play *Johnny Be Good*.

'Well, there came the day when he said, "Right, you do this pitch and I'll head off down Green Park and do the pitch there". And he just walked off down the passage. And it was rush hour. And the passage was jammed with people. And I was on my own for the first time with this ukelele and *Johnny Be Good*. And that's how I started.'

With the 101'ers, Joe slogged around the pub circuit, recorded *Keys To Your Heart*, and was on the verge of establishing the band when he had his post-Pistols brainstorm and quit.

'I know the 101'ers were good,' continues Joe, giving himself a rare retrospective compliment. 'In fact, as far as sound and excitement went we were much better than Eddie and the Hot Rods. The other guys in the group were twenty-five and twenty-six and they played good because they'd spent a few years getting that far. But they were just too old. What I really wanted was to get in with some young yobbo's who I was more in tune with.'



ERICA

The Clash at the Rainbow

It was March 1976. The Pistols were causing the first real swell of grass roots rock energy for nearly a decade. All over London young musicians were going through amoeboid contortions to establish groups of the right personality combinations. Mark P was still a bank clerk with long hair. The Damned were rehearsing. Night life was being spiced up with patent leather and stilleto heels.

One afternoon, Mick and Paul, out for a stroll down Ladbroke Grove with Glen Matlock, spotted Joe crossing the road.

'As soon as I saw Mick and Paul I wanted to join the Clash, just because I wanted to look like they looked,' says Joe candidly. 'I didn't hear them play until days later. I remember thinking after I'd agreed to join "Jesus, I've never heard these guys play!" Paul was just admitting that he had no idea what his instrument was — that Mick had just taught him the songs and, because he's got a good memory, he knew them parrot fashion. For a moment I thought "Oh God" and then I didn't give it another thought.'

Joe willingly admits how much he has been influenced by Mick and Paul's style. Off-stage, what they wear today is tomorrow's acme of punk

sartorial snazz. On-stage, to compete with their spotlight-grabbing antics, Joe has to fight hard. Would he prefer it if the other two hung back more often?

'Oh no. One of the conditions I made when I joined the group was that everybody had to *move*. I was the only person who moved in the 101'ers — which is one of the things I hated about that band.

'The first time I saw Mick put on a guitar he moved like a cunt. We were in a tiny room rehearsing. It was so small we had to crouch around each other. Even so, Paul was slinging his bass around and I thought "fuckin' hell! This guy's got confidence". He's got more style than Brigitte Bardot. He moves, and Mick moves, and I just always wanted to be in a group like that.

'It means you can't ease up. We're competing with each other. We've all got to outdo each other. Otherwise, if Mick stopped everybody would forget about him. He knows it, and Paul knows it, so we've all got to keep going otherwise we'd fade away into the background.'

The Clash have just finished their debut album. With typical independence, they produced it themselves,



DAILY EXPRESS

Fans at the Rainbow throwing seats onto the stage

recording sixteen tracks in seven days. Thirteen of their songs — scorching street poems bolted into split second rock rhythms — screech after each other on an album which will prove of what metal the New Wave is made. Since the album sound is essentially 'live' what, for Joe, were the differences between playing on stage and in the studio?

'On stage I fuck up a lot because I get so carried away I forget to put my hands in the right places. Often I'm playing a fret below what it's supposed to be. And then Paul will be playing a fret above, and it can sound like dogshit. And there's poor Mick. He's the



The Clash in Paris, 27th April 1977, against their 'White Riot' backdrop – a blow-up of the police at the Notting Hill carnival riot.

only one who plays everything perfect every time.

'But when we went into the studio as far as we're concerned it was technically perfect. There may have been a few bum notes but if the whole track sounded good we let them go.

'I enjoy singing in the studio because you feel big. You're the *singer* and you put on the headphones and sometimes it comes out and you can't believe how good it sounds.

'But as far as a general sound difference goes, I can't really say what I'm after because if I knew I'd probably not go after it. Mick's the one who's really into the sound. He's really into the music. He hears arrangements in his head. I can't.

'For Paul the Clash is a chance for him to strut his stuff. For me the music is a vehicle for my lyrics. It's a chance to get some really good words across.'

Does he find it easy to write?

'No – but I'm not telling you why. I learned something once: "you can show someone what you've done but you can't show them how you do it". And I stick to that. If I tell you how I write, when I next do it my words will haunt me and destroy me completely. For me writing is a big thing. The

biggest excitement going is sitting down and writing until you get exactly what you intended to get.'

On-stage the Clash only play their own songs. On the album they've made an exception and recorded a version of Junior Mervin's reggae hit *Police and Thieves*. It's a salutation, in a way, to the music they most respect after their own.

'It was just a wild idea I had one night. I wanted to play reggae when the band first started but I was talked out of it. Rightly so. There's people like Rotten who say, "I'd never play reggae". And he says that because he's got too much sense. I mean, who wants to sound like G.T. Moore and the Reggae Guitars!

'And we can't really play reggae. Who the hell could play them reggae drums apart from a black man. But I wanted to do a Hawkwind version of a song that was familiar to us, and we just did it within our limitations. If it had sounded shitty we'd have dropped it. But it sounded great. There's hardly any reggae in it at all – just a few off-beat guitars thrown in for a laugh – it's all rock 'n' roll. I think it's an incredible track.

'But don't lets talk about the album because I can't stand reading inter-

views where fat cunts sit around swigging Tuborg Cold saying, "well, this time we brought in Rick on violin . . ." Who wants to read about them? It makes me want to screw the paper up.'

The afternoon sun sets, and to avoid the chilly air we finish the interview in the warmth of George's Cafe in Camden Town. Conveniently close to the band's rehearsal studio, it is still one of their favourite haunts.

Did Joe think it was going to be difficult to maintain his grass roots credibility now the band was on the verge of becoming wealthy?

'I still come to this cafe for my beans on toast. I don't want anything else. But signing that contract did bother me a lot. I've been turning it over in my mind, but now I've come to terms with it. I've realised that all it boils down to is perhaps two year's security. We might have an argument with C.B.S. and get thrown off! For me it has been a gift from heaven. Before, all I could think about was my stomach. A lot of the time me and Paul did nothing else but wonder where our next meal was coming from. We were hungry all the time. And the dole was threatening to send me to Birmingham on some Government re-

training scheme. We couldn't think about the reasons behind anything.

'Now I feel free to think – and free to write down what I'm thinking about. I haven't changed my ways at all. And look – I've been fucked about for so long I'm not going to suddenly turn into Rod Stewart just because I get £25.00 a week. I'm much too far gone for that, I tell you.'

The Clash are often rumoured to be nothing more than the manipulated product of their manager's, Bernard Rhodes, svengalian imagination. Bernie met Malcolm McLaren, a close associate of his, at the May 1968 Paris Uprising. How much had he influenced the band?

'He's had a load of influence – especially at the start. He put the group together. And he also put us on the right track – mainly about song content.'

'All songs on the radio – every single one as far as I can judge from my last six day's marathon trying to hear our record played – every single one is about love. And obviously me and Mick were writing songs like that. I mean *Keys To Your Heart*, in the middle it goes into some kind of squat rock type of mad beatnik poetry, but mostly it's a love song. Bernard told us that was a load of bollocks, and we agreed with him. So we started writing about things that hadn't been written about. He pushed us into it.'

Last year Joe told me 'love doesn't exist'. He had been going for a year with Palmolive, the drummer with the Slits. How much is his Don't-Believe-In-Love line his own rather than his manager's belief?

'Well, I'm not in love so how can I believe in it. I was in love when I was sixteen but since then I can't say I have been. There's been girls that when they're *not* there in the room I've been thinking about them like uummmmm. But as soon as they're in the room with me it gets kind of sour. I can love them providing they don't come near me.'

'Obviously we can talk and philosophise, but we're all just dirty dogs aren't we really. So I just decided to forget love. It's madness, right. Really I only believe in myself. I'm not interested in other people much. I prefer to be on my own. I'm a lone ranger – my idea of a jolly fun time is

to sit on my own in a room for eight hours.'

Considering how blaggingly aggressive the Clash's music is, it's interesting to note how little violence there has been at their gigs. It may be a lucky coincidence, it may be because the breakneck music keeps everyone glued to the action on stage, but it must also be the consequence of Joe's attitude. 'Anyone who thinks violence is tough should go home and collect stamps,' he yelled at the I.C.A. audience.

'Yes, those were the exact words I said, but what I was really trying to say could have been said much better. What I meant was – the toughest thing is facing yourself. Being honest with yourself, that's much tougher than beating someone up. That's what I call tough.'

'On stage we're not inciting the crowd to violence – the music just sounds violent. Then if people want to go around punching themselves while it's going on – well let 'em. I don't care. I ain't telling them to go around punching each other up. The music is how I feel, and people can do what they like to it. Obviously if everyone in the audience started stabbing each other I'd freak out a bit and tell them to simmer down.'

Does he enjoy violence?

'If someone treads on me for no reason and I get back at him and knock him over – then I enjoy that. I don't think we're tough enough. We've got to get a lot tougher. I mean, no one's going to give you anything in this day and age. Nothing. So, if you want it you've got to take it and be tough about it. But I don't enjoy punching people up for no reason.'

It's time for rehearsal and, with luck, the recruitment of a new drummer. Joe's mood is ambivalent. In one year the Clash, in the vanguard of the New Wave, have seen their music, their attitudes and clothes influence and inspire a new generation of musicians. But because of the ban on punk music, their reputation has been built, somewhat precariously, on fewer than thirty gigs.

After Terry Chimes left the Clash, they auditioned around two hundred drummers to replace him. Then Mick bumped into Nicky Headon, a twenty-one year old ex-office clerk who had played drums since he left school.

'I've never performed live – but it's getting closer all the time!' said Nicky the day after he joined the band. 'I knew Mick a year and a half ago. For a week I played with the London SS. I really wanted to join the Clash. I want to give them even more energy than they've got – if that's possible.'

Their debut album 'The Clash' entered the charts at No. 12. In May they headlined their first national tour, culminating in a sell-out, landmark gig at the Rainbow (who subsequently banned them from appearing there again).

