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new MUSICAL EXPRESS

A night
in the cells with
THE CLASH



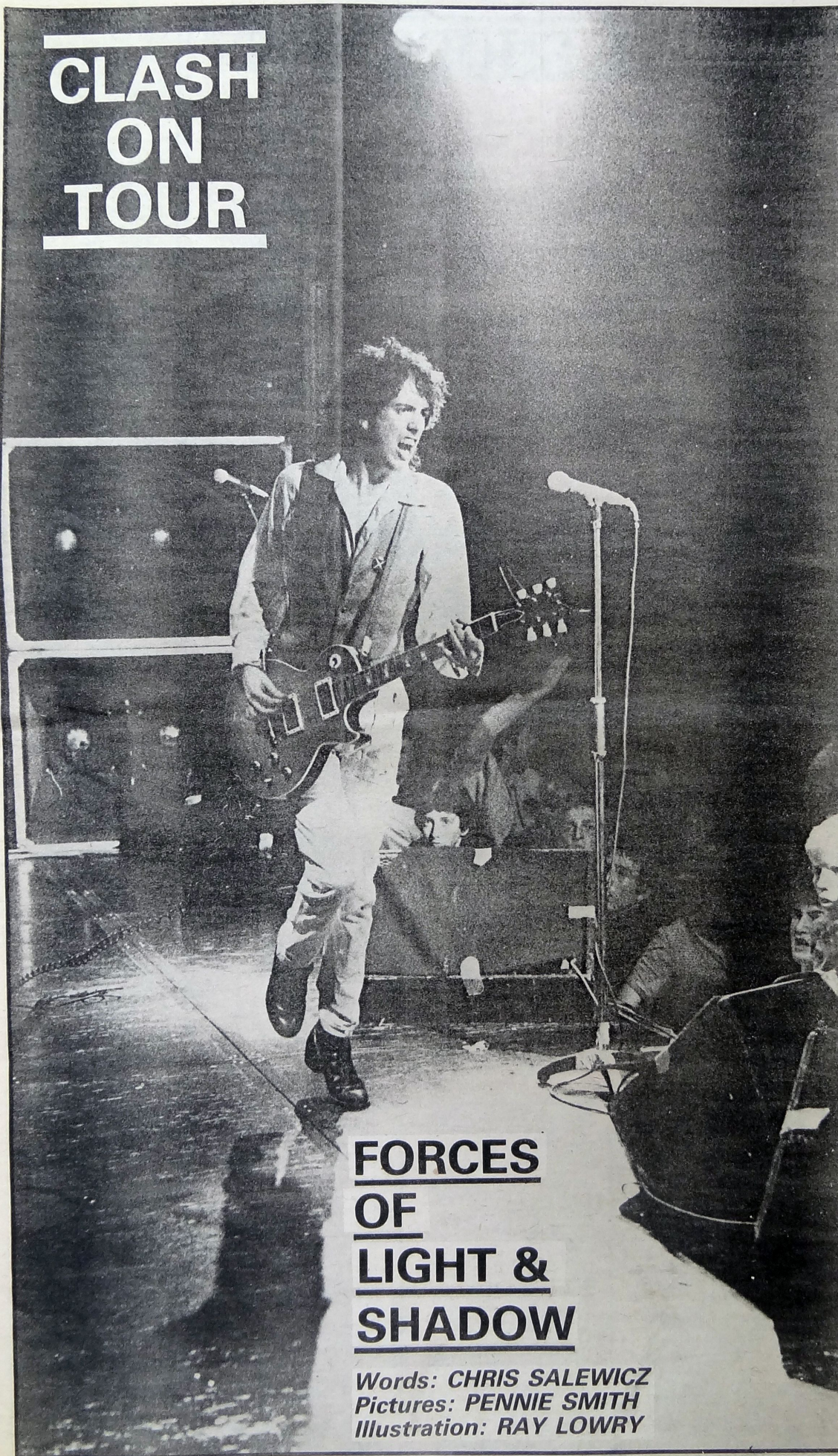
**JONES,
MICHAEL**

Age: 23
.....
Occupation:
Guitarist in a bloody good rock band
(Subject of bloody long feature P.27-30)

Aus. 45c NZ. 45c Dep. 45c S. Fr. 45c Ger.
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pic: PENNIE SMITH

CLASH ON TOUR



FORCES OF LIGHT & SHADOW

Words: CHRIS SALEWICZ
Pictures: PENNIE SMITH
Illustration: RAY LOWRY

IT'S AS IF THE Clash's "Police And Thieves" stage backdrop has suddenly transmogrified into moving 3-D.

The scene: the cobbled street down the side of the Glasgow Apollo. Round about midnight.

The dramatis personae: The Clash, fifty to sixty Clash fans, Clash drivers and security guys, an indeterminate number of members of the Glasgow constabulary.

The sound:
C-R-U-N-C-H!!!

There it goes again: Paul Simonon, impeccably street-cool despite the Johnsons royal-blue shot-silk suit and Scotch House scarlet cashmere sweater, sinking down on his DMs onto the damp cobbles in a perfect staccato frozen-frame sequence as the back of his neck becomes the object of a manic, self-brutalising, truncheon-waving charge by an anorak-clad plainclothes Glasgow cop.

It's a disgusting incident. Highly emotive, riddled with flashes and waves of fear and terror and shock.

There's a whole pattern of ironies binding this little scenario together: the Apollo bouncers, the police, even some of the kids outside the back of the theatre, all hating The Clash because The Clash threaten the basic status quo on which their hatred has been erected. As the plainclothes cops suddenly emerge, chain-weighted truncheons in hand, from the shadows, they stir up eerie images of battles between the forces of good and evil.

BACKSTAGE BEFORE the Apollo gig, a Glaswegian punk is haranguing Simonon. "You still doin' all that politics stuff? That's not music."

"It's not politics," Simonon replies, taking a hit from a bottle of Smirnoff vodka. "It's just the difference between right and wrong."

"Yeah. But a lot of punks don't understand the politics. They're just here for the music."

"Well," Simonon shakes his head, "I don't understand it either. I just know what's right and wrong. Like closing this place — that's wrong."

There's something horribly appropriate in The Clash being the last rock band ever to play the Glasgow Apollo — always (in)famous for having some of the best rock audiences and the most psychotic bouncers in the UK — before it's turned into a bingo hall.

More than any other band, The Clash really do *care* — no, not *care*, *love* — their audiences. And, by extension, their fellow-men, though maybe that's another matter.

Anyway, the bouncers, apparently, have long been standing by for this night.

Tonight's the night, Jimmy, when they get their own back on the kids. "Here!" One of them proudly pulls up his vest to show the band's 'personal', Steve English. "This scar's from the David Bowie show. And this one's from The Faces. And this" (he shows a thick welt across his belly) "is from the last time The Clash played here."

The instant the band hit the stage it's like the Apocalypse is upon us and performing live in the stalls. Poging kids being dragged to the back of the hall and having the shit kicked out of them . . . Poging kids having the shit kicked out of them in front of the stage . . .

"I'M SICK OF BLOOD. I'M SICK OF FUCKIN' BLOOD." Joe Strummer backs off from the mike and shakes his head to himself after pleading with the bouncers and kids to stop attempting to dismember each other.

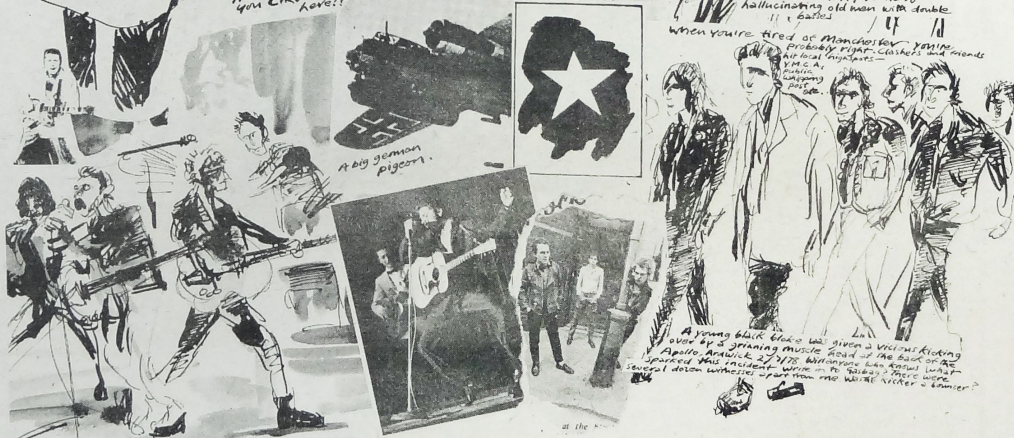
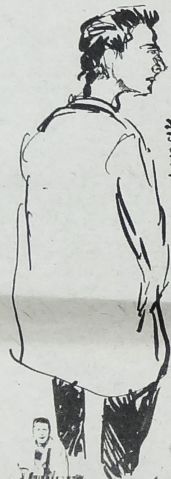
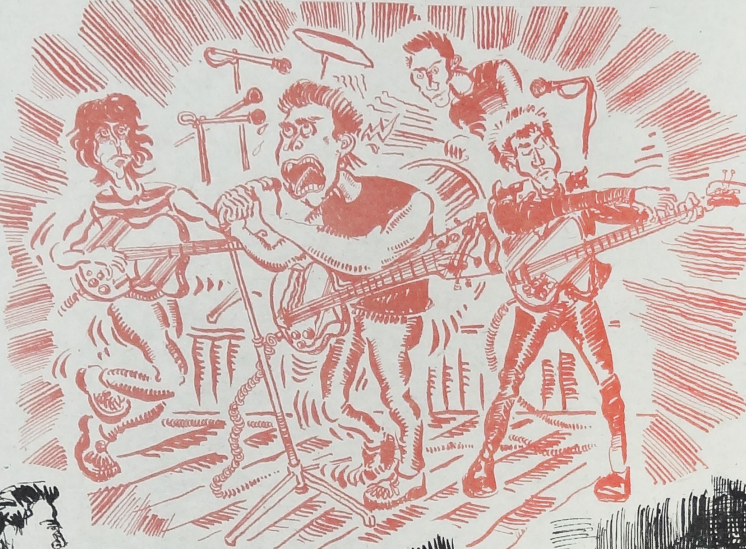
They do stop. A little bit. But there are still obscene sights like a bouncer with shoulder-length hair diving head-first off the front of the

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ELECTRICAL SHOCKERS

CLASH OUT

ON PAROLE



♦ From previous page

orchestra pit onto the heads of the audience...

As he's coming off the stage, one of the bouncers is waiting in the wings for Joe. Whisky-breathed, he leans six inches away from Strummer's face: "Ah'm gonna have y-e-e-ew."

The word is that the bouncers are intending to come up to the dressing-room to tear the band apart limb from limb. They are detained, however, by a young lady whom the theatre management have thoughtfully hired to stand on the stage and remove her clothes and do clever tricks with bottles.

Meanwhile, the band, Strummer with a bottle of lemonade in his right hand, head for the car that's parked just a few yards away from the stage-door.

As soon as they're out the door Joe is screamed at by kids who'd been kicked out of the theatre by bouncers. "Why'd you no' do anything to help us?" berates a guy who was beaten on and kicked out for pogoing during the first number. "Ye're jes' big eoged pop stars," snarls another.

Strummer, who'd been in tears after the gig over the way the fans had been treated, swears back and exasperatedly flings his bottle of lemonade onto the road. Instantly his arms are grabbed by two uniformed cops who've appeared from nowhere. As he's dragged out into the road, both uniformed and plainclothes cops appear to emerge from every crack in the pavement.

Simonon moves in to attempt to drag Strummer free... which is where you came in.

Topper Headon is chased up the road and manages to slip away and get back up into the dressing-room where Bernie Rhodes, the band's manager, is entertaining an American promoter who maintains he's never seen anything like the scenes he's just witnessed inside the theatre.

Mick Jones is dragged away in a state of total shock by some fans, who smuggle him through the prow-car filled streets and back to the band's hotel...

STRUMMER, ONE of his brothel creeper laces replaced with a guitar string, and

Simonon spend the night in the cells. "The people inside," says Strummer later, "the people up for drinking and nicking, they really treated us great. Giving us dog-ends and stuff."

A certain new wave spirit is maintained by the arrested punk fans spending much of the night singing chorus after chorus of "The Prisoner", the B-side of "White Man" in Hammersmith Palais.

Contrary to the fears of those waiting for the pair back at the hotel, neither Joe nor the bassist have too rough a time of it down the police station — although as Joe points out, "Just as we were leaving for the last time one of the cops on the door said to the one in charge of us, 'How come you didn't beat them up? Are you reformed or something?'"

"So I suppose they could've done that. But it never really seemed on the cards."

The magistrates court where the pair appear the next morning — both are on breach of the peace charges, with Simonon also charged with something like "attempting to free a prisoner" — reeks of austere, tiled Scottish Calvinism.

After a whole troop of casualties — crippled eighty-year-old drunks, 18-year-old hookers — have been led before the magistrate for him to sharpen his wit on, Strummer, appearing under his real name of Joseph Mellors, is called.

So authentic is Strummer's quite classic Brando slouch — head to one side, left lower lip hanging open, hands thrust deep in the pockets of his semi-drape jacket — that the real Gorbals heavies on the front bench of the visitors gallery turn round and nudge each other respectfully.

"Do you understand the charge against you?" demands the clerk of the court.

"Yeah," snarls Joe.

"Yeah what?" interrupts the magistrates.

"Yeah, sir," Joe snaps back sullenly.

"What is the name of your group?" enquires the magistrate.

"Vuh Clash," Joe enunciates proudly.

"How appropriate," titters the magistrate, just like he's seen them do in court-room scenes at the movies, too.

Both Strummer and Simonon, whose appearance is something of a replay of Joe's, plead guilty. (Hey Joe, how come Paul pleaded guilty when he was quite obviously innocent? "Cos I told him to. So we could get on to Aberdeen.")

Joe is fined £25, whilst Paul, who must be especially punished for going to the assistance of a friend, has to cough up £45.

As each leaves the court to pay their fines, the hard man poses are dropped and first Joe, then Paul, beams the kind of broad smirk that the bad kids in class always used to have on tap for walking back to their desks after they'd just been slipped in front of the whole form.

In the street outside the court Strummer turns to Simonon and grins: "Maybe it was a mistake calling this tour 'Clash On Parole'."

ALTHOUGH HE BELIEVES himself to have "trouble with words" and had equal difficulty adding up, Clash bassist Paul Simonon is actually far more articulate than the average rock musician.

Like guitarist and group founder Mick Jones, Simonon spent the early years of his childhood in Brixton, South London. Also like Jones, the bassist is the product of a broken marriage — although both would appear to present strong arguments for the single parent family.

In fact, Simonon tells me, it was because his father was always looking for some place to dump him for a few days that Paul became interested in art.

Sent out to stay with a painter friend of his dad's in East Acton when he was about seven, Paul waited until the artist had gone out one day and then sat down with a book of paintings by Matisse and copied them all out in pencil. "After a while," he tells me, "you find you can like draw a woman with just one flowing line."

Sitting in his Earls Court flat following a secret pre-tour warm-up gig in Fulham, Simonon recalls how he first came to join the band.

Mick Jones and Generation X bassist Tony James were attempting to get the London SS out of the rehearsal studio and onto some kind of stage, when Simonon turned up one day from the exclusive Byam Shaw art school in Holland Park, to which he had a scholarship, and, as a perfect David Bowie lookalike, auditioned for the role of lead singer by singing the words "I'm a roadrunner, I'm a roadrunner" over and over for ten minutes until he was requested to stop.

Later, Jones looked him up again and told him that if he wanted to be the bass player in a new group he was forming then he (Jones) would teach him.

Since taking up the bass and joining The Clash, Simonon feels his drawing and painting have suffered. "But then," he says, pouring me out a cup of tea, "I'm getting better on the bass all the time. I just want to transfer that simplicity from drawing and painting to bass playing, to say an incredible amount with just one flowing line of notes just like Leonardo used to paint."

Leonardo Da Vinci, in fact, is one of Paul Simonon's major influences. All he wanted to do when he went to the Byam Shaw was to learn how to draw cars and tower-blocks "in the style of Leonardo." Going into the bed-room of his flat to get me a Clash tour poster, he shows me one of his paintings, a stark, sinister car dump with (almost a Clash cliché) the Westway as background.

Simonon learnt his bass technique by playing along with The Ramones, the Pistols and reggae records. Although a skinhead in his early teens, he claims he never actually got into their field sport of Pakki-bashing, though he didn't blanch at going thieving down Pakistani supermarkets.

West Indians, though, were viewed very defiantly. "When I was at school in South London I used to always want to be mates with the hardest kids in school. So I could get to figure 'em out. And most of those guys tended to be black."

"Anyway, I used to hate all that Deep Purple and Hawkwind stuff and just listen to reggae 'cos I was a skinhead. Those reggae records really used to say a lot to me. Some of them really meant quite a lot."

As an English bassist who doesn't stick himself away back by the amps but chooses instead to move and dance about by the mike, Simonon is something of an iconoclast. And that's just for starters. "I want to be able to stick the bass behind my neck

and the sho... has... lips... it, fl... ligh... cou... been... doin... carp... A... at Si... Si... me t... new... reco... for w... studi... sum... At... with... they... regga... himse... get a... some... (thoug... studi... the b... Sand... Gene... The... Pearl... seen... that... trans... rather... becom... Not... Indee... The... the... wo... — in... the... co... band... appear... plus Jo... the ear... band's... all the... emric... streng... What... should... Gang... does se... these... left," M... he'll la... fairly s... who ar... he sees... rock'n... Bein... though... the ban... themse... and Str... Peckin... outlaw... whose l... last reli... Exce... are not... forerun... advance... New A... on rock... fall... T... at... fu... Altho... big a hi... Clash h... singles... Control... anthem... now the... (Man) I... Probably... Of co... had an... chalked... away fr... probabl... Basic... band's... finally... though... there fu... dealing... The Cl... them a... List... on in t... the Cl... second... land... Par... "ea..."

and play it like Jimi Hendrix played the guitar. Really elevate its status. Show people all the possibilities that it has in its simplicity."

He puts a Rothmans between his lips, flicks his Zippo lighter but holds it, flaming, in front of him without lighting the cigarette. "The last couple of years," he muses, "have been like being born again."

"Although I did always believe in doing the best in everything that I did... Even if it was only carrying carpets."

AH YES, THAT CLASH Pursuit Of Excellence that is the prime reason for my being at Simonon's... Simonon, in fact, is about to play me the rough tapes of some of the new material The Clash have recorded for their next LP, the record for which the group have been in the studios laying down tracks since last summer.

After the slightly abortive alliance with Lee Perry — apparently whilst they wanted Scratch to give them a reggae production, the Upsetter himself was anxious to learn how to get a 'punk' sound — the band spent some months working on their own, though mainly only in the rehearsal studio, until the sudden appearance at the beginning of this year of one Sandy Pearlman, Witchfinder General for Blue Oyster Cult.

The introduction of the American Pearlman into the Clash camp can be seen as just one pointer to the fact that The Clash have now indubitably transcended 'punk' — in its musical rather than social definition — and become A Rock Band.

Not just any rock band, mind you. Indeed, it is probable that right now The Clash are the finest rock band in the world. The hassles of the past year — finding the right record producer, the constant frictions between the band and record company and, it appears, with their management too, plus Joe Strummer's hepatitis bout in the early months of this year and the band's regular run-ins with the law — all these troubles appear to have enriched the band with new inner strength and righteous power.

Whatever, it's fitting that the band should have cut a track entitled "Last Gang In Town" — because that really does seem to be how The Clash see themselves. "We're the only one left," Mick Jones tells me, though he'll later qualify that by offering a fairly substantial list of other outfits who are trying to remain true to what he sees as the essential spirit of rock 'n' roll.

Being on tour with The Clash, though, you do gradually begin to see the band as they seem to see themselves — or certainly as Jones and Strummer view it: like Peckinpah's vision of the Western outlaw in *The Wild Bunch*, the loners whose high moral sense is one of the last relics of another time.

Except that in The Clash's case they are not anachronisms but the forerunners of better times. The advance guards, the emissaries of the New Age when Babylon's flaky hold on rock music (and on life) will finally fall.

THE CLASH now appear to be approaching the future from firm foundations.

Although none of them has been as big a hit as it should have been, The Clash have put out a trio of classic singles in the subversive "Complete Control", their very own group anthem in "Clash City Rockers" and now the near-epic ballad "White Man In Hammersmith Palais", probably the best single of 1978 so far.

Of course, had "Capital Radio" had an official release you could have chucked that up as four classic singles... but the band decided to give it away free instead. Still, Jah was probably quite happy about that.

Besides, "Capital Radio", along with "Complete Control", is being included on the U.S. release of the band's first LP. American CBS are finally beginning to wise up and, though it seems unlikely that anyone there fully understands what they're dealing with, they do at least see that The Clash are capable of earning them a large amount of money.

Listen, there is a lot of magic going on in the rough tapes Simonon plays me. All the indications are that when The Clash do finally release their second album it will be a rock music landmark.

Particularly notable are —
 • "Safe European Home". Written



Above: PAUL SIMONON and friend

after Strummer and Jones returned to England from their trip to Jamaica shortly before Christmas of last year. Originally the lyrics were some fifty lines long, now shortened to twenty. (Much of the material the band have recorded was written, incidentally, whilst the pair were tucked away in their room at the Pegasus Hotel, Kingston, a matter to which we will return later. Topper Headon, incidentally, claims that they didn't just do a *bit* of writing whilst out in JA, but that the band's songwriting duo actually turned out some two and a half albums' worth of tunes.)

• "Guns On The Roof". The first Clash number to be co-authored by all the band. Details the Simonon/Headon pigeon-shooting incident, of which both Mick Jones and I heartily disapprove.
 • "Stay Free". A Mott The Hoople-like anthem written and sung entirely by Jones, about the gang he was in at school. A great, stirring number that could be a Top Five single hit were it not for the number of four-letter words.
 • "Tommy Gun". An uptempo rocker, as they were once described, that is fast becoming an onstage fave. None of the lyrics seem decipherable.

Other titles? "Julie's In The Drug Squad", "Groovy Times Are Here Again", "Scrawl On The Bathroom", "One Emotion" and the very excellent "Cheapskates".

It should not necessarily be assumed that any of these songs will be on the album, however.

JOURNEYING UP TO Glasgow from the Manchester gigs — in addition to the scheduled Sunday theatre date, The Clash also played a 'secret' gig at Rafter's Club the following day — Mick Jones and I have the choice of either a very cramped car or the wonder of British Rail InterCity.

As Jah has specially delayed the Royal Scot by nearly two hours, we pick it up at Preston three minutes after disembarking from the commuter train that brought us from Manchester.

This ensures that we arrive at the hotel in Glasgow at exactly the same minute as the rest of the band, thereby dismissing manager Bernie Rhodes' taunt that Jones was only travelling this way to be 'flash', and that he would inevitably cause that evening's show to be delayed.

The group founder, Jones, like Simonon and Strummer, is a product of the English art school system.

While the rhythm section, and particularly the bassist, provide the truly primal punk aspects of The Clash, the central core of the group's being appears to emanate from Jones, with Strummer operating as an

external expression of that soul. (It is interesting to note that although Strummer and Simonon are both fire signs — Leo and Sagittarius respectively — both Jones and Headon are Cancers, a water sign. Though logically one might expect the water to cancel out the fire, it seems reasonable to surmise that that indefinable warm tension within The Clash is a direct result of this astrological chemistry.)

Settling back in the empty dining-car which we've found, Jones crushes an empty Coke can in his right hand and soliloquises on his craft. "Rock 'n' roll really is an art form — the most immediate there is, the most vital in terms of reaching out to the masses.

"But maybe one day if this all becomes dissatisfying I might go back to painting. Though it's one of the most introverted existences there is.

"Every morning when you get up and go and look at what you've done the previous day, in those moments you almost have to examine every aspect of your life. And if you're a painter — or an artist of any sort, come to that — then it's a full-time existence.

"I've no patience with people who claim to be artists and then just talk about it. Just get on with it whatever you're doing."

Sandy Pearlman, Jones tells me, just appeared to "arrive" one day.

"There's definitely some inner magic circle — whether conscious or otherwise — within rock 'n' roll. We've encountered it enough times already to be certain of that. People seem to have been sent to see us, to tell us we're on the right path, to tell us to keep it up."

"I think Pearlman definitely saw in us all the possibilities of that *black* side of rock 'n' roll. He immediately seemed to see in us another possibility for what he really wanted to do with the Blue Oyster Cult. He knows the Cult don't really do it. And he knows we know it, too."

Working with Pearlman began to appear something like the Grand Quest. Which it was/is as far as the U.S. division of CBS is concerned: The Quest For A Hit Album.

As the producer has laboured in Island's Basing Street studio until six every morning, making the band go through as many as twenty takes of each track, executives from CBS in New York have flown in to check out the progress. As the tapes have been played back to these upwardly mobile young men, it has sometimes been necessary for all four members of The Clash to be present in order to have enough people coughing and

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