

The Clash/ Suburban Studs Birmingham

WEDNESDAY HAD been booked as Punk Night at Barbarellas, an excuse, if nothing else, for the club deejay to fall in love with the sound of his mouth flapping. It was the brainchild of the local Suburban Studs, supported by their mentors the Clash. And here lies a story.

The Suburban Studs are the band initially thought to be called the Suburban Bolts. Now that was a great name, and I'm still hoping someone at least becomes the Bolts. But the Suburban Studs . . . How mundane, how archaic, how suburban. They supported the Pistols at the 100 Club during the summer, a laughable mixture of tacky jumpsuits, tacky makeup, tacky props and tacky music. More dinosaur rock.

They then supported the Runaways, billed as Birmingham's Glam Rock Band. They realised how *recherché* they were. Simultaneously, they were encouraged to check out the Clash, playing that night at the ICA. It was instant love; they even drove down to see the band the next week. Generally rockers at heart, they were said to have changed their music and dropped all the makeup and props. Their hair was getting shorter.

On Wednesday it took about five minutes to realise that this short haired geezer chatting to us was actually the formerly ultra-long haired Studs guitarist, Keef (sic). Such is progress.

It was the Clash's finest 45 minutes. Due to PA problems only the voices were on it, the rest of the sound coming directly from the amps — just like the old days. It made for amazingly clear vocals.

'White Riot' was superb. The

Clash's anthem and view of the Notting Hill Riots, it contains all the Clash's best trademarks: great hooks and chorus, a storming rhythm, and a Clash trick of everything dropping out except for Mick Jones' guitar, dropping back in two bars later behind a thundering crack from Terry Chimes' baseball bat sized drumsticks.

'London's Burning' became 'Birmingham's Burning'. 'I'm So Bored With You' has changed to 'I'm So Bored With The USA'. Not once do the Clash falter. Every song is pared to the minimum required to get it across with maximum energy and zero flab. Which they do with such power, speed and explosion that one assumes the lack of response from first time audiences in London is due to shock — no one young has seen such manic energy except from the Who or Quo in a stadium.

But in Birmingham, the audience began to applaud more and more vigorously. 'Protex Blue', another rhythmic high point and Mick's vocal bid for the spotlight, exploded into guitar mania, but unfortunately some amps problems took the edge off the attack.

But it was the encore, 'I've Got A Crush On You', that clinched it. Joe sings about being handsome and does his visual best to look anything but pretty. This time, he excelled himself, and with Mick racing between mikes and Paul exploding and jerking, it had powerful effect.

After all this, they just stood there. Eddie Zippa wears a black vinyl suit — called Julian? — tastefully torn over one tit, singing songs the equal of the punk lyricists in our letters pages. E.G.: *'I don't care what life's about, I just want to jump and shout'*. Well, Black Sabbath aren't exactly Bertrand Russels in their social commentary, either.

But their music matches the lyrical artlessness. Stolen riffs and rhythms abound, with a penchant for Bowie. The saxist can't really play; a pity, when you consider the spaces explored by Steven Mackay on the Stooges' 'Fun House' as an example of where it could go, that he stuck to Glitter Band riffing all night.

It's a shame their music is so lacking, because they get full points for trying. — JOHN INGHAM.