

WE WOZ THERE

THRILLS



LONDON'S BURNING . . .

ANTHRAX ORANGE and cyanide blue were the predominant scalp-fints at promoter Jock McDonald's impromptu punk-fest extravaganza last Saturday. An overnight word-of-mouth rumour about a possible Clash free concert at Kings Road's Beaufort Market narrowly failed to become a reality, courtesy of Chelsea's grizzly arm of law & order, but 2,000 people turned up anyway for an afternoon of small-cap *clashes* and the chance to get arrested.

For over three years, Beaufort Market has been London's central trading post for cheap(ish), imaginatively designed punk fashion and fripperies, and became widely accepted as a spiritual Mecca for the capital's Blank Generation. But a contract is a contract, and Saturday marked the expiry of lease for dozens of independent stall-holders. To herald the market's close-down, and as a partial gesture of protest, McDonald, who ran a platter-stall in the market, had secured the agreement of five bands including The Clash to do a freebie on the roof of the building.

The whisper was out and news of the event spread through the grapevine like a up a hot

Police and punks fought a pitched battle in Chelsea's Kings Road on Saturday after the cops put a stop to a free Clash gig held to protest against the closure of Beaufort Market. Thrills observed the carnage.

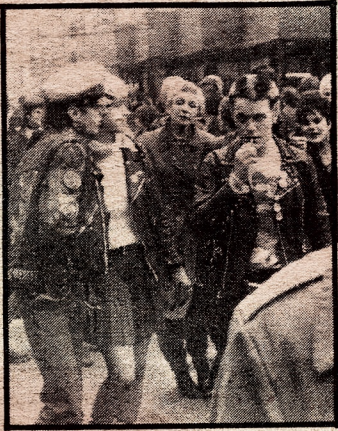
the scene, it had become glaringly obvious that any music in the street would have to compete with the sound of breaking heads. With guitars and jack-plug in hand, the band had unanimously expressed enthusiasm for doing the gig and were eager to set up their equipment forthwith. Unfortunately, the van-driver carrying the PA and drumkit had been repeatedly instructed by the cops to sling his hook, and was by now treading water around the neighbourhood, unable to unload the equipment.

Stories in some Sunday Smutrakers to the effect that about this time a member of The Clash was arrested proved untrue.

In the ensuing fracas between police and thwarted rock fans, over 70 arrests were made. It appeared to me that the cops were initially selecting their victims at random.

and that their handling of the situation was not exactly a model of restraint. A photographer standing next to me was dragged across the street by two constables who promptly put his Nikon in a twist. Kids got sat on; kids got to ride in uncomfortable vehicles. Tempers frayed, and there were mumbled threats of storming the building which the police had solidly cordoned off. When a Panda car was allegedly damaged by a flying bottle, reinforcements were called in from other constabularies.

In as much as the impending closure of Beaufort Market was a foregone conclusion, the day's turmoil might seem, in hindsight, to be a useless gesture for which a lot of people got clobbered for nix. And in the light of the very real-repressive aggro that goes on in Britain's streets, from Belfast to



Above: STRUMMER mingles. Right: carrot-top dangles. Top: fans rush for cheap Public Image albums from Jock McDonald's barrow. All pix: NICK WESOLOWSKI.

Brixton, the Kings Road event would appear to be pretty small potatoes.

Still, two positive conclusions can be drawn from the day's events: (i) the punk phenomenon is alive and kicking, and (ii) any spontaneous effort to rectify the mind numbing boredom of life in



London is likely to get trampled by a size 14 boot. Bearing in mind that total fines are likely to run into four figures and that some of the arrested kids will be hard-pushed for bail, McDonald has stated that a benefit concert is in the pipeline, and that The Clash have tentatively agreed to take part.

RICK JOSEPH

WESOLOWSKI