



Twist and Shout becomes Spit and Shout for Strummer Joe

Six thirty, Thursday in the Trinity Student Union office and Paul Tipping, the college's entertainments officer, is shouting and pleading into the phone. Bernard Rhodes, manager of the Clash is at the other end of the line — and he would appear to be in a rightfully foul and suspicious humour.

Rightfully foul and suspicious because the Clash's gig at the Ulster Hall in Belfast has been cancelled right under noses. At impossibly short notice, the company insuring the gig got punk-paranoia and pulled the plug on it.

Why, the Clash road crew had even arrived at the Ulster Hall to set up only to immediately be told to repack their gear and move on!

The band have got attuned to cancellations now but normally they've had some due notice. But travelling the breadth of the Irish Sea to

hardly congenial to the dole-queue dramatics of the Clash.

Trinity may no longer be the Ascendancy preserve it once was but its traditions of slightly superior detachment linger on. The grand Georgian design of its front square, the uniformed porters, the gowned professors gliding to Commons are all part of an affluent order that has endured since 1591. It may grant a certain assurance but would that suffice to meet the challenge of a horde of potentially rabid punks?

And while Trinity may pride itself on a tradition of liberal free speech, its ability to deal with the occasion would be further tested by another event, occurring the same night.

Across the square in the Dining Hall, the Historical Society would be holding its opening meeting of the year. Slated for bill were such personages as Conor Cruise O'Brien, Viscount Brookeborough, Mairead Corrigan, Noel Browne, Prof. John A. Murphy and Bernadette McAliskey. If ever there was a sitting target for punk guerillas bent on mayhem and irreverence, that meeting was it.

Connoisseurs of chaos sat back to await a

No sweat. Their Chiswick connection gives them the little credibility they need and their good-time R 'n' B is a perfect warm-up.

No seats in the hall. The crowd is packed up to the low stage. Eyeball to eyeball, The Bishops launch into "We Need You".

The first bars hardly playing and the gobbing begins.

Dave Tice, the Bishops singer, grins and bears it. He's the main target for the saliva that rains on the stage. The Bishops know they don't have the status to protest. They keep playing and smiling and by the time they finish the band have done themselves some favours.

The sound can't be called anything more than rudimentary, losing itself in the high ceiling of the exam hall. The Bishops boast a clinical rhythm section that takes care of the basics and the old-fashioned R 'n' B pulse is enough to move the punter.

Dave Tice is a matey cheerleader who doesn't lose control with smooth 'n' sandpaper vocals. The more I hear them, the more I like them. And the Bishops good-time music brings out all the right positive responses in a situation that might just have turned nasty.

Why, they even break all the rules as the front rows sway back and forth to a twelve-bars blues and then they finish with "Bo Diddley", which includes of all things, a drum solo.

It doesn't faze the audience. A few hardy souls even call out for an encore as the Bishops leave the stage. It isn't going to happen as the audience aren't going to be diverted from their main desire to see the Clash but it's a tribute to the Bishops that some at least want to hear more.

Up in the balcony, I meet an unexpected guest. Lt. Col. John Mainwaring Walsh, the college's agent, decked out in full dinner-jacketed attire. I explain to him that the Bishops aren't punks, he'll have to come back later to see the Clash. All bonhomie, but Walsh is here to see the hall isn't destroyed. College buildings are his responsibility.

Downstairs in the dressing-room, the Clash have arrived just as the Bishops took the stage. But they take their time about playing and as the minutes between the sets tick on, the audience begins to get restive.

They're an amalgam of many different types. Besides the curious non-punks, they break down between the plastics and the genuine article.

A few students have obviously come dressed for a fancy-dress ball and it's easy to see that the women are less secure in their fashions. They dress as they think they should but the clothes are very much a mix and match of Ivy Market cast-offs and the remains from grandmother's trunk in the attic, topped off by liberal applications of eye-shadow.

The real fans are the guys at the front of the stage. Not that they necessarily have all the right and proper threads. Many are bedemimed and likely to be seen at the Status Quo concerts. But once the Clash hit the stage, clothes-sense doesn't matter. From then on, it's all a blur in my memory.

All the old saws about the primitiveness of the music can be repeated but tonight they're irrelevant. If one is standing at the back of the hall, detached from the maelstrom at the front, the whole event must seem madness. But tonight, that's the wrong approach. Detachment, analysis, all the non-participating attitudes are out of order.

Tonight, rock 'n' roll re-emerges in its most primal form. The most potent and inexplicable base of rock is when it's a rite of teen initiation. And the most fundamental purpose of rock is that ritual. Back down the hall, the sound is doubly distorted both by the cavernous echo of the hall and the massed bodies suffocating it at the front. And standing there, one can hardly see the band. It's another emotional world away from the voodoo spells being cast at the

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"We don't know what it is either Paul. Answers on an S.A.E. please."

THE CLASH CAME AND CONQUERED

No irony intended by Bill Graham either. Read on.

Mick Jones, well he's been compared to Keith Richards — but if so, he's a delicate porcelain china-doll version. So small and thin, it's a complete contrast from the hulk-like guitar heroes of the old wave. Bassist Paul Simonon just touches six foot, but alongside both Strummer and Jones, he's a giant.

The band career on. A few punks jump on stage but the road-crew smartly throw them off. Strummer breaks the string of his guitar but it doesn't lessen the power as Jones takes to both rhythm and lead.

No, the main complaint is the gobbling. The Clash hate it. Strummer furiously harangues the guilty to fuck off and stop it. The gobbers don't know any better, don't understand why their heroes are so angry and spit on regardless. Wave after wave falls on their faces and the

clothes.

Hardly have they seemed to have begun the Clash power into the closing "Garageband" sprint back for a two-number encore and it's over.

They're exhausted, the audience is exhausted, I'm exhausted. What hit me, what happened, I still can hardly begin to calculate it. In the middle of that storm, you don't think — just respond with raw nerves and emotions. Mick can detach myself for the second set.

In the intermission, a set of railings brought up to protect the stage as the Bishops wheel out to play. The first impressions are of a tamer audience.