Pics: PENNIE SMITH



Chasses and Chasse



Lester Bangs falls in love (and sees the Promised Land)
Pages 31—34

HE EMPIRE may be terminally stagnant, but every time I come to England it feels like massive changes are underway.

First time was 1972 for Slade, who had the punters hooting, but your music scene in general was in such miserable shape that most of the hits on the radio were resurrected oldies. Second time was for David Essex (haw haw haw) and Mott (sigh) almost exactly two years ago: I didn't even bother listening to the radio, and though I had a good time the and though I had a good time the closest thing to a musical highlight of my trip was attending an Edgar Froese (entropy incarnate) press party. I never gave much of a damn about pub rock, which was about the only thing you guys had going at the time, and I had just about written you off for dead when punk rock

time, and I had just about written you off for dead when punk rock came along.

So here I am back again through the corporate graces of CBS International to see The Clash, to hear new wave bands on the radio (a treat for American ears) and find the empire jumping again at last.

About time, too. I don't know about you, but as far as I was concerned things started going downhill for rock around 1968; I'd date it from the ascendance of Cream, who were the first fake superstar band, the first sign of strain in what had crested in 1967. Ever since then things have just gotten worse, through Grand Funk and James Taylor and wonderful years like 1974, when the only thing interesting going on was Roxy Music, finally culminating last year in the ascendance of things like disco and jazz-rock, which are dead enough to suggest the rend of popular music as anything more than room spray.

I was thinking of giving up writing

enough to suggest the end of popular music as anything more than room spray.

I was thinking of giving up writing about music altogether last year when all of a sudden I started getting phone calls from all these slick magazine journalists who wanted to know about this new phenomenon called "punk rock." I was a little bit confused at first, because as far as I was concerned punk rock was something which had first raised its grimy snout around 1966 in groups like The Seeds and Count Five, and was dead and buried after The Stooges broke up and The Dictators' first LP bombed.

I mean, it's easy to forget that just a little over a year ago there was only one thing: the first Ramones album.

But who could have predicted that that record would have such an impact — all it took was that and the ferocious edge of The Sex Pistols'. "Anarchy In The UK," and suddenly it was as if someone had unleashed the floodgates as ten million little groups all over the world came storming in, mashing up the residents with their guitars and yammering discontented non sequiturs about how bored and fed up they were with everything.

discontented non sequiture about how bored and fed up they were with everything.

I was too, and so were you — that's why we went out and bought all those shitty singles last spring and summer by the likes of The Users and Cortinas and Slaughter and the Dogs, because better Slaughter and the Dogs at whatprice wretchedness than one more mewly-mouthed simperwhimper from Linda Ronstadt. Buying records became fun again, and one reason it did was that all these groups embodied the who-gives-a-damn-let's just-slam-it-al-'em spirit of great rock in roll. Unfortunately many of the ther components of same, with the result that (for me round about Live at the Roxy) many people simply got FED UP. Meaning that it's just too goddam easy to slap on a dog collar and black leather jacket and start puking all over the room about how you're gonna sniff some glue and stab some backs.

Punk had reaped the very attitudes it copped (BOREDOM and INDIFFERENCE), and we were all waiting for a group to come along who at least went through the motions of GIVING A DAMN about SOMETHING

Ergo, The Clash

OU SEE, dear reader, so much of what's (doled) out as punk

OU SEE, dear reader, so much of what's (doled) out as punk merely amounts to saying I suck, you suck, the world sucks, and

who gives a damn — which is, er, ah, somehow insufficient.

Don't ask me why, I'm just an observer, really, But any observer could tell that, to put it in terms of Us vs. Them, saying the above is exactly what They want you to do, because it amounts to capitulation. It is unutterably boring and disheartening to try to find some fun or meaning while shoveling through all the shit we've been handed the last few years, but merely puking on yourself is not gonna change anything. (I know, cause I tried it.) I guess what it all boils down to is:

gonna change anything. (I know, cause I tried it.) I guess what it all boils down to is:

(a) You can't like people who don't like themselves; and
(b) You gotta like somebody who stands up for what they believe in, as long as what they believe in is;
(c) Righteous.

A precious and elusive quantity, this righteousness. Needless to say, most punk rock is not exactly OD-ing on it. In fact, most punk rockers probably think it's the purview of hippies, unless you happen to be black and Rastafarian, in which case righteousness shall cover the land, presumably when punks have attained No Future.

presumably when punks have attained No Future.

It's kinda hard to put into mere mortal words, but I guess I should say that being righteous means you're more or less on the side of the angels, waging Armageddon for the ultimate victory of the forces of Good over the Kingdoms of Death (see how perilously we skirt hippiedom here?), working to enlighten others as to their own possibilities rather than merely sprawling in the muck yodelling about what a drag everything is.

The righteous minstrel may be rife with lamentations and criticisms of the existing order, but even if he doesn't have a coherent program for social change he is informed of hope. The MCS were righteous where The Stooges were not. The third and fourth Velvet Underground albums were righteous, the first and second weren't. (Needless to say, Lou Reed is not righteous.) Patti Smith has been righteous. The Stones have littled with righteousness (e.g., "Salt Of The Earth"), but when they were good The Beatles were all-righteous. The Sex Pistols are not righteous, but, perhaps more than any other new wave band. The Clash are.

The reason they are is that beneath their wired harsh soundscape lurks a persistent humanism. It's hard to put your finger on in the actual lyrics, which are mostly pretty despairing, but it's in the kind of thing that could make somebody like Mark P. write that their debut album was his life. To appreciate it in The Clash's music you might have to be the sort of person who could see Joe Strummer crying out for a riot of his own as someone making a positive statement. You percieve that as much as this music you might have to be the sort of person who could see Joe Strummer crying out for a riot of his own as someone making a positive statement. You percieve that as much as this music you might have to be the sort of person who could see Joe Strummer crying out for a riot of his own as someone making a positive statement. You percieve that as much as this music you might have to be the sort of person who could see Joe Strummer c career; the only difference was that he

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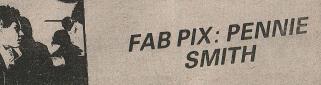


'IT'S GREAT TO BE BACK IN YOUR LI'L OL' COUNTRY AND I THINK YOUR PUNKS ARE WONDERFUL' SAYS LESTER BANGS (AMONG OTHER THINGS).



SIX DAYS ON THE ROAD WITH THE **FOREMOST** GARAGE BAND IN THE LAND

N U S 0



Manager Contraction of the Contr

An' on

used to be good at it and now he sucks.

The point is that, like Richard Hell says, rock 'n' roll is an arena in which you recreate yourself, and all this blathering about authenticity is just a bunch of crap. The Clash are authentic because their music earties such brutal conviction, not because they're Noble Savages.

■ ■ FRE'S a note to CBS letters a note to CBS
International, you can relax
because I liked The Clash as
people better than any other band I
have ever met with the possible
exception of Talking Heads, and the
music it goes without saying is great
mean you think so, don't you? Good
then release their album in the U.S. So what if it gets zero radio play; Clive knew how to subsidize the arts.

Here's a superlative for ads: "Best band in the UK!" — Lester Bangs. Here's another one: "Thanks for the wonderful vacation!" — Lester Bangs. (You know I love you, Ellie.) Okay, now that all that's out of the way, here we go

WAS sitting in the British Airwa terminal in New York City on the eve of my departure, reading *The War Against The Jews 1933-1945* when I looked up just in time to see when Hooked up just in time to see a crippled woman in a wheelchair a few feet away from me. My eyes snapped back down to my book in that shameful nervous reflex we know so well, but a momen later she had wheeled over to a couple of feet from where I was stiting, and when I could fight off the awateness of my cembarassement at the presence re-embarassement at the presence re-cembarassement at the presence re-cembarassement at the presence of the combarassement at the presence. The shame and the presence of the could have been a support of the country of the Shame as well as the country of the country of the Shame as well as the country of the country of the Shame as well as the country of the country of the Shame as well as the country of the country of the country of the Shame as well as the country of the country of the country of the Shame as well as the country of the country of the country of the Shame as the country of the country of the country of the shame of the country of the country of the country of the country of the shame of the country of the country of the country of the country of the shame of the country of

hello to each other.

She was a very small person about 30 years old with a pretty face, blonde hair and blazing blue eyes. She said that she had been on vacation in the States for three months and was now, ever so refuctantly, returning to.

England. "I like the people in America so much better," she said. "Christ, it's so nice to be someplace where people recognize that you exist. In England, if you're handicapped no one will look at or speak to you except old people. And they just pat you on the head."

T IS four days later, and I've drive from London to Derby with Ellie Smith from CBS and Clash Smith from Ciss and Class
depth of the Ciss and Class
days with the band. I am not in the
best of shape since I've still got
jet-leg, have been averaging two to
three hours sleep a night since I got
three hours sleep a night since I got
three hours sleep a night since I got
three, and the previous night was
considered to the control of the control
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cont

Nevertheless, I make sure after checking into the Derby Post House to hit the first night's gig, whatever my condition, in my most thoughtful camouflage. You see, the kind of

way down through the pogoing masses, right into the belly of the opportunities of the policy of the common through the policy of the policy of

included and trash them beyond included, and trash them beyond recognition. Because what I experienced, this first night and all subsequent on this tour, was so far from what we Americans've read in the papers and seen on TV that it YOU FIGURED OUT SOME MORE ORIGINAL WAY OF SHOWING YOUR APPRECIATION.

(After the second night I asked Mick Jones about it and he looked Mick Jones about It and he looked like he was going to puke. "But doesn't it add to the general atmosphere of chaos and anarchy?" wondered "No," he said. "It's fucking

disgusting.")

ND OF moral lecture. The Clash were a bit of a disappointment the first night. They played well, everything was in the right place, but the show seemed to lack energy somehow. A colleague

I have been at outdoor rock festivals in the hippie era in America where the vibes and violence were ten times worse than at any of the gigs I saw on this Clash Tour . . . I found English punk everywhere to be manifestly gentle people . .

amounts to a mass defamation of character, if not cultural genocide. Nobody gave a damn about my long hair, or could have cared less about some stupid weater. Sure there was goth and beercups fluing at the bands, first right and the left, but I hate to disappoint anybody who hasn't been here but this scene is neither. Clackwork Orange nor Lond Of The Phies. When I got triend of the Stephen with the left, but I had to disappoint anybody who hasn't been been been been in the left, but I had to disappoint anybody with a sure of the left of the ormed around me

stuck my ehows out and a space formed around my is that I have been at outdoor rock carbon been at my compared to the my compar

Inferent Yeah, they like to page On the labject of this odd tribal rugecut of sures the first thing I saw when I nored the hall was a couple of undered little heads need to little heads not be lips of the gard habiting up and down like althopomorphized pixtors in synchronic particles.

Inducental Resolution.
When I different about proping
before I though it issues the stupitest
thing anybody of ever told me about,
but as soon as I saw it in living spronig
it made perfect seve. I mean, it's
obsouped in more support than the
vears ago by Grant Funk audiences.
In fact, it's sheer logic (if not poetry)
in motion, when you're packed mot
a standing swearshop with ten thousand
other little bodies all mashed
or in the traditional manner (ie'
sideways ways).

dance in the traditional manner (te sideways sway). No, obviously if you wanna do the boogaloo to what the new breed say you gotta by dint of sheer population explosion shake your booty and your

In a flash I knew Jones was right. Here was I, a grown man, travelling across the Atlantic ocean and motoring up to the provinces of England to ask a goddam rock'n'roll band for the meaning of life.

reports we get over in the States abo your punk rock seene had led me to expect seething audiences of rabid little miscreants out for blood at all little miscreants out for blood at all costs, and naturally I figured the chances of getting a great story were better if I happened to get cannibalized. So I took off my black leather jacket and dressed as straight as I possibly could, the coup de grace (I thought) being a blue promotional sweater that said "Capitol Records" on the chest, by which I faniszed on the chest, by which I fantasized picking up some residual EMI-hostility from battle feral Pistols Fans. I should mention that I also decided not to get a harrout which I desparately needed before leaving the States, on the not-so-off chance of being mistakent for a hipping. When I came out of my room and Ellie and obstoorcarbor Pomis Fanish so we.

photographer Permie Smith saw me. they laughed When I got to the gig I pushed my

hody, in a sertical trajectory. Which won't be stretly rigid anyway since because this necessarily involves. It is a surface to the surface trajectory two seconds the next stay is falling carthward entrangled with your neighbours, which ris as good away as any of making new friends if not copping agree of it.

The surface and the surface trajectory of the surface appreciation which aim early so cute gobbing. For some reason this qualifies as news to everybody, so I'm goins serves notice right here and now. LNTS AND SEATING AND MORONIC, AND ID DON'T MEAN GOOD MORONIC, THE AND SEAL HATTER AND BE MUCH HAPPIER IF

who saw them a year ago had come back to the States telling me that they were the only group he'd ever seen or stage who were truly wired. It was thi I was looking for and what I got in its place was mere professionalism, and hell, I could go let The Rolling Stones put me to sleep again if that was all I

put me to sleep again if that was all I cared about.

Back up in the dressing room I cracked "Duff gig, ch fellas?" and they laughed, but you could tell they didn't think it was funny. Later I found out that Joe Strummer had an abcessed tooth which had turned into abcessed tooth which had turned into landular fever, and since the rest of the band draw their energy off him they were all suffering. By rights he should have taken a week off and headed straight for the nearest losspital, but he refused to cancel any sigs. no mere gesture of integrity A process of escalationg admiration for this band had begun for me which for this band had begun for me which ontinue until it broached ing like awe. See, because it's sing about your righteous, but as we all know actions youder than words, and The re one of the very few est I we seen where they would et an example by their il conduct than talk about it all

one limig! have learned to detest over the years it's stirting around some goddam hotel lobby like a soggy douchebap parasite waiting for some toney high and mighty rock froil imperial appearance.

But then a few minutes later. The Clash came down and joined as and realized that unlike most of the bands. The control of the control of

asked Mick-Farren what sort of questions he thought might be appropriate for The Clash, and he'd said, "Oh, you might do what you did with Richard Hell and ask 'em just exactly what their political program is, what they intend to do once they get past all the bullshir theoric. Mind you, it's liable to get you thrown off the tour."

the tour."

So, vainglorious as ever, I zeroed in on Mick and started drunkenly meedling him with what I thought were devastating barbs. He just laughed at me and parried every one with a joke, while the fans chortled at the spectacle of this oafish American with all his dumbass sallies. Finally he with all his dumbass sallers. Finally he looked me right in the eye and said, "Hey Lester: why are our asking me dithese facking questions" and these facking questions of the control of





But the show must go on











What in the fuck are you talking to practice in their own conduct. "Blah blab no one wants to have The fact that Mick would make; joke out of it only shows how far they're going towards the realizatio of all the hopes we ever had about rock 'n' roll as utopian dream — because if rock 'n' roll is truly the

me. If it bothers you so much why democratic artform, then the

"Forget it," said Strummer, "If they haven't got the courage to do it on their own, I'm bloody well not gonna lead 'em by the hand.

don't you do something about it?"
"Yeah," says one of the fans, a young black punk girl sweet as could be, "you're depressing us all."
Seventeen punk fan spike heads nod in agreement. Mick just keeps laughing at me.

Baughing at me.

O, HAVING bummed out
almost the entire population of
one room, Itook my show into
another the bar, where I sat down at
a table with Ellie and Paul Simonon
and started in on them. Paul gets up
and walks out. Ellie says, "Lester,
you look a little tired. Are you sure

you want another lager . . .?" Later I am out in the lobby with the

Later lam out in the lobby with the rest of them again, in a state not far from walking coma, when Mick { gestured at a leenage fan sitting there and said "Lester, my room is full tonight; can Adrian stay with you?"

I finally freaked. Here I was, stuck in the middle of a dying nation with all these funny looking children who didn't seem realismith world was these funny looking children who didn't even realize the world was coming to an end, and now on top of everything else they expected me to turn my room into a hippie crash pad I surmised through all my confusion Adrian came back saving

Box Adrian came back saying three was indeed room, so I grudgingly assented, and back to the fined see went. The next morning, sheet less than a south of State (State In a see that the state I state me a copy of his Clashi fanzine 48. Thrills which I bought for 20p, and in the course of breafasts conversation I learned that The Clash make a regular practice of inviting their fans back or so that the state of the state of the south of the state of the state of the south of the state of the state

of are a got the mean, and then go of their room.

The proper the mean deep min the flows of their room.

Now, dear reader, I don't know how their around bigtime rock in roll when the set the ledge of their room fans away from them at all costs, excepting the usual select contingent of fucky (?) mubiles who they'll maybe degin to allow up to their rooms for the priviledge of sucking on their covered wangers, after which they are covered wangers, after which they are covered wangers, after which they covered the

norm.

I mentioned it to Mick in the van that day en route to Cardiff, also by way of making some kind of amends for my own behaviour: "Listen, man. I've just got to say that I really respect you. I mean, I had no idea that wild have according to the fast." any group could be as good to its fans

He just laughed. "Oh, so is that gonna be the hook for your story, then?"

A ND THAT for me is the casence of The Clash's greatness, over and beyond their music, why I fell in love with them, why it wasn't necessary to do any boring interviews with them about politics or the class system or any of that. because here at last is a band which not only preaches omething good but practices it as yell, that instead of talking about hanges in social behaviour puts the

democracy has got to begin at home, that is the everlasting and totally disgusting walls between artists and audience must come down, elitism must perish. The "stars" have got to be humanized, demythologized, and the audience has got to be treated with more respect. Otherwise it's all a shuck, a rigoff, and the music is as dead as the Stones" and Led Zep's has become.

necome.

It's no news by now that the reason most of rock's establishment have dired up creatively is that they've cut themselves off from the real world of everyday experience as exemplified by their Jans. The ultimate queetion is low long a group the The Clash can egalitarians min the face of mushrooming propularity. Must the walls go up mevitably, eventually, and is owhern (Youngs like The Grateful Dead have practiced this free access and the control of the propularity most of rock's establishment have

money they do) The Clash are saddled with — I mean, not for nothing does Mick Jones resemble a young and already slightly dissipated Keith Richard — besides which the look to rock 'n' roll bands for some kind of model for a better society I guess it's just that I glimpsed something beautiful in a flashbulb moment once, and perhaps mistaking it for a prophecy have been soeking it fulfillment ever since. And perhaps

rromica It may look like I make too much of all this. We could leave all significance at the picture of Mick Jones just a hot guitared in a white jumposit and a rock in roll like door like life and all political pretensions be damned, but still there is a mood around The Clash, call it "obes" or whatever you want, that is possitive in a way I've never sensed around almost any other band, and I've been

fellow. Namely that HE LOOKS LIKE A MIJPPET. I'm not sure LIKE A MUPPET. I'm not sure which one, some kinda composite, but don't let that brooding visage in the photos fool you — this guy is a real clown. (Takes one to know one, after all.) He smokes a lot right, and when he gets really out there on it makes with cartoon non sequiturs that makes with cartoom non sequiture shat nobody else can fathom (often having to do with manager Bernic), but and with manager Bernic), but and you're looking in that face you're staring right into a red-spiked bigeyed beaming cartoon, of whom it would probably not be amiss to say he leve bouncing in and out of crute, have bouncing in and out of crute, trarely smilling but in fact brooding over his freeboard ever in ominous motion, he takes on a distintify similar aspect; the meaning in the companion of mischewous beychild and paleolithic primate which has sent swoon bigs quavering through of mischewous beychild and paleolithic primate which has sent swoon bigs quavering through and paleolith primate which has sent swoon bigs quavering through and paleolith primate which has sent swoon bigs quavering through the primate which has sent swoon bigs quavering through the base of the primate which has sent swoon bigs quavering through the base of the primate which has sent swoon being quavering through the base of the primate which has sent swoon being quavering through the base of the primate which has sent swoon being quavering through the base of the primate which has sent swoon being quavering through the base of the primate which has sent swoon being quarter than the primate which has sent swoon being quarter than the primate which has sent swoon being quarter than the primate which has sent swoon being quarter to primate which nobody else can fathom (often havir

get a chair on the other side of the table where my back's to no one and I can keep an eye on the red-domed Muppet. Only trouble is that I'll find out a day or so thence that it wasn't him set the fires at all: it was Bernie, him set the fires at all: it was Bernie, the group's manager. Eventually the beer runs out, and Mick says he's hungry. Bernie refuses to let him take the van out hunting for open eateries, which we probably wouldn't be able to find at 4 a.m. in Cardiff anyway, and we all go to bed wearing egg.

EXT MORNING sees us driving to Bristol, a large industrial city where we put up in a Holiday Inn, much to everyone's delight. By this time the mood around this band has combined with my

this band has combined with my tenacious jet-ag and liberal amounts of alcohol to put me into a kind of ecstacy state the like of which I have never known on the road before. The control has been supported by the properties of the ground the top with the properties of the propertie usual nap between vantrip and showtime by which I'd hoped to eventually whip the jet-lag, spendin

ernoon drinking cognac and By now I'm ready to go with the ow, with anything, as it has begun to the me delusory or not that there some state of grace overlaying this

is some state of grace overlaying this whole project, something right in the sout that makes all the headache simulating day to day pain in the ass practical logistics run as smoothly as the tempers of the people incolved, the whole enterprise saling along in perfect harmony and such daz zing contrast to the brutal logistics runds smaller level. I would be a supported to the proposition of the people incolved, the whole enterprise saling along in perfect harmony and such daz zing contrast to the brutal logistics runds smaller level. I womenow, whether it really is so or a simple basic healthings on the part of all involved

nealthiness on the part of all involved

begin to see this trip as somehow symbolic pilgrimage to that Promised Land that rock 'n' roll has cynically sneered at since the collapse of the

I have begun to see this trip as a somehow a symbolic pilgrimage to that Promised Land that rock'n'roll has cynically sneered at since the collapse of the sixties.

portends. Once again the band-delivers maybe (10% of what I know, they're capable of, but with an audience like this there's no blaming them. I'm not saying that all college stidents are subhuman — I'm just saying that if you aim to spend a few years mastering he art of pomposit, there are paces where you can be taught by unifigured experts. Take here at Cardiff about five corolle are beginned with

Like here at Cardiff about five people are pogging, all male, while the rest of the student bodies stand around booking at them with practice expressions of aloof amusement plastered on their mugs. After it's all over some cat goes back to interview Mick, and the most intelligent question he can think of is "What do you think of David Bowie?"

you think of David Bowie?"
Meanwhile I got acquainted with
the lead singer of The Lous, a good
all-woman band from Paris. She say
that she resents being thought of as
"woman musician," instead of a

The politics of rock'n'roll, in England or America or anywhere else, is that a whole lot of kids want to be fried out their skins by the most scalding propulsion they can find, for a night they can pretend is for the rest of their lives.

around most of them. Something unpretentiously moral, and something unpretentiously moral, and something both self-affirming and life-affirming—as opposed, say, to the simple ruthless hedonism and avariect of so many superstars, or the grim tauthipped monomaniacal ambition of most of the pretenders to their

DITENOUGH of all that The injulight of the first day's bus ride occurred when I casually mentioned that I had a lape of the band practically leaped at my throat: "Why ddn't you say so before? Shit, but it on right more." So I did and in a moment they were bouncing all over the want to the startin of "Cretin" they are the startin of "Cretin" the want to the startin of "Cretin" (Egnt : Jood) thereafter became the soundtrack to the reat of my leg of the soundtrack to the rest of my leg of the

I am also glad to be able to tell everybody that The Clash are solid Mappets Ian. Chee even sked mei ff. I had connections to get them on the pretty conventional choice if? Jask me — I'm a Fozzie Bear man myself. That night as we were walking into the balls of the glad of the stage of the clash and the stage in Cardiff. Paul why you like Fozzie Bear — he two of you do look a lot alike." And then talps me the stage me on the balls who was the stage when the stage we not he back — would like. All right, at this point You'd like. All right, at this point You'd like.

musician pure and simple, echoing a sentiment previously voiced to me by Talking Heads Tima Wymouth. "If No Wymouth I don't say is that I am developing a definite carnal interest which I will be too sky to broach. I invite her back to our hote; she says, when disappears "the mount seen in the lobby, except that this time the management has thoughtfully set out sandwiches and beer. The beer goes down our gullets and I me has thoughtfully set out sandwiches and beer. The beer goes down our gullets and I me has thoughtfully set out sandwiches and beer. The beer goes down our gullets and I has tabout to start patting the white time to the sandwich when the sa

sneered at since the collapse of the Strites.

At this point, in my hotel room in Birstol, if we white houses and a Birstol, if we white houses and a string of the string weekend approximation of spikes. "Hey," I said, "You guys Clash "Well," they mumbled, orta "Well, whattaya mean? You're

punks, aren't ya?"
"Well, we'd like to be but

punks, aren't ya?"
"Well, we dike to be — but
we're sand
"Well, we dike to be — but
we're sand
"An electric sand eleval flook him
side and, indicating the poor little
things, told him what they'd said, also
side and, indicating the poor little
things, told him what they'd said, also
sking if he wanted to get them into
the gig with us and thus offer a little
encouragement for them to take that,
next, lish, crucial step out into
the control of the said step out into
the said step out into
the said step out into
their own. I'm bloody well not gonnel
the said into the said step out
and the the said step out of the
land to been as good as I knew they
could be the previous two nights,
adding that I hadn't wanted to say
anything about it.
"Why nat" he said
I realised that I didn't have an

Actions speak louder than words, and the Clash are one of the very few examples I've seen where they would rather set an example by their personal conduct than

• From previous page
hypocritical "diplomat" I can
be. I mean their simple,
straightforward honesty, their
undogmatic insistence on the
truth and why worry about
stepping on people's toes
because if we're not straight with
each other we're never going to
get anything accomplished
anyway.

It seems like such a simple thing, and I suppose it is, but it runs contrary to almost everything the music business runs on: the hype, the grease, the glad-handing. And it goes a long way towards creating that aforementioned mood of positive clarity and unpeachy morality. Strummer himself, at once the "leader" of the group

(though he'd deny it) and the least voluble (though his sickness might have had a lot to do with it), conveys an immediate physical and personal impact of ground-level directness and honesty, a no-bullshit concern with cutting straight to the heart of the matter in a way that is not brusque or impatient but concise

If rock'n'roll is truly the democratic art form . . the walls between artists and audience have got to come down. The stars have got to be humanized.



Nicky Headon finally gets his pic taker

and distinctly nonfrivolous.

Serious without being solemn, quiet without being remote or haughty, Strummer offers a distinct contrast to Mick's

voluble wit and twinkle of eye, and Paul's looney toon playfulness. He is almost certainly the group's soul, and I wish I could say I had gotten to know him better.

From the instant we hit the hall for the sound-check we all sense that tonight's gig is going to be a hot one. The place itself looks like an abandoned meatpacking room—large and empty with cold stone floors and stark white walls, It's plain dire, and in one of the most common of rock 'n' roll ironies the atmosphere is perfect and the acoustics great.

the slaughterhouse, another thing occurs to me while The Clash are warming up at their soundcheck. They play something very funky which I later discover is a Booker T number, thus implanting an idea in my mind which later grows into a conviction: that in spite of the brilliance manifested in things like "White Riot", they actually play better and certainly more interestingly when they slow down and get, well, funky. You can hear it in the live if not studio version of "Police and Thieves", as well as "White Boy In Hammersmith Palais," probably the best thing they've written yet.

Somewhere in their assimilation of reggae is the closest thing yet to the lost chord, the missing link between black music and white noise rock capable of making a bow to black forms without smearing on the blackface, get mel It's there in Mick's intro to "Police And Thieves" and unstatedly in the band's whole onstage attitude. I understand why all these groups thought they had to play 120 miles per hour three last couple of years — to get us out of the bog created by everything that preceded them this decade — but the point has been made, and I for one could use a little funk, especially from somebody as good at it as The Clash why should any great rock in 'roll band do what's expected of 'em anyhow? The Clash are a certain idea in many peope's smids, which is only all the more reason why they should herak that idea and broade something else. Just one critic's opinion y understand one critic's opinion y'understar but that's what god put us here

but that swing group received for.

In any case, tonight is the payload. The band is taut terror from the instant they hit the stage, pure energy, everything they're supposed to be and more. I reflect for the first time

that I have never seen a band that moved like this: most of 'em you can see the rockinroll steps choreographed five minutes in advance, but The Clash hop around each other in all configurations totally non-selfconsciously, galvanised by their music alone. Jones and Simonn changing places at the whims of the whams coming out of their guitars, springs in the soles of their tennies.

Strummer, obviously driven to make up to this audience the loss of energy suffered by the last two nights' crowds, is an angry live wire whipping around the middle of the front stage, divesting himself of guitar to fall on one knee in no Elvis parody but pure outside-of-self frenzy, snarling through his shattered dental bombsite with face screwed up in all the rage you'd ever need to convince you of The Clash's authenticity, a desperation uncontrived, unstaged, a fury unleashed on the stage and writhing in upon itself in real pain that connects with the nerves of the audience like summer lightning, and at this time pogoing reveals itself as such a pitifully insufficient response to a man by all appearances trapped and screaming, and it's not your class system, it's not Britain-on-the-wane, it's not even glandular fever, it's the cage of life itself and all the anguish to break through which sometimes translates as flash or sometimes translates as flash or

The state of the s

Ever been in a situation where you remember a tune, but not the title or the group? It happens a lot with P**K and New Wave, because every week there is so much good stuff developing and being thrown out that it takes a lot of keeping up with. HMV can help. They really know their stuff.



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NEXT WEEK

Bangs finally gets to the point in another epic instalment (yawn) on Punko Mondo Anglo-Americana.

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