

# FRIDAY POP

RAY KING looks at the local scene

# An album in the city

RIGHT: The Clash — seen in Manchester this week

## TOP TEN

- 1 (1) Rat Trap—Boomtown Rats
- 2 (2) Hopelessly Devoted To You—Olivia Newton-John
- 3 (5) My Best Friend's Girl—Cars
- 4 (-) Do Ya Think I'm Sexy—Rod Stewart
- 5 (7) Pretty Little Angel Eyes—Showaddywaddy
- 6 (6) Darlin'—Frankie Miller
- 7 (3) Summer Nights—Travolta/Newton-John
- 8 (8) Instant Replay—Dan Hartman
- 9 (-) Hanging On The Telephone—Blondie
- 10 (4) Sandy—John Travolta

THAT unlikely chartbuster Jilted John, the daff lad who lost his love to Gordon the Moron on one of the year's strangest hits, is spearheading a bid to win Manchester a bigger slice of the recording business.

For the Manchester student is currently hard at work just off Deansgate in the city centre cutting True Love Stories for EMI International, his album follow-up to his debut single success.

In doing so, he is carrying with him the hopes of the Arrow Recording Studios in Jackson's Row for a major breakthrough in the music business. In an industry where nothing succeeds like success, a big

seller would make the Arrow name practically overnight.

Jilted John's sessions in the studio follow those of punk poet John Cooper Clarke, whose *Disunion In Love* on the CBS label was cut at Arrow and is bubbling just under the album chart.

And that band of pop mimics the Barron Knights laid down several of the tracks on their album *Night Gallery* — aimed squarely at the Christmas market — in the Manchester studios.

Arrow was born out of a merger earlier this year with Indigo, which operated its pop and commercials business in nearby Gartside Street, and the new set up is

under the umbrella of Greendow (MPS) Ltd.

Boss Gerry Dow arrived in Manchester 10 years ago as a film editor, and since has set up a mini Wardour Street in the city, developing the biggest film post-production house in the North. Now his ambition is to repeat that success in sound, wooing away business that has traditionally gone to London.

Co-incidentally, at the same time — 1968 — that Dow came to Manchester, a young musician called Eric Stewart was making the initial moves that were to develop into the now firmly established Strawberry Studios 10 miles down the road at Stockport — the first major studio outside London.



Aiming for the same sort of success, Dow gutted the old Arrow Studio and refurbished it with an array of advanced recording gear including the first computerised 24-track mixing desk in the North. The suite also provides facilities for artists and musicians to relax and a special lift enables vans containing group's equipment to be hoisted to

studio level on the first floor. From the new studios to the New Wave... and two major album releases from the movement's leading exponents: Clash, who appeared at the Manchester Apollo this week, and X-Ray Spex, who gig there next Wednesday night.

I wonder what Joe Strummer and the lads — the band who shunned Top of the Pops as being inappropriate to their style — will make of the instant commercial success of their album *Give Them Enough Rope* (CBS) which has rocketed to number two in the charts.

## Raw vocals

Despite those who claimed the New Wave "died" when the Clash "sold out" to a big record company, the band still sound pretty angry to me. Tracks like *Tommy Gun*, the English Civil War and *The Guns on the Roof* are hardly middle of the road.

And they are delivered with raw vocals over screeching guitars, crashing drums and wailing brass which as often as not make the messages indecipherable. Perhaps The Clash don't particularly care anyway.

Personally I prefer wit to weaponry, and wit and parody are there in plenty on Spex's excellent album *Germ-Free Adolescents* (EMI), the title track of which has made the top 30 as a single release.

Poly Styrene's invention and observation of the contemporary throw-away world makes the band's debut LP worth waiting for. It features Spex's two previous EMI singles, the amazing *The Day The World Turned Dayglo*, and *Identity*, both of which made the charts.

In addition it showcases tracks illustrating the direction the band's music, and Poly's writing are likely to take in the future, from *Art-I-Ficial* to the remarkable *Plastic Bag*.

With four singles from the film *Grease* already hits, veteran heart-throb Frankie Avalon bids to make the score five with *Beauty School Dropout* (Mercury) but may find the going harder than Mr Travolta.

That versatile English actor-singer David Essex turns composer producer and arranger too on his new single *Goodbye First Love* (Mercury). It's a complete contrast to his last two hits, but his ballad should succeed too.

Sally Oldfield also takes all the credits on her melodic composition *Mirrors* (Bronze), one of the best produced singles for some time. With enough airplay this could make the 20.

Finally, I thought I'd heard it all with Mecca's disco version of the *Wizard Of Oz*, which I reviewed last week. I was wrong. Try to avoid the disco *Dr Who* by Mankind on Pinnacle. If I were a Dalek I'd exterminate... exterminate...

TONY JASPER meets the Clash and asks them whether they talk politics just to package their product.

## The banned band

THE Clash may be the only white faces adorning famous Jamaican producer Lee Perry's *Wall of Fame* because they made musical sense with reggae song *Police And Thieves* which Perry had co-authored, produced for Junior Murvin — but outside of that tribute there are precious few from any quarter, save from their fans.

The Clash have built their massive following among music addicts of vaguely New Wave persuasion, by stirring up the creditable ingredients of behaving obnoxiously, spitting out facile political diatribe and trying to shock.

For all that, they do write some songs and provide sound to get the adrenalin flowing. They are an exciting act, even if unfortunately misguided. The Clash enjoy the dubious honour of being banned from countless towns. This wonderful feat achieves precisely nothing other than preventing their loyalist followers from both seeing and hearing the band.

In recent the Clash have played only venues where there are no seats. Even they have found it both boring and financially disturbing paying repair bills.

Change though is afoot. Well, not exactly on the recorded front, if the latest album, *Give 'Em Enough Rope* is the evidence.

That displays the ingredient I've mentioned but bass man Paul Simonon told me a few days ago: "Well, we have got fed up with the problems which seem to follow us. It's becoming crucial things get sorted out. We have to see eye to eye with the people around us. I suppose us getting banned really leaves the kids in a lurch because then they've got nowhere to go."

He felt criticisms amounted to sour grapes "You get up to the top and some people want you back again." When I sarcastically remarked that at least a great many of their lyrics couldn't be heard because of the sound balance he replied, "It's a lot clearer these days. There's improvement on the LP. When we started we sounded awful, but that's past."

## MELODY MAKER

24-34 MEYMOTT STREET, LONDON, SE1 9LU

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By Harry Sheety



## Late Extra

THE CLASH: "Tommy Gun" (CBS 6788). American producer Sandy Pearlman has certainly brought a method to the Clash's madness. This