

Off Centre

Edited by Tim Lott

20th ANNUAL CONVENTION OF BOUNCERS

ROCK GIG STAFF THUGS. Shock Horror probe. Something you'll never see in the Sunday papers. Several recent incidents suggest strong indication that B.B. (bouncer brutality) may be on the up. Draw your own conclusions.

Incident one: concerns an altercation between one Joe Strummer (Clash man) and several Security Supervisors (bouncers to you and me) at London's Marquee Club, last December. An eye witness, Robin Banks, who was with Strummer at the time stated the two were standing at the bar and it was Joe's turn to get 'em in which he proceeded to do with the help of a f10 note. The drinks came to £1.05. Asked for the odd three, Joe promptly produced it and waited for his 50 change. In vain so it seems. According to Banks, Joe complained and the till was checked there and then. All to no avail. Anger mounting, Strummer openly accused the barman. At this point the 'boys' stepped in and grabbed Strummer. Banks interceded and the two were punched and kicked down the corridor to the back door where they were unceremoniously flung out. Shortly after, Banks claimed three more people were turfed out. Their crime? That they had protested at the way Strummer and Banks were treated, and were themselves treated to more of the same.

Roughed up

Strummer, unfortunately, was not available for comment. However I did speak to a close friend who knew of the incident. He said: "Joe was escorted to the door and he did get roughed up a bit. After all it's a long way from the bar to the door isn't it?"

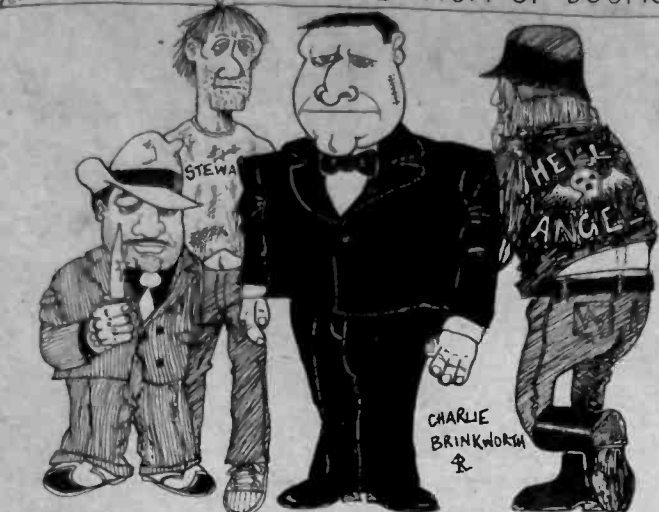
Down at The Marquee I spoke to a Security Supervisor who calls himself Michael. During our conversation he talked of the Strummer incident twice. First account: "When Strummer complained that he had been short changed we closed the bar and checked the till immediately. The count was right and therefore we rejected his claim. He was then asked to leave which he did."

Michael's second account tallies exactly with the first up to the point where Strummer's claim was refused. He then rephrased his last sentence to: "We picked him and his friend up and escorted them to the back door." Quite a dramatic change from his first statement.

Whilst at The Marquee I asked Michael and another doorman about security at The Marquee. I was shown a long heavy chain which had been confiscated from someone that very night.

"We regularly take things off people," said Michael. "Only the other week I took this cut throat razor, off a girl, would you believe."

How do they go about breaking up fights, ejecting people etc.



THE EX-MAFIA EMPLOYEE. HE WILL DO ANYTHING OR ANYONE.

THE JUST OFF THE STREET TYPE. HE DOESN'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT BEING A SECURITY OFFICER. IN FACT HE DOESN'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT ANYTHING.

THE "CLASSIC" STYLE. BELIEVES THAT "THEY DON'T CAUSE MUCH TROUBLE IF YOU BREAK BOTH THEIR LEGS."

THE STRANGLERS FRIEND. THE MOST FASHIONABLE TO HAVE YOUR HEAD KICKED IN BY.

HE AIN'T HEAVY, HE'S A BOUNCER

"Well, we warn them first," said Michael, "and if they keep fighting or start on us we remove them, preferably without force, but we are responsible for the other customers remember and sometimes a certain amount of restraint is necessary. I'd like to stress, very rarely though. If anything gets too out of control we do the obvious thing and call the police."

Violent

Michael agreed with me that there are some bouncers who are unnecessarily violent. Had he ever worked as a steward at a large venue? "Yes I have but some of the guys hired by the promoters for those gigs are really 'heavy'. A lot of them are ex-boxers, weight-lifters and bouncers who have been sacked from clubs for inciting violence. I'd rather not comment any further than that."

Rainbow Manager Albert Pingley didn't seem to share Michael's opinion of stewards hired by promoters.

"We never have any trouble with our bouncers. They all have strict instructions before a show and they follow them to

the letter. We don't have a 'Sit In Your Seats' rule here and the only thing that gets broken is the seats themselves. We're very happy with the way the stewards handle things in this theatre."

Incident two: The tendency among some bouncers to provoke, not protect, was brought home to me outside London's Nashville last Tuesday whilst trying to get in to see the Rich Kids. My friend and I pushed through the crowd and tried to tell the doorman that we were on the guest list. There was a huge crush of people all pushing around the door and my friend was pushed, against his will, through it.

Snarled

"Come one step past that door sonny and you'll be back in that crowd twice as quick," snarled the doorman. If he had carried out his threat a lot of people would have been hurt in the ensuing panic and crush. One Security Supervisor who didn't have the protection of other customers in mind.

Incident Three: A man

has been charged with manslaughter following the death of Henry Bowles, who died after an incident outside The Bell, King's Cross last October. John Godden, a 32-year-old labourer from Berkshire was charged with manslaughter at Clerkenwell Magistrates Court on December 6. Frank Flood, 22, from Islington, was charged with causing grievous bodily harm to Henry. The alleged assault took place outside the Bell, Pentonville Road, on October 22.

Died

We spoke to the landlord of the Bell, and asked him if the two men charged were employed by him as 'Security Supervisors'. He said: "I have no comment to make on the matter at all."

Henry Bowles died in hospital on November 4. Both men were committed to a higher court.

Unfortunately Henry was not available for comment.

MARY ANN ELLIS



"WAYNE JUST wants to be an ordinary housewife, simpers the County spokesperson. Yes folks, it seems the world's ugliest singer is about to achieve his dearest ambition — to become a girlie, just like his dear mama. That much, we agree, is no doubt perfectly possible — they can do wonders with a knife these days. But there ARE limits to the miracles of modern medicine. I mean, just take a look at this pic of our hero — who in their right mind would have HIM for a Puff! SHEILA PROPHET."

CAN'T PLAY a note? Busted your lips around a tuba? Striven manfully to batter drums like John Bonham?

Fear not gentle reader, salvation is at hand. Listen to 'Blaze Away' by Vivian Fisher and you'll know what I mean. It may sound like an army band in full splutter but there isn't an instrument on it. Vivian has skillfully mimicked everything with his voice. I kid you not, he can create everything from a trumpet to a drum roll through the medium of his mouth and throat. It sounds 100 per cent genuine.

Vivian, a 26-year-old sound recording engineer from Eastbourne, was whistling along to a toon one day and has never looked back. By various contortions of his mouth and face shown in graphic detail on the sleeve (don't look if you're of a nervous disposition 'cause it's not a pretty sight) he shows how it's done.

"I like whistling and doing silly voices," says Vivian and at a mix down one night the producer didn't turn up, so I thought I'd have a go and try and record a band."

He multi-tracked his voice, mimicking all the instruments before combining them altogether into a full scale band. His fame has spread. He's appeared with an actual band and he's reached the lofty heights of appearing on Blue Peter and the Pete Murray show.



myself

All mouth and trumpet



"Shep the dog got wildly excited when I performed and jumped up all over me," continues Vivian. "I wouldn't mind doing a whole album of voice music. There are some really stirring tunes, and I get the blood boiling. Actually I can play drums on cornet but I think this is more. It gives you a real sense of achievement." ROBIN SMITH