

HIGH SOCIETY

Great Moments In Rock Part 4336

It's Those F...ing Punks Again!

Thousands outraged

Pith! Flue! Dolt Loon

by four-letter words

AS YOU will no doubt have noticed Fleet Street went absolutely bananas over the Sex Pistols last Thursday.

Ignition point for the biggest press ballyhoo over a rock band since the Stones relieved themselves against a garage wall almost a decade ago was the Sex Pistols' appearance on London Weekend's 'Today' programme, a teatime magazine-format show dealing principally in local news and personalities.

The furore began when the group delivered a series of four-letter words after being baited by interviewer Bill Grundy, man of fifty-two summers, six offspring and no little wit.

Needless to say the TV station's switchboard was jammed with hysterical calls from the moment John Rotten uttered his first muted ruderie.

Next morning's *Daily Mirror* carried a blow-by-blow account of the 'incident' on its front page, including a literal transcript of the offending dialogue which left only the central 'uck's in the most frequently used adjective missing, *MM*-style. An amusing irony here is that the same issue also carried a

feature on the group on page 9, part of a series on the 'outrageous' new 'pop kings'. Meanwhile *The Sun* saved the story for its notorious page three, its account of the event and mixed reactions as to who was responsible lying alongside a deliciously exploitative titpic of a doctor's daughter. The Pistols made the front page of the *Daily Express* too — under a delicious 'Fury at filthy TV chat' headline. Grundy "digusted" was pictured alongside a self-justifying "I will not admit to goading them . . . I merely followed the theme of outrage."

Later in the day Bill would make the covers of both *The Evening Standard* ('The Foul-mouthed Yobs') and *Evening News* ('Why I did it'). It was revealed that Grundy would *not* be getting the elbow for his part in the fiasco, as many 'outraged' viewers had demanded he do. *The Standard* followed up their leader with a Pistols feature on page 3, pop editor James Johnson nutshelling the entire 'punk' phenomenon and underlining his intimate acquaintance with the scene by referring to the Pistols' best known fan as 'Sid the Vicious'.

The *News* cover featured a reprinted inset by their pop specialist John Blake, suggesting that Blake had discovered and championed the Pistols an entire *three*



pic Richard Young

weeks previously. Half the *News* editorial ('Not in front of the children') was devoted to explaining that swearing was alright so long as it wasn't done with nippers around. This same attitude was taken by the 47 year-old lorry driver who kicked in his colour TV set while the Pistols were on.

Driver James Holmes confessed to being able to swear as well as anyone but didn't "want this sort of muck coming into my home at tea-time."

If Thursday's National papers were sensational, Friday's were hysterical. The news that Bill Grundy had

been suspended for two weeks ensured further widespread front page coverage. *The Sun* asked whether the Pistols were drunk when they appeared on the programme. *The Express*, under the headline 'Punk? Call It Filthy Lucre' wrote an incredibly biased story accusing EMI of cashing in on smut. And the *Daily Mail*, after carrying a news story on the front page, ran a story on page six by their TV columnist Shaun Usher lambasting the entire rock and roll industry as 'mercenary manipulators'. He talked about 'neatly suited expense-account executives who are happy to rot the fabric of society for the sake of the company balance sheet'.

Everything in fact that Orpington man would thrill to on the 8.32am up to London Bridge. Nowhere was there any reference to the sensation-seeking journalists of Fleet Street being made to turn out the most appalling load of drivel in order to satisfy the circulation lusts of their editors and proprietors by pandering to the gullibility and prejudices of their readers.

Naturally the music biz buzzed with stories — EMI had given the Pistols back their contract, A&R man Nick Mobbs (who signed them) was also getting the old heave ho.

In fact, neither rumour was

true.

So what does it all add up to? Lotsa good anti-publicity for the Pistols and their just-started national tour — an extra kick in the pants for the 'Anarchy In The UK' '45, — which is reportedly not selling as well as anticipated (possibly because EMI underestimated demand and only pressed 5,000-which, being sold out, left them empty-handed) and something to put on your front page in the absence of any grisly murders, accounts of canniballism or vivisection. Also it gets Bill Grundy *SOUNDS* Nerd Of The Week award for finding the easiest way out of a sticky situation and transferring all the blame to the Pistols.

What nobody bothered to ask was what harmful effects — if indeed there are any — a few taboo words would have on the nation's kiddiewinks. Are they worse for you than a pair of tits, for example? Will they stunt growth? Create perverts by the hundred? Encourage kindergarden vice rings?

Highly improbably effects, each and every one, the truth of the matter being that kids are probably done a heap more harm than good by being 'protected' from what is simply everyday English.

Lenny Bruce died for somebody's sins, but not Bill Grundy's. — Giovanni Dadomo.