



(Credit: John Joe Coffey)

MUSIC

Relive The Clash's first-ever live performance in 1976

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When Joe Strummer witnessed the Sex Pistols live in action in 1976, everything he previously thought about music changed instantaneously. Suddenly, he realised that his band, The 101ers' time had passed, and he needed to reinvent himself as an artist.

Strummer wanted to immerse himself within London's emerging punk scene and be a part of the new, exciting wave of groups who were here to raise hell. The singer always had a political streak, and The Sex Pistols allowed him to realise a new way of making political music, one that could strike a chord with the youth.



"After seeing the Pistols I thought the 101'ers might as well give up there and then," Strummer later recalled to *The Independent*. "The other members couldn't see it and we were beginning to splinter," he added. Meanwhile, Mick Jones added about the impact of the Pistols: "You knew straight away that was it, and this was what it was going to be like from now on. It was a new scene, new values—so different from what had happened before. A bit dangerous."

They could smell danger and desperately wanted to hop aboard the mayhem. When Strummer received the invitation to join the group as their lead singer, he didn't have to think twice about making a decision. He knew the 101ers were yesterday's news, and punk was the future.

After a month full of rehearsals and getting a grip on their sound, The Clash headed up to Sheffield on July 4th, 1976, to make their grand arrival. Fittingly, The Sex Pistols were the headliners that evening at The Black Swan as Joe Strummer, Mick Jones, and Paul Simonon played together for the first time.

"We had a song we did called 'Listen'," Strummer recalled. "Which had a bassline that went up in a scale and then down a note to start, and Paul was so nervous that he just kept going up the scale, and we all fell over laughing 'cos we didn't know when to come in."

"It was the first time that I had ever played on stage," Paul Simonon added. "The night before it felt frightening but once we were on the way there then I began larking about. I tied one of Keith's shoes to a piece of string and hung it out of the back of the van - the door had to be open anyway so we could breathe."

The bassist continued: "So there we were sitting with all the amps and luggage with a plimsoll bouncing around behind us and all the cars behind us slowing down to avoid it. But the moment that we walked out on stage it was like I was in my own living room. I felt really comfortable. Things went wrong during the evening, and Mick had to come over and tune my guitar, but it didn't bother me. I just wanted to jump around, but Mick wanted it to be in tune."

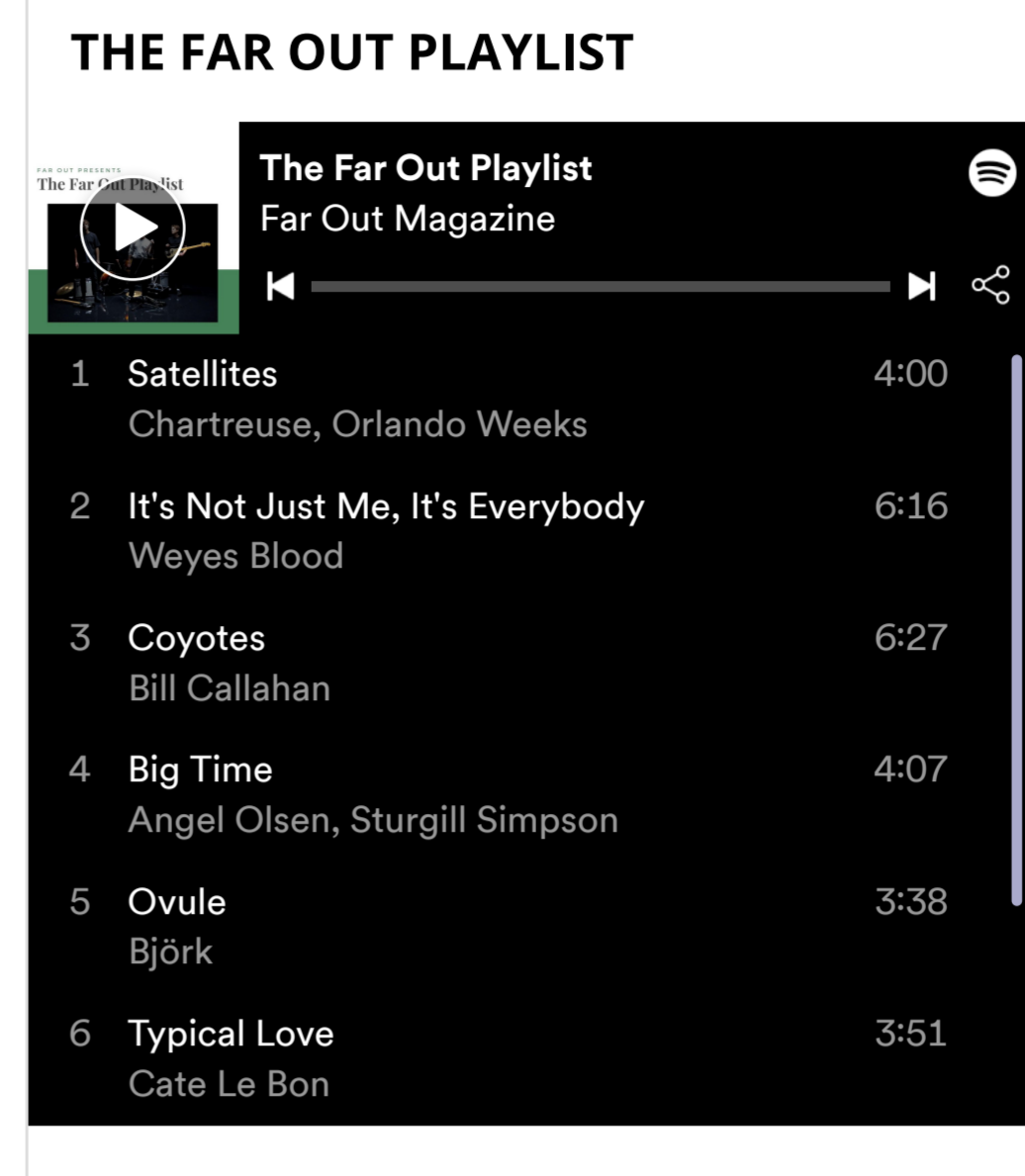
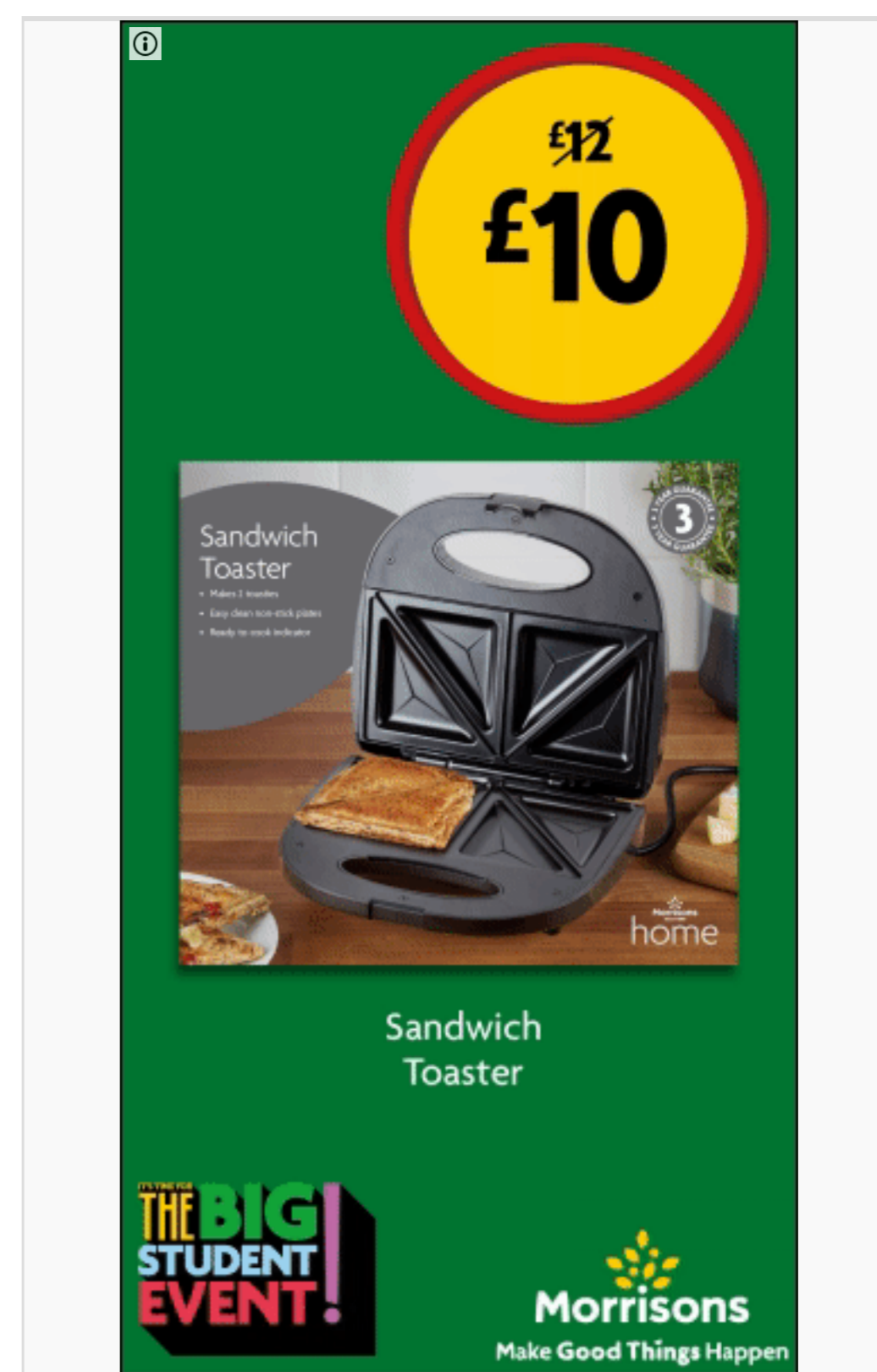
The first show might have been full of glitches, but all the snags across the show only added to the delicious chaos and set a precedent of what to expect over The Clash's reign of terror across the following decade. Across this time, they would prove that they were the only band that matters.

The Clash's full setlist from that evening sadly isn't available. It is known, however, that they did treat the Sheffield crowd to a rendition of 'Protex Blue', a track that later appeared on their self-titled debut. The band also exhibited their reggae influences with a cover of The Maytals hit 'Pressure Drop'. Not only was this inclusion a sign of things to come for the band, but it also showed from the off that they were more than just another punk group.

These wide-ranging influences made The Clash stand out like a sore thumb, and just six months later, they signed to CBS Records despite only playing a smattering of shows. Once The Sex Pistols self-imploded, The Clash were there to pick up the mantle and become the voice of a pissed-off generation.



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