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To set the record straight, the connection came about through CBS A&R man Dan Loggins sending a short-list of their recent signings to see if Pearlman would be interested in producing any of them. His interest kindled by the album, he opted straightaway for a crack at The Clash.

Pearlman reassures us that The Clash album won't sound like the *sine qua non* of high technology production, unlike the two recent Blue Oyster Cult albums. Which brings us round to the subject of Cult operations.

He says that the reason for his reduced contribution to the Cult song pool on "Agents Of Fortune" and "Spectres" was merely a matter of him being too busy with other projects, and not, as was rumoured, Eric Bloom's refusal to sing Pearlman lyrics because of their near total lack of standard rhyme and meter construction.

Talk of Cult disenchantment with the Pearlman/Krugman tag team production style is also unfounded. The venture into areas of aural foreplay on the above albums was, like all Cult matters, a case of communal decision.

"With 'Spectres'," he admits, "there was a deliberate attempt to make an album that would sell three million units, and beat Fleetwood Mac. I can honestly say I would like to sell three million units. I'm not sure I'd like the psychic burden of being Fleetwood Mac though."

Pearlman's involvement with BOC runs deep; right back to their inception at Stonybrook University. It was he who suggested the original name, Soft White Underbelly, and through his acquaintance with Elektra's Jac Holzman — Pearlman was then a part-time writer for *Crawdaddy* and was once asked to produce The Stooges' first album — got them their first record contract with Elektra.

He is also partly responsible for the hard-core mutant symbolism that pervaded and eventually plagued the Cult.

"In 1970 everyone in this band was walking around in leather and black boots. Whether they looked like axe murderers or not, that was the way they dressed.

"But, yes, I probably had most of the ideas of the presentation of the band to the public."

These ideas, and also his fascinating lyric conjuring, sprang largely from what he calls the enormous stock of *outré* knowledge that he carries about with him.

"I've always been interested in things like technology, science fiction, horror literature, obscure wars; junk information, romantic information."

As will be obvious to anyone who has deciphered his lyrics, he is also keen on arcane history.

"My single favourite year is 1905, because it was a watershed year. The first Russian urban revolution, the defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese war — which was the first time a European power had been defeated from outside — the radical spread of industrialisation all over the world... Einstein formulated the theory of relativity in 1905, and I could go on.

"I'm interested in change: how two eras come upon each other, the old and the new, and there is then either a dynamic or a conflict generated. Or else defective interfaces, where they'd never mesh, and one culture or both cultures, or one tendency or both tendencies, are subsumed in conflict."

Like The Clash coming up against the established American rock order. Interface or defective interface?

PAUL RAMBALI

THRILLS

GRAPES AND FLOWERS FOR MR STRUMMER (WARD 12)

YOU CERTAINLY COULDN'T TELL there was something wrong with the man from the way he went at it onstage in Coventry the previous week. The Clash in general, and Joe Strummer in particular, were just precisely what all the American writers who had been over here said they were: the best band. Period. Patti Smith, Lester Bangs, Robert Cristgau, Beverly Wiltshire... they weren't saying The Clash were the best band in a certain scene, or the best band since this one or that one or the best band except for... No, all reports were the same: The Clash are the Best.

So I stepped off the plane from sunny, healthy California expecting The Clash to be phenomenal live — and they were. And if Joe Strummer performs even better when he isn't yellow and about to go into hospital... well, I can't see how that's really possible.

But be that as it may, two weeks later there he was in Ward 12 of Western Hospital, a placid view of a cemetery out the window, recovering from hepatitis. Hepatitis? Not a very new wave disease, is it?

Hepatitis, see, is usually associated with dirty needles. Not in Strummer's case though — he reckons he got it from being gobbled on. Despite being quite gruesomely ill, he was so agitated he was actually sitting there writing a book about it. He's calling the tome *Saliva Missions*.

"There's a lot of saliva going around," explained Joe. "I'm not saying it's particularly healthy. That's my excuse why I am here. I'm not a junkie, ya see. See, either you're a junkie or you've been licking toilet bowls out or something — or people have been spitting on you for hours on end all over the country. Europe, too, and Ireland.

"See, I got one down my throat in the middle of a tour, and I told it to this guy at a pub, and he told me about a policeman at a football match who got one down his throat and three months later he died of some disease beginning with T. And I said, 'No, you don't say,' and I forgot all about it."

The little health mishap was a bit of a set-back for The Clash, who were all ready to go into the studio with Blue Oyster Cult producer Sandy Pearlman. But then again, being in hospital was giving Joe the opportunity to write some new material. (For inspiration: a TV set, a cassette player and radio and stacks of books, everything from Dashiell

JOE STRUMMER models his bondage pyjamas from a London hospital bed.



Hammett and Genet to a three volume set of Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*.)

"I've been doing some rockabilly stuff," he enthused. For The Clash? "That depends if I can twist their arms hard enough."

Except for the nice view of the cemetery out the window, the only

thing Joe had to look at all day was a poster he'd tacked up on the wall. It's a kind of arty-looking xerox job for a film called *Grutzi Elvis*, due out in May.

"It's about Elvis and the Baader Meinhof gang," explained Joe. Turns out he did two versions of "Heartbreak Hotel" for the flick — a cajun version and a "terrorist version," and the film-maker, Diego Cotez, had been by earlier with the poster.

I figured that as long as Joe was confined to the bed he was obviously too sick to get at me if I antagonised him a bit, so I started explaining how in America a lot of people love The Clash not only because they are a seminal rock'n'roll band, but because lyrically and spiritually they seem to be able to articulate the social passions and frustrations — politics — of all the non-rich young people and...

"It just stems from two songs," he jumped in. "One was called 'White Riot' and the other was called '1977'. It just stemmed from those two songs. I can't see why..."

What about "Career Opportunities" and "Police and Thieves"? "I was prepared to go through the whole repertoire if necessary.

"Well, if that's politics, I'm glad we're politics," he scowled.

Yes, so am I, believe it or not. Why the scowl?

"We always go on the defensive when confronted with this political stuff. We see it as a trap — a hole to get shut up in. We wanna move — in any direction we want, including a political direction. But if everyone is saying, 'Ah, you're political,' then obviously you say, 'Well, fuck you — I'm gonna go down there and get drunk for seven days and seven nights and then I'm gonna go over there and get smacked out of my head and then I'm gonna go over there and fall in a canal. Fuck your ideas.' And then shrug it off.

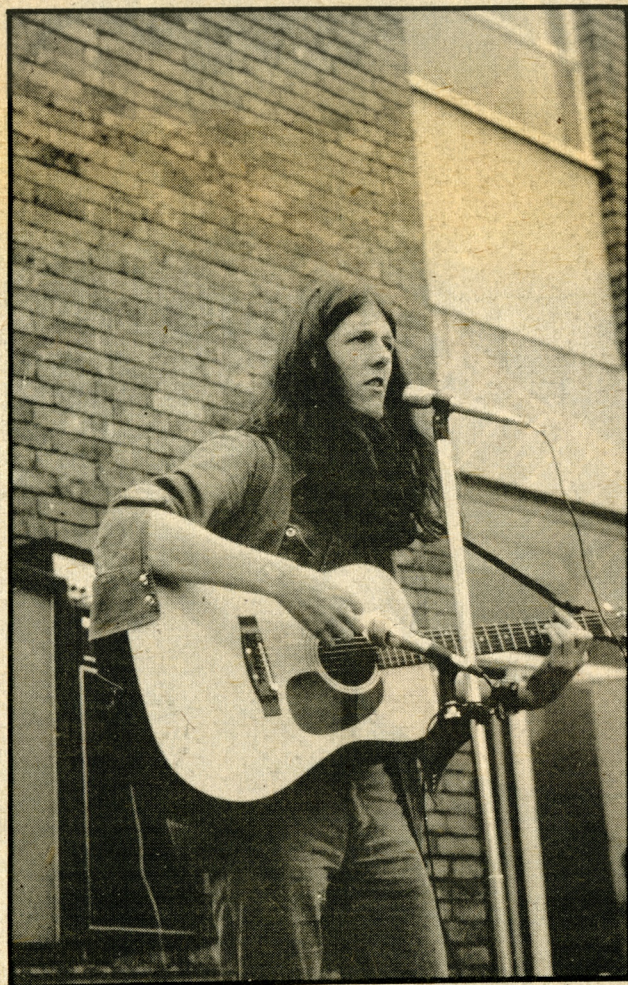
"It's just force of habit when anyone mentions the word 'politics'. We kind of go into a defensive, boring monologue — like this. But the thing about the defensive thing — they were using it to put us down. And for a time in London it was really hip. People were going, 'Oh, the Clash — they're too political.' A lot of people were putting us down."

How The Clash will resolve this dilemma remains to be seen. Joe is now out of hospital and back at the rehearsal studio, getting back on course for the new album. Meanwhile their American record company wants the band to de-politicise and become more commercial (like in maybe-you-should-try-somebody-else's-songs-boys).

From his hospital bed, Joe looked up and gave a sickly yellow smile. "We," he said, "will do whatever we want."

JACK BASHER

THRILLS



Even bright young Beatle babies cannot escape from...

BLACKMAIL CORNER

CALLING ALL Power Pop fans! Recognise the young man strumming his gittar on your left? No? Well pay heed to the words of the one who sent the picture, a resident of Guildford by the name of Paul Cook (surely no relation?):—

"Here's a photo you might be interested in. It shows Nick Powell of The Pleasers going through his "White Album" stage during the summer of 1975. Although he couldn't afford to go to India, he did get a job as a manure subsidy clerk at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food in Guildford, which was to exert a great influence on his future musical career."

Couldn't have put it better ourselves.

Below: THE PLEASERS circa '78.



The Lone Groover

BENYON