

ZIGZAG

**BUMPER
FUN
CHRISTMAS
ISSUE!!**

**CLASH TOUR
SPECIAL**

**BLONDIE/TUBES
PHOTO SPECIAL**

The DICTATORS

**THE RUNAWAYS
STRIP**

**ALTERNATIVE
TV**

The DARTS

The JAM



ZIGZAG 79

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THERE'S NO STOPPIN' THE CRETINS FROM HOPPIN'!

... Sure isn't, and here we are again all getting geared up for the Christmas piss-up. What a year it's been, the most action-packed I can recall. Basically great fun but with a few bad side-effects (bandwagons, loss of direction, posers, BOUNCERS) Still, '78 should be a laugh. We're gonna do what we want and have more fun... and that includes Zigzag.

I know last issue was a bit low-key/wordy. This Bumper Christmas Fun Issue! more than makes up for it, I hope. Lots to look at and eight pages bigger! What have we got?

THE CLASH A tour special. The Clash are now firing better than ever, despite certain problems like illness and retarded, missile-lobbing crowds.

THE LOU'S, four French girls, were bottom of the bill on the tour but made a big impression on a lot of people, including ROBIN BANKS, who interviewed them.

ALTERNATIVE TV Danny's article should have been in last month but got lost. He's revamped it and gives a strong insight into the recent personnel reshuffle in the band, ANY band for that matter.

THE RUNAWAYS are depicted in action on our cover. This month we start the girls off in the first of their own cartoon strip telling their story. It's all based on fact but at the time of writing this I ain't seen what liberties the artist, TONY GHURA, has taken!

Sorry girls!

THE DARTS are currently roaring up the TOP 10 with "Daddy Cool" and could be a Christmas Number One. JOHN TOBLER went on the road with 'em...

A new feature - ZIGZAG special photo-spreads are introduced this month. There's **BLONDIE**, who I thought were absolutely great (fuller report in the New Year on them), and also **THE TUBES**, photo-spread material if not anything else.

THE JAM Went to see 'em at Newcastle. It was fun 'til local things moved in, but the group were great. We got some great pictures though.

THE DICTATORS were recently here. Now they're in 'ere.

THE ANTS A new London group, led by a bloke called ADAM ANT and managed by JORDAN. JOHN WALTERS is also here in festive mood! Have fun over Christmas and don't forget to get pissed! Love KRIS xxx



THE FRONT BIT

ROCK GIG STAFF THUGS PART TWO:

THE MARQUEE. * HENRY IS DEAD

The second of the Buzzcocks' splendid Marquee dates was marred by a sadly disturbing incident which in retrospect was merely a symptom of the sickness that remains with us; despite "new wave," punk, or any platitudinous labels created to con us into thinking that we have escaped from or even become independent of the nebulous THEM, nothing has really changed.

The incident revolved around Joe Strummer, a figurehead of the "Punk Movement", and, although it had its genesis in something basically quite trivial, the end result indicates that we have a long, long way to go before we can look around with a clear conscience and say "Something has been achieved."

Anyhow, here's the story, and even if you view the last sentence with slight cynicism (eg nothing changes anyway) I can tell you that Joe doesn't view life with that attitude, and it is highly ironic that he became the victim of an event which, coupled with others of a similar nature, throws real doubt not on what people like Joe Strummer are trying to get across, but on what has actually managed to get through so far.

ACT 1. Joe and I are standing at the rear bar in the Marquee, listening to the Buzzcocks and chatting with a couple of friends. We're enjoying the show and drinking our lager. Anyway, it's Joe's round, and with great satisfaction he produces a ten pound note, something that is quite a novelty to both of us, and proceeds to order the drinks. The drinks arrive, and come to one pound and three pence, so naturally the barman asks Joe, "Have you got the odd three?" he fumbles in his strides and comes up with the required amount. We sip our drinks, and Joe awaits his nine quid. In vain. The barman who served us is leisurely slouched against the back of the bar, intently watching the band. S'funny, we both think, and Joe calls him over. "Where's me nine quid then mate?" he asks quite amicably. Quick as lightning back comes the reply (you guessed it) "What nine quid?"

Now you hear of this kind of thing happening occasionally, but when it happens to you or someone that you are with, it ain't really funny, especially when done in such a blatant manner. At first both Joe and I take the optimistic viewpoint that it is all a simple mistake, but after the barman shoots off to get the bar manager who checks the till to no avail, it becomes patently obvious that Joe has been stitched up. And when that realisation hits him, he is angry. Until now he has taken it all very coolly, but it becomes obvious he ain't gonna get his nine nicker back and

there's nothing he can do about it, he raises his voice and for the first time openly accuses the barman.

ACT 2. Immediately, and I mean immediately, three huge bouncers appear out of nowhere, and without a word they grab hold of Joe with such ferocity that I just can't believe it. I'd seen the tenner, observed the barman's calculatedly arrogant air of innocent indifference, and now it looked as if Joe was gonna get a real good kicking. And the worse thing of all was that the three bouncers (now a hackneyed euphemism for thugs it seems) were really enjoying themselves. They had hate and aggression stamped all over their faces and the collective expressions could only be interpreted as "Look, look, we've got Strummer, he's a star and we don't fucking well like that, we're going to give him the beating he deserves". Now I ain't exaggerating this at all, that's exactly what these guys were about, and they began to drag Joe towards the john, the intention I suppose being to keep their brutal activities as clandestine as possible. Well fuck, I ain't Charles Atlas, but I ain't a cunt either, and like anyone would have done in the situation, I jumped in my immediate thought being to keep Joe in the club, in the light, where everyone could see what was going on. So a quick tug of war ensues, me pulling Joe back with one arm, and trying to prise him free with the other, while Joe continued to put up the best fight he could. Within seconds another thug appears, and Joe and I are punched and kicked down the corridor to the back door where we are literally flung outside, and the door slammed in our faces.

Joe is bruised, shaken and nine nicker worse off. My coat's ripped and there is a cut on my leg. Well big fucking deal. We both got off very lightly, but that just ain't the point at all. The point is that any club that employs thugs who obviously enjoy and revel in violence doesn't deserve the support of me, you or anyone with any sense at all. We don't need these people. They are the kind responsible for the vicious attacks on Rotten and Cook. They have the same attitude and mentality as those people, and yet clubs like the Marquee are actually employing them! It makes me fucking sick to think about it. And the story ain't over yet. While Joe and I are standing there getting our breath back, the doors open again, and several other people are roughly turfed out, one guy clutching his head which is badly cut, punched several times by the bearded member of the thug

quartet. The heinous crime that these people had committed was to merely protest at the way Joe and I had been treated. They got more or less the same treatment that they were protesting about.

It later transpires that the original three bouncers had been watching the scene from the moment Joe asked for his nine quid. They had actually asked people to move so they could watch Joe while remaining unobtrusive themselves. Now this smacks of collusion to me, or at least premeditation. But just think about it for yourself, and also think whether you should go down the Marquee again. At least until the thug element is removed. Remember, you don't actually have to do anything to be attacked. If they don't like the look of you, that is justification enough in their eyes. Well I don't give a fuck who plays the Marquee in future, I ain't gonna go, because otherwise nothing's gonna change.

And there is a tragic footnote to this already unhappy tale. Henry has died. If you don't know the story, see last month's Zigzag, but briefly, someone in the audience at The Bell threw a firework. It wasn't Henry, but what did that matter to the bouncers. They dragged him outside and put his head through a window. He lay in a coma for nearly three weeks, and then he died. So the bouncers at The Bell killed Henry, and until we collectively make it plain that we don't require paid thugs to supervise our entertainment anywhere, Henry's death will have been doubly tragic.

Because if you can't learn from that, what is there to learn from?

Robin Banks

SNATCH BACK!

Great news for all you Snatch fans. The highly talented deadly duo of Judy Nylon and Patti Palladin soon unleash their second vinyl masterpiece, and the newie deserves to be a monster hit. Just like 'Stanley'/'IRT', (our single of the month back in August), this too is a double A sided brain stormer, and it leaves you wondering why Snatch have so far remained virtually ignored by press and record companies alike. Entitled 'When I'm Bored'/'All I Want', it's out on Lightening Records very soon. Don't miss it. RB

CRAZY



Derby Kings Hall. The thickset geezer with the appearance of a frustrated rugby player - too short to make the scrum but just as tough if they'll only try me out - stands at the edge of the crush around the stage and looks at the bobbing, shoving throng in between wet stares at all-girl French group the Lous, who are whacking out their punque froggais in the face of a constant shower of gob and plastic glasses. The Lous are soaked and matted but don't let up.

The frustrated one drains the last drop of the warm-piss-that-passes-for-beer into the beer-belly which hangs over his baggy disco trousers, weighs the glass in his hand and flings it at the stage, narrowly missing a Lou.

The Clash's Mick Jones breaks away from the crowd at the side, walks over to the bloke and puts a hand on his shoulders. "D'you wanna come outside?" or words to that effect. The hurler is embarrassed and surprised that a member of the group he's paid to see tonight is acting bodyguard for the third-on-the-bill act.

I've met few people who CARE as much as Mick Jones, apart from the rest of The Clash. Stranded fans are allowed to sleep on the group's hotel room floor. The group will talk to non-sheep fans with warmth and interest. Joe Strummer will take the stage for a punishing hour-long set a few hours after a doctor has told him he must rest for three weeks to get rid of the glandular fever which has kept him in pain for days.

It must be a bit of a piss-off that when the group takes the stage the first crowd response is an eye-ful of gob. Must make it all seem worthwhile.

I thought it might just be the fact that Derby rates high in the audience-retard stakes, but it was the same messy story down in Cardiff. How can a group play its best when guitar strings are all gobbled up and you can't see cos some twat's sprayed beer in your eyes? Are groups gonna

have to put glass screens in front of the stage then play behind them like a giant T.V. set. Still, gobbing's great "Punk Fun!" just like the papers told ya to. Beer adds a bit of wet-strength. Not to mention the odd glass, for effect. Anyone can do it. You don't have to wear a dog collar, as Derby proved with its legions of stringy-haired denim Quo-troops and the afore-mentioned Lads from the Sports and Social club, joining in the fray. A funny sight.

The King's Hall is a cavernous barn which doubles as a swimming pool, of all things. The water is covered by boards. Too much pogoing and ka-splish! Maybe that's why there ain't too many punks in Derby with this Instant Punk Disposal Unit in the hands of the local council! Remember, Derby was the council which wanted an audition from the Pistols before they'd be allowed to play there after the Grundy Affair.

It seems anything which could possibly pass as Punk is not welcome in this city, as me, Danny, Robin Banks and Adrian Thrills (Zigzag staff outing no less!) found out when we ventured across the road to a local pub in search of more beer-like liquid.

As we're getting 'em in its not too hard to notice the two semi-teds at the bar flashing hostile glances in our direction. We pass 'em to sit on the other side. The hate-looks continue. Then ne removes his flat-cap (yeah!) and slow-but-sure slicks back his hair making sure we'll notice. Still, there's four of us...

Danny gets up to make for the toilet but why's he talking to the two geezers. A few minutes later he was walks back and sits down, with the pair in tow.

Turns out Dan saw what was coming and thought he'd try and talk 'em out of it. Or at least kill the suspense..

The two locals are surprised and confused. They're being treated like humans by the species the papers have told 'em to hate and destroy. We go

through the "Why beat us up we're all the same underneath", bit and they seem to take it in. Bloody good job as it transpires the dozen or so bikers/big blokes sitting opposite were all set to weigh in against us when the action started! Our pair still ain't entirely convinced. "But why does he have to look like that" they say, pointing at me.

We leave after one pint to "See yer mate", and half-smiles. It's only when we come out that Danny explains the potential seriousness of the situation, i.e. the hidden on-hand reinforcements just waiting for the chance to paint the streets of Derby red - with our blood. Phew. "I must have been pissed", says Danny.

Back at the Kings Hall Richard Hell and the Voidoids have been on and got similar gob-and-glass treatment to the Lous.

While Hell sits staring at the floor behind his shades the rest of the dressing room is buzzing with pre-Clash gig tension, which is spasmodically uncoiled by good-natured piss-taking.

Joe's ill, reckons it's toothache but finds out differently next day. Mick looks a bit out of it. Paul tries to think of ways to "adapt" the name Lester Bangs. Why? Well, Lester noted US rock critic is along on this leg of the tour for NME. The Clash are one of his favourite groups along with the Ramones. Paul eventually comes up with (wait for it)... "Molester".

It takes the likeable Lester about a day to get fully accepted in the Clash camp. At first the group treat him politely but are not over-friendly. But with a little time and several "incidents" he was soon the lynch-pin of tour social activity. He eventually ended staying on the tour, double the time he should have. But more later...

Well, those who'd seen previous dates on the tour and the group themselves seemed to agree afterwards that



TOM CHEVENE

ROCKERS ON TOUR



Derby wasn't much cop. I don't care. I thought they were great. Seeing The Clash below their best brings home just how much craperoo is currently going out under the "Punk Rock" banner.

The Clash roared in with "London's Burning" followed by the orgasmic chord-rush of "Complete Control", which would have got higher in the charts if there was any justice, but there ain't.

The set was shortened 'cos of bozos bunting; "The Prisoner" was left out but you shoulda heard the other new ones. "Clash City Rockers" will be the next single and should destroy the charts. "White Man in Hammersmith Palais" is...for a start unlike anything else The Clash have done before. Slower than usual, with a melody I love. At last a white group's assimilated reggae music into its own style without resorting to the "This is our obligatory reggae song" blatancy of most that try. It works with Pauls bass and Toppers drums pumping the rhythm in gaps while Mick's guitar soars out on a deep ring. This number throws the "we wanna pogo" brigade.

The rest of the set is made up of album tracks, which the group can toss out with their eyes closed now and naturally seem less into than the newies. As usual the corkers are pulled out towards the end - "Janie Jones", "White Riot", two-minute speed of light blurs. The Clash storming the outer limits of intensity is still one of the most exciting experiences in rock'n'roll. It all comes to a head with "Garageland", perhaps my favourite Clash song ever. As usual Strummer has discarded his guitar by now.

In the terrace chant finishing blast Mick and Paul are on the drum rostrum, either side of the machine-gun-drumming Topper, guitars blazing: Joe's bent double at the front, tearing his throat apart.

The mood in the dressing room is rather deflated. Fans trickle in and take photos of themselves with Joe and show their Clash scrapbooks. Lester holds court and asks some questions the group don't really feel like answering WHEN...the mood abruptly changes. Everyone is helpless with laughter. Because Mr. Bangs has stood up revealing the most shapeless jeans-arse we've ever seen! "The Light of the East" cries Danny. Lester is a big fellow and pissed, which don't help the situation. But it breaks the ice and he laughs too.

Back to The Clash Motel, where we sprawl around the foyer drinking drinks and throwing salad sandwiches, sometimes in our mouths, mostly at each other.

The sobre desk clerk has a bald head. Paul lobs bits of cake to see if he can pop one dead on centre-pate. The unfortunate bloke carries on writing fiercely in his book as if nothing was happening least of all bits of cake raining all around him!

A full-scale sandwich battle breaks out. Joe holds up an NME-shield for protection. I get a cucumber in Paul's drink but then find several in me lap. Someone produces some Green Slime which is the Toy of the Tour. It's wet, bendable, green and slimy. It's great fun and looks like mould when you put it on cheese. Paul flicks little pellets around for the next few hours and secretly drops some in my beer. Later he proudly

boasts: "I got Bernie (Clash manager) right in the mouth and he went 'Errhh!'"

Friday is Cardiff. Mickey Foote, (Clash sound mixer) is taking Joe to hospital because his toothache is getting worse. It turns out to be glandular fever. We don't see much of Joe for the next couple of days 'cos he's resting for the gigs.

It's a long journey to Cardiff on The Clash minibus, and it's here that Lester passes another stage of the initiation to becoming a bona fide Good Bloke in The Clash's books.

The journey starts off cold and quiet. Mick slumps asleep, Danny and Robin read, Ellie and Pennie from NME look at the scenery. Lester sits in front of me and Paul and plays his reggae cassettes.

As we get past Birmingham our conversation gets sillier, aided by Paul's refreshments. "Doesn't Molestar sound like Kermit?" says Paul.

"Kermit's the only muppet I really like. I don't like Fozzie Bear 'cos he always does things wrong." A Muppet Show sticker is carefully transferred from my bag to the back of Lester's jacket. He doesn't discover it for three days and says he'll never take it off when he does.

"Do you wanna hear the new Ramones LP?" Lester asks innocently. YEAH! Is Rod Stewart a prat? Lester inserts his pre-cassette and for the next half-hour it's paradise all the way. Trouble is we get the giggles pointing at the Muppet sticker. The cold reality of a motorway cafe in a power cut should bring us back to earth. It doesn't. It's still giggles all the way to Cardiff.

Life on the road with The Clash left me physically and mentally exhausted. It also left me with the cast-iron conviction that they are the best band in Britain today. Ban none. Why? Because I watched them work their bollocks off night after night after night. When The Clash take the stage it ain't to perform. To perform means to carry out, to execute, to fulfil. As in ritual. The Clash don't believe in rituals. What The Clash do transcends all that, they don't go through with any ceremonies, when they get up on stage and play it is an act of love, and whether they have a good night or a bad night, it is never an indifferent night. What Faust sold The Clash give. Yeah, sure you have to pay to see them. But what you pay to see is a rock'n'roll band playing their songs. What you actually get is far, far more than that.

Despite that, this last tour left me with plenty of scope if I wanted to play the role of critic. I could tell you how the sound system should have been better, how the security arrangements could have been improved upon (and I mean by improved upon reduced) and how numerous other details weren't quite as they should have been. But what I can't do is think of one single gig where The Clash didn't deliver the goods with the conviction, courage and charisma that oozes from them like blood.

From Glasgow to Bournemouth, from Plymouth to Bristol, the band maintained their incessant tirade, never pausing, even to gasp for a breath.

Cardiff Post House is like every other Post House...gauche, riddled with muzak and slick-suited businessmen. Oh, and Stoke City, in town for a game tomorrow. Mick thinks its funny cos he got their autographs as a kid.

Horrors when me and Danny get to our room. It's only got a double bed. But then we notice the convertible couch. Phew. To celebrate not having to sleep with me Dan goes to bed upside-down for half an hour, then hangs out of the sixth-floor window in his underpants singing "Just One Cornetto!"

I sit down and watch a silly Welsh kiddie-quiz. I reflect: This is one huge CRACK!

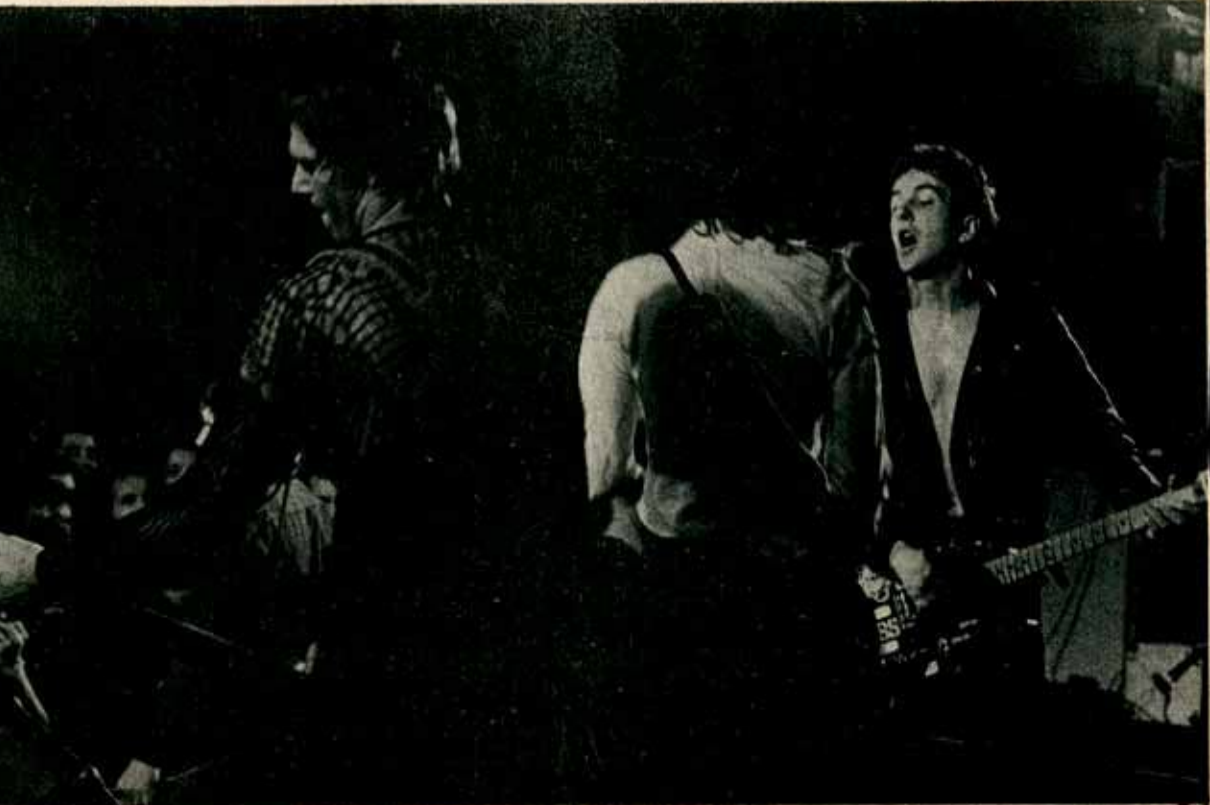
Downstairs Glen Matlock has turned up for the gig. Paul has got a new game. "A budgie with human arms... hee hee...A fish with a penis...ho ho...Bernie with a giraffe's body and the legs of a vole... hoo hoo." So it goes on till we're all joining in.

Two hours in the bar and we're well ready for the gig...which is being held in the hall at Cardiff University. Looks like a better audience though 'cos The Lous go down well and escape without much gob-shower. I really like them.

Richard Hell's lot fare better than the previous night with the studenty crowd. He looks pleased.

The Clash. Tonight they play a blinder. There are more numbers - "Police and Thieves", "What's My Name", "City of the Dead", "The Prisoner". Joe's mustering every bit of fevered energy he can while Mick leaps and struts and Paul simmers with suppressed aggression.

TOM CHEYENNE



CLASH VIEW 2: THE WHOLE TOUR

This time the mood in the dressing room is brighter.

A bloke from the students' magazine wants to interview Mick but Mick don't really wanna be interviewed. Still eager questions are fired, and greeted with one-line answers. "Do you still think, the audience can get into your lyrics when they're doing Left salutes?" brings the whole dressing room down.

Meanwhile a bloke from a magazine originally called "Punk Rock" is talking to Joe and someone who calls himself "A social worker" keeps asking Paul what'll he do when The Clash break up. "A horse with the eyes of a gnat...hee hee", is what he gets in reply! It must get a bit wearing to encounter this at each gig (that's why you won't find a profound, quote-packed interview in here right now).

"What a sample", mutters a doorman as we leave.

Another hotel bar, another sandwich fight. Paul goes mad and hurls a plateful at Bernie, places a well-aimed ham sandwich in my face and then covers my legs in milk.

Now it's 3 a.m. I'm sitting opposite Lester Bangs. For the last hour I've been trying to keep a straight face as Paul heaps everything from matches and paper cups to tomatoes on Lester's head, blows smoke behind his hair so it looks like he's on fire and finally builds a bonfire under his chair and sets it on fire Joan-of-Arc-style, singing the carpet and nearly catching Lester's now legendary strides. Lester laughs through it all, continuing to send us into further fits with anecdotes about Lou Reed and everything else he chooses to let fire about. The initiation passed. The Clash love 'in and it's days before he's allowed to come off the tour, despite NME screaming for his piece.

Rock Writers are s'posed to come back laden with carefully-probed quotes from their subjects.

The only verbiage I can report goes something like this:-

"I'm hungry. Is there anywhere round here still open" - Mick Jones.

"Hey! I'm on fire!" - Lester Bangs.

"A horse with human ears" - Paul Simonon.

"Oy! Stop throwing those sandwiches" - Hotel desk clerk.

No, don't get me wrong. The Clash are dead serious about what they're

doing, which is producing some of the most vital, uplifting rock'n'roll around. But they are sometimes misrepresented as tight-lipped messengers of urban destruction with a 24-hour cause. The Clash are about living today. Full stop. This includes having a lot of fun. I still didn't expect to come back from the tour with aching sides!

Kris Needs

48 FOCUS (OR THE ROCK)

to take up so much of their off-stage time. But that, I was to discover is what the band are really all about. Their fans are genuinely very important to them, so much so, that some of the visiting writers were visibly affronted to find themselves taking second place.

One very well-known American writer who joined the entourage for a while, came in for an excess of the probing, assessing, testing technique that the band employ on people they are meeting for the first time.

Another visiting writer, who found himself not quite so popular had his hotel door kicked in at three in the morning, and whilst most of these night time activities are done with a spirit of fun, it is not too wise to cross the band. Another visitor got off on the wrong foot when his introductory words to the group were, "You don't look as threatening as you do in your photographs." This attempt at psychological one-upmanship proved to be a complete failure, as the guilty party was treated to about three days of constant verbal and physical abuse. When the sandwiches started flying, it was his head that was always the initial target etc. etc. Eventually he passed the acid test, and "the treatment" ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

One unfortunate aspect of the tour was the attitude of most of the hotel staff. This had not changed much since the "White Riot" tour, and in Plymouth, which seemed to harbour the worst cases of complacent/lazy/rude hotel staff, the manager of the hotel restaurant had a pile of salad pushed into his face. He was not amused, and the police were called. Only very quick thinking by the tour's affable promoter, Dave Cork, saved several people being carted off then and there.

Perhaps the funniest incident of the whole trip took place shortly after Topper Headon had bought a massive B.S.A. air pistol. Late one night Topper excitedly summoned me to his room, and what I found there was so funny that I'm laughing even as I write this. The whole of the room was shot to bits, with slugs embedded in chairs, beds, tables, walls, even through the ceiling.

The glass lamp shade lay shattered to bits on the floor, and the only excuse Topper could offer was that he had been trying the gun out".

But touring is really a serious matter, and all the fun activities serve basically as a much needed release from the strain. There was on some occasions a certain desperation underlying the fun, and that never applied on the "White Riot" tour. Then, the band had The Slits in the same hotel. This time round, Richard Hell and the Voidoids, and The Lou's usually had separate accommodation, and The Clash missed the communal atmosphere of the previous British trip.

The audiences had undergone some changes from the last tour as well, and the most distinctive difference was sadly the escalation in gobbing. One night Joe got one straight into his open mouth, and from then on he decided to have no more of it. "When I spit, I spit on the fucking floor", he told the crowd at the next venue, and most of them took the hint. Not every band has a Joe Strummer, and Richard Hell just couldn't handle the gobbing at all. He would come off stage absolutely saturated nearly every night, and it is the stereotyped, sheeplike, Sunday paper punk who is responsible if he never returns to these shores. I for one wouldn't blame him at all.

Looking back on the tour as a whole, the places and faces encountered become blurred, a kaleidoscopic fabric woven in distorted memories. I can't tell you where Joe said what to which crowd, what numbers went down well where, or even recall some of the places the band played in. I hope that you saw the band yourself. I hope that you don't need me or anyone else to tell you whether you enjoyed yourself or not, but most of all I hope that you did enjoy yourself. Because if you didn't enjoy seeing The Clash, and you've just read fifteen hundred words on a band that do nothing for you, then you must be some kind of a cunt.

The things I do remember are indelibly stamped within, never to be forgotten. Trivial things like Paul pissing in the dressing room sink and pulling faces on the bus. Things like Joe giving me some magical stuff that immediately cured my raging

toothache. Things like Topper's beautiful girlfriend Wendy and their dog Battersea, which they rescued from the dogs' home and it took to our Cambridge hotel like a duck to water. Things like Mick Jones in one hotel smashing up the bathroom with a huge demonic grin on his face. But most of all I remember the music. The music that hits you, knocks you down, picks you up, and changes your life. The music that crashes into your skull like a runaway tank. The music that slices into your brain like a blade through sulphate, and re-assembles it as it should have been. No other band can rival The Clash at their best, and if you want to know what I mean, they are being brought straight into your living room by courtesy of Tony Wilson and his "So It Goes" team. And the cameras caught one of the best Clash sets ever.

Belle Vue in Manchester was the venue, and the fanatical Mancunian fans ensured that it was a night to remember. Before The Clash had even finished their sound check the impatient throng outside had smashed its way through the plate glass doors and surged like a tidal wave into the hall. Hundreds got in for nothing in the resultant free for all, and over £500 worth of damage was the lowest estimate quoted. Several people were badly cut, but the 2,000 paying and non-paying customers were in an almost euphoric state by the time The Subway Sect and Siouxsie and the Banshees had finished their sets. They wanted to see The Clash, and voiced their collective feeling so loudly that you had to shout to hear yourself even in the dressing room. When the band took the stage they were greeted with scenes akin to Beatle-mania, and as they swung into "London't Burning", fans in the front were fainting like flies. Totally ignoring the cameras, the only concession to their presence being an aural one, (Joe, Mick and Paul are all competing to see who could sing the word fuck the most) the band played a set that defies any description, the three front men moving like frantic, strung-out puppets programmed to self-destruct, whilst Topper smashed at his skins as if his arms were the frenzied, beating wings of some long extinct monster bird. When this is shown



THE CLASH (l-r): JOE STRUMMER, NICKY HEADON, PAUL SIMONON, MICK JONES.

on T.V. every set in Britain is going to blow itself to pieces. Watch it under heavy sedation.

To finalise, I can only say that I find it one of the hardest things in the world to sit down and write about a band like The Clash. Sitting down to write words onto a piece of paper has absolutely nothing to do with what they are about, and to pretend that it has would be hypocrisy on a grand scale. Despite that, I have made an attempt, but throughout the time it has taken me to write this article the fact running in and out of my brain like a mad church mouse has been that where The Clash were a "Garage Band", they are now "The Clash City Rockers". The new material illustrates perfectly that they are still at least two jumps ahead of all their contemporaries, it is this ability to write the music of tomorrow today, that makes The Clash leaders, and a flashing neon signpost to the future of rock music.

Robin Banks



THE LOU'S

If you caught The Clash on any of their recent U.K. tour dates, then you will probably have seen The Lou's. They were bottom of the bill, playing their first dates in Britain, and consequently they had to cope with all the hassles and aggravation that are part and parcel of said status. Shared and cramped dressing rooms, dingy bed and breakfast accommodation, infrequent sound checks, and occasional hostility from the more moronic sections of the audience who found it impossible to even attempt to evaluate something that has not yet had the official seal of approval. But the Lou's fought and overcame all these problems with a panache and style that earned them the respect and admiration not only of the other bands on the tour, but of the accompanying entourage as well.

The Lou's are four girls from France who play music that is a dynamic fusion of rhythm and blues and rock and roll. On stage, they present their own material with more conviction, energy and sheer guts than it is possible to describe on a printed piece of paper. It is the unshakeable belief they have in themselves that transcends all adjectives, and it is this nebulous quality, coupled with the fact that their music is delivered with no self-consciousness as regards gender (i.e. the fact that they are four girls is rendered totally irrelevant by neither accident or design, but by a natural assimilation which leaves them as neither male or female, but musicians pure and simple) that makes the Lou's one of the most exciting, entertaining and original bands this writer has seen for years.

Musically, there is some room for improvement, and although the lyrics were delivered in English throughout the tour, Pamela, the lead guitarist and vocalist, had trouble communicating with the audience between numbers. This perhaps was largely to blame for the occasional adverse response. On a few of the dates the band were showered with glasses, cans and gob.

I was not the only onlooker to feel utterly ashamed at the actions of the wankers responsible. Richard Hell and the Voidoids received the same reaction only magnified and it says a lot for The Lou's that they stood up to it far better than Hell did. Throughout the time they spent on the road, and despite the problems I mentioned in the opening paragraph, there was never a word of complaint from the four girls. Their complete professionalism and dedication surpassed and eclipsed that of practically any other band I have observed on tour. If rock and roll was purely about self survival, The Lou's would be hands down winners.

When I spoke to the band at the end of the tour, the only complaint they had to make was about the contemporary music scene in France. They felt most of the current French groups were simply cheap copyists of the successful British and American bands, and that this tended to put The Lou's themselves at a disadvantage. They cited their own favourite band as The Clash and The Seeds.

They also like The Slits, and met them during the tour. They got on very well. In fact, The Slits told me later that the admiration was mutual. This mutual admiration society may even go one step further, because Sacha (Lou's drummer and the one who speaks the best English) tells me that they would like to do a French tour with The Slits. Now that is something that I would give my right arm to see. I can hardly think of a better combination. The Lou's and The Slits together would make the Dynamic Duo completely redundant.

To return to the realms of cold fact, here is The Lou's line-up. The band comprises Pamela Popo - singer and lead guitarist; Sacha Dejong - drummer; Raphaelé Devins - rhythm guitarist; Tolim Toto - bass guitar. During the brief interview it is Sacha who does most of the talking. She tells me that the band as it now stands has been together for about

eight months. Prior to that Tolim and Pamela were playing together, whilst Sacha was singing solo. Raphaelé was playing rhythm guitar in another band. Eventually somebody gave Sacha's address to Tolim and Pamela, who had been casting about for a good female drummer without much success. As soon as they contacted Sacha things started to move in the right direction. The three quickly added Raphaelé on rhythm, and The Lou's were finally in existence. Only three of the girls are from France. Sacha was born in Holland, and is half Dutch and half Chinese. Pamela and Tolim are from Paris, whilst Raphaelé is from the South of France.

The four girls rehearsed in a damp and dark cellar in central Paris, where Sacha informed me, they met with a great deal of animosity from the neighbours. This bad feeling developed to such an extent that eventually, after several physical encounters with the fiercest of their critics, one of the girls lobbed a brick through the front window of their worst antagonist! This act obviously had its desired effect because from then on the girls were left in relative peace.

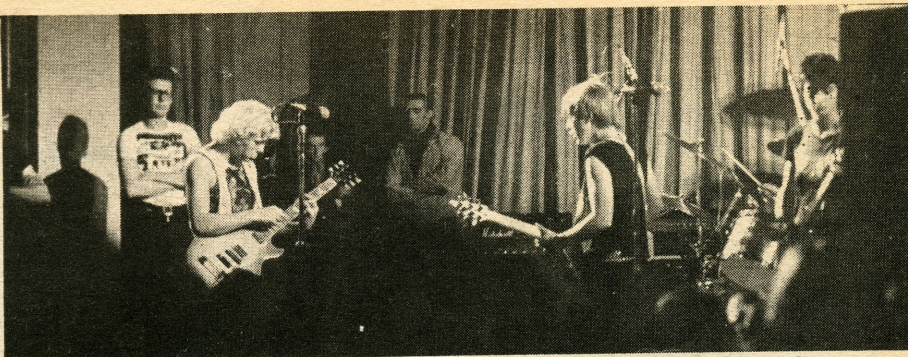
I first saw the band in action at Mont de Marsen, some four months ago, and at that stage in their career there was definite room for improvement, although the potential that has now flourished was quite obvious. Their performance drew an angry response from one male French critic, who wrote an article full of such adjectives as "degenerate". The girls were not discouraged.

They made their British debut at Dunfermline on the 24th of October, and although, as I've already explained, there has been some adverse reaction to the band from British audiences (mainly at Sheffield, where I saw them pelted with glasses and gob throughout their set), on the whole the response has been a very

good one for a foreign band making its first appearances in a country not particularly renowned for its tolerance of new acts. During the Clash tour The Lou's were taking the stage as a completely unknown quantity, and it was heartwarming to watch them slowly win the crowds attention. At most of the dates, after the band had completed their first two or three numbers, even the rowdiest members of the audience seemed to realise that The Lou's were not to be discouraged easily, and the rest of their set was generally very well received. After the Clash tour was completed, The Lou's played at London's 'Music Machine', where they were sandwiched between Neo and Siouxsie and the Banshees. Topping the bill was Richard Hell. The band's reception by a more discerning London audience was encouraging, and some of the provincial cretins who found it fun to lob glasses from the safety of a darkened audience should take a leaf from the London crowd's book, and learn to LISTEN.

Not that The Lou's were at all discouraged by any of the hecklers or gobbing morons that they encountered. Sacha explained in her delightful English, "For me, I do not give a shit. For my drums, I am worried because they are the only ones I have" The other three echoed her sentiments exactly.

At present, The Lou's are without a manager, but they have signed to CBS in France. It is their hope (and mine) that they will soon have an English CBS contract, and if and when this comes about they intend to release one of their best stage numbers, "Hey Stoned", as a single. The flip side



will possibly be "White Fire". At the time of writing, The Lou's are back in France, spending their time rehearsing and fulfilling a few dates in the South. By the time you read this article, they may well have made their planned return to England, where they hope to base themselves in the future. They describe the music scene in France as being jaded, and feel that most of the French bands playing at the moment take themselves too seriously.

Looking back at the tour, it still amazes me that The Lou's coped as they did. Not only did they find their own way from gig to gig, booking into bed and breakfast accommodation in every town, but Raphaelle, the rhythm guitarist, actually drove their van. To get up on stage every night, play your heart out to an audience that sometimes throws it all back in your face, and to then pack your gear into a van and drive to accommodation that in some cases is by necessity of finance miles away, is as stiff a test of stamina and endurance as you will find anywhere. The Lou's only comment was that

they sometimes found the whole process somewhat boring and tedious. But they were unanimously agreed that all the trials and tribulations were more than compensated for by the half an hour that they spent on stage every night, playing their music, the music they believe in so strongly and fiercely that nothing is going to deny them the success they rightly deserve. It is this belief, this blinding faith in themselves, coupled with Pamela's rich and fascinating vocal style and the way the band as a unit combines to create a devastatingly original wall of sound, that makes The Lou's the best thing to emerge from France in rock'n'roll history. Just in case you think I'm overstating the case, those who agree with me include The Clash, who made a point of catching The Lou's set almost every night, and the entire tour entourage - roadies, lighting crew et al (and me - Ed). And if you want to meet me to argue the point, I will be down the front at their very next British gig.

Robin Banks

THE LOU'S (LEFT TO RIGHT): SACHA DEJONG; PAMELA POPO, RAPHAELE DEVINS, TOLIM TOTO.



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