

30 June 1979

U.S. \$1.50 (by air)/Canada 80c

20p

Aus 45c NZ45c Den Kr 5.85 Fr NF 5.00
Ger Dm 2.80 Malaysia \$1.50 Spn 90 pts

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS

BRIAN JONES
As years go by
STRUMMER . POP
GROUP . LOWE



Yes, it's Strummer in the city (boilin' red hot)



"I was trying to see if we could stop all the bitching going on and I was working with John Dennis from Rock Against Racism and I fed him the idea of all the big names in punk of New Wave or whatever having a big jammin' show in the park and recording it for an LP to sell for RAR to help the cause. Something positive, something for the summer.

"I thought it'd be interesting if all

the groups shattered each in different combinations or something. But people are too arrogant: they'd say, 'I'm not goin' on stage with him' or 'They stink' . . . everyone's a bit too fussy.

"And with the GLC we haven't got a hope in hell! The Buzzcocks are just safe enough, but they ain't gonna stand for Clash, Pistols, Sham and Banshees and Undertones and

stuff, are they?"

Well, they let the Stones do it at a time when they were still considered subversive . . .

"Tell ya, the '60s are really in, aren't they? We got *Juke Box Jury*, mods and everything. It's a piss-off. Who needs the past? I'm so sick of all this delving into the past. It's on a really short cycle now as well. It's stupid. Everyone's looking for

yesterday because tomorrow's so shitty. There's 10,000 days of oil left. It's finite."

Ten thousand days in which to break our independence on oil?

"10,000 days to play the guitar, mate. Everyone's got to spend that time in their own way, but I think I'll play the guitar. Everything else gets boring . . ."

The Clash are in a deep hole at the moment. The separation from Bernie Rhodes — their manager from the early days before the interim period when Caroline Coon did their business — has necessitated legal, and that's why the American tour is off (okay, Wobble?). It doesn't look to be rancorous, but it still takes time and money, and The Clash are severely in debt.

Strummer gestures towards a rubbish skip a few yards down from where we're sitting. "You'd have to fill that with five pound notes to get anywhere near paying off our debts."

Despite all of that — and The Clash have the responsibility of trying to run their business as well as their music — Strummer is also jacking his energy into trying to set up a network of musicians in order to create a musician-owned venue in London and into trying to get in touch with London Weekend TV chiefs to create a *real* rock and roll TV show.

"It's time for a new pop show, and we want to get right in there. We've hung back from all that other stuff, because we didn't want to put whatever energy we've got into what's on at the moment. It's tough shit for us now, because all we get is 22 or 23 in the chart, but in the long run it's gonna be for the best."

We discuss *Quadrophenia* and I tell him it's maybe the best film about kids in Britain that I've ever seen.

"Don't say that too soon, mate. Wait'll you see our film. It's called *Rudi Can't Fail*. Ray Gant is the boy from nowhere." (The next day, Joe phones up to ask me to make that "the slob from nowhere".)

"The Who . . . you remember Misty getting smashed up in Southall? Well, us and The Who are working on doing a couple of shows for them, and it's going to happen in the middle of next month. The Who have been really good about it.

They're lending a lot of gear and they're really keen to play. Roger Daltrey's particularly keen to play. It's a really bad thing when a group gets beaten up and all their stuff gets smashed . . ."

And Clarence, Misty's manager, who was put in hospital that evil night, is walking and talking again, no complications. Positive.

"You know what John (Lydon) said about us being desperate? I think that being desperate is one of the best things you can be. That's what it was all about, being desperate. If you get desperate on one side, what's the opposite? Arrogant complacency?"

"They're a good group, PiL: no doubt about it. You know Wobble was saying that he was a natural? I think he is. But you know something? If I was just walkin' around and I didn't know anything about Clash and I didn't know anything about PiL, I'd be saying, 'What the fuck are Clash and PiL actually *doing*?' That's what I'd be saying and I think it's a very good question."

"If we get this musicians' venue going, we're going to call it Buckingham Palais. The average music fan is really great, because they fund this whole thing. If they didn't come, nothing would happen. I don't care what it's like as long as it's good. It's got to be good, that's all. I like singing. I don't like talking."

Between The Clash and the plans are the obstacles, which are . . .

"We got a debt so big we'd have to fill that skip with five pound notes. We're involved in court actions which we don't want, and we're having to deal with the whole thing ourselves. We're working on crazy plans."

"See: everything in the world is cost-related except for records. I shouldn't say this, but I'm a man whose knees are dusty from begging on record company floors — I got no pride — but I wanna survive and I want The Clash to survive. The only thing that we got is The Clash."

"I shouldn't be saying this, but we've been mucking around with some sound gear and we've got some crazy ideas like . . . some LPs, like a Bee Gees LP, will cost hundreds of thousands of pounds to make, so it's gonna cost — what is it now? — six quid soon."

■ Continues page 17

Wars... Clockwork Orange, and was midway through his Empire task.

citizens became convinced that they were under Japanese air attack.

DICK TRACEY

STRUMMER

■ From previous page

Suppose a group came along and decided to make a 16-track LP on two Teacs, which dramatically diminishes the cost factor called 'studio costs'.

"Suppose you presented that tape to the record company and told 'em that it cost just these few quid to make. So even when they've added their mark-ups and a cut for him and a cut for *him*, you can still get a fucking LP for two or three quid. So why can't *that* be cost-related?"

Well, with independent labels it can, but the majors don't like doing that sort of thing because it sets unhealthy precedents and because they just *love* making money.

"It's a serious thing about managers. You know the people who've approached us?"

I've heard everyone from Peter Grant to Brian Lane.

"Bet you ain't heard Kerry Packer. Bet you ain't heard Harry Hyams. Bet you haven't heard Freddie Laker.

... I'll tell you one thing about managers; the whole reason they exist is that groups are supposed to think about the songs while the manager thinks about the affairs.

"But times change, we're moving into the future and we're in the position of doing both things. It's pretty schizophrenic: you're either playing the guitar or you're on the phone and you could say that us and PiL are working in a Jamaican kind of way: we do what we feel like, *soon come*, but there's still that burning question. *What the fuck are they doing?* It's got to be answered, and that's why we're gonna get hold of some guy in America to do the American end and we'll handle things here ourselves, or maybe we'll work with someone we know.

"We're working on quite a wide front. We got all these things cookin' and we're trying to bring 'em to the boil. We've had our fill of various sorts of bullshit, and now we're back to the drawing board. We're really

tucked, but I don't think we're fucked enough to quit. We're way beyond *that*."

CHARLES SHAAR
MURRAY

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CHARD GRABEL

the Groover



HOT TOWN! Strummer in the city: walks into the Kings Road pub that serves as his temporary local while he's staying in Fulham dead on time. Nine o'clock on the nose: Dave Allen has time for precisely one and a half jokes before Joe arrives, one degree haggard but punkabilly sharp. A few things to clear up, a few ideas to kick around. A Guinness changes hands.

"I've got a few things to tell you but first I'll just get this out of the way," he begins. On his mind is the allegation made by Jah Wobble in Danny Baker's PiL outing a fortnight back to the effect that The Clash blew out their American tour because Public Image Ltd. refused to support them.

"Like Johnny says, there's two sides to every story. What really happened was that me and Mick were trying to cook up a good bill and we began noticin' that there was a similarity between PiL's set-up and our set-up.

"We'd both broken away from our mentors and we were both managerless groups who wanted to direct their own futures. So we just went down their house to see if they'd do the States with us. We said, 'We don't mind goin' on before you if you wanna follow us.'

"We didn't mean for them to support us; we were thinkin' about an alternating headline. They said no because they were already planning their own Stateside tour. We didn't go in the end, and neither did they.

"There's this bloke called Wayne who we work with in New York and who does our booking. I phoned him and said that we were gonna try and get PiL and he said, 'Yeah, that's a good idea'. When I called him back to say that they didn't wanna come he just said 'oh well' because we were working on a load of other ideas at the time.

"I don't know who's telling PiL things or from where they get their information, but I think someone's geein' 'em up a little.

"What do you think of that Buzzcocks-in-the-park thing? Did you hear what the GLC said? Imagine if you were a Buzzcock and you were told 'It's okay, you're safe enough to play in the park.'