

# Melody Maker

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**Marley**  
talks  
of his  
roots  
PAGE 47

**QUEEN**  
— full  
tour  
dates  
PAGE 5

**Neil**  
Diamond  
on his  
fame  
PAGE 30



**Clash**  
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# Punk rock: there's money in anarchy

EVER since, in December last year, the Sex Pistols uttered a few four-letter words on television, the commercial potential of new-wave rock has been glaringly evident.

The Pistols received phenomenal media coverage, and their single, "Anarchy in the UK," reached the lower levels of the Melody Maker chart, eventually notching up sales figures in the region of 40,000 copies. EMI, of course, dropped the band as a result of the adverse publicity. Nevertheless, other record companies noted the sales figures and started to search for their own new wave bands.

"The major companies are, predictably I suppose, going over the top about new-wave bands," says Ted Carroll, boss of Chiswick Records.

"It's a bit like the Merseybeat boom when, after Gerry and the Pacemakers and the Searchers had had a couple of hits, every group in Liverpool seemed to be offered a recording contract."

Chiswick are a small, independent label formed 18 months ago. "We saw there were a lot of bands gigging around London, creating a little buzz, which weren't being signed by the major companies. Our first band was the Count Bishops, and then the 101's."

"The big companies, however, seemed to be ignoring the bands which were actually gigging. They were looking for heavy management and all the rest, over-looking bands like the 101's."

The 101's, however, featured Joe Strummer, who was later to join the Clash, a band signed by CBS for a reputed £100,000 in February.

The Clash are the first British new wave band to be given the full promotional treatment by a major record company. Their debut single, "White Riot," looks certain to make the chart while their album, called simply "The Clash," is being promoted with a month-long tour, starting at GUILDFORD Civic Hall on May 1.

The concerts continue at CHESTER Rascals (2), BIRMINGHAM Barbarella's (3), SWINDON Affair (4), LIVERPOOL Eric's (5), ABERDEEN University (6), EDINBURGH Playhouse (7), MANCHESTER Electric Circus (8), LONDON Rainbow (9), KIDDERMINSTER Town Hall (10), NOTTINGHAM Palais (12), LEICESTER Polytechnic (13), PLYMOUTH Fiesta (15), SWANSEA University (16), LEEDS Polytechnic (17), MIDDLESBROUGH Rock Garden (19), NEWCASTLE University (20), ST ALBANS City Hall (21), MAIDENHEAD

Skindles (22), STAFFORD Top Of The World (23), CARDIFF Top Rank (24), BRIGHTON Polytechnic (25), BRISTOL Colston Hall (26), WEST RINTON Pavilion (27), CANTERBURY Odeon (28) and DUNSTABLE California Ballroom (30).

The company, however, have not stopped with the Clash. They have also signed the Vibrators, the band which recently supported Iggy Pop on his British tour. The Vibrators were previously with RAK, releasing one single, "We Vibrate."

They too, however, are on the road from the end of this month, playing LONDON Nashville (April 29), SOUTHAMPTON University (30), LONDON Marquee (May 1), TOLWORTH Toby Jug (2), TWICKENHAM Winning Post (4), CROYDON Red Deer (5), BRIGHTON Embassy Cinema (6), HASTINGS Pavilion (7), MANCHESTER Oaks (10), LONDON Dingwalls (11), DUD-

## New background by Robert Partridge

LEY JBs (14), BIRMINGHAM Barbarella's (17), WOLVERHAMPTON Lafayette (20), NEWPORT Roundabout (25), LONDON South Bank Polytechnic (27), DARLINGTON Incognito (June 1), MIDDLESBROUGH Rock Garden (3), MANCHESTER Electric Circus (4), BARROW Maximes (5), EDINBURGH Tiffany's (6) and LIVERPOOL Eric's (10).

"When we started, and when Stiff was formed last year, we were the only companies interested in these bands. But now there's a lot of money involved, and record companies don't go throwing money around," comments Carroll.

"The Jam are a good example. We saw them a few times playing around London, and we liked them a lot. But then we also

heard that the big companies were also interested, particularly Polydor who'd just lost out on the Sex Pistols and the Clash. "They rowed in and did a big number, offering more than we could ever afford. And, of course, they eventually signed the band."

"One night, when the Jam were playing at the Roxy Club (London's leading new-wave venue), the whole shooting gallery turned up, accountants, executives, the lot. We obviously can't compete with that."

Chiswick, nevertheless, have recently signed two new-wave bands. Skrewdriver from Blackpool and Radiators From Space, who are based in Dublin. Skrewdriver were signed after they sent demo tapes to Chiswick, while the other band were recom-

mended to the company by Eamon Carr of Horslips. "Neither band was in London. These days all the major companies are looking at the new London bands," says Carroll.

Yet, despite the attention lavished on the new wave by record companies, very few of the bands have landed record contracts. United Artists have Eddie and the Hot Rods and also distribute the Stiff label, CBS have the Clash and the Vibrators, Polydor the Jam, and Track have Johnny Thunders' Heartbreakers.

"The Heartbreakers are going to develop in the same way as the Who, they are going to be a phenomenon," insists Chris Stamp, head of Track. It was Stamp, together with partner Kit Lambert, who managed the Who from

their earliest days at London's Marquee Club to the making of the Tommy film.

"Every decade a new generation appears, and sometimes they make themselves felt. This time it's the Heartbreakers," says Stamp. The band, formed by ex-New York Dolls guitarist Johnny Thunders, came to Britain for the ill-fated Sex Pistols tour last year. "The bands are a lot younger in Britain, and they're better and more interesting than American bands," comments Thunders. "We decided to stay in Britain and signed with Track."

The band's first single, a double A side featuring "Chinese Rocks" and "Born Too Loose," will be in the shops at the end of the month, coinciding with the Heartbreakers' British tour.

They play BRIGHTON Embassy Cinema on April 29, followed by HULL College Of Higher Education (May 6), LIVERPOOL Eric's (7), WINCHESTER King Alfred's College (11), WARRINGTON Technical College (13), LONDON Royal College Of Art (June 10), ST ALBANS Civic Hall (13), BIRMINGHAM Barbarella's (14), PLYMOUTH Fiesta (19) and HEREFORD College Of Art (24).

Few of the punk bands have yet moved out of the clubs. Even the Clash, on their tour next month, play only a few concert hall gigs. Major halls, however, became wary of the new wave at the time of the Pistols tour, when most of the shows were cancelled at the last moment.

And at the beginning of the year even London's pub and club circuit seemed to be closing its doors to the new wave. The Roxy, in Covent Garden, however, met the needs of the new bands.

The club was opened on January 1 by Andy Czeowski, the manager of a new wave band called Generation X. He had hired the building for two days in December last year, promoting Johnny Thunders' Heartbreakers.

"That was a success so I decided to take it over permanently," comments Czeowski. In four months the Roxy has become London's prime new-wave

club and, today, Czeowski is planning a "Live At The Roxy" album, similar in format to New York's "Live At CBGBs."

"I'm not sure when the album will be released, but we've already started recording it. EMI are interested in it, although nothing has yet been signed. About nine or 10 bands will be on the album, which will have 14 tracks," comments Czeowski.

"It's similar to the 'CBGBs' album, although we haven't just taken the idea from that. The club's got so much vitality it seemed a pity to waste an opportunity to record some of these bands."

The running order of the album has yet to be decided, but among the acts to be featured on the album are Buzzcocks, Johnny Moped and Slaughter and the Dogs.

The most successful of Britain's new wave groups, to date, however, are the Damned, whose debut album "Damned Damned Damned" made the lower reaches of the Melody Maker chart.

Their success also represents a breakthrough for Stiff Records, formed in August last year by Jake Riviera, previously the tour manager for Dr Feelgood, together with David Robinson, manager of the Damned and Graham Parker and the Rumour.

The company, during its first few months, operated a mail-order system, with "So It Goes" by Nick Lowe as its first single. Full distribution did not come until earlier this year, when Stiff linked up with Island Records. The first result of that deal was a chart place for the Damned, who also toured Britain as the support band to Marc Bolan and T. Rex. The Damned play LONDON Roundhouse next Sunday (April 24).

Island, of course, also have Eddie and the Hot Rods, signed early last year. They made the Melody Maker chart with "Teenage Depression" in December and were even featured on BBC-TV's Top Of The Pops.

Only the major companies, however, can get their records into the big shops — and then only with a big promotional push. Other labels, like

Chiswick, Sky Dog Bomb, are forced to shop the growing new wave catering for wave.

Chiswick records stocked through the On chain of oldies, which are also own Carroll. But the source of esoterica is ain is a wholesaling pany called Bizarre last year did much interest in such bar Television, whose records were im from America.

Today, Television on the brink of the l chart with "Mr Moon" but, a year their reputation in l rested solely on B efforts. The compan imported Iggy Pop Velvet Underground MCS, all seminal ences in the rise c new wave.

The first of the / can new-wave bands to Britain in the su of last year, spearh by Patti Smith an band, who played i Roundhouse in L. They were followed i Ramones, who also i at the Roundhouse.

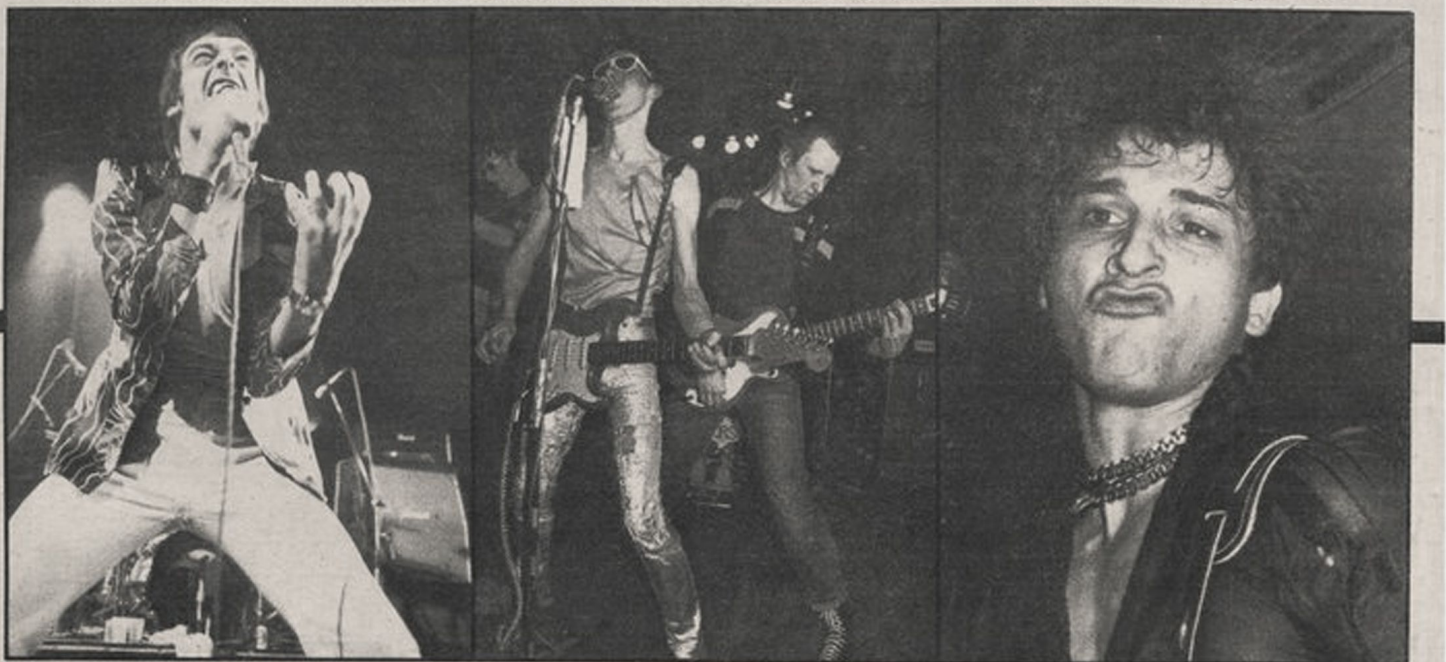
The Ramones retu Britain, this time tour, next month. Th port band will be T Heads, one of Am best new wave g. Among the dates an shows at the Round on June 5 and 6 Blondie, another York band, are in l join the bill.

The Ramones are haps the most succ — in commercial ven of New York's bands. Their first i has sold around 10 copies, a very h sales figure for a debu while the follow-up met with similar suc

The commercial i tial of new wave ha to be fully appreciate though new produ companies like Ste ward have been fo and there is even tal new-wave film, feat the Jam, to be made summer.

"We started by p our records by the l who were gigging at London. The whole has now got much b with the big record panies and everyone trying to get the bands," comments Carroll.

PICTURED BELOW: EDDIE AND THE HOT RODS: Island deal / VIBRATORS: signed by CBS / JOHNNY THUNDERS: recording for Track



# Singles

REVIEWED BY



CAROLINE COONEY

**MARVIN GAYE:** "Got To Give It Up" (Motown). At first this long-awaited new one, from one of the all-time greatest soul singers, sounds disappointing. Superb though it is, it's so faceless that it might have been sung by any number of top-class black artists. But then, the compact magnetism of another mini-riff, minimally produced

## Gaye but faceless

to maximum effect, wins the day.

Apart from being THE disco sound of the moment, the track moves in dead-centre to every known erotic zone. The main feature, the bass — imperceptibly

shadowed by keyboards — gently grinds away as Marvin's steady falsetto parties on and on.

Mellow vocal harmonies, warm flashes of brass, dynamic percussion and, in the distance, the gay chatter of people having a good time,

add delicious colour and texture. A smash hit.

Boys: "I Don't Care" (MAM). At London's Roundhouse on Easter Sunday, this band warmed up John Cale's audience with a hugely enjoyable blast of good-time rock 'n' roll swimming in a new wave direction. They are

one of '77's high energy combos who have almost got it made.

The problem? They are neither as stylish nor as contemporary as they could, indeed should, be. If they used their own ideas while being inspired by the Pistols' Damned / Clash, instead of being satisfied with second-rate copying, they'd improve immensely. For instance: they've got the regulation cropped hair (and very nice too) but half of what they wear looks as if it was sold to them by Freddie Mercury seven years ago.

"I Don't Care" is a regulation neo-punk stance but, to follow up those lyrics with "I don't care about rock 'n' roll", is a major crime. It was caring about rock and its potential which started the whole new tidal wave in the first place. If the Boys don't know this, then they better tune in fast or be counted among the merely fashionable flotsam. The band's future is bright but this debut single is not for the chart.

Desperate Bicycles "Smoke-screens" (Riff Records). One, two, three, four "bring me good news on a fast train/bring me fast news on a goods train/concentrating in a cafe/kicking paper in a subway/easy money is as good as it comes/easy living is a bad way of life . . . and more.

This is a fantastic piece of music. It leaps at the throat with burning commitment, very humorous energy and startling originality. Well, the second sparse cut, "Handlebars", is obviously influenced by that W. H. Auden/B. Britten movie soundtrack, "Night Mail" in new wave terms, the sound is closer to the Buzzcocks than anyone else. My single of the week.

Captain And Tennille: "Can't Stop Dancing" (A&M). These two never put a foot wrong and this is one of their finest yet. The sound is so tactile it creates an illusion of brilliant sparks flying off the turntable. It's breathless, ecstatic — the kind of music to play while you're filling in those tax forms. A smash hit.

George Fame: "Daylight" (Island). With really good disco material, and a producer like Daryl Dragon, George might make it as a hip shaker. He still has one of the most stylish voices around — especially when his King Pleasure/Mose Allison roots shine through. The production here is leaden. Chart Potential.

Strangers: "Peasant In The Big Shitty" (UA). A fine live recording with Choozy Saurie on the 'B' side — free with their fine, just released, debut album, "Rattus Norvegicus". Vic Maile handled Island's mobile to trap this gem and it must count as one of the best live sounds of the year — and what more could we expect from the band which is going to get everyone on the end of their skewer in '77?

Peter Tosh With Words Sound And Power: "Africa" (Virgin). "As long as you're a black man you're an African" whines Tosh on one of the most regressive, pseudo-political reggae songs I've heard in months in America. The black movement realised long ago that, as Alex Haley has proved, a true historical perspective is crucial to an individual's identity and sense of purpose. Africa is roots, but the only way to achieve power in society is by coming to terms with the fact that the place where you live is your future. '77?

One of the main reasons reggae has yet to become a real musical force is because musicians like Tosh, while keeping a commendable focus on Africa, insist that some kind of diaspora back to that continent is their only salvation. But if Tosh would help build a more equitable Babylon here instead of dreaming of Utopia elsewhere, then his music might be more successful. A miss.



CAPTAIN AND TENNILLE: a breathless hit/MARVIN GAYE: moves in dead-center erotic zone/ROD STEWART: at his best

## The Clash



... now out + THE LP + The CLASH

similar theme but Edwards explores "teach us our culture, African brother, put it in the papers, teach it in the schools." The sound is stunning — an up-tempo military rocker which cuts so deep it feels as though it could make a heart beat twice as fast. Masterful. Reggae chart smash. Available: Golden Age Music: 180 High Street, Harlesden, London, N.W.10.

Quincy Jones: "Roots" (A&M). From the album "Roots", the narrative, convincing acting and new look at "the saga of an American family" has been so absorbing that nobody I know has noticed the music. Well, it's a cross between folkie Chieftan-type lyricism and the all-out heavy sell of The Big Country. Great on the box — set for the chart.

Methu Selah: "All Night 'Till Daylight" (Pioneer). One to set the sound systems ablaze. An instrumental with incredible brass, rolling bass and excitement breaking all bounds. The version is a killer. Reggae chart potential.

Sylvia and Chuck Jackson: "We Can't Hide It Anymore" (All Platinum). Both sides of this single are about the pleasure of extra-marital affairs. Guilty thrills department. For masochists only. A miss.

Dobie Gray: "Find 'Em, Fool 'Em, And Forget 'Em" (Capricorn Records). The disco beat tramps on but Dobie ain't dancing — unless it's in jack boots. For fans this is an earache. But all is not lost. On the 'B' side, in a Johnny Nash reggae groove, Dobie opens his lovely lungs on a highly commercial track one thousand times more presentable than the 'A' side disco mess. A miss.

Dave And Sugar: "Don't Throw It All Away" (RCA). Soulful treatment — but the arrangement, attempting to be richly dynamic, lacks continuity — an essential in a long ballad like this. It drips through sound perceivers like water through a sieve. A miss.

Roger Daltrey: "Written On The Wind" (Polydor). A very serious song which David Soul could carry off because he is so light-hearted about the close-to-the-bone sincerity of his ballad style. Daltrey, however, is serious to the point of embarrassment. He interprets this Eurovision Song Contest-type tune as if he were trying to outdo Charles Aznavour in the forehead-furrowed, eye-popping, chest-beating stakes. Not a pretty listen. A miss.

Leo Kottke: "Backaroo" (Chrysalis). Some lovely, loose 12-string picking from a guitar ace who impresses all with his technique. But he

has made essential genius but feel an ultimate manship stuck on fingers in fore he exting rather th miss.

Ray J: "Jerry" (Polydor). here whi because running this singi Pogo Ro — a miss

Tim: "What A Night" (another . . . ments, lii Charge". almost a Top. Ten shouldn't good last

John Darlin': "around Christin, lined in teen-dreaz like this. or Show tory. A m J. J. B (Contemp chance. I had of m in the Their w beautiful: is given) from the arrangem Wild C ctified" ( whether: e.g. mad from sin. But you've d through minutes moover. C Larry Lady" (D broken li mended. I a broken If you're you'll b theme. I blood you be short-

Tina C (CBS). S over whi onto the album. Ti sure the semi-retir home co these esci Rod T Want T (Riva). I trembling a burnt- tenderness all jerker at

**I**N THE past, Joe Strummer would return to his squat from the dead-end gloom of the Lisson Grove dole queue and come up with sneeringly cynical "Career Opportunities."

When he and Paul Simonon got caught in the racial no-man's-land between charging police and angry black youths at the Notting Hill Carnival riots, the experience was poured into another rock 'n' roll song, "White Riot."

More recently, "Hate And War" and "Remote Control" (written around the time of the banned Sex Pistols tour) were reactions to the general condemnation of punk music.

But, considering their formidably exciting stage presence and ever-improving technique, it was only a matter of time before a record contract lured the Clash away from their squat/starve/steal lifestyle. A pox on the irony!

With CBS's hefty six-figure advance and perhaps two years' guaranteed security, what priorities inspired by street-level survival games now? Would they vanish as fast as ink dries on the dotted line?

"No," counters 24-year-old Joe Strummer, offering "Garageland" in evidence, "I never want that to happen."

"After our second gig, a critic wrote that we should be returned to the garage and locked in with a car motor running until we died. 'Garageland' is about that."

"I was trying to say that this is where we come from and we know it and we're not going to get out of our depth. Even though we've signed with CBS, we aren't going to float off into the atmosphere like the Pink Floyd or anything."

Admirable sentiments which cynics, no doubt, will find hard to believe. But, in truth, the band have changed little over the last six months.

In the early days, they returned to their rehearsal studio one night so hungry and broke that, over the one bar of their electric fire, they cooked and ate what remained at the bottom of a bucket of flour-and-water paste.

Today Joe Strummer, on a basic £25 a week, looks a picture of health but, if anything, an adequate diet has sharpened his reactive wit.

"The only person who played 'White Riot' (their recent single) on the radio was John Peel — and he's gone on holiday," says Joe, his voice a mixture of amused incredulity and frustration.

"You play our record against any of the other stuff and it just knocks spots off them left, right, and centre. They must be c— for not playing it."

"I want to slag off all the people in charge of radio stations. No 1: Radio One. They outlawed the pirates and then didn't, as they promised, cater for the market the pirates created."

"Radio One and Two, most afternoons, run concurrently and the whole thing has slid right back to where it was before the pirates happened. They're totally c— it."

"There's no radio station for young people anymore. It's totally down to housewives and trends in Islington. They're killing the country by having the playlist monopoly."

"No 2: Capital. They're even worse because they had the chance, coming right into the heart of London and sitting in that tower right on top of everything."

"But they've completely blown it. I'd like to throttle Aidan Day. He thinks he's the self-appointed Minister of Public Enlightenment."

"We've just written a new song called 'Capital Radio' and a line in it goes 'listen to the tunes on the Dr Goebels Show'."

"They say 'Capital Radio, in tune with London'. They're in tune with Hampstead. They're not in tune with us at all."

"What they could have done, compared to what they have done, is abhorrent. They could have made it so good that everywhere you went you took your transistor radio."

"They could have made the whole capital buzz. Instead, Capital Radio has just turned its back on the whole youth of the city."

Radio stations are not above criticism but what does Strummer think of the punk scene at the moment? "I don't think there is one really. The only thing that could count as a scene is the Roxy. And the Roxy is a DORMITORY. The last time I went I was

# Clash personality

## Joe Strummer talks to Caroline Coon

feeling really uppity. "I stood in the middle and looked round and all these people were slumped around dozing! I threw tomato sauce on the mirror and stormed out. And I haven't been back there. I don't think I will go back. The sooner it closes the better."

However, bad vibes or not, surely it is better to have somewhere to play than nowhere at all?

"No, I think it's better to have nothing than have that," says Joe, acknowledging that his "selfish" attitude might have something to do with the fact that the Clash are temporarily out of action since drummer Terry Chimes decided to start his own band.

The social scene aside then, what does he think about the way the music has developed?

"All I care about is the groups. If there're good groups then it's got to be good. There's bound to be a lot of rubbish but I've changed my opinion of the Damned."

"I've seen them a lot and I think they're fun to watch. They play good. The only thing I have against them is that they can't play as well as us."

"Number One for me at the moment are the Subway Sect. They've got some good ideas. The Shits are good too. Palmolive on drums! She's the female Jerry Nolan. But like everyone, they need to do 33 gigs in 30 days and they would be a different group. Then they'd be great. The same with us."

How has Joe been affected by the ban on punk music, which has effectively kept the Clash off the road since Christmas?

"I feel really bitter. We've tried our hardest and we've worked and slogged at it. Then we've had drummers quitting, which was just what we didn't need. We wanted to get going and move forward."

"All that business on the Pistols tour I hated. I HATED it. It was the Pistols' fault. We were in the background. The first few nights were terrible. We were just locked up in the hotel room with the Pistols, doing nothing."

"And yet, for me, it was great too. We had the coach and we had hotels and we had something to do — even though they didn't let us do it that often. We did it about eight times. It was good fun."

"But when I got back to London on Christmas Eve I felt awful. I was really destroyed, because after a few days you get used to eating. We were eating Hooley in rubbish, but it was two meals a day and that. And when I got off the coach we had no money and it was just awful. I felt twice as hungry as I'd ever felt before."

"I had nowhere to live and I remember walking away from the coach, deliberately not putting on my woolly jumper. I walked all the way up Tottenham Court Road and it was really cold but I wanted to get as cold as miser-



JOE STRUMMER: 'There's no radio station for young people anymore. It's totally down to housewives and trends in Islington'

able as I could.

"Christmas was here, and me and Micky Forte, our sound man, had our little bags in our hands and I just felt like the worst thing in the world that the tour had ended. I wanted it to go on and on. The coach had been like home in a way and I didn't want to get off it."

On stage, Strummer wires himself up into an inhuman dynamo of sweaty, trembling flesh, fearful enough to have one wondering when the ambulance brigade will rush to his rescue with a straitjacket.

While he tilts his bullet head at acute angles, his agonising face screwed into an open wound, he wields his Telecaster like a chainsaw. His magnetism is totally original — more like an Olympic strong man forcing all his energy into a final record-breaking lift than anything seen on a rock 'n' roll stage before.

Offstage, he's the Clash member with the lowest profile. Guitarist Mick Jones (21) is the most verbal. Bassist Paul Simonon (20), who was educated at schools in Brixton and Notting Hill, where 90 per cent of the kids were black, communicates more easily with animal physicality than with words.

"Much has been made of punk music's tough roots in

modern urban dereliction. But, Joe is not working class, is he?

"No, I'm not working class at all. My father was born in India. His father died when he was eight and so he was an orphan and he went to an orphan school."

"Then, because he was so smart, they gave him a scholarship and he went to university, and he was really proud that he'd come from nothing, with so much chance, to having a degree — even though it was from the poxy University of Lucknow."

"He came to London and joined the Civil Service as a junior bum. Then he became a not-so-junior bum and then he reached his high point and became a diplomat, going overseas."

"That was my lucky break. He was dead proud of it and he really wanted me to be like him. But at the age of nine I had to say goodbye to them because they went overseas to Africa or something."

"I went to boarding school and only saw them once a year after that — the Government paid for me to see my parents once a year."

"I think I was dead lucky. I was left on my own and I went to this school where bullying was really in."

"It wasn't a public school. It was a school where thick rich people sent their thick rich kids — another perk of my father's job, it was a job with a lot of perks — all the fees were paid by the Government."

"When I was eight he made me sit all these exams for these flash public schools. But I failed the lot. Finally I got into this semi-crummy school where they have this thing going where, if your brother passed the entrance exam, see, his brother, was let in too."

So Joe has a brother? "No, I did have, but he's dead. He committed suicide in 1971. He was a year older than me. He was a Nazi. He was a member of the National Front. He was into the occult and he used to have these deaths heads and crossbones all over everything."

"He didn't like to talk to anybody and I think suicide was the only way out for him. What else could he have done?"

The Clash are being attacked for their "intellectual" approach to music. They certainly appear to be the most politically aware of the new-wave bands. But I'm suspicious. Until recently, Paul thought David Steele was Tommy Steele's brother. Does Joe read at all? Does he know who the Prime Minister is?

"Yeah, I do!" he replies patiently. "I'm up to page 984 of The Rise And Fall Of The Third Reich (the hardback edition has 1245 pages). And I've read everything that T. E. Lawrence wrote. He was my hero."

"And Jim Callaghan, right! You know, I got a TV recently and the other day I was punching between him on one channel and Jimmy Carter on the other. Well, it struck me that Jimmy Carter had more going for him than Jim Callaghan."

"I don't know whether this is true, but I heard that Fidel Castro, when the mood takes him, just goes to the market place and starts babbling. All the people gather around him and listen to him and he talks for five hours and walks off again. And that to me sounds as if he's got something to say."

"Whereas c— like Carter and Callaghan have probably got 50 people telling them what to say. They're just robots. They haven't got any personal zing. Like Hitler. He wasn't a robot, whatever you say about the c—. Although, look what he did."

Joe defends the band's "politically aware" stance then?

"Well, the trouble is the word political. I just leave it as awareness. You get all these smart-alec young groups coming out — and more power to their elbow — sneering 'The Clash, they're too political — who wants to care about that —'."

That's like the flash thing to say now. But I sit back and think about it and it strikes me as rubbish.

"I don't think about Jim Callaghan any more than the newspaper vendor does. Politics, as the word describes itself, means Grey Boredom Talk Long Words Impossible Sentences — rubbish."

I don't think about that stuff. I just think about who's doing what to me and what I'm going to do

continued on p44

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imagine what  
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# The Clash

from page 44

Birmingham on some of the 101er's re-training scheme. We couldn't think about the reasons behind anything.

"Now I feel free to think — and free to write down what I'm thinking about. I haven't changed my ways at all. And look — I've been in — about for so long I'm not going to suddenly turn into Rod Stewart just because I got £25 a week. I'm much too far gone for that I tell you."

Considering how blazingly aggressive the Clash's music is, it's interesting to note how little violence there has been at their gigs.

It may be lucky coincidence, it may be because the punk music keeps everyone glued to the action on the stage, but it must also be the consequence of Joe's attitude to his audience. He never insults or humiliates them in the punk manner. Once he announced from the stage, "Anyone who thinks violence is tough should go home and collect stamps."

"Yes, those were the exact words I said, but what I was really trying to say could have been said much better. Sometimes things you say on stage work, sometimes they don't."

"What I meant was — the toughest thing is facing yourself. Being honest with yourself. That's what I call being tough."

"On stage we're not inciting the crowd to violence — the music just sounds violent. If people want to go round punching themselves while it's going on — well let 'em. I don't care. I ain't telling them to go round punching each other up. That music is how I feel and people can do what they like to do."

"Obviously if everyone in the audience starts stabbing each other, I'd freak out a bit and tell everybody to simmer down a bit."

"Does he enjoy violence?"

"Well, there's nothing better, if you're having an argument which won't resolve itself any other way, than smashing someone's face in and enjoy violence with honour. If someone treats on me for no reason and I get back at him and knock him over — then I enjoy that."

"I don't think we're tough enough. We've got to get a lot tougher. I mean, no one's going to give us anything in this day and age. Nothing. So, if you want it, you've got to take it and be tough about it. But I don't enjoy punching people up for no reason."

How does he plan to proceed from here, what does he want to achieve?

"I can see all or nothing. I want to write some more gear and I want to work my ass off. I want to get out and do 50 gigs in a row. If they don't let us it will be too sickening. But if we don't get a drummer, we'll be worse off than the Rejects."

Ambition drew him back again to London. He formed the 101er's (101, incidentally, is the number of the dreaded room in Orwell's 1984 where Winston is tortured), slogged around the pub circuit, recorded "Key To Your Heart" and was on the verge of breaking the band when he saw the Pistols and quit.

One afternoon Mick and Paul, out for a stroll down Ludbrook Grove with Glen Matlock, spotted Joe across the road. They were sufficiently yobbish enough to yell a 101er's put-down at him. He stopped in his tracks. Then they asked him to be their lead singer.

"I joined the Clash as soon as I saw Mick and Paul, just because I wanted to look like they looked," says Joe candidly. "I didn't hear them play until days later. I remember thinking after I'd agreed to join the group 'Jesus, I've never heard these guys play'."

"Paul was just admitting that he had no idea what his instrument was — that Mick had just taught him the songs and, because he's got a good memory, he knew them parrot fashion. For a moment I thought, 'Oh God' and then I didn't give it another thought."

Joe willingly admits how much he has been influenced by Mick and Paul's style. Offstage what they wear today is tomorrow's acme of punk sartorial snazz. On stage, to compete with their spotlight-grabbing antics, Joe has to fight hard. Would he prefer it if the other two hung back more often?

"Oh no. One of the conditions I made when I joined the group was that everybody had to MOVE. I was the only person who moved in the 101er's — which is one of the things I hated about that band."

"It means you can't ease up. We're competing with each other. We've all got to outdoor each other. Otherwise, if Mick stopped, everyone would forget about him. He knows it and Paul knows it and so we've all got to keep going otherwise we'd fade away into the background."

Did Joe think it was going to be difficult to maintain his grass-roots credibility now the band was on the verge of becoming very wealthy?

"I've realised that all that signing boiled down to is perhaps two years' security. We might have an argument with CBS and get thrown off! For me, it has been a gift from heaven."

"Before, most of the time all I could think about was my stomach. A lot of the time me and Paul did nothing else but wonder where our next meal was coming from. We were hungry all the time."

"And the whole was threatening to send me to

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