

WITHOUT SOUNDING excessively gloomy, neither producer Geoff Moore, not much-maligned front man Tony Wilson from Granada's 'So It Goes', hold out much hope of there being a third series.

Not that they've done badly mind you. Last year's debut was a fast and racy show with bands in the studio along with a white llama, Tony Wilson delivering throwaway lines, clips and cameos, and altogether a completely different mixture of rock and irreverence.

Which, incidentally, was monumentally panned.

Serious rock fans — weaned on the insipid pap of Bomber Harris' 'Old Grey Whistle Test' — rapidly became 'shocked', 'angered' and 'irritated' by the approach. Wilson in particular was the target of much stray mud, regarded (and reviled) as a smart-alec Mancunian who had no business touching rock with a bargepole.

By and large Granada didn't agree. After a few tantrums Wilson bounced back onto the screens this year with a second series; this time virtually launching a new wave crusade and hauling bands onto TV who wouldn't have got a look in elsewhere. They staged their own live gigs, tried to get the Sex Pistols, said and showed nearly everything they wanted and.

Well, they haven't gone yet.

In fact this is meant to be Wilson's vilification. The inside view. The proof of his worth. Two special 'So It Goes' concerts in the second city. All filmed for broadcast before the programme bows out in a blaze of glory sometime before Christmas.

Solt went.

Night one: The Pirates, Steel Pulse, John Cooper Clark, and the incredible Magazine, Howard DeVoto's new band. Free at Belle Vue.

Night two: Clash, with Subway Sect and Siouxsie and the Banshees. "Manchester is more alive than London", offers Wilson later. Among other things.

For all the slating the track record of the last series, as the man isn't slow to point out, was excellent, featuring TV 'firsts' from the likes of Graham Parker and Jonathan Richman. Yet the format has changed radically.

"The style that we've used is my own, developing out of the presentation of a newsy programme," says Wilson. "I've done 'What's On' for three years now and I wanted to keep 'So It Goes' fast and dense the same way."

"There is the danger of always presenting 'safe' television. With rock it's either hundreds of camera shots to keep the interest, or that dreadful Hampstead artistic approach. What we tried the first time we've taken further."

He does admit to mistakes, naturally, and has been upset by criticism in the past. But Wilson is skilful and confident, asserting himself as a 'bright boy' prone (for his own reasons) to intellectualising the new wave — which he determinedly follows — while retaining an entirely professional approach to broadcasting. "I'm a storyteller. I want to communicate — you want the audience to listen all the time."

He sighs: "It's not too much to ask, half-an-hour a week, for something different, is it?"

"Anyway there's so much more happening this year, we've got something to go with this time. We can be exciting and irreverent!"

Last year's idea of recreating a 'club' atmosphere in the studio didn't really work, Wilson feels, although he's disappointed that the same format works perfectly for 'Wheelieappers and Shunters'.

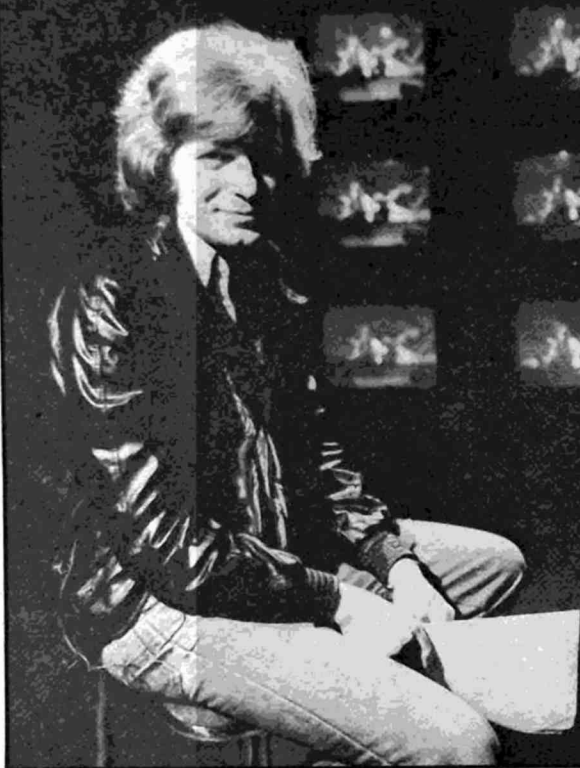
"We've taken chances this time, just gone out and filmed the gigs as they happened, and set up our own if need be. Just three, and sometimes only two, cameras. It's the best way. The speed is still there, and the excitement of live performances, even if it's a bit rough occasionally."

"So It Goes" has consistently gone for new, if never entirely unknown bands, and Wilson's enthusiasm for the movements in the last year has led to shows featuring the Jam, Tom Robinson Band, the Ig and the Heartbreakers among others.

But not the Sex Pistols. Producer Geoff Moore goes as far as describing Wilson's attempts to lure Malcolm McLaren's boys onto the tube as 'saga'.

"We've been upset at some of the

This man needs you



He's got a good TV show, putting on people like The Clash and using some imagination for a change. JOHN SHEARLAW talks to Tony Wilson, front man for 'So It Goes', to find out why there may not be another series

It's not too much to ask, half-an-hour a week, for something different, is it?

things that McLaren has been quoted as saying," says Moore. "It's always assumed that they have this 'ungetatability' about them. We read in the Sunday Times that no TV station will have them but we've been trying to set up a show for a year."

"Recently we even got as far as getting a studio arranged, only for them to withdraw only the day before. . . It's got so that I object to the myth-making that Malcolm seems so good at."

Historic

'So It Goes', however, have already shown the Pistols — last year, playing 'Anarchy In The UK'. This historic footage will be re-run this weekend. It's a great film, but not as good as they were hoping for. Still, they're getting the Clash live, alright?

A Wilson coup perhaps. His energy and enthusiasm has earned him respect in some unexpected quarters. He's still, in his own description, a "minor TV personality," especially in Granada land, but seemingly as devoted to the banishment of boredom and apathy (especially on TV) as the bands he's championed.

"We've had to fight for what we've done," he says. "And you can sense that we haven't been too popular, particularly with Granada. Just think we could have run a rock show, virtually for nothing as well, using promotional films. They're offered by the record companies all the time. Recently I turned one down, flat, and it appeared on the 'Whistle Test' the next week. Why should it always be so safe?"

And why always so serious? Wilson's main protagonists have attacked him in the past for smug, self-satisfied delivery, as if someone

who knows nothing about music shouldn't have the right to be humorous — or obscure.

"Unfortunately," he smiles, "That's just part of me. I'm confident in front of the camera, I like to speak fast. If you can't hear every word you have to sit up and listen. Heavens, that's the sort of change you need. Someone's got to try something."

"I like a few jokes, a bit of irreverence. I expected to get panned for it."

And at present this presenter is working hard.

The first night begins chaotically, with the mobile that Virgin have insisted is used to record Magazine, not turning up until 7.30. Wilson strolls about, disappears to Granada in the afternoon to record 'What's On', and returns for the action.

One camera in the crowd and two on the packed stage. The Pirates belting out at full blasts for half-an-hour. Already it's 9.30 with the concert due to end at 11. With a rapid changeover Birmingham's roots rockers Steel Pulse rank through a full set. Powerful stuff.

The audience is given an hilarious interlude (being both lewd and interesting) from 'punk poet' John Cooper Clark who seems to have as many greatest hits in Manchester as the Buzzcocks, and the indefatigable crew get ready for Magazine.

On their second live outing Magazine were staggering. Howard

DeVoto has managed to gather himself a brilliant band, which allied with his own chilling authority as commanding lead singer causes something in the way of transfixed immobility. For me any way. Watch and wonder on the screen.

Not too bad work wise. In the past the camera crew have insisted on plastic mics — at the Electric Circus for the Jam — to protect them from the flying gob. But they earn Wilson's and Moore's accolades for services 'beyond the call of duty'. Just as well they're not of the 'knock off at seven o'clock variety'.

The next night reinforces the opinion.

Clash. Anticipation. Tension in the air and 2,000 in the audience.

Yet again it's supposed to be in the can by 11. The Clash are going to come on at 10.30. Subway Sect and Siouxsie and the Banshees warm up, instilling gentle waves of pogo and floods of phlegm. The placement of a hand-held camera in the audience in front of the stage becomes a physical impossibility.

Tonight's a paying audience too; a fullscale event.

The mobile camera retreats. The Clash advance. The power and the fury attacking each song, each chord with angry venom, seemingly oblivious of the cameras filming them. "See that," screams Strummer, pointing at one. "That's money talking." There's a savage excitement, halls of spit, the odd

bottle flying, and a heaving ecstatic mass of vertical movement. Clash City Rockers. On edge as always, fighting for complete control.

The Clash do their business. The crew do theirs. Just. Despite filming amidst surging and seething disorder the job gets done. Side views, angry snarls, and the tapes rolling.

With the 'TV set' (only it wasn't) over the Clash are hauled back, compelled to play more. To drain the crowd, to defuse the tension and the fury. Until the midnight ceasefire.

A close shave. "Without meaning to sound pompous," states Geoff Moore. "This has been pushing television to its limits. . . ."

Hospital

The stills cameraman has had a camera stolen. One TV cameraman has had his glasses broken. One girl is taken to hospital with a cut face, driven there by Tony Wilson. Her friends allege that she has been kicked by a bouncer, the management deny it. The assailant has conveniently disappeared.

This ugly incident aside the success of the concert can't be denied. Frightening excitement. Live on TV. Wilson, Moore and company didn't need to do it, but they did. They regarded it as worthwhile. Placing themselves — certainly in rock 'n' roll terms — in the vanguard.

And succeeding? Even if they don't get to go for their hat trick?

Tony Wilson earlier had been gleefully suggesting just how he planned to finish his series.

With Clash . . . to come. Pan: monitor bank. Cue: presenter. Full face shot — side-of-mouth verbal: "There used to be a song called 'There's A Riot Going On' (Eh? — Jazz Ed.), for the last 10 years there's hardly even been a knees-up. Glad to see that there's some action back . . . here's a real 'White Riot'."

Such irreverence! Such good television!

Support another series — at least somebody's got the guts / imagination / influence (viewing the situation obliquely) to try, and succeed, with something different.

And maybe they WILL get the Pistols next time.



THE CLASH: compelled to play more