

IT'S A good job it's not going to be a long hot summer, that's all I can say. The cooler the weather starts, the cooler everyone's temper will be. And I won't be the only one to be relieved when this Jubilee year passes up. Why?

Because the combination of heat and fervent patriotism seems to be affecting the reason of a large slice of the public (and the Press) the resulting aggression is turning against punk rockers. As the bunch of people sticking their necks out and actually causing a reaction, the punks are also getting it for having the guts to stand and say what they mean.

I hope the attacks against Johnny Rotten and Paul Cook of the Pistols are isolated events; I hope it's not the start of a backlash against New Wave by people who're old enough to know better but too frightened to cope with what's happening. The bands have begun to notice it.

Nick Cash who's the singer with 999 says he's seen people begin to stare at him in the street. Older people who don't like having their complacency ruffled, people who believe everything they read in the National Press about alleged violence at punks gigs; people who'd really like to have an enemy to aim at. That's a dangerous situation.

"There's no way we want to cause trouble," said the quiet spoken Nick. "But we've had a lot of Teddy Boys around causing trouble. They've been standing outside our gigs, looking in. When we were in Canterbury recently we went down the street to get something to eat in a Wimpy bar and we were followed by the Hells Angels. They realised we were playing at the University and they turned up, pointing at us and swinging empty Newcastle Brown bottles. You get bottled with one of these and you die! We had to call the police before we could go on."

"Just the week before, the Strangers were there and they had trouble. You see, I think this is the first threat they've had. It's like a revival of the Mods AND Rockers. It was all right for them during flower power, cos they just took

Cock Sparrer
pronounced Cock Sparra Got it?

999: A POLICE CHAT



NICK CASH

control of the festivals and things and acted as security. But they can't do that now.

"Yes, there could be a backlash against New Wave. Some of the National press have put people into the position where they feel like that. It's not just affecting young people, it's people over 30 as well. I mean, did you see that thing in the Sunday People about punk - the woman who said it must be caused by the Russians?"

"That creased me up. A lot of things could happen, because people don't discriminate. They just assume we're violent."

999 have been together since the beginning of the year and have already built up a following around the south - and particularly in Southall, where their fans are prepared to travel to all of the gigs.

They start work on a single next month, to be titled "Quite Disappointing". It'll be brought out on their own label, to be called Labritain. And in August, when the band begin a nationwide tour, they'll all be giving up their day jobs.

Onstage they all move around so much, getting into their individual positions, there's no chance your attention will be rivetted to just one person. Jon Watson is a fascinating bass player - I mean, do you see that many bass players hiking around all over the place? Most of the ones I've seen do a passable impersonation of Bill Wyman with his feet nailed to the stage.

I pointed out to Guy Days that he knocks off a few Pete Townshend movements too.

"But he's never seen the Who!" laughed Nick. Which just goes to show their energy comes naturally. Which is great. As long as we don't have a long hot summer. ROSALIND RUSSELL.

SO WE'RE in this boozier off Oxford Street, Mark P and me.

The jewk's playing 'A Star Is Born'. It's 11.30am - definitely not the right time for Courtroom.

Mark's talking about his band Alternative TV and it's when he starts mentioning Frank Zappa and Can influences my mind begins to wander.

I get to thinking about blind alleys, dust covered proms, the blank fruition of desolation row, riot infested minds stunned into submission by mediocrity etc.

In other words, this guy is DEPRESSING me.

Now it ain't his fault. He seems sincere enough. It's just that he makes me realise time is running out for a number of things - ju-ju juvenescence, clarity, improvisation.

He obviously doesn't mean to. But when you start getting sentimental about events of only a few months back something's wrong somewhere.

I mean - get a load of this: "I used to really believe the kids would change something - but they never will. They're naive, they can't see the truth. Outside London especially they're mostly limited to reading the gutter press."

"And I don't think you can ever break that media system. International Times tried it - and failed. Time Out tried it - and now it's a conservative magazine. It's just no use having alternatives."

Unity

See what I mean? But wait, there's more.

"Sniffin' Glue will never take over anything. The Clash can't go on forever. I mean, what a contradiction CBS demanding the release of 'Remote Control' as a single when that record is all about such manipulation."

"There's just no unity anymore. How can I possibly relate to kids in Bradford who put safety pins through their ears? And how can they relate to me with the Zappa and Can influences?"

"And if that's the case there's just no scene left. And I'm happy with that. I've lost the high I used to get back in September and October. We meant something then, we knew who our audience was. People trusted us."

"But now I can't get enthusiastic about the scene. I like The Clash now in the same way as I've liked any band over the last 10 years. This is not the be all and end all. There will be other scenes. Like if my band don't relate to the punks I'm sorry, I apologise, but I'm never gonna change."

"If they're expecting Mark P to destroy, clamour for anarchy, trip up all the MP's then they're gonna be disappointed. I'm not into that at all."

Coming from a geezer who has made his name something of a legend in certain circles which, though perhaps not totally dedicated to that kind of positivism, certainly lent themselves to such sentiments is, well, incredulous.

But the last few months seem to have inculcated a less vibrant attitude in the 20 year-old's crotch head.

Maybe it's his newly formed association with Miles Copeland and Nick Jones, the demon duo of Oxford Street, in



MARK P

GOING FOR A P

... Mark 1 of course

their Step Forward record venture. "It was a natural progression to be involved with making records."

"It got to be so frustrating seeing bands I really liked and yet not being able to buy their records simply because they had no record contracts. Nick and I started talking about the possibilities of a label and it just happened."

Mark was directly responsible for signing the first, and as yet only, bands for Step Forward - Cortinas, Chelsea, Models.

"I simply wanted to put out records I liked. See, I didn't like writing about bands. That got to be a high horse level. I just didn't think I had the right

to say if a band was good or bad.

"In fact, I've just written my last piece for Sniffin' Glue."

The Sniffin' Glue office is next door to the Step Forward office. It has no electricity so a cable is fed out of the window along a ledge and into the SG office. Neat.

And now he's taken that 'natural progression' one more step forward - by forming a band. "I've had an idea for a band since last September. In fact I actually had one - The New Beatles - a kind of anti-legend, but that never got past the rehearsal stage."

"So now I'm in Alternative

TV. I can't play guitar, so I play by a series of dots. I don't particularly want to learn how to play either. The concentration it would take to learn would spoil on-stage thought. I like things to be hard.

"I'm into Zappa and Can and jazz. I don't want to write songs for the people. I ain't a writer for the kids. But that doesn't mean I don't want people to be interested in us. I just want to get on stage and say something."

"The only way I can do anything now is through music. If 10 kids say they really liked what the band played and it helped them change the whole aspect of their attitudes then I'll be happy."

The band is - Alex Fergusson lead guitar, Tyrone Thomas bass, John Towe drums (not a permanent member) and Mark guitar and vocals.

To date they've played four gigs - and they're already headlining. "We did this really long slow number down the Marquee last week - 'Alternatives To NATO' which has me reading a speech from an anarchist magazine."

"And it got a great reaction. I'm convinced if you wanna change anything you've got to do it through music and music alone. I ain't a good enough writer to do it through writing."

His ideas of getting to the people are to say the least ambitious. "I'm not interested in singles. I want to put out an album right away."

Anarchy

"It's no use coming out with all the anarchy bit and throwing it in their faces. They'll take no notice. Woo them with music. I want to go straight into the big venues and not piss around with the pub and small club circuit. That's a complete waste of time."

"I wanna play the Empire Pool."

"I've never cared about getting a tight band. Alternative TV ain't tight and that's why it works. If I want to do an instrumental break when I feel like it I will and it's up to the others to follow me."

Maybe a slight contradiction from the opening gambit but he knows what he wants. Can't make me mind up if he'll get it though.

Mark was a "how do you want it" merchant in a bank for two years before cutting out to start Sniffin' Glue. "In the summer when it was really hot you couldn't even loosen your tie."

"Problems with the job started mounting and I started hiding them. Two months after I left they found drawers full of problems that I had stashed away."

He lived in a Deptford council flat which though maybe not quite the pits ain't exactly above the ground either. "I never have old friends. I'm not one for the gathering of the clans. I was never involved in the gang thing."

"You play safe when you start relying on people around you. See, when most people leave school their brains ain't developed. They'll go and work in a factory and the most frightening thing is a geezer will go there because his mate did. He's basing his whole career on something just cos his mate did."

"So then you get to thinking that the audience you're reaching are kids satisfied with their lot. That's why you can't say anarchy to them. There's no way I'm gonna get kids to leave the bank, but I can give them music."

"We need a spokesman for the whole scene. Johnny Rotten was but he's slagged everyone off so much he ain't anymore. And there's no way I'm a spokesman. But we do need someone."

New wave/save/fave/rave? Delete where necessary.



THE CORTINAS



MODELS

BARRY CAIN