

THE HISTORY OF

ROCK

1977

A MONTHLY TRIP THROUGH
MUSIC'S GOLDEN YEARS
THIS ISSUE: 1977



THE CLASH

"We ain't ashamed to fight"

STARRING...

DAVID BOWIE

SEX PISTOLS

FLEETWOOD MAC

PETER GABRIEL

MUDDY WATERS

ELVIS COSTELLO

LED ZEPPELIN

THE JAM

TELEVISION

AC/DC

★
FROM THE
ARCHIVES OF
**NME &
MELODY
MAKER**
★

PLUS! RAMONES | TOM PETTY | BUZZCOCKS | IGGY POP | KEITH MOON

1977

MONTH BY MONTH



Welcome to 1977

AFTER THE WIDELY publicised stirrings of the Sex Pistols at the close of 1976, punk rock has now become more than a media sensation. It is a widespread discussion, talked about in political – and increasingly even in musical – terms. Bands such as The Clash, Stranglers and Sex Pistols are actually releasing albums.

Mick Jagger has checked out the bands in New York and listened to the singles (“Chelsea, ‘Right To Work’ – that one’s awful”). Keith Moon makes a riotous trip to the Vortex club, to confront punk rock head on. Robert Plant, who has seen The Damned at the Roxy, is unconcerned. “The dinosaurs,” he memorably says, “are still dancing...”

Still, they are a little on the defensive side. Plant seems anxious to downplay punk’s youth, claiming Rat Scabies and Johnny Rotten are older than they look. They’re not – indeed Plant himself is only 28 – but generationally speaking, he may as well be a cabinet minister. He is professionally expert and enormously wealthy, but in this changed musical economy, this only contributes to his irrelevance.

His discomfort is not soothed by the press. Punk doesn’t only politicise youth and revolutionise the way in which records are made, it also effects change in music papers, which become bolder in layout, more irreverent in tone. Features by staff writers such as Tony Parsons contain important interviews with bands like our cover stars The Clash – but these only support the main thrust of his communiqué.

This is the world of *The History Of Rock*, a monthly magazine that follows each turn of the rock revolution. Whether in sleazy dive or huge arena, passionate and increasingly stylish contemporary reporters were there to chronicle events. This publication reaps the benefits of their understanding for the reader decades later, one year at a time. Missed one? You can find out how to rectify that on page 144.

In the pages of this 13th edition, dedicated to 1977, you will find verbatim articles from frontline staffers, filed from the thick of the action, wherever it may be. In court with Keith Richards. Looking at the Westway with The Clash. Being called a wanker with Keith Moon.

It is Moon, in fact, who best articulates the anxieties of his generation of musicians in 1977 when he reveals to a young punk in the Vortex a simple biographical fact.

“I’m 30,” he says.

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THE HISTORY OF
ROCK

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REX FEATURES, WARING ABBOTT / GETTY



1977

JANUARY – MARCH

IGGY POP, SEX PISTOLS,
PETER GABRIEL, AC/DC,
RAMONES AND MORE



“Not guilty”

NME JAN 15 Keith Richards in court charged with possession of LSD and traces of cocaine on a silver chain.

ON MONDAY MORNING, a gold Rolls-Royce drew up outside Aylesbury Crown Court and Keith Richards stepped out to face a two-count indictment alleging possession of LSD and cocaine.

Keith was white-faced and sombre as he entered the small courtroom, dressed in a plain black velvet suit, a white silk shirt and scarf, and stack-heeled boots. Charges were read out and both times Keith answered quietly, “Not guilty.”

The prosecution described how, just before 4am on May 19, 1976, the police received an emergency call to investigate an accident on the southbound section of the M1 motorway near Newport Pagnell. Richards’ seriously damaged Bentley had run off the motorway and into a field, ploughing through a hedge and fence.

By the car were people: Keith Richards, his son Marlon, aged seven, an American called Mr Sessler and two unidentified girls. Taken to a police interview room, Richards was searched. In an inside jacket pocket, it was alleged, was found a folded piece of paper, and inside that another piece of paper.

Police believed the stain on the second piece of paper to be LSD and arrested Richards on a charge of possessing a controlled drug.

Keith was then taken to the Newport Pagnell police station, while officers searched his car and found a silver chain, on which were attached several objects, including a vinaigrette (a scent or smelling-salt holder dated 1870 and worth £150), a miniature silver flick knife, a hollow silver tube, and a car key.

When Keith was shown the chain he denied it was his, the court was told. Keith, it was said, informed police that many members of the Stones and their entourage used the car and that the silver chain could belong to anyone. Of the jacket in which the stained paper was discovered he said, “We all wear each other’s stage clothes. I don’t know what it is.”

The court heard that forensic tests showed the silver tube on the chain to contain traces (130 milligrams) of an off-white powder, including 39 milligrams of pure cocaine.

The jury were shown two photographs from the Stones’ Leicester concert of May 15, 1976, in which, it was alleged, the chain that Keith was wearing was the same as the one found in his car. »

January 11, 1977:
Keith Richards
arrives at Aylesbury
Crown Court

CHALKIE DAVIES / GETTY



March 10, 1977: the Sex Pistols and their manager Malcolm McLaren sign a new contract with A&M outside Buckingham Palace



“We shall have to leave Britain”

The trials of trying to tour or record when you are the Sex Pistols.

MM JAN 22

The Sex Pistols have finally split from EMI, less than four months after they signed a recording contract with the company on October 16.

Leslie Hill, managing director of EMI Records, announced this week: “In accordance with the previously stated wishes of both parties and the verbal telephone agreement made on Thursday, January 6, the document terminating the contract between EMI and the Sex Pistols has now been agreed.”

Malcolm McLaren, manager of the band, was not available for comment on this announcement, which brings to an end a long series of claims and counter-claims made by McLaren and EMI over the termination of the band’s contract - as detailed in *MM* last week. No information on financial compensation for the Pistols on the loss of their contract has been revealed.

The question of who will sign the Pistols next remains open. Chrysalis remain among the contenders, as do CBS, but Polydor are out of the running. A spokesman for the company told *MM* last week that they had no interest in the Pistols.

NME MAR 12

Sex Pistols are on the brink of signing a new recording contract. Manager Malcolm McLaren told *NME* this week: “The terms of the contract have been agreed, and we are delighted with our new deal. All that remains is to put our

signatures on the dotted line. As soon as that is done, we shall be making an official announcement later this week.”

Meanwhile, as reported last week, Sid Vicious has replaced Glen Matlock on bass. According to McLaren, Matlock left because of “his different tastes and other ambitions”.

Final word from McLaren: “We shall be signing our new contract in front of Buckingham Palace!”

NME MAR 19

A&M Records have signed the Sex Pistols. The pact was sealed, as manager Malcolm McLaren forecast in last week’s *NME*, in a ceremony outside Buckingham Palace last Thursday - the significance being that A&M are rush-releasing the group’s new single “God Save The Queen” on March 25.

McLaren stressed that the two-year deal carries a guarantee of £150,000 - not £50,000 as was reported in the national press. He does not anticipate any difficulty in obtaining BBC and local radio airplay for the single. “It’s not a punk-rock version of the National Anthem, but the boys’ own genuine tribute to the Queen,” he added.

The Pistols’ main problem now is securing venues where they would be allowed to perform in Britain. They are hoping to headline a major charity concert at a London theatre next month, but this is dependent upon whether the GLC gives approval at a meeting between the Council and McLaren later this week.

At present, the Pistols are banned from appearing in virtually every major city in Britain owing to local council rulings. Said McLaren: “We want to do dates in major cities, but the ban is still in effect almost everywhere. The only possible exceptions are Liverpool and Newcastle, and they are by no means definite.”

A series of European dates are being lined up for the end of April, and the Pistols are due to record their first A&M album in May. If there is still no relaxation of the British ban, the Pistols would then tour Japan, Australia, the United States and Canada -

where, McLaren assured *NME*, the band would be welcomed.

He added: “The rest of the country will be watching our meeting with the GLC. If we are allowed to perform in London, we hope that other councils will reverse their decision. If not, we shall have to wait until after our overseas tours - because if they prove to be successful and without incident, then maybe they will open a few doors here at home.”

And if all else fails and the Pistols are not permitted to work in Britain? “We shall have to leave Britain for good,” said McLaren.

“If overseas tours are successful, maybe they will open a few doors here at home”



Long periods of time without speaking

NME MAR 12 Bob Dylan's wife files for divorce.



Bob Dylan: faces handing over half his royalties

MAYBE HIS MATZOS made crumbs in the bed. Maybe he played his guitar early in the morning. Maybe he just had too many visions of Johanna. Whatever, last week Sara Dylan filed suit for divorce from her husband Robert Allen Zimmerman on the grounds of irreconcilable differences. The couple have been married for 11 years and have five children.

The formidable Mrs Dylan has obviously acquired a taste for the good life; she is demanding not only custody of the five kids, but also half Bobby's entire possessions, including the copyrights to all his songs and their attendant royalties.

For the moment she's making do with exclusive use of the family's new Malibu home, a \$2 million house built in a highly unorthodox style that was previewed in Thrills some months back. Sara was apparently largely responsible for the house being built, while Dylan is reputed to loathe it.

Of the five Zimmerman children, eldest is from Sara's previous marriage. Jesse Dylan is said to be closer to his father than to Sara, but the others are all evidently closer to their ma. Friends of the couple have pointed to major differences in the characters of Bob and Sara, who is a former model. On the Rolling Thunder Revue, for example, Sara apparently liked to stay in top-flight hotels, and carried a large number of trunks for her clothes. Dylan, on the other hand, seemed as happy to doss down in the trailer with a change of jeans and T-shirt.

It is also said that he two would go for long periods of time without speaking to each other, not so much through hate, but because they had little to say. Others point to the strain of being married to Bob Dylan, and the strain that his public life necessarily imposes on the marriage, with attendant problems about protecting the children and so on.

According to reports from New York, Bob and Sara are currently meeting with lawyers in an attempt to end the acrimony since she filed for the divorce this past week.

Friends of the couple have said that one of her charges was that Bob "beat" her; others say that he claims she was hysterical and he merely slapped her, etc. There were also rumours that Sara was working as a waitress in a Greenwich Village cafe called The Figaro, but this proved unfounded. However, it is thought that she wants to resume her career as an actress, for she has been taking workshop classes at Lee Strasberg's Actor's Studio in Los Angeles.

News that the Dylans had split asunder was greeted with malicious glee from certain of the more cynical members of Dylan's NME fan club, who recall that the last time Dylan had woman trouble and was separated from Sara, he came up with *Blood On The Tracks*, widely reckoned to be his finest work in years (and perhaps a persuasive element in Sara and Bob reuniting). *Julie Burchill*

➤ A top-security blanket has been thrown around EMI's plans to release a Beatles live album in mid-spring. Reason for the secrecy isn't clear, as it's known that original Beatle producer George Martin is remixing the tapes of their 1964-65 Hollywood Bowl Concerts and that The Beatles themselves have given their go-ahead for the project. Release is planned for May, backed by massive TV promotion, utilising film footage from the Bowl concerts.

NME MAR 26



➤ Generation X lead guitarist Bob Andrews was hospitalised on Friday night after being hit on the head by a flying beer mug while playing the Easter Ball at Leicester University's Clare Hall. Generation X and The Boys, who were supporting, had been receiving a hail of plastic cups and empty beer cans, but halfway through the headliners' set full cans and glasses started flying. Andrews dropped to the floor, covered in blood but still playing, and later had a couple of stitches in the gash. One observer termed the aggressors "Led Zeppelin heavies", while another had them down as the rugby club. The Damned and The Stranglers recently spent an evening dodging beer cans at Essex University.

NME MAR 19

"Problems" **MM JAN 22** An inflatable pig. A full year recording. Just what is holding up the new Pink Floyd album?

PINK FLOYD'S NEW YEAR has started with a technical hitch. The band's new album - their first since *Wish You Were Here* in 1975 - has been hit by problems over the sleeve design. The album, called *Animals*, was to have been released on January 14. But this week Pink Floyd's manager, Steve O'Rourke, told the *Melody Maker*: "There have been problems with the artwork for the sleeve. It's nothing serious, but it means we've not been able to keep to the original release date."

"We still haven't fixed a definite date, although we hope to decide that over the weekend. It looks as though the sleeve will be ready in time for us to release the album on January 28."

This setback comes at the beginning of a vital three months for the Floyd, a period when they step back into the limelight. Although they have long since proved themselves one of Britain's biggest bands, the Floyd have been virtual recluses for well over a year. Their last British concert appearance was at the 1975 Knebworth Fair, a spectacular open-air show which even featured a Spitfire flying overhead. That concert was followed, in September 1975, by the release of *Wish You Were Here*.

Since then, however, nothing has been heard about the band's activities - apart, that is, from the 50-foot flying pig which, last month, was flown over London's Battersea. Photographs of the pig will be used on the *Animals* sleeve.

"The band spent the whole of last year recording the new album," claims O'Rourke. "It was finished and ready for release by Christmas, although of course we were then held up by the sleeve problems."

The album, which features just three tracks, called "Dogs", "Pigs" and "Sheep", comes at a crucial time for the band, who since *Dark Side Of The Moon*, have become victims of their own success. Their last album, for instance, sold extremely well by most bands' standards, although it was commonly regarded as something of a flop for the Floyd. *Wish You Were Here*, which received only lukewarm reviews from the critics when it was released, stayed in the *Melody Maker* chart for 22 weeks and failed to make the No 1 position.

It had been, of course, completely overshadowed by the extraordinary success of *Dark Side Of The Moon*, which first entered the chart on March 31, 1973. Although it, too, strangely failed to reach No 1, the album spent a total of 128 weeks in the chart, a feat rivalled only by Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells*.

Even now, *Dark Side Of The Moon* makes occasional appearances in the MM chart. The album also established the Floyd in the United States, where it was the band's first chart-topping album. Such phenomenal success is virtually impossible for the band to repeat, although all the Floyd's subsequent albums will be inevitably compared to *Dark Side Of The Moon*.

To promote *Animals*, therefore, the band have chosen to return to the British concert stage this spring, their first shows for 18 months. They play four concerts at London's Wembley Empire Pool, from March 17 to 20, and then four shows at the huge Stafford New Bingley Hall, from March 28 to 31.



D-U-M-B



Joey Ramone: known as Jeffrey Hyman before adopting the alias Jeff Starship as lead singer with glam-punk band Sniper in 1972, then co-founding the Ramones two years later

flat and brutal, over before they've almost begun and only occasionally memorable. So many instant tracks played so fast back to back make it extraordinarily hard to differentiate between one and another, especially when the mix favours the guitarist rather than the singer.

I didn't catch one title, apart from "California Sun", yet the lyrics seemed to deal with boy/girl relationships rather than violence or glue-sniffing, a gesture that will surely find sympathy with people who make up radio playlists.

"We spent at least twice as long making this album as we did on the first," guitarist Johnny Ramone told me after the album had been played. He could not, though, remember just how long that was: "Most of November, I think."

Despite the punk image of the Ramones, Johnny, like his colleagues, is an amiable enough fellow even if he is not too bright. It's difficult to prise more than a couple of sentences from his reluctant mouth.

"We like to get the idea of a song across quick, leave out all the slack and play fast," said Johnny when I commented on the length of the tracks. "We try to write a song a day when we're due to record. We'll get up in the morning and say, 'Let's write a song today,' and get on with it. Sometimes it takes 30 minutes and sometimes it takes the whole day. Then we rehearse it to get it right until we play it on stage."

"We even had a few songs that we didn't even bother to record, and one that we recorded but left off the album. We wanted to keep it to 14 tracks."

Johnny was particularly vague about the cancelled British tour with the Sex Pistols. He had wanted to go over but manager Danny Fields decided against it and the group seem to have little say in business matters, probably a wise state of affairs.

"I enjoyed the last time we went to England," said Johnny. "I remember playing the Roundhouse on July 4, Independence Day, and that was fun. It seemed that the dates on this last tour weren't so good, so Danny cancelled it, but we're due back in February or March."

The Ramones will play some dates in New York over the Christmas period provided that Joey's ankle has healed up, then spend early New Year in California before coming to England.

At the end of the evening a young, dark-haired girl opened her blouse to reveal a perfect figure. The gesture, largely unnoticed, was enough. We spent the evening prodding each other with safety pins. *Chris Charlesworth*

— NME MAY 21 —

"HEYMAN!" PLEADS a panic-stricken Dee Dee Ramone. "If ya hit me, I ain't gonna hit ya back! I've got too much respect for ya! Anyway, I don't know how many armed bodyguards ya got hidden in the kitchen who'll come burstin' through the door with their guns blazin' if I do!"

Nevertheless, Dee Dee stands his ground. Arms pressed rigidly against the sides of the body, fists clenched, eyes half-closed, bracing himself for a KO punch that is never launched.

"Just leave me alone will ya!!" he hollers defiantly at Phil Spector – who, after handing me his automatic pistol for safe keeping, is executing a fast Ali shuffle inches in front of his distraught house guest.

Joey, Johnny and Tommy silently anticipate the next move. If there's got to be a rumble, they're ready – if somewhat reluctant.

"I came over here this evening at your invitation," pleads Dee Dee, who's no longer talking to Spector but screaming at him at the top of his powerful lungs, "to admire your house, listen to your music and party, not to fight with ya, so just cut it out, before someone gets hurt!"

I don't think Dee Dee's referring to himself. The blank cutesy mask that usually adorns Dee Dee's fresh features has in seconds become screwed into an expression of terminal angst. The kid's confused.

"Dee Dee R-A-M-O-N-E – I mean that's your name?" Spector continues taunting, "I was also brought up on the streets of New York, so let's see if you've learnt anything... one on one... So whatcha waiting for!"

The evening had commenced quite favourably. As soon as the Ramones' scene-maker Rodney Bingenheimer and yours truly had arrived at the heavily fortified Chez Spector, we had been made to feel most welcome. In fact, it appeared that Spector was on his best behaviour.

First, the youngest of Spector's three kids had dashed up to Joey and after taking stock of his height had asked, "Are you a basketball player?"

"No," the embarrassed stick insect had replied.

"Are you sure you're not a basketball player?" was the repeated enquiry.

"Sure!" affirmed Joey, precariously rocking from side to side on his long, spindly legs.

From the moment we entered the room, it was obvious that Phil Spector was fascinated by Joey Ramone's quirky charisma, in very much the same way as he had been enamoured by Blondie's Debbie Harry, a couple of weeks earlier.

"J-O-E-Y-R-A-M-O-N-E... J-O-E-Y-R-A-M-O-N-E," Spector would trill in admiration like a cracked record. If he could transmogrify Debbie into a '70s version of Ronnie Spector, then Joey was Dion's heir apparent.

Spector made no secret of the fact that in Joey he sensed the kind of dormant potential from which Great Phil Spector Productions are made. No pussyfooting: Spector expressed a desire to produce a Joey Ramone solo album.

Flattery didn't get Spector anywhere. After hours of discussing the matter, Joey politely informed his new-found fan that the Ramones are a four-man democracy and that they've made no contingency plans for individual projects.

Not to be deterred. Spector insisted that the Ramones would never be bigger than they are right now. He suggested a possible label change.

"I can make you into the stars that you want to be," he claimed.

They listened to what he had to say. Seemingly, money was no obstacle. He quoted telephone-number guarantees. The Ramones were impressed. The Ramones were dumbstruck. The Ramones became confused. Communication breakdown and a rapid deterioration in detente.

Part of Phil Spector's home entertainment often includes the sort of bizarre black-comedy antics I've described. Pushing unsuspecting visitors beyond their limits and then observing how they react. One day it'll backfire. Dee Dee refuses to allow Spector to get the better of him.

"I'm neurotic," blurts the exasperated Ramone. "And, of all people, you should appreciate what that means!"

That remark stops Spector dead in his tracks. Spector apologises profusely for his behaviour and a less-than-memorable soiree reaches an anticlimax.



ASTHE TITLE of their second album implies, the Ramones left the comparative safety of their home in Queens, clad only in the threadbare clothes they stood up in, to discover Middle America. Here's the crunch. Except for a few big cities, Middle America hadn't heard of the Ramones. That's when the trouble started.

Being Big In Britain, A Cult On The Continent just didn't cut it with the hard-nosed proprietors of singles bars where nobody wearing leather, denim and sneakers was admitted.

To make matters worse, \$250 a gig doesn't cover \$500-a-day road expenses.

Things are a bit better for the Ramones out here on the West Coast, but only just...

Earlier in the day, I ran the Ramones to ground in LA's Tropicana Motel – an infamous rock 'n' roll pit-stop which may have long since seen better days, but still boasts the best and cheapest coffee shop in town. Nobody serves grease better than Duke's.

The Ramones seemed quite at home in its claustrophobic confines. Apart from a pile of old comics and rock papers on the floor, the only other signs of occupation were Dee Dee's sweat-soaked sneakers drying in the sun outside the bathroom window and a small black leather hand-grip stuffed with clean T-shirts.

When the Ramones leave home, they travel light.

When, in the first weeks of this year, the Ramones released their second LP, our man Murray confirmed in his review what so many people have already felt about the Blank Generation's Mop Tops – that unlike most groups who achieve immortality via a Saturday-morning television cartoon series, the Ramones bypassed the Jackson Five/Archies route by at least five years and manifested themselves as real-life cartoon characters the moment they stepped on stage at CBGB a couple of years back and realised they outnumbered their audience. The Ramones have confounded the sceptics by demonstrating that they are far from being a one-off ephemeral phenomenon.

Dee Dee plays bass. A rehabilitated ex-doper, he confesses that he used to live in a glue bag. That's him squatting barefoot on the floor remarking that if the rips in the knees of Joey's denims get much bigger he'll be wearing Bermuda shorts. Joey's the tall gangling one. He was

the neighbourhood outcast until the rest of the band befriended him. No cartoonist ever dreamt up such an original character. Joey sings. He's also very shy.

The guy who just took the phone off the hook is Johnny. He talks very fast, plays buzz guitar and thinks a lot.

Tommy plays drums. He acts tough. Probably fights dirty. He's reclining on the bed tucking his dime-store shades into his tangled hair. They remind me of the Bowery Boys!

Tommy speaks first. "Ya know... a lotta people didn't even think we could put out a first album."

His tone was cynical. "They said, 'These guys are great live, but can they do it again?' We have. But I guess they'll probably always say that about us!

Joey nods silently in agreement. Tommy argues that just because the Ramones' music is humorous, there are those who refuse to take the group seriously.



“We missed the spirit of the '60s – that good-time feeling”

“We ain't geniuses,” brags Tommy, “but we sure ain't dumb. A dumb person couldn't write out lyrics. We just tell it like it is. And, in a way that most kids can understand.”

Gabba-Gabba-Hey!

Perhaps, I proffer, any schmuck smear is just a backlash from those people whose musical tastes have become too sophisticated? The remark doesn't register with anyone in the room.

I draw pictures. I get a minimal response.

“They call us shitheads,” says Tommy, “they call us assholes... I guess we really get to them.”

A cruel smile decorates the edge of his mouth. “They just don't understand what rock 'n' roll is really all about!”

A product of trash culture, the Ramones soak up inspiration from movies, comic books, TV and every other form of instant mass media, like bread soaks up gravy. This particular afternoon, they get inspired.

To a man, they're intrigued by a news item on TV about someone with over 20 dogs and cats who died in an apartment and has been devoured by his/her pets. The pathologist, says the newscaster, has yet to sex the skeleton.

“I think,” jests Johnny, “we'll probably write a song about that. Anyway, rock 'n' roll should be a fun thing. You don't have to go out on stage and yell at the crowd, ‘Ya wanna boogie! Ya wanna rock 'n' roll? Y'all high?’”

WITHOUT GOING INTO boring detail, the roots of the Ramones are to be found amongst the remnants of innumerable aborted high school garage bands, but according to Johnny, the Ramones banded together for a different reason from those groups they'd been associated with.

“We'd been friends for about 10 years or so, and we were just getting bored with music. We just couldn't take it any longer.”

“We all seemed to miss the spirit of the '60s,” interjects Tommy from the bed. “All that good-time feeling has gone. Rock got too progressive, which is fine if you like that kinda thing, but we felt there was a desperate need for the great rock feel of bands like The Kinks and the Stones.”

Tommy continues. “Where we come from, there's a great guitarist on every block. I guess it's the same in every neighbourhood, like you'll always find a good tenor sax player in every big apartment building. So it's no big deal any more.

“When Eric Clapton came along it was great, but now there's a million kids playing Clapton guitar licks. Maybe they're not playing them quite as good, but they're playing 'em just the same. Everything became too slick. The excitement had gone. There were no pop songs.”

“So we wrote some songs we wanted to hear,” says Johnny. “The only reason that the Ramones came into existence was simply because American radio has become so low-energy. I'm certain ‘You Really Got Me’ or ‘Do Wah Diddy Diddy’ wouldn't stand a chance on the radio if they had come out now instead of the mid-'60s.

“At least England managed to move into the '70s with singles bands like T Rex and Slade, but most of their records didn't get airplay in America.”

Though press coverage has been forthcoming, the Ramones have received restricted airplay.

“We're working on that one,” admits Tommy.

Could be that the Ramones' new surf single, “Sheena Is A Punk Rocker”, will resolve any imbalance. If it doesn't then we might all as well pack up and go home. Any buzz-saw band that persistently plays at 78rpm must have a head start over the rest of the pack. That's, of course, unless they run out of energy.

“We usually wear out audiences before we wear out ourselves,” insists Ramone Johnny.

“And we're getting faster every day. We listen to our second album, and that's faster than our first, and even that sounds real slow. Our normal set consists of 17 songs and takes 30 minutes to perform. A month ago, the same set lasted 37 minutes.

“When we played Seattle the other week,” he reveals, “we knocked up 17 songs, took a five-minute break, came back, played another 14 songs, a couple of encores, and we still hadn't been on stage for an hour. The only trouble is, it tends to make us feel faint!” Roy Carr •



The Ramones in 1977: (l-r) Dee Dee, Joey, Tommy and Johnny

1977

JANUARY - MARCH

The **SEX PISTOLS** enter Europe. Behind them: Bill Grundy, tabloid outrage and a dispute with their label, EMI. Ahead: an unimpressed Dutch crowd and some long negotiations. “We just acted our natural selves,” says Paul Cook. “It just beats me.”

“The more madder the better”

The Sex Pistols in early 1977: (l-r) Paul Cook, Glen Matlock, Steve Jones and Johnny Rotten

ALAMY



Spitting into the eye of the hurricane

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"Right, you fuckers, we're gonna do one more": Rotten, at the behest of his manager, cues up another encore

Paul Cook: You done the one at the 'Undred Club that time, didn't ya?

NME: Yeah, a long, long time ago.

Glen Matlock: Was you the bloke that was gonna "split down the middle"?

NME: No, the main thing I've written about you was in the Stranglers piece, actually...

Cook: Luring 'em into saying naughty things. [Hugh Cornwell had called Rotten "a paranoid clown".]

NME: People were saying at the time what a bad deal it was for the Pistols, running into all this trouble, and it seemed to me if anything it was helping you, because you were getting all these front pages. I mean, you're a household name now. But I must admit it seems to have changed somewhat since then.

Matlock: Backfired? In some ways, yeah. It's all part of it, though, isn't it, all the mad hassle. The more madder the better.

NME: I don't know how you stand the pressure of it, though.

Cook: We're used to it already. I just think it's a load of bollocks. I don't know why they all write about it.

Matlock: You don't believe it till you've been the other side of it really.

Cook: Like that thing at the airport. I'm not kidding, straight up, we couldn't believe it when we got over here. Someone phoned up, said this that and the other – we just couldn't believe it. There was a press bloke waiting, I suppose; just waiting at the airport for something to 'appen. We just acted our natural selves. It just beats me.

NME: Wasn't there anything at all?

Cook: Nothing. Really. The bloke from EMI was with us all the time. He would have said if there was, but he didn't.

NME: I've heard you're gonna refuse to let them [EMI] break the contract.

Cook: Come on, we're not just gonna let 'em say, "Get off the label, do this, do that."

NME: You wouldn't rather just go somewhere else?

Cook: That's the point, innit? We're just letting Malcolm sort it out.

Matlock: A contract's a contract. If you sign a contract, right, and six months later they say you gotta tear it up...

Cook: If they do it with us, what chance have other bands got?

NME: But I would have thought that working with a company that was so against you, you'd rather just get out.

Cook: Yeah, but it's the people at the top who are against us. The people in the record company, like the A&R guys who work on the shop floor, they're behind the band, and they've got absolutely no say in it. It's yer John Reads – he's the guy that's in charge of all of EMI, not just the record company.

Matlock: He doesn't normally interfere.

NME: What happened before the Grundy interview? It seemed at the time like you were just sitting there – right, here's our opportunity, we're gonna get on the box and...

Matlock: Swear!

NME: Create havoc.

Matlock: No, we just went there and sat in a room for a bit and had a beer each, and he asked us a few questions – we just answered them. That was it. We never even spoke to the guy before it. He was just, like, sitting there, y'know – he looked a bit kinda pissed.

Cook: I think he incited (*obscured*), but he asked John – John said "Shit" under his breath – and he said, "WHAT WAS THAT?" He said, "Nothing, no, nothing." He said, "Come on, come on, I wanna hear it", y'know. What does he expect?



— NME JANUARY 15 —

AMSTERDAM'S PARADISO IS much bigger than I'd imagined it to be – at least twice the size of the Marquee, for instance, with the ambience of a much friendlier Roundhouse, a balcony, two quirky bars, pool and pinball, a high (five-foot) stage with stained-glass windows behind, and hardly any sign of the public dope scene for which it's famous.

Two black guys morosely attempt to sell cocaine outside as *Guardian* rock writer Robin Denselow and I shuffle in just in time for The Vibrators' opening number.

For most of the audience, "No Fun" is their first taste of live English punk rock, and there could hardly be a better way to start: tongue-in-cheek nihilism, stampeding guitars and grotesque flash. They're amused, seem to enjoy it, give it quite a good reception. The Vibrators' set is reviewed in full in *On The Town*.

Backstage, The Heartbreakers and Sex Pistols wander in as The Vibrators wander out. After a while there's a completely different population in the concrete-box dressing room, and I sidle over and set up the tape machine next to Pistols drummer Paul Cook.

NME: There's also at the moment a rather nasty rumour going around that you didn't play on the record.

Cook: We 'eard that too. We got on to them straight away and got a letter of written apology. We 'eard it on the radio, couldn't believe that one either. It seems totally wrong to go... (*obscured*)

NME: One of the rumours is that Spedding was on the record.

Cook: Spedding can't play as good as that (*laughs*).

NME: You did some work with Spedding, though, didn't you?

Cook: Three tracks. A long time ago, though. We really rushed in, but we come out of it all right. He produced on 'em. It was all right.

NME: But the single is categorically you lot?

Cook: Sorry?

NME: The single's definitely you lot?

Cook: Oh yeah, yeah. What a question! (*Laughs*) How can you believe it?

NME: I don't believe. I gotta ask it, haven't I?

Cook: Yeah, OK. We 'eard it on Capital Radio; we just couldn't believe it.

NME: How's the audience here taking you?

Cook: Oh all right. They was getting going last night.

NME: They seemed to like The Vibrators.

Cook: All the bands went down really well last night.

NME: What are your favourite bands out of the other bands that are around?

Cook: These boys.

NME: The Heartbreakers? What do you reckon to The Vibrators?

Cook: Ah, you're trying to put me in that trap again what the Stranglers fell for.

NME: They didn't fall for anything. They'd decided to give that interview before I walked in the room.

Cook: How other bands can just go out and say things about... I think any band that's about at the moment, trying to do something new, give 'em credit for it whether you like 'em or not.

Don't just go out and slag 'em off, whether you like 'em or not. I think it's good that they're just doing it, that it's something new.

Jones: (From across room) Who's this?

Cook: He's from the *NME*.

Jones: What's your name?

NME: Phil McNeill.

Jones: (Aggressively) Oh, are you?

Cook: No, they've been good to us lately.

NME: We've been good to you all along. What's all this about spitting at the audience?

Cook: We don't. You been reading too much *Daily Mirror*.

NME: Well, in the wake of reports of John spitting at the audience, some bands have started doing it.

Cook: We read that in the press too, and suddenly we were playing and everyone started spitting at us.

That's what they thought we wanted, y'know. Gobbing at us. In Manchester or somewhere.

NME: What's your reaction to seeing people with safety pins through their cheeks?

Cook: I've seen that too, yeah.

NME: It seems like it's a development of John wearing safety pins through his shirt.

Cook: Let 'em do what they wanna do, that's what I say. Who cares?

NME: And what about the great Nazi thing that's going around now? You got a lotta kids coming to your gigs these days wearing Nazi emblems and safety pins through their faces and God knows what else.

Cook: They take it too seriously, they really do. If they wanna wear a Nazi armband, let 'em. I don't think kids

are that political, really mean what they do. They like the shape of it. It's a good shape.

NME: What about the Pistols? What's your politics?

Cook: Do what you wanna do. That's what we're doing, and getting turned down for doing it. Do you wanna talk to John for a while? (*Rotten is standing nearby, back to us; Cook tugs his arm*) John. John! Here, this is Phil...

Rotten: No way.

Cook: He's from...

Rotten: (Obscured, shrugging Cook off)

Cook: (Slightly put out) All right. He don't wanna do it.

THE HEARTBREAKERS' SET flashes by. It's been said here already – the Dolls, a heavied Ramones, not so fast, though – the reception's comparatively quiet but the friendly atmosphere combined with the blazing rock onstage... it's a helluva gig.

Interview The Vibrators in the Paradiso office. They're euphoric because the guy from Amsterdam's other main club, the Melkweg, who blew out the gigs he'd booked for The Vibrators when the Grundy/Pistols thing erupted, came down last night and has booked them in for two days' time.

A charge shivers the room as "Anarchy In The UK" lams out in the background; Malcolm McLaren arrives and huddles heatedly with The Vibrators' manager. Bread.

A few songs into the Pistols' set we wind down the interview; it will appear here sometime soon. But let's go check the naughty boys...

The Johnny Rotten Show is well under way. Long time no see. Not much sign of the vast improvements in playing we've heard about: the sound's

much clearer than the early days, but the music is still primitive. Without Rotten they're a good, hefty drummer, an ordinary bassist and a mediocre guitarist.

"Substitute" and others go by. The crowd are up for the first time, standing fascinated but diffident. Rotten goes through his ostrich-poses, the chin jutting, the mouth leering, the eyes rolling. They're playing what seems to be "No Future". It boasts the title line from the National Anthem.

There's a long break, with a lot of aural and visual agro between the punters and the Rotten/Matlock duo, then they resume the song, very loud. It's sloppy, and it reaps silence.

A green-haired lady is sitting under a Christmas tree stuck on the wall behind the drums, and as they go into "*(We're so pretty, oh so)* Pretty Vacant" it occurs to me, vacantly, that it looks like she's wearing some gigantic hat.

The Pistols are playing tighter, but it's still mighty basic. Jones compensates for his limited skill with a fair line in one-note breaks.

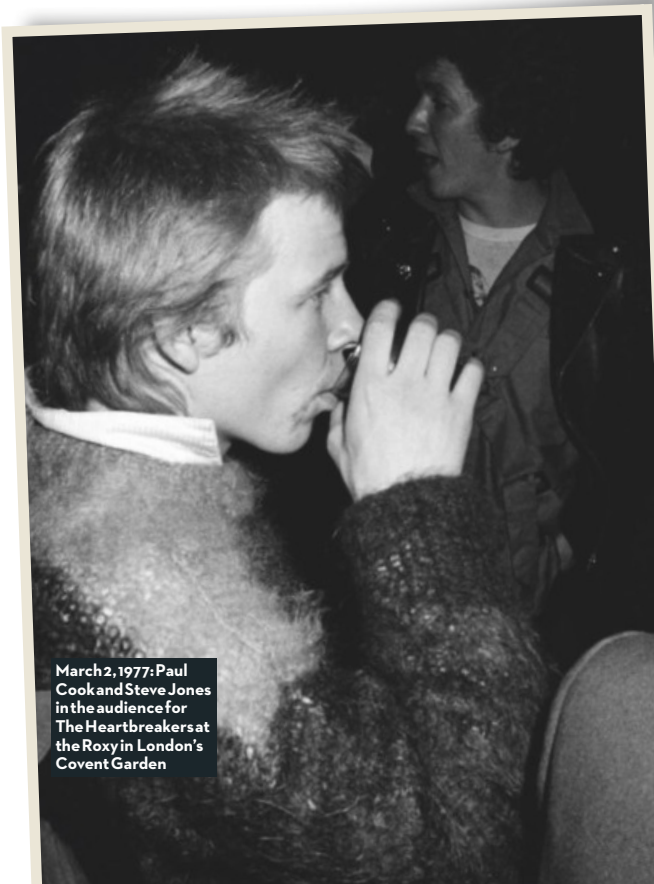
Johnny Rotten is a perplexing performer. He has an extraordinary ability to enrage his audience.

At the most basic level it's his insults and his bad behaviour, but Rotten has something deeper. It goes deeper, too, than his contempt for society in songs like "I'm A Lazy Sod". And surely it goes beyond his looks, his fleabitten, hunchbacked cadaver.

Somehow this guy repels virtually everybody, and somehow his power reaches through the taunts to the sensibilities of thousands, maybe even millions, of people who have only ever heard his name and seen his picture.

Yet he is mesmerising. He can't be ignored. He's not just some hooligan who swore on TV, he drags the most »

"We're not just gonna let 'em say, 'Get off the label, do this, do that'"



March 2, 1977: Paul Cook and Steve Jones in the audience for The Heartbreakers at the Roxy in London's Covent Garden

casual observer into, usually, a love-hate relationship; probably the most charismatic rock star to emerge since Bowie.

Suddenly a couple of kids at the front who have been hitting Rotten with woollen scarves start throwing beer. Not glasses, just beer—but for this laid-scar mob it's the equivalent. While Rotten stands there, Cook erupts from his stool and he and the girl chuck beer back, Matlock kicks his mic stand very nastily off the stage, and the rhythm section storms off, Jones still rifling, and Rotten sends the girl to get the others back. They eventually return for the only really furious piece of music they play all night.

Meanwhile Malcolm McLaren stands impassive upon the mixing desk riser, his three-piece-suited solicitor behind him

The show really begins about now. It's got nothing to do with music, but so what? It's Entertainment. The band have left the stage—all but Rotten, who sneers, "If you want more you can clap for it." Feeble applause. The disco starts, and feet start shuffling out.

But a chant is generating. Yes... yes... the Pistols are coming back. "Whatcha Gonna Do 'Bout It", nihilism incarnate.

They end but don't go. "You're boring," drones Rotten. This weird challenge to the audience to respond. I look round at McLaren—and see that he his standing there gesticulating to Rotten, the upswept arms of the "Get Up" movement and the hands clapping overhead... and Rotten is mimicking McLaren. This shows ends when Malcolm says so.

The crowd raise a half-hearted chant, Rotten's response: "Right, you fuckers, we're gonna do one more, so move or else forget about it."

It's a very good version of "Anarchy", lots of echo on the voice. End of Act.

End of act? No way, McLaren is signalling Rotten again, and puppet-like, Rotten copies him. Whether the audience wants one or not, there's going to be another encore. There is, and this time Rotten stomps off before Malcolm starts signalling.

The point of all these false encores eludes me, unless the Sex Pistols are actually unliberated enough to get an ego-boost out of such conventional trappings of success.

Their music is lumpen, but the spectacle is marvellous. That last sentence could easily be applied, coincidentally, to shows I've seen in the past years by Queen and the Stones—and like those bands today, the Pistols' main success is in show business.

MALCOLM HAS AGREED to speak to Robin Denselow and me at his hotel. How the hell do we find it?

We wander off in pursuit of the beleaguered mad scientist. It's freezing and I haven't eaten all day. We walk for miles. As we near our destination, Steve Jones runs past, bums five guilders off me virtually in return for showing us where he's staying, much to my bemusement... Finally we're there.

And behold, McLaren appears. For some reason we can't go in, so we conduct the interview standing on a hotel step by a canal at three in the morning. McLaren looks even more wasted than I feel, talking unstopably like a man possessed, staring into space. There could be 2,000 of us listening.

"We've had word that most of the majors won't touch us with bargepoles."

You haven't had offers from people like Polydor, UA?

"No, that's all guff, man—who's spreading those kinda rumours? There's nobody after us. We've had, I suppose you call it, votes of confidence from the shop floors of various record companies, but you begin to realise that those sort of people don't have any control over the situation, just as it's happened in EMI.

"We've had people like the guy from EMI Publishing, Terry Slater; he rang me up today and he feels totally pissed off that he's been totally overruled. He's the head of EMI Publishing; he signed us four weeks ago

R. JONES / GETTY

December 11, 1976: the Pistols and manager Malcolm McLaren (left) at EMI's Manchester Square studios, where they record demos of "Problems", "God Save The Queen", "Liar" and "No Feelings"



for £10,000 and now he's been told that's all got to be quashed. He's been made to look stupid.

"The same goes for Nick Mobbs, who threatened to resign. He's now been told that would be very unhealthy for him, so they can produce a wonderful statement saying on EMI no one has resigned.

"There are different bands with different points of view. The real situation is that people on the board of directors at EMI do not agree with our point. The people who actually work for EMI, they do. But if they come out and make a statement to that effect they will get the sack, or they'll have to resign.

"Those truths have never come out. What appears in the press is that we have been thrown out by all of EMI together, a wonderful consensus of opinion."

If it comes to the crunch and they force you to terminate, will you repay the advance?

"How are we going to repay the advance? We've already spent all the money maintaining ourselves here and on the tour. We're out here promoting their single – it's not just our single."

Is it out here?

"Yeah, that's the reason we're here. We weren't doing any other European territory simply because EMI sent a memo asking them not to release it. EMI Holland got the record out before that memo reached them. Now they're withdrawing it."

Are they blocking its sale in England?

"Oh yeah, it's being withdrawn in England."

If you do split with them, what happens to any tapes that are in the can?

"Those questions have been raised. They would prefer that we take the lot and go away with it. It's been very easy for them. Someone signs a contract for two years: that is an agreement between two parties. If

you can tear that contract up in two months because they dislike the opinion of the band – by "they" I mean the EMI board of directors – it makes a farce of the whole situation.

"What about all these other bands that are coming along? They sign a contract and some guy at the top, not some A&R guy who's responsible for signing, says, 'I don't like what I'm hearing about this band, I don't want them on the company any more.' So they go out the window."

Who are the guys who've come over here?

"The managing director of EMI and the head of the legal department – Leslie Hill and Laurie Hall. They came over to terminate the contract and we haven't terminated it. They want us to have another meeting; at the moment they haven't met any of my proposals, probably because they have been told they can't meet anything.

"We had a two-hour meeting tonight. It's been very nice. We've come away to Holland and someone's decided behind our back to "mutually terminate" the contract. Legally, we're still on EMI Records..."

"Now people on the EMI board are saying, 'Why the hell did we sign them in the first place? They're musically inadequate, it was too much money...'

"But I spoke to Leslie Hill, the managing director of EMI Records, prior to us signing. It was him that was exhilarated by the band and thrilled at the idea of signing the act. He was fully aware of their public image, and he will not deny that.

"EMI had all the tapes to all the Pistols' songs. They heard them, they were excited at the prospect of signing this act and commercially gaining through it. We had had offers from other companies, but I went there because the sympathy with EMI was strong on the shop floor.

"Nick Mobbs, Tony Slater on the publishing side, David Munns on the promotion side, Mark Ryder the label manager, Paul Watts the general manager and Leslie Hill the managing director all wanted to sign this act. Now they're saying, 'We have 4,000 employees on EMI and if we took a consensus of opinion I don't think you would raise the amount of votes necessary.'

"I made a proposal; I said, 'OK, find us an equivalent contract.' If I walk into Warner

Brothers they're going to say, 'Well, man, you didn't make it with EMI, the bad publicity, et cetera.'

"What they did on TV was something that was quite genuine. They were goaded into it, and being working-class kids and boys being boys, they said what they felt was... OK. They don't regret it.

"The KLM situation at the airport was fabricated up to a point. Yeah, the band might have looked a little bit extraordinary, they might have spat at each other. Big deal. And someone may have appeared a little drunk. But they weren't flying the plane, they don't need to be that sober.

"There are these bands now that have some sort of petition, like Mud, Tina Charles, all these other Top 20 acts, and sent round this petition to all the record companies saying that they do not support this kind of music."

(NME talked to Mud's manager, Barry Dunning, on Monday. He denied Mud had signed any petition, nor would they ever do so.)

"My lawyer asked: 'We'd like a meeting with John Read or the rest of the money.' They'd rather give us the rest of the money than have a meeting. John Read speaks on behalf of all the shareholders, he controls EMI Ltd, which covers far more than just a record company. He wouldn't meet us. He sent Hill instead; every time you just get to speak to Hill. Hill has his orders and he can't move from that point."

How much money have you had of the £40,000?

"Half. The first year. But that has been spent on supporting a tour.

"We ended up selling the fucking record at the bloody door in Rotterdam and at the Paradiso last night. It's a joke."

What's next, a big legal battle?

"I don't know. I asked Hill if they can reconsider their situation, quite simply – and if they can't, why can't Capitol Records, who we're signed to in America? 'Oh well, Capitol Records decided to go along with Manchester Square.' They don't want any part of it.

"I said, 'What happens if we're on another label and the distribution is through EMI? Are EMI gonna distribute the record?' They can't really answer that. It's very difficult, it really is. I feel pretty bad about it.

"Hill's now saying, 'Can't you go to Virgin Records, I hear that's an interesting company.' Bollocks, man – we went to Virgin Records before we went to EMI and they didn't wanna know.

"If we walk into another record company, what are they going to say?

'If you can't play anywhere and we can't hear your records on the radio and EMI decided to drop you...' What the hell are they going to do?

"It's not just EMI, it's people behind the scenes, guys that go on the radio and say we didn't play on our record, the guy that's scared to put us on *Top Of The Pops* even though we're in the breakers because the BBC don't want to be seen to be associated with us.

"What's it all about?"

UNTILLASTWEEK I had no sympathy whatsoever for the punks-as-martyrs line, but if what McLaren says about them not being able to land a contract anywhere is true (I still don't really believe that one), and EMI Records do succeed in breaking their legal contract simply on account of 30 seconds of televised swearing, then I'll, I'll...

Phew, for a moment there I Almost Cut My Hair!

The McLaren interview was recorded on an EMI tape. *Phil McNeill* •






1977

APRIL - JUNE

TOM PETTY, THE JAM, FLEETWOOD MAC, ELVIS COSTELLO AND MORE





June 7, 1977: in the evening of the day the Silver Jubilee is celebrated with street parties up and down the UK, Virgin Records mark the release of the Sex Pistols' "God Save The Queen" with a boat trip down the Thames. Seen here before the band's performance below decks are Johnny Rotten chatting with filmmaker Julien Temple (back to camera) as artist and designer Jamie Reid looks on

Insulting behaviour

MM **JUNE 11** Arrests follow the Sex Pistols' Jubilee boat party.

MALCOLM McLAREN, MANAGER of the Sex Pistols, appeared at Bow Street Magistrates Court on Wednesday morning, charged with insulting behaviour, following a Virgin Records party aboard the Thames cruiser Queen Elizabeth the previous evening. He pleaded not guilty and was remanded on £100 bail until August 30.

He was one of 11 people arrested when river police boarded the cruiser after the Pistols had begun to play. None of the band was charged, but the brother of Pistols lead singer Johnny Rotten, James Lydon, was fined £3 after he admitted shouting and swearing on Victoria Embankment.

BRIAN COOKE / GETTY

Jordan, born Pamela Rooke on June 23, 1955: "If I ever see Freddie Mercury, I'll tip something over him"

"I have faith in the clothes"

NME APR 16 A meeting with Jordan, punk face and close friend of Johnny Rotten.

UNDERNEATH THE THICK black lines and heavily rouged cheeks there might well be a stunning female trying to get out. It's so hard to tell, my dears, for Jordan does such a good job of covering up any good features she may possess. Even her hair (brown at the roots, white at the tips) is engulfed in a thick layer of lacquer.

Jordan (real name Pamela) is something of a star. Although she's a shop assistant (in Seditonaries, the shop owned by Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren) there's little that is mere routine in her life. Because of her looks and associations with the new wave, when she went to America recently she was given the star treatment and even got a spot on TV.

Johnny Rotten is a close friend (yes, he does have some), and if he's bored, down or just plain fed up, invariably it is Jordan he phones to cheer his flagging spirits.

I met Jordan at the shop, situated, ironically enough, next door to a Conservative club, but there was little conversation about her as she strode purposefully across the road, seeming oblivious to the open-mouthed stare of Joe Public. Her obsession is fashion. So every incident in her life (she is 20) is referred to via associations with clothes worn and makeup applied. School was her pink period ("I had bright-pink hair."). Harrods (yes, Harrods) was her green period. America? Well, that was when she was into rubber. Spring '77 finds her clad mostly in black. A black jacket resembling

a straitjacket, all zips and bits), and black suede boots. The only break is vivid pink rouge and brightly coloured lipstick.

This strange fashion-conscious lady originated from Seaford, a quiet backwater near Brighton. Her parents weren't into fashion or theatre, but by the age of seven it was obvious their offspring was... "My father," says Jordan in a well-educated voice, "was a clerk. My mother was a barmaid [both are now retired]. They'll never get used to the fact that I didn't turn out the way they wanted."

And her mode of dress has also presented numerous problems with, er, the opposite sex. "I've been walking out with people, totally ordinary people, and they've freaked out just going down the street with me." Even the police have shown an interest in Jordan. "They once tried to arrest me for being indecently dressed in public." And what was the sweet girl wearing at the time? "Stilettoes, stockings with huge holes, see-through knickers and see-through bra." Ah, I see.

Prior to Seditonaries, Jordan worked for a time in Eastbourne - "Where I dressed the same." She later worked at Way In at Harrods, where "they were very good and never said anything about my green lipstick or makeup."

She adores working for Malcolm. "I'm very involved in the shop and have great faith in the

clothes. Vivienne [Westwood, McLaren's girlfriend] and Malcolm are the two most creative people around."

Jordan was one of the first people to ever clap eyes on the Pistols. "I remember watching them rehearse in Hammersmith before John was in the band. He was just a customer then." As a close associate of Mr Rotten's, can she tell when he is putting on an act? It has been suggested that Mr Rotten deliberately does so whenever a member of the press is present. "He never puts on an act - he won't compromise. If he feels like spitting, he'll spit."

Jordan sees Seditonaries' as "the hub of the situation that young people are in". And she adds: "We get other bands in the shop to get the clothes the Pistols wear. Mr Big even came in to buy vinyl trousers."

For some obscure reason Jordan does not like Queen. "If I ever see Freddie Mercury in public, no doubt I'll tip something over him," she confides.

What, I wondered, has Freddie done to incur such wrath? "Actually, I've never met him; only the drummer. It's just that they cater for a certain kind of people - hippy college people - and I feel violent towards him. I don't like what he's doing."

Jordan is not exactly modest when talking of her success when she visited America recently. "I was knockout," she says. "There were pictures of me in *Woman's Wear Daily* and I even made Channel 3 news. That was the time I was wearing rubber..." Rubber what, precisely? "Stockings, skirt..."

Not surprisingly, boyfriends never seem to feature in Jordan's life. Nor have they done so in the past. "I was very much an outcast at school. If it was kiss chase, they'd

run away from me. No boy would touch me. Still, I didn't really want their attention. But I was very hard up for people on my wavelength."

Now, of course, there are many others who share the outlook, although it's still difficult to walk down the street without getting rude remarks or gaping stares. "I remember once getting on a train and sitting opposite a woman with her young son. First she stared and then she asked the boy: 'Is that woman opposite upsetting you?' He nodded. Then she asked if I would kindly leave the carriage.

Well, of course I didn't! Next thing she asked me was if I was a stripper. So I turned round and asked her, 'Do you think strippers look like me?' And I also said that if I had a son like that I'd throw him out the door."

Back on the subject of Rotten, Jordan claims, "He's not really interested in permanent girlfriends. But he does need someone to pour his thoughts out to. He'll ring up and say, 'Please come over and keep me sane.' He said to me he liked me better than anyone because he liked my clothes and he felt I had the potential to say what I wanted."

And on these evenings, how (dare I ask?) do they spend their time? "We listen to an awful lot of reggae. John really likes reggae. It's the only thing we ever dance to." So now we know, my angels. *Velda Daquiri*

Wilko Johnson (left), who leaves Dr Feelgood during the recording of third studio album *Sneakin' Suspicion*



“Called his bluff” **MM APRIL 9** Wilko Johnson leaves Dr Feelgood, citing “musical differences”.

GUITARIST WILKO JOHNSON has left Dr Feelgood – on the eve of a major British tour by the band. Johnson, who was a founder member, parted company with the Feelgoods over musical differences. Fred Munt, the band’s tour manager, told the *MM* that the split came when the rest of the band “called Wilko’s bluff”.

“Wilko gave an ultimatum that if they recorded a track called ‘Lucky Seven’, he would leave the band. He didn’t feel it was the Feelgoods’ type of music. But the rest of the band and the record company loved the song and insisted that it stay on the album,” he said.

The tour, which opens at Exeter University on May 12, will be the debut of a new guitarist, unnamed but already rehearsing with the rest of the band. He is from Southend.

Before leaving the band, Johnson recorded a new album with the Feelgoods at Rockfield Studios in Wales. It is scheduled for release in mid-May. Johnson has not yet announced what his future plans are.

The Feelgoods’ tour is designed to cover the areas not regularly played by the band, including, in response to letters from fans, two West Country dates. The band plan to tour Britain again in September, following their return from the USA.

The full tour schedule is: Exeter University (May 12), Bracknell Sports Centre (13), Crawley Sports Centre (14), Wolverhampton Civic Hall (15), Norwich St Andrews Hall (17), Ipswich Gaumont (18), London Hammersmith Odeon (19), Malvern Winter Gardens (20), Salford University (21) and Coventry Theatre (22). Support on the tour is the Lew Lewis Band.

“In exchange for beer”

MM APRIL 16 Beatles Hamburg recordings are legally contested.

TWO LIVE BEATLES albums are set for release within three weeks of each other – thanks to the band’s failure to win a court injunction preventing the release of the “unofficial” *Hamburg Tapes* album.

The Beatles and Apple attempted to get the High Court to prevent the release of *The Beatles – Live At The Star Club*. The album comes from a tape made by ‘60s Liverpool rock singer Ted “Kingsize” Taylor.

But High Court vice-chancellor Sir Robert Megarry turned down the application after hearing Taylor say that The Beatles had originally agreed to the tape provided he bought them beer.

The decision was bad news for EMI, who are planning to release a live album which comes from a tape of the band’s concert at the Hollywood Bowl in 1964.

That album is expected to be released on May 1, but no one from EMI would comment this week on a definite release date. They also remained silent about the High Court decision on the “Hamburg” album.

The “Hamburg” album should have been available in Britain last week, but the release was held up by the airport workers’ industrial action. There are 100,000 copies of the album in Germany, where they were manufactured, waiting to be flown to Britain at press time.

The albums are on Paul Murphy’s

Lingasong label and will retail at £4.99. None will be pressed in Britain. Murphy, who bought the tapes from Taylor, was unavailable for comment at press time.



An unspecified figure **NME MAY 21** The Sex Pistols sign to Virgin. A new single, “God Save The Queen”, is imminent.

AFTER WEEKS OF speculation, it was confirmed this week that the Sex Pistols have signed with Virgin Records – for an “unspecified figure”. And their much-delayed new single “God Save The Queen” is the first release under the new deal – it comes out next Friday, May 27.

The Pistols have also nearly completed work on an album, and a Virgin spokesman described the advance orders for both LP and single as “massive”. A huge marketing

campaign is being mounted by Virgin to announce the new contract and upcoming single, but plans to advertise it on ITV last

weekend were thwarted when both Thames and London Weekend rejected the commercial, even though it was described as “not offensive or controversial”.

The Pistols have been without a record deal since their dramatic departures from EMI and A&M. Now they are back in business again, they plan to return to the gig circuit in the near future – provided they can obtain bookings. Existing bans on the group are, apparently, still in operation at many venues.



GUS STEWART / GETTY

1977

APRIL - JUNE

On the tube, in the caff and overlooking the Westway with THE CLASH, spokesmen for disaffected youth. However raw, their message will find its audience. "It's not for them if they can't understand it," says JOE STRUMMER.

"We ain't ashamed to fight"

— NME APRIL 2 —

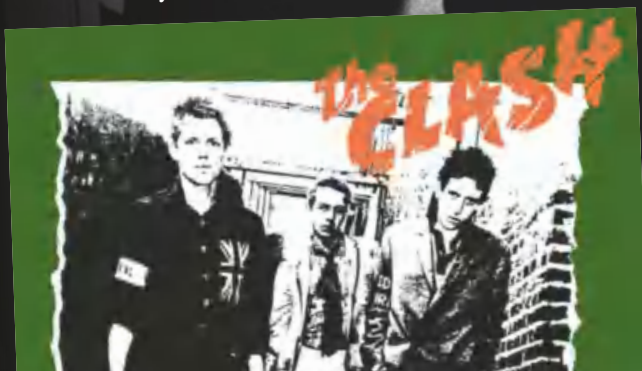
"IT AIN'T PUNK, it ain't new wave, it's the next step and the logical progression for groups to move in. Call it what you want - all the terms stink. Just call it rock'n'roll..."
You don't know what total commitment is until you've met Mick Jones of The Clash. He's intense, emotional, manic-depressive and plays lead guitar with the kind of suicidal energy that some musicians lose and most musicians never have. His relationship with Joe Strummer and Paul Simonon is the love/hate intensity that you only get with family.

"My parents never... the people involved with The Clash are my family..."

The Clash and me are sitting around a British Rail table in one of those railway-station cafes where the puce-coloured paint on the wall is peeling and lethargic non-white slave labour serves you tea that tastes like cat urine.

Joe Strummer is an ex-101er and the mutant offspring of Bruce Lee's legacy - a no-bullshit sense of tough that »

ERICA ECHENBERG / GETTY





May 9, 1977: (l-r) Joe Strummer, Paul Simon and Mick Jones backstage at North London's Rainbow on the White Riot Tour

means he can talk about a thrashing he took a while back from some giant, psychotic Teddy boy without the slightest pretension, self-pity or sense of martyrdom.

"I was too pissed to deal with it and he got me in the toilets for a while," Joe says. "I had a knife with me and I shoulda stuck it in him, right? But when it came to it I remember vaguely thinking that it wasn't really worth it, 'cos although he was battering me about the floor I was too drunk for it to hurt that much and if I stuck a knife in him I'd probably have to do a few years..."

When The Clash put paint-splashed slogans on their family-created urban battle fatigues such as "Hate And War" it's not a cute turnaround of a flowery spiel from 10 years ago—it's a brutally honest comment on the environment they're living in.

They've had aggravation with everyone from Teds to students to Anglo-rednecks, all of them frightened pigs attacking what they can't understand. But this ain't the summer of love and The Clash would rather be kicked into hospital than flash a peace sign and turn the other cheek.

"We ain't ashamed to fight," Mick says.

"We should carry spray cans about with us," Paul Simonon suggests. He's the spike-haired bass player with considerable pulling power. Even my kid sister fancies him. He's from a South London ex-skinhead background; white Sta-Prest Levi's strides, highly polished DM boots, button-down Ben Sherman shirt, thin braces, eighth-of-an-inch cropped hair and over the football on a Saturday running with The Shed because for the first time in your life the society that produced you was terrified of you. And it made you feel good...

Paul came out of that, getting into rock 'n' roll at the start of last year and one of the first bands he ever saw was the Sex Pistols. Pure late-'70s rock, Paul Simonon. In Patti Smith's estimation he rates alongside Keef and Rimbaud. He knew exactly what he was doing when he named the band The Clash...

"The hostilities," Mick Jones calls the violent reactions they often provoke.

"Or maybe those Lemon Squeezers," Paul says, seeking the perfect weapon for protection when trouble starts and you're outnumbered 10 to one.

The rodent-like features of their shaven-headed ex-jailbird roadie known, among other things, as Rodent break into a cynical smirk. "Don't get it on their drapes otherwise they get really mad," he quips. He went along to see The Clash soon after his release from prison. At the time he was carrying a copy of *Mein Kampf* around with him. Prisoner can mess up your head.

Strummer, in his usual manner of abusive honesty, straightened him out. Rodent's been with them ever since and sleeps on the floor of their studio.

The Clash demand total dedication from everyone involved with the band, a sense of responsibility that must never be betrayed no matter what internal feuds, ego clashes or personality crisis may go down. Anyone who doesn't have that attitude will not remain with The Clash for very long, and that's the reason for the band's biggest problem—they ain't got a drummer.

The emotive Mick explodes at the mention of this yawning gap in the lineup and launches into a stream-of-consciousness expletive-deleted soliloquy with talk of drummers who bottled out of broken glass confrontations, drummers whose egos outweighed their creative talent, drummers who are going to get their legs broken.

"Forget it, it's in the past now," Joe tells him quietly, with just a few words cooling out Mick's anger and replacing it with something positive. "If any drummer thinks he can make it, then we wanna know."

"We're going to the Pistols gig tonight to find a new drummer!" Mick says excitedly. "But they gotta prove themselves," he adds passionately. "They gotta believe in what's happening. And they gotta tell the truth..."

THE BAND AND Rodent have their passport photos taken in a booth on the station. Four black-and-white shots for 20 pence. They pool their change and after one of them has had the necessary two pictures taken the next one dives in quickly to replace him before the white flash explodes.

When you're on 25 quid a week, the stories of one quarter of a million dollars for the cocaine bill of a tax-exile rock-establishment band seem like a sick joke...

The Human Freight of the London Underground rush hour regard The Clash with a culture-shock synthesis of hate, fear, and suspicion. The Human Freight have escaped the offices and are pouring out to the suburbs until tomorrow. Stacked haunch to paunch in an atmosphere of stale sweat, bad breath and city air, the only thing that jolts them out of their usual mood of apathetic surrender is the presence of The Clash. Because something's happening here but The Human Freight don't know what it is...

"Everybody's doing just what they're told to! Nobody wants to go to jail! White riot! I wanna riot! White riot! A riot of me own!! Are you taking over or are you taking orders?! Are you going backwards or are you going forwards?"

"White Riot" and The Sound Of The Westway, the giant inner-city flyover and futuristic backdrop for this country's first major race riot since 1959. Played with the speed of the Westway, a GBH treble that is as impossible to ignore as the police siren that opens the single or the alarm bell that closes it.

Rock 'n' roll for the late 1970s updating their various influences (Jones—the New York Dolls, MC5, Stooges, vintage Stones; Simonon—Pistols, Ramones, Heartbreakers; and Strummer—totally eclectic) and then adding something of their very own. The sense of flash of beach-fighting mods speeding through three weekend nights non-stop, coupled with an ability to write songs of contemporary urban imagery that are a perfect reflection of the life of any kid who came of age in the '70s.

The former makes The Clash live raw-nerve electric, a level of excitement generated that can only be equalled by one other band—Johnny Thunders' Heartbreakers.

The latter makes The Clash, or maybe specifically Jones and Strummer (as Simonon has only recently started writing), the fulfilment of the original aim of the new wave, punk rock, whatever; that is, to write songs about late-'70s British youth culture with the accuracy, honesty, perception and genuine anger that Elvis, Beatles or The Rolling Stones or any others in the Rock Establishment could never do now that they're closer to members of the Royal Family or facelift lard-arse movie stars than they are to you or me.

But so many bands coming through now are churning out cliched platitudes and political nursery rhymes. The Blank Generation is the antithesis of what The Clash are about...

Strummer and Jones disagree on the best environment for a new band to develop and keep growing. Joe

"We're going to the Pistols gig tonight to find a new drummer!"





"They'll take to us, but it'll take time": The Clash onstage in 1977



Clash roadie Rodent, who sleeps on the floor of their rehearsal studio

thinks it's all too easy right now, and having to fight every inch of the way when the band was formed a year ago is the

But, ultimately, they know that White Youth needs its own sense of identity, culture and heritage if they're going to fight for change. A riot of their own...

But can the masses take to the incisive reality of what The Clash are about and why they lap up the straight-ahead rock bands who push nothing more than having a good time?

"Maybe the reason those bands are so big is because they don't say anything," Mick says. "But we ain't gonna preach and sound like some evangelist."

I mention to Joe what happened when he walked on stage at Leeds Poly for the first gig that actually happened on the Pistols' Anarchy Tour. He said a few words before the band went into the set that they'd been burning to play for weeks, about how the gutter-press hysteria, local-council butchery and Mary Whitehouse mentality of The Great British People was preventing certain young rock bands getting onstage and playing for the people who wanted to see them. I remember him saying that 1984 seemed to have arrived early as the Leeds Poly students bawled abuse at him. With the minds and manners of barnyard pigs, the overgrown schoolchildren conveyed the message that they didn't give a shit.

"I think they will take to us, but it'll take time," Joe says. "But I don't want to go towards them at all, I don't wanna start getting soft around the edges. I don't want to compromise... I think they'll come round in time, but if they don't it's too bad."

"We ain't never gonna get commercial respectability," Mick says, both anger and despair in his voice.

Paul Simonon takes it all in and then ponders the nearest station that has a bar on the platform.

That's the difference between their attitudes to, how you say, Making It. Strummer is confident, determined, arrogant and sometimes violent in the face of ignorant opposition (a couple of months back in a club car park he faced an American redneck rock band with just his blade for support).

Mick Jones is a rock equivalent to a kamikaze pilot. All or nothing. The Clash gives him both the chance to pour out his emotional turmoil and offer an escape route from the life the assembly-line education the country gave him had primed him for. When a careers officer at school spends five minutes with you and tells you what you're gonna do with your life for the next 50 years. More fodder »

healthiest situation – whereas Mick believes in giving every help and encouragement possible while being totally honest with bands who are just not delivering the goods.

"I'm as honest as I can be," he shouts over the roar of the tube train. "All the new groups sound like drones and I ain't seen a good new group for six months. Their sound just ain't exciting, they need two years..."

The sound of The Clash has evolved, with their experience this year in the recording studio first with Polydor, when they were dangling a contract, and more recently recording their first album after CBS snapped them up at the 11th hour. The change in the sound first struck me as a regulation of energy, exerting a razor-sharp adrenalin control over their primal amphetamine rush. It created a new air of tension added to the ever-present manic drive that has always existed in their music, *The Sound Of The Westway*...

And, of course, the subtle-yet-indefinite shift in emphasis is perfect for the feeling that's in the air in the United Kingdom, one quarter of 1977 already gone: "*In 1977 you're on the never-never! You think it can't go on forever! But the papers say it's better! I don't care! 'Cos I'm not all there! No Elvis, Beatles or The Rolling Stones! In 1977.*"

"1977", the other side of the single, ends with the three-pronged attack shouting in harmonies derived from football terraces: "*1984!*"

THE PRESSURE. THAT'S what they call the heavy atmosphere in Jamaica, the feeling in the air that very soon, something has got to change... The Jamaican culture is highly revered by The Clash. They hang out in black clubs, pick up reggae import singles in shops where it ain't really wise for them to tread, and express their disgust at the undeniable fact that in the poor working-class areas of London where they grew up and still live the blacks are treated even worse than the whites.



for the big corporations and the dole. Mick is beating them at their own game by ignoring all the rules.

"Someone locked me out, so I kicked me way back in," he declares in "Hate And War".

His uncanny resemblance to a young Keef Richard allowed him to relieve an early identity problem by adopting the lookalike con trick which fools no one but yourself. Then he met Strummer, who told him he was wearing a Keith Richard identikit as though he had bought it in a shop.

"I got my self-respect in this group," Mick says, "I don't believe in guitar heroes. "If I walk out to the front of the stage it's because I wanna reach the audience, I want to communicate with them. I don't want them to suck my guitar off..."

And Paul Simonon: total hedonist. His fondest memories of the Anarchy Tour are hotel-room parties and broken chairs, things trod into the carpet and girls who got you worried because you thought they were gonna die like Jimi Hendrix if they didn't wake up. He's a member of The Clash because they're the best band in the country and it gets him laid a lot.

So what did they learn from the Anarchy Tour, so effectively butchered by the self-righteous Tin Gods who pull the strings?

"I learned that if they don't want you to play they can stop you," Joe says seriously. "And no one's gonna raise any fuss..."

"For the first four days we were confined to our rooms because the *News Of The World* was next door," Mick continues. "We thought, 'Shall we go out there with syringes stuck in our arms just to get 'em going?' Yeah, and furniture seemed to have labels saying, 'Please smash me' or 'Out the window, please!'"

And when they finally got to play, the minds in the Institutes Of Further Education were as narrow as those in Fleet Street. So Strummer gave them something – even though they were too blind to see it...

"This one's for all you students," he sneered before The Clash tore into the song that they wrote about Joe being on the dole for so long that the Department Of Employment (sic) wanted to send him to rehabilitation to give him back the confidence that they assumed the dole must have destroyed, together with Mick's experience working for the Social Security office in West London, and, as the most junior employee, being told to open all the mail during the time of the IRA letter-bombs.

The song is called "*Career Opportunities*": "*Career opportunities/The ones that never knock/Every job they offer you/Is to keep ya out the dock/ Career opportunities/They offered me the office/They offered me the shop/ They said I'd better take ANYTHING THEY GOT/ 'Do you wanna make tea for the BBC?/ Do you wanna be, do you wanna be a cop?/ I hate the army and I hate the RAF/ You won't get me fighting in the tropical heat/ I hate the Civil Service rules/ And I ain't gonna open letter bombs for you!'"*

"Most bands and writers who talk about the dole DUNNO WHAT THE DOLE IS!" Mick shouts. "They've never been on the dole in their life. But the dole is only hard if you've been conditioned to think you've gotta have a job... then it's sheer degradation.

"The Social Security made me open the letters during the letter bomb time because I looked subversive. Most of the letters the Social Security get are from people who live next door saying their neighbours don't need the money. The whole thing works on spite. One day an Irish guy that they had treated like shit and kept waiting for three hours picked up a wooden bench and put it through the window into Praed Street."

Mick shakes his head in disgust at the memory of the way our great Welfare State treats its subjects.

"Every time I didn't have a job I was down there – waiting. And they degrade the black youth even more. They have to wait even longer. No one can tell me there ain't any prejudice..."

WE MAKE FOR Rehearsal Rehearsals, the North London studio of The Clash. An enormous building once used by the British Rail for a warehouse. Only part of it is in use at the moment, a large expanse of property ruled by no lighting, rats and water.

Upstairs, Joe, Mick and Paul look glad to have guitars in their hands again. The walls are covered with posters of Bruce Lee, Patti Smith, the Pistols and The Clash themselves. A large map of the United Kingdom faces the old TV set where Hughie Green is being sincere with the speech turned down. Biro graffiti stains the screen. The television is not treated like the Holy Grail in this place...

I watch Joe playing a battered old guitar with all but two of its strings missing and I think about his comments when I wanted to know how he would cope with financial success when/if it came...

"I ain't gonna fuck myself up like I seen all those other guys fuck themselves up," he said. "Keeping all their money for themselves and getting into their head and thinking they're the greatest. I've planned what I'm gonna do with my money if it happens. Secret plans..."

I could be wrong, but at a guess the development of Rehearsal Rehearsals into anything from a recording studio to a rock venue to a radio/TV station seem like possible Strummer visions for when The Clash get the mass acceptance they deserve.

As we talk about how The Clash have reacted to putting their music down on vinyl, I tell them that the major criticism people not cognisant with their songs have

CHALKIE DAVIES / GETTY

Ladbroke Grove habitués Mick Jones and Joe Strummer on the Circle Line in April 1977



expressed is that the unique Strummer vocal makes understanding their brilliant lyrics almost impossible for the uninitiated.

"The first time we went into a studio with a famous producer he said, 'You better pronounce the words, right?'" Joe remembers with his amused sneer. "So I did it and it sounded like Matt Monroe. So I thought I'm never doing that again... to me our music is like Jamaican stuff – if they can't hear it, they're not supposed to hear it. It's not for them if they can't understand it."

The Clash say that being signed with CBS has had no interference with the preservation of their integrity and, even with the band's attitude of No Compromise, a termination of contract in the manner of the Pistols seems most unlikely.

They believe the sound on the album to be infinitely superior to that of the single because the latter was cut during one of their first sessions in the studio after the decision to let their soundman Micky Foote produce the band, even though he had no previous experience in production.

"We tried the famous ones," Joe grins. "They were all too pissed to work."

"Outside, there ain't no young producers in tune with what's going on," Mick says. "The only way to do it is to learn how to do it yourself."

"You do it yourself because nobody else cares that much," Micky Foote, Boy Wonder Producer tells me, his sentiments totally in keeping with the clan spirit in The Clash camp.

The band talk of their respect for their manager Bernard Rhodes, who has been a major influence on all of them, and who has made enemies because of his obsessive commitment to The Clash. But Joe, Mick and Paul are free spirits, unlike a lot of bands with heavy personality management.

"He really pushes us," Paul says.

"We do respect him," Mick adds.

"He was always helping and giving constructive criticism long before he was our manager," Mick then points at the other members of the band and himself.

"But the heart is there."

I ask them about their political leanings. Do they believe in left and right or is there just up and down?

They reply by telling me about a leftish workshop they used to frequent because they enjoyed the atmosphere – and also because it gave them an opportunity to nick the paints they needed for their artwork.

"It was really exhilarating there," Mick says. "They used to play Chinese revolutionary records and then one day the National Front threw bricks through the window. The place didn't shut, though. So one day they burned the whole joint down and they had to close down..."

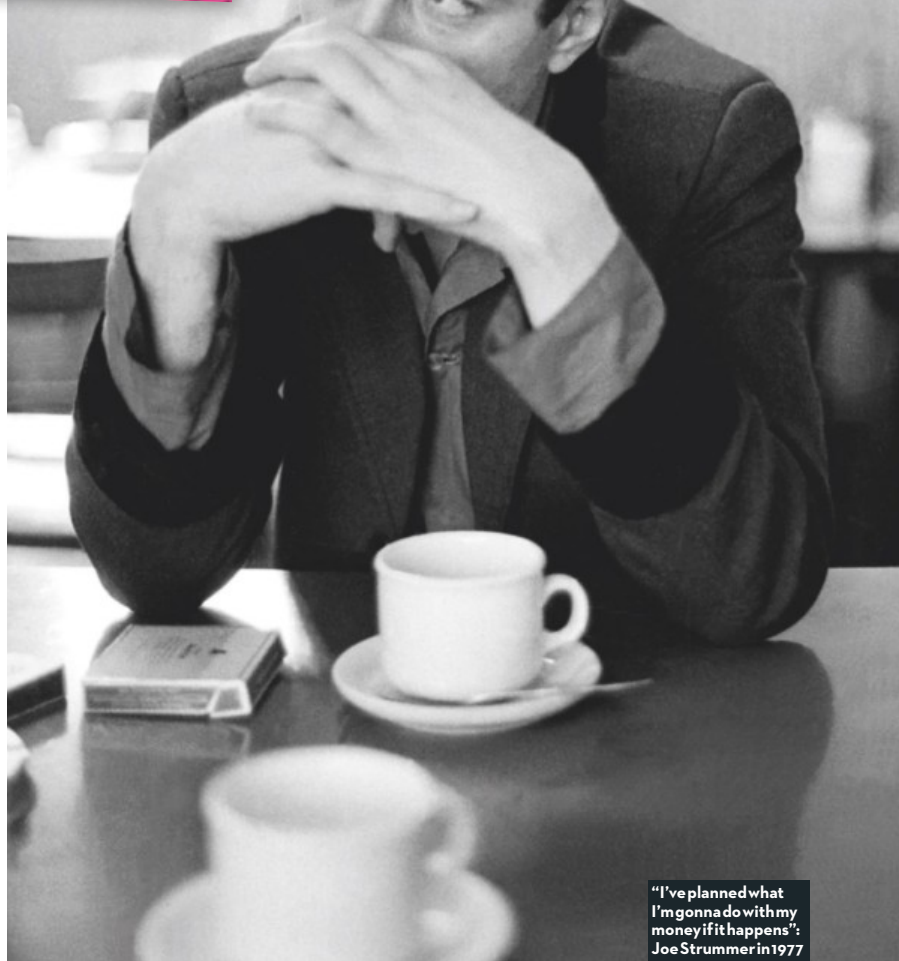
"In 1977 there's knives in West 11/Ain't so lucky to be rich/Sten guns in Knightsbridge/Danger stranger, you better paint your face/No Elvis, Beatles or the Rolling Stones/In 1977/Sod the Jubilee!"

"I always thought in terms of survival," Mick says. "And these people are the opposition of free speech and personal liberty. And they're trying to manipulate the rock medium."

Then he repeats something he said earlier, reiterating the importance of The Clash: "And I ain't ashamed to fight..."

IT HAS BEEN over a year since Mick Jones, Paul Simonon and their friend Glenn Matlock first met Joe Strummer down the Portobello Road and told him that he was great but his band was shit. Later Joe talked to Bernard Rhodes, and 24 hours after that he showed up on the doorstep of the squat where Mick and Paul were living and told them he wanted in on the band that would be known as The Clash.

And from the top of the monolith tower block where they wrote their celebration of the Westway, you can gaze down through the window of



"I've planned what I'm gonna do with my money if it happens": Joe Strummer in 1977

“Bernie was always helping long before he was our manager”

– as Mick Jones puts it – one of the cages and see that London is still burning...

"All across the town/All across the night/Everybody's driving with four headlights/Black or white, turn it on, face the new religion/Everybody's drowning in a sea of television/Up and down the Westway/In and out the lights/What a great traffic system/It's so bright/I can't think of a better way to spend the night/Than speeding around underneath the yellow lights/But now I'm in the subway looking for the flat/This one leads to this block and this one leads to that/The wind howls through the empty blocks looking for a home/But I run through the empty stone because I'm all alone/London's burning, baby..."

"Each of these high-rise estates has got those places where kids wear soldiers' uniforms and get army drill," Mick says quietly. "Indoctrination to keep them off the streets... and they got an artist to paint pictures of happy workers on the side of the Westway. Labour liberates and don't forget your place."

He looks down at the fire hundreds of feet below.

"Can you understand how much I hate this place?" he asks me.

1977 is the year of The Clash.

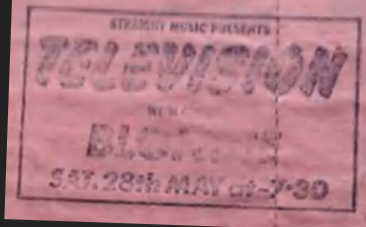
Tony Parsons •

**Sten-guns
in Knights-
bridge??**

1977

APRIL - JUNE

The descendant of every enigma from Monroe to Piaf to Ronnie Spector: Debbie Harry with Blondie at Hammersmith, 1977



Pop-pulp vs prayers

NME JUN 4 NYC cool crosses the pond as Blondie support Television.

B LONDIE'S DEBBIE HARRY frantically shimmies and shakes across the stage limelight, furiously rattling a pair of shiny maracas, and I sigh sadly, wishing they were mine.

You look good in black - fashion notes are an off-the-creamy-shoulder mini-dress, night-nurse tights and stiletto leather ankle boots from which project the silk-clad sparrow legs of the type of non-stop-dancing NOO Yawk City bud that Tom Wolfe eulogised in the Peppermint Lounge Revisited section of his *Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*.

The World's Greatest Mouth cries "SURF'S UP!" at the start of Blondie's celebration of summer, "In The Sun", a number that's the equal of the type of Golden Old'un that Brian Wilson used to knock out on a lazy afternoon with his piano parked in the sand box. That song's typical - a joyous, updated

synthesis of Beach Boys, Spector, Orlons, Daytonas, early Motown, the very crème de la crème of the most timeless *American Graffiti* pop-pulp that every poured out of a cruising car's radio.

It's exhilarating Americana, and even though the furthest West I've ever been is Ealing Broadway, I could almost taste the back-seat-drive-in love and the ketchup-soaked cheeseburgers sizzling on an open grill...

Debbie looks like a peroxidized 16-year-old ponytailed cheerleader who got a job turning tricks on Times Square during the vacation. The angelic countenance, absorbed in her speeding-sideways dance steps, turns vicious as her painted nails claw the

air for the Patti Smith-inspired "Rip Her To Shreds".

Her Mop Top Muppet band ploughed through "Get Off Of My Cloud" on Saturday and "Louie Louie" the next night for the intro to the opening track on their Private Stock album "X Offender", a child-like paean to a perverted cop who's into rubber boots, if you see what I mean. It's the tragic story of a jailed man and the girl who waits for him.

The notion that the band should stick to small clubs and avoid the larger halls is smashed as the descendant of every enigma from Monroe to Piaf to Ronnie Spector gets bathed in blue lucid spotlight for "Look Good In Blue" done soft and sultry. West Side Story derivative finger-snapping choreography with Debbie torching it into the footlights with Doomed Lover angst.

"For Iggy!" Debbie cries and they rip through their tribute to The Pop, "Detroit".

"In The Flesh" was only performed on the Sunday, which was bad strategy as they should do it every night. Not a dry eye in the house as Debbie purrs, murmurs and sighs.

It's Blondie's newest single and it would mean a lot to me if you all go out and buy it.

I bite my toenails in anguish as "Man Overboard" is followed by "Rifle Range", with Debbie getting gunned down and dying the Bogart, flat on her back and twitching with the throes of Sudden Death.

But when she bounces back for "I Didn't Have The Nerve To Say No (Dear)", a sort of porno "God Only Knows", I know that everything's gonna be alright.

The band leave the stage (sulky bastards, her musicians; not the type of boys Debbie should mix with at all), then get

brought back for two numbers that display real fire - killer versions of "Heatwave" by Martha Reeves & The Vandellas and The Daytonas' "Little GTO".

The difference between Blondie and Television was the difference between hanging around an amusement arcade and going to church. Honest, I think that the *Marquee Moon* album is great. But the two

weekend gigs that Tom Verlaine's Television played at Hammersmith Odeon were like sitting at the Maharishi's feet or gazing respectfully at the Crown Jewels - or watching Pink Floyd if they had any good songs.

"Prove it, Tommy boy!" an irreverent prole bawled,

HAMMERSMITH ODEON LONDON
LIVE!

MAY 28 / 29

Television played with the technical perfection of a sophisticated computer

GUS STEWART / GETTY

and I assumed he was talking about the album track of the same name. But when the song had come and gone and he continued shouting, "Prove it, Tommy boy!" I realised he was challenging Verlaine to live up to the hyperbole of his build-up.

On the album, Verlaine's frighteningly intense music carries some warmth, passion and SOUL. There was a paucity of all those qualities during these two gigs. It was cold, heartless and joyless, and they played with the technical perfection of a sophisticated computer. When they started with the first tracks on the album, "See No Evil" and "Venus", I thought they were gonna run straight through the album because they didn't have the energy to change the tracklisting around.

When a man as talented as Verlaine can write something like "Venus", perhaps the finest love song since Dylan's "Love Minus Zero", there's just no excuse for playing with as much sexuality, love or affection as a necrophiliac.

Between numbers, Verlaine savours the role of distant, cool, patronising Star. Unsmiling, unmoving throughout, he introduces each song in a short slur of words, all indistinguishable except for the title.

Meanwhile, everybody's sitting round watching Television. It made me think that the Television/Blondie tour and the Ramones/Talking Heads tour should swap support acts for everyone's benefit.

While not in the same league as songs on the album like "Friction" or "Prove It", the old Ork single "Little Johnny Jewel" got the best reception simply because it's certainly the most esoteric number the band do.

"Marquee Moon" alone comes across as visually impressive as it is on vinyl, with guitarist Richard Lloyd and Verlaine cutting jagged, incisive structures through the air as TV's transparent axe reflected beams of coloured light that looked like the music FELT.

On that occasion the music touched me inside. The rest of the time it was how I imagine a Grateful Dead concert to be.

"Knockin' On Heaven's Door" is dire, and it's not until the encore of "Satisfaction" that the audience stand up from their chairs and Idiot Dance.

"WALLY!" somebody has the amusing and appropriate audacity to bellow, and then the bouncers start playing Gestapo Warriors and it ain't funny.

As the fishbloods leave the stage I reflect that Television may have 10 times the talent of Blondie, but they ain't half as much fun. I think I'm in love. *Tony Parsons*



Michael Jackson (left) eclipses brothers Marlon (centre) and Jackie at Hammersmith, 1977

Pirouettes vs outsider shtick

NME JUN 4 The Jacksons

IT HAS BEEN nearly five years since The Jacksons' last visit to Britain, and Michael Jackson, 13 then, is 18 now. Not that that has diminished his appeal one jot – and indeed the fact that these boys have come up with no UK material in that period doesn't seem to matter either. They were still able not only to pack out the Hammersmith Odeon, but also to fill it with fanatical followers.

There had been some changes since last time. Jermaine, torn between family loyalties, opted to remain at Motown, and has been replaced by the largely anonymous Gerald Brown. Also, the band's own instrumentation – guitar, drums, keys – was now supplemented by a small orchestra, no doubt made necessary by the nature of the new material on Epic. Also, there was Randy, now 14, pounding on the bongos like a veteran.

The main change, though, was probably the material. It would now be invidious to suggest that The Jacksons are simply offering teenybop fare when they are vying with The O'Jays for the very best that Gamble-Huff have to offer (not that that's currently that good...).

The other important development was that this was virtually the Michael Jackson Show. Big brothers Tito, Marlon and Jackie were mostly relegated to the roles of back-up singers. This didn't particularly disappoint since Michael's voice has not changed much, and in any case he now has sufficient stage presence to control proceedings himself. Too much, it could be argued. His series of neatly executed pirouettes tantalised and teased the throng at the front of the stalls, and it was no surprise that for the second half of the show Michael was enveloped by kamikaze female fans storming the stage.

The material was reasonably predictable – mostly from the last album, with the obligatory medleys of former glories (their Tamla hits) – as was the assurance with which it was delivered.

Although I don't rate the Epic material too highly, it's obvious that Gamble-Huff have helped arrest the Jacksons' decline. And once the boys have found some material that's actually hot, then things might begin to get very interesting indeed. Meanwhile, don't leave it so long next time. *Bob Woffinden*

MM MAY 7 Tom Waits

THE OBVIOUS QUESTION about Tom Waits – is he, or is he not, a phoney? – was never quite resolved for me at London's Sound Circus on Sunday. The difficulty stems from his self-made image, which seems so much second nature it's become his whole artistic stance.

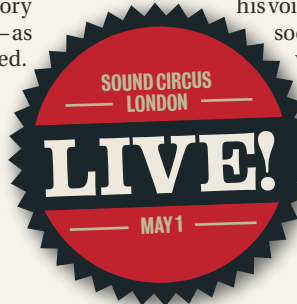
Waits is the coolest cat on the block; in his beat clothes, and with his radical slur of a voice, he contrives both to look and sound as though he were a stew-bum halfway into a meths trip.

It's a romantic idealisation of "the outsider" that he reinforces not just by stage tricks, like the cigarette that droops perpetually about his person, but even by the use of a laconic three-piece group, whose finger-snapping rhythms supported his piano playing and formed the background to his monologues, his "metropolitan doubletalk", as he calls them.

It's all patently shtick, but it's a great image, a hip, existentialist image that appeals to a certain audience's sense of sophistication and implies their familiarity with the artistic San Francisco scene of the '50s from which Waits draws some inspiration. Yet despite the amusement to be had from Waits' absurdist vision of himself and his many jokes – "It was as cold as a Jewish-American princess on her honeymoon," he quipped at one point – the mannerisms not only bring to pall, but they obscure a very real songwriting ability.


He has a good feel for melody and for lyrics, many of which explore with genuine force his self-portrait of the restless loner, bumming the bars and pool halls. It's a quality he evoked in "San Diego Serenade", a wistful song, performed alone and at the piano, which revealed his essential sentimentality. Too many other songs, however, were marred for me by straining to hear him strain, though I'm prepared to believe that

his voice really is that cracked and sodden. The real question, which requires a qualified yes, should be: Is he good? But to arrive at this conclusion one would do better to consult his records, where the pose can be put into truer perspective. *Michael Watts*



1977

APRIL - JUNE



“We’re the
black sheep
of the
new wave!”

They burn fanzines and rate the Queen. What sort of punks are THE JAM? Introducing an urgent new trio and their opinionated leader, Paul Weller. “We’re not totally brainwashed – yet,” he says. “We will be in two years if we don’t do something.”

October 1977: The Jam - (l-r) Bruce Foxton, Rick Buckler and Paul Weller - in San Francisco's Chinatown district. Although scheduled to play 16 dates over 12 days on their first US tour, Weller's dad/manager John cancelled the SF show because of an earthing problem with the microphones

— NME MAY 7 —

BYNOW ONLY the staunchest reactionaries amongst the nation's rock people can be of the opinion that the much-touted new wave, despite its several less-than-endearing facets, isn't a good thing. But just in case you still had any doubts, get a load of The Jam.

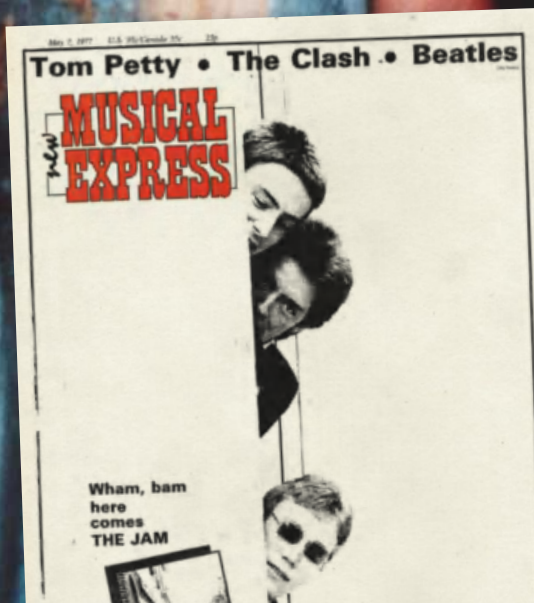
You'll doubt no more. For The Jam, while eulogising the nation's youth - and, come to that, the nation itself - with total commitment, remain the scene's renegades. "We're the black sheep of the new wave," says lynchpin Paul Weller.

The Jam most certainly do not toe the Punk Party Line. Why, they've even been known to commit such sacrilegious acts as burning on stage the Blank Generation's mouthpiece, *Sniffin' Glue*, after said journal had complained of The Jam's being "laidback" and "lacking direction" - not to mention "spending too much time tuning up onstage". Aggro!

With an image straight out of the Scene Club 1964 or some similar mod Mecca, The Jam wouldn't know one end of a safety-pin from another. Unlike the new-wave elite (Damned, Pistols, Stranglers, Clash), they are, sartorially speaking, three very sharp young men - the proud owners (and I mean proud) of customised mohair suits of the kind (say) The Yardbirds wore when they were an R&B band. And, unlike adherents of the new-wave dogma, The Jam don't go for wholesale rejection of their predecessors.

One Otis Redding is Paul Weller's favourite singer. He even attempted to sing like him at one point. Bassist Bruce Foxton admits to copping the odd earful of Bad Company and Thin Lizzy once in a while. And, to top it all, drummer Rick Buckler has owned up to possessing a couple of Genesis albums and liking the band when he saw them at Guildford in 1973.

Such views demonstrate the group's open-mindedness and individuality - something which Weller is keen to emphasise - »



and also their honesty. (It hasn't been unknown for The Damned's whirlwind drummer Rat Scabies to blag a Joni Mitchell album from her record company – but imagine him laying that on an interviewer. Or, come to that, an interviewer printing it...)

Moreover, The Jam have no time for playing the blank moron. Instead of the amphetamine-blitzed expression of vacant aggression copyrighted by new wavers, The Jam come on as sharp as their creases. Wasted they are not – though I can't believe they're quite as clean living as they make out. But perhaps most important of all, they are the best rock'n'roll band I've seen in many a year.

So sweeping a statement begs for qualifications, and not least among these is Paul Weller's flawless rock-star credential. Each of The Jam has an individual onstage persona strong enough to attain stardom in the not-too-distant future, but Weller stands out like a king among princes.

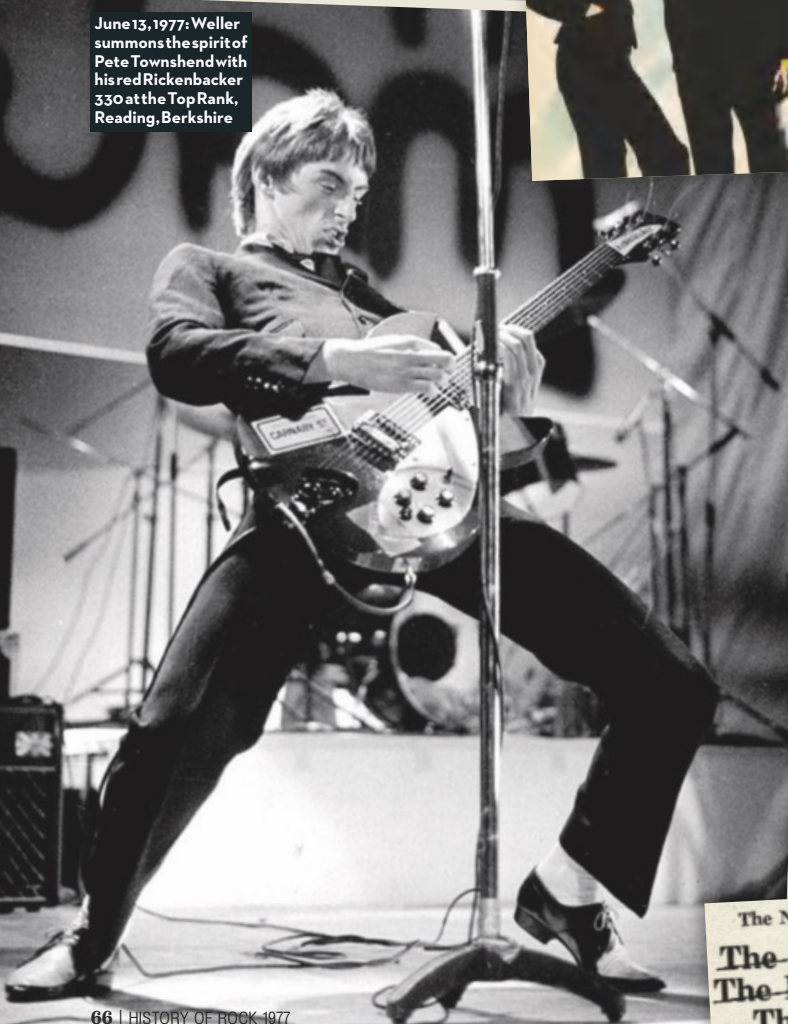
THESE PAST YEARS, British rock has failed to come up with any truly high-calibre working-class rock stars, the likes of which were typified in the '60s by Pete Townshend, Steve Marriott and John Lennon. This decade only folk like Lee Brilleaux, Wilko Johnson, Phil Lynott and (I suppose) Noddy Holder have come anywhere near to continuing that tradition, but none of these has even aspired to be – let alone been taken seriously as – a spokesman for their generation.

What's more, there's nothing intrinsically teenage about either the Feelgoods, Thin Lizzy or Slade – which is not true of The Jam, whose Paul Weller will in years to come, if not sooner, be regarded in the same light as those previously mentioned '60s figures.

Weller has Rock Star written all over him – and it's not just the fact that his razor cut and clothes bring back memories of the mod era. On stage and off, Weller, unlike some of his new-wave peers, is taut with positive vibrations – almost as if he's about to explode. Only occasionally does he slow down with the intensity... and then you realise that Weller is after all a guy on the tip of his 19th birthday from Woking in Surrey, on the far reaches of London's hinterland.



June 13, 1977: Weller summons the spirit of Pete Townshend with his red Rickenbacker 330 at the Top Rank, Reading, Berkshire



Remarkably unconfused, his age doesn't strike you, despite the total absence of lines on his face. In one publicity shot of The Jam, Weller, perhaps not coincidentally, looks as if he's trying his darnedest to come on like Pete Townshend, eyebrows arched to emphasise his determinedly mean stare. Weller, in his own way, is doing what Townshend did more than a decade ago – writing songs for and about kids and performing them with the exhilaration only a few can muster. And that's where age is an important, if not crucial, factor.

Live, The Who still have more energy than any other band in rock, but it's calculated, polished energy. When The Jam hit the stage the commitment is all but tangible, Weller putting his all, and more besides, into it.

I first stumbled across the band at Islington's Hope & Anchor, where, incredibly enough, The Jam managed to come over visually despite the severe limitations imposed by the venue's tiny stage. The area between band and audience was alive with electric energy, the pogoing kids and The Jam's frontline of Weller and Foxton (another good-looking guy, less tough-looking than Weller, though still possessing a youthful tightness) in total empathy with one another – Weller thrusting himself up and down with youthful abandon, occasionally pushing himself towards Foxton, who simultaneously launched himself backwards in Weller's direction so that the two collided momentarily, a double act with all the markings of a classic Rod-and-Ronnie or Bowie-and-Ronson routine.

Given more room, Weller gets into a few Townshendesque, thighs-tucked-beneath-the-abdomen leaps, the sense of commitment transcending mere plagiarism. Rick Buckler, complete with shades, looks good behind the drums, exuding nonchalant cool.

Musically, The Jam reflect Weller's tightness. There is nothing remotely sloppy about them, and they execute their material with a taut knife-edged intensity – while losing nothing in the way of warmth. As Chris

Parry, the Polydor A&R man who signed them, says, their music is brutal, but it is not without compassion.

Individually they play great too, especially Weller and Foxton. These two have plumped for Rickenbacker guitars, which goes some way to explaining why The Jam's sound is comparable to early Who and on occasions to The Beatles themselves; those with ears will have noticed the similarity between Weller's lead runs on the flipside of the group's "In The City" single, "Takin' My Love", and the way John Lennon used to embellish a rock'n'roll song like "Bad Boy" or "Dizzy Miss Lizzy".

But like Lennon or Townshend – at least early Townshend – Weller is essentially a rhythm guitarist and quite a remarkable one at that, perfectly capable of playing fast, clipped rhythm chords like Wilko Johnson, or coming on with triumphantly ruthless power chords, just like Townshend. You should hear the way Weller plays on Larry Williams' late-'50s rock'n'roll classic "Slow Down". Go, Paul, go.

The Jam's version of "Slow Down", live and on their soon-to-be-released first album, is almost as good as The Beatles', though, as befits the genre, played faster and with more urgency. It's their overall pace which they have in common with our other new-wave bands, but their music is not just about playing fast. Their songs (all of 'em Weller's) are, with the exception of The Stranglers' (hardly a teenage band anyway), easily the best, musically and lyrically, to come out of all this punk hoopla.

True, there are more than a few resemblances between the chord progressions Weller uses and those Townshend laid down in the past, but there is no denying Weller's ability to write a song which rings true. And one which has melody and passion behind it.

Of the 10 originals which grace their album, it's the lengthy (over three minutes), reflective dolefulness of "Away From The Numbers" (great title, eh? Conjuring up all kinds of images) which impresses me most. But every song is memorable, whether it's the pure adrenaline rush of "Art School", the reckless abandon of "I've Changed My Address" or Weller's paean to the fact that for the first time in ages young bands are playing to young audiences, "Sounds From The Street".

Apart from their own songs (and, of late, Foxton has started to write), The Jam include in their set blistering versions of those two mid-'60s soul classics Wilson Pickett's "Midnight Hour" and Arthur Conley's

The Next Big Deal is:
The PISTOLS
The DAMNED
The CLASH ... THE JAM

“Sweet Soul Music” – as well as a version of The Who’s “So Sad About Us”...

In a nutshell, The Jam have taken what they want from the past and fused it with a ’70s street consciousness while totally eschewing the blind negativity which has, until now, been de rigueur among their fellow rebels.

As Weller once told *Sniffin’ Glue*: “I don’t dig hippies, but they achieved something in the ’60s. They brought about a little more liberal thinking. We’re all standing and saying how bored we are and all this shit. But why don’t we go and start an action group, help the community? How many people can you see getting off their arses? Not fucking many.”

WHEN PAUL WELLER was a kid in Woking, the son of a labourer (who, incidentally and ironically enough, gave up his job six months ago to manage The Jam), he was absolutely besotted by the Fab Four. He had one of those Beatles souvenir guitars, the red-and-white plastic ones replete with mini-portraits and “autographs” of the Fabs. Paul used to mime to “She Loves You” in front of the TV. Later on he got himself a Hofner violin bass just like McCartney’s.

“I’ve got a Rickenbacker now, so I’m Pete Townshend,” he mocks defensively – for there have been those who contend that The Jam are just pale shadows of the early Who.

At the local comprehensive school he grew his hair long and smoked dope, just like all the other kids did, to rebel. Rick and Bruce were at the same school, but because of the age difference (they’re both 21), the three of them didn’t know one another that well. From the age of 14, Weller was convinced he was going to be a rock star, thereby gaining exemption from the humdrum. “I didn’t want to work,” he says. “I didn’t want to become Mr Normal.” He has no doubt he’ll succeed, either.

Weller left school when he was 16. For a time he worked as a window cleaner and worked “on the building” with his dad, who’d always encouraged him in his musical pursuits. Most of the time, though, he didn’t work, finally falling in with Buckler (who’d stayed on at school in the sixth form with the idea of becoming an architect, but quit before A-levels came round and worked for a time as an electrical inspector) and Foxton (who had got himself an apprenticeship in the printing trade).

Weller might have been a Beatle freak, but the thing which changed his life was hearing The Who’s “My Generation” on the *Stardust* album a couple of years ago. He fell in love with the mod image. And, while he’s unwilling to admit it, Townshend’s influence on Weller can’t be dismissed. It’s apparent when he voices off about what he thinks of The Who these days – over-reacting to the point of scoffing at Roger Daltrey’s beer gut.

“You can’t play rock’n’roll when you’ve got a beer gut.”

Weller is adamant that The Who haven’t produced a worthwhile lick since *Tommy* and expresses no interest in seeing them, despite the fact that he’s never seen them on stage. Opines Weller, “The songs Townshend writes now are so self-martyr shit. He can’t rest on his laurels for the rest of his life. Why doesn’t he give way to some of the younger bands? He’s got a lot of money and so have the Stones, so why doesn’t he put it into some clubs or build a... I don’t know... anything. Just *do* something with it. Some rehearsal studios or a record company.

“I think they owe it to the business, if anything. They’ve got enough out of the music business, so they should put some back. Instead of Keith Moon going round smashing up cars, *use* that money instead of wasting it. That’s what really pisses me off. This is the old order and they’re all wasting their bread. Paul McCartney brings his cats up on a plane and all this sort of shit.

“Lennon is the only one who hasn’t sold out. He’s the only bloke I’ve got confidence in still. He’s quietened down. He’s not so outspoken, but I like him still. It’s like us doing ‘In The City’ when we’re 27. Maybe we’ll be expected to sing it like The Who are expected to sing ‘My Generation’, but I don’t think we’d do it.”

Unsurprisingly, he has little sympathy for tax exiles.

“There’s people that work in factories that pay a lot of tax and they can’t split to the South of France,” he says rather naively. “Why don’t these rich rock stars open up some clothes shops? There’s no personalised clothes these days, which is one minor thing, but...”



“All this change-the-world thing is becoming a bit too trendy”

Buckler butts in. “You walk up this road here and you look in the clothes shops [Oxford Street] and they’re all the same. All the clothes shops are exactly the same.”

Weller points out that such mass production is a sign of the times.

“Really,” Buckler continues, “people are forced into buying that kind of thing because they say this is the thing to wear.”

Surprisingly enough, all the band, particularly Weller, are fiercely patriotic. When The Jam perform, they drape a Union Jack behind them and it’s unusual if one or more garments of Weller’s isn’t decorated with the odd Union Jack or two. They even went to the trouble of having some badges made with Union Jacks on them. Weller believes in the monarchy (and this is the same scene which sired the Pistols) and defends the Queen so: “She’s the best diplomat we’ve got. She works

harder than what you or I do, or the rest of the country.”

Buckler echoes him: “They’re an example to the country.”

So much for “Anarchy In The UK”... Moreover, Weller says he’ll vote Conservative at the next election, and he and Buckler reckon it’s the unions who run the country.

But even if fundamentally Weller supports such pillars of the establishment as the monarchy and the Tory party, his songs do have strong reformist attitudes. “Bricks And Mortar” numbers councils for getting their priorities wrong (“Woking’s like a fucking bomb site,” he says). One of his newer songs describes his fear that Britain is heading towards a police state. And throughout his songs the predominant theme is youth consciousness.

“We don’t love parliament. We’re not in love with Jimmy Callaghan. But I don’t see any point in going against your own country. If there’s such a thing in the world as democracy, then we’ve got it. We’re not totally brain-washed – yet. We will be in two years’ time if we don’t do something about it.

“Everybody goes on about new orders, but no one seems really clear what they are. Chaos is not really a positive thought, is it? You can’t run a country on chaos. Maybe a coalition or something with younger party members. All this change-the-world thing is becoming a bit too trendy. I realise that we’re not going to change anything unless it’s on a nationwide scale.”

Quite rightly, The Jam think they’re a cut above the other new-wave bands, surmising that their songs are better-structured and more subtle lyrically. They have kind words for the Pistols, though.

“They spurred the whole thing off. Not that we’re very much associated with them, but they still did a lot for the music. They brought about a lot of change. They frightened some of the older musicians, which is a good thing.”

So did they influence you at all musically?

“It wasn’t that I saw the Pistols,” says Weller. “It was that for the first time in years I realised there was a younger audience there, young bands playing to young people, which was something we’d been looking for in a long time.”

Most of the new-wave bands are very much into speed...

“We’re not into drugs,” Weller replies very quickly. “We don’t need it. We don’t need that to go on stage with. We don’t need it to get in the mood of playing. We might when we’re 30 or something. We might have to. In that case we’ll give up.”

The Jam have been together for two years. Originally they were a four-piece. They started off playing the usual stuff – Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley – before going through a phase of playing Merseybeat (“Beatles songs were too difficult”), for a time wearing satin suits and adopting a teenybop image. And before hitting the London circuit last year they’d worked in working men’s clubs and cabaret around the Woking area.

Three months ago they signed to Polydor, Chris Parry (the A&R man who’d “almost” signed the Pistols, The Clash and The Damned) offering them a contract as fast as he could so as to ensure a rival company didn’t step in with a larger advance.

Already there’s action on their first single “In The City”, a genuine ’70s teen anthem, and when their album of the same name comes out later this month, don’t be surprised if that follows The Clash and The Damned’s albums up the charts, for The Jam alone justify the emergence of the new wave. *Steve Clarke* ●



May 13, 1977: Bob Marley on stage with the Wailers at Houtrust Hallen in The Hague, Netherlands

ALBUMS

Bob Marley
Exodus ISLAND

THE MOOD: If some gunmen had charged into your house and shot you and your manager into a hospital bed, then perhaps you, too, would go into a studio and make a religious album - if you were capable of making music at all.

The fact is that this is a highly charged spiritual record by the reggae musician most capable of articulating the mood of his people. It was conceived by Marley shortly after his brush with disaster at the hands of gunmen, and thus there's precious little joy about it.

Even so, Marley sounds his customarily "up" self - and there are fewer more worthwhile sounds around in contemporary music.

THE MUSIC: Only one song, "Waiting In Vain", comes across as a plain love theme. For the rest, there's either the traditional sensuality we've come to expect

from Marley, or the spirituality of the first side. "The Heathen", "Exodus" - an unremittingly powerful track, perhaps the most potent on the LP - and the heavy insinuation of "Guiltiness" are all examples of spiritual conviction, but the endearing aspect of them all is the simplicity with which they're delivered. You don't get the feeling that a sermon is coming at you, or that Marley has suddenly found God.

"One Love", the final song on the record, is pure gospel, and delivered with an astonishing, insistent beat, a deadly combination of old-fashioned blues hollering and 1977 reggae wailing.

"Jamming" would be an instant disco smash if issued as a single; "Turn Your Lights Down Low" is slow and sexy; "Natural Mystic" is light, polite, yet systematically all-enveloping in the Marley tradition.

THE RESULT: This is a mesmerizing album. While his

last, "Rastaman Vibration", was rather cultish, this is more accessible, melodically richer, delivered with more directness than ever. Let's face it, after an attempt on his life, Marley has a right to celebrate his existence, and that's how the album sounds: a celebration.

Ray Coleman, *MM* May 14

The Clash *The Clash* CBS

By an odd quirk of fate, this debut album by The Clash came into the *MM* office on the same day as The Beatles' *Live At Hamburg*. Both found their way on to the record player and the somewhat surprising reaction was that The Beatles album induced derisory laughter, while The Clash produced requests for even louder volume.

The lesson from that is not that the *MM* is full of punk-rock freaks - not a safety-pin among us (honest) - nor that we don't like The Beatles, but that in the '70s punk rock has the vitality which many now esteemed

bands had when they were first starting. And it sounds a lot more fun, especially when you're not listening too closely, than triple-album concepts.

It would be ludicrous, of course, to judge The Beatles by what is little more than a bootleg; probably even more ludicrous to expect The Clash to achieve even more than one-tenth of what the Fab Four did. But it at least shows that at one time they - and the Stones, and The Who, and all the other establishment bands - sounded pretty rotten. They weren't adept at their instruments (to say the least; you ought to hear George Harrison on *Hamburg*), they hit bum notes, their harmonies

were flat; all the faults we lay at the punk rockers' door.

Yet they had an energy that overrode all those considerations, and a defiance of the status quo. The attitude was: if you want to hear note-perfect music, go to a classical concert.

The same applies today, except that in many cases you can substitute "rock" for classical. It all boils down, of course, to what exactly you do want. Personally, I care neither for the reverential neo-classical shows of the Pink Floyd, nor for my turntable to be filled all day with the extremely restricted music performed by The Clash and their cohorts.

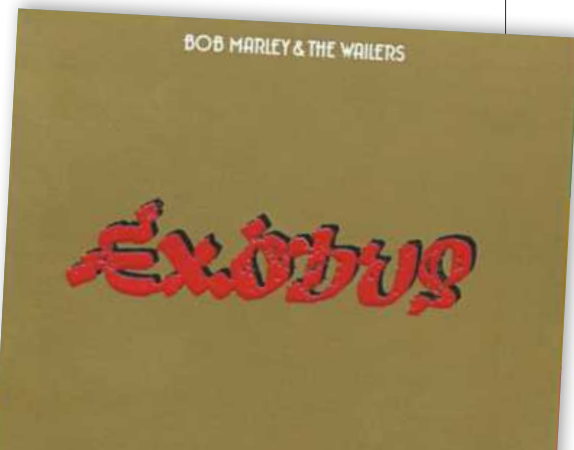
Punk rock strikes me as an experience to be savoured in small doses and, if on record, then at a high volume and preferably while doing something else. A closer examination, I find, leads to headaches, thanks to the tuneless repetition of chords at a breakneck pace.

The Clash, if you can believe it, manage to make the Stooges sound subtle. A shame that the instruments have the upper hand, because lurking beneath the racket are some interesting lyrics, snatches of which it's possible to hear if you listen carefully (not recommended).

It's here that The Clash, and others of their ilk, justify their existence. Just as in the pre-Beatles era lyrics had degenerated into "moon in June" romantic slush, so has the standard of today's pop song lyric gone back into a moronic slump?

By its very definition, "popular" music should not just be for the people, but about them, too. The Clash do exactly this, chronicling the ideas, frustrations and problems of disaffected youth in songs like "Remote Control", "Cheat" and "48 Hours" - these are the kind of themes that ought to be in the chart (if someone could write a tune for them, of course).

Particularly impressive is the sneering denunciation of



G/ISBERTHANEKROOT/GETTY



business that won't give them a break? Smells more like hype to me. The music on the album confirms that The Stranglers have little or nothing to offer. They're singularly lacking in all of the virtues that new-wave bands like The Clash, The

the employment prospects faced by the young in "Career Opportunities".

Some commentators will no doubt find the most significance in the only non-original on the album, a cover of Junior Marvin's big reggae hit of last year, "Police And Thieves" (you know, rebellious white youth links with angry blacks to create a potent political force, blah, blah, blah), but I shall leave that for the sociologists, except to say that it's a musically creditable version.

As an album, *The Clash* is pretty much what you'd expect: raucous, basic, and should go down a treat with the Blank Generation. Thank God I'm "too old" to have to enjoy it.

Michael Oldfield, MM Apr 16

The Stranglers Strangers IV (Rattus Norvegicus)

UNITED ARTISTS

Just about the only predictable thing about rock is that as soon as something new comes along, there's always someone willing to jump on the bandwagon. Even more predictable is that punk rock/new wave is going to get more than its fair share of these jerks, simply because it is a genre without rules and regulations.

The Stranglers strike me as one such group attempting to cash in. On the face of it, they've got all the punk credentials: the name, the musical incompetence, even a gig supporting Patti Smith. But one look at this album is enough to let you know where The Stranglers are at - or, perhaps, where their record company would like them to be at.

There's a beautifully designed sleeve and inner sleeve, a special label with The Stranglers' rat logo and even - try and hide the groans - a free single. ELP should be so lucky! As a special bonus for us lucky reviewers, there's a bundle of press cuttings, fax, pix and info, a press release that's magnificently mistyped and - here comes the real killer - a card from their press-and-public-relations consultant.

This is the music of disaffected youth, struggling against a hard

Damned and the Pistols have as their saving grace; they're about as energetic as a slug, and their lyrics, far from providing an outlet for the frustrations of today's young, are the same old tripe used by most of the bands the punks love to hate - but with a few naughty swear words thrown in.

Here's an example of the wit and wisdom of The Stranglers from "Peaches": "*Strolling along, minding my own business/Well there goes a girl now, 'hi'/She's got me going up and down/She's got me going up and down/Walking on the beaches looking at the peaches/Well I've got the notion girl that you've got some suntan lotion in that bottle of yours/Spread it all over my peeling skin, baby, that feels real good/All the skirts lapping up the sun/Lap me up.*"

All this is delivered in the usual arrogant tone, as though it were something momentous, and over a stunningly boring keyboard-dominated riff. It has been suggested that The Stranglers resemble The Doors: an insult if I ever heard one. It's true that the opening cut, "Sometimes", sounds like it's based on the "Light My Fire" organ solo; yet they are more akin to a late-'60s Detroit band, SRC, through their use of keyboards, but without half the Americans' style in exploiting doom-laden chords, nor even anything as remotely cheeky as combining "Hall Of The Mountain King" with "Beck's Bolero".

In truth, The Stranglers are no more than a cut-rate version of '60s American punk bands, but with none of the fizz that made that music so enjoyable. About the only thing they do well is write the titles to their songs; "Grip", "Down In The Sewer" and "Ugly" promise something more interesting than a succession of deadening riffs and a noticeable lack of ideas. The only sense in which The Stranglers could be considered new wave is that no one has had the gall to palm off this rubbish before. Michael Oldfield, MM Apr 23



Quirks, niceness and charm: (l-r) Johnny, Tommy, Joey and Dee Dee Ramone



SINGLES

Sex Pistols God Save The Queen

VIRGIN

Ramalama fa fa! Just in case there was any danger of forgetting that the Pistols are a rock band instead of just a media hoax/guaranteed talk-show laff-getter/all-purpose scapegoat or whatever, here's a record which actually managed to squeak its way past the official guardians of our morality and may well be in your shops any minute now. It may even stay there long enough for you to buy it. It comes out on Saturday and it'll probably be banned by Monday, so move f-a-s-t.

The "real" title of this song is "No Future", but it's received so much notoriety as "God Save The Queen" that now it's called "God Save The Queen" so that you can get what you ask for when you ask for it. And what you will get when you ask for it is a remorseless, streamlined crusher of a single that establishes the Pistols' credentials as a real live rock'n'roll band. Up front, star of stage and screen Johnny Rotten (the singer) gets to grips with the already oft-quoted lyric in the inimitably charming manner that has made him the darling of international cafe society. "*We're the future/ You're the future/NO FUTURE!*" he leers, except that there is a future, you're it and if you don't take it, then you've only yerownass to blame...

Anyway, buy it. Buy it whether you like the Sex Pistols or not. If people try that hard to stop you from hearing something, then you owe it to yourself to find out why. Besides, since 1977 marks the Queen's ascent to cult-figure status, maybe the reason that punx dig her so much is that she's a shining

example to all of us. How many of you dole queue cowboys can get that much

bread for posing all year? Gabba gabba hey! Which reminds me...NME, May 28

Ramones Sheena Is A Punk Rocker SIRE

For the time being, this is available as a 12-incher with a cute picture sleeve, T-shirt offer, green stamps, chance to win a three-year subscription to *New Society* and all manner of specialised weirdness like that, but I'm reviewing this off a plain old seven-incher and it still sounds sufficiently monstrous. Monstrously charming, that is. "Sheena Is A Punk Rocker" is a heart-warming love song with references to surfboards and discotheques and it's got harmonies and a chorus and... and... Look, all the Ramones' songs sound like hit singles and then don't sell, but this song is so flat-out delightful that not even the dull-as-bleedin'-ditch-water Brit-public will be able to resist it. The sheer charm and essential niceness of Dolly Ramone's four horrible sons is gonna win out. And even if it doesn't, there's always the double B-side of "Commando" (from the last album) and "I Don't Care" (never previously released) to cop the sympathy vote. Me, I like "I Don't Care" because of the beautifully soulful way in which Joey Ramone lists all the various things he doesn't care about.

"Heart-warming" just isn't the word, though I haven't the faintest idea what it is. NME, May 28



ROBERTA BAYLEY/GETTY

1977

APRIL - JUNE

“The only group”

TELEVISION arrive with a classic album, *Marquee Moon*, which makes New York the backdrop to a romantic/spiritual quest. “Every performance should attempt to go beyond yourself,” says leader Tom Verlaine. “To enter a new field of experience.”





Television in 1977:
(l-r) Fred Smith,
Tom Verlaine,
Richard Lloyd
and Billy Ficca

— MELODY MAKER JUNE 18 —

TELEVISION, WHOSE RECENT tour of Britain established them as one of the most unique and exciting American bands of the '70s, made their public debut in March 1974, at the Townhouse Theatre—a small viewing theatre in New York that had been engaged for the event by the group's manager and patron, Terry Ork (to whom, incidentally, *Marquee Moon* is dedicated).

Richard Lloyd recalls the occasion: "It was hilarious. We rented the theatre and went around asking people we knew to come down to see the band and give us some quotes that we could put in the papers. The place seated maybe 88 people and I guess it was full. I don't know how we managed it.

"I couldn't describe the music. It was just crazy. We were so wacky in those days. We used to fall over a lot on stage... and, like, we didn't have anything. Literally."

Television's lineup at this time was Lloyd (electric guitar), Billy Ficca (drums), Tom Verlaine (electric guitar) and Richard Hell (bass).

Ficca, Verlaine (née Miller) and Hell (née Myers) had attended high school together in Delaware. Verlaine and Hell were, from all accounts, particularly close (though their relationship was to end bitterly and precipitate an extended feud). They shared an interest in literature, art and modern poetry and music, and craved an escape from the stifling parochialism of their environment (in fact, legend has it that they made one abortive run for freedom which ended with their arrest).

Verlaine remains elusive about his musical activities in Delaware, admitting only that he and Ficca played together with various individuals in a series of short-lived, apparently experimental bands.

Verlaine, having decided that New York would be the most conducive environment in which to work and live, finally arrived in that city in August 1968. For three years he merely enjoyed the experience and atmosphere of living in the city, working in the Strand bookstore and hanging out in fashionable artistic circles.

In the early '70s he began composing songs, and by the time he embarked upon a tentative solo career on the New York folk circuit he had already composed several of the songs that have since been recognised as classics in Television's repertoire, including the beautiful, hallucinatory "Venus".

Verlaine vividly remembers his first public performance in New York: "I'd been thinking about it for some time. I had these songs and I had a guitar. I just thought, 'Fuck it, I'll do it.' One Sunday afternoon, I went down to this club and played for 15 minutes. I just wanted to find out what it was really like, and something happened to me and it occurred to me that this was the direction I should follow."

Verlaine decided that his songs could be best expressed in a group context, and with Richard Hell and Billy Ficca he formed the Neon Boys. As Billy Ficca explains elsewhere, the group's existence was prematurely terminated through lack of work and financial support.

Nevertheless, Verlaine and Hell began collecting the material that would form the basic repertoire of the original Television: the material, in fact, that was premiered that night at the Townhouse Theatre and would be heard over the next two years, by fluctuating audiences at CBGB, Max's Kansas City and any other New York haunt where the group could secure a gig.

Among these songs were Verlaine's "Venus", of course, "Friction", an early arrangement of "Marquee Moon" (which, in its original version ran to some 20 verses) and the as-yet-unrecorded "Double Exposure" and "Hard On Love" (mentioned by Richard Williams in his column last January). Hell contributed a brace of his apparently off-the-wall ditties, including

his disappointing single "Blank Generation" (a classic, apparently, in its original form), "Love Comes In Spurts" and "Fuck Rock'n'Roll".

It was this version of Television that was produced by Eno for a tape for Island Records. That company's head of A&R at the time was Richard Williams, who'd been impressed by the group in New York and was interested enough in their future to recommend them to Brian Eno. The sessions, however, were aborted after protracted disagreements between Verlaine and Eno.

"I think Eno was too individual," Verlaine explains. "We heard different things in the music. Maybe what he got on tape was a realistic sound for the band at the time, but his ideas were incompatible with mine. He'd get something down and I'd listen to it and I'd say, 'What's THAT? It shouldn't sound like THAT. Do THIS to it.' And he'd tell me that he'd change it. And he'd go off, but he just wouldn't change it. He's a real clever guy."

If Verlaine was dissatisfied with the recorded sound of Television—even though he suggests it was an accurate reflection of the group as it stood—he might possibly have recognised some of the musical limitations of the group; particularly the shortcomings of Richard Hell's bass playing.

Lloyd recalls that Hell responded reluctantly to Verlaine's suggestion that he play bass in Television (it was Hell, incidentally, who gave the group its name), and he accepted the offer only after displays of great enthusiasm and encouragement. Whatever, it was decided that he was relatively inadequate and he was replaced in 1975 by former Blondie bassist Fred Smith.

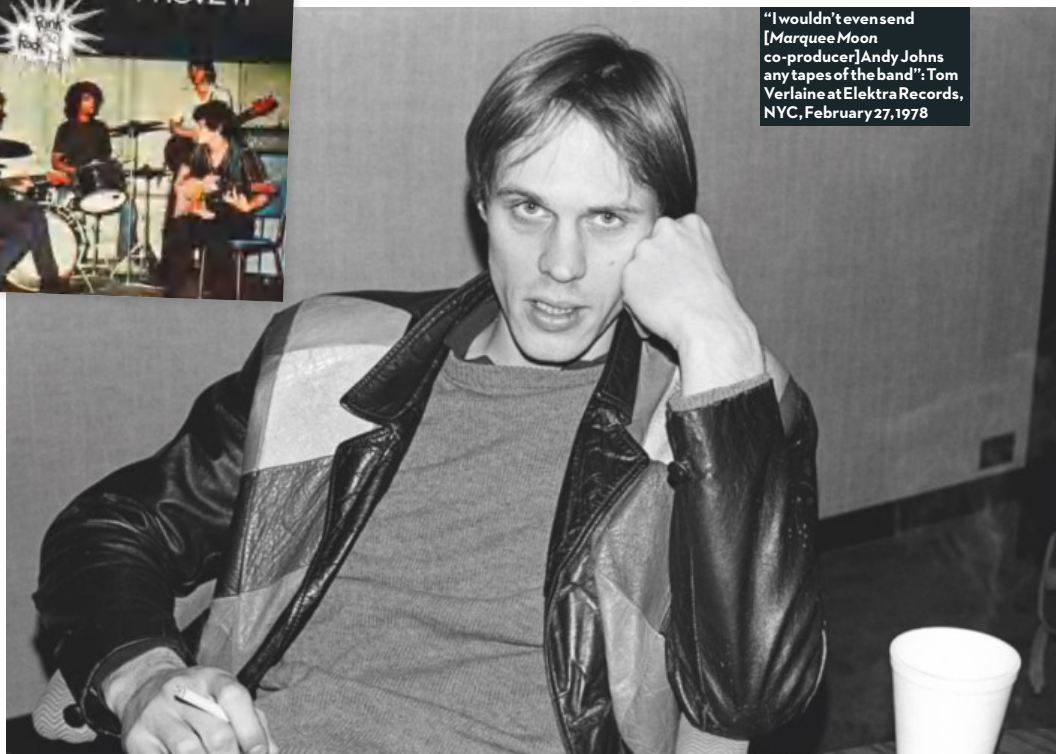
Hell went off to join ex-New York Dolls Johnny Thunders and Jerry Nolan in the original Heartbreakers (now resident, with a different frontline, in London). He now leads his own band the Voidoids.

Television, with Verlaine firmly in command after Hell's departure, continued to play around New York, picking up critical accolades for the music. Their perseverance was rewarded in 1976 with the offer of a contract to Elektra/Asylum, which Verlaine, who had displayed a rare caution previously, accepted.

Andy Johns, whose previous credits include engineering stints with the like of the Stones and Zeppelin, co-produced the group's debut album, *Marquee Moon*, with Tom Verlaine.

"I wanted someone who has no preconceptions about our music, who could be relied upon to get a good sound," says Verlaine. "I wouldn't even send Andy Johns any tapes of the band. He'd never heard us until we went into the studio. I didn't want him to know anything about us. That way, I figured we could avoid arguments. Since he didn't know what exactly we were supposed to sound like, he really responded to what I wanted."

TOM VERLAINE, THE enigmatic leader of Television, has been variously described as a potential rock'n'roll genius and the most original and exciting new writer and guitarist to have emerged in American music in this decade. Alternatively, there are those who subscribe to the rather less complimentary opinion that Verlaine is an arrogant and conceited individual, a pretentious and



"I wouldn't even send [Marquee Moon co-producer] Andy Johns any tapes of the band": Tom Verlaine at Elektra Records, NYC, February 27, 1978



May 28, 1977:
Verlaine onstage
at Hammersmith
Odeon, playing an
Ampeg guitar made
of clear Plexiglas

facile talent and a paranoid egomaniac who's callous and vicious toward those with whom he comes into contact. He's also said to have a megalomaniac streak that would reduce Hitler to the status of a shambling introvert.

"If you believe in yourself, people usually attack you," he says, defending himself against these charges, most of which have been made by his former associate Richard Hell.

"Those are the things Richard said about me when he quit the band," he adds wearily, obviously tired of the feud. "It's spiteful. If it wasn't for me, Richard Hell would never have had his name in the papers. He wasn't about to go start a rock'n'roll group. He just had a friend who played guitar. He couldn't possibly have played in any other band. We let him play with us and we hoped that he'd improve musically as we developed. Eventually we decided that we needed someone better.

"I'm sure that there are other people who share that image of me. The kind of people that hang around CBGB. People that I've never said a word to. And because I don't go over and talk to them, they start to think that you're being aloof and distant. But I'm not the kind of person who enjoys that kind of socialising."

It is, in fact, not difficult to imagine Verlaine's manner antagonising those who might test his tolerance. There is about him, for all his polite calm, an impatient air; talking about his adolescence in Delaware, for instance, he expresses an intolerance of the provincial atmosphere in which he grew up. He missed in that environment the excitement and artistic activities that he imagined would abound in, say, New York. Indeed, such was his impatience and desire to become part of a more exciting world that he decided that he would high-tail it out of Delaware and into New York at the earliest opportunity.

Richard Hell had been living a year in the city when Verlaine, then 17 years old, moved into his apartment. "It was an exciting time. It was a great experience, meeting people who had a certain atmosphere about them that you just didn't find in Delaware."

He had, at the time, vague plans for forming a band, although he had no specific ideas about the style of music he would pursue. "That was the first idea I had," he continues, "but when I got to

New York, the place just excited me so much that I didn't think seriously about doing anything. I was just taking in everything; I didn't start writing for a couple of years after I got there."

Although, as he admits, he was infatuated with New York, he was discriminating enough to recognise the superficiality of much that surrounded him. "There were lots of different cliques," he remembers. "People seem to form schools there very fast. Like all the poets would get together in various groups, and develop similar styles and share the same ideas and the same girlfriends. I don't know if incest is the right word, but it got to the point where everyone was just patting each other on the back and congratulating each other all the time."

He has still a romantic vision, he confesses: it remains for him a city of intrigue, mystery and a strange beauty. Indeed, much of the music on *Marquee Moon* betrays this infatuation with the city: there's a romantic evocation of the

nocturnal underworld filtered through a romantic vision that's at once confused by the potential violence of the environment and yet curiously seduced by the darkness.

In some ways, it seems to me, Verlaine and Television are direct heirs of The Velvet Underground. However, where Lou Reed portrayed New York with a graphic, documentary clarity, Verlaine deals more exclusively with atmosphere, evoking startling images of metropolitan anguish, loneliness and despair allied to a characteristic romantic yearning for spiritual perfection in the face of this darkness.

"That's very much the case," says Verlaine. "Living in New York you somehow become very night-orientated. Especially in the summers, when it gets so hot and the

streets get so dirty... I've always thought of New York as an inspiration. It isn't for many people, but it is for me. Obviously, it was for Lou Reed, too.

"I think we capture different aspects of the city, but there is some sort of connection between Television and The Velvet Underground. It goes beyond any musical connection, although I think we share the same sort of energy. New York is a really concentrated microcosm of emotions, you know, and atmosphere. The songs do deal mostly with atmosphere, yes; I think that's what art is all about..."

"Like, on stage, you don't have ideas so much as feelings; a sense of what's happening around you. I think that's an important part of the performance, responding to the atmosphere... and every performance should be some attempt to go beyond yourself, or get in touch with something beyond yourself. To enter a totally new field of experience.

"To me, that's what life is all about, too. An opportunity to enjoy new experiences. And it's all tied together... music, writing, living... It's all about experience, learning, growing.

"I know that as we become more successful we're going to be restricted, but success is something so abstract that I can't really think about it in specific terms. We'll just have to figure out a way of circumventing the restrictions... It's sort of a problem already."

"**T**HERE WAS NOTHING before Television," asserts the modest, quietly humorous Richard Lloyd, who forms, with Tom Verlaine, one of the most exciting electric guitar partnerships ever to hit this planet. "I always had this feeling that there was only going to be one group that I'd get into and the vibe would be right. Television was the only group. Is the only group."

Lloyd would ask us to believe that his musical career began, at the age of two, with the tentative exploration of the sound of a 24-key plastic piano, the property of his parents: "Then, one day, one of the keys broke. So I demolished it. My parents wouldn't replace it."

His interest in music, thereafter, waned considerably. He makes it emphatically clear that he was not particularly enamoured of the white American pop music of the early '60s that daily infiltrated his life, bouncing over the airwaves in his native Pittsburgh, and, later, New Jersey, where his parents moved when he was 17.

"I thought it was all incredibly dull. The radio was full of slush. It was, at least, something to listen to, but I hated most of it."

The American release of the early Beatles and Stones albums excited him rather more, he recalls (his first inclination was toward drums, and he remembers bashing away in a basement to *Meet The Beatles* and the Stones' *12x5*), but it was the first albums by Hendrix, the Floyd and the Dead that inspired him to learn guitar.

"Those records took me for a loop," he says, as if recalling some momentous event. "It was through those records that I first discovered real electric music."

Simultaneously, he was drawn to blues guitarist like Elmore James, Buddy Guy, JB Hutton and Johnny Shines (an associate of Robert Johnson): "When you pick up an instrument, you've got to start someplace," he explains, "and blues licks are some of the easiest places »

"We let
Richard Hell
play with us
and hoped
he'd improve"





March 21, 1977: Television perform at New York's Bottom Line club

to start from. But I didn't really concentrate on developing the influence of those people."

Inevitably, he attempted to start a series of bands; every attempt, however, was an abortive failure, he claims. "I was just playing my guitar and waiting for the right group. I'd put together a few bands who'd play maybe one gig and disappear. But I had no plans for any of them, because I knew that they weren't going anywhere."

He drifted to Boston, jamming infrequently with various local bands – he does not care to mention their names – before returning for a short time to New York City. "One day I went out for a sandwich, came back to where I was living and found that my guitar had been stolen. The only clothes I had were in the guitar case, so I had nothing. I figured that, for once in my life, I was unencumbered by any possessions. So I went to California. Just split for a year. I didn't have a guitar for six months, until I raised enough money to buy one in San Francisco."

There he began to practise on his guitar – "all day and all night for months" – perfecting an individual style. He had no specific strategy for discovering compatible musicians and forming a band at this time. As he says, he was carefully biding his time, waiting for the right circumstances in which to commit himself to a band possessed of the vision and originality for which he was searching.

In 1974, Richard was back in New York, living in Chinatown with Terry Ork (later to become patron and manager of Television), who one night persuaded him to trundle down to a club called Reno Sweeney's to see a guitarist called Tom Verlaine, who was then performing as a solo artist following the relative disintegration of the Neon Boys.

Verlaine, Lloyd remembers, played three songs, including early versions of "Venus" and "Double Exposure" (the latter has yet to appear on record, though a demo tape, recorded with Brian Eno, exists).

Lloyd was enthralled by Verlaine, and after a brief conversation it was clear to both that they shared similar ideas and concepts: "I just thought that there was something about what Tom was doing that was right. It struck a responsive chord. We got together and played, and started to work on ideas for Television.

"At that time we didn't have a specific idea of what we'd sound like. It was a madhouse; we'd play and writhe on the floor with our guitars, stand on our heads and laugh hysterically."

Lloyd recalls Television rehearsing for at least six hours a day, five days a week, during this period: "We all realised that we had to improve. If you realise that you are not technically proficient on an instrument, that shouldn't stop you from playing. But you have to be aware of the limitations of not being proficient.

"You have to need to play to spend, like, four or five years learning about your instrument. You have to work at it constantly. You have to be dedicated. Like, there must be a million guitarists and a million bands, and if you're going to be heard as an individual you've got to work and be prepared to spend all that time learning. I mean, it's not the kind of thing you can venture into casually."

The extraordinary empathy that exists between Verlaine and himself, Lloyd asserts, can be attributed to this period of intensive rehearsal, though he emphasises that on stage especially, their musical relationship is by now an intuitive affair.

There are, he says, some songs during which he will take the principal solos as a matter of expediency; then there are others where Verlaine and he will simply realise that one or the other has the momentum to carry through an unscheduled solo, in which case the other guitarist will ease back to a secondary role.

"If we hadn't spent that time together," he says, "we wouldn't know what we were playing. Of course it was an important time. There's never been any ego problems; we both have enough to play to keep us both happy as guitarists."

FRED SMITH, WHO contributes the sinuous basslines that underpin the guitar adventures of Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd, admits that it was the British bands of the mid-'60s that first inspired him to play rock'n'roll.

Like Lloyd, he confesses to finding little about which to enthuse in American music immediately prior to the transatlantic ascendancy of The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Kinks and The Zombies – who he remembers with particular affection – whose individual styles were a profound influence on the American bands formed in the slipstream of their success.

He recalls, with amusement, his early high-school bands like the Poor Boys and the Auroras, whose respective repertoires consisted of versions, invariably inept, of current chart hits (usually British records, he remembers), and later, psychedelic extravaganzas "and anything we could figure out how to play. We just used to copy everybody. If we could play it, we played it no matter what it was."

He played guitar then – "rhythm guitar. I never played lead. I couldn't play fast enough" – and only turned to bass six years ago after failing an audition for a gig as a guitarist.

"I hadn't been in a group for a while; I'd sort of given up. I couldn't get the guitarist's gig; the group just wanted a bass player. I felt like playing again, so I got a left-handed Japanese bass and turned it upside down and I liked it. It was like learning a whole new instrument.

"It was with a group called Captain Video. I played with them for a while; it was around 1971. Leon Russell was big and we had an organ player, so we did a lot of his numbers. It was nothing special, but I didn't care. We could've played anything and it wouldn't have bothered me because I was just learning how to play. At the time I didn't even think about what I wanted to hear from the bass.

"When I first started playing I wondered if I should sound like the guy from The Byrds or McCartney. I just played what sounded natural and comfortable. If it sounded right I played it. I didn't sit around and study the styles of any other bass players. I didn't want to have their styles crammed into me.

"I'm not the kind of person who puts on a record and listens to the bass player. I listen to the group. I'm more interested in songs than instrumentalists. The bass as an instrument, I find, has its limitations. The bass players I like are subtle and play things that fit the song.

"I don't like to hear bass players that really stick out. Like, someone like Bill Wyman you don't notice at first, but if you suddenly catch what he's playing it'll send a chill up your spine because it's so right."

Before joining Television in 1975 (when he replaced Richard Hell), Smith played with Blondie's Deborah Harry, first in a band called The Stilettoes, then in the original Blondie. The Stilettoes featured three girl singers and Fred found that fun. It was at the time that the New York Dolls, those tragic figures of the New York scene, were being recognised internationally, and NYC was alive with glitter and outrage combos hoping to emulate the Dolls' success.

"It was all glitter bands," Smith recalls, "That's what was happening. It was a lot of fun. It was exciting. There were all these groups forming on the Lower East side. There was CBGB and Club 82 opening. There was something happening. It was more fun than music. The Stilettoes, like most of the other groups, were probably more into presentation than music, but the girls wrote a few good songs. I enjoyed it."

The original Blondie lineup he describes as a sketch of the group that toured here with Television. "It was rougher," he says. "We worked a lot and just hoped that something would develop. It did eventually, but I'd left by that time.

"We were a little erratic, you know. We had this drummer who kept passing out, he'd just collapse. A weak guy. Kept passing out all the time.

"We used to open for Television at a lot of gigs, and I liked them a lot and I knew all their songs, and then Tom asked me to join them because Richard was on his way out. I knew that I had to go on and do something new, and joining Television was something new, a challenge. I had to join, you know."

Television's escalation to prominence and popularity in America and Europe is viewed casually by Smith; having struggled for so long in New York, he is not easily infatuated by the group's

present success, and the personal glory that will inevitably attend that success he is less than enamoured of. "I'm just enjoying playing," he says simply. "I'm enjoying touring. The whole thing. I like it. It hasn't been as hard as I had been told it would be. It isn't easy, but hotel rooms are better than my own apartment, you know."

He is modest about his own contributions to Television's unique sound: "Jesus," he says when the question is posed. "I think, more than anything, I contribute to the time of the band. I keep time for the whole band to enable Richard and Tom to go off on solos whenever and wherever they want to go. I keep the bottom together. Yeah, like an anchor. It's important.

"When I heard the record for the first time, I could hear how much the band had 'developed'."

BILLY FICCA, A drummer whose individual style is marked by a rare exuberance and, occasionally, by a ferocious intensity, is, off stage, surprisingly nervous, unassuming and more than a little shy. An initial encounter, at least, suggests

as much. Nevertheless, he responds politely, with charm and humour, to questions about his personal and musical history.

A friend of Tom Verlaine since 1965 (they attended the same high school in Delaware), Ficca has been playing drums from the age of 12. Although he played in the inevitable series of high-school rock'n'roll bands, his principal interest was jazz. Pop music he found weak and anaemic. He listened intently to his father's collection of Gene Krupa records. His brother played trumpet and was an admirer of Maynard Ferguson, whose drummer, Rufus Jones, he remembers as an adolescent influence.

"Jazz wasn't a meek music," he asserts. "It was very strong. I got tired of a lot of rock'n'roll. I could never find anything to listen to on the radio, except for one Baltimore station that played a lot of old jazz - Django Reinhardt, King Oliver, some Leadbelly.

"The first bands I played in did mostly Stones numbers - R&B, that kind of thing. Then there was the freak-out period," he laughs. "Everybody took LSD and got stoned and played 27-minute songs in double time. Music was so free then. Everything was swept away and we started from scratch again. Everybody got pretty weird. People mellowed out in the end, though."

It was during this period that he first played with Verlaine. They had been introduced by a mutual friend and discovered that they shared the same musical tastes and infatuations: "We got together," he recalls, "and played some crazy stuff with different people. It was pretty far out. Not at all commercial.

"We couldn't get any work, you know. There weren't too many people in Delaware interested in that kind of crazy music. We just rehearsed, worked out some material and played for ourselves really. Then that disintegrated and I did a couple of gigs with a kind of blues group with horns, you know.

"Played with a couple of bands like that. Soul bands, really. I enjoyed it. We played mostly around Delaware... then Tom invited me to New York. He and Richard Hell were trying to form a band. Yeah, the Neon Boys. Just the three of us. It never really evolved into anything.

"We spent all our time rehearsing. There were no real gigs. Nothing was happening, and a friend of mine from Delaware invited me to join this group. They were a kind of pop/soul/blues/funk group. It seemed that it might be fun, so I went off for maybe a year. I played my final gig with them in Cape Cod. It was at the end of the summer and we decided to take a vacation. We just never got back together again."

By this time Verlaine and Hell had enlisted the talent of Richard Lloyd, and on his return to New York, Ficca completed the original Television lineup: "Tom already had a lot of ideas for the band. I think I'd have to say that what we're doing now is similar to what we were *trying* to do then. The ideas have evolved and been refined. And, of course, we're all more

proficient, individually, than we were then. We understand each other and we're closer now. We can anticipate the direction someone might suddenly follow and we can go after him.

"But the energy is still the same. We never want to lose that energy. We all think it's essential to keep that, because it's something the audience can respond to. Like when you first hear us it might sound, you know... a little different, a little strange. I mean, I listen to a lot of crazy music, so it all sounds natural to me, but I think it might sound a little weird to someone hearing us for the first time. It's not obvious music. It's not straight-ahead rock'n'roll boogie or whatever. At the same time it's still very

physical music. It can shift you. It doesn't just aim for the head.

"The music has everything, I hope: humour, anger, love, beauty and tears. It should combine every emotion. And we, as musicians, should be able to express those emotions. I said that I didn't want us to lose any of the energy of the original band, but I think technique is very important. I mean, I can hear sounds and textures in my head, and it requires technique and skill to get them out." *Allan Jones* •

"When you first hear us it might sound, you know... a little strange"



Readers' letters

MM JAN-JUN A Genesis fan laments, McLaren telegrams and Strummer explains.

Etymology in the UK

It seems strange that, with the exception of a brief mention by Michael Watts, no one has actually paid much attention to the actual meaning of the word "punk". I have always understood it to mean a young man who would, willingly or unwillingly, submit to anal intercourse.

The word apparently had its origin in prison, where the victim was usually unwilling. Thereafter, owing to society's peculiar double-standard, the "punk" was a despised and unwanted person, similar in status to a female "tramp". Because no pride of any kind could obviously be attached to the term, "punk" is one that the gay community has never wanted. Interesting?

VALERIE WILMER, Balham, London (MM Jan 1)



Genesis: it's no joke

When it was announced that Peter Gabriel was leaving Genesis, the question uppermost in everybody's mind was: "Can they exist without him?" For, indeed, he was the Genesis image with his strange tales, macabre costumes and eccentric behaviour on stage.

Now, two albums later, they have shown that they are capable of producing excellent music and a stage act that stands up without Peter Gabriel. However, in doing so they have lost something that was very important in creating the Genesis "persona" of the first five albums. They've lost their sense of humour.

Compare tracks like "Harold The Barrel" (*Nursery Cryme*), "Supper's Ready" (*Foxtrot*) and "The Battle Of Epping Forest" (*Selling England By The Pound*) with anything from *Trick Of The Tail* and *Wind And Wuthering*. They still use the technique of putting whimsical little stories into song, with beautiful, haunting music, but there is nothing on either album to give any relief from the seriousness, which at times becomes positively agonising.

I agree that, with the departure of Gabriel and their reaching the top of the "first division", they are bound to change and grow more sophisticated. However, with this increasing sophistication they are going to start losing many younger

supporters. Having been a fan ever since they played the Mad Gin Mill at the Angel Hotel, Godalming, in the early days, it saddens me to think that they are losing that certain eccentricity which went a long way to making Genesis what they are today.

MWREFOD-BUSH, Merrow, Guildford, Surrey (MM Jan 15)

Beatles: oldies but goldies?

If EMI are to continue repackaging Beatles material, then why don't they use some initiative and release an EP consisting of the only tracks otherwise unavailable from the *Yellow Submarine* LP - "Hey Bulldog", "Altogether Now", "Only A Northern Song" and "It's All Too Much", which Steve Hillage recently revived? Such a record would be more useful to the fans than haphazard collections such as *Rock And Roll Music*.

STEVE PARTRIDGE, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester (MM Jan 1)

When I read that the ex-Beatles were attempting to stop the release of an album made before their unprecedented rise to fame, I felt I would have to write to express my, and probably many other fans', feelings on the subject.

As I see it, they are trying to stop the disc on the grounds that it would be derogatory to their careers. Well, I can't think of anything more derogatory to their individual careers than *Living In The Material World* (George), *Wings At The Speed Of Sound* (Paul/Wings) and *Ringo's*

Rotogravure (Ringo). The reason surely can't be that it would kill sales of the up-and-coming EMI live album, because why should any of them care, as they are no longer signed to EMI!

I am sure Beatle fans everywhere would much rather have previously unreleased songs, (eg, "Falling In Love Again", "I Remember You" and "To Know Her Is To Love Her") than already over-released tracks (eg, "Ticket To Ride", "Can't Buy Me Love" and "She Loves You"), even if they are unreleased versions.

MICHAEL RINFOUL, Banholm View, Edinburgh (MM Apr 23)

The Clash write, right?

Right now you're on a 31 bus with your mate, lighting up a fag. You notice some pink-and-black posters stuck on a wall in Kilburn. You say, "Fuck me, The Clash are playing the Roundhouse Easter weekend." Having sod all better to do, you wander down the Roundhouse, pay your two quid and, blimey, what's this, The Clash and Subway Sect don't turn up.

What happens? You get The Boys, Generation X and hippie John Cale, all on a duff PA. Being a bit of a flash sod yourself, you want to know who's conning you, so here goes: 1) The Clash were never contacted to play the Roundhouse. 2) All posters and ads stating The Clash were to play were crap information.

Stay with us, wise up quick and keep fighting. See you soon, kids.
JOESTRUMMER, The Clash (MM, Apr 23)

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1977

JULY - SEPTEMBER



July 13, 1977: in a muslin "Destroy" top designed by Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren, Johnny Rotten fronts the Sex Pistols at Daddy's Dance Hall, Copenhagen

“Everyone has a beastly side”

THE SEX PISTOLS outrage the locals in Stockholm, but a chat with Paul Cook, Johnny Rotten and Sid Vicious reveals hidden depths. Discussed: hippies, imitators, O-levels, even music. “We never sat down and wrote a thesis,” says Rotten. “We just do it.”

— NME AUGUST 6 —

THE PROSPEROUS CYBORGS at the next table in the back room of this expensive Stockholm eating-place are sloshing down their coffee as fast as they possibly can, with such indecent haste that one plump, middle-aged Swedette disgraces herself in the process. As they vacate the premises, another troupe are ushered in, take a look at the party in the corner and usher themselves out again.

John Rotten—a discordant symphony of spiky crimson hair, grubby white tuxedo embellished with a giant paperclip on the lapel and an absolutely godawful black tie with orange polka dots—looks at the departing Swedish posteriors with no little disdain.

“It must’ve been my aftershave,” he remarks in his fake-out voice, halfway between Kenneth Williams, Sweeney Todd and Peter Cook, and returns to his beefheart fillet, which—much to his disgust—is delicious. He eats nearly all of it and that night he doesn’t even throw up. »

JORGEN ANGEL / GETTY



In Stockholm, the Sex Pistols are a big deal. “God Save The Queen” is in the Top 10, just as it is in Norway, where they also have – for their pains – a monarchy. They’ve been splattered all over the national press in Scandinavia just like over here; more so than any other visiting rock band, or so they tell me, anyway.

It hardly bears thinking about: “The outrageous young superstar of Britain’s controversial punk-rock group the Sex Pistols knocked over an ashtray this morning while having his breakfast. MPs commented, ‘Is this the kind of behaviour that we want our young people to emulate? We must certainly think carefully about allowing this kind of performer on television.’ See editorial: page two.” And all in Swedish, too...

In general, though, Sweden has been less willing to take John Rotten at his word and identify him with the Antichrist than the good ol’ UK. They’ve stayed four nights in the same Stockholm hotel without any complaints from the management, despite Sid Vicious taking a leak in the corridor because two girls had locked themselves in the bathroom of his particular chamber.

When the local equivalent of Teds (a bunch of kustom-kar cruisers/*American Graffiti* freaks known as *raggare*) began harassing the Pistols’ fans as they left the gig and, indeed, followed the band and their admirers back to – and into – the hotel, the police were right there for the protection of the people.

I even saw one Swedish copper at the back of the hall on the second gig doing a restrained but joyful pogo to the lilting strains of “Pretty Vacant”. Can you imagine that at a British Pistols gig – in fact, can you imagine a British Pistols gig at all these days? In Britain, if the police were informed that the Sex Pistols and/or their fans were getting the shit whacked out of them somewhere, the most you could expect would be that they’d show up an hour or two later to count the bodies and bust the survivors (if any) for threatening behaviour.

At home the Sex Pistols are public enemies. In Sweden they’re an important visiting Britpop group. So it goes...

LEMME TELL YOU a little bit about Stockholm, just for context and perspective, before we get on to the good bits. They’ve got the highest standard of living in the world over there – weep, Amerika, weep – with an average weekly wage of £120 and prices to match. A bottle of beer will set you back over a quid a throw, and by British standards it ain’t even beer; more like a beer-flavoured soft drink that fills you up and leaves you belching and farting and urinating like an elephant and doesn’t even get you pissed. You can drink 20 quids’ worth of the poxy stuff and still go to bed sober, though the O Henry twist-in-the-tail comes when you wake up with a hangover.

Somehow the idea of a suffering hangover without even having been drunk is peculiarly Swedish.

The natives don’t see it quite that way, though. Through some weirdness or other of the Scandinavian metabolism, they get completely zonko on the stuff, with the result that the authorities think that they have an alcohol problem. You can imagine what effect this would have on a bunch like the Sex Pistols, who are pretty fond of their beer. It got so bad that by the end of the tour John Rotten gave up in disgust and started drinking Coca-Cola.

Swedish television is fun, too. For a start, the two channels only operate for a combined seven hours each night, and the programming seems to consist almost exclusively of obscure documentaries and the occasional mouldy old English B-picture. Radio is impossibly dopey – you can’t even dance to a rock’n’roll station, ‘cuz there’s nuthin’ goin’ on at all. Not at all.

In the discos, they play the same dumb records that they play in UK discos, only six months later, and the girls think you’re weird if you don’t/can’t dance the Bump.

Put it this way: if you think that there’s nothing going on in your particular corner of the UK, then there’s double nothing going on in Sweden. Make that treble nothing. God only knows what the Swedes get up to in the privacy of their own homes to cope with the total lack of decent public entertainment facilities, but it must be pretty bloody extreme.

We thought some kind of oasis had been discovered when we found a late-night cafe that served Guinness.

John Rotten – who is, after all, an Irishman by roots (the rest of the band call him “Paddy” sometimes) and therefore likes his Guinness – was enchanted by this revelation until we discovered that it was – are you beginning to get the picture now? – a special Scanda variety of Guinness even though it’s brewed up in Dublin, and therefore no stronger than the rest of the stuff they have over there.

We ordered up about 10 of the bloody things, swilled them down and discovered to our horror that we were all still sober, so we celebrated the fact by doing a burner on the establishment in question and vamoosing without settling the bill. We’d got as far as the car of our self-appointed guide – a Chris Spedding lookalike who runs a punk boutique called Suicide and who calls himself “the only true punk in Sweden” – before a search party from the cafe catches up with us and hauls The Only True Punk away to face retribution.

At this stage in the proceedings, the Pistols are only three-quarters strong. Sid Vicious is in London, where he has had to appear in court on charges of possessing an offensive weapon of the knifish variety and assaulting a police officer.

That leaves the rest of the party as Rotten, Steve Jones, Paul Cook, roadies Rodent (borrowed from The Clash) and Boogie, and Virgin Records’ international panjandrum Laurie Dunn, an amiable Australian (stop laughing at the back there) whose room seems to function as an assembly point. People at a loss for anything to do seem to end up going to Laurie’s room as a convenient way of running into other people with nothing to do.

Steve Jones plays guitar. He’s been playing the guitar for little more than a year and a half, which would indicate that he’s going to be a monster player by the time he’s been playing for a bit longer. The reason that he sounds far more professional and experienced than he actually is is that he sticks to what is simple and effective and – within the confines of a hard-rock aesthetic – tasteful. He knows what constitutes a good guitar sound, his time and attack are impeccable, and he plays no self-indulgent bullshit whatsoever.

There are a lot of musicians far “better” than Steve Jones (in the technical-ecstasy sense, that is) who could learn a lot from listening to him, could remind themselves of what they were originally looking for when they started out and how they lost it along the way.

Steve Jones is the oldest of the Pistols at 22, and his stolid features and blocky physique make him, visually at least, the most atypical Pistol of ‘em all. On the first evening, he went out to dinner in a Normal Person costume of dark-blue blazer, grey slacks and a neat shirt and tie – camouflage so effective that I nearly didn’t recognise him when he passed me in the corridor. It was only his fluorescent hennaed hair that gave him away as being a rock’n’roller. He’s a friendly, relaxed, good-natured geezer; could be anybody you know and like and drink with; could be you.

Paul Cook plays drums, and has done so for three years now. Like Jones, he plays with an ear for what sounds good, a straight-ahead high-powered no-bullshit approach to what he does and no distance at all between himself and his drums.

Again, he’s an ordinary guy in the best sense of the term; he was in at the roots of the band when a convocation of kids with heisted instruments were jamming around in Shepherds Bush – no formal groups, just a bunch of people playing together.

“I stayed in for about two weeks ‘cos everyone kept calling me Sid”





July 13, 1977: the Pistols play to an audience of about 125 at a disco in the restaurant of the Östra Stranden Hotel, Halmstad, Sweden

The nucleus was Cook and Jones (the latter then singing as well as playing guitar), Glen Matlock on bass and sundry additional guitarists including Mick Jones (now of The Clash), Brian James (now of The Damned) and Nick Kent (now of no fixed abode).

The Sex Pistols had their dark genesis when Jones, Matlock and Cook got together with Johnny Rotten under the Cupid auspices of Malcolm McLaren. Since Glen Matlock got the push and was replaced by Rotten's old college (not "university" – college) buddy and neo-bassist Sid Vicious, the Pistols have consisted of two factions: Cook/Jones and Rotten/Vicious.

These factions are by no means opposed or unfriendly or at cross-purposes; it's just that Paul and Steve get up earlier and go to bed earlier (with all that implies) and John and Sid get up later and go to bed later (with all that implies) – Paul and Steve hanging out together before Sid and John get up and Sid and John hanging out together after Paul and Steve have gone to bed.

John and Sid are the public face of the Sex Pistols: Jagger and Richard to the other two's Watts and Wyman, even though it'd be highly misleading to assume that the creative chores are split that way as well.

Anyway, that's as much background as we've time or need for, so zoom in on the Happy House, a Stockholm club run under the auspices of the local university's Student Union where we're a few minutes early for the soundcheck prior to the first of the band's two nights there.

ONE THING YOU have to say for Rodent: it takes a lot of bottle to set up gear while wearing a pair of those dumb bondage pants that strap together at the knees.

Rodent, Boogie and this Swede called Toby (though the band and their own crew call him Bollock-Chops) have just schlepped a massive PA system, three amps, a drum kit and all the rest of the paraphernalia that it takes to put on a rock show up to the second floor of this horrible structure, and Rodent's done it all in bondage pants.

He does it the next night with his sleeves held together with crocodile clips. It's a man's life in the punk-rock business. Join the professionals.

Sid Vicious has caused everybody a massive amount of relief by returning from London with the news that he beat the assault rap

completely and copped a mere (?) £125 fine for the knife.

How'd you dress for court, Sid?

"Oh, I wore this real corny shirt my mum got me about five years ago and me steels. I must've looked a right stropy cunt."

Oh yeah, we haven't really met Sid yet. He got the name "Sid" when he was named after an allegedly really foul-looking albino hamster of that name that he and Rotten used to have.

"I hate the name Sid, it's a right poxy name, it's really vile. I stayed in for about two weeks because everyone kept calling me Sid, but they just wouldn't stop. Rotten started. He's 'orrible like that, he's always picking on me..."

Rotten: "Sid's the philosopher of the band."

Vicious: "I'm an intellectual."

Rotten: "He's also an oaf. He listens to what everybody else says and thinks, 'How can I get in on this?'"

Vicious: "No I don't! I'm a highly original thinker, man; he's just jealous because I'm really the brains of the group. I've written all the songs, even right from the beginning when I wasn't even in the group. They was so useless they had to come to me because of they couldn't think of anything by themselves..."

Thank you, boys. We'll be returning to this conversation later, but meantime there's this soundcheck to do and it sounds terrible.

The stage is acoustically weird and means that by the time Sid's got his bass amp set up so that he can hear himself the bass is thundering around the hall with an echo that bounces like a speed freak playing pinball. The drums and guitar have been utterly swamped and everybody has a headache. Even me – the man who stood 10 feet in front of Black Sabbath yelling, "Louder! Louder!" – I have a headache. Oh, the shame and degradation of it all!

The problem is partially solved by the simple expedient of moving the amp forward until it's beside Sid instead of behind him. It's unorthodox but it works and it means that a semi-reasonable balance can be obtained. The sound still swims in the echoey hall and everybody's brought down something – you should pardon the expression – rotten. »



Friends since schooldays in West London: Paul Cook and (right) Steve Jones

Outside, a youthful horde of Swedish punks decked out in fair facsimiles of Britpunk outfits are milling around looking up at the window behind which the band and their entourage are lurking.

None of these kids are going to get in tonight, however, because Happy House gigs are mostly for over-23s only – a fact which causes bitter amusement because it means that the audience is, officially at least, all older than the band.

When the group make a break for it to go back to the hotel, it's Sid Vicious who stays out in the street listening to what the people have to say and assuring them that the band are on their side. He's out there for more than five minutes before he's virtually pulled into the car.

"I don't think we should be playing for them poxy student hippies. I reckon we should tell 'em that we don't play unless they let the kids in – either that or open up the back doors and let the kids in anyway." In the end, the kids have to wait until the following night when it's 15-and-over, but it's not a situation that the band are particularly happy with.

In the dressing room back at the Happy House a few hours later, John is ostentatiously asleep on a couch, Steve is tuning up his white Les Paul with the aid of a Strobo-Tune (more accurate than the human ear, totally silent so you don't bug the shit out of everybody else in the room by making horrible noises, hours of fun for all the family, get one today!) and Sid is whacking out Dee Dee Ramone basslines on his white Fender Precision bass.

Sid's musicianship (or lack of same) is something of an issue with some people, so let's say right here that he's coming along pretty good. His choice of Dee Dee as his model is a wise one, since that's just the kind of clean, strong and simple playing that the Pistols require.

At present, he's using a kind of flailing-from-the-elbow right-hand action that takes far more effort than the notes require, but he keeps time, doesn't hit more than his share of bum notes (not much more than his share, anyway) and takes his new-found role as A Bass Player as seriously as he takes anything.

Up in the hall, the student audience is milling around ignoring the reggae that's pumping out of the PA system. There are signs of movement from behind the silver curtains and then they're on, revealed in all their scummy glory. Rotten's behind the mic, staring out at the audience through gunmetal pupils, mouth tight, shoulders hunched, one hand clamped around the microphone.

"I'd like to apologise," he says harshly, "for all the people who couldn't get in. It wasn't our fault."

And the band kicks into "Anarchy In The UK", Jones' guitar a saw-toothed snarl teetering on the edge of a feedback holocaust, Sid's bass synched

"We do what we want to do and there's no industry behind us"

If the last few British rock'n'roll years have produced a superstar, Johnny Rotten is it. And let Fleet Street, the BBC and the rock establishment cope with that the best way they know how, because it isn't just happening, it's already happened. And if the definitive British rock band of now feel that they have to go to Europe or Scandinavia or even America just to be able to play in front of people, then there's something worse than anarchy in the UK right now.

"Never are tyrants born of anarchy," wrote celebrated fun person the Marquis de Sade. "You see them flourish only behind the screen of law." And right now in 1977, who's to say he's wrong?

Get up, stand up, stand up for your rights... and segue straight into Marley's "Exodus", pumping out of the soundsystem of a hideously twee rococo disco deep in the heart of Stockholm. It's playing at least twice as loud as anything else that they've played so far tonight, and that's because John and Sid have commandeered the disco DJ's command post and they've found it among his records. They've also found "Pretty Vacant" and that comes up next... even louder.

THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON finds the Pistols' party signing autographs, hanging out, posing and nicking things at The Only True Punk In Sweden's boutique.

The verdict seems to be that everything there is pretty much like SEX was a year or so ago and, in keeping with the celebrated Swedish standard of living, everything is around twice the price that it would be in London.

A photographer is on hand to capture the golden moments. Swelling almost visibly with pride, Sweden's Only True Punk unveils with a flourish a deluxe leather jacket that he's ordered up specially for Sid.

Vicious – charmingly clad in baggy pink pants, a floral blouse and sandals, with a little pink bow in his immaculately spiky coiffure – takes one look at it and declares it poxy, vile, corny and twee.

Sweden's Only True Punk looks deeply hurt.



Over the other side of the shop, Rotten is trying on a pair of repulsive leopardskin-topped shoes.

"They're really 'orrible," he beams. "I must have them. I could start another absurd trend... like safety pins."

The way that previous sartorial quirk of his had caught on with The Youth and become an industry virtually overnight is a source of vast amusement to him – as well it might be.

With the Only True Swedish Punk and his girlfriend are two 12-year-old kids, neighbours of theirs from out in the country, where they live. These two kids immediately latch on to Vicious, and he spends much of his day sitting with them and playing with them and talking to them... generally keeping the kids amused. He's really great with them... if you know anyone who's got a pre-adolescent kid who's into punk rock and needs a babysitter, allow me to recommend you Sid Vicious, Mary Poppins in punk's clothing.

The previous night, the air had been thick with rumours that the raggare had eyes for trashing, and for the second gig – the one open to the teenage punk rockers – the talk is intensified.

The band's limo – shaddup at the back there! – and the attendant dronemobiles are waved through a police cordon and everyone's hustled through a back door *mach schnell*.

"Get that poser inside!" snaps Rotten as Sweden's Only True Punk dawdles to make sure he's noticed in the exalted company. There's less dressing-room lugging than last time and the band are on fast as shit.

The punkette audience tonight is a lot cooler and better behaved than the beer-chucking beardies who made up last night's crew, and the band feel a far greater kinship to the crowd.

"It's our night tonight!" shouts Rotten as the band crash into "Anarchy", and tonight his contempt is not directed at the audience but – on their behalf – at a phantom enemy: the crowds who lurk outside the police cordons in their Dodges, Chevies and Cadillacs.

Tonight everything goes fine. The monitors work, the sound's fine and the band relax and play a better, longer set, graced by a couple of additional numbers that they hadn't bothered to get into the night before, including "Satellite Boy" and "Submission".

Next to me, a girl sits on her boyfriend's shoulders, oblivious to the little bubble of blood welling up around the safety-pin puncture in her cheek. After a while, she switches the safety pin to her other cheek so she can link it up with the chain in her earring. Pretty soon, that begins to bleed too. She doesn't care.

Everybody – band, audience, even the cop at the back – is high as a kite and happy as can be. There's no violence and not a bad vibe in sight; everybody's getting off. And this is the show that our guardians won't let us see?

Listen, all the Pistols do is get up on stage, play some songs and get off again. Shit, officer, t'ain't nothin' but a little rock 'n' roll fun; no chicken-killing, throwing of clothes into the audience, nudity, or any of that dirty stuff. No audience manipulation, no incitement. This is healthy, Jack.

The trouble comes after the audience leave; it ain't the Pistols' fault, and there's nothing at all that the Pistols can do about it. We're all upstairs drinking rats' piss when there's a commotion outside and someone reports in with the news that a bunch of raggare have just chased a couple of young girl fans and ripped the pins right through their faces to prove what big bad tough guys they are.

Sid wants to go out there and lay into them. Someone else suggests ramming them with the limousine like the cat in the South did to the Ku Klux Klan awhile back. Ultimately, there's nothing that can be done except call the Fuzz and feel very, very sick about the whole thing.

SO ULTIMATELY, WHY are the various establishments – governmental, media and even rock 'n' roll – more frightened of the Pistols than of any other previous manifestation of rock 'n' roll madness?

"Because they were all to some extent slightly controlled by the industry," says Rotten, ensconced with Vicious and Cook in the relative peace and quiet of a hotel room. "There was always an element of the establishment behind it, but with us it's totally our own. We do what we want to do and there's no industry behind us. That's the difference. That's what frightens them"

"Or rather," interposes Vicious, "the industry is behind us rather than with us."

Hey, if the industry's behind you it's got a knife in its hand...

"Yeah," says Sid, "but we've got a Chieftain tank."

"They can't control us," continues Rotten. "We're uncontrollable. They've predicted all down the line against us, and they've failed. This scares them. They've never been able to do that before. They've always known before that the money would come into it, but they've missed the boat so many times."

PAUL COOK: "The thing was that everyone in the beginning was so sure that no way was it going to take off. People like Nicky Horne said that they'd never play punk rock and now he don't play nothing but."

Which is an equally narrow attitude...

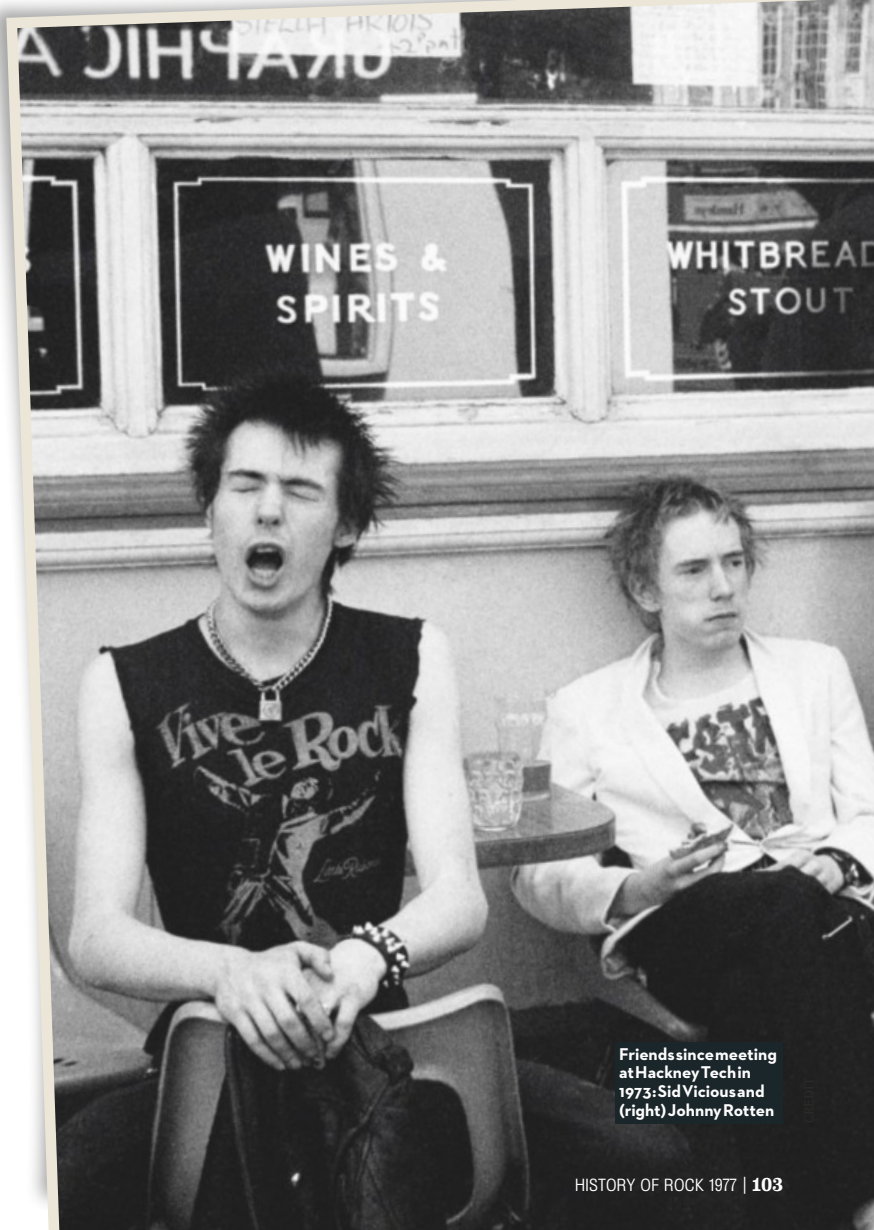
ROTTEN: "If not worse. With us it used to be 'They won't catch on because we're going to stop it' and there've been a hell of a lot of organisations out to stop us, and they've all failed."

Me, I don't think the Pistols can be stopped unless the kids are tired of them.

ROTTEN: "They're the ones who make all the decisions now. They're the ones that count, and I hope they've got the brains to suss it all out for themselves and not be told by the press, 'This band is finished,' and then think, 'Yes, that's right, they're finished and I'm not going to like them any more. I'm now going to like this.' They've got to decide for themselves."

COOK: "I think it's gone beyond the point where people can be told. They wouldn't play 'God Save The Queen' but that went to the top of the charts, and that usually dictates what goes in."

We talk about the Only True Swedish Punk's boutique, and Rotten opines that places like that should only be there to inspire people to create their own look, and be what they are instead of adopting a readymade facade. The same dictum, *natürlich*, applies to moozic: »



Friends since meeting at Hackney Technic 1973: Sid Vicious and (right) Johnny Rotten

“That’s what music should be about,” says Rotten. “I get very sick with the imitations. I despise them. They ruin it. They have no reason to be in it other than wanting money, which shows.”

“You’ve got to have your own point of view. You can have an idol—like you may see a band and think, ‘God, that band are really fucking good, I’d like to be like that.’ So you start up your own band, and then your own ideas come in as well on top of that and you have a foundation.”

“But a lot of those bands don’t leave that foundation and they stay in a rut and they listen to all the other songs in their morbid little circle and they do rewrites of them. Hence fifty thousand songs about how hard it is to be on the dole.”

“Been listening to The Clash, obviously,” says Sid. “The Clash only wrote those songs in the first place ’cos of me and ’im [Rotten] moaning about living in a poxy squat in Hampstead. It was probably them coming up there and seeing the squalor we were living in that encouraged them to write all that shit.”

Squalor in Hampstead, the bastion of liberalism?

“Oh no,” says Rotten. “You shoulda seen it.”

Vicious: “It was liberal, all right. It didn’t even have a bathtub.”

Was there any particular plan or strategy in mind right at the start of the Pistols?

ROTTEN: “Instinct. It hasn’t really worked out like that. We never sat down and wrote a thesis. There’s no rules, and no order. We just do it, which is more to the point. Do it, and when you can’t do it no more, then don’t do it at all.”

VICIOUS: “If it requires any real effort, then there’s no point in doing it. It should just come. If you have to force it, then there’s something wrong.”

ROTTEN: “Yeah, if you have to sit down in your room and go, ‘I’ve got to write a song, but what about?’... that’s rubbish. It just comes. It’s there.”

Yeah, I know just what you mean, John. Pure, untainted, burning creativity...

ROTTEN: “Oh yeah, man. Far out. It’s very hard not to run into those hippie bullshit phrases, because some of them were good, some of them actually meant something. It’s just a shame that they ruined a lot of ’em with silly ideas about, ‘Yeah man, I wanna be free’, which meant fuck all.”

VICIOUS: “Free from what they never even said.”

’Course we did, man—free from the same things you want free from: preplanned existences, boring jobs, stifling media...

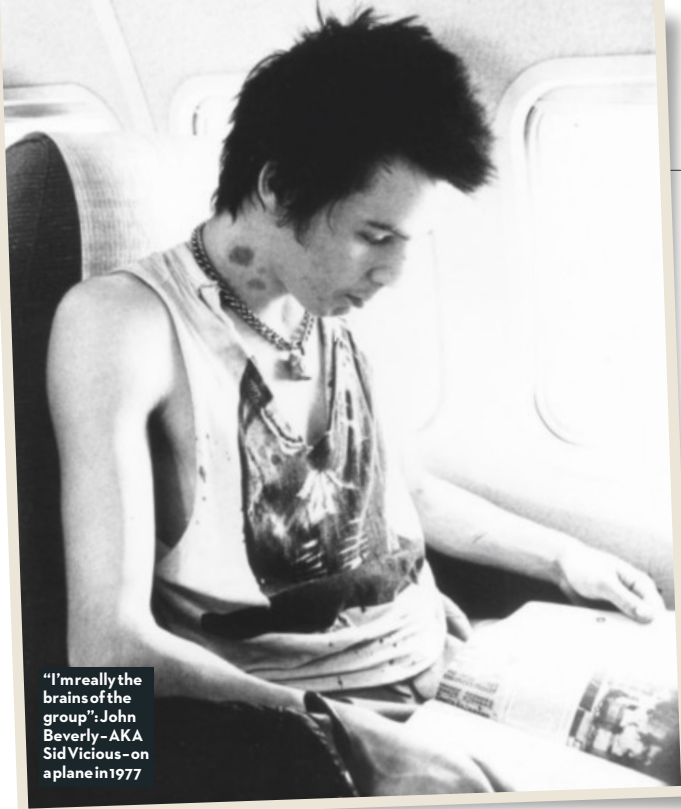
COOK: “Yeah, but they were like that themselves, weren’t they?”

ROTTEN: “I can remember going to those concerts and seeing all those hippies being far out and together, maaaaaaan, despising me because I was about 20 years younger than they were and having short hair. That’s when I saw through their bullshit. A lot of punks are like that as well, which makes me really sick.”

COOK: “The only memory of hippies I have was when I was in a park once when we was skinheads and we was throwin’ conkers at these hippies and they were goin’, ‘Hey, that’s really nice, man, I really love conkers.’”

ROTTEN: “Well, that made you a fool then, didn’t it? I think they won hands down, because you were wasting your energy and they were laughing at you.”

IT MAY OR MAY NOT seem ironic now, but when Johnny Rotten was 15-year-old John Lydon of Finsbury Park, he was tossed out of school because his hair was too long, the old



“I’m really the brains of the group”: John Beverly—AKA Sid Vicious—on a plane in 1977

find-out-what-the-kids-are-doing-and-make-them-stop trick.

“Yeah, but when they find out it’s always too late,” he says.

“In five years’ time they’ll have schoolteachers with safety pins in their ears. It’s so predictable with those oafs.”

VICIOUS: “The definition of a grown-up is someone who catches on just as something becomes redundant.”

The kids Rotten went to school with weren’t really into music, “except the geezers I hung around with. It was in skinhead times and they couldn’t understand how a skinhead could like The Velvet Underground. It was quite apt. I went to the Catholic School in Caledonian Road, opposite the prison. What a dungeon!”

Force-feeding you religion along with the lessons?

“Yeah, it was terrible. They really destroy you with what they do to your soul. They try and take away any kind of thought that might in any way be original. You know when caning was banned? In Catholic schools that didn’t apply, because they’re not state-run. They get aid from the state, but they’re not entirely state-run. I don’t know where they get their money from... I’d like to know. It’s probably some Irish mafia.”

“What they try to do is turn you out a robot. When it comes to allocating jobs for a student who’s about to be kicked out into the wild world, it’s always jobs like bank clerk... be a railway attendant or a ticket collector. Even the ones who stayed on for A-levels...”

Were any of the teachers halfway human?

“The ones that were got sacked very quickly. Everything was taught in a very strict style, in the same way that they taught religion: this is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and if you don’t like it you’re gonna get caned. But Catholic schools build rebels: a lot went along with it, but a lot didn’t. There was always a riot in religion classes. Nobody liked that subject.”

“I got kicked out when I was nearly 15—14 and a half—because I had too long hair. I had really long hair...”

“A balding old hippy with a big pair of platforms on,” sneers Vicious. “That’s what you were. I went to the same college as him...”

“...to get O-levels,” Rotten finishes the sentence for him. “I waited a year and a bit because I went on building sites working, and then I went to get some O-levels because I still had it in me that O-levels were the way to heaven... plus I didn’t want to work no more.”

“I got a grant. It was very easy. For some reason I always liked technical drawing and geography. At college I did maths, English, physics, technical drawing and chemistry...”

COOK: “I’ve got an O-level in woodwork.”

VICIOUS: “I’ve got two O-levels... English and English Literature... and I’m very intelligent.”

ROTTEN: “English Literature was a joke.”

I passed that with flying colours without even trying. It was stupid fucking Keats poetry, because I did my English in my Catholic school.

“They kicked me out halfway through the course because they said I’d never pass, but they’d already entered me, so I went and took the exam privately because I was still entitled to sit down at County Hall.”

“And I passed with an A... and I went down there with the certificate and showed it to ’em.”

UNLIKE FELLOW REGGAE freaks in The Clash, there’s no reggae in the Pistols’ repertoire.

“I find that slightly condescending—and that is not a slag-off of The Clash. I’m white, and I’m rock. I don’t

“We’re fighting people who ought to be on our side”



like rock music, but I like what we do with it. How could we sing about 'Jah Rastafari'? Even 'Police And Thieves' is full of innuendo, it's about three in one God on the cross and on each side are the police and the thieves; Rasta in the middle. That's what the song implies. It doesn't need to say more, because a Jamaican will know straight away. Besides, I don't like Junior Murvin's voice."

He's very much like Curtis Mayfield.

"Yeah, very much like Curtis Mayfield."

And you don't like Curtis Mayfield?

"Yeah, I do. I like the music; there's a different feel about it.

Do black kids dig your music? Do they understand it as part of the same thing?

"For sure. Where was that gig where a lot of dreads turned up? That was really shocking. I think it was an early Nashville, years ago. There was a few of them at the back, and I was really shocked that they'd be there. I talked to them afterwards and they said, 'Understand, just understand, man will understand, mon'. You never get any trouble from blacks. They understand it's the same movement."

Yeah, but reggae singers talk about what they love at least as much as they do about what they hate.

"Don't we?"

Only by implication: in the sense that if it's known what you stand against it can then be inferred what you stand for.

"Yeah, but it's the same with reggae. There are so many people who refuse to listen to them: 'No no, it's all a big con. All this terrible Jah and Rasta stuff, it's all a big con to make money.' There's been loads of reviews..."

"That one by Nick Kent was just classic ignorance, comparing reggae with hippies."

MANY PEOPLE LIKE to feel that Malcolm McLaren is in total control of the Sex Pistols: Svengali to Rotten's Trilby. Maybe they feel happier thinking that Rotten's controlled by McLaren than they do feeling that maybe he isn't controlled at all.

"They need to do that because they don't want to think differently than they already do. They like their safe world. They don't like realising the way things actually are."

COOK: "They fucking do that with everybody. They don't like admitting that anybody actually is the way they are. They always say, 'They got it from them, they're just like them.'"

VICIOUS: "The trouble is that the general public are so contrived themselves that they can't imagine how anybody else could not be contrived. Therefore, if you're not contrived, they have to find some way of justifying their own contrivance..."

Ghost voiceover from the past: Jack Nicholson in *Easy Rider* telling Fonda and Hopper, "They're not scared of you. They're scared of what you represent to them... what you represent to them is freedom. But talking about it and being it—that's two different things.

"I mean, it's real hard to be free when you are bought and sold in the marketplace. 'Course, don't ever tell anybody that they're not free, 'cos then they're gonna get real busy killin' and maimin' to prove to you that they are. Oh yeah—they're gonna talk to you and talk to you and talk to you about individual freedom, but they see a free individual, it's gonna scare 'em."

But I don't tell 'em what my ghost voice says, because that's hippies, and that's past and gone... and it was bullshit anyway.

Or so they tell me.

A few more things about Johnny Rotten. When he was eight he had meningitis, and it left him with weak eyes, permanent sinus, stunted growth and a hunched back.

The once-decayed teeth which got him his nickname are held together with steel rods.

They only time I saw him throw up was because his dinner had disagreed with his somewhat unstable digestive system... and

then some twisto went into the bog after he'd finished and started taking polaroids of it.

He uses foot powder on his hair because it absorbs all the grease. I never saw him hassle anyone who didn't hassle him, and I never saw him bullshit anyone who didn't bullshit him, and what more can you say for anyone in 1977?

"Turn the other cheek too often and you get a razor through it" — John Rotten, 1977.

Still, 1977 is a prize year for violence, and talking about the Pistols nearly always ends up as talking about violence, so—in the words of Gary Gilmore—let's do it.

"When they push you into a corner like that, what are you to do? You either kill them or give up, which is very sad, because we're fighting people who ought to be on our side... or are on our side but don't know it. They say we're using them, but the real people who are using them they don't even know about."

VICIOUS: "We're quite nice friendly chappies, really, but everyone has a beastly side to them, don't they? I can't think of anyone I know who if somebody messed around with them they wouldn't do 'em over."

ROTTEN: "People are sick of being used, but they're now attacking the wrong people—eg, us. When I was a skinhead, everyone I know used to go to the football games, and the match had nothing to do with it. What else was there to do? Disco? The youth club? Talkin' 'bout my generation... there was nothing else except alcohol."

Yeah, but having a barney with a bunch of people who're there to have one too is one thing, but random picking-on in the streets—like some skinheads used to do to hippies—is a whole other ballgame.

ROTTEN: "Yeah, but to a skinhead it looked like: 'These geezers are having fun doing what they're doing and we're not just because of the way we look, so smash 'em up and stop their fun.' It's just like the Teds in London, 'cos like I said, when I had a crop and I went to a festival, the reaction I had was terrible.

"Violence is always the end result of nothing to do. And it's very easy, and it's very stupid."

Johnny Rotten is an avid fan of *The Prisoner*, which figures. After all, he's not a number. He's a free man. And no matter what they put him through, he'll always be a freer man than any of the people who've tried to tear him down.

Charles Shaar Murray •



"It just comes, it's there": Johnny Rotten on his songwriting, 1977



SINGLES

Adverts

Gary Gilmore's Eyes ANCHOR

Remember all those old horror movies where a sensitive and observant concert pianist, violinist or some such gets a mitt transplant and ends up with the hands of a brutal murderer (or, *après* the brilliant Marty Feldman, the hands of a demented circus clown)? If you do, go line up with Adverts main man TV Smith.

This song is about waking up from an eye transplant and discovering that the donor was Gary ("Let's do it") Gilmore, the American murderer who demanded the death penalty. The performance is, how you say, minimal, but the idea is great and the record carries a genuine chill. If not the performance of the week, "Gary Gilmore's Eyes" is certainly the idea of the week.

Who says you have to be a bearded ginko with a synthesizer to be thought-provoking?

NME Aug 20

The Desperate Bicycles

The Medium Was Tedium/Don't Back The Front REFILL

Presumably inspired to make a record by the punk dictum which states that anyone can play, The Desperate Bicycles went ahead and did it. The result is not a little weird. John Peel plays it all the time. And if you ask me, when anyone so obviously has their credentials in all the right places, as these boys do, you can't possibly knock it. Well, not at least until they sign with a major record label. NME Jul 16

Roogalator

Love And The Single Girl VIRGIN

Hmmmmmm. Old-fashioned blue-beat jump rhythm, electric piano chiming like ice in a tall glass on a hot day, breathy vocals like Colin Blunstone with laryngitis. Must be Roogalator! I'm already tapping my fingers gently on the table and wishing I could go out for a beer.

This record tries abnormally hard to sound cool, but it just sounds wet. Even the attempt at a rave-up B-side transforms James Brown's sweaty, demonic "I Got You" into something long, cool and neat. Roogalator play great and I love the kind of mid-'60s R&B soul that they're drawing on, but hey, a little more humanity, please. NME Aug 20

Briquette and Simon Crowe providing the backbone.

This rates as one of the best debut albums in years and The Boomtown Rats will be hailed as one of the best new bands to arrive in ages. I'd bet my Thin Lizzy collection on it.

Harry Doherty, MM Aug 27

BILLY JOEL

Souvenir CBS

Some artists sit on the precipice of The Major Breakthrough for so long that it becomes an act of real patience, awaiting their arrival. So it is with Billy Joel. Ever since America took a fancy to him with a killer single called "Piano Man", it has been obvious with the release of each album that he has all the vocal, instrumental, and songwriting equipment to match the impact of Elton John.

If anything, he's a more inspired, less predictable writer than Elton, as evinced here by "The Entertainer", "The Ballad Of Billy The Kid" and "I've Loved These Days". Basically, Billy Joel writes songs much closer to the bone than many others. He takes as his basis for writing not love or interdependence by two people, more the loneliness and near-desperation of young Americans. Thus, "New York State Of Mind" and "Los Angelenos" tend to be commentaries on the extremes of these two cities, while "Captain Jack" is a lament on a 21-year-old man morally at sea.

"The Entertainer" parades the empty life on the road of those people, while "Say Goodbye To Hollywood" pinpoints the city's transparent shallowness.

As well as being a fine writer, Joel is a powerful pianist. This record, from a TV recording, presents material from three albums, *Piano Man*, *Streetlife Serenade* and *Turnstiles*, as well as new material. He has not taken an easy route in success, being a commentator on the passing scene more than a flat-out romantic. But if he continues to build on his strength, there is no doubt Joel will eventually clinch it, because his performances of interesting songs are often magnetic. Ray Coleman, MM Aug 13



The Adverts: (l-r) Laurie Driver, TV Smith, Gaye Advert and Howard Pickup

T Rex

Celebrate Summer EMI

For one golden instant I thought Marc had finally pulled off the unalloyed pop triumph that he needs as a convincing, viable follow-up to "Get It On". This isn't it, but it's certainly the most likeable single he's made for a long time, even though it, ahem, borrows the melody and chord sequence of The Deviants' "Let's Loot The Supermarket". "Summer is heaven in '77", yeah? Depends where you are, Marc. I wouldn't anticipate heavy sales in Lewisham for a week or two.

NME Aug 20

Ian Dury

Sex And Drugs And Rock'n'Roll

STIFF

This ex-pub-rock luminaire deserves infinitely more credit for the late-'70s renaissance of rock culture than all those arteriosclerotic lard-belly "grand pappy of punk" specimens that the gutter-rock press has offered up for instant deity. He was one of the prophets most responsible for kicking music out of the tax-haven rock-Tsar syndrome and restoring it to the rightful acnervaged owners in the sweaty subterranean depths, while also possessing the suss to realise that fashion is there to be led, not followed. He and no other was the instigator of safety-pin chic, wearing the objects in his lugholes when Richard Hell was still wearing them in his Mothercare diapers.

The geezer's music boasted a total Anglo-consciousness somewhat akin to a vicious Syd Barrett, and 1976 finally rolled around

après Dury le deluge. And while the majority of punk bands are getting pecky layers of flab around their souls as they get used to the idea of having a press officer tickling their anus from dawn to dusk after making their cross on that six-figure recording contract, Dury's still sharp and sleazy. If the youngsters can't keep up the pace without terminal bland-out, then TOO BAD.

Ian Dury has created a Juke Box Classic around youth cultures' Holy Trinity that would be a Universal No 1 if Eddie Cochran hadn't died in vain and if our national media wasn't controlled by joyless reactionary loonies. It's possibly the ultimate statement in narcissistic, hedonistic London Mod Omnipotence over stunning purity of funk, inducing immediate addiction that intensifies over the subsequent grooves where Our Kid gets understandably choked with emotion as he gets measured up for his new custom-made mohair so he can look like a real Tasty Geezer when he goes in search of the night.

The B-side is "Razzle In My Pocket", about getting nicked tea-leafing in the South Street Romford Shopping Arcade out there in Essex Overspill, and proves conclusively that Ian Dury is writing the soundtrack for this generation, which thankfully ain't really got sweet FA to do with being Blank. NME Sept 3





Sniggers drift round the room as the next question is unveiled, even the translator allowing herself a grin. It's from a gentleman, apparently Israeli, who wants to know why she had to surround herself by so many people and isn't more accessible to the media. Right on.

She stumbles a bit on that one...

"The problem is people don't realise that an artist, well, I don't get very much sleep and... if everyone had my telephone number... well, I can only give so much."

And then, more belligerently: "In American we were selling before the radio and the television and everyone knew about me - it proves the market is sometimes stronger than the media."

What was that about treating the press with grace? The questioner persists.

"I'm gonna punch you, sir," says Donna, laughing dismissively. The conference rapidly disintegrates. By sheer volume, eventually we get through. Jenour quotes her own headlines back at her... first lady of love... the biggest cock-teaser of all time.

"I never said that, I don't talk that way," snaps Donna, although nobody suggested she had. "Every person has a different expectation of me; it doesn't bear any relevance to me."

Jenour and I battle our way to the front and plant ourselves in front of Donna, now signing autographs and shutting her ears off from the babble. She looks across in surprise at our presumptuousness, and, I believe, some fear. I ask her if she was surprised by the storm "Love To Love You Baby" caused in Britain. "Yeah, I mean some of the lyrics these rock bands sing... I just sang an erotic song, that's all. I didn't expect a reaction like that, not in England of all places."

She raises her eyes skywards as the Italian hubbub intensifies and there's a battery of photographers enclosing us. "I can't handle this," she mutters. Let's go to another room and continue the interview in peace, I say.

She hesitates. I see De Blasio watching from the end of the room. "I'm sorry, there's nowhere to go." Well, there's the bar, or the hotel foyer. "I'm sorry, I'd like to, but I haven't the time. I've got to go straight to a rehearsal and then to the concert. Really, I'm sorry."

The girl they're trying to mould into a superstar was then hustled away.

Ken Jenour calls the *Mirror* in London. The space allocated to Donna Summer goes instead to Mud. *Colin Irwin*

LENNON SPEAKS

-but only just!

"We really have nothing to say"

MM OCT 15 John Lennon is retiring - sort of. "We've decided to be with our baby as much as we can."

JOHNN LENNON IS officially semi-retired, and will not perform or record for at least another year. He told a press conference at the Hotel Okura in Tokyo last Tuesday that he and Yoko Ono wanted to devote their time to their son, Sean Ono Lennon.

"We've basically decided, without a great decision, to be with our baby as much as we can until we feel we can take the time off to indulge ourselves in creating things outside the family," Lennon announced. "Maybe when he's three, four or five, then we'll think about creating something else other than the child."

The Lennons have been in Japan since May, and one of the purposes of their visit was to show the child, now about two years old, to his in-laws. Lennon took his stay so seriously that he enrolled in a Japanese language course in New York before he went.

The press conference, at which the *Melody Maker* was the only western paper present, was called just before their return to New York, which will continue to be their main home.

Lennon later told me that their only motive was to thank the Japanese people for respecting their privacy while there.

Although perceptibly nervous, he looked in tremendous physical shape. Wearing an expensive black, two-piece suit, with a white shirt and pearl-grey tie, and with his hair in a smart, conventional cut, he sat beside Yoko, who translated and did most of the talking. Incense burned, and an incongruous note was struck by a radio somewhere in the penthouse suite playing "You Are My Sunshine".

I was forbidden to ask direct questions, and after the conference Lennon remained friendly but noncommittal. "We really have nothing to say," he explained.



John Lennon outside the Dakota building in New York City, 1977

The Japanese questions were hardly penetrating, however. Many of them concerned the death of Elvis Presley.

"Elvis died when he went into the army," Lennon replied. "Up until he joined the army I thought it was beautiful music, and Elvis was for me and my generation what The Beatles were to the '60s. I basically became a musician because of Elvis Presley."

"I never did concerts to influence people," he answered one questioner. "I did them for many reasons. And since 1966 I have not performed for money, only for charity."

Responding, therefore, to a question about The Beatles reviving, he replied, "I doubt it very much."

Lennon was also asked about punk rock, and seemed very out of touch with music of the past year. After almost 45 tentative minutes, Lennon and Yoko closed the shop, and all that Lennon would add later was

that he would be coming to Britain "at some point". He appeared unconcerned both about returning and about recording again. His last album, *Rock 'n' Roll*, was released a couple of years ago. Nor would he comment on the fact that his contract has now ended with EMI.

The birth of the couple's child and the atmosphere of Japan seem to have made him remarkably contented. "Basically, I'm now a Zen pagan," he said. Perhaps that explains it. *Michael Watts*

"I became a musician because of Elvis Presley"

Entirely amicable **MM NOV 12** There's a split in Black Sabbath.

OZZIE [SIC] OSBOURNE, singer with Black Sabbath since the band formed nine years ago in Birmingham, has quit. His decision came after a meeting with the band last week, and he said his departure is entirely amicable. He has left the band to follow some form of solo career, but exactly what is planned has not yet been announced.

Black Sabbath are now looking for a replacement singer, and a vocalist with a fairly well-known band flew in from America this week for an audition. The band was planning an album when Osbourne decided to quit, and as soon as a singer has been found, rehearsals will go ahead. The record will be recorded in Toronto before Christmas, and is due for release in the spring to coincide with a British tour.

Ozzie quits Sabbath



The Fall at The Ranch, Manchester's first punk club, on August 18, 1977; (l-r) Una Baines, Martin Bramah, Karl Burns (drums), Mark E. Smith and Tony Friel

“People tell me we’re political”

MM DEC 31 Introducing, from Manchester, The Fall. They are, insists their frontman Mark Smith, far more multi-faceted than The Clash.

AUTUMN - THE WORLD a copper-gold shade of dying? Nuclear omni-destruction - the shrieking tumble of the Bomb before the fallout? Woman and man's expulsion from Paradise in the Christian fairytale? Or the toppling of capitalism by revolution?

As The Fall say, their name is so evocative that it'd be almost criminal to select any one meaning and evict all others. The new bands certainly seem to choose better names than the old - I mean, The Beatles, the Rolling Stones? The Fourmost? What kind of names are those?

The Fall hit hard. Not with the sledgehammer superficiality of the sub-Ramones clones/drones, but ingeniously - intellectually, I suppose. Their attack is more cerebral on all fronts than is usual within these street-gut shores. Their lyrics (nearly all indiscernible in concert) are oblique, and occasionally esoteric enough to necessitate explanation; they all look very sharp, yet cool and detached, especially the blond axis of vocalist/lyricist Mark Smith and organist Una Baines; and their music is probably clever before it's powerful.

That “cleverness” isn't meant to suggest a link with art rock, that brightly contrived fringe, though The Fall have intelligence and a readiness to experiment with form in common with that genre.

Even their formal adventurousness, though, is of an entirely different order from, say, Talking Heads' clinical variation - The Fall take the repetition and the monotonous vocals which have flooded the country in the past year and develop them into something positive and exciting.

They even have a song called “Repetition”, perhaps their finest, which is ambitious despite revolving entirely around an omnipotent two-chord core-thread, Martin Bramah's guitar twanging trebly in a calculatedly tacky radio-signal sound - the closest reference point is probably Buzzcocks' “Boredom”, though I'm not exactly sure why. Like Buzzcocks with “Spiral Scratch”, The Fall

are making their first recorded foray with an EP on Manchester's New Hormones label, which will probably appear next month and feature “Repetition”, “Frightened” (a slower, more thoughtful, menacing number, which relentlessly grinds out its evocation of paranoia), “Bingo-Master's Break-Out!”, and “Psycho Mafia” - the last being the song which has haunted me most in the two months since I first saw them.

Mark Smith's intonation is always intensely cynical (if that's possible) and usually deliberately tuneless, and both those traits come into their own in this fragmented warning about the Thought Police of the present. “Psycho Mafia” was probably one of the songs that led to them being branded an exclusively political band - the first time they ever appeared in print it was as a totally committed socialist band who, like Henry Cow, would have trouble coming to terms with a commercial art form.

They were grossly misrepresented, they say, though tales of Una furiously berating other Manchester musicians backstage over their sexism, as well as exchanges like the following, show that they come from quite a long way left. I'd mentioned to them that I'd heard they used to refuse all college gigs, and to sing “Oh Student!” instead of “Hey Fascist!”. Una: “I didn't think we'd been going long enough to have a history,” (it's only eight months since Una and drummer Karl Burns joined and the band's life began in earnest).

Mark: “One of the reasons we changed that was that it's become very trendy to bash students. The sentiment's still there maybe, but the main reason we changed it to “Hey Fascist!” was that we thought it more relevant.”

So what does the song say now? “It's an anti-fascist song,” said Una, “what else is there to say?” She glared at me with a challenging

glint in her eye, as she did till at least halfway through the interview, when we finally decided we liked each other. I was glad she didn't know that only a few months before I'd been one of the reviled student breed.

But do all of you stand on the left?

Martin: “Yeah, well none of us are fascists.”

Not everyone outside the left is a fascist...

“Yes, they are,” retorted Una in her laconic monotone, “They're just watered-down fascists. We're talking about the same mentality.”

You reckon? I don't at all...

Mark: “They've got no mentality.”

That exchange makes them seem very confident, both in themselves and in their views, and that's just how they appear on stage - they all implicitly express a distance from punk by wearing nondescript casual gear (when's the last time you saw a new waver wearing a sweater?).

Una looks icily uninterested, a fully paid-up member of the Tina Weymouth detachment school; and Mark reminds me visually of a committed but cynical street-level activist.

Yet when Mark sent me the lyrics to “Hey Fascist!” later on, he didn't seem at all confident of the worth of his work, heading it with “Pretentious Garbage Inc 1977”.

Martin, Karl and Tony (Friel, their bassist, who's on the brink of leaving) agree that they're less politically

committed than the other two and are in it more for the music. “Well what d'you think we're in it for?” said Una, on the attack again.

I dunno - to communicate a political belief?

Una: “No way - the music's very important.”

Martin: “People try to tie us down too much - we've got other things besides the political angle. We're not in this band to put over the beliefs of any political party or even our own political ideas exclusively - though in our political songs we mean what we

“The Clash set up things and knock 'em down - like the police, employers”

say, we didn't form as a political band."

Una: "But if you sing about life, you're singing politically. Politics is life and society in its perversity has made it into something else. But God, we've covered it enough - let's talk about something else."

But Mark carried on anyway: "This is typical, getting bogged down in politics. People come up to me and say, 'You're the only political band,' and I reply, 'What about Tom Robinson?' Then they say, 'Yeah, but you're really political,' but it's not true."

"They're pushing us into the political syndrome that The Clash have fallen into and will never get out of - their credibility will diminish as they go on. The Clash set up things and knock 'em down, like the police, employers - we do that too, but that's all The Clash are doing."

"Those people who tell me we're political, I think, 'You mean in the fucking Clash way, don't you, and we're not. I mean, something like "Bingo-Master's Break-Out!" is nothing to do with conventional politics. It's about a bloke cracking up, partly funny and partly not. And I think, 'You've fucking ignored that, haven't you?'"

"You're not a very good songwriter if you can only write about one dimension of life," added Mark. "You have to write what you feel. One day you might be particularly angry at fascism, have a real gut-reaction like you do when you go on pickets like we do."

"But there again, it's difficult to feel things when you're away from the original situation, it feels a little forced. Like "Race Hatred", another of our songs - this lot want to rehearse it but I can't sing about racial hatred again and again till I get it right because I'd lose all feeling for it. And as lyrics they don't stand up on their own; the song only works when it's full of live feeling."

As yet no major company has expressed interest in The Fall, which must be largely to do with their refusal (like Buzzcocks) to leave Manchester for the brightest lights and the biggest cheques. Again, there's some kind of split between Mark and Una and the others on the question of commercial success. Martin, Karl and Tony come out with the same old guarded new-wave phrases about success like "We won't change our style, we'll stay like us - if people like us, then we won't turn them away and we'll plough the money back into cheaper tickets and albums if we make it."

They mean it now - so does just about every young band I talk to - but success sucks you in so smoothly and completely that you hardly notice you're keeping all the money you make.

The only way to escape corruption is to avoid commercial success from the first, and Mark reckons the way the band play might act as a commercial self-destruct unit: "I really don't see us getting into that kind of position anyway. If we did there'd be something wrong, because our musical approach now could never win us massive popularity - something would have detracted if we did."

Una: "Huge commercial success doesn't interest me personally at all. Apart from anything else, I can't imagine enjoying an audience response if it was so predictable."

Tony: "Hey, could we talk about music?"

What on earth for? *Chris Brazier*



December 25, 1977: Sid Vicious and girlfriend Nancy Spungen at a Pistols benefit gig for the children of striking firefighters at Ivanhoe's, Huddersfield

"Only advertised locally"

MM DEC 17 The Sex Pistols plan to tour. Discreetly, to keep "local objections down to a minimum".

ON FRIDAY THIS week the Sex Pistols kick off on their first official British tour since their debut *Anarchy In The UK* dates. The band will be playing a straight run of 10 dates, finishing on Christmas Day, but there is the possibility of a further show being added for London audiences on Boxing Day.

While the concerts have been officially confirmed by Cowbell, the band's booking agency, and booked openly in the Sex Pistols' name, there is still some secrecy about the exact location of the venues and the final bookings will only be advertised locally within a few days of the shows.

Cowbell's John Jackson said that the details of the venues and concert dates are being kept a last-minute secret, even from Virgin Records, the band's record company, and from the group themselves. Despite the secrecy, Jackson still fears problems from local authorities, but he has worked out a complex strategy involving two alternative "tours" if local authorities or police revoke licences at the last minute.

"The shows will be advertised locally as the Sex Pistols, but the advertising will be very close to the date to keep the possibility of local objections down to a minimum and to ensure a fair distribution of tickets. The tickets for the first show will go on sale the day before the concert."

Jackson confirmed that the 10 shows will be played in the following areas of Britain: North London, East Anglia, the West Country, Merseyside, two in North Yorkshire, East Midlands, two in the West Midlands, and one south of London outside the GLC area. One show that has already been advertised and sold well is at Bristol's Bamboo Club on December 21.

Tickets for the shows cost £1.75, although one promoter has been offering them at £2.50. Jackson said that anyone who has paid more than £1.75 for a legitimate ticket will get the balance refunded when they go to the show.

Pistols set off on 'secret' U.K. tour

Anarchy in the UK Christmas Day
SEX PISTOLS HUDDERSFIELD

They are Poles - like workers who with ragged clothes and pale faces face down the streets of Huddersfield
All
Setting FREE to Building Britain up
on a people... with...

➤ The Radiators From Space, currently touring with Thin Lizzy, release their third single on Chiswick on Friday week. "Prison Bars" is in mono and taken from their *TV Tube Heart* LP. **MM NOV 12**

➤ Julie Covington, who came to fame with *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Evita*, releases her version of Alice Cooper's "Only Women Bleed" on Friday. The Virgin single features orchestral arrangements by John Cale, who appears on keyboards. **MM NOV 12**

➤ Charles Mingus, the influential jazz bass player and composer, has had to cancel a one-off concert at London's Hammersmith Odeon on Nov 30. **MM NOV 12**



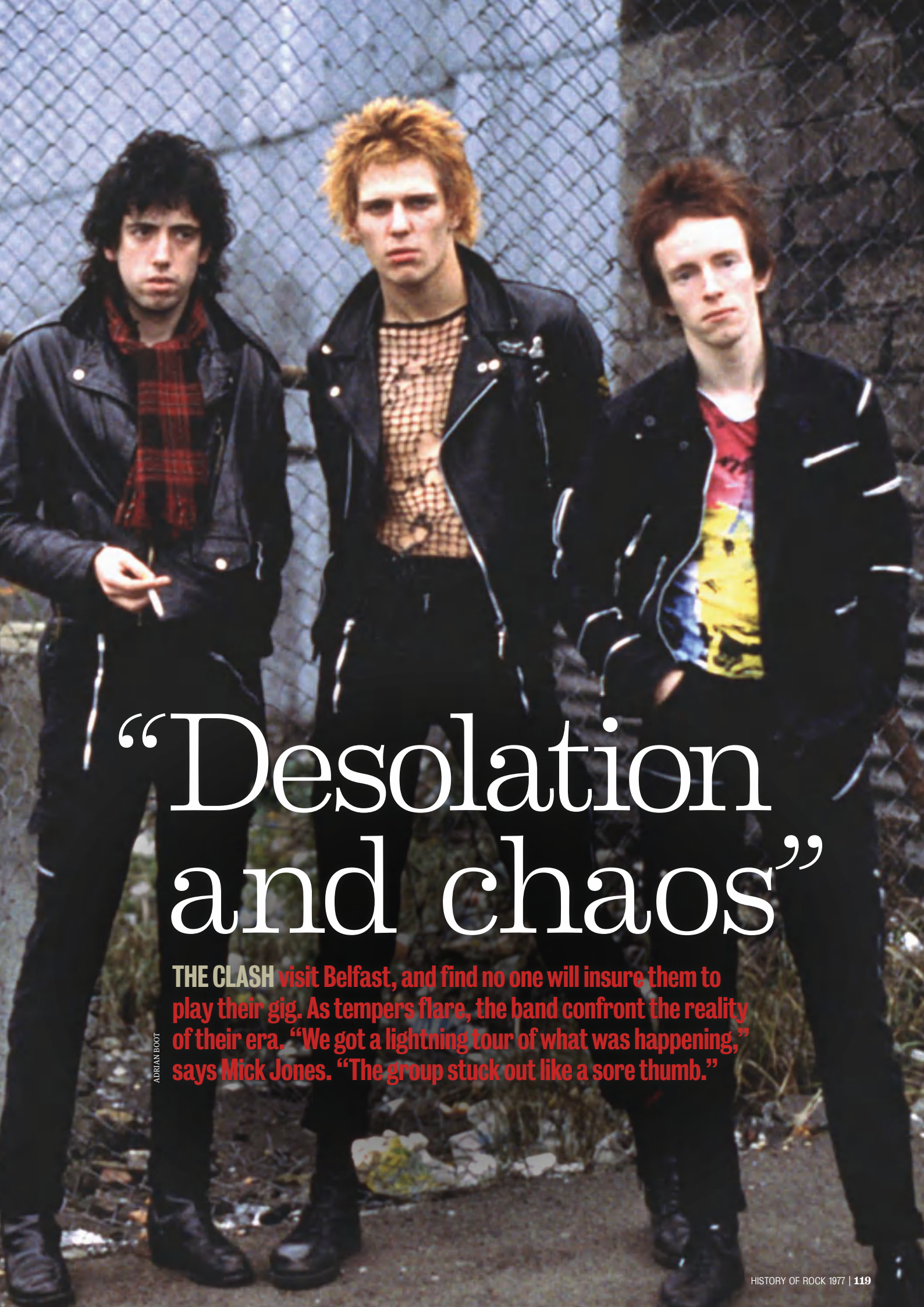
➤ Rock'n'roll singer Shakin' Stevens has been selected to play the part of young Elvis Presley in Jack Good's musical *Elvis*, which opens at London's Astoria Theatre on November 28. Sixties singer PJ Proby will play Presley after the age of 40 in the musical. Good, the man responsible for the famous *Oh Boy!* TV show of the late 1950s, is producing and directing the stage show, and music is provided by Fumble. Stevens' band the Sunsets will play their planned dates without him, with vocals taken by drummer Rocker Louie and pianist Ace. **MM NOV 12**

1977

OCTOBER-DECEMBER



The Clash in Belfast, October 1977: (l-r) Joe Strummer, Mick Jones, Paul Simonon and Topper Headon



“Desolation and chaos”

THE CLASH visit Belfast, and find no one will insure them to play their gig. As tempers flare, the band confront the reality of their era. “We got a lightning tour of what was happening,” says Mick Jones. “The group stuck out like a sore thumb.”

ADRIAN BOOT



Leaving the fortified Europa Hotel, The Clash and their photographer take a taxi and venture beyond Belfast city centre

— MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 29 —

IMPOTENCE MIGHT BE described as having to apologise for something that wasn't your fault. When complete control becomes remote control. Last Thursday in Belfast, The Clash were confronted with such a freeze-out.

The date not only marked the opening of their current UK tour, but also the first time a major British punk/new wave/now band had played in the strife-racked city. Joe Strummer remarked that they had wanted to play the venue ever since the group formed last year, and consequently were itching for the stage of the Ulster Hall, where the event was supposed to take place. But once again the Faceless Ones who transform people into puppets stepped in at the 11th hour and refused permission...

However, let's start at the beginning of the invidious fiasco. Perhaps the minor irritants that happened in the morning could now be interpreted as omens for the later catastrophe.

We all arrived at the airport to find that the tuner had been left in the cab and the carnet (the official document for transporting equipment from Northern Ireland to Eire) forgotten. Soundman Micky Foote was dispatched to gather up the missing links and so had to catch a later

ADRIAN BOOT

plane. Plus the plane itself was delayed because of the air traffic controller's industrial dispute.

Then through security (the guard jokingly described his Evil Presence detector as a Dan Dare gun) and onto the plane, where conversation turned unnervingly to talk of the recent Baader-Meinhof hijacking. Not, you can understand, the most comforting of topics at 8.30am on a plane to Belfast. Spirits picked up as Paul Simonon leaned over to announce that his word for the day was "synopsis". Eh?

We were about to land and the stewardess made the customary announcement that anyone carrying foods or livestock should report to the Ministry Of Agriculture. Mick Jones shouted out, "That includes me! I'm a chicken!"

Another cab ride followed and initiation into Belfast began. Scenes of endless devastation, urban wasteland, rows or terraced houses that had been reduced to (and by) shells, the windows boarded up with grey breezeblock slabs.

The driver was like a surreal tourist guide. Passing yet another gutted pub, his meticulous memory threw out a brief history of the events behind the attack. How many people were killed when it happened, what the backlash had been. If you look up that street on the left, two men were killed last month in a firebomb raid, etc. One building he singled out was what remained of the Youth Employment Exchange, now enmeshed in a wire cage. Joe and Mick understandably gave it a lingering glance.

Late that day Mick mused, "Black is the predominant colour here. The first thing I saw in Belfast was hundreds of blackbirds."

He added in a lighter tone, "Joe thought they were crows, but they weren't crows because crows

have dark glasses and saxophones." The movie *Fritz The Cat* takes on a different meaning in Belfast.

We arrived at the hotel, the Europa, similarly fenced off by a wire boundary and security outpost, to find out that it has the dubious claim to fame of being the most bombed hotel in Europe. Everything seemed to be going well until about 4pm, when yours truly was in the pub awaiting the band for a pre-soundcheck Guinness or two.

Suddenly drummer Nicky Headon rushed in: "You've got to come back to the hotel. The gig has been cancelled." Whaaaaat????

ONE OF THE promoters was waiting with the story so far. The gig had been organised by the Northern Ireland Polytechnic and they had genuinely believed that all aspects had been accounted for. All but one, as it transpired: the insurance.

To secure the Ulster Hall (which is run by the Belfast City Council and not officially connected with the Polytechnic) what is known as an insurance "cover note" is needed to underwrite any unforeseen mishaps that might occur. It is a stipulation made by the Hall. Three weeks previously, the Medical And Professional Insurance, who handle the Polytechnic's affairs in this respect, apparently assured the Polytechnic's entertainment's committee that the cover note would not pose any

problems. It would simply be an extension of their existing cover for the Student's Union.

However, come Thursday morning, the committee were informed that the offer of insurance had been withdrawn – allegedly because there were outstanding claims arising out of previous Clash concerts. This the band later refuted as entirely untrue. Anyway, the committee feverishly tried to find an insurance broker, both in Ireland and on the mainland, who would be prepared to underwrite the concert. No one was forthcoming – even after they themselves had offered a premium of £500. So an alternative plan was suggested: switch the venue to Queen's University. But that also proved fruitless as they couldn't accept the responsibility, not having the requisite insurance.

Since the event looked doomed, the Polytechnic promoters asked the local radio and TV to announce that the gig had been cancelled. By this time the fans had started to congregate outside the doors of Ulster Hall. The police turned up and told them the news. In despair, frustration and anger they stormed round to the Europa Hotel, pulling at the wire fence and demanding to see The Clash. An official from Queen's Student Body arrived and said they could play in a smaller hall in the university – the bar, in fact, as opposed to the originally mooted main concert arena.

Nicky and Paul explained this to the fans, who duly rushed towards the seat of learning. The site wasn't ideal by any means, but it was better than nothing. The Ulster Hall has a capacity of 1,600, while the bar holds only around 400 and, due to the liquor licence, was barred to those under 18. Just to compound the seriousness of the situation, news was also coming in that several of the hotels that the band had secured for the tour had cancelled the bookings.

Nicky was horrified: "Sometimes I think I might just slash my wrists and maybe then they'd see what they're doing to us."

The last time The Clash had tried to play in Britain was at the Birmingham Rag Market festival in July, virtually subtitled "The last big event before we all go to jail", and that had collapsed under a torrent of bans.

The next move was to dismantle all the gear that had been so far erected in the Ulster Hall and to move to Queen's. The kids were amassing outside the university entrance (800 advance tickets had been already sold and obviously many more punters were emerging on the night itself). It was both an odd and potentially hysterical situation.

The police and army were there in force, but looked confused, to say the least, by the spectacle. They weren't acclimatised to such a congregation. Instead, the mayhem gathered momentum. The old obstacles were rearing their oppressive faces again. A white riot was feared and insurance cover stayed as inaccessible as it had been all day. In addition, the roadies were unhappy with the stage. It didn't boast the most reliable structure.

In the dressing room, the band smouldered. But there was nothing they could do without incurring massive repercussions from almost every legal side. Unfortunately, the only course of action was to leave. They were trapped in contracts that cared zilch about providing entertainment for rock 'n' roll-starved kids.

First Joe and Mick left, followed quickly by Nicky and Paul. I was in the second batch, and as we came out by a side entrance a bunch of about 40 kids were waiting. They pleaded with Nicky and Paul to play, and in return the two band members attempted to explain the trail of absurd events. But the words were drowned out, and all the kids could see was that the group they had, in many cases, travelled long distances to enjoy were abandoning them.

Nothing could have been further from the truth. The group and manager Bernie Rhodes had done virtually everything they could to alleviate the 11th-hour chaos. The kids became furious. Nicky and Paul left in the car, and as it drove off the fans hurled abuse, beer cans and whatever was available at the departing vehicle.

When such an iron clampdown occurs, it must have its counter-reaction. A few windows in the Ulster Hall were smashed, five

punks (three male and two female) were arrested and a pack of about 100 formed a human chain across Bedford Street.

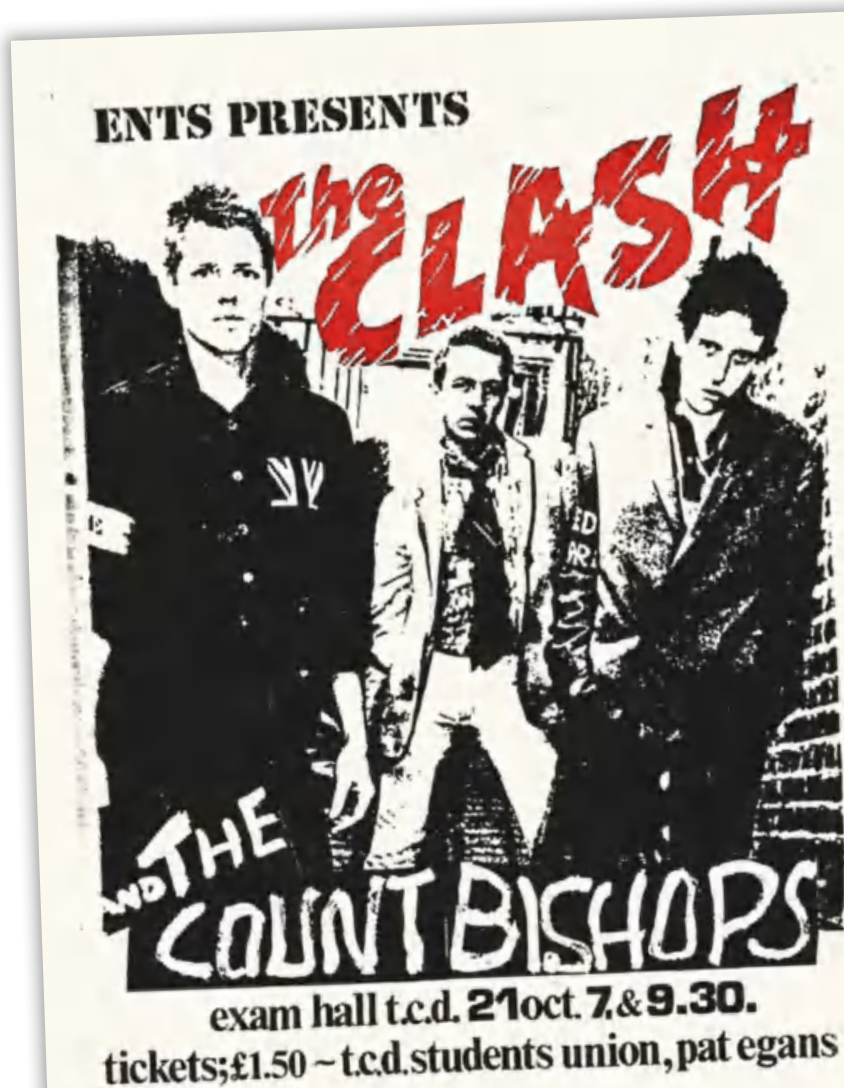
JUST REMEMBER, THEY mean it, maaaaan. Back in the hotel the atmosphere was one of terminal depression intercut with pure anger. Three fans who were on the verge of forming their own band had collared Joe, whose external belligerence belies an incredibly sympathetic and understanding nature. The three blokes were bitterly hurt, and Joe spent several hours clarifying the debacle and offering advice about getting a group together. Two were Protestant and one was Catholic, and in order to practise together they ran the daily risk of all that such religious intermingling implies. Now that makes the ludicrous struggles of the more pampered mainland would-be stars look a trifle silly, don't you think?

The late-night news came on the TV. The first item was – surprise, surprise – The Clash, the pared-down information giving no clear picture of what ACTUALLY HAPPENED, Mick sneered.

"The most horrible thing was the way the kids were treated – the way they were pushed around. They didn't have a chance to understand what was happening, so they were disappointed in us. Obviously, it wasn't our fault, but you can't explain that to 800 people personally. The way they've been pushed around by the army and the police, they obviously thought, 'What the fuck's going on here?' They reacted accordingly. Everyone acted the monkey they thought they would.

"Like, it's almost a night of freedom and they can see it slipping through their hands while policemen are crushing them. You don't look for sane reasons. You just see the object, and »

"The horrible thing was the way the kids were pushed around"





Royal Ulster Constabulary policemen pat down the band, who at one point were thought to be members of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA)

the object is The Clash and you aim for that. You want to be assured that it's going on and it didn't. In two weeks' time the insurance will probably be worked out and The Stranglers [set to play then] will come in and clean up, and they'll reassure them. Meanwhile, for us the kids were lining the street in front of armoured cars. It was a scene of desolation and chaos.

"I thought it was great that they lay down in the road in front of those armoured cars because they wanted the concert so badly. The trouble is that it's our first time here we and don't know the situation and we can't go down the police station and check it out, because we don't know if we can walk down the block. I'm like a complete alien.

"It was very self-conscious. It was a self-conscious way of getting your own way in a situation which is so out of our control. No way are we going to call the shots with guys with Bren guns standing outside and beating on kids. In no way was it also giving up. We ain't an army, we're a rock 'n' roll band. It's like a band against the army and the Ulster constabulary, who were only there in case of trouble, and the only trouble was produced by the fact that this company wouldn't insure us. The threat of half a million pounds meant nothing to me. They said, 'Do you want to pay it yourself?' so I said, 'I'll pay it myself.' I meant it.

"They couldn't get it off me, so throw me in jail. It's just a joke. I think they had a lot more trouble here because of the fact that the concert was cancelled than if they had let the concert go on. It was a complete red herring."

"The soldiers crouching in cubbyholes thought we were dicks"

THAT AFTERNOON, OTHER bizarre events had taken place. Mick and Joe had gone to do an interview with the local radio station, Downtown Radio. As they stepped out of the car by the station, the security had mistaken them for members of the UDA. The reason was evidently their clothes – black zippered outfits, Doctor Marten's footwear, leather jackets, which highlights the fine line between the (excuse the possible pomposity) symbol and reality.

Again, what is de rigueur down the Vortex takes on provocative implications in the authentic war zone. In addition, during the afternoon, we had all piled into a mini-bus for

a round-the-town photo session. The band were ill at ease at the prospect and its ramifications. At suitably evocative landmarks, like an army barracks, or devastated rubble, the camera would whirr. How had Mick felt?

"Like Paddy McGinty's goat. I just felt like a dick. The best time was when all the kids were in the photos with us. That was the only time when it was human and real. I should imagine they'll lap it up in London, though. The soldiers crouching in their cubbyholes thought we were dicks. The kids thought we were dicks. Like, we asked some, 'Do you want to be in the photograph?' and they said 'bollocks' on the Ballymurphy estate.

"But I think it was important, because we got a lightning tour of what was actually happening, and so we were really in touch during those moments. I was more aware of what was going on around me than the camera. If I had known people in Belfast I would have hung out with them



Simon and Jones by an army Saracen vehicle on Royal Avenue, Belfast's main shopping street, secured at either end by the "ring of steel"

and become part of the background. Instead, I thought the group stuck out like a sore thumb."

Another raw nerve was the backdrop The Clash play against. It features a photographic blow-up of a violent Belfast street scene, replete with armoured cars and hunched civilians.

Mick: "I didn't think we should put it up here because they aren't going to particularly want to be reminded of it and they are going to say what the fuck do they know about it. Obviously we're sympathetic and have an empathy for the place, but I also feel we might be rubbing their faces in it. In Bournemouth it's great because everyone is fucking asleep and it's really heavy because everyone is confronted by this stuff, but in Belfast they don't need to be reminded. You just have to walk down the street and be reminded of it every day.

"How many times have we been searched? Must be about 20 times. I really felt this concert was going to be a rock'n'roll show and the audience was going to be one

of the best we'd ever encountered. But, of course, the bureaucrats and arseholes put their foot in it. But listen – you can be a Catholic or a Protestant kid – you can come along and all be bouncing together.

"Now the authorities gotta see something wrong in that. It's a cruel irony. The live backdrop being associated with our group and then the authorities stamping on our concert."

AT LEAST THE following night in Dublin the promised rock'n'roll took place. On the train down, Joe handed me a Combat Picture Library cartoon strip booklet, called *Jack Wouldn't Dare*.

"That's for you and *Melody Maker*," he quipped. It told the engrossing saga of one reporter Jack Roberts (who looked not unlike Elvis Costello and had PRESS emblazoned on his helmet). The time was the Second World War, and Jack The Hack was sent out with an army platoon on a search-and-destroy mission to a Japanese arms dump. Jack was SCARED

"How many times have we been searched? Must be about 20 times"

but, as in all good stories, ended up being the hero, destroying the hideaway single-handed. However, when he returned to his editor with the explosive copy, it was summarily rejected because it was – you might say – too real. As a result he quit the journalistic department and joined the platoon.

The last line read: "It's easier blowing up Japanese magazines (geddit?) than getting one of my articles on the war accepted, sir." Do you think Joe was making a point to me?

There were two shows in Dublin at yet another bastion of learning. Trinity College, in an astonishingly ornate hall, Joe shouted out, "Ain't this posh?" and he was right.

Portraits of past academic luminaries decorated the walls – bewigged gents in languidly pensive poses, a sculpture of two almost intertwined figures and a gigantic organ in the gallery, which looked as if it came out of Hollywood in its most fantastic phase. Set all this alongside the kids and the finally erected backdrop and the ironies were extreme.

Many of the fans who were disappointed in Belfast had come down, and Joe dedicated "Hate And War" to them. Despite there not being time for a proper soundcheck, the band, first time around, were astonishing, soaring through "London's Burning", "Capital", "City Of The Dead" (which, as Mick said, is the opposite of what was happening in Belfast), "Janie Jones" and "Garageland". After half a dozen or so numbers, Joe announced, "Listen – shut up. I can't play with

these guys here," motioning towards the security guards.

Instantly they upped and went, and suddenly the kids poured onto the stage, creating a scene of delirious confusion. No, they didn't prevent the band from playing, but exulted in the fact that this was their night, their victory. Strangely, the audience numbered few fashionably attired punks. Most were longhairs or the curious brigade who transform themselves from sports jacketed bystanders (one couple were actually smooching to "Cheat") to frenetic dervishes.

If the first set was good, the second one was superlative. On "Remote Control", Mick's voice (he's now taking charge of more vocal parts than ever) rang out in spine-chilling, splintered shards.

Nicky looked deceptively loose-limbed as he thrashed out a titanic drum underlay, while Paul, with India-rubber intensity, attacked the bass with a venom that would have split the atom. Joe was also superb as he circled the stage in those juddering, quickfire movements. Equally intense was the version of Junior Marvin's "Police And Thieves", whose significance grew uncannily after the previous day's events. Words like intense, powerful, unavoidable, magnetic just spun through my head. I love The Clash because they are one of the most honest and exciting rock'n'roll bands we have.

So, on leaving the hotel on Saturday morning to catch my various planes and trains back to London, a small incident irked considerably. Getting into the lift were two chambermaids who worriedly confided in me, "Watch out. There are punk rockers on this floor. Mind you don't get beaten up."

I replied that they didn't want to beat anyone up.

"They do," the girls rushed back at me. "Are you one?"

Do I look like one?

"You can't tell by the looks. They're a terrible lot. They put safety pins through their cheeks and even babies' cheeks."

Who is at fault for such an attitude? Girls, this band is more on your side than your manager is. He was toying with the idea of throwing them out of the hotel because of their so-called "bad language". See this band. They are very, very special. *Ian Birch* •

Clash lose control...

far. The gig had been organised by the Northern Ireland Polytechnic and they had respectively believed that all

Polytechnic's entertainment's committee that the cover note would not pose any problems. It would simply be an extension of their existing cover for the

mum themselves of £500. So an alternative plan was suggested: switch the venue to Queen's University. But that also proved fruitless as they

ing outside the university entrance (800 advance tickets had been already sold and obviously many more punters were emerging on the night itself)

was available at the departing vehicle. When such an iron clampdown occurs, it must have its counter-reaction. A few windows in the Ulster Hall were smashed, five punks (three

The three blokes were bitterly hurt, and Joe spent several hours clarifying the debacle and offering advice about forming a group together. Two were Protestant and one was Catholic, and an order to pay



Johnny Rotten:
marked by his
Catholic schooling?

ALBUMS
REVIEW

1977

ALBUMS

Sex Pistols
Never Mind The Bollocks, Here's The Sex Pistols VIRGIN

What are you waiting for? True love, school to end, third world/civil war, more wars in the third world, a leader, the commandos to storm the next aeroplane, next week's NME, The Revolution?

The Sex Pistols album!

Hail, hail, rock'n'roll, deliver them from evil but lead them not into temptation. Keep them quiet/off the street/content.

Hey punk! You wanna elpee-sized "Anarchy" single? You wanna original "Anarchy" black bag? You wanna bootleg album? You wanna collect butterflies?

Very fulfilling, collecting things... very satisfying. Keep you satisfied, make you satiated, make you fat and old, queueing for the rock'n'roll show.

The Sex Pistols. They could have dreamed up the name and died. The hysterical equation society makes of love/a gun = power/crime shoved down its own throat, rubbed in its own face. See, I'm just as repressed and contaminated as the next guy. And I like the Sex Pistols. Aesthetically, apart from anything else. Three of them are very good-looking. And the sound of the band goes...

"I don't wanna holiday in the sun/I wanna go in the city/ There's a thousand things I wanna say to you..."

All very Weller, but is this a Jagger I see before me? No, it's the singles, all four of them—"Anarchy In The UK", "God Save The Queen", "Pretty Vacant" and "Holidays In The Sun"—constituting one third (weigh it) of the vinyl. Of course, there are other great songs.

This is no first-round knockout. This is no Clash attending the CBS Convention; no Jam voting Conservative; no Damned fucking an American girl with a Fender bass; no Stranglers distorting Trotsky and Lenin for their own cunt-hating, bully-boy ends. No, this is the Sex Pistols. The band which (so I'm told—I wasn't there in the beginning) started it all.

Great songs like "Submission", a numb-nostrilled "Venus In Furs"/"Penetration"/"I Wanna Be Your Dog", in form hypnotic, in content writhing. Pain through a dull, passive haze. Is that a whip in your hand or are you abnormal? "Submission/Going down, down, dragging her down/ Submission/I can't tell you what I've found." Smack?

Geeks? What a mystery and who grew up on the New York Dolls? Dogs yelp as the drill continues. Most unhealthy and ya like it like that? Well, it grows on you. A bit like cancer.

Great songs like "No Feelings": "I got no emotion for anybody else/You better understand I'm in love with myself/My self, my beautiful self." Ah, solipsism

rules, as Tony Parsons used to say before he got wise. Good dance tune, anyway, while "Problems" says it all: "Bet you thought you knew what I was about/ Bet you thought you'd solved all your problems/But YOU are the problem." Whatcha gonna do? Vegetate? Listen to the Sex Pistols album? Great songs gone, ineffectual flicks

of the wrist like "New York", which probably has David Johansen quaking in his heels, and "EMI"—you guessed it, they're bitching.

"You're only 29/You gotta lot to learn." In spite of this inspired opening, "Seventeen" rambles a little and the guitars do go on a bit. "I just speed/That's all I need."

Whaddya think so far?

Well, I've saved the best bit for you to linger over. You've already heard two songs the band co-wrote with Sid Vicious (as opposed to Glen Matlock, The True Pop Kid): "EMI" and "Holidays In The Sun". Here's the third. It's called "Bodies".

"She was a girl from Birmingham/She had just had an abortion/She was a case of insanity/Her name was Pauline, she lived in a tree/She was a no one who killed her baby/She sent her letters from the country/She was an animal/She was a bloody disgrace/Bodies/I'm not an animal/Dragged on a table in a factory/Illegitimate place to be/In a packet in a lavatory/Die little baby screaming/Bodies/Screaming fucking bloody mess/ Not an animal/It's an abortion/ Mummy/I'm not an abortion/ Throbbing squirm/Gurgling bloody mess..."

What? Good God. Was I shocked! Did I jump! Is that what they wanted, to shock people? Smart boys. Do they mean it? Is it satire of the most dubious kind? Did John's Catholic schooling

leave its mark? I don't know where "Bodies" is coming from and it scares me. It's obviously a gutter view of sex/dirt/blood/reproduction and if the song is an attack on such a mentality it's admirable.

But, as with "Holidays In The Sun", Rotten never allows himself to make a moral judgement and, going by things he's said, he seems refreshingly capable of making them. I wish he

would. I wish he would say that East Germany is presently organising itself better than West Germany—or vice versa, if that's what he believes. I wish the Sex Pistols had said in "Bodies" that women should not be forced to undergo such savagery, especially within a "welfare" state.

I'm sick of unlimited tolerance and objectivity, because it leads to annihilation. I wish everyone would quit sitting on the fence in the middle of the road. I think "Bodies" will be open to much misinterpretation and that to issue it was grossly irresponsible.

Many of these songs (under new names) also crop up on their bootleg album—plus "Satellite", in which the Pistols give the finger to the provinces, and "Just Me", which has a non-existent tune and frightening words: "You wanna be me/Didn't I fool you?" The singing is done with much less expertise. Rotten sounding sick to death. It's a much better record.

I don't really know anything about music, but the Sex Pistols seem to play as well as anyone I've heard, and I've heard Jimi Hendrix and Pete Townshend records. I never knew what was meant by "guitar hero"—it sounds like the kind of phrase a mental retard might mouth. "Guitar hero"—you mean as in "war hero", that kind of thing?

Why should anyone wish to play more usefully than Steve Jones, or drum more elaborately than Paul Cook, or play better bass than Sid Vicious? What purpose could it serve to outdo them?

So what are the Sex Pistols?

For the tabloids a welcome rest from nubile (sex and violence in their name alone and drugs too, if you count Rotten's speed dalliance); for the dilettantes, a new diversion (Ritz has a monthly punk column); for the promoters, a new product to push; for the parents, a new excuse; for the kids, a new way (in the tradition of the Boy Scouts, the terraces and one-upmanship) in which to dissipate their precious energy.

Johnny Rotten, Oliver Twist of this generation. "I wanna some MORE, Malcolm!" *Julie Burchill, NME Nov 5*

Allman And Woman
Two The Hard Way WARNERS

When The Clash cut "I'm So Bored With The USA" they couldn't have heard this album, yet it's eminently applicable. And it could only have happened in the States; it's hard to think of a British couple who would have the arrogance to come up with this collection of mediocrity.

The bad news starts with the grossly sexist title Gregg and Cher Allman have chosen for their duo status, Allman And Woman, which reduces one of the most outstanding female singers of the last decade or so to the role of a mere chattel of an average Southern rocker.

Perhaps, however, Cher consented to be relegated to worse than second best in an attempt to keep her own name off the album, in which case she's taken a wise step. Her subservient role continues through into the music, where she's forced to sing far too low to get down to the level of hubby. Even when she's singing on her own, on "Island", she barely sparks, but her unrestrained sexuality comes through. By contrast, Gregg's solo spot, "Shadow Dream Song", is grotesque, as he groans out the ballad, bum notes and all.

As a duo they seem to have started out with the intention of becoming a white Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell and get off to a good start with "Move Me", a lively '60s-style song on which they give a fair impersonation of the Motown pair. They keep up the momentum through "I Found You, Love", bright and breezy and not unlike "It Takes Two", then start to go downhill with "Can You Fool". They meet their Waterloo on the fourth track, an unspeakable version of Smokey Robinson's "You've Really Got A Hold On Me" which they manage to turn into a dirge. There's no way that anyone can match the Miracles' definitive original, of course, but there's plenty of scope for a good reading of this song, as Eddie Money has proved on his debut album.

From here, Gregg's singing gets worse, Cher loses enthusiasm and the songs mostly become maudlin ballads. If it didn't represent such a waste of talent, this album would be a joke. Perhaps they should have called it *Funny And Cher*.

Michael Oldfield, MM Nov 26

Sad Café Fanx Ta-Ra RCA

A remarkable debut album that augers well not only for the group but for all music makers working within the framework of British rock. Sad Café are one of the best bands to emerge in some time, and side two, in particular, of this engrossing programme represents a sustained peak of achievement rare on albums. It is literally a performance, with each piece, song or instrumental, slotting into the next one, with barely a pause for breath.

Although all the compositions are richly varied they seem to follow a logical path, as the moods and tempos switch around. Side one tends to be more patchy. The opener, "Babylon", is certainly a good introduction to their music, for it features their key ingredients. These are distinctive lead vocals from Paul Young, plenty of back-up vocal harmonies, violent lead guitar from the passionate Ashley Mulford, an orchestral approach to arrangements, and the sophisticated keyboard work of the man largely responsible for those arrangements, Vic Emerson.

"Black Rose", their single, concludes the first side and is rather too obviously influenced by Hall & Oates, but the band are still finding their feet, so doubtless more of their own personality will emerge, as indeed it does on the second segment. Opening with an instrumental by Emerson entitled "The Further Adventures Of Mad Alan", it is nice to hear him consciously get away from rock clichés and employ strange chordal devices to create a mood of menace and mystery. The guitar cuts across the organ chords like a psychotic killer advancing on his victim. The piece finally resolves into "Fanx Ta-Ra", which is a song about the aftermath of love, hence the cover picture.

The band's music makes its impact immediately, and the best way to enjoy this album is to start at the beginning and let it build rather than extract odd tracks. I have a feeling that this time next year we may be toasting them as our Brightest Hope. They are certainly one of mine. *Chris Welch, MM Oct 8*



June 1977: Talking Heads take their "fey funk" to Amsterdam

SINGLES

Wire Mannequin HARVEST

Magnificent "Sweet Jane" riff repetition, ludicrous surfing back-up vocals, heavy petting in the middle of a fire fight from veterans of the Roxy era overcoming the age barrier with a shambling punkathised pop-consciousness and one for suitable vinyl fodder for a K-Tel Presents Punky Waver Explosion. Aimed at the position which will soon be held by The Rich Kids. *NME Nov 26*



Bill Withers Lovely Day CBS

Just one look at you, he knows it's gonna be a lovely day. And the world's all right with him, he knows it's gonna be a lovely day. Gentle soul-jog with "dah-dah-dee" Beach Boys harmonies over soothing strings-and-ribbon section, content platonic eternity fraternity pin wallpaper music suitable for the re-runs of *Lassky And Crutch*. *NME Nov 26*

Talking Heads Uh-Oh, Love Comes To Town SIRE

Fey funk for passive intellectuals with added ingredients of hesitant steel band backing David Byrne's contrived flitty yelp. Their unfulfilled promise disappoints while hardly causing long winter nights of insomnia. *NME Nov 26*

Wings Mull Of Kintyre CAPITOL

Nice cover pic of the Isle Of Davaar on the west coast of Scotland. This is a tribute-in-song to the area in Argyllshire where Friendly Macca has his twee little hideaway. The Campbeltown pipe band, with whom Wings posed for the cover of *The Campbeltown Courier*, all sound good, especially Johnny Sinclair, but the song sucks on ice. *NME Nov 19*



Bob Marley & The Wailers Jamming/Punky Reggae Party ISLAND

"Punky Reggae Party" was celebrated before it was even released because of all those references to The Clash, The Jam, The Slits, The Damned, Dr Feelgood, etc, etc... but it's more of a vague goodwill gesture to the punks than anything else. It's best to regard this Lee Perry/Bob Marley collaboration effort as just a welcome, worthwhile B-side to the excellent "Jamming" (from the *Exodus* album, natch) than any kind of cosmic statement. *NME Nov 19*



GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/GETTY

1977

OCTOBER—DECEMBER

“We don’t regret mistakes”

The BUZZCOCKS have grown up away from London’s punk hype — they’ve even stopped getting bottled. “I write songs that don’t exclude anyone,” says Pete Shelley. “The only people they exclude are people who don’t know anything about love.”

— NME DECEMBER 3 —

THE PIZZA PARLOUR muzak is a never-ending, damned-for-all-eternity loop-tape of ageing session men bleating out sanitised versions of 1977 smash hits for swinging teens, etcetera.

Crown Topper, false-teeth, wrinkled interpretations of The Rods’ “Do Anything You Wanna Do”, of The Modern Lovers’ “Roadrunner”, even (forgive them, Lord, they know not what they do) of the Sex Pistols’ “Pretty Vacant”, as well as arteriosclerotic carbon copies of The Jam, Clash, Damned, Stranglers, Vibrators and just about every other name in the coterie of punky-waver elite that has ever been reverently gobbed on by the UK’s enlightened hordes of safety-pin-heads... except for Buzzcocks.

With mixed feeling of relief and slack-jaw shock, I gaze at my Pizza Putrido reflectively. Surely the high-calibre credentials of the Mancunian innovators would put them amongst the first in line for the dubious honour of having a bastardised representation of their work included on any punk-pizza-rock-muzak loop-tape???

Buzzcocks were one of the very first set of collective talents to band together back in June 1976 in the wake of the cataclysmic aural upheaval instigated by Malcolm McLaren’s Rude Boys. They played their debut gig the following month supporting the Sex Pistols at Manchester’s Free Trade Hall. Buzzcocks terminated their set when their 16-summers drummer boy, the gangling John Maher, deserted his skins to flee in tail-flying terror through the crowd and out into the night.

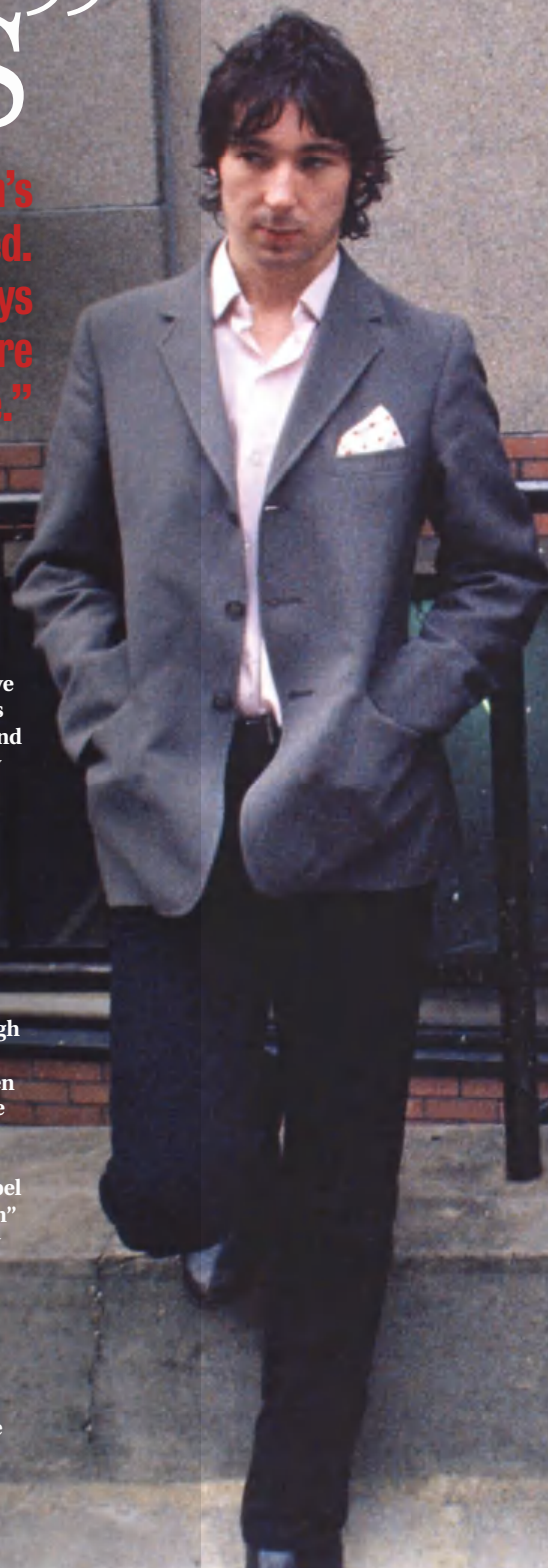
From there Buzzcocks went on to play support to the Pistols at the first Screen On The Green gig in Islington; to play Day One of the 100 Club Festival with the Pistols and Clash; to replace the expelled Damned on the Pistols’ Anarchy Tour coach; and to support The Clash at the Harlesden Cinema gig on their White Riot Tour.

The last was just after they became the first band to form their own independent record label in the dawning of this year when they released the classic, precious, priceless “Spiral Scratch” EP on their New Hormones label. “Spiral Scratch” was arguably the finest 45 since “Anarchy In The UK”. No fewer than 16,000 of the little black beauties were bagged and posted by Buzzcocks themselves from the front room of manager Richard Boon’s Manchester home. Buzzcocks vinyl even occupied the last two tracks on the *Live At The Roxy* album.

All that... and what do they get, oh-oh, what do they get?

In sleepy London Town there’s just no place on a Pizzaland punk-muzak loop-tape for a bunch of ridiculously underrated Northern cults.

“Oh, they’ll get around to ‘Orgasm Addict’,” comments Pete Shelley dryly as he pops a piece of pizza into his mouth. “It’s this commercial world we live in...” »



Buzzcocks in November 1977: (l-r) Steve Diggle, Pete Shelley, Steve Garvey and John Maher



Not that Buzzcocks give a toss about Babylon, despite their impeccable punky-waver credentials. Coming out of Manchester may have blinkered the record corporations when it came to snapping up this combo for the dotted line of a recording contract, but this minor disadvantage has been more than compensated for by the beneficial aspects of their geographical location; Buzzcocks were never under pressure to follow a punk party line like some of their contemporaries in London.

In Manchester, fashion as exclusive dictatorship of a silver-spoon elite just doesn't exist. Buzzcocks have evolved at their own pace. They're very special and they know it; if the rest of the world doesn't... well, they'll catch up sooner or later, and if they don't that's strictly their own loss.

"If we'd been from London we would have been signed up a year ago, but we wouldn't be in the position we are now," Shelley asserts. "The music industry is centralised, which is more to its detriment than ours..."

"I hate London, it's just another city. We know—fairly certain—the things that we want to do and how we want to do them. If we'd been caught up in the rush in the beginning we wouldn't have been given the breathing space to work on the direction we want to take. We were in no rush to sign."

Shelley smiles, wryly. "Until United Artists came along, all the interest was fairly low profile anyhow."

PETE SHELLEY IS short, sharp and slyly urbane; dapper, diminutive and quietly defiant in his unfashionably conservative taste for sartorial elegance—a two-piece three-button electric-blue angora-goat's-hair suit worn with a bright-yellow rollneck, the same two-tone colour combination that dominates on both the label and cover of Buzzcocks' first United Artists single, "Orgasm Addict" b/w "Whatever Happened To?".

"It hasn't been banned," asserts the trenchant Shelley. "It just hasn't been played."

John Maher is elsewhere noshing Anglo egg and chips, so only two other Buzzcocks are present in the pizza house—the Pinocchio-featured, painfully shy Steve Diggle (back-up vocals and staccato rhythm guitar to Shelley's lead) and their latest recruit, watchful, silent bassist Steve Garvey, who resembles Bruce Foxton's kid brother and was drafted in to replace the ejected, difficult man-mountain, Big Garth, kicked out because Buzzcocks believe that a group cannot be a therapeutic vehicle for the problems of one member.

"It was getting to the point where if he'd been in much longer and didn't do some drastic changing—which we didn't think he'd be able to do—then there wouldn't be a Buzzcocks at all, we'd all just freak out," opines Shelley, who is basically a shy person but with growing self-confidence.

Shelley co-founded Buzzcocks with that enigmatic, natty-baldhead Howard Devoto when the latter stuck up a notice at their college requesting contact with like-minded souls interested in forming a band. Shelley was the only person who replied. The two spent a few days in London checking out the capital's fast-evolving seminal punk scene, and got the band's moniker from a *Time Out* review of *Rock Follies* which contained the phrase "Getting a buzz, cocks!".

They were introduced to Steve Diggle in June '76 by Malcolm McLaren at the first Pistols gig in Manchester. They found John Maher through an ad in *Melody Maker* and at the beginning of this year, as interest grew in the band after the release of "Spiral Scratch", Devoto left Buzzcocks to stretch his talents in other directions, feeling a growing distaste for performing live and extreme reluctance to commit himself to anything as drastic as a recording contract.

"Howard thought he would be unable to experiment if he remained in the band," Shelley comments, stifling a yawn. "I get bored with people asking about Howard. Tonight is the 63rd Buzzcocks gig (the second of the Marquee Buzzcocks brace) and Howard only played the first 11—he was only there at the very beginning."

Their disdain for Babylon's streets of chic has meant a disappointing paucity of Buzzcocks' gigs in the capital; before the two Marquee dates they'd played London only four times in 1977.

"It's the only place we get gobbled on," Shelley smirks. "Only in London and other liberated places... It used to piss me off, but now I understand that it's a mark of respect..."

His eyes are wide with mock-awe.

"If someone out there can gob right into your mouth... well, it's the nearest you can get to a French kiss from 30 yards."

But it would appear that the cocky cockney sparrers are catching on fast. "The last time we played London, there was nowhere near as many chairs and glasses thrown at us as the time before."

BUZZCOCKS SING LOVE songs. The love may be betrayed, bitter, vitriolic and vengeful, but its love nevertheless. Shelley's incisive lyrics are the work of a neoteric Smokey Robinson bearing a grudge. The direction of the band altered after the Devoto departure, Buzzcocks featuring Shelley out front after he took charge of limelight chores seeming more of a quintessentially pop-oriented band and less the vehicle for a tortured, angst-ridden artist with a widow's peak.

The Marquee has got the House Full sign up outside. Inside the Establishment Punk, vertical gyration and long-distance French Kissing is reaching perspiration point as Shelley and Diggle fret-thrash the juddering, abruptly staccato opening chords to Buzzcocks' ode to a shot-nerved unrequited lust habit, "Breakdown".

"Well-if-I-seem-a-little-jittery/I-can't-restrain-myself..."

Shelley controls the crowd with a polite deceptive grace, a natural performer with sufficient confidence in his ability to perform live not to feel the need to assault the audience with mandatory punky-waver contrived belligerence.

John Maher is continually head-bowed and relentlessly solid on skins, his work at the back of the stage meshing with Steve Garvey's voluble basslines, the neophyte Buzzcock's playing obviously still feeling its way (Lancashire's answer to Sid Vicious?), while his studied cool visual is infinitely more commercially viable in the teen-appeal stakes than that of the rotund, revolving Garth. And I couldn't help wondering if the expulsion of the Gentle Giant at this crucial stage of the Buzzcocks' scaling of the heights was perhaps made with a more ruthless calculation than Shelley would have you imagine.

But that's conjecture; Buzzcocks are now more of a live band than they've ever been before, including the early Devoto days. As always, Diggle looks mildly surprised to find himself on stage, his guitar emanating a juddering, Wilkoesque stutter as a base for Shelley to cut short, sharp, savage flicks of the plectrum, giving Buzzcocks the sound of a humming, brachiariate circular saw that incorporates the concision and rock-action speed of *la mode punkais* while exercising a refreshing control of dynamics that only the best of the new bands have been able to master.

It's rich, rhythmic and addictively repetitive, perhaps reaching its most perfect expression on the adventurous instrumental recitation "Pulsebeat". Maher repeats a drum roll of devastating brevity while the

other three Buzzcocks dance, eyes closed with their instruments silent, then as one man cutting rich, full, abrupt slices of sound that build to the contagious, intelligent magic with which they climax the show.

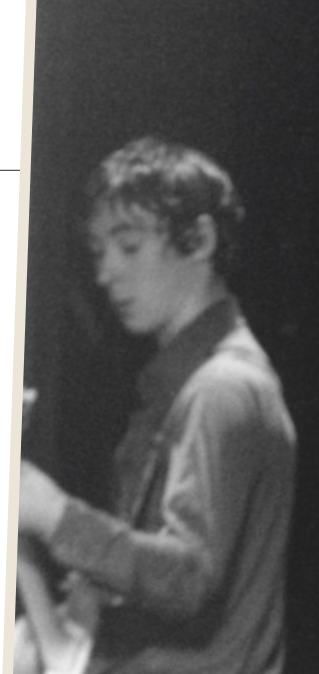
Doing "Pulsebeat" as the last number shows in Buzzcocks a willingness to experiment that no other band in the UK can match, together with the panache, aplomb, self-possession and ability to pull it off. At the bar The Clash's Mick Jones reels with stunned admiration. "They're the only band in the country who'd dare finish with that," he gasps. "Fucking brilliant."

"Thank you, goodnight!" Shelley shouts into the mic as they stumble off, brought back for an encore of the *Spiral Scratch* track "Time's Up", the story of the disintegration of a teenage couple's relationship when the intention's unjust and the commitment's unequal.

I've been waiting at the supermarket, standing in line with beans
(CASH UP)

I've been waiting at the post office for sticky pictures of the Queen
(STICK UP)

"I try to keep
the lyrics
I write
ambisexual"



December 11, 1977:
topping a bill with
Subway Sect and
Siouxsie & The
Banshees at the
Roundhouse



And now I'm waiting for YOU, to get yourself
good and ready (MAKE UP)
Say to myself is this what they mean by going steady
(BREAK UP)

And I've been waiting in the waiting room
And I've been sitting in the sitting room
And now I'm whining in the dining room
Waiting for you is like waiting for the man in the moon
I was really smouldering, so I bought a pack of King Size cigarettes
(STOOD UP)

This hanging around's killing me if you just come along and have no
regrets (GIVE UP)
I call your number and your mother tells me you're still in bed (GET UP)
When you get to the phone your voice is thick and sexy, shoots through
the top of my head (HANG UP)

And I've been standing in the standing room
And I've been smoking in the smoking room
And now I'm dying in the living room
I'm gonna forget what I came for here real soon
I said your time's up/Me too
I'm out on account of you
Your time's up/Me too
And I'm out on account of you
Yeah, your time's up/Your time's up/Right up

"There's bitterness in our songs, yeah," concedes Shelley. "But there's hope in them, too. I have got a tendency to self-pity, but I realise that's not the way to get anything done, by making myself a martyr..."

Buzzcocks. "Whatever Happened To?" – "Your love is a cashed cheque..."

"It's more pissed-off frustration than self-pity," says Shelley. "It's like," he free-associates, "when someone you really care about does something stupid and you wish they hadn't done it, you're just sorry that they've done that."

Shelley sees the scene in Manchester as infinitely more healthy than in London, and rightly so, citing the attitude of young Manchester musicians who are into bands for the simple rush of playing and not expecting to get signed up by a record label as soon as they step out of the garage... because it just doesn't happen like that up there... which is why there's not a band in the whole of London fit to lick the plectrums of virtual unknowns The Fall.

"I'd be a nervous wreck in two weeks if I lived in London," Shelley admits.

Of course, Manchester is far from an aural promised land and has got its share of dross like anywhere else, but there is a precious vitality about the city that London (and others) sorely lacks. And it all emanated from the same raw material that all classic rock sprouts from: boredom, boredom, boredom, bor-dum, bor-dum.

You know that I say what I mean
I say what comes to my mind
Because I never get around to things
I live a straight, straight, line
You know me, I'm acting dumb
You know the scene, very hum-drum

Boredom, boredom, boredom
Now I'm living in this movie

Neoteric = newfangled, in the modern mould

But it doesn't move me
I don't mind waiting for the phone to ring
Let it ring and ring and ring, the fuckin' thing!
You know me, I'm acting dumb
Y'know the scene, very hum-drum
Boredom, boredom, bor-dum, bor-dum, bor-dum
Now there's nothing that's behind me
I'm already a has-been, because my future ain't what it was
Well, I think I know the words that I mean...

What did you think of the Roxy album?

"I thought it was a piece of shit because it was so lousy," Shelley says calmly. "Like if someone dug up an old essay of yours and it got printed and everybody said, 'Wow, that's great!' But we don't regret making mistakes, it brings a certain order."

Tell Shelley that a good gauge of the difference in the atmosphere's of both London and Manchester is the way that the superb John Cooper Clarke was received at the Vortex and the last night of the Electric Circus respectively; in Manchester the kids stomped, clapped, roared with laughter and even danced (not bad for a poet), whereas in London the punks threw bottles.

Shelley nods. "It's sad that people in London can't appreciate something new and exciting simply because it hasn't been deemed cool..."

But London ain't the only place where Buzzcocks have encountered bigots. "We played Leeds Polytechnic and I happened to be wearing a Manchester United shirt... and they went totally crazy," recalls a bemused Shelley. "How was I to know what it was; I have no interest in football whatsoever... I've nothing against students per se, but Buzzcocks would never play a students-only gig. It's too much of an exclusive thing like being asked to play a Masonic Hall or a darts team. It's a lot better to play a CBS convention than a student-only gig... you feel like a cabaret girl!"

THE SECOND DATE at the Marquee is another unqualified success. Buzzcocks run through the four *Spiral Scratch* tracks ("Friends Of Mine", "Boredom", "Time's Up" and "Breakdown") plus "Sixteen", "No Reply", "Whatever Happened To?", "Orgasm Addict" (Shelley: "It's about people who use other people merely for the orgasm because they can't handle a proper relationship; that's too dangerous"), "Oh Shit", "Pulsebeat", "Love Battery", "Fiction Romance" (Shelley: "It's about the commercialisation of love in things like *Romeo And Juliet* or *The Little House On The Prairie* to such an extent that every time you have a minor heartache, you build it into so much more through sheer theatrical melodrama") and their next single, the outrageously magnificent "What Do I Get?", pure pop for tomorrow people that is destined to be written down as the finest single of this year (including *Spiral Scratch*).

Musically, it's "Do Anything You Wanna Do" without the contrived sense of epic, while lyrically it's worthy of Smokey Robinson at his finest, and nothing gets better than that.

*I just wanna lover like any other – what do I get?
I just wanna someone to never forget – what do I get?
What do I get – oh-oh-oh-oh?/What do I get?*

"The songs aren't complete stories," Shelley tells me. "You've got to put yourself into them for them to take life."

Do you feel the need to keep your own sexual preference out of your lyrics and/or interviews?

"I try to keep the lyrics I write ambisexual. If I was a great butch macho rock-guitarist singing songs about laying all the groupies, then it wouldn't mean anything to women or the people I work with. I don't like excluding people from ideas simply because of their gender.

"And also if I wrote songs like Tom Robinson about being gay then I'd be excluding another part of the audience. And because I'm a man, if I sang songs about male/female gender then it's going to cut out more people. I enjoy writing songs that do not exclude anyone.

"The only people they exclude are people who don't know anything about love." *Tony Parsons* •

1977

MONTH BY MONTH



Coming next... in 1978!

SO THAT WAS 1977. We meant it, man.

Certainly, that's not it from our reporters on the beat. The staffers of *NME* and *Melody Maker* enjoyed unrivalled access to the biggest stars of the time, and cultivated a feel for the rhythms of a diversifying scene; as the times changed, so did they. While in pursuit of the truth, they unearthed stories that have come to assume mythical status.

That's very much the territory of this monthly magazine. Each month, *The History Of Rock* will be bringing you verbatim reports from the pivotal events in pop culture, one year a month, one year at a time. Next up, 1978!

KATE BUSH

A PHENOMENAL NEW arrival on the scene. The singer from South-East London brings a completely theatrical avant-garde pop, all delivered in an unprecedented voice. Is it contrived? "I just opened my mouth and it came out," she says. "Honest."

BOB DYLAN

BACK WITH A huge band, and an engaging line in stage banter, Dylan even finds time for an informal chat with the *MM*. "I turned round in Japan and saw a pair of breasts on stage," he says of his newly "sexy" show. "I thought then that something's gotta be done about this."

THE JAM

PAUL WELLER AND band visit America. A support slot with Blue Öyster Cult isn't rapturously received by band or audience, while Weller feels stung by the fate of The Jam's first album. "In a few years' time," asserts Weller, "people will realise how good it was."

PLUS...

DAVID BOWIE!

SUICIDE!

ROLLING STONES!

| FROM THE MAKERS OF **UNCUT** |

THE HISTORY OF **ROCK**

Every month, we revisit long-lost *NME* and *Melody Maker* interviews and piece together *The History Of Rock*. This month: 1977.
“In 1977 I hope I get to heaven!’Cos I been too long on the dole...”



Relive the year...

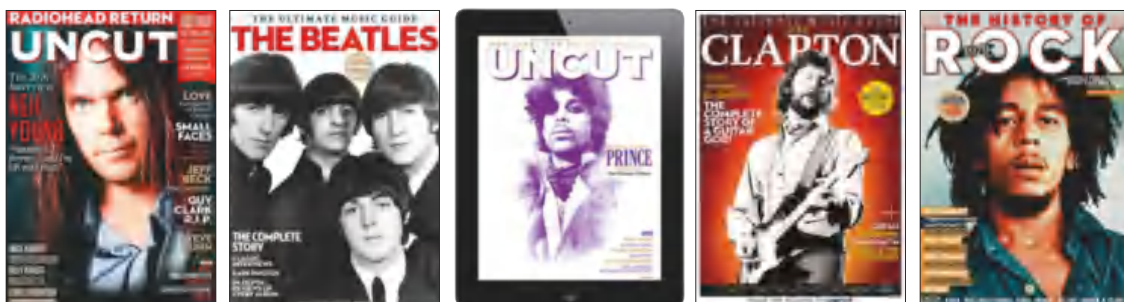
THE CLASH SAW LONDON BURNING

DAVID BOWIE MADE *LOW* AND “*HEROES*”

THE SEX PISTOLS BROUGHT ANARCHY TO EUROPE

...and KEITH MOON, LED ZEPPELIN, BUZZCOCKS,
ELVIS COSTELLO, MUDDY WATERS and many more
shared everything with *NME* and *MELODY MAKER*

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