

ITEMS...

INCOMMUNICADO

On March 1rd, JOHN LYDON (a.k.a. JOHNNY ROTTEN) and KEITH LEVINE of PUBLIC IMAGE LTD. held a press conference at the City disco in San Francisco. Taciturn and more than obviously bored, the former SEX PISTOLS' vocalist fielded a series of particularly obtuse and self-serving questions from a crowd of about 70 people. Local punk luminaries outnumbered conventional media types by ten black leather jackets to every one shetland pullover sweater. Admitting that he was "embarrassed to be here," Lydon claimed that the conference was the idea of his record label, Warner Brothers. Asked if he were subject to the publicity whims of the company, he stated that he does "whatever I want to." Confused, but undaunted, the audience (or, if you prefer, the mob) took the opportunity to ask such relevant questions as "What do you do with all your money?" and "What do you think of Flipper?" With more good humor than would be expected under the circumstances, Lydon and Levine endeavored to respond to those questions which related to Public Image and the band's various projects on vinyl and videotape. The audience, as might be expected, was more interested in rehashing old Sex Pistols' soap operas and intimate details of Lydon's lifestyle (lasting only thirty minutes, the conference seemed interminably long; Lydon's overwhelming boredom (ennui?) did nothing to shatter the illusion. The conference, dis-organized by Warners and the ubiquitous Howie Klein, was certainly one of the great non-events in recent memory. At the conference's end, the salient point seemed to be not so much Lydon's consummately inebriated performance as the pathetic puerility of San Francisco's scene makers.

WASHED-UP WAVE

The Mudd Club, New York City

by Margaret MASSAM

First, getting past the warder operating the chains at the entrance is no mean feat. "OK, you two, the rest have to wait." And this is a week night: no live bands, minimum tourist traffic, and weather which would comfort North Sea whales... Once past the \$5 entry fee, we find punkification permeated. The smell of new leathers and expensive perfumes is the first indication that chic is the order of the evening. Apart from extravagantly painted faces, no colors are to be seen, for the obligatory black is everywhere.

Upstairs, frenetic eye contact seems also a part of the rules. If words escape at all, then it's in heated discussions of one's latest art piece, which will of course be exhibited soon... On mumbling something about film to a woman in the bathroom I was immediately assailed with "I have a script if you'd like to see it." This "former video artist" is now beginning a "new wave modeling agency", and touted me around to meet all the young hopefuls.

An old woman at the bar was really enjoying her drinks, although completely ignored, but that may have had something to do with the fact that she said "Oh shit" with such venom any time anyone came near...

It was the usual photo studio in the bathroom, which seemed to have more action than elsewhere. Surprisingly, there was toilet paper and separate bathrooms for the sexes, though they did not operate separately, much to the discomfort of newcomers. Everyone else was, of course, cool.

No one noticed the music since all the other senses were so busy, but downstairs the dancing picked up as the morning wore on. I mean, "Love to Love you Baby" would get anyone up... The dancing ritual is truly innovative: first, it must be with one person, one configuration, then the male asks the female for her phone number. As departure time nears, this procedure becomes more urgent, and quite often only the second part of the ritual occurs.

When I left, the little clutches upstairs were still ensconced with other suitable clutches, and there wasn't a drunk in sight to make me feel at home. But then at \$2.24 for a Bud, it's a bit hard to get loaded.

CLUB SCENE

New venues continue to open, proliferating faster than nuclear arms. In the Bay area, there are now upwards of ten regular clubs featuring punk/new/new wave/underground/X wave music (choose one). Newest additions include THE BACK D.O.R., THE STONE, BERKELEY SQUARE and THE PALMS.

In addition, the trend in disco-conversion continues unabated with THE CITY, one of S.F.'s first discotheques, joining the new wave bandwagon. Owner TOM SANDFORD hired the almost legendary "theadbare threesome," HOWIE KLEIN, BEVERLY WILSHIRE and RICHARD GOSSETT away from X's (S.F.'s Palace of Uncool) to regale the masses nightly with their special blend of the new wave goes M.O.R. accompanied by rich helpings of Ramones, Blondie and Nick Lowe in extremis. THE CITY also expects to be putting on some live shows as well (see JOHNNY LYDON and SPECIALS items on this page).

THE BACK D.O.R., which is the downstairs suite of THE CITY, has been attracting the multitudes too, most of which seem to be crawling out of San Francisco's more affluent woodwork. This is apparently cool by DAVID STEIN, manager of the club, who says he's looking to fill it with "nice, party people." Stein's idea is to make THE BACK D.O.R. into a private club, charging \$20, or more as membership fees (which seems certain to encourage undesirable elements even more). According to Stein, he most definitely is "not looking to be a punk club" and is interested in "exposing new wave music to an older audience not into punk." David, by the way, is an ex-BILL GRAHAM employee. Seems he ran security for everyone's favorite uncle.

SPECIALS

NON-DELIVERY

THE SPECIALS PRODUCED BY BILL GRAHAM LIVE AT THE CITY DISCO

dateline San Francisco, February 13th 1980

The 700 or so fanatics who showed up at THE CITY to see THE SPECIALS, the English ska band, were greeted by the ever-grizzled, ever-harried Mr. Graham instead. To a crowd which even charitably could only be described as "menacing," the promoter announced that the show had been cancelled due to the The Specials dissatisfaction with the sound system and layout of the club. Amid loud cries of "fraud!" and "rip-off!" Graham informed the mob that the show would take place the following Sunday at his regular venue, a reconverted movie theatre, THE WARFIELD.

When queried, Graham denied there was any connection between the fact the 700 capacity CITY was sold-out and that the WARFIELD could easily hold 2000 plus SPECIALS fans.

Since that time however, rumours have been rife that the Specials and Graham Organisation made some sort of deal. One person close to both confirmed to DAMAGE that Graham had "underestimated the group's draw" and that the band was unhappy over the fact that many fans would not have the chance to see them. Our source suggested that the sound system and CITY layout were legitimate concerns, but that the band's real reason for cancelling the Wednesday night show was financial. Given the \$10 ticket price the Specials are charging for their shows in New York City (a fact noted in NEW YORK ROCKER's editorial urging a boycott of the concert) and the continuing accusations on the part of local merchants, etc. that, in their dealings with the band, they had been continually ripped-off, it seems more than slightly probable that, Uncle Bill's denials notwithstanding, San Francisco fans got no special treatment from our British visitors.

Everyone's fave magazine ROLLING STONE has sacked its one and only voice (and a half-hearted one at that) for new wave music, DAVE MARSH ("American Grandstand"). Apparently, publisher Yawn Weener Figures new wave is as dead as punk was three years ago.

TRUE STORY

by an eyewitness special to DAMAGE

The DAMAGE party at the Mabuhay was a huge success.

Also notable was Fast Floyd of the Offs after the show party at his Nob Hill penthouse. Seen among the crowd were Billy of the Offs, Mikal of Soul Rebels, Cathy TR and of course the lovely Eva and one of S.F.'s more prominent divorce attorneys who asked that we not mention her name as her husband thought she was in Sun Valley.

Bill Offs was taught all the old dances by Cathy TR. Eva shot a mouse with Floyd's pellet gun. Cathy TR, a noted good sport, asked to be shot in the ass with a pellet... Later Cathy was thumb-cuffed by Fast Floyd and Mikal, boys renowned for their incredible imaginations, while Billy spent time massaging her thumbs. This scene precipitated a fight between Cathy TR and Floyd, ex-guitarist of the Vifabasters.

Cathy was seen careening from the party in her limosine, the license plates reading DYKE, but it's whispered that she's ready for a turnaround. Later Billy, who was as usual blamed for everything, and Floyd were seen eating burgers at The Grubsteak.

Mesquite... In another part of town, the police discovered the partyers had fled ahead of their arrival.

The party-goers were joined by the Bags who had just arrived from L.A., ChiChi and Joe Rees of Target Video. The party resumed at ChiChi's South of Market Studio where she managed to produce a hidden cache of drink to the amazement of her guests.

The party ended as Patricia and Alice Bag surrendered to a well-earned rest after their long trip.

GEARY TEMPLE

Feb. 8, 79 - March 22, 80

Once again, the hand of fate slaps San Francisco across its heavily-touged cheek. Gone the way of the Deaf Club and 330 Grove St. is the GEARY THEATRE, a/k/a Temple Beautiful, New Wave au-Go-Go or simply The Temple.

Shut down, as were the other two venues, because of some blatantly needless legal embroilments, the Geary was the only San Francisco venue capable of holding more than 1000 fans.

The Geary was opened up to punk and new wave shows by Olufunmi Presents, a Third World cultural group headed by flamboyant rasta, Ashia. OP put together quite a few memorable new wave shows at the Geary, along with much reggae and multi-ethnic performances before financial and legal headaches forced them to move another location.

Enter Paul Rat. Rat had previously been involved with booking shows into the Pride Foundation's 330 Grove Street venue. This locale housed the Gay Community Center, a variety of social service programs for gay people, an art gallery and one of the better new wave show spaces in town. After a long and enervating court battle, the 330 Grove building was slated to be demolished to make way for parking lots to service the new \$35 million Performing (read: dead) Arts Center.

One of the milestone events at the Geary was, oddly enough, its initial new wave concert. THE CLASH interrupted their US tour to play a benefit for New Youth Productions. The show was unprecedented in that there was no advance planning and no publicity other than spray-paint wall graffiti and some postering (they read: "The Only English Band That Matters").

The rumor is that the Baptist Church will purchase the old synagogue, which is delightfully sandwiched between the People's Temple building and the remains of Bill Graham's original Fillmore theatre. So, another tourist attraction is born, and it looks like clubs (cool but not the same as a hall), theatres with seats (it is to entertain thoughts of vandalism), cheesy nightclubs with drink minimums and charmingly Cro-Magnon security ("OK, I won't dance, but can I just kind of wiggle around in my seat, please?") and, last, least, new wave discos (atrocity!).

Until the next venue comes along, we'll just wait here, in the front office. Can I make a call? It's local.