

Roadshows



CLASH: joined in with the shouting

clash, bang, wallop

THE CLASH Queensway Hall, Dunstable

I HAVE a proverbial bee in my proverbial bonnet, and it's no good trying to write about this gig without airing the damn thing.

The bee in question is the hordes of suburban thugs who chose the Clash concert for a jamboree. Headbanging's fine if you stick to your own head, but there was a large contingent amongst the armies of Clash fans whose main concern was to get drunk, fight and prove to one another what big men they were.

It was these sheep who gave short shrift to both support bands. Modelmania got through most of their set before being pelted off with a barrage of missiles of all description. This idiocy prompted a visit from Joe Strummer who, when hit in the face by a can from point blank range, demonstrated the art of cool by stepping down to the level of the offender for a verbal confrontation. Three guesses who won.

It was when the French all-girl band The Lous came on that things turned really heavy. There was such a bombardment of cans and sundry that after two songs and a physical assault upon one member they were hauled off-stage never to return. Mick and Paul put in an appearance to try to quieten the crowd, but there was no chance of The Lous being allowed back to play what had promised to be a great set.

The morons who had booed The Lous off were now calling for action, and so at 9.35 when The Clash stepped onstage to fire straight into 'Complete Control' the hall became just one seething mass of bodies.

I won't try to explain that they played XYZ with

two new chord changes and a drum solo, because not only would it be unnatural to attempt a cross-examination of their performance, but it would be a downright insult to all concerned. No-one was there to listen to carbon copies of old favourites, they all had the records at home for that, they were there to get high on the music, charisma and sheer power the Clash generate.

It's the power that's the key to their success. It's in the songs, the definable anthems, intense lyrics, no wishy-washy sentiments or nostalgia, just clear cut words and music of today. It's in their actions, wild and urgent stumbling at times, yet continually in motion. But it's the power that hangs in the air, just out of reach of both band and audience that is the most potent, that is the communication between You and Them. If you miss anything in those precious minutes it's only your own fault, cos you're only going to get as much out of it as you put in.

The reggae influence of course is growing. The only true reggae song in the set, Junior Marvin's 'Police and Thieves' fitted in as though it was one of their own, although the change in tempo had a stunning effect. For me it was that moment when the concert, nay event, took over completely. Forget note-making, I'd get more from joining in the riot than from a book full of clinical observations.

'USA', Janie Jones' and 'Garageland' finished it off in a surreal dream. They had to do 'White Riot' in the encore even if there were so many people on stage it became an instrumental.

That could be ignored, cos everyone was singing along anyway. It's a pity I didn't leave then, because the can and bottle throwing stint between those on the stage and those on the floor can only be described as sick. That was too real to ignore. KELLY PIKE

DEAF SCHOOL College of Art, Maidstone

'DEAF SCHOOL' "What?" "Deaf School." "What?" "DEAF SCHOOL" "Alright, no need to shout!" "I have got a Sore Throat now."

Unfortunately it seems that the wide scale success of any band depends too heavily upon its image fitting in with the current trend, whatever that may be. But, if you can remember enjoying art school rock, post-Roxy Music and pre-new wave, then Deaf School and support group Sore Throat are a good package to go and see, since both groups seem to be cast in a similar mould, although both possess their own individual style, and each has a slightly different musical emphasis.

Sore Throat lean more towards rock 'n' roll than Deaf School, who are distinctly rooted in jazz, yet both are essentially showbands, with an air of the theatrical and an eye for the dramatic.

The visual aspect was therefore of great importance with Sore Throat relying upon a weird uniformity of dress for their impact whereas Deaf School rely upon nothing but out and out weirdness for theirs.

Deaf School are in fact a group of eight distinctly different personalities, onstage, with each putting on his own private show so that it is impossible to catch everything that goes on. This does, to a certain extent, detract from the front line trio of Enrico Cadillac, Erik Shark and the exquisite Betty Bright, but it does also serve to hold the interest.

'Where's The Weekend', 'Thunder And Lightning', their new single, and their anthem 'What A Way To End It All' went down particularly well in a set of a great variety of mood which showed how Deaf School defy categorisation. A fact which is both a hindrance and also the source of much of their bizarre charm.

So if Deaf School either tire of being either ahead or behind the times, to achieve great commercial success, they would have to sacrifice much of their spontaneity and thus for my appeal for as they don't say on TV talent shows, they may be high on Presentation, Content and Entertainment Value but they have so far been heavily lacking in Star Quality. GARETH KERSHAW

THE SAINTS Marquee, London

AFTER BEING attacked by some crazed woman on my way to the bar, I retreated, somewhat nervously, to the back, thinking this homicidal loon might be representative of the Saints' Supporters - (Marquee Murder - Man Pogged To Death?) But I was very much mistaken. The Saints have been

branded a punk band by virtue of their opener 'I'm Stranded', but punk they certainly ain't. Anarchy and singer Chris Bailey have very little in common - mope-headed, and almost friendly, he has a strong soulful rock style. All the songs are imaginatively arranged around his lyrics: heavy rhythm chords used sparingly, neatly wedged lead breaks, and at times, as in 'Demolition Girl', the backing fading out to accentuate Bailey's improvised vocals, then crashing back into a wall of sound climax.

An ambitious move to play 'River Deep, Mountain High' and 'Runaway' - both heavy rock versions (hard to imagine?), yet a wasted opportunity for vocal harmonies.

But enter stage left a horn section (two saxes and a trumpet), decked out in luredos, bow ties, etc, looking appalled by the liquid reception they were given. Gracefully dodging flying missiles, they provided exactly what I felt had been lacking - a fuller sound, and the catchy harmonies needed to bring out all the hooks. 'Know Your Product' and 'Orstralla', both from the new album, supplied an energy burst that kicked the show into overdrive.

They ended with 'Lipstick On Your Collar', an Oscar-winning performance by Bailey, moaning through uncontrollable sobs, as he draped himself romantically round one of the horn players.

Apart from being far too long, (18 numbers is way over the energy limit), an impressive set from a band spawned by the new wave, but heading into the realms of revitalised rock. MARK ELLAN

RADIO STARS Dingwall's, London

SO YOU'VE heard the single 'Nervous Wreck', been intrigued by it, and you want to know more about Radio Stars. If you hoped they were an inventive band with a sense of humour, as this song would suggest, you may be in for a bit of a disappointment.

At Dingwall's last week the band were really much less entertaining than they should have been. The song titles were often interesting - 'Macaroni And Mice', 'Dirty Pictures' and 'No Russians In Russia' for example - and so were the lyrics, like "I hold your love just like a hole in the head" from 'Don't Waste My Time' - but the actual music was often very ordinary and it was difficult to distinguish between numbers on this first hearing. Difficult, that is, except for 'Nervous Wreck', which is an amazing contrast to their other material. It's more or less out-and-out pop, and looks like being a hit because of that, but not so the rest of the set.

Marlin Gordon's bass and Ian McLeod's lead guitar create a solid wall of noise, not unlike that of the Sex Pistols. In fact the similarity might not be accidental

- lead singer Andy Ellis comes over as a rather more acceptable version of Johnny Rotten.

I hope the Stars' album title 'Songs For Swinging Lovers' is meant as a joke, because their songs just don't fit that description. Radio Stars they are, Television Stars they are becoming after the TOTP appearance. Fully Qualified Stars they may become - but not for me. PAUL SEXTON

MILLIE JACKSON Odeon, Hammersmith

MILLIE TORE up the Odeon with seven brilliant songs and a series of raps that shows she is capable of getting an audience to eat out of her hand.

You can take her two ways. First and foremost she is one of the greatest singers to sing soul that we have seen here for a long time. Her best songs are classics, the openings to 'If Loving You is Wrong, I Don't Want to Be Right' and 'Loving Arms' are enough to send shivers up and down your spine. She lives up to her legend and surpasses it with the ferocity of her singing displaying just what real soul means. If she had sung these songs without her raps, I would have said that she is one of the greatest performers I have ever seen. As it is I came out of this concert more depressed than I have ever been by a concert.

Millie is billed as the 'Liberated Ms Millie Jackson' but in reality Millie is ultimately as liberated as a Mary Whitehouse that has suddenly decided to tell everyone about her sexual fantasies. Okay, so talking about sex on stage is some kind of step forward from pretending that it doesn't exist at all, but Millie is just reinforcing the stereotype of the superstud. She wants a man that is going to give it to her when she wants it and he is going to have to be good because she is good.

'What's your name,' she asks one of the photographers in the pit. 'Junior, well you'll be Junior when you've finished with me.' She reminded me of Mae West at that moment except that Mae's irony and humour about men sets her apart as an individual, whilst Millie concentrates all her attention on making sure that her dependence on men is satisfied. The key word is dependence. Millie looks, at first sight, as though she is breaking the rules and that's why the audience loved her, but the wig on her head contradicts her black pride and her trouser suit just as the tricks she has learnt although not outwardly as submissive as the conventional female role are all to do with submission to her man.

Millie needs to learn that although it may be a start to play the game within the current rules and be able to win in her own way, the important thing is to change the rules of the game. GEOFF TRAVIS

RUNAWAYS Whisky, Los Angeles

I'VE SAID it before and I'll say it again. The Runaways weren't OK, they were good, bloody good, getting better all the time. (Must have been something those Japs did to them - or was it just that Joan Jett makes such a fine lead singer?)

It's been a few months since the new fine-up, minus Cherrie and Jackie and introducing Vicki Blue on bass, who had the boys drooling at the Whisky. Quite a lot's been happening since then, including a visit to Britain and some new songs. (Quite a lot's been happening for their manager, living legend Jim Fowley, too. He's taken on / discovered a

Getting better all the time

new all-girl band, younger than the Runaways, and rockabilly singers to boot. But that's a whole new story. The punters tonight (and it was full) seemed glad to see the sweet young things back.

The set opened with 'Wasted', a solid, tough song from their new album, followed by 'Blackmail', vicious, bitchily beautiful, featuring fine, basic drums and bass, a real sense of rock and roll. 'Queens of Noise' next, virtually a theme song, full, ripe

and biting - come and get it boys; that is, if you don't mind having your head smashed all over town.

If such a scathing song can be called lovely, 'You're Too Possessive', from the new album, was just that. (Whatever happened to Nice Girls like Lulu?) 'Wanna Be Where The Boys Are', very sensible song -

title, was greeted with cheers and leers aimed more at the teasing efforts of Lita Ford on lead guitar shoe-horned into a black leathery garment which

didn't leave too much to the imagination than at the loud, punchy, rocker of a song 'Playing With Fire' shows, above all others, that Ms Joan Jett is as capable of kick-ass rock and roll as any male of the species to cross the Whisky threshold, and set a closer 'Schooldays', the British single, was performed with such passion that the guy on the table next to mine split his lager down his bondage pants.

Yes, it was good show, but then again it usually is. The Runaways seem to be getting more and more confident with every performance, and it shows, before long it won't be just the Japanese who give them gold records. And about time too. SILVIE SIMMONS