

Roadshows

And they all came in one week

SEX PISTOLS

Brunel University, Uxbridge

WELL, WHAT'S the thing, how de rigueur should I be? What do you want to hear?

You want to hear that the Pistols were dynamic. You want to hear it because they are heroes and symbols, to be held high, and worn on badges, on T-shirts, on posters. God save the image.

To stick to actuality, the Sex-Pistols have a pretty scrappy set. Their worse flaw is that they are painfully limited - after the initial rush of actually seeing them onstage, they degenerate into torpidity pretty soon after, right until the last apocalyptic anthem finale, 'Pretty Vacant' and 'Anarchy In The UK'.

They have a problem - the space between the opening 'God Save The Queen' and the finale. The gap is partially filled by charisma. Johnny R is a beaut, a perfect, perfect idol. Before the set he left the hubbub of the privileged gallery and danced by himself at the stage wing to 'Egyptian Reggae', an exuberant scarecrow alone dance. It was curiously touching and convincing at the same time - because he wasn't doing it for the benefit of the crowd (who couldn't see him), he was doing it for himself, his beautiful self. Johnny is real and he deserves his adoration.

But the gap, even with Johnny prat falling and robot-jiving magnetically, is still vivid and obvious. The sound system, which is trash, doesn't help, but it's not excuse enough.

They have a material problem - apart from 'Bodies' and 'EMI' which stood out only for their shoutalong choruses the songs stick to a rather mundane formula. Whereas The Clash mix and shuffle their power, the Pistols serve it up straight and blurred and constant, which is a weakness rather than a strength. Image and perfect singles and publicity are helpful but they don't last forever. The Pistols need some meat for their songwriting machine, not recycled soya riff pap.

There were still moments of real, vicious excitement, and even if they weren't maintained, they were priceless. 'God Save The Queen' tightened muscles and almost made you as proud as the old anthem is

supposed to make ageing army colonels. The defiance, the defilement in Rotten's yowl tackily stirring and emotive.

Then the double header that screamed what the Pistols could be (if they worked?) (if they hadn't lost Matlock?), 'Vacant' and 'Anarchy' bitterly condensed bile reaction that moves you to shudder at the core. To leave it at that would have been sensible and exhilarating.

In a mistaken flush they returned for 'Liar', which wasn't a great encore, 'No Fun', ditto, and 'God Save The Queen' which was devalued by replay. Still, they at least didn't do 'Sweet Little Rock 'N' Roller' or 'Johnny B Goode'.

Rotten was god for the evening despite it all. No one seemed to take affront - except me - when he told his audience, who had all laid down their money and been universally crushed half out of existence for an hour at the entrance, to "++++ off." Brat and ingrate he may be but he's still himself, which is more than could be expected really.

Of course you've got to witness them if you value experience and want to pay homage to an instant legend (and who doesn't?). Just don't expect too much or you'll finish with not only crushed body but crushed faith. **TIM LOTT**

THE CLASH

Rainbow, London

IT WAS earlier this year at the Rainbow when I became heavy and I was among The Clash army, out of uniform and scared. The front rows were heaved onstage, the reaction became love and hysteria. Fights weltered and nerves - my nerves were ragged.

December, 1977, repeat and the heavy is still there but it's diluted, the army ranks are split because they have been infiltrated by kid fans, sucked in by The Clash musical force. The skinhead guerrillas are cushioned by sheer numbers so the stormtrooping goes out the door. It's a musical evening now, not a rally.

So define The Clash stripped of their stigma, stripped of their hard-as-nails posturing, they are the essential and remaining punk band. It may be sacrilege but it's also true to say they're streets ahead of the Pistols who have a

pit of lukewarm songs, a couple of unforgettable anthems and endless charisma.

What The Clash have is not only stance but consistency and a gift for the subtle. They have enough variables to ensure that Clash album two won't be a carbon copy of Clash album one; but where do the Pistols go?

Displayed at The Rainbow, The Clash, although magnificently defused by the size of the venue, sat all over the 'opposition'. There's some poor fodder in the first 10 minutes of the set but the rest burns through your skin, through your bones to your self and you churn and judder without choice.

Strummer is incoherent like a bomb is incoherent - you don't understand the noise but you can't escape the effect. Audience explosion and shock ripple the language of the speechless.

Some would lock The Clash away, some would put a lid on them and run. Some would injure The Clash but The Clash will endure. They are their own riot, white or otherwise. **TIM LOTT**

BOOMTOWN

RATS/YACHT

Rainbow, London

I'VE BEEN trying to think of a concert I've enjoyed more this year and the only one that's come up is Rod Stewart's and that wasn't in this country. The Rats have undoubtedly blazed through this year to come to a fitting and spectacular climax at the Rainbow on Saturday night. The last time they played there, was as support to Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers back in the summer. It's a pity Yachts turned out to be such weak opponents in the same position.

Bob Geldof has worked out his patter to a fine art; the rambling introductions have been honed down, sharpened so they strike home with deadly accuracy - thanks Bob for missing out RM in your condemnation of the Press who "tell lies". It's his man of the people stance that's helping to win votes; his politician's acumen pulls in the punters and good luck to him. He's probably one of the few frontmen that truly isn't affected by a sudden rise to fame. Corny but true.

They opened with 'Close As You'll Ever Be', an impressive light show matching an impressive perform-



JOE STRUMMER (top) and JOHNNY ROTTEN

ance. It was all planned. The Rats had the first two rows of seats removed as a precaution against damage and so that people could dance as they pleased. In fact, the crowd was well controlled by security men who didn't allow too many to rush down from the back, and as far as I could see, no one was hassled to sit down.

As Geldof postures, prances and sings, the rest of the band comes upfront too, expending energy at astonishing speed. They've always been good, now that they've got more experience, they're excellent. Into 'Never Bite The Hand That Feeds' and they sound a lot like early Stones - I can't quite place the exact Stones' number that's similar, but that doesn't matter. Who else has come close to getting that sound in the last 10 years?

"We're a dance band,

nothing else," yells 'Geldof' after 'Neon Heart' and he constantly exhorts his audience to do better, to give as much as they get. 'Feel So Strange' and 'Kicks' - and there's none of the mindless, blind interpretation of the latter as there was earlier this year. The Geldof philosophy is beginning to get through.

'She's So Modern' and 'Joey' then it's onto a new song - 'Don't Believe What You Read'. But believe this, because they really were superb. 'Do The Rat' and here we see the full extent to which the Rats control their audience. It was incredible to watch people get up onstage, in front of about 3,000 people and crawl around making faces, doing the rat. It was like being at one of those hypnotist shows where the members of the audience are per-

suaded to make complete fools of themselves and enjoy it.

Finally, the master stroke, from 'Mary Of The 4th Form' straight into 'Lookin' After No 1', with no breaks, a steady stream of high energy rock 'n' roll. It was a shame really to come back for an encore after such a perfect ending, but then everyone would have been very disappointed if they hadn't returned to give a lasting memory of 'Born To Burn' and 'Barefootin'.

The Rats' show closes what has been a momentous year for them. I'm sure next year will be even better. **ROSALIND RUSSELL**

THE JAM, Hammersmith Odeon, London

WHITE SHIRT, black tie, white socks, black shoes... Sweet Gene Vincent would be proud of them.

Every group has its own uniform these days but while some of the others overlap around the edges the monochromatic Jam look is quite distinctive. In fact the group and their audience are more or less interchangeably visually - all smartly turned out boys who love their mums. You could stick any of the teenage fads here tonight up on that stage and they'd look quite at home.

Clothes apart, The Jam's stage set is so quaint the Americans are going to love them. Stark white backdrop, the Union Jacks - everything they always dreamed a British group would be.

It's funny... I never thought The Jam quite made it live when they were playing at club level but today the whole thing seems snappier, slicker. They could be the one new wave group who've actually benefited from the move to larger venues.

As for the venue itself though - by the second number the seats in the hall are redundant, just an awkward waste of dancing space. Fortunately the bouncers decide to let things ride and the kids seem content just to pogo in the space in front of their seats. But it's hardly an ideal situation. There must be some unseated venues around London big enough for the likes of The Jam... why can't somebody track them down?

The Jam's music is pop at its most basic. Minimal, even. (Whatever happened to minimalism?) No frills - plenty of thrills though. Amazing what they do with so little. Just three basic instruments, those flatless voices and a bunch of great little pop songs. Especially the singles.

The boys finish with their version of 'In The Midnight Hour', then 'In The City' in finally for the second encore you knew what's coming. 'Take Your Love'. "See you next year," they tell us, and off they go - off across the Atlantic to conquer the States. They'll do it, too - you wait and see. **SHILA PIEROPHET**

STATUS QUO

Hammersmith Odeon, London

ALMOST but not quite there. Quo in a rock 'n' roll - triumphantly - to notch up nearly a half-century of gigs on their current 'Rockin' All Over the UK' tour. Bedded in and belting it out with a two-hour (plus?) set that leaves the howling and baying crowd shattered, silenced... and completely satisfied.

And for this one? First night of four at the nation's biggest Odeon. Let's say a 75 per center

Right from the start it seemed as if London was out to wrest the Quo crown from the established denim army strongholds like Glasgow and Stoke. Up and clapping before the earthquake had even started - hungry for blood and boogie. Singing and stamping in sweaty unison through the build-up.

As I said after the first night of this levathan crawl around the country, the boys have achieved something of an impossible feat. Chopping around a few of the old tried and trusted favourites, adding some of the best new songs - including, of course, the riotously successful 'Rockin' All Over The World' - with the whole new zestful package rounded off with Andy Bown's sterling keyboard work and a light show that puts the Blackpool illuminations to shame has shifted Status Quo into the dynamically superior class.

The sweat and grind and relentless 12-bar still rocks as hard as ever - but perhaps for the first time the Quo are stepping out onto stages with all potential fulfilled.

Control and confidence abounds and they're both professionally controlled and head-shakingly extended in a way that wasn't possible with the entrenched set that became extinguished and immortalised on 'Quo Live'.

Or to put it another way. The devastating barrage of boogie is now more than that. This is top-of-the-tree action. Mature and forward-looking without the loss of any of the guts that got them there in the first place. Watch out.

You've got your jig, all right? You've got your 'Caroline', all right? You've got your 'Roadhouse Blues' and your 'Don't Waste My Time', all right? And all the other whatsnames, all right?

I said it that ALL R I G H T ? "YEEEEAAH!", came back the chorus bouncing off the steaming walls, echoing through the forest of waving arms illuminated in the red spotlights beaming down from a top the mountain of speakers around the stage.

And Quo marched on. See it once and believe it. Before it's too late. Oh, and 100 per cent must be just around the corner. **JOHN SHEAR-LAW**