

What will YOU say when they ask . . .



What did you do on the Punk tour, daddy?

PETE SILVERTON reports on what is 'shaping up to be an all-time classic rock 'n' roll tour'.

TO TURN up to a Sex Pistols' show nowadays is to make a statement to the world that you care about rock 'n' roll and don't give a Bill Grundy what the yellow press thinks.

And enough kids in Manchester, God bless 'em, were prepared to do just that, almost filling the Electric Circus. However, once there, they weren't quite sure what to do.

When Johnny, Glen, Steve and Paul sliced through the crowd (no folding lotus stages for them . . . yet), bounded up the steps and roared straight into 'Anarchy In The U.K.', the kids knew just what to do because they knew the song. They sang along and jumped and bumped me back into the unreceptive arms of the national daily press photographers, one of whom was trying to take his pix with his hands over his ears (try it sometime).

However, with 'Anarchy' searched and destroyed, our heroes (the Pistols and the kids) were on unfamiliar ground. The kids didn't know the songs and weren't quite sure how to react. The band were visibly tired and disorientated by the happenings for the past week (see new page for the whole story). They'd come, they'd seen, but the conquering had had to be postponed.

Local band, the Buzzcocks, opened the bill in place of the now-off-the-tour Damned. I'd seen them once before (in London) and my second

viewing only reinforced my belief that they're a second-rate, provincial Pistols copy. The lead singer was only honestly interested in performing his eyebrow massage tableau. They're the facade of the new wave with none of its substance. Their set was notable only for their mutilation of the Trogg's hoary chestnut, 'I Can't Control Myself', the evening's first outbreak of pogo dancing and the fact that a section of the audience disagreed with my sentiments — the Buzzcocks got an encore.

Then came what was probably the best received band of the evening, The Clash. I'm probably super-naturally thick-skinned but, although ex-public schoolboy turned guitarist and vocalist with the Clash, Joe Strummer, in a fit of childlike pique, had me thrown off the coach back to the hotel (I did get reinstated), I still reckon he's currently the quintessential English rhythm guitarist. As rough as a Surform. As energy-charged as a Ford Cosworth V8.

You remember that Sixties bedsit poster of Che Guevara with his eyes pointing upwards to that great Bolivia in the sky? That's how Joe looked once he'd ploughed into the set. Once, that is, he'd told them to shut down the crummy light show with the advice: "It's a bit psychedelic in here, innit? This ain't Amsterdam, y'know."

Mick Jones bust strings on his guitar, Paul Simonon flashed off his bass with the notes painted on the frets so he knows where to put his

fingers and Rob Harper, drummer for the tour, beat hell out of his kit and had lots of fun. The Clash did the greatest hits of their, so far, short career: 'White Riot' (an anti-racist anthem), 'I'm So Bored (With USA)', 'Janie Jones' and the sparkling new 'Hate And War'. Their weakest, most strained song 'Crush On You' coming as an encore to a splendid set.

Next up, the Heartbreakers, are like the Ramones with songs that have beginnings, middles and ends . . . in that order. More straight-forward rock 'n' roll than the other bands on the bill, they had the best drummer in former New York Doll, Jerry Nolan, and the craziest looking bassist in Billy Wrath — he could've stepped out of 'West Side Story'.

Walter Lure's on second guitar and the front man (guitar and vocals) is the other ex-Doll, Johnny Thunders. They'll be very good in the future but this night they were still in need of match practice and only cut loose three quarters of the way through their set. They also had a great song about a telephone conversation which ends with one of the parties hanging themselves on the phone flex.

Me, I clapped hard but the Heartbreakers weren't off to polite applause which is when I noticed . . . the stony-faced security goon standing in front of the stage. He answered to the name of John "You can write what you like about me 'cos I'm getting paid a tenner" Robinson and offered the opinion on the

evening's entertainment: "It's pure noise, and bad noise at that."

Which ain't what the kids thought at all. Nick Lomas and Billy Massacre from Clayton Bridge? "It's great. We've never seen them before. We're forming our own band as soon as our mums give us the money for the amps." The sentiments were echoed by most every kid I spoke to — they were certainly all in the process of forming bands, Stiff Kittens (Hooky, Terry, Wroey and Bernard, who has the final word) being the most grotesque offering.

I BROKE off my enquiries at that point, seeing the Pistols make their move towards the stage, and dived forward to soak up the aforementioned 'Anarchy'.

Now, as Pistols fans go, I'm very much a Johnny come lately — for a long time I thought they were very average. But I'd grown to like them and this night in the beautifully apt locale of a converted flea-pit bounded on one side by wasteland and on the other by one-third bricked off council tenements, I was finally convinced.

I could see that they were well below maximum power — getting thrown out of two hotels before lunchtime does sap your energy somewhat. But anyone who can, as Johnny Rotten did, rejuvenate the tired lines of 'Substitute' when he's evidently exhausted, has got to be one hell of a rock 'n' roller.

If Johnny was uncharacteristically quiescent, the others

almost made up for it. Glen Matlock seemed to be playing his bass in a blur of knee jumps. Steve Jones-practised calisthenics between savaging his guitar — he's beginning to justify the legend 'Guitar Hero' sprayed on his amp. And Paul Cook kept right in there with his solid drumming and torn porno t-shirt.

It wasn't really their night though. The kids were all gobbing at the stage, devoid of menace, obviously believing that was the correct behaviour at a Grundy rock-gig. Mr. Rotten's elegant (honest) belted red jerkin and soft mulberry shirt were covered with saliva by the end. "It's up to you. If you wanna keep gobbin', we won't play".

They stopped and it was into the God Save The Queen intro to the newie, 'No Future'. Difficult to make a judgement on it but it seemed a good set closer: iconoclastic, demonic and rocking.

The lights went down, came back up and 'Problems' blitzed us all one more time. It was apparently the encore but I didn't know until I was told later.

It was the end of a great gig but it was also the mark of the unease in the Pistols' set. They lacked a degree of certainty and concentration just as the crowd were unsure how to pogo.

But, no matter, it's shaping up to be an all-time classic rock 'n' roll tour. The sort that'll have your grandchildren asking you: "Where were you when the Pistols, the Heartbreakers and the Clash doing the rounds?"

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