

Harlesden's burning

Clash/Buzzcocks/
Subway Sect/Slits
Harlesden

IT WAS a BIG GIG.

Fans from hither and yon had been hot for the re-appearance of the Clash after two months of neo-Garbo seclusion.

I was hot to see the first appearance of the Slits, the band you read about first in the *SOUNDS* ROUND-UP OF WOMAN BANDS.

O.K. So here we all are at the Harlesden Colosseum, home of unexpurgated kung-fu movies (blood all over the floor, I meantasay) and I'm late for the Slits (a hard day at the office, darling) and even though I didn't catch most of it, they make my heart go brrr like a buzz-saw 'cos Arianna and Palmolive are so great.

Arianna sings lead in a black leather mini-skirt with de rigueur runs in her black fishnet tights. She's as winsome a brat onstage as she is offstage, stamping her foot and chiding us for bein' silly when we clap even though we don't understand the songs. She moves FREE in a way I haven't clocked since Patti Smith was in town, and it's exciting to watch. Palmolive drums fanatically (does that include like a fan?) For a first-ever gig, it was outstanding. See them AS SOON AS YOU CAN.

Then Subway Sect, co-managed by the Clash's Bernard, I'm informed, and they do their thang. Their thang is Can-type monotones — stylised anti-music, they're all dressed in stylised black and white and look effective, and though I can't say I enjoy 'em, I'm told it's music that grows on you (if it grew on me I'd cut it off...)

Now the Buzzcocks, I enjoy. Their lead person, Pete Shelley, has a memorable on-stage persona. The only camp punk-popster. They performed a fine Richman-esque 'Out Drivin', and other authentically MEMORABLE tunes like 'Orgasm Addict'. They have to go far (so stay near).

And it's entertaining music which makes you think and makes you sink and made me make notes (no mean feat, lthat) all at the same time. Then the fans mill around, while Rough Trade's Geoff Travis plays roots reggae music, tensely getting in gear for THE CLASH.

And then THE CLASH shoot on — the three-man front line like an artillery invasion, Giovanni reckons Joe Strummer was actually frothing at the mouth... The Clash's visuals (couture be-zipped ensembles) are so hot that I can't make out which is a bigger plus, the music, the words, or the image (dare I say).

The three front personalities are outstanding — Paul Simonon on bass, his hair golden like a Greek god, handsome face screwed up in a soulful scream, head yanked back so you can see the veins pulse in his neck, Joe Strummer rodent-mean, spits out the lyrics like poison darts, and Mick Jones plays fluid guitar lines that scream and scream like the birds in 'The Birds' (Hitchcock doin' it to ya in your earhole...) while his whole body writhes in rushes of raw nerve energy.

They play all their favourites, though the sound was so off-the-wall that you couldn't hear the words — a tragedy when their words are so penetrating — 'London's Burning', they started out with, then wham-bam into '1977' ("when the two sevens clash" like they sing in Joe Gibbs' studio, down Jamaica way,) 'Remote Control', 'Hate And War', 'I'm So Bored With The U.S.A.', 'Deny', '48 Hours',



THE CLASH: the energy roared like lions let loose at Christians.

'What's My Name', 'Protex Blues', (that's about prophylactics — look it up), 'White Riot', 'Janie Jones', 'Career Opportunities', 'Back In The Garage'. The titles tell the story.

Although Joe screamed when somebody pulled out the plugs (not a million miles away from the longhairs at the mixer who didn't seem to like shorthairs one little bit...) the energy roared like starved lions let loose at fat Christians — or like the Clash when they haven't played live since Jan 1 '77. And Terry Chimes on drums (rejoined for the gig) was brilliantly minimal.

The gig was full but not too full. Donovan Letts was there filming. Lots of people taped and took pictures. Everyone knew it was An Event. People didn't want to leave. It was thrilling. — VIVIEN GOLDMAN.

Akkerman/Lux Band Bristol

CANCEL ALL your engagements, liquidise all your assets, make reservations on all inter-city trains, and fill your diary only with the remaining dates of the Jan Akkerman/Kaz Lux Band. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, they're that good.

You know, like masterful, magnificent, majestic.

Some of the soaring, sweeping phrases of the music remain imprinted on the mind for days afterwards. But then it's not often that a new band of such significance sets its mighty feet on this earth, and the memories it leaves are precious.

Despite the double title the band has, it belongs to Akkerman onstage, and no mistake. He is at the focus of all the sound, and the rest of them look to his dominating presence for their leads and promptings. His playing mesmerises your brain with a

similarly hypnotic effect, making you wonder how he plays so slowly with such clarity, and so fast with such control. This man is one of the world's masters, and his playing now is at its peak.

The most enjoyable feature, perhaps, is to see how happy he and the band are at playing together. The cold, withdrawn figure who seemed to hate flicking out some of the commercial chords of Focus seems positively ecstatic now in comparison, though all you see are warm smiles and the odd boyish grin.

But it's clear that the pleasure they all share is from playing in a band where music and musicianship are sovereign. Kaz Lux, whose singing on the band's album seemed to dominate with its sharp, high-pitched tones, blends much more easily on stage, and he knows when to withdraw from the front and let the instruments take over. Not that he doesn't count as an instrument, for his style is to sing for the sound

produced, using the full range of pitch, texture and attack.

Completing the front line is Joachim Kuhn, on keyboards, another master musician in his own right. Often the sound and speed of his keyboards and Akkerman's guitar were so similar that it was hard to distinguish between them, and the swirling interplay of thier instruments, and the rapport between their personalities was riveting.

The rest of the band are Pierre van der Linden, pushing and prompting on drums, and Cees vander Laarse on bass, complementing and augmenting the sound.

Most of the material was extended, embellished versions of the 'Eli' album, although a listen to the record doesn't adequately prepare you for the embrace of the live sound. It's a preliminary statement, a skeleton, whereas the concert is full-bodied, flesh and blood, with a life of its own. — HOWARD FIELDING.

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