

The Clash London

BEFORE WE begin, some clarification.

For a start, this isn't intended to be a 'review' as such; consider it rather as a somewhat peripheral cluster of observations regarding one The Clash.

Here's what you need to know: The Clash are a quintet, and feature among their number Mr. Joe Strummer, lately lead singer with the recently deceased 101'ers. The 101'ers were a sporadic but sometimes excellent rock 'n' roll band and all that remains of them is 'Key To Your Heart', a killer single (on Chiswick) and a few fond memories. The Clash are also a rock 'n' roll band. And there the resemblance begins and ends.

The Clash were unveiled last Friday evening in a small but rather splendidly decorated — by the lads themselves, no less — rehearsal room in darkest Chalk Farm, London.

The 'audience' was size-wise commensurate with the room — an informal gathering of press (including our own Mr. Ingham — he's that tastefully-attired gent languidly sipping his *vin blanc*, in the salvaged barber's chair) plus a handful of other hacks (that's me over there with the grubby jeans and acne scars) and potential bookers.

The invite was for nine. For an hour or so we amused ourselves with liquid refreshment from the amply-filled bar and music from the tastefully furnished juke-box.

Time. Five striking looking gentlemen strolled in. The four who carried guitars plugged them in to the waiting amplifiers, the fifth took his place at the drum-kit.

The gentleman on the extreme left (he looked not unlike a slightly more vicious Keith Richard in his striped shirt, leather trousers and centre-seamed Chelsea boots) gave a hoarse count-in and . . .

And for the next forty-odd minutes it was like being hit by a runaway fire engine — not once, but again and again . . . and again.

That first number was the one though, wasn't it boys and girls?

Wasn't it just like you're sitting peacefully at home and something taps you on the shoulder and you turn around and suddenly there's King Kong.

Or a runaway fire engine.

An Atom Bomb.

A hurricane.

An avalanche.

Or all these things, suddenly and very solidly right there above you. Screaming down.

I know, I know. It was only a rock 'n' roll band. So it was, but let me tell you, it was one



THE CLASH: unstoppable technicolour energy

monstrous entity in that first few minutes. Screaming down.

Clash could make it on looks alone practically. They all have that cropped hair, skintight trousers look that helps the Pistols' Mr. Rotten look so menacing. Only, like I said, there's five of them. Also their clothing, from collar to toe is spattered and daubed with paint, from the tiny flecks that look like maybe it just happened when they decorated the hall to the stripes on the aforementioned shirt. But it doesn't look at all silly — far from it — it looks the way a lot of kids will probably be dressing before very long, as much the anti-thesis of the bearded be-denimed latterday hippie as the mods were to the rockers.

Clash have plenty of that old mod flash too — posing f'sure, but impeccably done down to the last scowling spit.

But all this — striking as it is

— is a secondary consideration, something my senses take in gradually. What hits first is the gut-curdling *power* of them. It's like the gleaming and totally unstoppable bastard son of the Pistols and the Ramones with the firepower of Status Quo. But get this — where all the aforementioned bands are basically simple, monochrome examples of electric violence The Clash generate an energy that's Technicolored Cinerama by comparison. By which I mean to dispel any notion that the music is one relentless semi-cacophony, because in all that nuclear glare there are incandescent gems of solos and references to everything from 'You Really Got Me' to *younameit*. Also, Strummer seems to have finally found his niche, his always manic deliveries finally finding their place in a compelling tapestry of sound and colour that only reveals its

full impact in the breathless silence that follows that first demonic show of hands.

Then we all breathe in and start to applaud — hesitantly at first, after all this is an 'informal' gathering — and then with increased delight.

Of course there were one or two little cock-ups, but considering the nature of the event The Clash still managed to come up with one of the most memorable debuts of the year so far.

I think they're the first band to come along who'll really frighten the Sex Pistols shitless.

I also think a hell of a lot of people are going to be knocked out by them.

And I know I can't wait to see them again, in front of a real audience this time, in a real hall.

Exciting isn't the word for it.

— GIOVANNI DADOMO