

THE HISTORY OF

ROCK

1976

A MONTHLY TRIP THROUGH
MUSIC'S GOLDEN YEARS
THIS ISSUE: 1976

★
FROM THE
ARCHIVES OF
**NME &
MELODY
MAKER**
★

STARRING...

BOB MARLEY

*"Righteousness must
cover the earth"*

DAVID BOWIE

TOM WAITS

SEX PISTOLS

NEIL YOUNG

PATTI SMITH

STRANGLERS

LED ZEPPELIN

QUEEN

PLUS! ABBA | ROLLING STONES | KISS | WINGS | AC/DC | DEREK & CLIVE



Welcome to 1976

“PUNK” – AS A NAME for rowdy, grassroots rock – has been floating around for the past 18 months. It is only towards the end of 1976, though, that a bright *NME* staffer called Tony Parsons grasps the nettle of a scene which has as yet no major record releases, and attempt to explain what it all might mean.

He nails the history and the context of this growing phenomenon, and also the heart of the matter: the distance between music listener and band. The issue for the kids is ownership. “They are hungry for music that they can identify with,” Parsons says. “*Their* music, not product.”

Established giants – Bowie, Zep – still dominate the charts and the press, but with his radical stance, his passionate convictions and startling music, our cover star Bob Marley is the artist of the year. He – and the reggae music being explored seriously in his wake – resonates strongly with disaffected punks, and a wider public, too.

This is the world of *The History Of Rock*, a monthly magazine which follows each turn of the rock revolution. Whether in sleazy dive or huge arena, passionate and increasingly stylish contemporary reporters were there to chronicle events. This publication reaps the benefits of their understanding for the reader decades later, one year at a time.

In the pages of this 12th issue, dedicated to 1976, you will find verbatim articles from frontline staffers, compiled into long and illuminating reads. Missed an issue? You can find out how to rectify that on page 144.

Rock in 1976 has become a two-speed economy, with its celebrity action and street-level reaction. Reporters from the music press are where it matters, chasing the story wherever it appears. Fighting Parisian stallholders with Patti Smith. Receiving cryptic messages from the Rolling Stones. Exchanging profanity with Derek & Clive.

“This bloke comes up to me and he says...”

It’s not a year for the easily offended.



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THE HISTORY OF
ROCK

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1976

JANUARY - MARCH

DAVID BOWIE, WINGS, ABBA, LED ZEPPELIN, RONNIE LANE AND MORE

“We’re into chaos”

NME FEB 21 The Sex Pistols play their first public date at the Marquee Club in Soho.

“**H**URRY UP, THEY’RE having an orgy on stage,” said the bloke on the door as he tore the tickets up. I waded to the front and straightaway sighted a chair arcing gracefully through the air, skidding across the stage and thudding contentedly into the PA system, to the obvious nonchalance of the bass, drums and guitar. Well, I didn’t think they sounded that bad on first earful – then I saw it was the singer who’d done the throwing.

He was stalking round the front rows, apparently scuffing over the litter on the floor between baring his teeth at the audience and stopping to chat to members of the group’s retinue. He’s called Johnny Rotten and the moniker fits.

Sex Pistols? Seems I’d missed the cavortings with two scantily clad (plastic thigh boots and bodices) pieces dancing up front. In fact, I only caught the last few numbers; enough, as it happens, to get the idea. Which is... a quartet of spiky teenage misfits from the wrong end of various London roads, playing ’60s-styled white punk rock as unselfconsciously as it’s possible to play these days – ie, self-consciously.

Punks? Springsteen Bruce and the rest of ’em would get shredded if they went up against these boys. They’ve played less than a dozen gigs as yet, have a small but fanatic following, and don’t get asked back. Next month they play the Institute Of Contemporary Arts if that’s a clue.

I’m told the Pistols repertoire includes lesser-known Dave Berry and Small Faces numbers (check out early Kinks’ B-sides leads), besides an Iggy and the Stooges item and several self-penned numbers like the moronic “I’m Pretty Vacant”, a meandering power-chord job that produced the chair-throwing incident.

No one asked for an encore but they did one anyway: “We’re going to play ‘Substitute’.”

“You can’t play,” heckled an irate French punter.

“So what?” countered the bassman, jutting his chin in the direction of the bewildered Frog.

That’s how it is with the Pistols – a musical experience with the emphasis on Experience.

“Actually, we’re not into music,” one of the Pistols confided afterwards.

Wot then?

“We’re into chaos.” *Neil Spencer*



The Sex Pistols - (l-r) Johnny Rotten, Steve Jones, Paul Cook and Glen Matlock - outside the Marquee at 90 Wardour Street, London. They will be banned after just one gig there, playing support to Eddie & The Hot Rods on February 12, 1976



Don't look over your shoulder, but the Sex Pistols are coming

Sex Pistols

MARQUEE

and bodices) pieces dancing up front. In fact, I only caught the last few numbers; enough, as it

1976

APRIL - JUNE



June 15-18, 1976: Bob Marley & The Wailers play four nights at the Hammersmith Odeon during the Rastaman Vibration Tour



“My music fight against the system”

Already a songwriter and performer, **BOB MARLEY** steps into a new role: superstar.

“People come to me, say ‘Bob Marley, big international artist’ and I laugh,” he says.

“If God had-na given me a song to sing, I wouldn’t have a song to sing.”

— MELODY MAKER JUNE 12 —

“Don’t want success. Success mean nuttin’. Plenty people been successful, but dey still living dead.”

Bob Marley

IT’S NO ORDINARY rehearsal room, the door-less outhouse in the garden of Bob Marley’s house in Hope Road, Kingston, just a few minutes along from the prime minister’s residence.

The Wailers practise here, in a room about twice the size of the average British lounge. What makes it extraordinary in atmosphere is the unmistakable feeling that when the musicians are there, playing and smoking and planning a concert or an album, it’s as if nothing had ever happened and they were still jamming purely for fun, as they did 10 years ago. With few cares or considerations beyond the next tune, the new single, and not the faintest prospect of world tours and hit albums.

ANDREW PUTTLER / GETTY

A drum kit lies idles, an empty guitar case here, a chair or two... and what's this? A running order is scribbled and stuck to the wall reading as follows:

"Revolution / Natty Dread / So Jah Seh / No Woman / I Shot The Sheriff / Talking Blues / Road Block / Belly Full / Jah Live / Trenchtown Rock / Nice Time / Concrete Jungle / Kinky Reggae / Midnight Ravers / No More Trouble / Bend Down Low / Get Up Stand Up / Rat Race / Burnin' And Lootin' / Stir It Up / Duppy Conqueror / Slave Driver / Rock My Boat / One Love / Thank You Lord."

On another wall, an article of faith—a portrait with the words:

"Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie, King of Kings, Lord of Lords."

Incongruously, a sticker is pinned beneath it: "Album of the Year—*Natty Dread*".

Bob Marley lives here, works here, plays here; and if there's one thing absolutely endearing about the whole Jamaican-Rastafarian reggae story as it reaches its British peak with Bob Marley's tour next week, it's this: what you see, and what they say, is all there is. There's no hiding behind poses, and the uncluttered sound of their music runs synonymously with their personalities. The rehearsal room is the opposite of pretentious.

MARLEY IS HARD to reach.

Even his friends say that strangers, particularly white ones, should not go to his house unless accompanied by a face which Marley recognises. It is virtually impossible to make an appointment to see him, because he appears not to recognise schedules, even for himself. But, eventually, on that hot evening, he appeared from the table tennis room in his house and walked me outside, saying he would think better with some air.

His house is large and old and rambling, and bears the vibrations of a commune. People drift in and out, by car and on foot, and he waves to them all, while remaining seated on the steps.

The house is a positive statement by Marley. Opposite, there are some terrible new apartments which look like prison cells, and Bob continually laughs at the fact that they have bars up, protecting them from burglars. "No way to live, no way to live!" he keeps saying. "Must run home like mind. Keep open."

Thus, Marley's home, Island House, in Hope Road, Kingston, is open to all-comers. Especially Rastafarians. As the Marley/Wailers success gathers momentum, so their allegiance to Rastafarian principles becomes more concentrated. Every other sentence of Marley's speech is punctuated by a reference to Jah (God) and as he drew harder on his cigar-sized spliff (joint) repeating: "Righteousness must cover the earth like the water cover the sea", I had visions of a sermon rather than a conversation, and certainly fading hopes of a lucid conversation.

And yet it's too easy to dismiss the obsession with Rasta as excluding their attachment to reality. It's impossible to catch, first time round, every word and nuance of what Marley is saying, but his drift is quite simple to understand, and while he keeps returning to his declarations that commercial gain is not his aim, he is acutely aware of all that's happening around him. His mind moves very quickly indeed, and his powers of observation are uncanny.

I asked him first about his evident need to smoke ganja (herb), of which he partakes a pound a week, and why the smoking of it was so dovetailed into his Rasta beliefs.

"Herb is healing of a nation," he said quietly. "When you smoke, you don't frighten so easy. Herb bring all brethren together, all thinking alike, and that's why they lock you up when you smoke herb, because it makes people think same way. But if people don't smoke herb they think different from each other, can be told what to do and get... confused.

"In Babylon we give thanks for herb, and if we didn't have herb to educate us, we be educated by fools who tell us to live like funny, like in Babylon. Herb is the healing of a nation, Bible say that. Herb come out of the ground!"

Did this contempt, then, for materialism and Babylon (western culture) and even for organised society represent Black Power, and did Bob feel his music was preaching TO white ears, or to blacks about whites?

"My music fight against the system. My music defend righteousness. If you're white and you're wrong, then you're wrong; if you're black and you're wrong, you're wrong. People are PEOPLE. Black, blue, pink, green—God make no rules where my people suffer and that why we must have redemption and redemption is now. Against white people? Couldn't say that. I fight against the system that teach you to live and die."



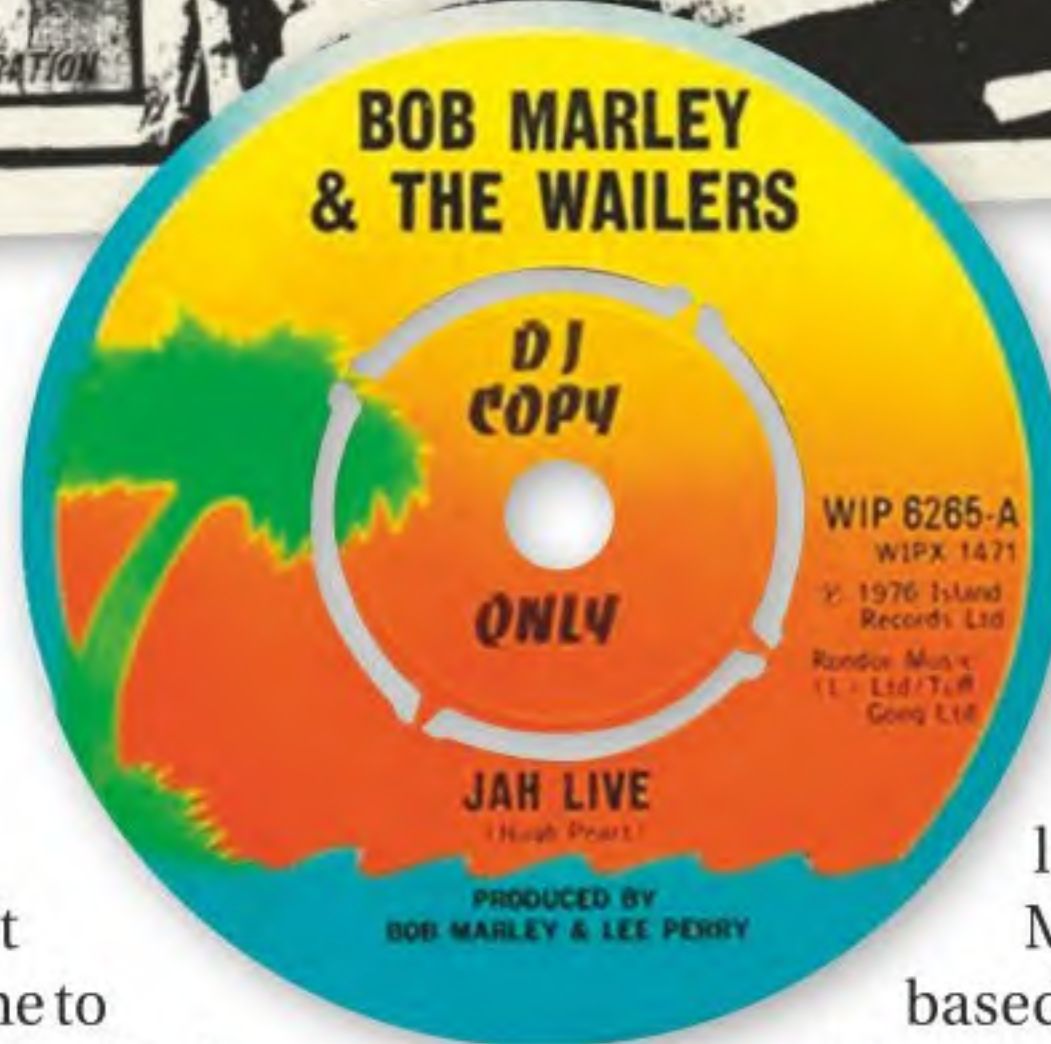
June 13, 1976: Marley on a riverboat in Amsterdam, Netherlands, before that evening's concert at an ice rink in the east of the City

BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS ON TOUR

June 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th
Hammersmith Odeon,
London
June 20th,
Wolverhampton
Civic Hall
June 22nd,
Birmingham Odeon

June 23rd,
Bristol Colston Hall
June 24th,
Exeter University
June 26th,
Leeds University
June 27th,
Manchester Belle Vue

Bob Marley
and the Wailers
Rastaman Vibration
Album ILPS 9383
Cassette ZCI 9383
Cartridge YSI 9383
Produced by Bob Marley and the Wailers



So his music existed for propaganda? He laughed at the seriousness of the word. "No, if God had-na given me a song to sing, I wouldn't have a song to sing. So it's not MY music, from my soul, doing these things, saying these words. I don't know about propaganda but in telling truth, and I don't deal with the wrong things of life, and I don't want to know them, you... know them, and because you're not perfect you might try to change. Don't like the idea of propaganda, that's not how I-and-I see it. Don't deal with dark things."

And yet many of his songs, I said, were laced with stabs at various inequalities. "Bellyful", for example, was surely a commentary on the starvation of some as compared with the abundant wealth of others?

Not exactly, Marley answered. It was more subtle than that – "You belly's full, but we're hungry for your LOVE of your brethren. Food's in your stomach, but cannot you see there is more to living than filling it? Where's the love for your brother?"

No, he averred, it wasn't entirely a materialistic commentary, more a sad declaration of the bankruptcy of believing that everything ended with self-gratification. But he was positively not playing a role. Asked if he felt any responsibility as the most popular star reggae had produced, he said: "I don't think about it, you know. Too busy working. People come to me, say, 'Bob Marley, big international artist,' and I laugh. I don't know what that mean. If it mean more people listen, enjoy music, then good. That's all."

Still, he had been watching the adoption of reggae by others, and he liked Johnny Nash's "Stir It Up", a world-hit version of the Marley song, and he was interested in other incursions into the style, mentioning Paul Simon's "Mother And Child Reunion" ("nice").

"See, dem American players come down here and play with Jamaican musicians who are very friendly. Make good records. It happens all the time."

So there was no determination to keep reggae as a wholly private scene, and Jamaica was happy for the world to go into Kingston and join in?

"Nah, world cannot take it," Bob replied immediately. "This is one of them things the world cannot take. It's like gold is gold and silver is silver, and what is... imitation can be seen t'be imitation."

"So the real thing, nobody can take away from here. You have to really come in to this thing at our time to have the feel, y'know. It's art, y'know, art. Not just a purposeful thing, but from knowing. That's why I-and-I know nobody can take it. They can go anywhere and play funky and soul, but reggae – too hard, reggae. Must have a bond with it. The real reggae must come from Jamaica, because other people could not play it all the while, anyway – it would go against their whole life. Reggae has t'be... inside you."

Marley was now trying to get himself to define reggae music as clearly as possible, and the nearest he could get was to say it was like jazz. "Jazz – a complete music," he declared, still smoking. "Reggae complete too. Reggae is funky, but it's also different from funky, and sometimes I think funky soul music goes little too far in what it tries to do. Reggae music is simple, all the while. Different from soul as well. Cannot be taught, that's a fact."

It relied on a mental attitude, he explained. If he was depressed and was going into a studio, he could not make music properly. But then, it might

easily have something to do with the people and their vibrations. He felt – well, not uneasy in the company of non-Rastafarians, but not relaxed either. He wanted to stress, though, there was no antipathy towards non-Rastas.

"Well, I say give a man a chance if he's not Rasta. The Bible full of stories of people not treated right for not believing. Problem is not with people who are not in touch with Rasta, but with people who are once Rasta and then have left it and have to go back to it. These can be difficult and... confused people."

Propaganda for Rastafarianism was something he admitted, if not for black repression.

Are you trying to make audiences outside Jamaica appreciate what Rastafarianism stands for?

"Yeh, mon, *Rastaman Vibration* gonna cover the earth! Jah say: until the philosophy which places one race superior and one race inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned, then we won't have no peace.

"Babylon believe in divide and rule, but Rasta one way only, the right way, and we can do it but it take longer. We have redemption now, nobody can stop it..."

Marley said he read a chapter of the Bible every day, and based his belief on that, including his diet. He is a vegetarian, although that is not a prerequisite of Rastafarianism. He didn't drink, he said, because it was obvious that pumping chemicals into his body would make him ill. "A little wine, sometimes," he reflected.

"The reason people drink is because they want to feel how I feel when I smoke. Everybody need to get a little high sometimes, just that some people get high on the wrong thing. Herb does grow. How much do I smoke? Plenty."

Could someone be a Rasta and not smoke?

"Yeh... but if you believe in Rasta and fight against the herb, you are wrong. Herb needs to be understood properly, but, in hands of Rasta, it is the healing of a nation."

Smoking is highly illegal in Jamaica, however, and Marley repeats his view that society is frightened of people thinking the same way.

"Vampires!" he roared. "Most people are negative out there, but Rasta people think positive. Most people in Babylon want power. Devil want power. God don't want power, but Devil need power, 'cos Devil insecure."

Insecurity never bothered him. Even when he travelled outside Jamaica, he remained confident, secure, positive. The only place he would contemplate settling in, except Jamaica, was Africa – this was naturally bound up with

his Rasta convictions – but even without the prospect of settling there, he planned a trip there soon. Friends say they dread the day Marley goes there, because he's such a highly charged, sensitive man that it is bound to change his entire attitude, one way or the other, towards his beliefs.

He said the system taught people that they must live and die, but he and his brethren did not agree. Furthermore, they were totally opposed to the worshipping of material goods to the point where people in "Babylon" (Bob's all-embracing word for the centre of the world's problems) died working for material objects which would do nothing to enrich their lives.

It wasn't that he personally renounced materially useful things: bicycles, cars, were OK in the Rasta creed, but they were merely a means to an end. »

"Herb bring
all brethren
together, all
thinking
alike"

1976

APRIL – JUNE

"If somebody gave me a spaceship, I would give it back to him because I could not use it," Marley continued.

He pointed to that ugly block of new houses opposite, and laughed sadly. "Those people over there are working to live in a situation not good, but the system educated them to think that is the end of their life," he said. "People not taught to be at peace with themselves. Education all wrong. Put you in a bracket where you earn enough money to pay for *these* things!" (He pointed at the houses again.)

"Well, you have to be a Rasta man to beat the system, and when they can get a Rasta man in jail, they do, and then they try to get you back there. Everyone wants the biggest car, refrigerator, crazy, mon – this is the system I keep talking about..." He started to sing "Rat Race".

What about the race for the title of the biggest reggae band in the world, then? Did he concede such a contest existed?

"Can't say that," he answered, convincingly. "I-and-I, and my brethren, only answer to myself and to Jah. If de Wailers are in some race, we must have been put there by somebody, but not us."

How about the future of the band, Bob? Does it plan to change, progress in any foreseeable way?

"When I feel that the job has been done that I-and-I have been sent to do, I-and-I pack it up," he stated firmly. When would that be? "When I feel satisfied and when Jah tells me I am finished with this work. It might be at the end of the American visit, or the English visit – I will know that when as many people as possible have learned what we have to say."

When the system is challenged?

"System bound to go," he answered.

The personal manager of Bob Marley is Jamaican-born Don Taylor, who has worked with Tamla Motown in Detroit, and especially closely with Marvin Gaye, Little Anthony, Martha Reeves and Chuck Jackson. He's managed Marley for a year, and says he was warned against taking on Bob by locals who described Marley as a "problem, difficult character".

"What you must remember," said Taylor one day as he contemplated the escalating Marley story yet again, "is that Bob's sharper than all of us. Right now, he's getting to the position he was in 10 years ago, of not trusting people, and that's a pity. Lots of people hang around the studios, for instance, saying they are broke and asking him for 10 dollars just like they used to. He always used to give friends dollars if they needed it, but now the whole world seems to be joining in."

"Maybe it's because there's jealousy in this town because Bob's the one who made it, and people are out to take him for a ride. This is real bad, y'know – they should realise that he's made it possible for everyone to make it. Instead, people are talking behind his back and speaking all this crap about selling out. Listen, the same guys who knew Marley when he was in Trenchtown are talking behind his back now, and it's sickening..."

Bob Marley, he declared, knew all about the rats and the roaches of Trenchtown living. "He also knows all those old slogans about no money, no jobs, no future. Well, Marley's giving them a future."

Flying out of Kingston next day aboard Air Jamaica, I asked the hostess her views on reggae, Rastafarianism and Bob Marley. She was about 23, a black Jamaican.

"Rastafarianism?"

Oh, it's quite popular but only among the very young here. I don't think reggae will ever catch on much. It's really dance music for the young. What would you like to drink?"

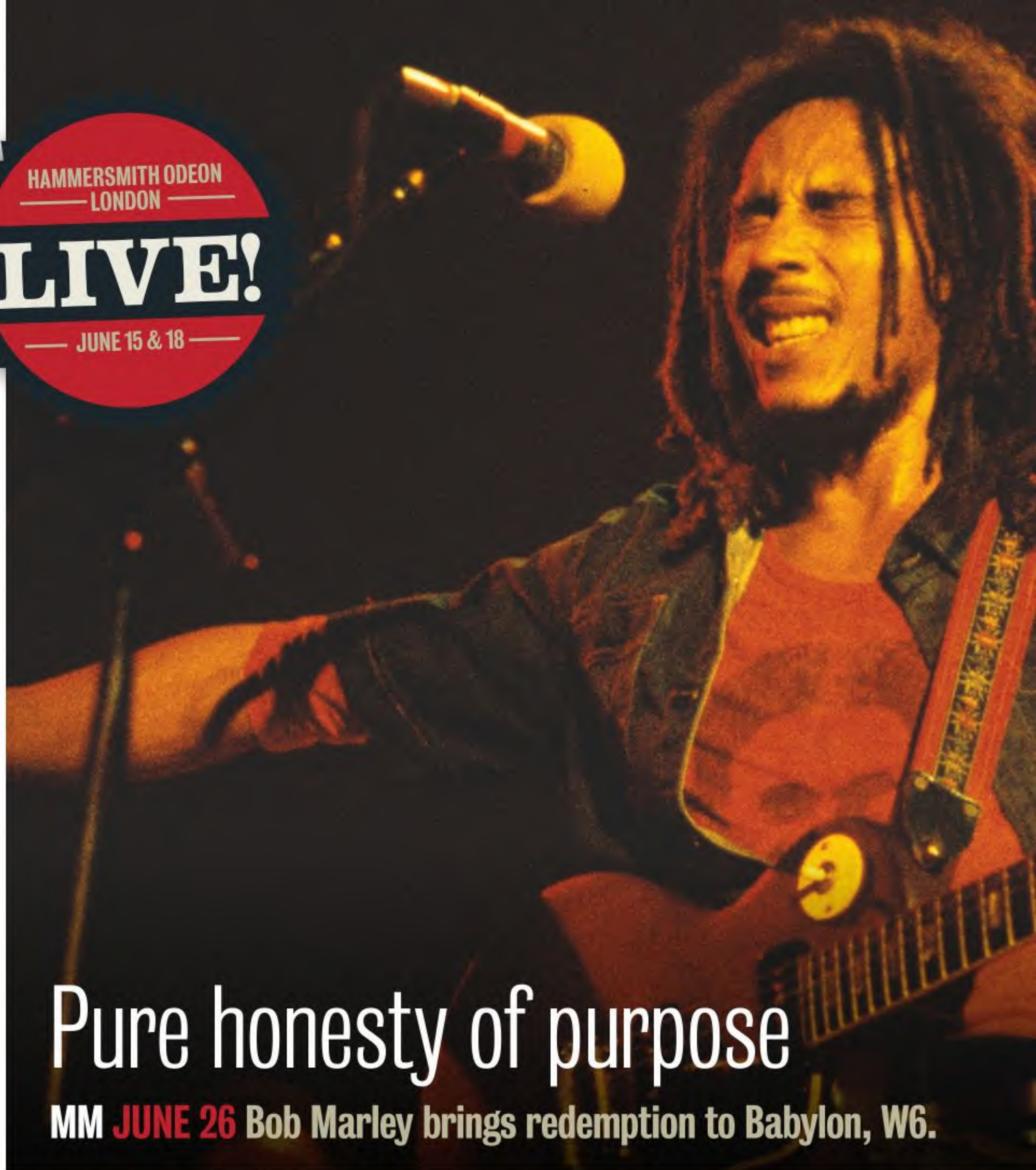
Ray Coleman •



HAMMERSMITH ODEON
LONDON

LIVE!

JUNE 15 & 18



Pure honesty of purpose

MM **JUNE 26** Bob Marley brings redemption to Babylon, W6.

IT'S FREQUENTLY SAID that no single artist has yet captured the flagging spirit of the '70s. Led Zeppelin and heavy metal, singer-songwriters by the score, middle-of-the-road demons like The Carpenters, soft rock, folk rock, jazz rock, electronic rock, glam rock, sham rock and The Chieftains – it's all valid and honest and worthy and good of its kind. But it's true to say that no one solitary force has erupted which can be accurately described as reflecting the heart of the '70s in a meaningful fashion, like The Beatles did with the '60s.

The single star who comes nearest to it is Bob Marley. This is partly because his concerts are actual events as important for the occasion as for the music he so powerfully projects – and partly because, by virtue of the fact that he's black and sings the blues of the '70s, he's capturing the heat of the times.

The man has a hypnotic magnetism, and it's the sure sign of a giant when it scarcely matters that the quality of his music is occasionally rough. What counts is solely that he's up there, delivering and communicating.

For too long, it seems to me, contemporary music has failed to emphasise the emotional rapport essential between an artist and the audience. Bob Marley & The Wailers, during their concerts at Hammersmith Odeon, London, last week, had that rare aura of familiarity and warmth and heart and presence.

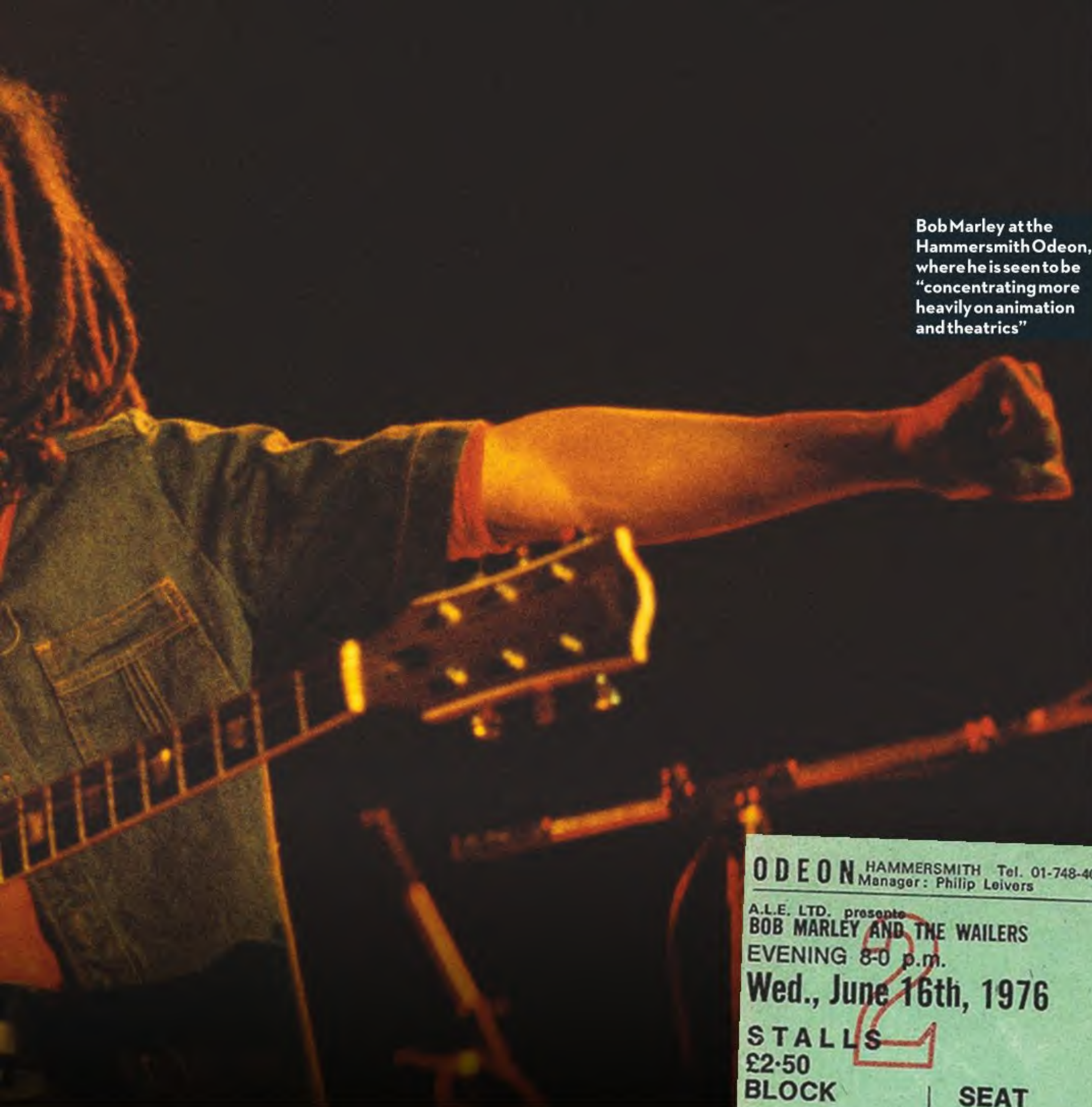
"Feel The Vibes" said the notice

outside the Odeon, and inside, the Rastaman's vibrations were powerful indeed. "Let peace and love abide in this house," said Marley as he took the stage, flanked by congas draped in the Ethiopian colours of green, yellow and orange, and atop the stage, a flag of the same persuasion bearing a portrait of the Rastafarians' idol, Haile Selassie.

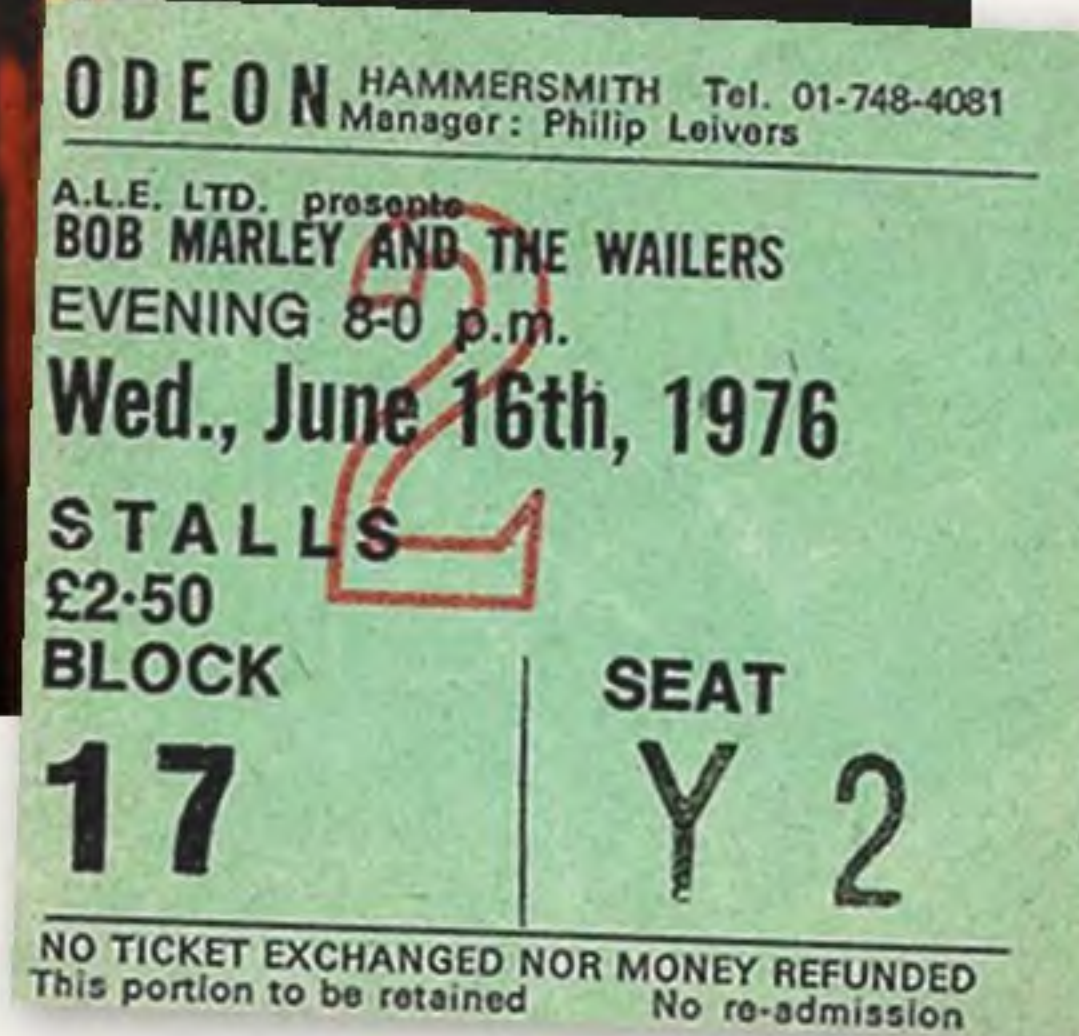
Audiences were very mixed in colour, but white or black, all were instantly caught up in the intensity of the event. Today, of course, Marley is more politically committed to the black "redemption" cause than he was a year ago when he played that very special gig at the Lyceum, London. Everyone at the Hammersmith gigs last week seemed peculiarly aware of the seriousness of Bob Marley & The Wailers' stance.

He came out, singing "Trenchtown Rock", and we were away, as those deceptively simple rhythms gripped an audience which immediately abandoned its seats and took to the floor or, like me, stood on seats for a better view. "One good thing about music, when it hits you feel no pain," sang Marley, and his message was accepted.

The Odeon, a venue as cold as this music is hot, often eats artists alive, because it is impossible for them to radiate much from the invisible barrier erected by the stage. Yet within seconds, Marley had done it – completely enveloped his audience and commanded the entire theatre. It was a remarkable achievement.



Bob Marley at the Hammersmith Odeon, where he is seen to be "concentrating more heavily on animation and theatrics"



What was equally surprising was the speed with which he raced through his songs. "Rasta-far-i!" he exclaimed after the first song, and the crowd roared back approvingly as he sailed into: "This morning I woke up in the curfew... How many rivers to cross before we talk to the boss..." ("Burnin' And Lootin'").

All Marley's songs have these cryptic dashes of pure demonic fury, so that even when you're unaware of the complete storyline, it's easy to catch the mood. Furthermore, Marley is now concentrating more heavily on animation and theatrics. He may dress meanly, in red T-shirt and ordinary denims, but his out-stretched arms, with hands across face in desperation, clenched eyes, finger-pointing to the extreme to stab home a point – all these characteristics are, if not rehearsed, at least statements of intent. Bob is now working hard to get across his lines, every bit as seriously as a professional actor.

Head held back, he launched into "Them Belly Full", a reminder that most of his songs stand up as anthems in themselves; the lead guitar solo here, from Donald Kinsey, was a killer. Throughout the concerts, Kinsey impressed with guitar licks that absolutely flew, but raced away with their understated control rather than dabble into that head-strong philosophy of the desperate rocker.

On "I Shot The Sheriff", Marley's enunciation was fascinating. He rode far away from the Eric Clapton version, relying more on the potency of the lyrics than Clapton, who took the song up the chart on the crest of its rhythm.

Here, his arm-waving as he spat out "...but I didn't shoot the deputy" was immaculately timed, and the back-up vocals of the I Threes was an object lesson in restraint and taste. (A word about the I Threes. They're Marcia

Griffiths, Judy Mowatt and Rita

Marley. Not only do they look majestic in flowing white and Ethiopian flashes, they deliver back-up vocal shots in honeyed tones. As always with the greatest of artistry, it's what they leave out, and where they choose to join the show, that's so special. Their cohesion and timing was a pure joy.)

"Reflexes got the better of me... what is to be must be," sang Marley, hand over face, pointing his hand to the audience. And next, on "Want More", his hand regularly covering his face as he delivered the words: "They stab you in the back... After you get what you want, do you want more?"

The blood-curdling organ of Tyrone Downie announced the classic "No Woman, No Cry", and although nothing can eclipse the memory of this particular song at the Lyceum last year, Marley did it OK.

The audience chanted "Everything's gonna be all right" along with the song, and the simple act of clapping by the I Threes in mid-song was really something. It's the little things that count...

And so it went: "Lively Up Yourself", "Roots, Rock, Reggae" with the I Threes' glorious counterpoint to Marley's voice, and the crowd really loving the line: "You know, mister, music sure sound good to me!"

Whether by planning or accident, Marley's encore was devoted to his political slants. "Rastaman Vibration", "Rat Race" and a lengthy "Get Up, Stand Up", perhaps his

hottest song, all demonstrated what an immensely powerful repertoire the Wailers now have; I thought they had used up too many of the goodies to encore with anything significant, but how wrong can you be!

Here, Marley delivered his speech in the form of the words of Haile Selassie: "Until the philosophy where one race stay superior and the other inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned, there will be no peace..."

Dancing off the stage, as he had done several times that night, he had assumed the mantle of a finely honed artist. It may well have seemed a long way from Trenchtown, and he may be spouting songs from a safe vantage point, which irritates some of his brethren – but at least he is DOING it.

For his final London show last Friday, before the band took off for its provincial tour,

Marley was in even more joyous mood than on the opening show. Dancing around the stage, arms and dreadlocks flailing as if he had been choreographed, he looked and sounded physically tired and mentally high enough to carry him through.

"I Shot The Sheriff" and "No Woman, No Cry" were again the musical and spiritual peaks, and by this show the I Threes had added short but cute individual dances to the start of several of the songs.

Again the audience was politically receptive, especially wailing when Bob sang "We build your penitentiaries... we build your schools..." (during the glaringly anti-capitalist song "Want More"). What

of the music? Economy is the strength of Marley & The Wailers' sound. Aston Barrett's bass, Earl "Chinna" Smith's rhythm guitar, Carlton Barrett's tasteful drums and the percussion work of Alvin Patterson combine for a lift-off which doesn't rely on volume at all, but through the insistence of the beat and heart-beat of the music, makes for intoxication after a couple of minutes.

Marley and the Wailers grab you by the gullet and refuse to compromise. No other artist speaks for the time so eloquently, and the pure honesty of purpose is like a breath of garden air in a scene recently dominated by business motives.

Marley may well be the pawn in a Rasta chess game – woolly hats bearing the Rasta colours, posters and T-shirts are on sale at concerts, so the marketing of a cult has certainly taken hold. Whether that's a good or bad thing for the music's future is debatable, but the momentum would seem to

be unstoppable. For the moment, though, Bob Marley & The Wailers are the leaders, the most potent voice to erupt into the contemporary music arena within the past six years.

And Marley himself is a terrific artist, full of nervous intensity, delivering the goods spectacularly, with a wealth of hot music that can chill the spine like few other events in recent years. All this, and he has his finger on the mood of a generation, too.

Who could ask more? *Ray Coleman*

"I Shot The Sheriff" and "No Woman, No Cry" were the musical and spiritual peaks

Aggro chic

NME SEPT 11 The Clash and the Sex Pistols play an Islington cinema. Teeth are broken.

THE SCREEN ON THE GREEN LONDON
LIVE!
OCTOBER 17

"Someone's got to come along and say to all of us, 'All your ideas about rock'n'roll, all your ideas about sound, all your ideas about guitars, all your ideas about this and that are a load of wank. This is where it is!'... Someone's got to come along and say, 'Fuck you!'"

Alex Harvey, November 1973

IT'S ALMOST FUNNY. Not quite worth an uproarious explosion of uncontrollable hilarity, but definitely good for a wry chuckle or two when it happens to someone else. Trouble is, no one's laughing because all the professional chucklers just found out that the joke's on them.

Any halfway competent rock'n'roll pulse-fingerer knows that this is The Year Of The Punk. You got Patti Smith doing Rimbaud's-in-the-basement-mixing-up-the-medicine, you got Bruce Springsteen with his down-these-mean-streets-a-man-must-go stereologues, you got the Ramones as updated Hanna-Barbera Dead End Kids, you got Ian Hunter doing I-used-to-be-a-punk-until-I-got-old-and-made-all-this-money, you got everybody and his kid brother (or sister) crawling out of the woodwork in leather jackets trying to look like they were hell on wheels in a street fight and shouting Put The Balls Back Into The Music.

Ultimately, if the whole concept of Punk means anything it means Nasty Kids, and if Punk Rock means anything it means music of, by and for Nasty Kids. So when a group of real live Nasty Kids come along playing Nasty Kids music and actually behaving like Nasty Kids, it is no bleeding good at all for those who have been loudly thirsting for someone to come along and blow all them old farts away to throw up their hands in prissy-ass horror and exclaim in duchessy fluster that oh no, this wasn't what they meant at all and won't it please go away.

In words of one (or, at the most, two) syllables: you wanted Sex Pistols and now you've got 'em. Trouble is, they look like they aren't going to go away, so what are you going to do with them? Alternatively - ha ha - what are they going to do with you?

In a way, it's a classic horror-movie situation. Dr Frankenstein's monster didn't turn out according to plan but he was stuck with it anyway, Professor Bozo opens up a pyramid/summons a demon/goes up to the Old Dark Mansion despite the warnings of the villagers and gets into a whole mess of trouble. Don't rub the lamp unless you can handle the genie.

The current vogue for Punkophilia and Aggro Chic has created the atmosphere in which a group like the Sex Pistols could get started and find an audience, and - dig it - it is entirely too late to start complaining because they behave like real Nasty Kids and not the stylised abstraction of Nasty Kiddery which we've been demanding and applauding from sensitive, well-educated, late-20s pop superstars.

Anyway, time's a-wastin'. Their gig at The Screen On The Green has already started; in fact we've already missed the first band, a Manchester group called Buzzcocks. All kinds of folks in Bizarre Costumes - the kind of clothes you used to find at Bowie gigs before 'e went all funny like - are milling around the foyer playing the wild mutation. The occasional celeb - Chris Spedding, who has eyes to produce the Pistols, and Sadistic Mika - is mingling.

Up on the stage it's Party Piece time. A bunch of people, including a chick in SM drag with tits out (photographer from one of the nationals working overtime, presumably with the intention of selling a nice big fat look-at-all-this-disgusting-decadence-and-degradation centrespread) and a lumpy guy in rompers are dancing around to a barrage of Ferry and Bowie records. Every time the lumpy go-go boy does a particularly ambitious move the record jumps. He makes elaborate not-my-fault gestures and keeps dancing. The record keeps jumping.

This goes on for quite a while. Movies are projected on the

screen and someone gets creative with the lights. The area near me 'n' the missus reeks of amyl nitrate.

There is nothing more tedious and embarrassing than inept recreations of that which was considered avant-garde 10 years ago. Someone has obviously read too many articles about the Andy Warhol/Velvet Underground Exploding Plastic Inevitable Show. Andy and Lou and Cale would laugh their butts off. This ain't rock'n'roll - this is interestocide.

Sooner or later - later, actually - a group called Clash take the stage. They are the kind of garage band who should be speedily returned to their garage, preferably with the motor running, which would undoubtedly be more of a loss to their friends and families than to either rock or roll. Their extreme-left guitarist, allegedly known as Joe Strummer, has good moves, but he and the band are a little shaky on ground that involves starting, stopping and changing chord at approximately the same time.

In between times, they show Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising*. The Pistols' gear is assembled in a commendably short time with an equally commendable absence of fuss and pissing about and then the Pistols slope on stage and Johnny Rotten lays some ritual abuse on the audience and then they start to play.

Any reports that I had heard and that you may have heard about the Pistols being lame and sloppy are completely and utterly full of shit. They play loud, clean and tight and they don't mess around. They're well into the two-minute-thirty-second powerdrive, though they're a different cup of manic monomania than the Ramones. They have the same air of seething just-about-repressed violence that the Feelgoods have, and watching them gives that same clenched-gut feeling that you get walking through Shepherd's Bush just after the pubs shut and you see The Lads hanging out on the corner looking for some action and you wonder whether the action might be you.

The Pistols are all those short-haired kids in the big boots and rolled-up baggies and sleeveless T-shirts. Their music is coming from the straight-out-of-school-and-onto-the-dole deathtrap which we seem to have engineered for Our Young: the '76 British terminal stasis, the modern urban blind alley.

The first 30 seconds of their set blew out all the boring, amateurish artsy-fartsy mock-decadence that preceded it purely by virtue

of its tautness, directness and utter realism. They did songs with titles like "I'm A Lazy Sod" and "I'm Pretty Vacant", they did blasts-from-the-past like "I'm Not Your Steppin' Stone" (10 points for doing it, 10 more for doing it well) and "Substitute" (a Shepherd's Bush special, that) and they kept on rockin'.

"Should I say all the trendy fings like 'peace and love, maaaaaaan'?" asked Johnny Rotten, leaning out off the stage manically jerking off his retractable mic-stand. "Are you all having a good time, maaaaaaan'?" Believe it: this ain't the summer of love.

They ain't quite the full-tilt crazies they'd like to be, though: Johnny Rotten knocked his false tooth out on the mic and had the front rows down on their knees amidst the garbage looking for it. He kept bitching about it all the way through the gig; Iggy wouldn't even have noticed. Still, they got more energy and more real than any new British act to emerge this year, and even if they get big and famous and rich I really can't imagine Johnny Rotten showing up at parties with Rod'n'Britt'n' Mick'n'Bianca or buying the next-door villa to Keef'n'Anita in the South of France. And if Elton ever sees them I swear he'll never be able to sing "Saturday Night's Alright (For Fighting)" again without choking on his Dr Pepper. Charles Shaar Murray

The Pistols play loud, clean and tight and they don't mess around





August 29, 1976: the Sex Pistols' Glen Matlock and (right) Johnny Rotten at The Screen On The Green, Islington, North London

“What the kids want”

Protégés of Dr Feelgood, **EDDIE & THE HOT RODS** are a young, “high-energy rock’n’roll band”, into the MC5 and “goin’ out there an’ doin’ it”. “The Stones can’t relate to kids now,” says bassist Paul Gray. “They’re a completely different generation.”

— NME SEPTEMBER 18 —

PROBABLY FOR THE first time this decade, *Top Of The Pops* was one of those miss-it-if-you-dare shows last Thursday. People rushed home to dump themselves in front of the box at 7.10 and – “Uggle-uggle-uggle, good evening, guys and gals” – watch Jimmy Savile introduce the hottest new act to make the show in years.

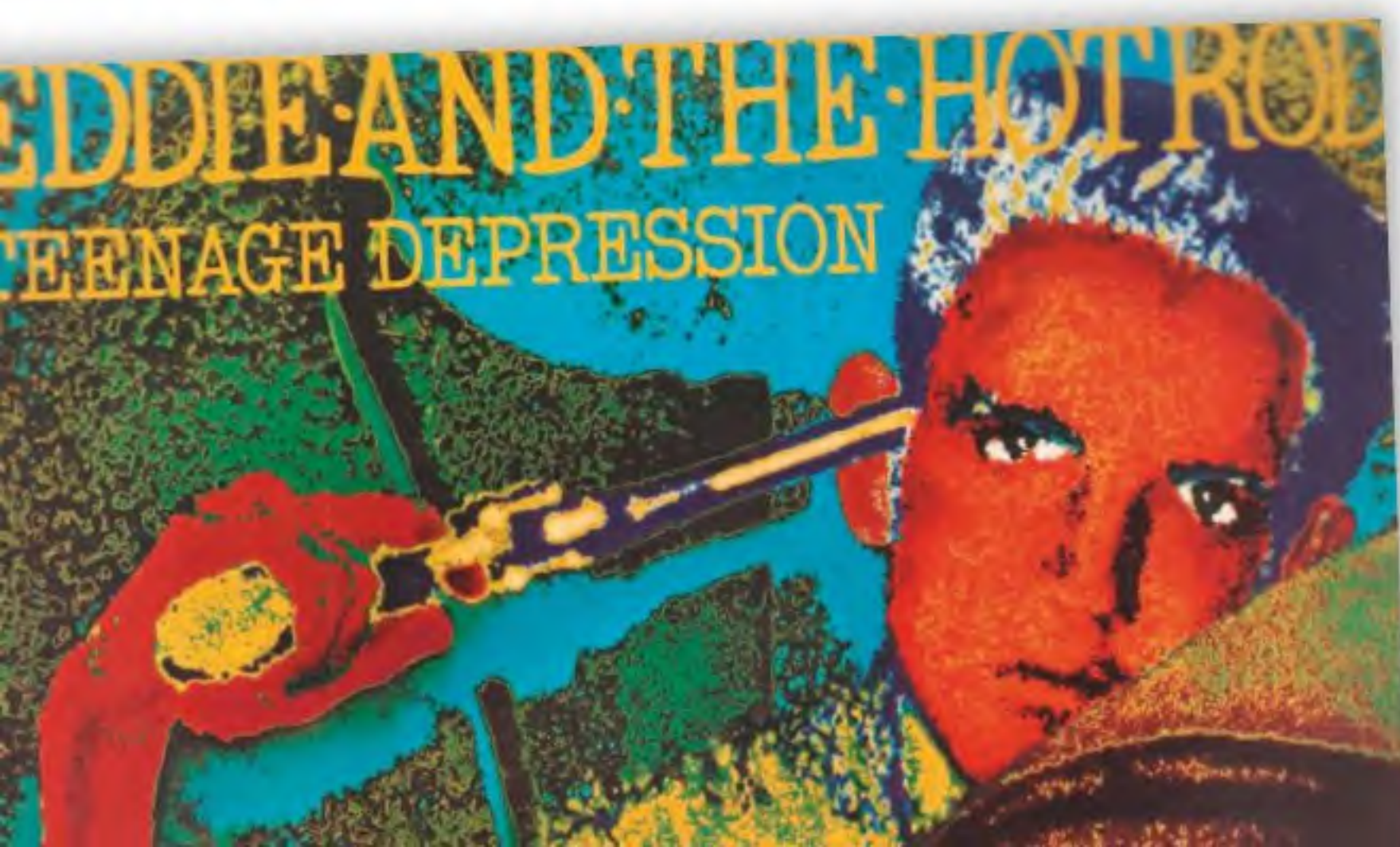
It was worth it, too, wasn’t it: Paul Gray pacing malevolently from side to side behind Barrie Masters, who was doing his unlevelled best to spit his eyeballs out the screen at the nation, while the very wonderful Eddie & The Hot Rods rocketed their way through the demonic, chart-climbing *Live At The Marquee* EP. Yours for just £1.00 and worth the price of admission for the one track they did on *TOTP*, their fast-as-lightning-and-twice-as-electric version of Bob Seger’s “Get Out Of Denver”.

Even more worth the price of admission these days, though, is a live Hot Rods gig because, unless some nascent, jet-propelled beat group is already warming up to wrench the Rods’ crown away before they’ve even finished trying it on for size, this is undoubtedly the hardest-rocking combo in the kingdom.

ALAMY

Cram yourself into the Marquee when they’re back there next Tuesday. It’s a good summer for that venerable establishment, with the Rods and AC/DC appearing virtually on alternate weeks, each group breaking the attendance record set by the other mob the previous week. Obviously, that can’t go on much longer, so you’d better get in while you can...

The doors are closed within an hour of opening; the air is unbreathable; the disco »



Eddie & The Hot Rods:
(clockwise from top)
Barrie Masters, Dave
Higgs, Steve Nicol
and Paul Gray



is good – the new Velvets bootleg EP, for instance; semi-rival punks The Damned hang out with the tiresomely-paranoid-till-you-get-to-know-them little clique that surrounds the Hot Rods. It feels special.

WHEN EDDIE & The Hot Rods bounce like a wicked Bay City Rollers (oh, there are links: mods begat skins begat blank begat Rods; mods begat skins begat Rollers begat a new youth cult) you have to be deaf, dumb and blind not to know it's real special.

The atmosphere is beautiful, so cramped yet really friendly, and how else could it be when these exhilarating kids are bounding their way through "The Kids Are Alright"?

Regressive, innit? Funny that – I picked up that first Who album in a junk shop not long ago, and I'd forgotten just how regressive The 'Oo were back then, Bo and JB and all...

The Rods even clatter their way through Townshend's idiotic windmilled "solo" and the hammering build back to the verse. Good stuff.

They proceed to blitz an ecstatic audience, an endless stream of high-energy three-minute shots, Dave Higgs starting each number with a driving guitar riff that unflinchingly runs straight out of Barrie Masters' spoken intro just right. Paul Gray and Steve Nicol pile in on bass and drums and within four bars Masters grabs the song and shoves it in.

It's an impressively polished show, for all its vim and its venom, its occasional tight-rope collective improvisations and its occasional pratfalls uninsured by any safety net except the bravado to get up and swagger on.

One such pratfall comes when Masters' rampaging limbs pass a little too close to the shaded Gray, snatching off his strap and ripping out his lead. It takes an awful long time for Gray to sort it all out; his nervous cool is severely punctured, and the murderous looks he spears at Masters augur dressing-rooms fights after the gig perhaps.

It was Paul Gray who I interviewed after the Rods' midday appearance at the Reading Festival. Trying to get that together was impossible, traipsing around with the band and manager Eddie, getting chucked out of their caravan because the next act needs it to change in, loitering at the bar... I'd just about given up for the day when a friendly coach driver let Paul and me use his coach.

FIRST THINGS FIRST: bread. Are the Hot Rods still on the £20 per week mentioned by Max Bell back in April, or has the impetus of the EP been sufficient, to quote that April headline, for the band to "up their wages to £25 a week and find true happiness"?

"I dunno where 'e got that twenny quid from," Gray says, settling into the coach seat and lighting a fag. "We was on 15. We're still on 15 quid a week, but if things go all right we get a tenner extra."

"But I mean even 25 quid goes nowhere when, like, you're on the road. Like fuckin' truckin' up 'n' dahn the M1 and the services at four o'clock in the morning... the amount of cigarettes, booze and food you consume is astonishing."

You can't actually live on £25 a week...

"Well, none of us actually live on it," he says, and for a moment I expect him to reveal that Masters is, in the current fashion, bionic. "We all live wiv our parents, see, that's why."

So how do they feel about supporting a bunch of rock'n'roll delinquents?

"Me, I was at boarding school, right, an' I got chucked out, and my old man sort of manages a bank an' he's sorta quite high class an' everything, so he freaked out a little bit. I went to the Tech in Southend [an academy which has vouchsafed the world at least one necrophiliac genius of my acquaintance] up till last June. I don't know what I wanted to do; I went on the dole for a month, but I 'ad a shitty old guitar and like a Vox amp 'an all that sorta crap – I fort I'd try 'n' get in a band just for a laugh. So I put an advert in the local paper, of all fings, and Dave phoned up..."

Love at first sight. Gray auditioned for the Rods at Feelgood House (Dave Higgs comes from Canvey, used to be in a local 10-piece soul band in the

The Hot Rods at the Nashville Rooms in West Kensington, London, where they had a joint residency with Joe Strummer's 101ers in late 1975



"After the gig they'll say: 'You're the same age as us, same level'"

'60s called the Central Heating Big Band) and joined Higgs alongside two other virtual novices, Masters and Nicol, and Lew, the blues harp player who has now moved on.

This was just last July. Since then the group has got its gear together (Gray got his by working for the Civil Service days and the Rods at night all last autumn), infiltrated the pub circuit (initial introduction via the Feelgoods), landed a contract with Island in December, put out two singles, played Reading and now, with an EP originally intended merely as a gesture to fans who wanted a representation of the live act on record heading for the Top 30, they're one of the most in-demand bands in the country.

A good year. "It 'as 'appened very quickly," Paul agrees with the air of one who has adjusted to being on the way up already.

HE CONFESSES TO having been into heavy metal before joining the band, while Nicol was "into jazz" and Higgs into blues. "We had really diverse interests. But the one common denominator was high energy, just goin' out there an' doin' it, y'know, so that people get off on it," he says, setting the centre of their mutual interest about the MC5 and J Geils.

Uh huh. And what about the newer US punks? (Profuse apologies for using that word – Gray reckons we lazy journalists should coin a new term for the Rods, like "high-energy '70s rock'n'roll". Yet the Rods are probably closer than any other band around today to what "punk" meant, in terms of music, when I was a kid.)

"I fink it's great... I liked Patti Smiff at first, but I think she's a bit overdone... I dunno, what other punk bands are there?"

The Ramones.

"They're all right for one song, but the album I just can't fuckin' tolerate. The thing that wires me up most is the vocals. Can't stand 'em. But I think the best band in that ilk were the MC5 – I should think they're my favourite band really."

So that's where the Rods take their lead from?

"No, because we only sort of discovered MC5 only like a few months ago," Gray tells me, without the least hint of realising that he may be



saying something a little uncool. "An' our ideas were already set."

Moving into the London collector scene by virtue of the music they played, they came into contact with people who could turn them on to such esoterica – though Paul still stands by his liking for Led Zeppelin.

"But the MC5, at the time they were doin' it... what other music was goin' round then... I think that's fuckin' genius, I really do. They shoulda made it, more than any other band.

And the Stooges I like as well, and John Cale... I don't like New Wave, y'know, I prefer the originators. Like them, though, I only really 'eard 'em a coupla months ago. 'Cept Lou Reed, everybody's 'eard 'im. But most people'd say, 'MC5? Who's that, a new pub band?'"

And has hearing them affected the way your hand plays?

"Not really, 'cos we don't wanna be like no one else – we just sorta play what we play. We all know what we wanna play, so there's no point rippin' off other people. But I think we're like them in a way, the same sort of high-energy thing and vibe that they caused."

ONE OBJECTION TO that remark, my knowledge of the MC5's performance being limited mainly to one blurred gig witnessed under the influence of LSD-25, or something similar, would be that the MC5 were political animals, White Panthers.

Gray, as if excusing their folly, reckons that was "probably forced on them" – and in a way he's right, just as the current political void in British kids' culture has "forced" a non-political stance on the Rods and a nihilistic stance on the Pistols.

At 18, Paul Gray epitomises the younger breed of rock player who's very conscious of his youth and who is profiting from a similar, later swing in the somewhat less fickle rock public to that in pop which launched the Rollers.

"Because we're young" is an extraordinary phrase to hear resuscitated today, but it comes easily to his lips. It's rather like asking Paul Newman what's his appeal and he says: "Because I'm handsome." Gray talks about his success thus: "Everybody's got a bit pissed off with everything that's been 'appenin'. There's been nothing new, 'as there,

since about the early '70s. Punk rock's such a big thing. So many bands are doing it, and so many kids are in it, and getting pissed off with the older bands like the Stoo and the Hones..."

Who?

"Er, the Who and the Stones. Like, back in 1965 kids had them two and The Animals and The Yardbirds, and there was

nothing like that right up until last year. Now it's all coming back, and kids today, who weren't into all that, they felt a bit missed out – I know I did – and they've got this whole new thing coming on.

"So they think, 'Great, I can get in on it – I'm right at the beginning.' God knows what direction it'll go in. But I was 18 two weeks ago, so like I sorta know, 'cos I'm a kid y'know, and I know what kids feel like. Old men like the Stones can't relate to kids now, they're a completely different generation. So if you're a young band like us you know what the kids want.

"After the gig they'll come up and talk to yer and say, 'It's great that we can talk to yer after a gig [which may strike cynics as the aren't-we-having-fun attitude to having fun], and you're the same age, on the same level as us'; kids playing to kids."

I'll leave you to draw your own conclusions (he lied) about people who make a virtue of such accidental attributes as their sex or nationality... or their age.

"That's why we wouldn't play 'Ammersmiff Odeon, 'cos it wouldn't be like that. I can't see us doing that like the Feelgoods did," he reckons. "You could do two nights at the Roundhouse, say, rather than one at Hammersmiff. 'Cos fuckin' seats, man, that's not rock'n'roll. You gotta have a floor where you can freak about."

Presumably coming out of the Southend scene – auditions at Feelgood House, etcetera – has helped the Rods a lot. Even now Graeme Douglas of the Kursaals is being very helpful towards The Wharf Rats, who could well be in the position the Hot Rods are in now in a year's time.

"Yeah, there's quite a little sort of community of bands. But there's also a lot of competition. Like when we started we were very friendly with the Feelgoods, but when we started to make it they got a little hostile towards us.

"I don't wanna say much, 'cos it's all right now, but I don't think they thought we'd make it. A lot of people that used to write for Feelgoods information write to us now, and we get a lot of Feelgood freaks coming to our gigs. They're not really interested in the Feelgoods now, because they haven't been gigging much."

BACK AT THE Marquee, it's obvious the Hot Rods have been gigging a lot. Not only are they right on top of every single number they play, but the audience is well acquainted with most of the set, singing along with many of the songs – particularly "Wooly Bully" which, miraculously, is actually enjoyable.

The rest of the set features R&B oldies like "Gloria", "Satisfaction", "96 Tears" and "Hard Driving Man" – all, notably, associated with white bands – as well as a few originals like their two singles' B-sides, "Cruisin' In The Lincoln" and "Horseplay".

The Rods are far less purist than Dr Feelgood, their own songs being more melodic and more catchy than Wilko's tend to be. They must stand a much better chance of writing their own hit singles – and getting "Denver" in the charts has already taken them one step beyond their mentors, as well as isolating them as leaders among their peers.

Hopefully they'll still have records in the charts 10 years hence, and will laugh at the days when they thought their audience rapport was due to age rather than music. But in the meantime, whether you're a bright young thing of 16 or an old fogey of 26 (or even older, if that's possible), take it from one who's been around long enough to know the score, kiddo, the Rods are Hot. *Phil McNeill* •



1976

JULY - SEPTEMBER



DR. FEELGOOD'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

DR. FEELGOOD

CLOVER

and

THE LEW LEWIS BAND

will be rockin'

Hammersmith Palais

on

Sunday, December 19th

Admission £2.00 in advance

Doors open 7.00pm WorldMags.net

Christmas Eve at the Kursaal, Southend.





1976

OCTOBER – DECEMBER

PATTI SMITH, EAGLES,
INDEPENDENT LABELS,
STRANGLERS AND MORE



“Say something outrageous...”

NME DEC 11 The Sex Pistols appear on *Today*, an early-evening news show. An unexpurgated transcript appears in *NME*.

THE INTERVIEW THAT started the controversy took place on Wednesday December 1 on Thames TV's early current-affairs programme *Today*. The actual interview lasted one minute 40 seconds, after a short introduction by Grundy and a 40-second clip of the Pistols on stage. Our recording started a few seconds after Grundy's introduction as he faced the four members of the band seated in the studio. Standing behind the Pistols was a group of fans.

The following is a transcript of what ensued.

GRUNDY (*To camera*) ...Chains round the necks and that's just the fellas, innit? Eh? I mean, is it just the fellas? Yeah? They are punk rockers. The new craze, they tell me. Their heroes? Not the nice, clean Rolling Stones... you see they are as drunk as I am... they are clean by comparison. They're a group called the Sex Pistols, and I am surrounded by all of them...

JONES (*Reading the autocue*) In action!

GRUNDY Just let us see the Sex Pistols in action. Come on, kids...

(*A film clip of London Weekend's documentary on punk broadcast the previous Sunday came on the screen*)

GRUNDY I am told that that group (*hits his knee with sheaf of papers*) have received £40,000 from a record company. Doesn't that seem, er, to be slightly opposed to their anti-materialistic view of life?

MATLOCK No, the more the merrier.

GRUNDY Really? »

YOU WANNA SEE
**MEDIA
OVER
—KILL**

"What a fucking rotter": when Queen cancel at the last minute, stand-ins the Sex Pistols and their "Bromley Contingent" entourage give Today presenter Bill Grundy more than he bargained for, Dec 1, 1976



MATLOCK Oh yeah.
GRUNDY Well tell me more then.
JONES We've fuckin' spent it, ain't we?
GRUNDY I don't know, have you?
MATLOCK Yeah, it's all gone.
GRUNDY Really?
JONES Down the boozier.
GRUNDY Really? Good lord! Now I want to know one thing...
MATLOCK What?
GRUNDY Are you serious or are you just making me—trying to make me—laugh?
MATLOCK No, it's all gone. Gone.
GRUNDY Really?
MATLOCK Yeah.
GRUNDY No, but I mean about what you're doing.
MATLOCK Oh yeah.
GRUNDY You are serious?
MATLOCK Mmm.
GRUNDY Beethoven, Mozart, Bach and Brahms have all died...
ROTTEN They're all heroes of ours, ain't they?
GRUNDY Really... what? What were you saying, sir?
ROTTEN They're wonderful people.
GRUNDY Are they?
ROTTEN Oh yes! They really turn us on.
JONES But they're dead!
GRUNDY Well suppose they turn other people on?
ROTTEN (*Under his breath*) That's just their tough shit.
GRUNDY It's what?
ROTTEN Nothing. A rude word. Next question.
GRUNDY No, no, what was the rude word?
ROTTEN Shit.
GRUNDY Was it really? Good heavens, you frighten me to death.
ROTTEN Oh all right, Siegfried...
GRUNDY (*Turning to those standing behind the band*) What about you girls behind?
MATLOCK He's like yer dad, inne, this geezer?
GRUNDY Are you, er...
MATLOCK Or your grandad.
GRUNDY (*To Siouxsie*) Are you worried, or are you just enjoying yourself?
SIOUX Enjoying myself.
GRUNDY Are you?
SIOUX Yeah.
GRUNDY Ah, that's what I thought you were doing.
SIOUX I always wanted to meet you.
GRUNDY Did you really?
SIOUX Yeah.
GRUNDY We'll meet afterwards, shall we? (*Sioux does a camp pout*)
JONES You dirty sod. You dirty old man!
GRUNDY Well keep going, chief, keep going. Go on, you've got another five seconds. Say something outrageous.
JONES You dirty bastard!
GRUNDY Go on, again.
JONES You dirty fucker! (*Laughter from the group*)
GRUNDY What a clever boy!
JONES What a fucking rotter.
GRUNDY Well, that's it for tonight. The other rocker, Eamonn, and I'm saying nothing else about him, will be back tomorrow. I'll be seeing you soon. I hope I'm not seeing you [the band] again. From me, though, goodnight. Today *theme*. Closing credits.

Siouxsie Sioux (née Susan Ballion) in 1976: to appear alongside the Pistols, Ramones and Talking Heads at a big London date?



“The start of a wave”

MM NOV 6 The first major British tour for the Sex Pistols tour is planned.

A **BIG PUNK ROCK** concert starring the Sex Pistols is being planned for London later this month. The show celebrates the release of the band's debut single, “Anarchy In The UK”, on November 19. The show will also feature Chris Spedding & The Vibrators, whose “Pogo Dancing” single is available from November 12, together with Suzi & The Banshees [sic] and, from New York, the Ramones and Talking Heads.

The venue has yet to be decided, though there were plans to stage the show at the Talk Of The Town, London's traditional cabaret club. This idea was dropped after difficulties over the licensing laws.

The show will be the prelude to the Pistols' first major British tour, exclusively reported in the *MM* last week. The concerts will be co-headlined by the Pistols and the Ramones — who made their British

debut at London's Roundhouse earlier this year. Spedding and Talking Heads will also be on the tour. The 20-date tour, from November 30 to December 21, visits all of Britain's major cities. Among the dates will be a show at London's Hammersmith Palais.

The concerts come as the climax to a triumphant three months for the Sex Pistols, Britain's top punk band. They were one of the big successes at the punk rock festival in London two months ago, and in October they signed a recording contract with EMI.

In this week's *Melody Maker*, Nick Mobbs of EMI, the man who signed the Pistols, claims: “I genuinely think that they're the

start of a wave. I think they're the rare breed of artist; they're total entertainment and in a lot of ways uncompromising in what they want to do.”

Mobbs is one of the top A&R directors featured in the *MM*'s Dialogue, which this week discusses the state of British rock.

“The time is right for an act that kids of 16 to 18 can actually identify with,” says Mobbs. “The key point is that the group are very young. There's other groups giving entertainment, but this group are only 19-year-olds and because they're young they'll grow and their audience will grow with them.”

“In the same way that the Rolling Stones were known as symbols of rebellion when they started, so are the Sex Pistols. The Stones are now the elite of the rock'n'roll establishment and the Sex Pistols are the new people knocking at the door.”

“To a lot of kids the Stones and groups from that era don't mean a thing. They're too old for a start, all over 30, and the kids want some young people they can identify with.”

“A lot of people criticise the Sex Pistols for not

playing well, but they've only been together for about eight months. I think a lot of kids watch them and think, ‘Yeah, I could get up there and do that, let's form a group’.

“Again, that hasn't happened for a long time because groups are too good; the musicianship has been so high that kids of 16 have been put off. But already, there are about 12 groups in London directly inspired by the Sex Pistols.”

“Rubbish”

MM NOV 20 A punk package tour proves problematic.

PUNKS ARE AT war! The special punk package tour in December, co-starring Britain's Sex Pistols and New York's Ramones, has collapsed.

The Ramones, Talking Heads and Chris Spedding & The Vibrators have pulled out—leaving the Pistols to soldier on alone. But the whole tour has been revamped and the Pistols are now joined by the Heartbreakers—the band formed by ex-New York Doll Johnny Thunders—The Damned and The Clash.

Highlight of the new tour will be the first-ever concert at a new major London venue, the Roxy Theatre, Harlesden, on Boxing Day.

Ramones manager Danny Fields claimed this week that the tour was never really on—but Pistols' manager Malcolm McLaren has slammed that statement as “a load of rubbish”.

Fields told *MM* this week: “As of last Sunday night only three dates had been confirmed of the 20 or so the Sex Pistols' management had told us about. Fred Bannister, who was promoting the tour and who was a major factor in persuading Phonogram to back it financially, had pulled out—and when he quit, Phonogram pulled out.”

“We weren't too concerned about violence. Perhaps Phonogram were, and I know promoters are always worried about violence. But I don't see what Phonogram are

worried about—we'd be in the thick of it, not them.”

Phonogram said they were not in business to set up tours, and any decision by them would not have affected the shows.

Promoter Bannister was unavailable for comment. But Malcolm McLaren, the Pistols' manager, said: “All

that about the tour is rubbish. It's just that Phonogram wouldn't cough up any money to promote the tour. The Ramones felt they weren't getting any publicity, but that's not my fault. Anyway, if the Pistols were touring America with the Ramones and we only got one line I wouldn't blow the whole thing out. It's ridiculous.

“Talking Heads are out because they were part of the deal we made with the Ramones.”

McLaren claimed that Spedding had pulled out because he wanted to play his own dates, but neither Spedding nor his record company, RAK, would comment.

McLaren has revamped the tour for the Sex Pistols, which now

“The Ramones felt they weren't getting any publicity, but that's not my fault”

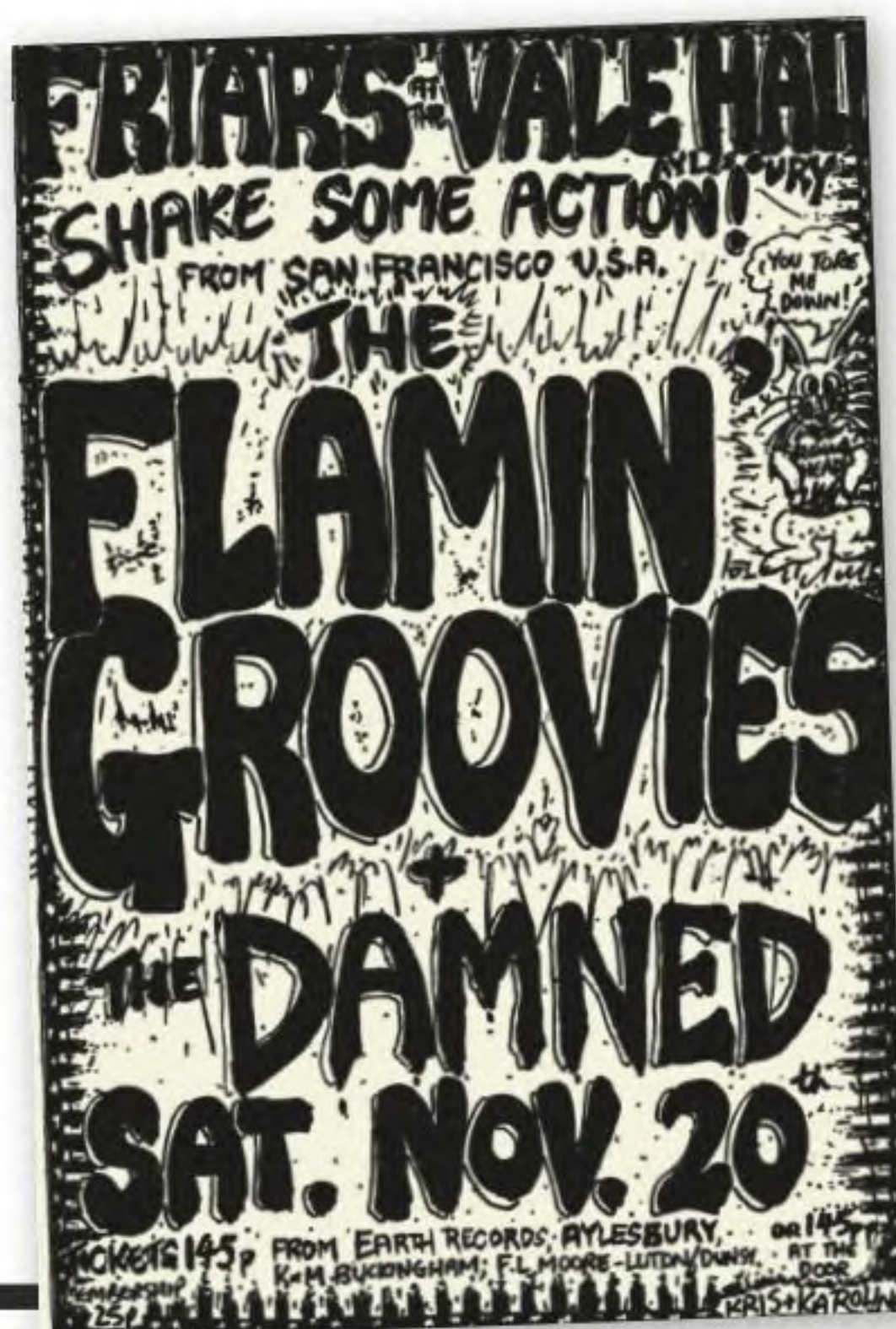
starts on December 3 at Norwich University.

Further dates: Derby Kings Hall (December 4), Newcastle City Hall (5), Leeds Polytechnic (8), Manchester Electric Circus (9), Lancaster University (10), Liverpool Stadium (11), Cardiff Top Rank (12), Bristol Colston Hall (13),

Glasgow Apollo (15), Dundee Caird Hall (16), Sheffield City Hall (17), Southend Kursaal (18), Guildford Civic Hall (19), Birmingham Town Hall (20), Bournemouth Village Bowl (21), London Roxy Theatre (26).

The Damned have pulled out of their tour with the Flamin' Groovies. The Groovies failed to arrive at London's Roundhouse on Sunday, leaving The Damned and The Troggs, who were also on the bill, without a PA. A spokesman for The Damned told *MM* this week: “We agreed to play the tour to give some modern credibility to it. But we are not interested now in supporting or bailing out living legends.”

Phonogram refused to comment. Roundhouse concert promoter John Curd, however, said the Groovies told him they were suffering from flu. He dropped the admission price for the concert, which started three hours late with a replacement PA, from £1.70 to £1.20.



The Ramones in Santa Monica, California, August 1976: (l-r) Dee Dee, Tommy, Joey and Johnny Ramone



Assassination attempt

MM DEC 11 Bob Marley shot at home. Attack possibly “politically motivated”.

REGGAE SUPERSTAR BOB Marley was the victim of an assassination attempt last week. Gunmen shot their way into his home in Kingston, Jamaica, on Friday night, but Marley suffered only a slight arm wound in the raid.

His manager, Don Taylor, threw himself between Marley and the gunmen as they opened fire. He was shot five times and is now on the critical list after an emergency operation. It is thought he may be permanently crippled as a result of his injuries. Marley's wife, Rita, was wounded and clubbed during the attack, but she was released from hospital after treatment.

Speculation suggests the attack was politically motivated. There will be a general election in Jamaica in three weeks' time, and Marley, despite his allegedly apolitical stance, had accepted an invitation to appear, together with The Wailers and Burning Spear, at a concert benefit for the Island's current premier, Michael Manley. The invitation followed the release of a new Marley single, “Smile Jamaica”, in which he extols the virtues of the country despite its recent history of political violence.



December 3, 1976: Bob Marley at the University Hospital, Kingston, Jamaica

Marley is shot

1976

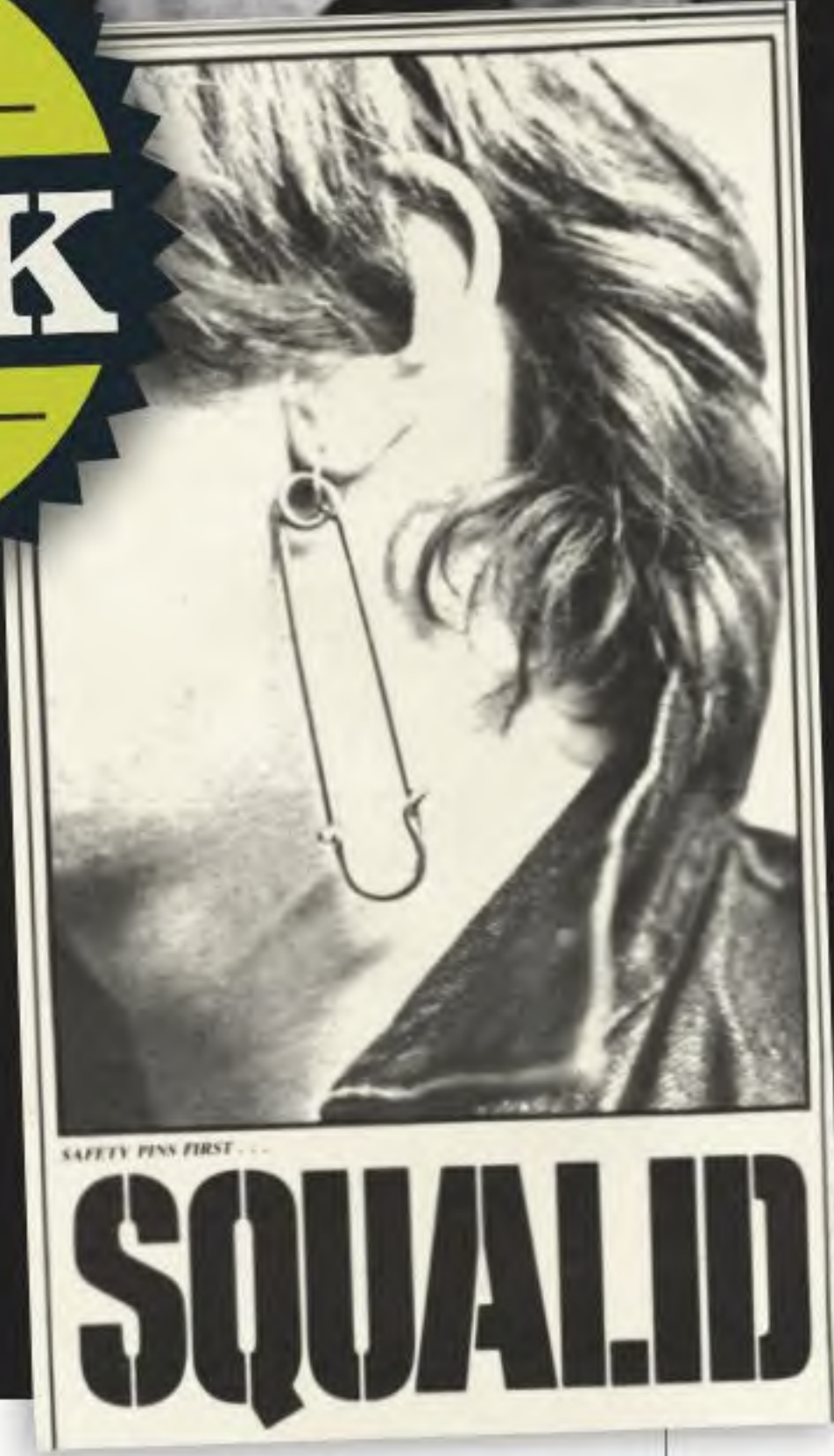
OCTOBER-DECEMBER



The kids are hungry

NME OCT 2 The energy in the “punk” movement should give senior rockers pause for thought. “This time next year,” writes one young staffer, “they could be laughing on the other side of their faces.”

NEWS SPECIAL
PUNK
1976



“Smashing guitars used to be proper anger; it isn’t any more. It’s theatrical melodrama”
Pete Townshend, January 1968

“I think this whole punk thing at the moment has got too stylised. There’s no such thing as punks any more. This lot are consciously making themselves out to be something they’re not. They’re trying to come on like little yobbos. And they’re not little fucking yobbos.”
Lee Brilleaux, September 1976

*“Go! Geet-outa-Denver baybee
Go! Geet-outa-Denver baybee!
Go! Geet-outa-Denver baybee!!
Go! Go! Go! Go!”*
Eddie & The Hot Rods, right now

SO IN THE year of our punk 1976 the veteran end of the rock world finally woke up to the nine-year-old fact that this ain’t the summer of love. The kick in the teeth that savagely brought an end to its slumber was, of course, the mercurial rise and still rising of amphetamine-stimulated high-energy ’70s street music played by kids for kids for the first time in maybe 12 years.

Yeah, you guessed it - the unfortunately titled punk rock. Unfortunate because punk rock is a second-hand name first used to

describe American garage bands like ? And The Mysterians, The Leaves and Shadows Of Knight who started making their music after being completely won over to the cause of rocking when they first heard the bands of the mid-’60s like the Fab Four, the Stones, The Who, The Kinks, The Yardbirds and all the rest.

Unfortunate because punk rock is the term used to describe the descendants of those garage bands in the States, combos like the now defunct New York Dolls, the Ramones, Tom Verlaine’s Television and the Heartbreakers.

Unfortunate because of the stance that Britain’s so-called punk rock bands are taking, the Sex Pistols and Eddie & The Hot Rods being top of the crop at this moment in time is original enough to warrant a handle all of its own.

Punk rock just won’t do - the name is too old, too American, too inaccurate. The teenage kids in the Hot Rods who shake the foundations of Wardour Street every week ain’t “punks”. That makes them sound like refugees from *West Side Story*.

They are kids who are the product of the United Kingdom in the 1970s; more specifically the teenage wasteland of the Essex Overspill. The music they play reflects their times, no more, no less. Kids rock would

be more to the point than punk rock. Sure, they play a lot of material that they didn’t write themselves. So did the Stones and The Who when they were 18 years old. What’s so good about the scene that the Hot Rods and the Sex Pistols are in is not only is it the most exciting thing happening in this country at the moment, but also the members of the bands have time to develop as writers, which they must do if they are going to survive over any period of time, let alone Make It. That is, to do what the Feelgoods did - evolve from their stomping grounds of small clubs and pubs and make the transition to playing large venues in front of 10 times as many people without losing the essential blitzkrieg malevolence of their music, make their set a healthy mixture of original material and old masters and, ultimately, cut records as exciting as their live show.

It was the Feelgoods who blazed the trail around the pubs and clubs of London that the punk/kids-rock bands are following. They made it possible for bands like the Sex Pistols, the Hot Rods, The Wharf Rats, The Damned, The Clash and all the others to get venues twice a week or more where they can get up and play the music they want to in front of people who are getting off on it.

The Feelgoods weren’t the only band on the pub-rock circuit, of course, but by using

IAN DICKSON / GETTY



November 15, 1976: the Sex Pistols at the Notre Dame Hall, Leicester Place, central London



their success to further the cause of bands like the Hot Rods, the Feelgoods can deservedly be considered the godfathers of the whole punk/kids-rock scene.

But the Feelgoods are not punks or kids; if you called Lee Brilleaux a punk he would no doubt bottle your eye out before you could say "Iggy & The Stooges". You only have to compare the old masters of the Feelgoods to the old masters of the Hot Rods to see that they are from different generations - the Feelgoods, along with the Wilko Johnson material, do songs by Chuck Berry, Rufus Thomas, Lieber/Stoller, Sonny Boy Williamson and Solomon Burke, while the Hot Rods are coming from the Stones, Who, Them and ? And The Mysterians time.

That's the point - a rock generation lasts only two or three years at the most. I'm 22 and I felt prematurely middle-aged the other day when a honey-thighed 16-year-old jailbait bud who looked like a roadie for The Runaways told me that her favourite Stones album was *Rolled Gold*.

If the punk/kids-rock bands want to survive, then they have got to come to terms with the fact that they can only trade on their youth for so long. Otherwise,

there will be younger kids coming up in a year or so and the punks of today will be seen clutching their battered Fenders and Strats and floundering like beached whales all along Wardour Street, 21 and well past it.

The message is clear: trade on the fact that you are young enough to be the son of the Rolling Stones' rhythm section for as long as you can, kid, but realise that in the end you will stand or fail by the music you make.

In the meantime, though, you can sneer all you want about rock'n'roll mutton dressed up as lamb, all those tax-exile superstars of the '60s, jaded old farts the lot of them, and anything that you say about them they deserve. The main reason the punk/kids-rock scene is so healthy is because the kids who are playing it and the kids who are getting off on it are all hungry, and that breeds good rock, rock, ROCK!

They are hungry for music that they can identify with, their music, not product. Hungry to make it, to be stars. Hungry for good times and ecstasy. Hungry to burn it all down and start again. Listen, when you see Elizabeth Taylor or Princess Margaret at a Who or Stones concert drinking champagne backstage with your heroes, and you've queued for six hours for your overpriced ticket and the officials at the stadium treat

you like dirt and your girl gets her head opened up by a bottle and there's the rock aristocracy up there in the clouds sipping your wages, there's only one thing you can do, no matter what age you are, there's only one thing you can do - vomit.

ROCK MUSIC IN 1976 needs middle-aged has-beens like a leper needs a dose of the clap. But to get rid of them won't be easy. When The Beatles and all the rest happened in the '60s there was literally no competition - Eddie Cochran, Buddy Holly were both dead, Gene Vincent was still recovering from the car crash that killed Eddie, Elvis was back from the army and singing ballads, Chuck Berry was doing time and Little Richard had given up rock for religion. There was a gap in rock the size of the cosmos and everyone moved in. And, of course, they were great, they had real hunger.

Pete Townshend, for instance. Pete had a big nose and when he was growing up everyone laughed at him and made his life hell. So he stayed indoors for two years, only leaving home to go to school and get laughed at because of his nose and he learned guitar so he could lead a rock band and become famous, get his face on the cover of every rock paper in the world, big nose and all, ram it back into the face of everyone who laughed at him, make a billion dollars and screw any chick he wanted. And he did. He did it all. He had real hunger, real fire inside him, and I'd rate him as the most exciting performer on stage that I ever saw.

But these days, of course, like all the other one-time greats of the '60s, the anger has gone and now, after having all the money, the glory, the girls, the drugs, the booze, what does he do now? Make home movies about Meher Baba. Well, that's not as bad as jet-set cocktail parties or inviting royalty to your concerts, but I can't help but wander off and look elsewhere for the rock'n'roll excitement that I used to get from The Who. And I'm getting it from the punk/kids-rock bands that have got as much hunger inside them as Townshend, Jagger and Lennon had when they started out.

Those bands are getting a lot of criticism from the same people who were calling out for a return to high-energy raw-power rock five years ago, and now that it's here they don't like it! But that don't matter. How many 30-year-old fans did the Stones have when they were playing at the Scene in Soho, 1964? You shouldn't call the doctor if you can't afford the pills.

A few years back I remember Bob "Whispering Grass"

Harris putting down the New York Dolls after "Jet Boy" and "Looking For A Kiss" from their first album on the OGWT, skidding about on their platform boots (remember them?), and playing loud, brash, amateurish.

I thought they were great, but then I was never very fond of half-hour guitar solos.

"Mock rock," Whispering Grass said with an it-couldn't-happen-here smile. Well it has, and none too soon for my taste. A short while after that TV slot, Lou Reed was quoted saying about the Dolls: "I like the titles of their songs ["Pills", "Personality Crisis", "Subway Train", "Bad Girl", etc] more than the actual songs." Well, the punk/kids-rock bands are going to have to get used to those kind of comments. In a scene where ex-hippies and ex-junkies just ain't relevant, there is bound to be a lot of ill-feeling.

But it's OK. Kids are used to old men bitching. They can take it. And they can get their revenge through their music.

Punk rock is really just a lazy journalist media spiel for a genuine new wave. After all, what has Patti Smith (who is called punk rock by some rags, not *NME*), who brings together in her music such diverse influences as Burroughs/Velvets/Dylan/Ginsberg/Stones/masturbating to Arthur Rimbaud's Greatest Hits, have in common with straight-ahead nihilistic rockers like Joey Ramone, Dee Dee Ramone, Tommy Ramone and Johnny Ramone?

What does "Birdland" have in common with "Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue?" Right first time. Nothing.

I can get off on both, but to presuppose that they are one and the same and call it punk rock along with all the new wave bands coming up over here is, if you will, bullshit.

If the young bands causing so much controversy at the moment are going to sustain themselves, then they have got to start writing the soundtrack of the lives of their audience with songs like the Sex Pistols' "Anarchy In The UK". That song could only have been written in 1976.

Imagine them doing it on *Top Of The Pops*. Tony Blackburn meets Johnny Rotten. Oh, yeah!

When a band like the Sex Pistols gets in a punch-up with members of their audience halfway through a performance, it probably gets a big laff with all those coke-snorting superstars up there on Olympus, as secure as the Tsars of Russia. Just maybe, if things work out as they should, this time next year they'll be laughing on the other side of their faces.

Tony Parsons

The kids who are playing it and the kids who are getting off on it are all hungry



Bromley Contingent mainstay and punk icon Soo Catwoman

ags.net

ERICA ECHENBERG / GETTY

“EMI freaked”

British record labels are doing it for themselves — and for just £400. No lawyers, no contracts, **STIFF** and **CHISWICK** are tearing up the record industry rulebook, with singles by bands such as **THE DAMNED**. “They really haven’t got much to lose,” says one label boss.

— NME NOVEMBER 6 —

IN JANUARY 1959, Berry Gordy Jr founded Motown Records on the strength of a £400 loan. In July 1976, Dr Feelgood’s one-time tour manager, Jake Riviera, in partnership with Graham Parker’s manager Dave Robinson, launched Stiff Records with precisely the same amount. Their £400 was advanced by the Feelgoods.

“Today’s Sound Today”, a respectful paraphrase of Phil Spector’s “Tomorrow’s Sound Today”, is Stiff’s slogan — and an accurate one for a label which in less than three months has established itself as the prime outlet for aspiring local club talent.

A shoestring operation run with boundless enthusiasm from a small converted lock-up shop in London’s Notting Hill, Stiff has built up the kind of street-level credibility that the major record companies never attain, despite their standing on the stock exchange.

“Credibility,” Dave Robinson insists, “is even more important than actual finance at the beginning of a venture like Stiff.” White man doesn’t speak with forked tongue!

For the time being, Stiff only have sufficient cash to enter into one-off deals (with an option), but the fact that an artist of Nick Lowe’s stature (ex of Brinsley Schwarz) was prepared to inaugurate the label has meant that Riviera and Robinson have had little difficulty in attracting fresh talent to the fold.

Of the artists so far pacted, none are what could be termed “other labels’ rejects”. Primarily, they are those souls who normally don’t fit into most major record companies’ five-year investment plans. »

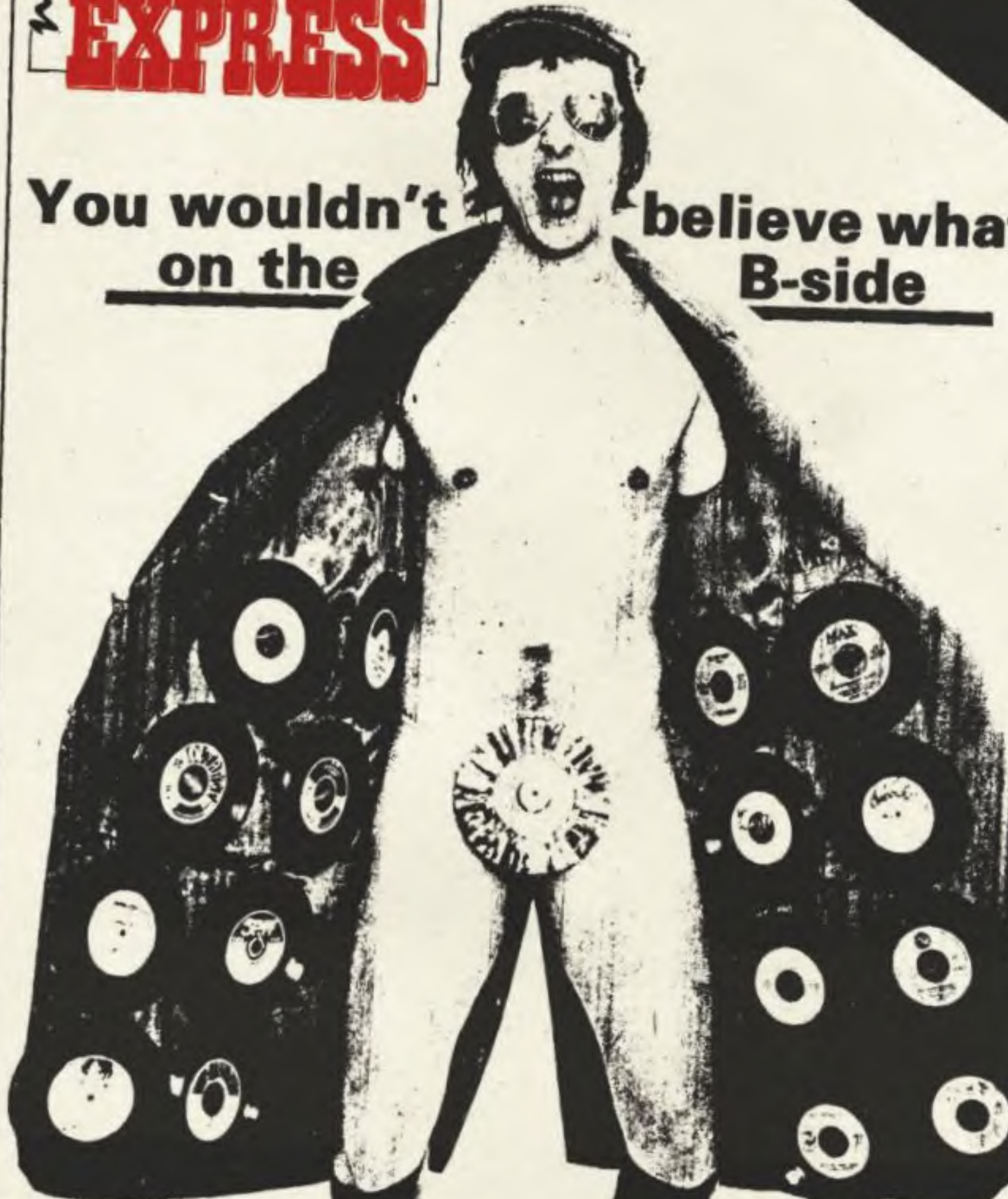
ERICA ECHENBERG / GETTY

The Damned: Stiff Records made them the first UK punk band to get a single out with "New Rose", released on October 22, 1976



new
MUSICAL EXPRESS

You wouldn't believe what on the B-side



Independent labels come out of the closets, and into the streets

Indecent three page exposure inside. See page 25-27

It's the immediacy of Stiff that makes it such an attractive and exciting enterprise. For, in very much the same way as the more responsible sections of the rock press file reports on emergent talent, Stiff are recording many of these artists while they've still got hunger in their bellies, fire in their blood and an HP company on their backs. The upshot is that they get the results out on the streets while it's still happening. Despite a limited cash flow, Riviera maintains that if necessary, within two weeks of signing a letter of agreement (who can afford lawyers?), an act can have their record pressed and in the shops.

Though Riviera sometimes chooses extremes to illustrate his logic, he nevertheless makes his point. "For far too long," he says, "there has been a gap between the million-quid advance and scuffling about in a cellar. There had to be a middle ground. I believe Stiff is it."

Now £400 isn't a helluva lot of money with which to try to set the record industry on fire, but, with just svelte Suzanne Spiro to hold the fort, answer the phone, handle the paperwork and heal the sick, Stiff seems to get by without too many traumas.

The most important thing is that Stiff sells records; maybe only a few thousand copies at most, but that's still a few thousand more than most new artists can hope to sell. Along with other similar labels, Stiff has instigated its own market through an international network of specialist record shops and mail-order companies.

You have to understand that with the major labels, unless it's a specialist release, a golden oldie or a disco demand, a record either sells no more than the initial pressing order of a couple of hundred or else, if it's lucky, it makes the charts. With few exceptions, there are no in-betweens.

Stiff releases move off the company's shelf as quickly as they arrive from EMI's pressing plant. "Actually," says Riviera, "EMI freaked when we got started. They began to ask who the hell are these guys who are doing 5,000 with the Pink Fairies and other groups they've never heard of. They still can't quite get over it. They're so used to singles turkeying at 500 or selling upwards of 20,000, and here we are forever reordering 1,000 copies immediately after one lot has been pressed."

Though overheads continue to escalate, £300 will still get 2,000 copies of any record pressed and also cover the royalties. The cost of the picture sleeve is extra, but Stiff can still maintain quality control and bring their product into line with other labels by selling a single at the recommended retail price of 70p.

So apart from a picture sleeve, what else can Stiff offer an artist?

"The way things are at the moment," Riviera continues, "we can virtually guarantee to sell quite a few thousand copies of a record by a group that, for various reasons, the majors would never consider signing."

Roogalator is offered by Riviera as a prime example. "They received some exceedingly fine press coverage, every A&R man checked them out, but when it came to the crunch nobody was prepared to take a chance with them.

"Working with the kind of limited finance we have at our disposal, it can often prove to be frustrating when you know for a fact that with a band like Roogalator we can easily sell 5,000 EPs in advance, yet only have sufficient funds to place an initial pressing order of 2,000. For instance, we got 6,000 advance orders on the Pink Fairies single and 2,000 for an unknown band like The Damned."

Owing to different production budgets, each record has its own break-even sales figure; every one of Stiff's releases has not only recouped the initial outlay but they've all shown a profit.

The Lew Lewis single "Boogie On The Street" only needed to sell 800 copies before it showed a profit because the Feelgoods gave Stiff the tapes gratis. As a result, Lewis will be cutting a follow-up, probably a reworking of Manfred

Mann's "5-4-3-2-1". Roogalator will go into the black at 3,000, because they received a £100 advance. One thing that does remain constant is the exceptionally high royalty of 15 per cent that Stiff pay their artists.

Says Robinson: "We're not in a position to give large advances. The hundred quid we paid Roogalator was an exception and also about as high as we could afford to go. So we ask a group to come along with us. They really haven't got that much to lose.

"To begin with, they get a record in the shops and if it sells well they are in a position to make a good profit. To a relatively unknown club band, a single is of great help with regard to getting gigs."

Though there is an option clause on both sides in Stiff's letters of agreement with their artists, there is a distinct possibility that because of the media coverage that Stiff has garnered, any one of their acts could chalk up a small hit, a big reputation and as a result be picked up by a major label who wouldn't have normally considered signing the acts that Stiff thrive on.

As Riviera points out: "Already publishers and a few astute A&R men are starting to think that if it's good enough for Stiff, then just maybe they should get in quick.

"We are a little scared of that happening," he admits. "Naturally, we want to build Stiff into a steady thing, but at the same time we don't want other labels to use us simply as a stepping stone—once we've demonstrated that there's a demand for an act, a major label comes along and reaps all the benefit from the hard work we've put into the act. I can tell you, we work our butts off."

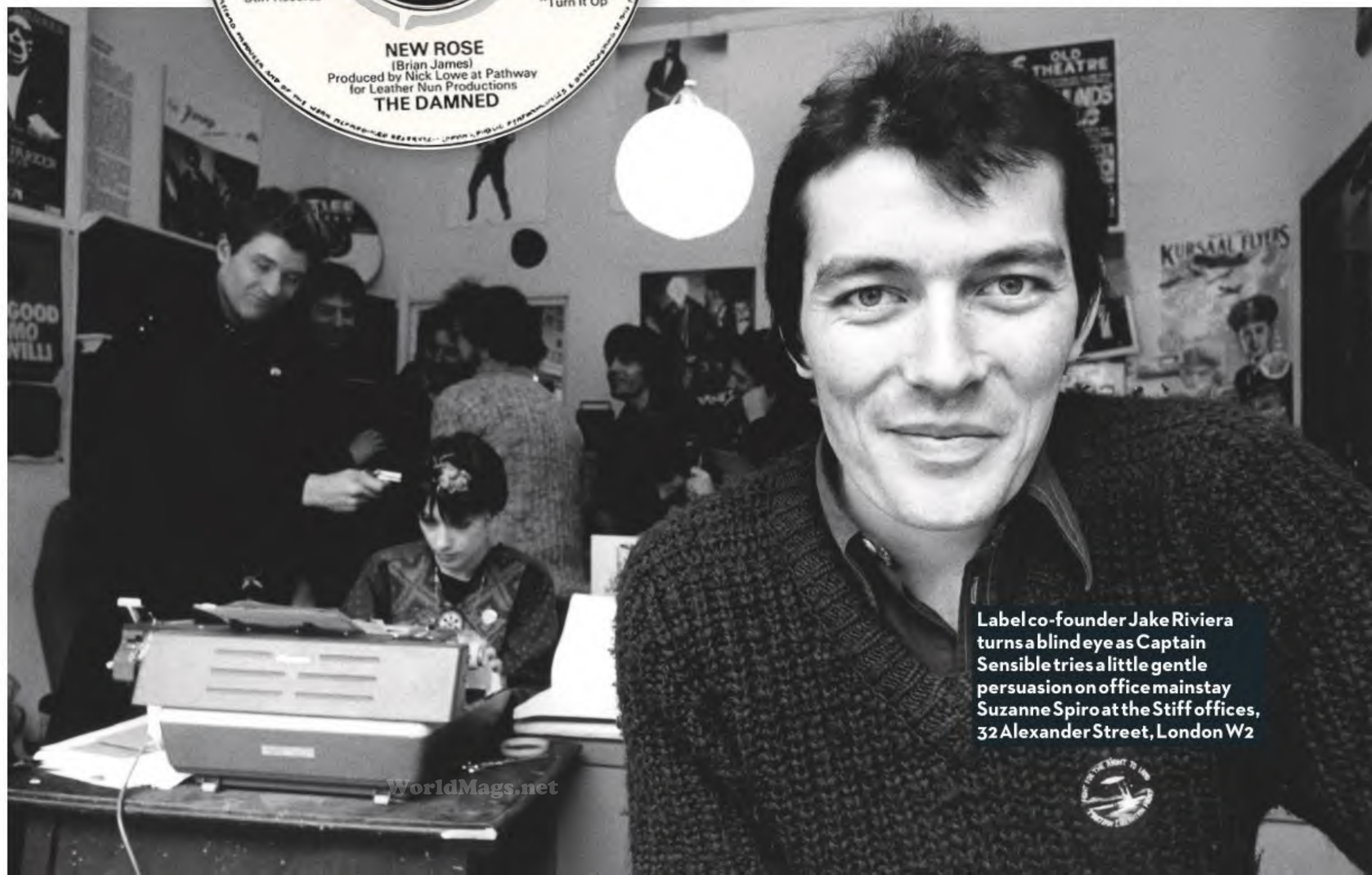
Having already admitted that as yet there isn't sufficient floating cash to lure acts with large advances, Dave Robinson hopes to put into effect a plan that will swell Stiff's coffers. At one time, Robinson used to run the recording studio at the Hope & Anchor in Islington, during which time he recorded "live" every group ever to play there.

Once Robinson has secured the necessary releases from various bands, he intends to compile a double, maybe a triple album of '70s pub roots rock featuring everyone from the Feelgoods to the Brinsleys, Ace and Kokomo. Robinson and Riviera reckon that the profit from such a project would be far more amenable than having a silent financial partner.

Stiff is a sink-or-swim operation. It will succeed or fail on its principles. Whatever the outcome, the partners are determined to avoid the pitfalls that plague most labels: heavy release schedules, lack of promotion time—and apathy.

"We've got to make Stiff a self-reliant organisation," Riviera insists. "Because to be truthful, aside from the money we received from the Feelgoods, nobody is prepared to back us. They all think we're bloody mad. Don't really think we've got a chance. For instance, they know that if we suddenly found we had a chart hit on our hands we'd be forced to lease it to one of the majors like they do in America."

Neither Robinson nor Riviera were born yesterday. They are fully aware that musicians are extremely



Label co-founder Jake Riviera turns a blind eye as Captain Sensible tries a little gentle persuasion on office mainstay Suzanne Spiro at the Stiff offices, 32 Alexander Street, London W2

ambitious and that loyalties can be bought for a hefty cash advance. Nevertheless, Stiff feels that there are sufficient bands to maintain the label and enable it to survive without compromise.

"Let's not kid ourselves for a minute," says Riviera, "none of our acts have secured deals with other labels as a result of recording for Stiff. So if nobody is going to pick up the Pink Fairies or Roogalator and we've got sufficient money for another single – or in the case of Nick Lowe, an album – and they want to do it, then we can keep on issuing records by them because we know in advance their minimum sales potential. Also, they know they're not stuck with us for life. I honestly think it's that kind of freedom that can often bring out the best in an artist."

However, it needs to be pointed out that Stiff's comparative minor success is also beginning to work against them. On those occasions when they've approached a major label to enquire about the possibility of leasing old master tapes they've been treated with suspicion.

"It's not so much that they're scared of us," says Robinson. "Just that they're not sure what we're up to and how we can keep on selling thousands of records by people they've never heard of or that they wouldn't want to record."

"Therefore," he concludes, "when Jake and I come around asking to lease something they automatically think it's worth a fortune, but they'd never think of reissuing it themselves. They much prefer to sit on it and do nothing."

Stiff can't afford to procrastinate. As a matter of fact, neither can they afford to pay their staff wages. Robinson and Riviera earn their daily crust not from Stiff but through their management company, and then they only draw £34 apiece each week.

"It's gonna be one helluva time before we become tax exiles," quips Riviera, "but there's always the possibility."

Berry Gordy didn't do so band for himself on £400 either.

TED CARROLL IS adamant. Within the next 12 months, Chiswick Records will have a hit record. A gregarious red-bearded Dubliner, Carroll exudes the kind of confidence one would expect from a man who's had his Rock On record shop immortalised in the lyrics of Thin Lizzy's "The Rocker".

The proprietor of both Rock On and Chiswick, Ted Carroll is the most respected character among British record collectors and a man who has an enviable reputation for fair trading. He'd much prefer to undersell than oversell his wares.

A visit to any of Carroll's three Rock On stalls/shops is a compulsory part of any visiting rock fan's London itinerary.

While still living in Dublin, Carroll was first baptised into rock'n'roll when he played rhythm guitar with the Caravelles before switching to bass when they mutated to The Greenbeats and recorded an obscure Jagger-Richards original for Pye. A musician by night, Carroll also held down a nine-to-five gig as a bank teller. However, when he was transferred to a border town in 1961 he quit playing and became a part-time promoter, organising weekly R&B sessions at a tearoom on the beach at Killarney. Two years later, the police closed him down for overcrowding the venue.

Soon after, Carroll got himself involved in managing an early Skid Row lineup that included Phil Lynott as lead vocalist. That kept Carroll off the streets until 1968, when he moved to Bournemouth where, for the next two years, he drove a corporation bus. On a visit to Dublin, Carroll once again met up with the Skids and immediately accepted the position of tour manager – a six-month gig that took him to America for a four-week tour. During a stop-over in Sacramento, Carroll purchased a copy of Charlie Gillett's book *Sound Of The City*.

On his return to London, he quit the Skids and, with some Decca and London-American deletions he'd picked up on the cheap from an Irish warehouse, opened his Saturday-Only record shack in the rear of an arcade in Golborne Road at the flea market end of Portobello Road in October 1971.

Though Carroll had taken over Thin Lizzy's management seven months earlier, he abdicated soon after guitarist Gary Moore quit. From there on in, Carroll devoted his energies to expanding Rock On. In 1974 he opened



his stall in the Soho Market and just before Christmas of last year he not only opened a shop in Kentish Town Road, but launched Chiswick Records with The Count Bishops' "Speedball" EP.

Carroll argues that as Chiswick is a logical extension of Rock On, he couldn't compromise himself when it came to recording the Bishops.

"You've got to start the way you intend to continue," Carroll theorises, with the result that he invested £150 on studio time, £400 on the pressing of 2,500 records, plus the cost of the sleeve and the labels. "I reckon," says Carroll, "that it costs £800, but we've already recouped that amount and made a profit."

The "Speedball" EP has already notched up sales of 2,500, while most of the 1,000 re-order pressing have already been accounted for. "If it wasn't for the Christmas rush, I'd have reordered 2,000, because I can get rid of them."

Chiswick almost had a minor hit with their second release, a reissue of the early-'60s British rock classic "Brand New Cadillac" by Vince Taylor & The Playboys. Had Chiswick finalised their distribution deal with President Records when the single was hot, it might have made the Top 40. Despite missing important concentrated sales action, "Brand New Cadillac" is approaching 10,000 copies and still selling steadily.

However, Carroll isn't losing sleep over the Vince Taylor near-miss, for he has little doubt that Chiswick will get a hit and hopefully it will be with Hammersmith's arcane mod power-trio, The Gorillas, the only act under exclusive contract to Chiswick.

Carroll has invested money in new equipment, a manager is being sought, a French tour supporting The Flamin' Groovies is upcoming, together with a December 5 gig at the Roundhouse.

Carroll insists that labels like Chiswick and Stiff and the French-based Skydog operation will succeed because not only do they show a genuine interest in the records they release, but they also have integrity.

"So few of the major labels," insists Carroll, "have any integrity. They are all money-making machines. It's a fact that most of the people who work in them know bugger all about the music or their artists, and truthfully they don't want to know. For all that they're contributing, they might just as well be selling beans, and the kids have got wise to it."

"The only person I know," Carroll continues, "who works for a major record company who is totally aware of what he is doing, is in a powerful position and is successful, is Andrew Lauder over at United Artists. I'm sure there are other people like Andrew in other record companies, but how often are they given an opportunity to really prove themselves?"

Though they might not have real effect on this country's balance of payments, Chiswick Records is building up a large export business – for, according to Carroll, both here and abroad a whole new record market is crystallising.

"The shops," Carroll reveals, "are a direct reaction to Boots and Smiths. Today, there are two ways of running a record shop. You either discount the Top 50 or you specialise."

"It's those shops who specialise, stock imports, cut-outs, rarities and small labels that are beginning to do good business and build up regular customers. There's a big market for individuality, and as a result these specialist shops can open up without having to take out large accounts with the majors."

"The great thing about a label like Chiswick is that unlike the majors, a record isn't dead after three weeks. The product continues to sell to people who might not have picked up on some of the releases when they were originally issued. Thankfully, the back catalogue continues to move. And now, with our distribution with President, should one of our records suddenly take off, they can handle it. They've proved themselves over and over again with hits for Hank Mizell, George McCrae and KC & The Sunshine Band."

"You know," Carroll concludes, "the first shoe-string label to score a hit will scare the shit out of the majors. You see, we're straight off the streets and are more in touch with what's happening than all those expense-account A&R men. We ain't gonna take over the entire record business, but we're gonna get by. That's for certain." Roy Carr •

"We don't want other labels to use us simply as a stepping stone"

“Democracy has collapsed”

THE STRANGLERS don't rate “paranoid clown” Johnny Rotten or “Iggy Bombom”, but talk a good punk game. “The trouble with rock in the last few years,” says Jean-Jacques Burnel, “is that it's become verbose, self-indulgent and safe.”

— NME DECEMBER 4 —

HUGH CORNWELL AND Jean-Jacques Burnel, Stranglers lead and bass guitarists, are ready for me. The instant I walk through the door I'm assailed by their criticisms of my review of their Marquee gig, which has appeared in the morning's *NME*.

“You don't look so young yourself.”

“Do you consider yourself mature, then?”

“Come on, then, tell us where we sound like ‘The Doors.’”

“Do you look at the audience when you review a gig?”

“Did you see how they were getting off on what we said about the Marquee?”

And so on...

This is just what I need, having leapt out of bed late, paid the earth for a cab, got soaked walking to the interview, got no cigarettes, had no breakfast, and when I'm still trying to force myself awake. It's especially galling because, apart from criticising the band's “stance”, I'd given them a rare review. Musically they are one of the most exciting, adventurous combos I've heard in a long time.

Burnel, in standard issue black leather jacket, and Cornwell, swamped into an enormous, ostentatiously ripped overcoat, analyse my review point by point. It's a novel experience, not simply because I'm forced to rigorously defend every word I've written, but also because at no point during the interview/argument, or on our withdrawal to the pub, do the two Stranglers relax their suspicion of me.

They maintain that the Marquee is dead, despite the fact that two of this year's most successful new bands, AC/DC and Eddie & The Hot Rods, have launched themselves from Marquee residencies. That the club did not become a discotheque or strip joint years ago is almost enough to be thankful for.

They object to my linking the Rods with the new wave, despite the fact that the Rods are the only band remotely connected with that scene who have got nationwide exposure on TV, radio and the road, and therefore may epitomise “punk” in many people's minds.

They carp at my Doors comparison, though it's undeniable in their lineup and their keyboard and lead-guitar styles, while they claim it's coincidence that Dave Greenfield bases his playing around 3rds and 5ths (Burnel trying to blind me with science) like Ray Manzarek.

But when we get down to my criticism of their onstage rabble-rousing we quickly dead-end ourselves; “But I think you're just battering your heads against the wall.”

“OK, so where's the wall?”

“Er, um, well... I dunno, I suppose it's the music-biz establishment...”

And at this point I confess to being checkmated.

But I shouldn't have let myself be. See, The Stranglers get up on stage at the Marquee and rant about its obsolescence and tell the audience to smash the place up after the gig (“It wasn't an order, it was suggestion”). This I find quite unwarranted: if you don't like it, don't play there.

The Stranglers, however, see the Marquee as a major stanchion of the system which they reckon has repressed their talent. Like most of their punk/dole queue/new wave rock cohorts, they are martyrs and rebels.

Humbug.

Let's have a look at how martyred and repressed the Stranglers are. They formed the band just a year ago. Since then they've been working constantly; they've supported Patti Smith »

Jean-Jacques Burnel
in 1976: bassist, history
graduate, karate
expert and Triumph
motorcycle enthusiast



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on both her media blitz tours, and they've now landed a contract with United Artists. They've really had it tough, haven't they?

While they're on the subject, let's look at a couple of their contemporaries. The Sex Pistols have just released a blow against the empire called "Anarchy In The UK", a pretty good thunderous single which I like a lot. But in so doing these "anarchists" have signed on as minuscule fish in the colossal pond of EMI. Watch its foundations shake.

Oh, and The Damned. "Dole Queue Rock", is it? Look, mate, I was on the dole for two years trying to launch a rock band. It had no bearing whatsoever on the kind of music we played, and we didn't presume to set ourselves up as spokesmen for some great new breed of Dole Queue Kids.

The Damned claim to be society's rejects—a very lucrative business.

THE TIME HAPPENS to be right for a new youth craze, and self-styled Angry Young Men are it. It's a long time since anyone had had an easier route to a recording contract than the Pistols, Stranglers, Damned and Vibrators—none of whom have been playing in public for more than a year—and the ironic fact is that their overnight success is partly due to playing up the way the rock establishment is supposedly trying to make life difficult for them.

The Stranglers claim to be different to the other bands of the new wave—while still laying claim to a place in its hierarchy—because they are "more politically aware", and are not just into showbiz, which they reckon a lot of the other bands are. Their politics? Well, that's a tricky one—let's leave it till later.

But they spout many of the same litanies as the other bands. For instance, it's now apparently de rigueur for less mainstream punks to deny any knowledge of the Stooges before this year. The Stranglers like to be classified as psychedelic, though they're at pains to tell me exactly what psychedelia is not (hippies, of course), and disclaim any knowledge of the *Nuggets* bands who appear to be such a strong influence on them (Electric Prunes, Standells, etc, etc) I can't help thinking they are donning a mantle they've misconstrued.

Another new wave litany: they refuse to reveal what they were doing before The Stranglers. It later slips out that two have teaching experience.

And another: Jean-Jacques recites his "criteria for good rock"—"It's gotta be energetic, it's gotta be rock, it's gotta be economic and it's gotta be aware. It's gotta be neo-revolutionary, even if it's just fucking people's heads about a venue, political at that low a level. And the trouble with rock in the last few years is that it's become verbose, self-indulgent and safe."

What constitutes "safe" rock? I cite The Kinks, and most major beat groups, as "safe" examples of great rock. Yet later I wind up arguing Cornwell and Burnel's cause by wondering whether in these austere times the emergence of a "new Rolling Stones" might not be a more real threat to social stability than the originals were in their heyday.

(In fact, while it may be a little complacent of me to point it out, the so-called rock revolution—which is nowadays sneered at as a failure—did, undeniably, play some kind of role in setting the social climate for, say, the legalisation of homosexuality and abortion, the end of the American presence in Vietnam, Watergate, and most non-economical leftward developments of the past 10 years, from the SLA to Women's Lib.)

Another new wave litany: "There's nothing worse than apathy or smugness at a rock gig."

This from Burnel, who does most of the talking in his jumpy, boarding school voice. Cornwell, who sits, head bowed, between the two of us, occasionally fixes me quizzically and chucks in some remark.

"People are often surprised at the stances we take at gigs," he tells me. "We only take a stance because it's better than taking no stance at all. You put over the music in the best way possible," says Burnel. "So you

use psychology. And that relies on the context and the situation.

"Someone told me they saw Johnny Rotten and he looked bored, and the second time he looked bored, and the fourth time, and by the fifth time they were bored because it was the same... a stereotype. We're much more organic than that."

"I think that whole new scene's being manipulated," Cornwell suddenly breaks in from nowhere.

By Malcolm?

"And other people too, who've got financial interests in it. They're manipulating the kids away from what they really, y'know..."

To what extent does your audience clash or mix with theirs?

"There's a certain amount of overlap," Hugh reckons, "but we don't attract the hard-core manipulated people..."

I ask why The Stranglers are sneered at in those circles.

"For not digging Iggy and the Stooges and telling them so," erupts Burnel. "And, er, not digging really on plastic and not going down King's Road to the Roebuck and the Sex shop. That's why we've been ignored a lot. We've been slated by the hip scene, only because we don't wanna be into that trip."

Seems to me these guys have no idea what it is to be really ignored. Later on Burnel tells me: "Maybe we're not popular because we don't sing about pleasant little meadows and flowers and 'I love you,'" which is either bare-faced double talk or a complete misunderstanding of the current status quo. A realistic rephrasing would be: "maybe we are so popular because..."

The Stranglers, standing to one side within the punk explosion, can actually reap the benefits of the scene without forgoing their independence? "By the end of next week there's going to be 20 new punk

bands," mocks Burnel. "And they're all going to be doing the same thing. It's just gonna be like a big melee... and we're going to come out from underneath. Because there's no direction to a lot of them; the only direction is a commercial one, which is very successful."

Cornwell mulls this over to himself while Burnel and I discuss Steve Miller as a brief diversion, then suddenly gives me his opinion when I turn Burnel back to the Pistols, Clash and Damned.

"Well, they rely a lot on their connections with the mental sort of agoraphobia of young kids. So I think they're relying very little upon their music; they're relying much more on the way

"We're due for
tyranny.
People laugh,
but I think it
could happen"



The Stranglers:
(l-r) Jean-Jacques
Burnel, Jet Black,
Dave Greenfield
and Hugh Cornwell

that they're identifiable with their audiences. I think they've been manipulated."

The bands or the audience, it's not clear. I put it to him that in a way the kids may have been manipulated into that agoraphobia anyway.

"You reckon? You don't think there's any there anyway just because of disillusionment, a sign of the times?"

Having suggested it, I'm actually in no position to hazard any kind of guess as to whether I'm right or wrong – except that discontent rarely breeds unprompted. But I can suggest that had many of the new bands' current audience seen them cold a year ago, their instant reaction might well have been that it was absolute crap.

"Oh sure," Jean-Jacques agrees. "The fact that they play badly and people say, 'So what?' That's inverted snobbery, isn't it?"

"I reckon a lot of them suffer from bad musical systems," says Cornwell. "Y'know, the PA's terrible and it just comes out as a din. Once they get their musical systems together, then you'll be able to really judge if they're doing anything."

I suggest that maybe people don't pick up on rebels – they have to be told: this is a rebel for you. Burnel agrees and cites James Dean as an example of this. "We needed heroes, so pick one out." (Certainly it's amusing to think of the number of people who stuck pix of Dean on their walls during the great 20th Anniversary media madness.

"It's the same with the music scene at the moment," opines Burnel. "They're picking out old heroes because at the moment they're still trying to get new heroes together. That's why Iggy... Iggy Bombom is becoming a cult figure.

"The thing is, there aren't any heroes. Politically there are no heroes either; that's why everything's going round in circles, very directionless."

ALTHOUGH THE STRANGLERS play totally different music from most punk bands, they are, as I've said, similar (if more articulate) in their attitude – much of it, I suspect, received from rock critics' post-Velvets punk intellectualisations.

Maybe they can shed a light on the Nazi fetishism that had crept in here somehow. "Well, it's just 'cos that is the only thing around, the only vibe, that is united and with a certain direction," Hugh reckons. "People want direction."

"Everyone is paranoid," Jean tells me fervently. "There's decay everywhere. We've always lived with the assumption that things were getting better and better materially, progress all the time, and suddenly it's like, you hear every day there's a crisis. Things being laid off, people are not working.

"Everything's coming to a grinding halt," he goes on, while I start moving toward the door to nip out to Selfridges for a gas mask. "No one sees any heroes. The politicians have lost their credibility; political philosophies are no longer relevant. Sure, they want something dynamic."

Those sort of paranoid fantasies used to entice me when I was a speed-freak, but I can't work myself into a terror these days. Still, I suggest the one about the Stones not being so dangerous, as they arrived in comparatively affluent times. The Stranglers agree. I ask if they reckon Johnny Rotten is going to be subsumed into the system in the way that Mick Jagger became tolerated as our kind of ambassador of Swingin' London freakiness.

"Definitely," Burnel asserts. "Because he's too stupid to be aware of anything larger than himself. To get to that powerful position – because rock is probably the most powerful medium in the world for young people – to get to that position, I think Rotten is too stupid, having talked to him, to be aware of anything broader than that. He's not coherent enough to sacrifice present gain for future gain."

"I feel really sorry for him," Cornwell states drily, "because he's paranoid about what he's put himself in. And he's got to maintain this stance to the sacrifice of his own head. If you ever try and talk to him you can't get any sort of, you can't rap to him about, like, what the problems are. He's always wanting to keep it going. I feel very sorry for him, because he's a paranoid clown."

They don't consider the Pistols' EMI contract a sell-out, though they do say the Sex Pistols lost credibility through it and by, for instance, staying in first-class hotels when, according to Cornwell, they had said they'd never do that. Even so, The Stranglers are reluctant to admit the future

"Rotten's too stupid to be aware of anything larger than himself"

probably holds similar luxuries for them, and labour the fact that they doss around. Y'know, real and street... and boring.

Returning to Nazi fetishism, Jean tells me it's a symptom of something deeper, the country being weaker than at any time since Cromwell (hey, you can tell which one taught history). He saw *Cabaret* recently and reckons it parallels contemporary Britain.

"I think whether you're into it or not, it's gonna happen. You know Plato's theory that, um, democracy leads to oligarchy, oligarchy leads to aristocracy, and aristocracy leads to tyranny, or... there's definite progressions, systems, and they always recycle. Well, I think

democracy has totally collapsed, it's lost all its credibility. So we're due for tyranny. People laugh at that, because England is the last place for that, but I really think it could happen."

But you are at the centre of that scene, more or less, with the kids that wear Nazi emblems. Obviously little boys like Eater just see it as a pretty pattern on their trousers, but do you think some of these kids are really right wing politically?

"No," says Jean. "They're not politically right wing but they're politically ripe, I reckon. Until there's another symbol to replace the swastika, or another ideal, they're gonna stick to that one. It's gotta be as strong as that... it's gotta be seen to be as strong as that, as energetic as that.

"But it'll happen within the next 10 years. Very strange things are happening, very strange undercurrents," he adds darkly, "and they're getting louder and louder."

Yes, but what I want is your attitude to it. As one of the leading bands, what would your influence be on the way these kids think?

Cornwell: "Well, they want to belong to something."

Burnel: "They want a change; they want to believe in something. And that is a very strong image. They definitely don't wanna be associated with leftist things; there aren't any leftist heroes really..."

Tell that to the Russians, Chinese, Cubans and Yugoslavs...

"They're not street-level heroes; they're all intellectuals, the leftist ones." Come again?

"Leftist heroes were very much middle-class heroes. They want warrior heroes..."

We wander up this blind alley a while, till I realise I still haven't got a straight answer.

You're very good at doom-mongering, Jean, but which side of the barricades do you line up? He's boasting about his musical sophistication being "another weapon" in his "armoury", but... do you consider yourselves to have any sort of political message beyond, er, self-liberation?

"Well, yes," he says. Then, after we've been talking little except politics for nearly an hour, he has the nerve to tell me: "But this is neither the time nor place to get into it."

Totally bemused, I try to coerce them by suggesting that if they don't state their position themselves, they leave it up to people to make up their own minds – and with all this gush about the imminent fascist apocalypse, well...

"But we're not associating ourselves with any of the other bands," Burnel protests. "We're right out on a limb musically and philosophically..."

"Hey, that sounds a really heavy work, doesn't it?" muses the guy who's been reciting Plato.

A STRANGE INTERVIEW. THE Stranglers are possibly the most self-righteous interviewees I've met, modishly arrogant about their musical worth, and convinced they have a part to play in a social upheaval they maybe paranoiacally see evidenced in the physical trapping of an in-crowd whom, paradoxically, they sneer at for being trend followers. Yet when it comes to the crunch, for all their onstage aggression, they won't commit themselves.

They are recording live at the Nashville on December 10, and they're going into a studio at the end of the month to record a single, either "Go Buddy Go" or more likely "Grip". The single's out late January and an album, hopefully, in February.

I'm not enamoured of their spoken pronouncements, but make no mistake about it, these guys are great musicians who are going to make records that will be played till they wear out. And as The Stranglers are well aware, that means power. *Phil McNeill* •

1976

OCTOBER-DECEMBER



Onboard the Anarchy Tourbus, December 1976; (front, l-r) Mick Jones, Johnny Rotten, Billy Rath (Heartbreakers bassist), Paul Simonon and Joe Strummer. At the back, Johnny Thunders sits next to photographer/tour manager Lee Black Childers (blond hair)

RAY STEVENSON

“We feel like prisoners”

The **SEX PISTOLS**' appearance on TV has caused uproar. Radio stations won't play their single, local councillors are banning concerts, and the band are suing. MM reports the fallout.

ANARCHY IN THE UK TOUR
SEX PISTOLS
DAMNED AND FROM THE USA
JOHNNY THUNDERS & THE HEARTBREAKERS
(EX NEW YORK DOLLS)
With Special Guests
the **CLASH**
THE TOUR DATES

Fri 3 Dec	Norwich University	Mon 13	Colston Hall Bristol
Sat 4	Kings Hall Derby	Tue 14	Apollo Glasgow
Sun 5	City Hall Newcastle on Tyne	Wed 15	Caird Hall Dundee
Mon 6	Leeds Polytechnic	Thu 16	City Hall Sheffield
Tue 7	Village Bowl Bournemouth	Fri 17	Kersaal Southend
Wed 8		Sat 18	Guildford Civic Hall
Thu 9	Electric Circus Manchester	Sun 19	Birmingham Town Hall
Fri 10	Lancaster University	Mon 20	Woods Centre Plymouth
Sat 11	Liverpool Stadium	Tue 21	The 400 Ballroom Torquay
Sun 12	Top Rank Cardiff	Wed 22	

TICKETS AVAILABLE FROM
Village Bowl

THE SEX PISTOLS' headlining British tour has been reduced to ruins. Just six dates from the original 19 are left following mass action by local councils and hall managements across the country. Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren plans to take legal action against everyone involved with the band's cancelled dates and claims that the Musicians' Union support him and the Pistols.

A spokesman for the Union, however, commented: "We haven't had an opportunity to assess the situation. The Sex Pistols wouldn't be regarded as different to any other band coming to us with a problem. If we felt there was a legitimate complaint we would take it up."

Dissent has broken out on the tour itself. Said McLaren: "The Clash and the Heartbreakers are behind us but we are not in sympathy with The Damned and we will ask them to leave the tour after the show at Leeds Polytechnic."

McLaren said The Damned considered playing at Derby Kings Hall on Saturday when the Pistols were refused permission to play by local councillors. "We were disgusted by this and so they will have to get off the tour."

McLaren has arranged new dates for the tour and told *MM*: "There is no way we are going to be prevented from playing in Britain. This is pure censorship and a complete denial of the principle of free speech."

Radio stations across the country are banning the Sex Pistols' debut single "Anarchy In The UK" and one major record store chain is considering this week whether they should refuse to stock the record.

One radio station was swamped with phone calls after playing the single and inviting listeners' comments. But sales of the record have rocketed in some parts of the country.

One record retailer in Manchester claimed he could have sold as many records as EMI could have supplied and blamed his lack of stock on the lightning strike by workers at EMI's pressing plant on Friday after the Pistols' controversial appearance on Thames Television.

Another punk band, The Vibrators, claim they have suffered a backlash because of people associating their music with that of the Pistols. Three of their British dates have been cancelled and a full European tour scrapped.

In Glasgow, where the Pistols were due to play the Apollo on December 15, the local council revoked the theatre's entertainment licence for just that night. Said Councillor Robert Grey, explaining the unprecedented move: "This group attracts a young element and I honestly believe we have got enough problems in Glasgow without importing yobbos."

Local councils in Derby, Newcastle, Liverpool, Bristol, Sheffield, Guildford and Birmingham all banned the Pistols from playing in their towns.

This was an unprecedented decision for Sheffield Council since they have never banned any rock group from the City Hall before now. Newcastle Councillor Arthur Stabler said: "It was decided to cancel the concert in the interests of protecting the children. We can control what happens at the City Hall but not what happens on the stage."

In Derby on Saturday the Pistols kept a 15-strong council delegation waiting for two hours at the King's Hall. The band had agreed to stage a special preview concert so that councillors could judge whether the show should go ahead or not.

The Pistols stayed in their hotel as the councillors waited, refusing to travel with a waiting police motorcade into the centre of the town. Eventually the council delegation conferred in secret at the hall and Councillor Leslie Shipley, leader of the delegation, then announced the concert was off.

He said the council was disgusted by the Pistols' lack of manners in making them wait at King's Hall for nothing—and added: "I have personally spoken to the manager of the group and he told me that they will not perform before the council unless we come here this evening and see the whole of the show."

"This we are not prepared to do. We have bent over backwards to put on this rehearsal, but in fairness to the group, the promoter and the public, the committee have decided that the Sex Pistols will not perform here tonight."

He said the rest of the package—The Clash, The Damned and The Heartbreakers—could play if they wished. The Clash and The Heartbreakers refused.

The Damned, staying at a different hotel, considered their response and, says *MM* reporter Caroline Coon, it was rumoured among the touring party that The Damned would play.

The Damned's Dave Vanian announced: "Although we do not align ourselves with the Pistols' political position we sympathise; but we are going to do all the gigs we can and any others that come along."

Said manager McLaren: "We were disgusted by this statement and we feel that The Damned have no place on this tour."

"We'll have to have a special listen to the single to see if it is offensive"

The original opening date of the tour was to have been Norwich University on Friday, but this date was cancelled by the university authorities. The vice-chancellor, Frank Thistlethwaite, met two members of the Students' Union social committee on the morning of the show and, according to an SU spokesman, "took it upon himself to force the union to cancel the punk package concert."

"Since the university own the hall, they are legally entitled to do this by simple refusing to allow the union use of the hall. We wish it to be known that we are disgusted with the manner in which this decision was taken."

Said a spokesman for the authorities: "Because of the group's reported views on violence we felt there was a possible threat to personal safety if the concert had gone ahead."

At press time the Students' Union reported they were planning to rearrange the concert despite the university's views.

Two more dates disappeared because the owners of the venues, Rank Leisure Services, refused to be associated with the Pistols. Rank information officer Chris Moore told *MM*: "The date at Cardiff Top Rank on December 14 was never really on. We had signed no contracts with

anyone connected with the Sex Pistols for that date.

"As for Bournemouth Village Bowl on December 7, the Sex Pistols' appearance on TV brought that to a head. We were concerned about the security aspect of it all. We were certainly not keen to be associated with a band of this sort."

Moore added that the question of future Sex Pistols concerts had been discussed and said the company wouldn't be interested in booking them if they could not prove they had changed themselves from the current format.

The only dates remaining from the tour by press time were Leeds Polytechnic on Monday this week, Manchester on Thursday, Dundee Caird Hall (December 16), Plymouth Woods Centre (21) and London Roxy Theatre (26).

Dates were added at Leeds Polytechnic—a second booking—



"The whole thing is ridiculous": Johnny Rotten with the Pistols at Leeds Polytechnic, December 6, 1976

ROWS

on Wednesday, Liverpool's Eric's (December 12), Caerphilly Castle Cinema (14), Maidenhead Skindles (18), Birmingham Bingley Hall (20), Paignton Penelope's (22) and Plymouth Woods Centre, another repeat booking (23).

Radio One is refusing to play the "Anarchy In UK" single during its daytime programmes, but denies that its decision was prompted by the controversy surrounding the Pistols. Said a spokesman: "The record has been played by John Peel as a new spin on his late-night programme, which has always featured new bands of interest."

Peel will be devoting his Radio One show this coming Friday to punk rock, with The Damned making their BBC debut and records by the Pistols, Australian punks The Saints and New York punks Television.

Producer John Walters told *MM*: "It's not meant to be a history of punk, but a presentation of the music after all the words about the sociology of the players. It's not like the Beeb jumping on the punk bandwagon, but just some examples of what the controversial artists sound like."

But in Sheffield the local commercial station, Radio Hallam, has banned the Pistols' single. DJ Colin Slade told the *MM*: "It was played last week during the lunch show and then we threw the phones open to the listeners. We got 80 calls through our jammed switchboard in less than 20 minutes, and only four people said they liked it. The rest thought it was terrible. We decided this was a pretty clear mandate from our audience, and so the record is not being played."

In Manchester, Piccadilly Radio say the record is not on their playlist, and the same goes for Capital Radio in London and BRMB in Birmingham.

IN RECORD SHOPS across the country, sales of the single rocketed after the Pistols' TV appearance. One retailer in Cambridge said: "People who would never normally be seen in our shop have been coming in and asking for the single. They've been buying because of curiosity value and because of the Pistols' appearance on television."

Another retailer in Manchester told *MM* he sold every record he had in stock. "We could have sold plenty more but EMI didn't have any more in stock, which was a great shame from our point of view."

A spokesman for EMI said that sales were very healthy but refused to give figures.

"That's not our policy. But let me just say it was doing fine before that television programme, but it's doing fine now."

EMI's pressing plant in Hayes was hit by a lightning strike on Friday. Women on two shifts refused to pack the Sex Pistols single in protest over their television appearance. They handled other records. The problem was resolved and the plant was back to full production on Saturday.

A spokesman for EMI said: "We can appreciate what these ladies were upset about and I won't suggest that they were exactly delighted to have to go back and carry on packing the record. EMI itself does not condone the use of bad language, but there is no question of action being taken against the Sex Pistols."

The spokesman denied suggestions that directors of EMI were attempting to force the recording division to revoke the band's contract. "That's totally out of the question. Their contract is signed and that's all there is to it."

Boots are currently considering whether to continue stocking the Pistols single. Said a spokesman: "Some of our branches have copies of the single, but I think we will need to have a special listen to the single to see whether it is offensive before deciding on whether to continue selling it."

Pistols singer Johnny Rotten, speaking to *MM* at his hotel in Leeds, commented: "The whole thing is ridiculous. I don't see why councillors should dictate to people what kids go out and listen to any night."

"It's up to the kids who work and pay taxes just like anyone else to decide what they want to do. I'm just sick of the whole thing. We feel like a bunch of prisoners."

STOP PRESS: Sex Pistols London concert at Roxy Theatre on Boxing Day cancelled.

Sir John Read, chairman of EMI, said at the company's AGM on Tuesday that they are considering "very carefully whether to release any more Sex Pistols records".

He also told shareholders: "EMI will review its general guidelines regarding the contents of pop records. We seek to discourage records which are likely to cause offence." •

"Clever management"

Rock stars comment on the PISTOLS "outrage".



Alex Harvey

"The hypocrisy of all this staggers me - if everyone used

four-letter words on TV, then nobody would object. But how can a word like fuck be offensive; one wonders what Shakespeare would have said. Yet you get a man who says the TV show offended him admitting that he would use these words to his mates, but he didn't want it coming in his home. Well, how hypocritical can you get?

"The whole of rock music breaks the rules - which is only what these kids were doing, and what the Stones did. Jazz another four-letter word, broke the rules. As for the talk of them being violent - to me, when my kids can see an advert Join The Professionals, that's far more violent - like ads to join the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders.

"I don't think the adverse publicity will do the Sex Pistols any harm. I don't know if they can play - but if they can, then all that publicity can only do them good. This is 1976; and these kids think differently."



Eric Burdon

"This is obviously a spin-off from the Rolling Stones era.

I haven't heard the Sex Pistols yet, but anything that publicises hot rock or more sex is all right with me.

"This is really a very clever piece of management and is typical of the times, which seem to throw more attention on the management than the music. Perhaps the warning aspect is the quasi-Nazi spin-off from New York. Hitler would have been very proud of *Clockwork Orange*, Andy Warhol, Kiss and the Sex Pistols. It's when this gets beyond the playful side, and youngsters could perhaps be manipulated for other reasons, that the real danger would set in.

"Hitler was very much under the influence of Wagner - and this was an unpleasant association with music. But

I don't want to pre-judge the Sex Pistols; I haven't heard them play. The name, however, turns me

off. But from what other people have said, their music is not that important. Let's hear something which shows ability, and then we won't care what they say."



Roger Daltrey

"The best possible hype image since The Who and the

mod thing. It's not all that original. If you look back through the files of old *MM*s you'll be surprised how much the Sex Pistols sound like us.

"Swearing doesn't bother me at all; I just think they could have said something really sensational. I don't dislike what they do, but I'd like to tell them they're skating on thin ice, for the press jumped very quickly on the sensational aspect and if the group can't produce something more substantial to back them up they are going to be in for a very tough time.

"It's about time the youngsters kicked up and maybe this will lead to a more mellow attitude in people. But a lot of this is good old rock'n'roll hype.

"The Sex Pistols may now feel they won't change, but you don't see things the same at 32 as you do at 19. And only someone of 32 can tell you that. It's all like reading about The Who smashing up hotels - so what's original about that?"

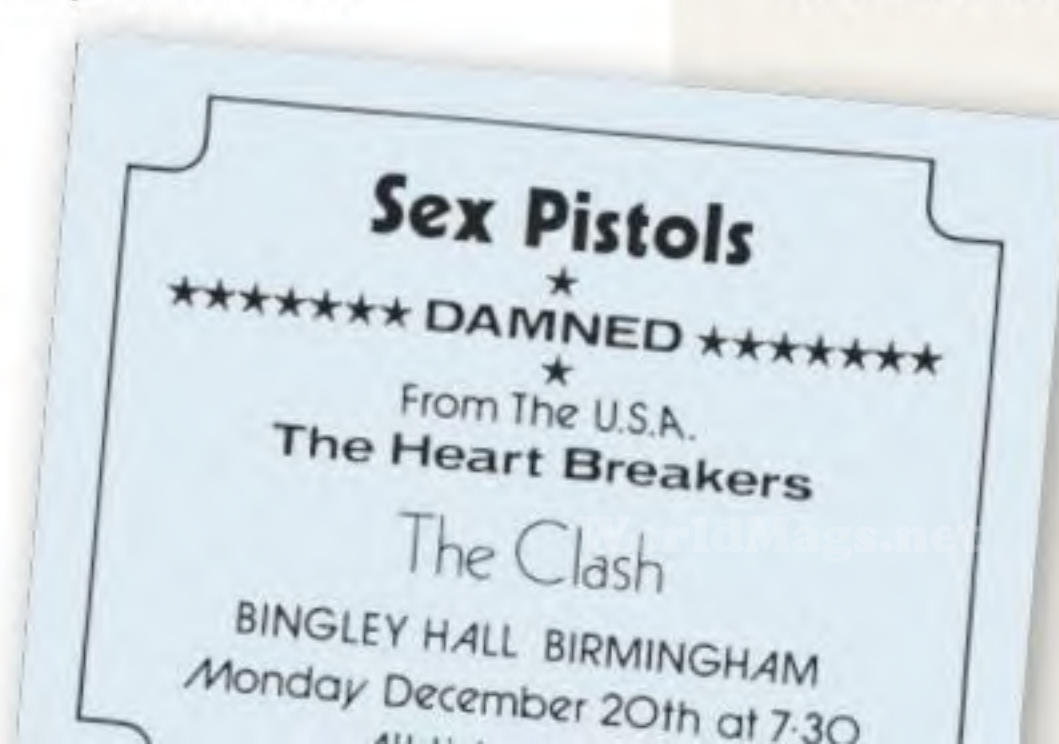


Phil Collins

"I suppose their behaviour is aimed at teaching

something other music can't reach. And if the public reaction is anything to go by, then they couldn't have had a better PR job done for themselves. It will arouse interest in the group, and as the main aim of a group is to get a record in the charts, then it is likely people would now buy a disc by the Sex Pistols out of curiosity. But if Johnny Rotten and his group aim to become the next Beatles, they won't do so on shock tactics alone - they'll have to produce something musically worthwhile.

"A friend video-taped the group on a *So It Goes* TV programme and following all this publicity we played it over out of curiosity. All we found was a complete lack of talent."



Readers' letters

MM OCT-DEC Punk ruffles feathers, Chrysalis impresses, vinyl gets a sound kicking.

Punk? I'll drink to that

What is happening to music today that forces the *MM* every week to write reams on the so-called punk rock controversy?

For two years or more the *Melody Maker* has been printing regular (though with increasing vehemence) articles on what has been apparently accepted as the new wave in rock music.

Don't you think that perhaps this attitude amounts to the greatest form of adulation that punk rock could ever receive? Whatever caused the current "success" of these bands, it certainly was not their music.

I would be tempted to lay the blame at your feet. If you really would like punk rock to be no more, may I suggest you ignore it, and in six months it would be gone? Punk rock really does not have the popular appeal your weekly articles on it would have us believe; let those that need an aural lobotomy keep the music to themselves and let those of us who understand the real emotive power of music read about intelligent music within your pages.

The only time I have ever come across these punker-wallahs live was at a gig the Sex Pistols did at my old college. Within two minutes I and half the audience were rolling about laughing. The other half had fled for the bar; I humbly suggest you do likewise.

Whatever punk rock is supposed to be, it's certainly amusing and it's a great excuse to turn to drink. **BILL DYKE, Slaithwaite Road, Lewisham (MM Oct 9)**



Today's punks, tomorrow's establishment

I'd like to know why the world is so worked up and surprised by the arrival of punk rock, as it was bound to come. OK, it's a load of crap and anyone with hands can play it, but the same was true of early rock'n'roll and English reggae. Both of these types of music attracted the violent element of their generation - the rockers and the skinheads - and today punk rock attracts our violent element: the punks, I suppose they're called.

The thing is, given two to four years, the 19-year-old musicians will be 22, 23 and no longer

relevant to the new violence generation. They will become the thing they despise now, the establishment. Unlike bands like the Stones, The Beatles and the Floyd, they won't survive with their own generation because they have no talent and they won't progress from punk music because they can't. So real music lovers just be patient; punk rock will kill itself with its own hate of establishment. **CHRIS WHITAKER, Ongar, Essex (MM, Nov 27)**



Punk: the truth

In reply to Chris Whitaker's letter. I would like to say that it's not what the punk bands are playing that matters, it's what they are saying.

I've been involved with music now for about 16 years, and one thing I've learned is that music and truth go together hand-in-hand. For too long now we've been inundated with bands who are very technical, very clever, very polished, but shy away from the important issues of life and cover them up with technical wizardry and pretentious lyrics that have no relevance.

Now I'm not knocking good music, but let's have good music and truth together. You may think punk bands lack talent; this may be true in the musical sense, but there is no lack of honesty and truthfulness in what they do, and this must surely be the rarest talent of them all.

Thank you, punk rockers; it seems the Age Of Aquarius isn't dead after all. **GEOFF GRAHAM, 2 Tudor Road, Camp Hill, Nuneaton, Warwickshire (MM, Dec 11)**

Pistols live, after a fashion

The likes of the Sex Pistols have yet to prove that they are only worthy of a mention in a publication dealing solely with fashion, and if the music they deliver live is anything to go by, I think that their

audacious lyrics and discordant music will not hold their heads above water when their followers tire of torn jumpers and safety pins. **STEVEN MORRISSEY, Kings Road, Stretford, Manchester (MM, Dec 11)**

Publicity no stunt

I wonder if I may, through the columns of your magazine, express my deepest thanks to the public relations office of Chrysalis Records. On Tuesday, November 30, I sent a letter to Chrysalis requesting information on Robin Trower. As I posted the letter I thought I would receive a reply, good or bad, in a month or two.

How wrong I was, because on Friday, December 3, just three days after I sent the letter, I received a reply with the information I had asked for plus two photographs.

The speed of the reply just left me astounded. In these days when one hears so much about record companies treating the consumer in a shoddy manner, it is gratifying to find a company that does care about its customers.

I really hope you will print this letter, not out of a desire to see my name in print, but because it is about time that the record companies that take trouble over their consumers got some favourable publicity. **GEORGE P. COLE, Acland Hall, Bingley College, Bingley, Yorkshire (MM, Dec 25)**



Pressing problem

The price of records continues to increase, yet the quality of pressing continues to decline. It's annoying to part with an amount approaching £4 for an album, and then play it, only to find the enjoyment of the music ruined by crackling and hissing noises.

This situation seems even more inconceivable when one considers that in recent years the improvement in hi-fi equipment means that faults on pressings become even more apparent. Surely, as sound recording and reproduction equipment improves, so should the quality of record pressings.

A return to the quality of pressings of five or 10 years ago can't be beyond the bounds of possibility. **GRAHAM GREEN, Staines Road, Twickenham, Middlesex (MM, Dec 25)**

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1976

MONTH BY MONTH



Coming next... in 1977!

SO THAT WAS 1976. Hope you said something outrageous. Certainly, that's not it from our reporters on the beat. The staffers of *NME* and *Melody Maker* enjoyed unrivalled access to the biggest stars of the time, and cultivated a feel for the rhythms of a diversifying scene; as the times changed, so did they. While in pursuit of the truth, they unearthed stories that have come to assume mythical status.

That's very much the territory of this monthly magazine. Each month, *The History Of Rock* will be bringing you verbatim reports from the pivotal events in pop culture, one year a month, one year at a time. Next up, 1977!

FLEETWOOD MAC

THE DOUGHTY JOURNEYMEN of the British blues boom enjoy their transformation into a classy, enormously successful MOR act that has delivered *Rumours*. "Now we can make jokes," says Mick Fleetwood, "but it wasn't very funny at the time."

THE CLASH

IN THE CAFF and on the tube with the drummerless punks. On the agenda: violence, revolution and inferior bands. "All the new groups sound like drones," says Joe Strummer. "I ain't seen a good new group for six months."

THE SEX PISTOLS

A TRIP TO Scandinavia with the band and their new member, Sid Vicious, who Johnny Rotten calls "the philosopher in the band". "I'm a highly original thinker," says Sid. "He's just jealous because I'm really the brains of the group."

PLUS...

BOWIE!

THE JAM!

LED ZEPPELIN!

TOM PETTY!

FROM THE MAKERS OF **UNCUT**

THE HISTORY OF **ROCK**

Every month, we revisit long-lost *NME* and *Melody Maker* interviews and piece together *The History Of Rock*. This month: 1976.

"If you get down and you quarrel every day/You're saying prayers to the devils, I say..."



Relive the year...

BOB MARLEY BECAME A SUPERSTAR
DAVID BOWIE CONQUERED STAGE AND SCREEN
PUNK ROCK OUTRAGED A NATION

...and **QUEEN, PATTI SMITH, LED ZEPPELIN** and many more shared everything with *NME* and *MELODY MAKER*

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