

Black'n White Drop Outsite

The Clash

Roxy Theatre

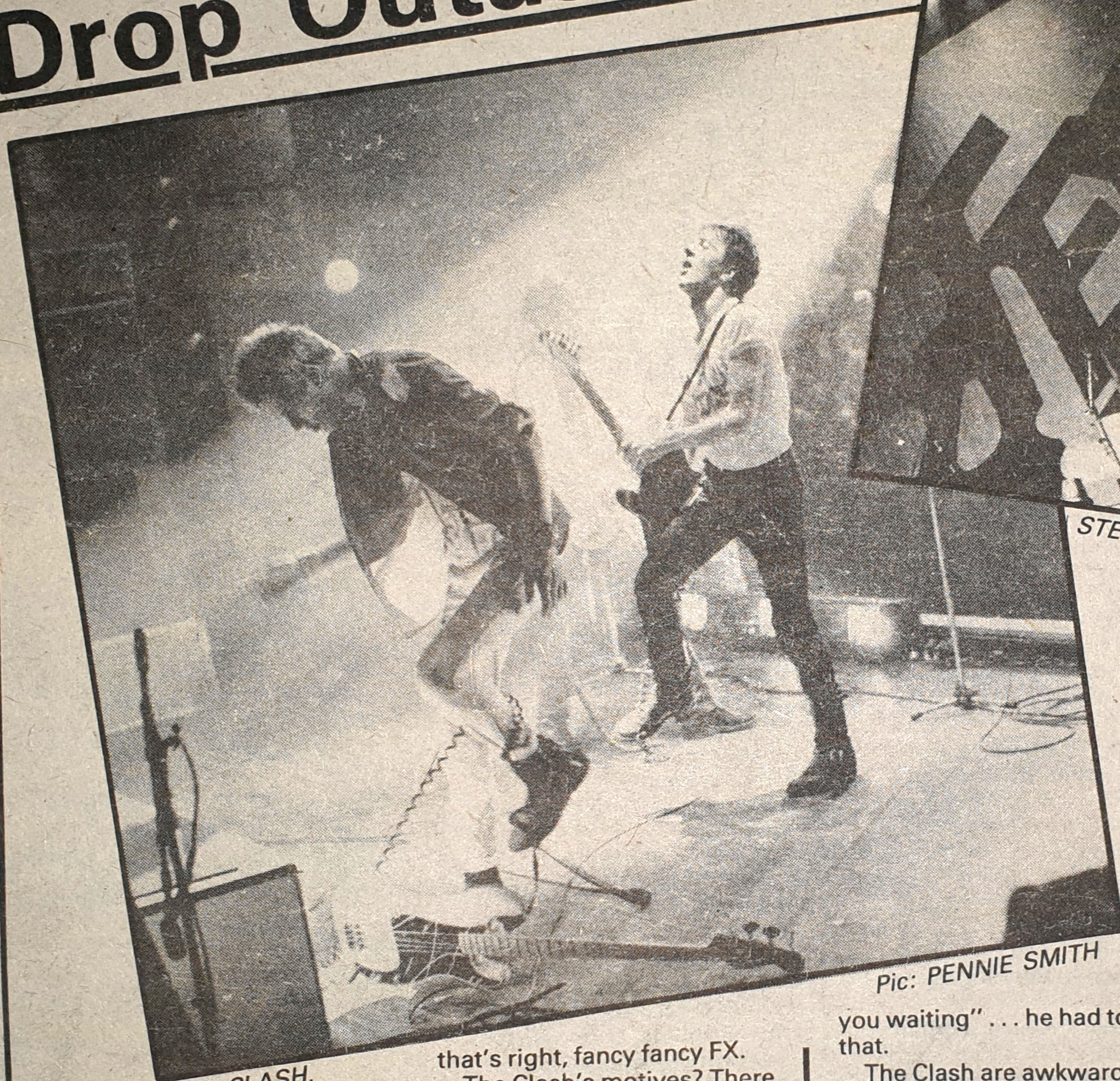
Weapons exist, but some people can't see them for looking.

The Clash take the obvious lines of misrepresentation, superficiality, and hold up the tacky backdrops, the disinfected battleclothes, the turbulent, tubercular grimaces, and most of all the rock instruments as their weapons, not forgetting air rifles — roots rock rebel!

But these plain chaps with art school roots . . . what is it exactly they have rebelled against? Tell me that! On the basis of this performance, one of the two re-scheduled at the Roxy theatre in Harlesden (immigrant population, heavy industry, how convenient) I for one won't fall in with the future they are supposedly leading us into.

A joyless, emotionless, directionless, self-important music, something like a shambolic HM quartet converted to Mao minutes before a show but still retaining the original ego-pushy set, swaggers and all.

Perhaps this heavy manners street band have finally come to realise that the "street" houses expense and excess as well as the romantic oppression visions. What is this myth about the "street"? Remember, the street is the basis not only of free enterprise (market place credibility?) but of capitalist exploitation . . . and I'm sure The Clash have been exploited as much there, naked in the street, as much as — more than — anyone.



THE CLASH.



STEEL PULSE. Pic: DENIS O'REGAN

Which is probably how they come to be in their present sorry state. There are embarrassing runs across the stage, HM poses, hackneyed guitar solos — no idea of how to mix and assert different positions and degrees of sharp rock sound, unlike, say, Penetration.

Headon's drums are leaden and lumpen — I fail to observe any reggae inflexion either there or with Simonon — a different part of the sound from Strummer's rehearsed spastic twanging and Jones' nowengineered playing —

that's right, fancy fancy FX.

The Clash's motives? There don't seem to be any anymore.

The Clash is The Clash is The Clash, no relationships between the individual members of the band, or between the band and the audience.

On stage, there's only the disgusting mock stand - and - deliver confrontations, the choreographed bumping into one another. The only concession to the 'kids' came at the very end of the set when Jones stopped sprinting for a second to garble "Alright? Sorry to keep

you waiting" . . . he had to say that.

The Clash are awkward. Unlike their peers — Travolta, Brotherhood Of Man, Dooleys — they have not come to terms with their role of working class entertainers. They aspire; they do not want to be seen to simply perspire.

They have not come to terms with anything beyond The Clash, and now, after all the sycophantic press, after the coke busts, after the second album gap, The Clash don't know what to do with themselves, don't know what to do with rock music, but I and you know what it's doing to them.

The Clash is a dying myth.
Ian Penman

Steel Pulse

Rainbow

The Rainbow Theatre seemed a poor venue for Steel Pulse's Big London Gig, but reconsidering during this performance, it was probably second choice only to the Palladium. The covers have dropped; Pulse are simply entertainers. Nothing wrong with that, but remember how Pulse hooked themselves into the big time and it's slightly depressing.

Pulse's appeal may have been their 'idealism', their 'roots' (plus a right time, right place thing, and the influence of the present hip reggae circumstances) but it was a very meaningless, affected bag of tricks, a glossy petulance.

There were never any real risks taken . . . a very bitty sense of style, nothing actually uncomfortable. Their appeal now (and forever more . . .) is their predictability.

The show wasn't such an effort to watch as the likes of

10cc but soon come a time when Pulse will be a vague equivalent to say Fleetwood Mac . . . or The Average White Band.

I like reggae as a combination of sounds, as with Coleman or Company, but Pulse's combination of sounds is as formal and as limited as any traditional six piece rock group. Despite each individual instrument never coming over any better than adequate, especially the knobby, erratic bass, the whole unit proved mundanely sophisticated, with only the drums supplying any bite and threatening to push the sound into harder, less precise areas.

'Dub effects' are limited to stop . . . echo . . . start, or simple mixing manoeuvres, while the vocals are non descript and the harmonies thickly smooth. Visually, Pulse have failed to develop any theatre, still relying on mildly symbolic uniforms with a new light show the depth of their innovation. Steel Pulse as entertainers are flat and unimaginative.

And all these references to Jah, the herb, desperation, revolution, rastafaria. What is it all about? Is it a joke? Why am I not laughing? How long before these plain chaps run out of rehearsed moves?

Steel Pulse are yet another bundle of ultimately accessible contradictions. They are a 'good reggae band' like Clash are the 'best rock'n'roll group in the world' or Robinson an 'effective catalyst'.

All these minimally seductive, superficial, 'revolutionists' are essentially naive, musically staid, lyrically obvious, visually twee and one mass compromise. Illusion, delusion, glamorous escapism — 'a damning indictment of the state of the nation.' I've had enough. I can't put up with any more.

Paul Morley