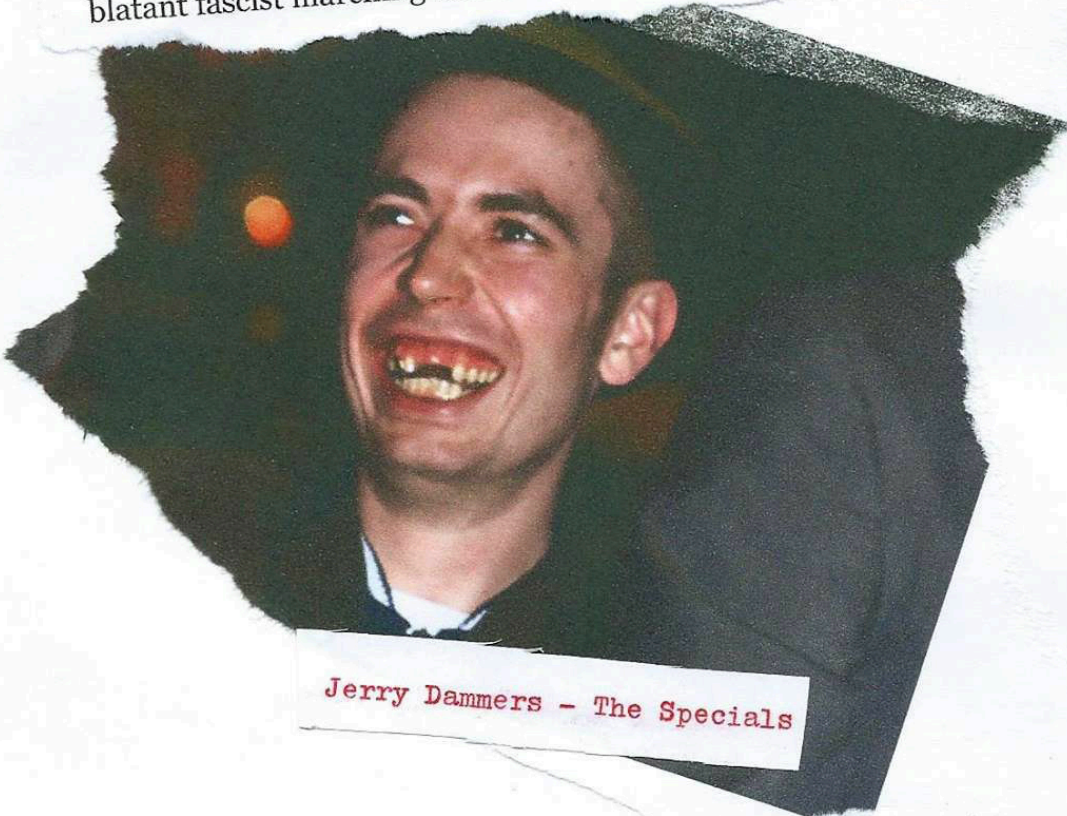


hate & war

// The Specials were involved early on playing at RAR gigs, even before we headlined the Leeds RAR concert in 1981. We were coming up as a band at the same time as RAR. The whole atmosphere was very anti-racist and that was reflected in our lyrics. Songs like "Doesn't Make It Alright" were influenced by V C the whole atmosphere of the time. Everybody was working together on a common cause.

I remember the Leeds concert well because, as we were coming in on the coach, the National Front had organised a march on the same day. It was a pretty scary sight; they looked very sinister with all their Union Jacks. It was chilling to see blatant fascist marching in Britain.



They don't march any more; that's one of the achievements of RAR. The trouble is, they are more insidious. They try to be more respectable but basically it's the same thing. At this time, RAR knocked them as they were gaining votes, and played a huge part in defeating them. They still work as a pressure group on the mainstream parties, who pretend to be against them, but are influenced by scaremongering, such as about immigration. I don't think immigration is an issue, but it's in the media the whole time. ♪

Its time was right. For me, the music of the 1970s was The Eagles and "Hotel California", which had nothing whatsoever to do with the young people in the estates – and in the affluent areas, too. Along came this new music that was open to new ideas – people were doing it in their garages and their bedrooms. It was just so exciting and it was exactly at that time that RAR was formed.

Syd Shelton - Founder member of the first RAR carnival

The carnival came about after a year of RAR gigs and concerts and the formation of the Anti Nazi League. We wanted to give people space to stand against the Nazis. It was not about individuals, but organisations helping to set it up. We played it by ear – there was nothing corporate about organising the first carnival. We had sympathetic stage builders and volunteer guards. We wanted the carnival in the East End of London, the heart of the working class where the National Front were trying to build a following. The concert was all about black and white unity, so it was important we had black and white people on stage together: Steel Pulse, Tom Robinson and some of The Clash. It took us about a month to organise the carnival – we wanted to do something before the local elections of 1978 to push the National Front off the streets and off the electoral registers. We wanted to get rid of them.

Roger Huddle - One of the organisers of RAR in 1978

Being in a shop [her parents' shop in south London] we were very vulnerable because the next person who walked in could beat you up. I was really into RAR. When I heard about the carnival, I was determined to go, but my parents said there was no way. The whole of the park was jumping up and down to The Clash. It was an incredibly emotional moment because, for the first time, I felt surrounded by people on my side. That was when I thought that something had changed in Britain for ever. Before RAR, there was no sense that it wasn't OK to be racist. But with RAR, we got to see that there were others willing to speak out against racism and talk about a different kind of Britain.

Gurinder Chadha - Film-maker

"It was a sea of thousands of people, heads and faces. I didn't march because I wasn't feeling well, but I managed to perform on stage. We sang the whole set, including "Germ Free Adolescence" and "Oh Bondage, Up Yours!"

Has RAR achieved anything? I think it has achieved a lot. I think racism isn't so blatant as it was in the Seventies, when it was socially acceptable to call people all kinds of names because of their different backgrounds. I can't speak for other artists, but for me, RAR was something that made me think about other people's lives and struggles. At that time you only had to watch sitcoms to be aware [of racism] and I was attacked a couple of times as a child because I had an olive complexion. When I was at school the talk was of Paki bashing and queer bashing, so I was quite aware of racist skinhead talk."



Poly Styrene (X-Ray Spex) Singer (RIP)

"Music can help to bring people together. When you saw a band like ours jamming with Tom Robinson or with Elvis Costello it showed that, if you love music we can all live together."



Poko - Misty in Roots

White riot - I wanna riot

White riot - a riot of my own

White riot - I wanna riot

White riot - a riot of my own

Black man gotta lot a problems

But they don't mind throwing a brick

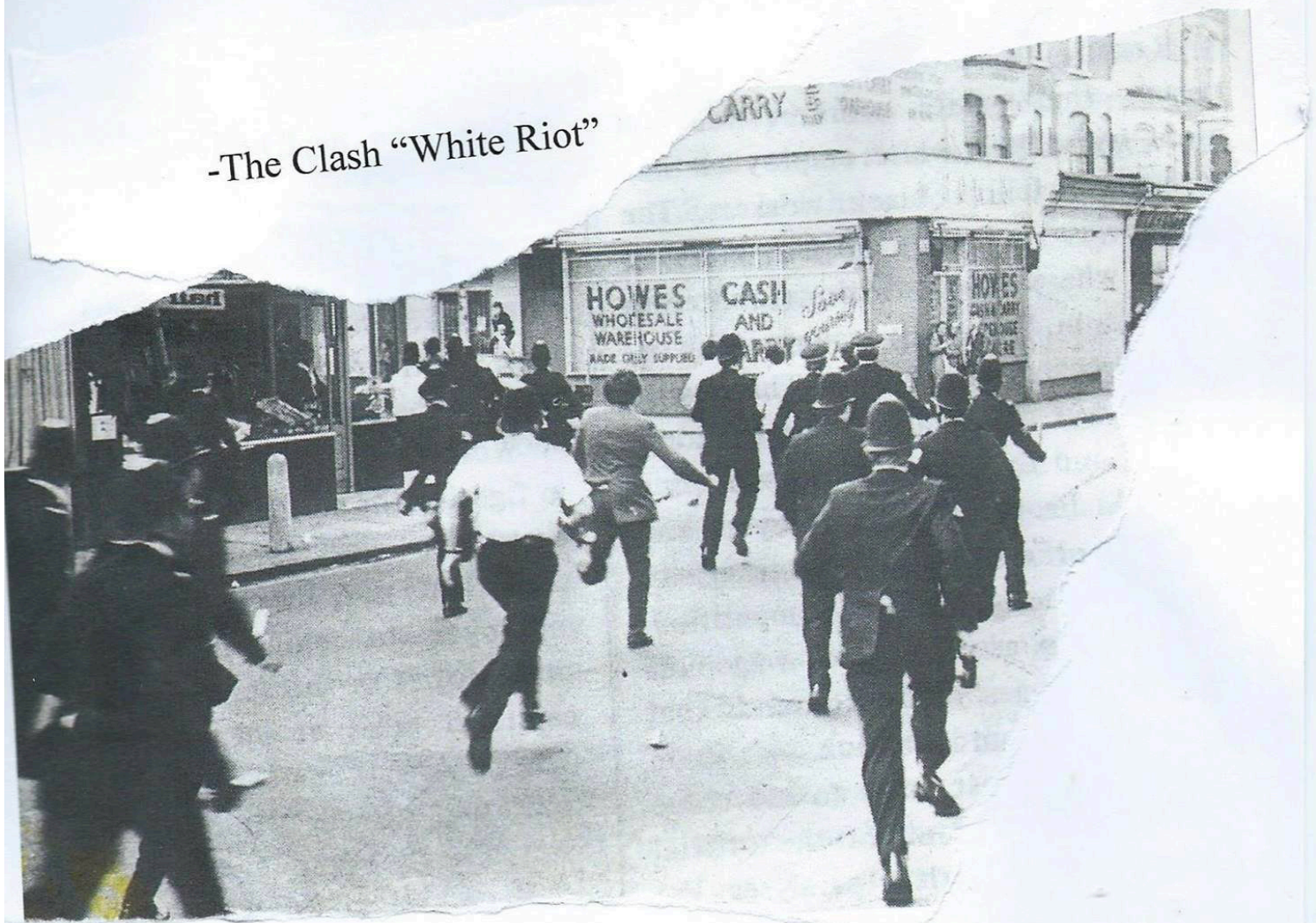
White people go to school

Where they teach you how to be thick

An 'everybody's doing / Just what they're told to

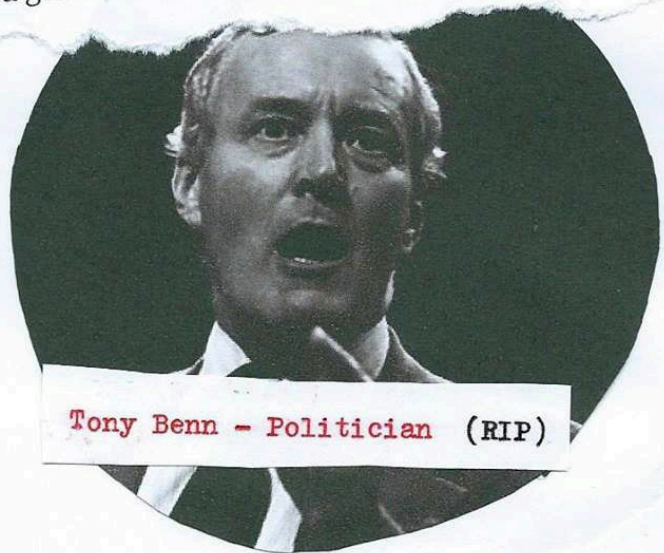
An' nobody wants/ To go to jail!

-The Clash "White Riot"



Melody Maker

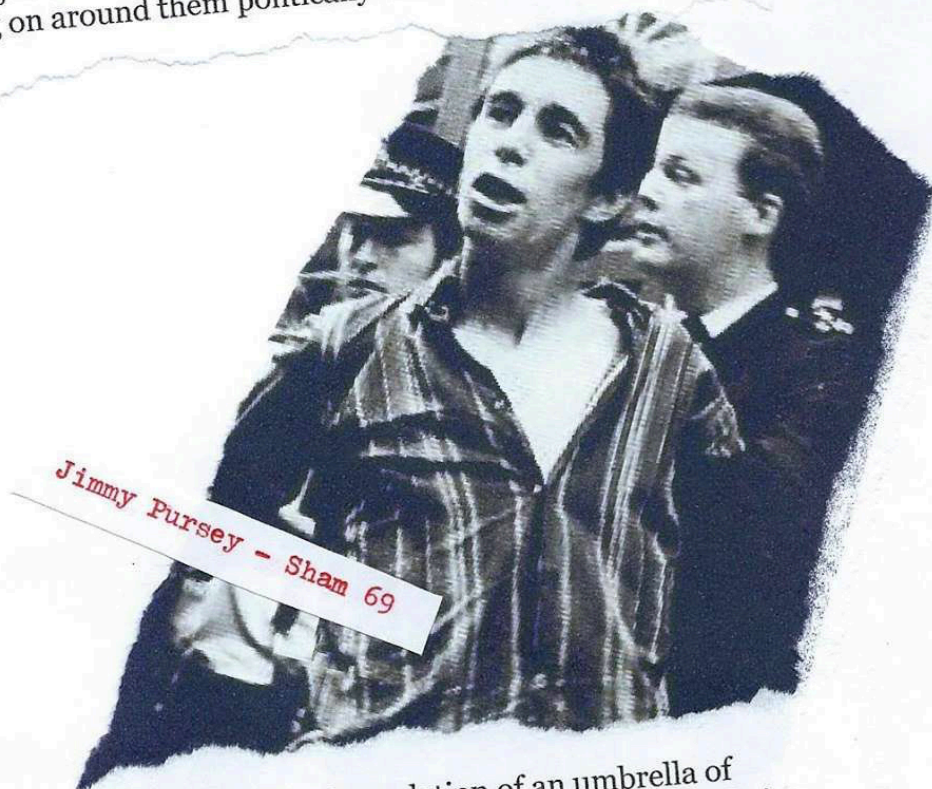
I attended the original Anti-Nazi league demonstration in Hyde Park because I remember the fascists before the war. It was a huge meeting, a very big and impressive occasion because of the war connection. Fascism – the use of frightening people to get power – is one of the most common and extremely powerful forms of politics and music is a global language that speaks to everyone.



Tony Benn - Politician (RIP)

I attended various Rock Against Racism concerts to speak and I think they were extremely important. Anything that brings people together in this way has a positive effect. Before the war, people were attacking the Jews and the communists, then the trade unions and now it's immigrants. We started something which had a very profound effect. Wilson was furious with me because he didn't want racism brought into the election. When you get to my age, you realise every generation has to fight the same battles and I am pleased to be able to help in any way I can. Popular culture is a very important part of the fight against fascism and we need the broadest-based campaign possible. That's why I'll be at the Brixton Academy on 30 April. We must never let the racists win by default and making anti-fascism something people can enjoy helps enormously. You realise you're not on your own and that gives us the confidence to challenge the BNP.

"I got up on stage and sang "White Riot" with The Clash at the RAR carnival in 1978. I was at the back with the amps and then joined them for that song. The atmosphere was supercharged with raw energy and real people trying to understand what was going on around them politically in a very depressing time.



Jimmy Pursey - Sham 69

The uplift of what we had was RAR and the formulation of an umbrella of culture. It was a beautiful sunny day and the people were mesmerised by being united as one. I'm singing "White Riot" again at the RAR 30th anniversary concert at Brixton Academy for Joe Strummer, who would have done the gig if he was alive.

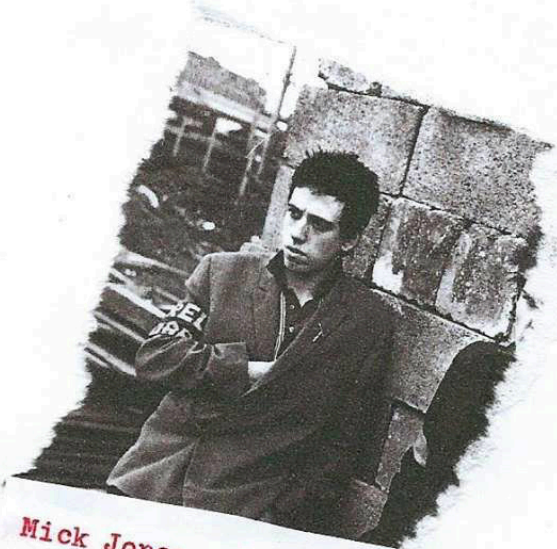
Here we are 30 years later. Of course it achieved something. The survivors of the 1978 Carnival – I will be performing with Babyshambles; Paul Simonon will be performing with The Good, The Bad, and The Queen, and Mick Jones might be playing with Hard-Fi – will join forces again. We are still depressed by the Government, but we are not confused by our culture. Britain is a multi-cultural society and it always will be if I have anything to do with it. ♪

SOUNDS FOR INTEGRATION



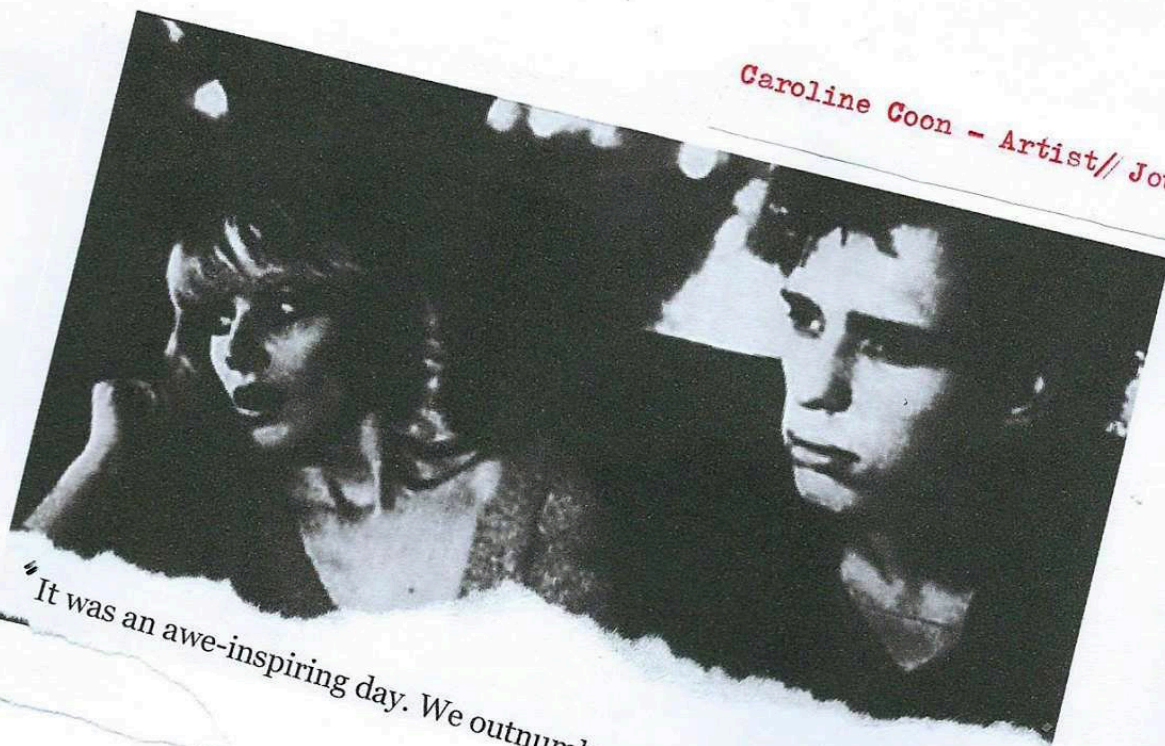
"...Black and white unite in staging an anti-racism demonstration outside the headquarters of the National Front in early 1977. The protest, a year before the Rock Against Racism concert in Victoria Park, united white punk with black roots reggae.

The two genres of music were booming in the UK at this time. A combination of huge cuts in welfare by a Labour Government under pressure, wage freezes and mass unemployment, along with the uninspiring glam rock and disco that dominated the radio during the mid 1970s, proved to be the perfect breeding ground for the political and religious messages of punk and roots reggae..."



Mick Jones - The Clash

"They were saying: "How dare you play the Anti-Nazi League gig in a stormtrooper's outfit!" I was wearing a BBC commissioner's hat which we nicked when we did the TV show, black shirt and black trousers. And all of a sudden I'm in a stormtrooper's outfit. And they're saying to me: "You're disgusting."



Caroline Coon - Artist// Journalist

"It was an awe-inspiring day. We outnumbered the fascists by 100 to one."