

ON THE TOWN

Sex Pistols
Damned
Heartbreakers
Clash
LEEDS

KENNETH ANGER called James Dean "a human ashtray." Maybe he should have waited twenty years to see the self-inflicted fag burns on Rotten's arms. "It's my body and I'll do what I like with it."

The Pistols come onstage at Leeds Poly to a smattering of applause, lots of abuse and a few objects thrown at them. No way is this mob gonna be like their pogoing London supporters.

Glen Matlock & Steve Jones plug in and Paul Cook sits behind his kit as Rotten just hangs from the mike stand, rips open a can of beer, and burns the crowd with his glassy, taunting, cynical eyes. Spiky dyed red hair, death white visage, metal hanging from lobes skinny leg strides, red waistcoat, black tie and safety pins — he looks like an amphetamine corpse from a Sunday gutter press wet dream.

Something thrown from the audience hits him full in the face. Rotten glares at the person who did it, lips drawn back over decaying teeth. "Don't give me your shit," he snarls, "because we don't mess... This first number's dedicated to a Leeds councillor, Bill Grundy and the Queen — fuck ya!"

And straight into a searing rendition of the Blank Generation anthem, "Anarchy In The U.K." done even better than the single which just charted at 43. The rhythm section of Cook on drums and Matlock

BLANK GENERATION OUT ON THE ROAD

on bass are tighter than tomorrow, fully complimenting the pneumatic guitar work of Steve Jones and Rotten's deranged dementoid vocal.

It's a blistering start, but unfortunately for both the Pistols and the crowd it turns out to be the high point of the set. The crowd are way too restrained through "Lazy Sod", "No Future" and "Pretty Vacant", failing even to see the humour in the really cocked up intro of this song.

Rotten glares at them. "Your not wrecking the place", he says. "The *News Of The World* will be **REALLY** disappointed."

This gets a laugh, but the crowd don't seem to realize that the two things Rotten hates most are apathy and complacency, both of which are rife tonight at Leeds Poly.

"I 'ope you 'ate it!" he screams. "You don't like it then your know where the EXIT door is!"

Earlier he had been taking a sip from a can of beer and then handing the can to the crowd. Now he spits at them...

Even with numbers that the crowd know, like the Who's "Substitute" or the Monkees' "Stepping Stone", the punters never really get into it. Rotten's going crazy with angry frustration. A token object thrown from the audience hits him in the face. "You just stand there, you don't know whether you like it or not!"

The band eventually returns for a few more numbers. The Small Faces' "What'cha Gonna Do 'Bout It" has its lyrics changed to Want you to know that I hate you baby,

want you know I don't care," and then it's the last number, with the audience finally putting some effort into lifting the band. It's Iggy's "No Fun", arguably the definitive Pistols live number — even more so than "Anarchy".

Then they were gone and I felt for them. A string of cancelled gigs, the press labelling them Public Enemies No. 1, and a frightened element of the rock press saying they can't play (obviously a lie) — and when they finally get a chance to play the kids *ain't* all right. What a choker.

Clash opened up the evening with a great set. Hard committed, loud, brash, violent rock music, I got the impression they expected nothing from the audience or anybody else so that they didn't have the same problems as the Pistols. Joe

know why I call it dole queue then you ain't seen The Clash.

I enjoyed the Heartbreakers because they remind me of the New York Dolls — the way they play, their songs and *sometimes* their visual. With ex-Dolls Jerry Nolan on drums and Johnny Thunders on leads (both of them with neatly shorn locks as a concession to the UK) you couldn't help but compare them to their days with Johansen Sylvain and Kane.

Well, they're not as good as the Dolls *yet*, the other two members of the band being less manic than the Dolls of old, but if they live long enough they could develop into something very fine.

"I Wanna Be Loved By You" by 'Needles' Nohan, as Johnny Thunder calls him, has got hit single stamped all over it. And the Heartbreakers are certainly better than the Ramones.

I had eagerly awaited the appearance of the dole queue supremos The Damned, but they turned out to be the biggest disappointment of the night. The downer of cancelled gigs, a far too short set, and behind-the-scenes problems all contributed to the lacklustre performance.

And no one knew it better than Rat, Brian, Dave and the Cap. But I'd lay odds that next time out, anxious to prove themselves again, they'll be playing at the heights we expect from them and they expect from themselves.

Now listen good. If the pious hypocrites who rule our land ban this tour from appearing in your town then get off your lazy butt, go to the next town, or even the next town, until you get a chance to check it out.

Because if you miss it this time round, I doubt very much if you'll ever get a chance to see a tour like this again. And if you don't see it then all I can say is you are no fun.

Tony Parsons