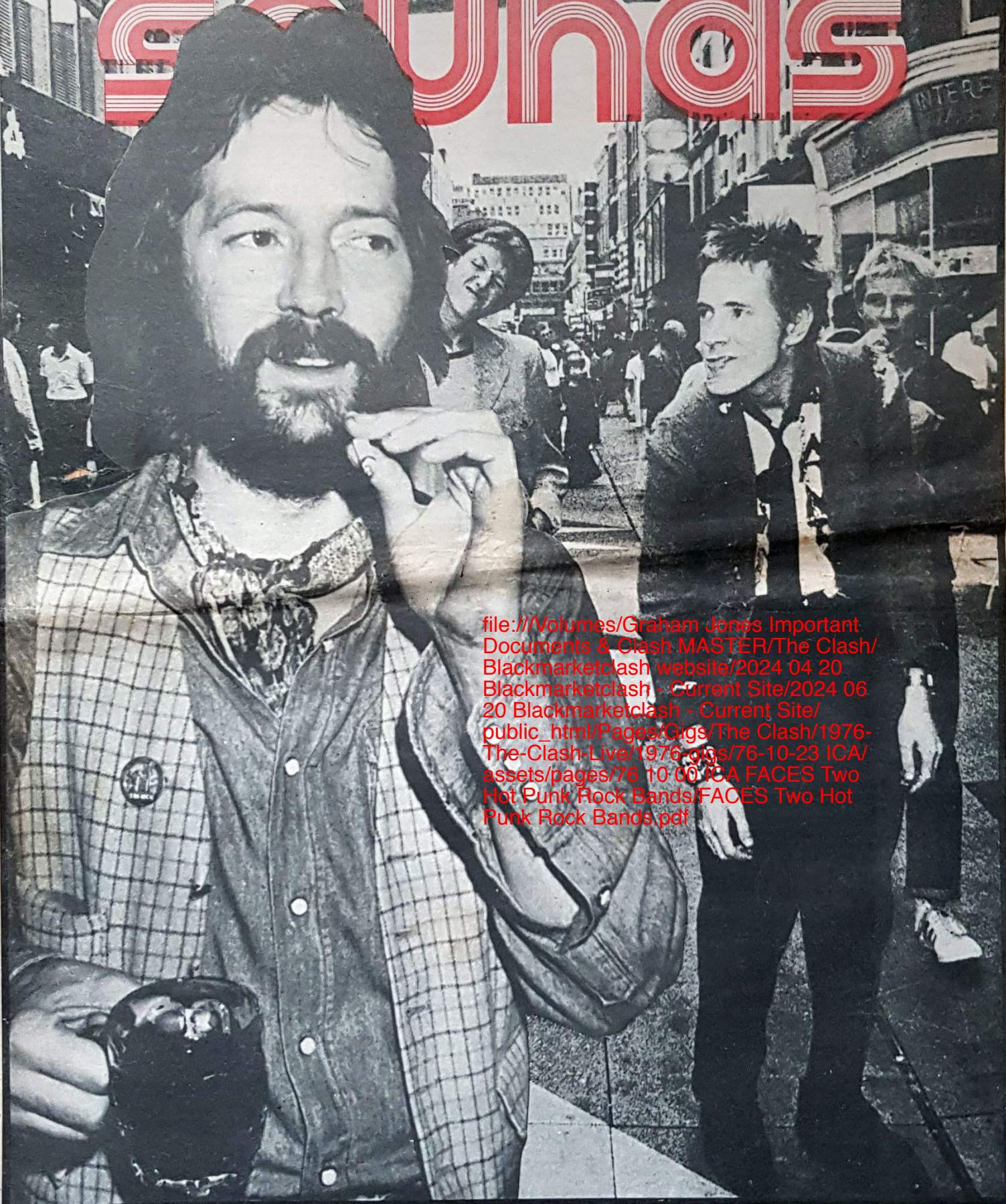


CLAPTON/PUNKS

exclusive interview

six-page blitz

SOUNDS



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Welcome to the

"I didn't even know the Summer Of Love was happening. I was too busy playing with my Action Man."
— Sid Vicious

THE AUDIENCE

YOU SEE them on Kings Road on Saturday afternoons. They look different. Longhaired youths in their flares and platform turn and stare; tourists laugh and jabber among themselves, aiming expensive cameras for the folks back home; local residents of several decades standing look bemused or shocked and shake their heads with resignation.

Could their attention be focussed on the bright pink hair? Or the blue hair? Or green, mauve or yellow hair? Perhaps it's the rubber stockings or seamed fishnet stockings, or the shiny black stilettos with bondage overtones. Perhaps it's the sheets of PVC rubber safety-pinned into t-shirts, or is it the ripped t-shirts, the baggy pants ending in tight cuffs, the winkle-pickers, the wierd shades?

Maybe the "couture" look favoured by some of the more steadily employed has stopped them short. At Sex one can choose from trousers with vinyl pockets and zips on the arse, outrageously oversized fall-apart sweaters, studded belts and wrist straps, anarchy shirts with hand painted stripes and Marx and swastika patches and CHAOS arm bands, and the Sex staple, t-shirts — printed with everything from the Cambridge rapist's mask to the naked young boy that is the Sex Pistols' logo — and of course, out and out bondage apparel.

Up the road, Acmé Attractions are denuding any warehouse still possessing early 60s fashion — you want

an original Beatles suit? Look no further — the only thing out of step with Swinging London the booming reggae on the sound system and the perennial dreadlocked you'ts grooving to the beat.

Between the two emporiums, Retro caters to all decades.

These people, this technicolour parade that owes no allegiance to any fashion or trend except that which they create themselves, this group that has uncompromisingly treated the 70s as the 70s, are the ones variously described as "folks in Bizarre Costumes" (Charles Shaar Murray) and "garishly designed night creatures" (Giovanni Dadomo). But as Bo Diddley said some eons ago, you can't judge a book by the cover.

On a recent Saturday Steve celebrated his 21st birthday. He and his 19 year old friend Siouxsie had spent the afternoon shopping and now, as midnight approached, picked their way through the Soho puddles towards Louise's, treating the staggering, pissing drunks with the same indifference as the rain.

The drunks laughed and tried to think of insults, but that was normal for straights. Steve hated them, because they refused to accept him for what he was. He didn't try to do anything about the funny way they looked, but they were always going on about the super-hero peroxide flashes gracing the sides of his jet black hair or his choice or sartorial correctness. Especially in Bromley, where he lived. Especially schoolgirls.

It was a good thing, probably, that Siouxsie was wearing her polka-dot plastic mac.

Louise's used to be an almost exclusively lesbian club but has graciously expanded to accommodate the

In love with the modern world

I WAS hoping to avoid mentioning the bloody word at all, but since SOUNDS has so adamantly advertised this shebang as a Punk Rock Special, I guess there's no avoiding it. In the context of the band and people mentioned in the following pages, I hate the word as much as they do. For a start it's (rock) historically inaccurate. Punk rock as a genre in the mid-60s, composed of American garage bands trying to duplicate or better their English fave raves like the Yardbirds and Them, has no correlation with the viciously original music of the Sex Pistols or the Clash or the Damned.

As an attitude there's basis for discussion, but consider Mark P in Sniffin' Glue 3:

"You get the feeling at Pistols gigs that everyone's posing so they can't really be punks can they? Punks are carefree, and I mean completely... you know, like a football who kicks in someone's head and don't care a shit. Yer, the Pistols crowd are not punks, they're too vain. But what's wrong with that so am I."

John Rotten half-seriously favours "anarchy rock". Paul Morley in his fanzine *Out There* wants "a rock". That's 's as in 'surge'.

The Jam mentioned the "punk rock (?) scene". Siouxsie from the Banshees reckoned that should have been "(?) rock".

And so it shall. Welcome to the (?) Rock Special.

In April, John Rotten wanted "more bands like us" — well now he's got them. Each week during their residency at the 100 Club more and more of the audience have felt the urge to create their own excitement, live out their rock and roll fantasies, get on that stage, have an audience looking at them. Each week sees new requests for satisfactory bassists and drummers (of which there is a sore need), cheap instruments and cheap or free rehearsal rooms. It has to be cheap or free because most of them are unemployed, and living on £11.10 a week doesn't leave much spare change for guitar and amp payments. But that doesn't lower the buzz of world-be rock stars organising themselves for action.

The bands in the following pages aren't necessarily inspired or influenced by the Pistols, but they do share (with one exception) youth, the belief that old farts like the Stones, Beatles, Yes — in fact, the entire pantheon of rock aristocracy — should have been carted off to the euthanasia centre years ago, and, for the first time in rock, a background that is 99% working class.

It's gratifying and exciting that the Damned and the Clash share almost no musical similarities either with the Pistols or each other — the more experimentation the better — and it's equally exciting that while the groups jibe about each other's demerits, the audience is judging and accepting each new group on its own terms. (It should be mentioned that the jibes are seldom in earnest. When did you last see or hear of the Stones et al loaning their equipment to other bands or tuning the guitars for musicians so fresh they can't do it themselves? Yet that attitude of help and cooperation was

commonplace among the bands at the 100 Club Punk Festival.)

On the other side is the music industry. As the Sex Pistols gigs have changed from private party to public celebration, the A&R men, agents, and even managing directors have walked into the 100 Club to weigh the band and their prospective future. I keep saying the 100 Club because no other London club (with the initial exception of the Nashville) has wanted to give them the chance to develop what is obviously a departure from the past. (You need only look at the audience to begin seeing that.)

That repressive attitude permeates most of the industry coffins. Ten and 12 years ago they were telling the old farts in power to take their Dennis Lotises and Lita Rosas and shove off into the sunset; now they're the old farts, unwilling to give any time or encouragement to youth who want to do things that might threaten their power and position. Even though it is those same youths who will be providing the record industry with its means of survival and profit over the next 10 years.

The comments of some of these influential industry people can be found further on. It is worth remembering that these people with their fingers on the pulse are evaluating the Sex Pistols and the whole scene in the context of record sales being 40% lower than last year. Most of them prefaced their comments with variations of, 'Oh — hmmm... How can I put this?'

But while the industry stands by the bar and tries to determine the minimum amount they could spend on the band in the hope that it took off without the company having to actually commit itself, the audience leaps and bounces and doesn't give a shit about commerciality or whether 'Anarchy In The UK' has chart potential. They're present for excitement and a good time, and they can tell you why in highly articulate terms.

Interestingly, as the audience continues to grow, the new fans assume the trappings of the original audience. In the Ladies toilet, for instance, three immaculate Pistols fans of three weeks standing are applying makeup and grooming their newly short hair. Leaning against the wall in brogues and a Dannimac, is long haired, 18 year old Mary from Plumstead. She has been trying to make a gig for ages and she is watching the other three girls with open admiration. When Mary goes to her next Sex Pistols gig, you know exactly how she will look.

JONH INGHAM

leading edge of 70s youth and their pansexual tastes. In the reception Siouxsie removed her mac, revealing a simple black dress with a plunging V neckline, black net loosely covering her pert breasts. A home-made swastika flash was safety-pinned to a red armband. Black strap stilettos, studs gleaming, bound her feet; fishnet tights and black vinyl stockings her legs. Her short black hair was flecked with red flames.

Steve was still wearing the same clothes — white shirt daubed with paint and a Union Jack pinned over the right breast, black drainpipe slacks and winklepickers — he had worn on stage at the 100 Club the previous Monday night when he had played bass with Siouxsie, Sid Vicious and Marco, also known as Siouxsie and the Banshees. He had first picked up a guitar the previous afternoon.

"I don't know why I did it, I just knew I wanted to before I was 21."

It was also Siouxsie's first stage appearance.

"I'd always wanted to be on a stage... I was a bit nervous at first but when I saw everybody enjoying it, I



Siouxsie of the Banshees

enjoyed doing it. I think they considered it a joke.

"I've always gone around being looked at so I thought perhaps I should go on a stage and exploit it.

"I also had singing lessons," she added archly. "When I was about 16. I really wanted to do singing and I practised a lot and made cassettes and I dunno... I went to some interviews from *Melody Maker* ads, record producers looking for singers, and it really put me off. They made me think I'd

have to become a classical type singer to be popular..."

"Dana," smirked Steve.

"—So that the general public would like you. They gave me the impression that everyone who makes it has to sleep around... The fact that I could get work by that and be paid for it and nothing be expected of me (professionally), that was, you know..."

They moved inside. Downstairs was non-stop dance-arama. Upstairs, in the fire-engine red room flanked by the bar and a wall of great posing mirrors, the party got underway. Most of Steve's friends — known for convenience's sake as the Bromley contingent — were there, all Sex Pistols fans of long persuasion, all looking just as much a part of the present as the Pistols, who were also there.

Most of the Bromley contingent owe their discovery of the Pistols to Simon (age, 19), who witnessed an early gig at Ravensbourne College of Art last December — "I was almost the only person applauding". Simon looks like the one established rock star he, or anyone else present for that matter, still rates —

Bowie, Siouxsie, in fact, was inspired to perform because of Ziggy Stardust.

"He's the only singer who's managed to keep up by changing and not stay the same... get old."

Their other tastes are what you would expect: Lou Reed, the Velvets, the Stooges — in many instances discovered through Bowie's involvement — and old Stones and Who And Small Faces and offbeat soul tracks. They took to the Pistols because of the energy, and "they had guts to them, in the music and by being on stage" (Steve), and "they were different" (Simon), and "they were young" (Siouxsie). The only other 70s artists to so far make the grade are the Ramones and Jonathan Richman, who Siouxsie credits with a new concept of love songs — "They're not mushy, they're more fair" — though some of the new, post-Pistols English bands are viewed favourably.

Simon has definite ideas about the icons the Pistols are smashing, as well as the ones they're establishing.

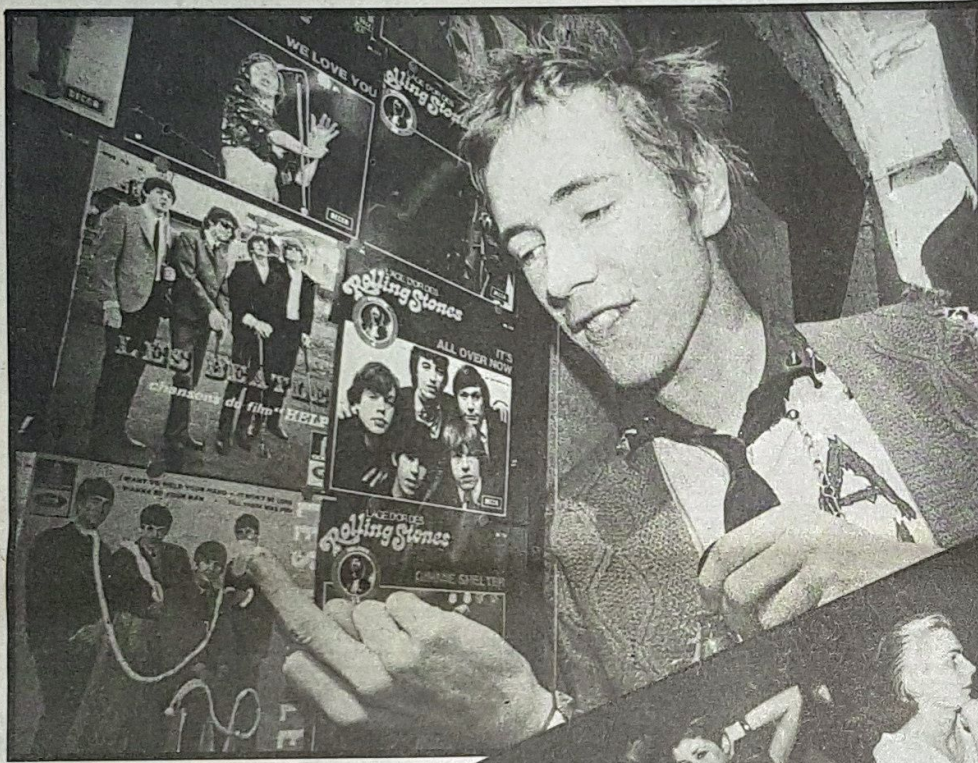
"It's really funny all those kids shouting out anarchy and half of them don't know what it is. I agree with-



Just good friends

(?) Rock Special

Johnny Rotten, the Clash, the Damned and a committed cast of hundreds of new music makers give the finger to the old farts



thing was moving so fast in the 50s and 60s that it just couldn't go on, but instead of slowing down it ground to a halt.

"I never took that much notice of hippies. I liked things that really took the piss out of it, like Frank Zappa, but then he went all serious . . . As people get older they just act older, don't they? Want to be taken seriously. Stupid."

"Flowah powah," mocked Debbie, sitting next to him. Debbie is 15. "I don't remember that long ago," she laughed. "I remember Woodstock . . ."

"It was so weak and stupid," continued Simon, "And they believed it. To try and change things with flowers; if you get beaten up you've got to retaliate. I really think that violence is the only way. If you're going to change the world you've got to use violence — not beating people 'up, but destroying property. It doesn't matter if you protest — it's property that really counts. As soon as there's damage they take notice. If the IRA had only done buildings and not people . . . There was a really good feeling at first, people wanting a united Ireland, but the minute they did people . . . They're not opponents

any more, they're murderers.

"I want to stop older people telling young people what to do. I'm young and everything I do there's some arseholes telling me I'm wrong. There are a few exceptions . . . they're alright."

"But I don't think anyone will bother, will they? To use violence. They're too lazy, aren't they?"

Steve's view is far more succinct. "There'll only ever be anarchy in the 100 Club," he laughed. He also believes in love. "But I don't believe in devotion, thinking that someone or something is the only thing there. I'm interested in marriage, but not in the traditions and the possessiveness. It's just for a laugh."

They drained the champagne. Vivien Westwood, seditious and Sex mastermind, bought another bottle for the birthday man. Debbie, changed into a black leotard and red leggings, went downstairs and danced. Her hair was cut in a modern interpretation of a 50s flat-top. In the past it had been sprayed every colour of the rainbow, now it was blonde. Since all the other girls at her school

anarchy, but I was like that before the Pistols. People are always telling you what to do and it's always old people telling young people. If you're going to be told what to do it should be from young people. That'll never happen, so you've gotta have anarchy. There's no way old people are going to just sit back, they're just going to tell young people to do too much. It's like all those old people trying to stop the Pistols thing. They're like parents."

He sneered, and took a sip of champagne.

"This nostalgia thing, I don't like it. First the 40s, then the 50s, then the 60s. Why no 70s? I think every-

were starting to crop their hair, her's was growing out.

But she isn't what the demographics experts call an opinion-former among the mostly Jewish, middle-class teenage femininity that con-

stitutes her peer group in suburban Burnt Oak, where she lives.

"You're joking?? At first they really had something against me. Now they sort of take it. Laugh.

They're into what I was into three years ago. Clumpy shoes . . . What gets me is something will come out and if one person gets it, then they all get it. They're just like clockwork.

"I bought some plastic sandals a couple of years ago,

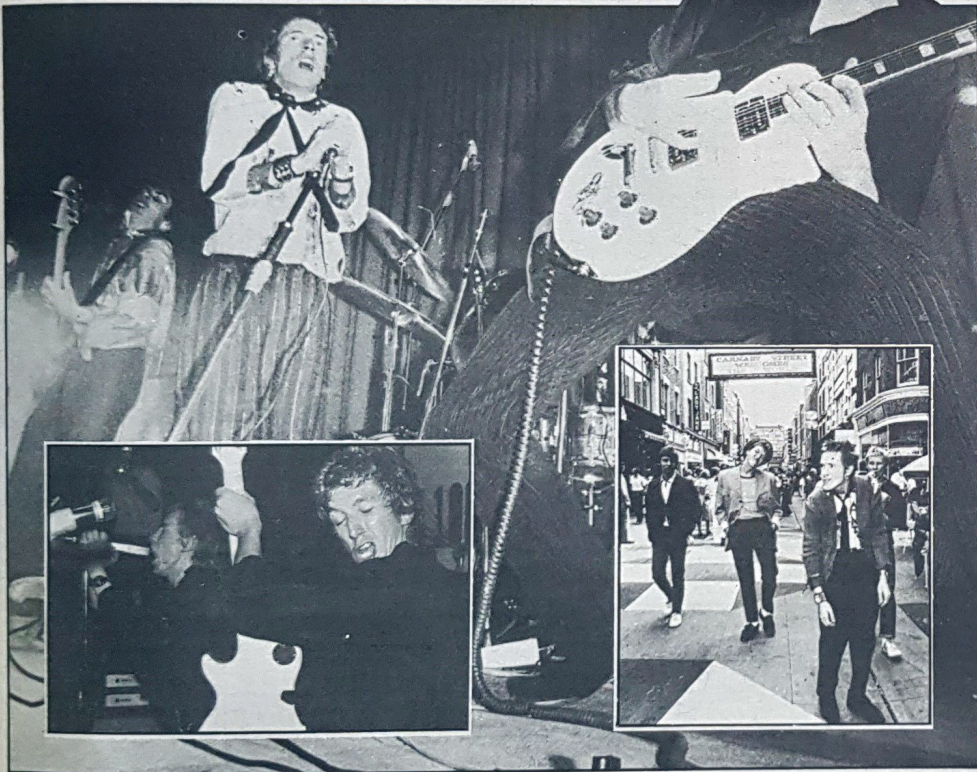
and they really laughed at me, but now everyone's getting them and they turned around to me and said, 'Why don't you get a pair?' They forget that they used to laugh at you . . . You get used to it."

The party carried on.



Special

"I go home once a week to have dinner with my mother."
— Sid Vicious



twinset comes up and appropriates his attentions.

Two weeks later in Manchester the experience is repeated, Glen suddenly launching into the bass explosions that are now a staple of their sound. 'Anarchy In The UK' is unveiled.

A week later, Steve relaxes in Louise's. Suddenly, he is no longer just another young man playing guitar, but basks in the self-assurance of one who accepts attention as a matter of course.

John: "I can't see much future in this country... Ten years... I dunno, I'm not a prophet like Richard Williams — ask him. He's the problem — complacent cynics, they've seen it all before, they've been through it, man, they've experienced it. They're just wapping the way bloody parents do."

"What do I care about the end, I'm having fun now. I don't want to die an old fool on a pension."

August: The crowd at the 100 Club continues to grow. Music biz figures start turning up en masse. The band record seven tracks on a four track deck in their own studio, over-dubbing and mixing on 16 track facilities. Malcolm starts shopping for a recording contract. In the middle of what is the music biz's "dead" period, the band work continually.

On Bank Holiday Weekend play a midnight concert at the Screen on the Green cinema. Launched in a blaze of smoke bombs, it is their best gig yet. Steve raging away in simultaneous feedback, noise and ringing, crystal clear rhythms, Paul and Glen thundering like a stampeding herd of cattle. John knocks a capped tooth out with the mike during the second song. The blinding pain provokes an unbelievable performance.

*We don't care about long hair
We don't wear flares
On my face, not a trace
Of reality
I don't work
A lot of speed's all I need
I'm a lazy sod
(I'm A Lazy Sod)*

"As a musical thing I found them very unmusical — perhaps the fact that it wasn't disciplined prevented me from liking it. I could see it was valid; you can't knock anything that has an audience."

"It's right for now because they have an image but I can't see it going anywhere further than where it is right now, and when you sign someone you have to think in terms of five years."

We had a meeting today and we'd be interested in signing them for a single or an EP and see what happens. If their manager was sensible and didn't want the world." — Dave Dee, A&R Manager, Atlantic Records.

September: The Pistols play in Paris — their first gig outside Britain — inaugurating a new, 2,000 capacity disco. The promoters haven't advertised them due to nervousness — most of the capacity crowd have no knowledge of them. John wears a black bondage suit dripping with pins, swastikas, crucifixes and chains. Half the crowd love them and dance wildly, half hate them and take it out on the outrageously dressed English fans, punching and pawing them.

After a short Northern tour they play Chelmsford maximum security prison. Steve draws a few wolf whistles, John — in his homemade anarchy shirt — draws a lot. The band play clean and precise, John taunting the prisoners mercilessly. They love it, returning the ripostes with gusto. By the end the prison hippie breaks the rules and starts dancing — he isn't stopped.

At the 100 Club Punk Festival the audience stretches around the block. As the band hit the stage there is a mass epidemic of pogo-dancing. John looks at the seething crowd with a satisfied grin: "Great." As the evening progresses the band tread a thinner and thinner line between order and chaos. The encore of 'Anarchy' is a blazing carnage of feedback, noise and head crushing rhythm. It is great.

John: "There'll always be

Continues next page

playing in the provinces. Record three tracks with Chris Spedding. John Curd, promoter, refused to give a quote, not wanting to sully his mouth with the name Sex Pistols. He had seen the band at their first 100 Club gig and thought them awful. His wife confirmed that he had thrown

Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren out when the latter asked Curd to book the band at Roundhouse.

*Betcha thought you had it all worked out
Betcha thought you knew what I was about
Betcha thought you solved all*

*my problems
Fuck you — all my problems
Problems, got a problem.
The problem is you
What you gonna do?
(Problems)*

July: Get a decent p.a. Play the Midnight Court at the Lyceum,

the largest stage they have encountered, in the largest venue. They deal with a bad case of nervousness, but as Steve relaxes he takes off in shuddering, blasting experimentation, face screwed up in concentration as he searches for unheard notes. Afterwards, a young girl in denim

(?) Rock



MARK P

"I may be sounding dramatic but I wanna go out and hear the sounds that I like every night, I wanna have to choose what gig to go to. We need somethin' happening daily, if it don't get that way we can forget the whole thing right now!" — Sniffin' Glue 3.

MARK P, 19, had worked in a bank in Deptford for two years and read the music papers every week. He was nurturing this idea, sparked by a Lenny Bruce sketch about aeroplane glue. Then he read a record review by Nick Kent, whose opinion he respected and rushed out and bought 'The Ramones'. On it was the chain-saw-sharp song, 'Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue'. Sparks flew. Two weeks later his rock fanzine Sniffin' Glue was on the streets.

Although he had eclectic tastes — reggae, Little Feat, Bowie — the continual need for an energy-fix caused him to rave in its xeroxed pages about Eddie and the Hot Rods, BOC and (natch) the Ramones. He wore flares and shoulder length hair — strictly in keeping with Sniffin' Glue's spirit — was punkish enough to rate glue a better high than acid because it destroyed more brain cells.

He also relished the put-on. In July he saw the Sex Pistols. His hair was semi-short. Sniffin' Glue 2 was under way. He kept returning to the 100 Club, hacking his hair ever shorter with a pair of K-Tel clippers, adopting drainpipes. ("You just can't help getting into it!" he wrote in SG3.) A band he discovered were

renamed the New Beatles and a four song showcase was plotted for tunes like 'You're A Dirty Poser' — the lyrics to be spontaneously made up by describing prominent cases in the audience — and 'We Don't Want No Anarchy' ("We just wanna sing out of key"). He left the bank.

By the time SG3 was in preparation he had appointed former school friend Steve Mick co-editor. The two fed off each other — who else would confront Johnny Rotten with the supposition that he only wrote 'Anarchy In The UK' in order to sell Sex's anarchy shirts?

"If they sing about anarchy Rotten can't do nuffin' about it," asserts Mark. "He's a singer. Rock and roll bands are never going to change anything on that level. If they were so concerned with anarchy — I mean, contracts with a major record company and all that business. Fuckin' 'ell, they want to make money as a rock and roll band."

Sniffin' Glue 3 represented a major leap, with a photo cover and the Damned's first interview, littered with photos and contact strips, and still xeroxed. But it's the writing that grabs the attention. Mark has an enviable ability to muck in with the action while simultaneously retaining an objective viewpoint that is unfailingly accurate, while Steve has the benefits of a first year English Lit. course — he maintains he only went to college for the exercise afforded by the daily three mile walk — to draw from. Unfortunately, they feel SG is



Sniffin' Glue magazine



THE DAMNED Sex Pistols + 7669 Pop +

already too successful.

"There's all sorts of business," sighs Mark. "I don't like all that, but I've got to get used to it. I do it because it's so easy to write. I like people coming up and saying, 'You've got a great mag'. I like to pose like anyone else."

But success can't stop them. Only a week after the 100 Club Punk Festival SG3½ had hit the streets with a fine critique of the two days. Print run was 10 copies, since they couldn't afford more. (Or as the blurb under the title says, 'This issue is rare... Rip it up and it'll be rarer!')

What can the future hold for such men?

Mark: "I'd love to be a singer... every record, I used to make out I was the artist. Best Bryan Ferry take-offs ever, I do."

Steve: "I told the college I wanted to be a leader of men."

"The great ignorant public don't know why we're in a band — It's because we're bored with all that old crap. Like every decent human being should be."

— John Rotten



SEX PISTOLS

John Rotten (vocals), Steve Jones (guitar), Glen Matlock (bass), Paul Cook (drums).

I am anti-Christ
I am an anarchist
Know what I want and I know where to get it
I wanna destroy the passer-by
I wanna be anarchy
No dogsbody
(Anarchy In The UK')

1975: Paul, Steve and Glen rehearse every night in a warehouse in Hammersmith, playing a repertoire of Small Faces and Who. Paul played guitar, Steve sang, there was a second guitarist and a variety of drummers.

Paul: "We were a good band — really tight and solid, but we never played publicly because it wasn't going anywhere."

November 1975: Play first gig at St. Martins Art College. The plugs are pulled after 10 minutes. Play Central School Of Art the next night. They are allowed to finish their 30 minute set.

December: Get gigs around outskirts of London by gate-crashing colleges, posing as the support band. Alienate most people. A small group, mostly young, suddenly find a band to be excited about again.

John: "The great ignorant public don't know why we're in a band — it's because we're bored with all that old crap. Like every decent human being should be." 1976

January: Get first real boost playing at Andrew Logan's party.

February: Play the 100 Club on new band night. Glen decides mid-set he's had enough of John's out of tune singing and tells him in no uncertain terms. John retaliates by pulling over Paul's cymbals. Paul rushes off and demolishes the dressing room. Steve breaks all his strings. John storms offstage and out the exit. Booker Ron Watts is impressed enough, and by their audience, to start booking them regularly.

March: Play the Marquee supporting Eddie and the Hot Rods. The first time they have

monitors, they go a bit wild. John throws some chairs. They are banned.

"I heard about them through friends quite early on. They looked and sounded good — most groups are pretty boring, they weren't boring. I find it very weird all that about them not playing music. If they're notable for one thing it's that. They're always in time and in tune. I can't understand why some of the Melody Maker have chosen to attack them on the very thing that is their strength. Obviously, they've got cloth ears." — Chris Spedding, musician.

April: Promote their own gig at the El Paradise strip club in Soho. Support at the Nashville several times. Get heckled a lot.

May/June: Residency at the 100 Club, now the only place in London they can play. The audience slowly grows; with headline gigs the hecklers vanish. When it's time to play the band just step onstage out of the audience. New songs are constantly being introduced. Start

From previous page

something to fight — apathy's the main thing. All those silly bastards... The *Melody Maker* telling us what bands to like every week, and they go off like sheep and rabid dogs and do. The brainless generation."

"When I saw them at the Nashville my first impression was that they were too unattractive, but I went back to the press built up. I went up to Barbarella and that impressed me. They looked and sounded so new, which was a major criterion in my interest."

"They have a very good mainstream rock appeal overlaid with their own uniqueness. The guitar is very fresh and Johnny's singing is very unique. They've improved one hell of a lot — the improvement ratio is enormous — and that's what music needs."

— Chris Parry, A&R Manager, Polydor Records.
Paul: It's great the way all this is getting up the old rats' noses. I wanna be an anarchist.
Get pissed.
(Anarchy In The UK)

All songs copyright 1976 Sex Pistols/Glitterbest



Rotten dons stage threads, Jones embraces door.

"I don't understand why people think it's so difficult to learn to play guitar. I found it incredibly easy. You just pick a chord, go twang, and you've got music."

— Sid Vicious

THE CLASH

Joe Strummer (vocals, guitar), Mick Jones (guitar, vocals) Paul Simonon (bass), Terry Chimes (drums)

"I formed (the 101ers) with my sweat. I slugged at it. Then I met these others. Before I used to think I was a crud. Now I realise I'm the King and I've decided to move into the future." — Joe Strummer, *Melody Maker*, July 24, 1976

In 1973, Joe Strummer terrorised South Wales as part of the Vultures. He turned up in London in 1975 on the tail-end of pub-rock, rapidly rising through the ranks as main madman with the 101ers. Then, in early 1976...

"All of a sudden it was old-fashioned and boring. How many times can you sing 'Roll Over Beethoven' and not get bored? About 150 times, I reckon."

He left. He had met the other three in the street a week before. They had been together two months. They joined forces.

Mick, the psychic poet of the

group, isn't too forthcoming about his past except to admit he's been in bands before. There are vague mentions of a group that almost made an appearance on "Top Of The Pops". A spy reports he used to be seen around the Royal College of Art dances, looking as much like Keith Richards as possible.

Now he looks like Mick Jones. His black hair is short, he wears a pencil-thin, old black jacket with a broken plastic VOX logo pinned to the chest, pencil-thin black leather pants and needle-pointed black winklepickers. He favours a black shirt with painted yellow stripes, or perhaps a tie splattered with paint. The latter fashion has been picked up from Paul.

Paul was an artist. From the evidence of the half finished fresco on the back wall of the Clash's rehearsal studio, he favoured a hard-edged realism. Getting bored with the task of finishing it, one day he decorated his beat-up brown shoes with a dribble of yellow paint. They looked great.

Joe: "And then you swing your arm a little wider and it gets on your clothes."

THE DAMNED

Dave Vanium (vocals), Bryan James (guitar), Ray Burns (bass), Rat Scabies (drums).

THREE months ago, when the Damned could count the number of gigs played on one hand (they can still count them on two), Rat Scabies had an axiom. He and Bryan had been trying to put a band together since 1975, when the Sex Pistols was still just a fantasy, but as many of the increasing number of people at the 100 Club dissatisfied with merely being part of the audience are discovering, finding the right people for a band is like the search for El Dorado. By the time the Damned first conquered a stage, the second new-wave London band, they were six months behind the Pistols.

Rat always failed to see the humour as he vehemently maintained, "If we'd been together six months ago we'd have beaten the Pistols, then everyone would be talking about us as the first band."

Rat, 19 and egotistical and bursting with hi-speed unlimited energy, is a little vague about his damming genesis. *Sniffin' Glue* 3 reveals Dave Clarke as initial inspiration, but he readily admits only to two years solid drumming. The Damned is his first "serious" group. Merely see him on stage belting the bejezus out of his kit and you'll understand why drums are his chosen weapons. "It's getting to hit things, isn't it?"

Before music took over, Rat and Ray both worked as janitors at the Fairfield Hall, Croydon. On Saturdays they were terrorists of the terraces. During Christmas, 1974, Ray, aka Captain Sensible, saw T. Rex and felt the urges... a bass was the simplest instrument to learn.

Bryan is the only one with previous experience in working rock 'n' roll combos. Before the Damned it was London SS, and before that the Bastards. Needless to say, his musical tastes run towards the Dolls and the Stooges — in fact, the sublimely tacky spider-web embroidered jacket he usually wears onstage is a relic from Stooges guitarist James Williamson.

Dave was found in classic Tin Pan Alley style, a face in the regular Sex Pistols audience that looked like a singer. He was perfect in that he had never previously sung; no preconceptions. He pays lip-service to the currently de rigeur denial that he wasn't influenced or inspired by Rotten and Co.



Damned, (l-r) Bryan James, Rat Scabies, Dave Vanium, Ray Burns.

"Actually," he deadpans, "I wanted to start a funeral parlour. But the rates were too high."

When not prowling the stage, Dave, 17, works as a grave-digger. The Damned's ethos is high-energy, "because no-one else around is". They play loud, hard and fast. Since they do so few gigs and don't believe in rehearsing much, the improvement can be measured visibly from date to date. More frequent playing, whether to an audience or an empty rehearsal room, would cinch them so tight there wouldn't be room to breathe. And then we might experience some real raw power.

Until now Bryan has written the songs, but new tunes seem to be much more of a band effort. Their choice of oldies centres on the Doll's 'It's Too Late', the Beatles' 'Help!' and the Stooges' '1970'.

"We were playing 'Help!' over at Bryan's," says Rat. "And I suggested it as a good song to do. Not all that dinky, musically playing that goes on in it, but the general feel."

"I used to be really into all that — how well each musician was playing — but I've gotten beyond that. You're a band and you play as a band and project as a band. And if you can't do it as a band then you're not a musician."

Unlike the Pistols and the Clash, they're not interested in projecting any unique sartorial sense. Heavens, Rat and Dave even wear flares!

Dave: "I don't like being dictated to about what clothes I should wear."

Rat: "Yeah, you want to wear what's comfortable."

Brian: "It's like politics for a band to say you should wear this or that — it's just as bad. You play in London and the audience is super-cool because they don't know if it's hip to applaud, but you go to High Wycombe and you get all these guys who look like fucking hippies from the sticks. They don't know what's happening, they just come along to enjoy it; they go wild."

Ray: Adjustiv tv screen shaped red plastic shades and says nothing.

While the Pistols and the Clash set their sights on the First Division record companies, the offbeat independents that have been formed to cater for the music the majors overlook have taken the Damned under their auspices. Skydog has been

hampered by being headquartered in France and Chiswick didn't move fast enough, so Stiff Records has the honour of releasing the group's first single, 'New Rose/Help!', in a couple of weeks.

Produced by Nick Lowe, it was recorded in two hours and mixed in another two, total cost £46. Although 'Help!' is amusing, it's 'New Rose' that grabs the attention, hammered along by a killer riff and some ridiculous drumming, it's 2.30 neatly bisected by a blazing solo.

And if you think anything recorded that fast can't be "music", take note of United Artists' A&R chief Andrew Lauder's reaction upon being introduced to the band via the single. He loved it.

Tony Blackburn, are you man enough for the Damned?

"I don't believe in sexuality at all. People are very unsexy. I don't enjoy that side of life. Being sexy is just a fat arse and tits that will do anything you want. I personally look upon myself as one of the most sexless monsters ever."

— Sid Vicious

(?) Rock

Mick: "Now we're just exploring it — a new rock and roll fashion. The access of it. You've got to do something between gigs, don't you?"

Paul only went to art school because he didn't like working. He'd been wanting to play music for a long time, but it took Mick to force him into it. He learned to play by putting his fingers on the bits of paper the others pasted to appropriate spots on the neck, and playing along with the reggae singles on the rehearsal room jukebox. None of which prevents him from blasting through sets with the authority of a veteran, moving and playing with power, speed, menace and grace.

Terry has three years drumming under his belt. He was inspired by his older brother, a kettle drummer in an orchestra. Although he's played in a variety of aggregations, this is his first serious effort.

Originally, there was also Keith Levine. A third guitarist, he gave the music a real punch, but it needed a good p.a. and sound balance to get the guitars properly meshed and the lyrics audible. After three gigs he left, for reasons undisclosed.

The music is fairly mainstream. It recognised tradition. But it lives in the present. It is very fast, very hard, and very short. They don't talk between numbers, except for Mick or Joe to stomp in a frantic '1-2-3-4'. They move like maniacs, and it looks fantastic, but they lack

presence. They need to play to an audience every night for six months, then — watch out.

Lyrics have only been audible at the last gig — the fourth — but show a penchant for direct lust and direct politics. They're usually very specific. 'Janie Jones', for example, about a bored office exec reading *The Sun* and dreaming of being either side of a two-way mirror — 'He's in love with the Janie Jones world. But he hates his point of view'. Other titles are 'White Riot', 'Protex Blue', '1977', 'I'm So Bored With You', 'Deadly Serious'. Like the other bands, at the moment they show no interest in hanging around after 30.

Paul: "By then we'll be old and boring, we'll give up and help young kids on the street."

"Like professors," proffers Bernard, their manager.

"Yeah," muses Joe. "Become coaches."

Mick: "A lot of the things we do is to encourage kids to do it themselves and be creative themselves. Be honest with themselves."

Joe: "That's the important thing to be good. To be honest."

In 1977 there's knives in W11 It ain't so lucky to be rich Because there's sten guns in Knightsbridge Danger, stranger You'd better paint your face No Elvis, Beatles, Rolling Stones, in 1977 (1977)

"I've only been in love with a beer bottle and a mirror."

— Sid Vicious

EDDIE & THE HOT RODS

Barrie Masters (vocals), Dave Higgs (guitar), Paul Gray (bass), Steve Nicol (drums)

The Rods were the first non-teenybop/charts oriented band in some years to concentrate on singles rather than an album — also the attitude of the Pistols and the Damned — and have been known at the more eccentric gigs to spend the night performing requests, with perhaps a lacing of 'Whole Lotta Love' and 'Interstellar Overdrive'.

ALTHOUGH THE Rod's aesthetics are far removed from most of their new-wave brethren — a lyrical concern with classical romance and teen pursuits, the wearing of flares, a taste for psychedelia and American oldies — and some would say there is no connection (Mark P points out that the Rods are pretty conventional; "they'll play 'Ammer-smiff Odeon just like the Feel-gods. The 'ot Rods audience is 'ippies who want to rock 'n' roll."), they share that all-consuming lust for high energy attack. At their peak, in 'Writing On The Wall' or 'Get Out Of Denver' say, they pack the devastation of a well aimed A-bomb. And the mass audience that the Rods are picking up are going to tune in to the Pistols (if they do) primarily for the same reason: fast, exciting, loud, noisy rock that sounds and feels great.

in a "moment of oblivion" one night last year, the result of some "very simple music" — it might have been the Stooges", decided to have a go at trying to do it on stage.

"The real problem was finding people you could work with."

He already knew Peter, but it wasn't until the Sex Pistols' first Manchester concert that the group was completed. Pete and Steve had come early to meet respective potential group members and Malcolm McLaren introduced them, mistakenly thinking that each was the person the other was waiting for.

Their music is hard, crude, and on the Punk Festival's showing, very powerful. With the exception of Shelley they tend to stand still. Devoto spitting stark, intense lyrics over chopping, meatcleaver rhythms. At the 100 Club they succeeded in driving a large number of the audience from the room, a difficult achievement.

"It's nice for that to happen sometimes. It makes you feel like you've been there."

As in London, suitable venues are few. They wanted to get a residency at the Ranch, a local bar and disco, but they started driving the regulars out. So, like most new-wave bands, they can count their gigs on ten fingers.



Pete Shelley of the Buzzcocks

THE BUZZCOCKS

Howard Devoto (vocals), Pete Shelley (guitar), Steve Diggle (bass), John Maher (drums)

THE ONLY non-London band, the Manchester based Buzzcocks are typical of many of the bands in that their formation was almost an accident after months of half-realised ambition. Devoto,

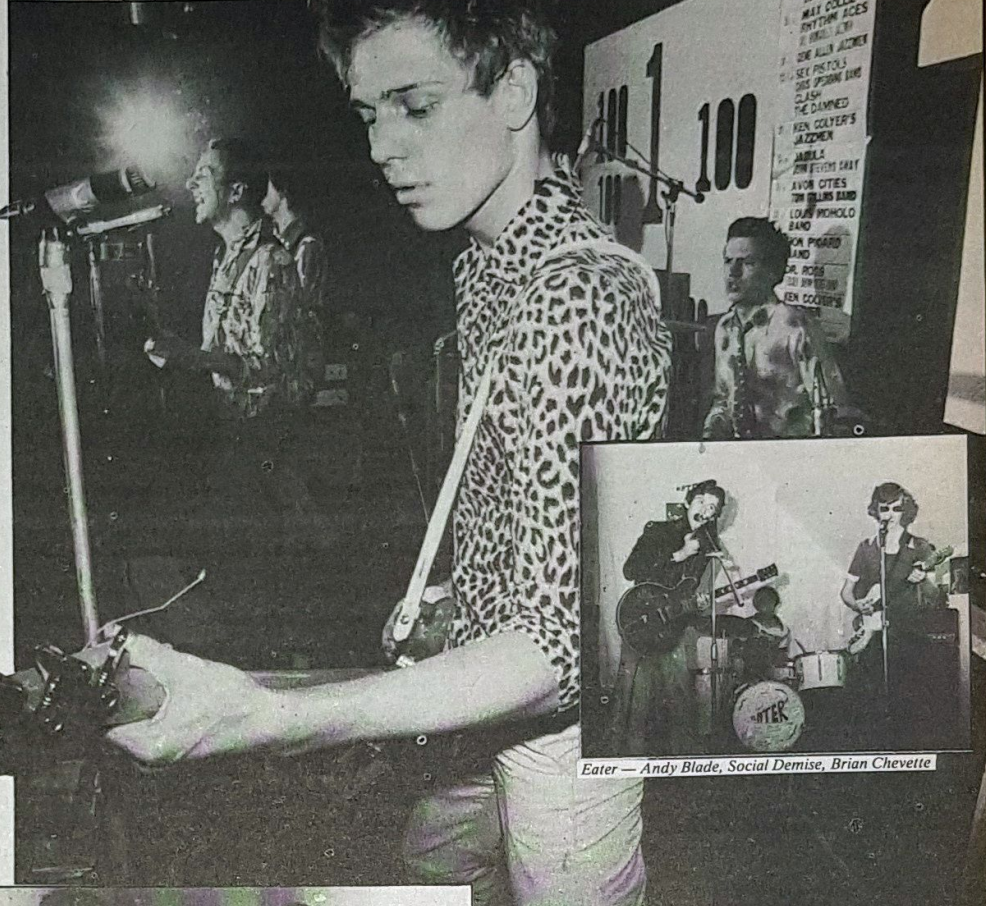
Special

"All the guys around me were forming bands, and they had heroes to look up to. But I didn't have anyone. I didn't want to look like or be Joni Mitchell. I didn't even want to be Fanny. Then it suddenly occurred to me that I didn't have to have a hero, I could pick up a guitar and just play.

"It's not so much why I started playing as why I didn't play before."

— Vivien

The Clash



Pic: Ray Stevenson



Eater — Andy Blade, Social Demise, Brian Chevette



Sheebs (right) I-r — the very lovely Sid Vicious, Steve, Marco and Siouxsie



Ray Stevenson



The Vibrators — Knox & John Ellis

SUBWAY SECT

Vic Godard (vocals), Robert Miller (guitar), Paul Myers (bass), Paul Smith (drums)

AGED 18 and 19, from Mortlake, they formed because, Paul Myers says, being unemployed "got boring during the days". Robert has been playing three months, his Fender Mustang inches south of his chin à la Pacemaker era Gerry Marsden. Smith has played for four weeks. Although influenced by the Sex Pistols, they have a strong originality and identity. Myers and Smith are solid and uncomplicated, while Miller overlays a fast strummed rhythm, varying it for the "solos". Godard sings and chews gum at the same time, presenting simple, interesting lyrics. They don't move much on stage, looking bored without it being affected.

Musical tastes include Television, the Velvet Underground, first heard a year ago after listening to Lou Reed's solo work — "And then we didn't think much of Lou" — and the New York Dolls — "But they weren't serious". Interestingly, they are unfamiliar with the other new-wave staples, the Small Faces and early Who.

Their biggest problem is finding a rehearsal room cheap enough for them to rehearse every day; they credit Malcolm McLaren with getting them before the public eye. "Otherwise we'd still be playing among ourselves."

EATER

Andy Blade (guitar), Brian Chevette (guitar), Paul Flynn (bass), Roger Bullen (drums)

PROBABLY THE youngest band, and thereby a source of trouble. Fourteen year old drummer Social Demise couldn't manage both school and the group, so 15 years old Andy and Brian were introduced by Rat Scabies to 14 year old Roger, a pint-sized powerhouse, who in turn knew Paul Flynn.

Together in one form or other since Christmas, they initially played pubs and parties around their native Finchley. The one "top class" gig was in Manchester two weeks ago, promoted by themselves.

Apart from Alice Cooper's 'Eighteen' — "I heard it in 1971, a year after it came out," says

Andy, "It was one of the best songs I've ever heard." — the songs are original, including 'Bedroom Fix', a homage to 'Lou and the Velvet'. The problem is all of them are taken at an irritating tempo midway between fast and slow — faster, please — and also need to be much shorter.

Apart from the above named groups, Andy and Blue also share the scene's general like for the Dolls, having first encountered them stumbling and blasting 'Jet Boy' on the *Old Grey Whistle Test*.

VIBRATORS

Knox (vocals, guitar), John Ellis (vocals, guitar), Pat Collier (bass), John Edwards (drums)

THE GRAND-DADS of the scene, with an average age of 23/24, though Knox readily admits to 31. He also admits that to an extent they're cashing in on the scene's publicity, "but we like playing hard and fast, and kind of got roped in".

Unlike the other bands, the

"Civilisation will drag on for ages, because everything that's ever come up to challenge it, the media cotton onto it and turn it into a big commercial joke until it's a household thing. That's how they survive... Anarchy will only succeed if it erupts everywhere at the same time, but it won't will it? They'll hang on as long as they can." — Vivien

"I did like the New York Dolls a lot — their ambiguity and also the racket they churned out. I was very impressed by their ordinariness and how bad they were."

— Sid Vicious

Vibrators began in pubs, since those were the only bookings they could get, but bookings are now being phased out. Also unlike the others they include a lot of oldies, from 'Great Balls Of Fire' to 'I Saw Her Standing There' to 'Interstellar Overdrive' to '1969'. Their own numbers include 'Claws In My Brain', 'Down On The Street', and their rather lame theme song, 'We Vibrate'. (Perhaps they should change it to 'Whole Lot Of Shakin' Goin' On'.)

Although Knox reckons they're trying to entertain with an emphasis on fun, in the confines of the 100 Club it comes across as condescension. They're also hindered by an obvious lack of cohesion in attitude and presentation — they desperately need to rethink their stance, and decide

unanimously whether they're part of the scene or not.

As Rat Scabies said, "I've got nothing against age, it's attitude that matters."

THIS ROUND-UP is already obsolete. The Jam haven't been mentioned (give us a call, lads — your telephone's not working), and there are the French bands — Whos Art, European Sons, the Black Head Gang, Stinky Toys — who, apart from the latter, remain in unknown quantity. Caroline Coon in her Punk Festival report in *Melody Maker* mentions the Babes and 1919 Altera Motive Five. There's a new band every week. And that's the way it should be. Stay tuned for further developments.