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Creem

RETURN OF THE ZEPPELIN

Rockpile's
DAVE EDMUNDS
New Wave Rockabilly

U.K. Report
THE CLASH

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**DR. IGGY
& MR. POP**
Double Talk?

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INTERVIEW



Filth In The Grooves
Dirty Records

been talking about playing Ibiza—Just getting in there and playing. Just so we've got a chance of trying out new ideas and new riffs and arrangements and songs."

So do you not think that Led Zeppelin has become part of some huge thing that's got totally out of hand?

"Well, if it has it certainly won't in the future because we'll be playing places like Ibiza."

Was there a stage that you reached with Led Zeppelin when it became important to make money?

"No. Never. No, because we've been our own worst enemies over that. But you wouldn't see it like that now. But at the time we put out our fourth LP we had the worst reviews of anybody. And to put out an untitled LP at that time was considered professional suicide. It probably doesn't seem it now. But then..."

Are you very materialistic?

"Well, I dunno. Yeah, I suppose I am a bit. But on the other hand, even though I have material possessions, the most important things are books, studios and records. If I had to get up and run that's what I'd try and take," he laughs.

Do you think that you personally have perhaps unavoidably become caught up in the Whole Great Swell?

"I don't think I have. No, no. I haven't. Otherwise I wouldn't have opened up a book shop. I'd have opened a boutique or something where I could really make money. *Equinox* was never designed to make lots of money but just to tick over so it could publish books."

Do you think people have ever taken advantage of your having such desires?

"Quite probably. Yes," he replies in a certain tone.

But you're a reasonably happy human being?

"Well," he seems momentarily uncertain now, "as happy as the next one." Then he gives a spirited chuckle. "I think I'm pretty fortunate in that I'm able to do what I'm best at. It's a pretty fortunate position to be doing what you really want to do and turning people on."

But you've made tapes with people like Keith Richards. Obviously you must have wanted to make records with other people...

"Yeah, I did. But in the end it comes down to playing with the people who I really like to play with."

Jim now tells me that he must leave in a few minutes as he has to meet Charlotte, the lady with whom he lives and by whom he has a five-year-old daughter, Scarlett. This is unfortunate. We were just getting going, it seemed to me. It's a pity also that interviews with members of Led Zeppelin are inevitably set in the anonymous Swan Song offices, thus providing writers, and therefore readers, with little comprehension as to how the band members actually live. Even the Stones seem to have woken up to the fact that both journalist and band benefit from less clinically set-up situations. But I suppose that's all part of the Led Zeppelin problem anyway.

There were many other things I'd like to have asked Page: what have he and the other three band-members done for the last eighteen months or so, for example? Whose records has Page been playing recently? Why doesn't Swan Song sign

any hot new acts?

As it is, though, I only have time to touch on some of the more, uhh, "controversial" topics that are raised in the first section of this piece.

A large part of the original strength of Led Zeppelin surely stemmed from the energies and ideas Page derived from his lengthy session work in the 60's. Now, though, it seems that all that has been exhausted and there is little new creative input to replace it. Page's views on the music business show a startling lack of original thought and clarity. Mainly, though, they suggest, as I mentioned earlier, confusion. And it's by perpetrating that state of chaos and confusion that the music business is able to persist in its Babylonian and fatuous desire to be part of the vast dehumanized, cynical corporate state. Grrrrr...

On the other hand, compared with certain of his contemporaries, maybe he's not faring too badly. I ask him if he feels isolated and cut-off. He claims not to feel that now, though admits to having been in a pretty weird state round about the time of the band's fourth LP.

"Of course," he adds, "it can do very odd things to you, the whole guitar hero bit. Look at Eric Clapton. Peter Green... Well, that's the obvious example. Jimmy Page: well, I don't think I'm doing too badly," he laughs, with a fair amount of confidence.



LETTER FROM BRITAIN

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Bob Geldof is a classic new case of having settled firmly in the "If this what it takes to be a household name I'll do it" syndrome. The national newspapers here love him, projecting him as the new bad boy of rock, which is a pretty bad sign for anyone who wants to be taken seriously as a musician but a good one for anyone who sees rock as a big circus. Even though the Boomtown Rats' "I Don't Like Mondays" is a straight cross between Queen, Bowie and Elton and Bernie's sniper song, and will probably drive me crazy in a week's time, it's a brilliant piece of construction. Written about the girl in San Diego who went to school and started shooting everyone in sight it works on two levels. One as an adequate piece of narrative, the other as a memorable chorus line (the number of people who just think it's about waking up after the weekend and feeling lousy -- and I suppose in a way that's just what it is). Geldof hasn't got a great voice -- it would sound even better if he got angry or desperate -- but there's no doubt he's shrewd. That track doesn't bear one hallmark of spontaneity, carefully planned and executed and so in a way, pretentious. But it's not surprising it's likely to beat the wretched "Mull of Kintyre" as the biggest selling single ever in the British chart. Geldof knows the game within a game. It's one Clash may have to learn.

Meanwhile, Nils Lofgren's new album is a piece of vinyl that could actually be a piece of gamesmanship unequalled. I don't think it is, but that could be the winning hand. Lofgren always seems such a rock 'n' roll innocent, with absolute affection for his music. There's such an untainted quality to "Shine On", for instance, that it really does defy critical cynicism. There's an optimism at work here and yes, in its own way, a real purity too.

PERE UBU

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CREEM: *When's the happy event?*

SK: Are you going to invite Robot to the reception? (*Much laughter and puking noises.*)

DT: No, private affair. Fortunately I don't have any friends.

CREEM: *What do you guys watch on TV?*

TM: *The Dating Game.*

DT: *Mork & Mindy* and *Laverne & Shirley.*

TH: *WKRP In Cincinnati* is cool sometimes.

DT: I don't consider myself a TV addict, but I guess that's the same as any junkie would say. TV is only good to keep track of what they're trying to sell and to see how far society has degenerated.

CREEM: *What are your opinions of other Ohio bands?*

DT: I like Styrene Money. Boy, that's about it.

TM: There're a few decent Jamaican bands in town.

ST: Most underground bands have either broken up or moved to New York.

CREEM: *Are you going to groan if I mention the Akron coalition?*

DT: What about them? Chi Pig's Ok. We all know them and like them.

TH: I like Devo the best. And Rachel Sweet.

SK: It's dangerous for us to comment too much.

Then all the bands will take swipes at Pere Ubu. If the media would just support anybody . . . like Christgau came down and wrote a big article about the area for the *Voice*. It's amazing nothing gets going.

DT: If you're talking about the Ohio bands . . . Pere Ubu, Devo, 15-60-75 are all equally superb at what they do.

(*A brief discussion follows re the excellence of the Number's Band, which has recorded a privately-pressed LP, Jimmy Bell's Still In Town. Crocus: "I like to describe them as the Velvet Underground if they'd been a blues band instead of a folk band."*)

CREEM: *If Cleveland's so crummy, what do you like about it?*

DT: There's an underground where everything travels by word of mouth.

TH: Daily living has energy in it.

TM: Cleveland's streets are relatively wild, a really charged atmosphere. There aren't too many police around so you have to be on your toes. If you see a cop in Cleveland, it's just good to see him around.

TH: If you want to take the responsibility for your own life, it's a great place. But the government doesn't worry about people.

CREEM: *I've seen Mayor Dennis Kucinich several times on Tom Snyder.*

DT: Did you hear that the Head of the Education Board got arrested for mooning?

TH: They've all got their hands in each others' pockets scratching their little pinheads. But Cleveland is quite scenic, especially the industrial area, where you can disappear and regenerate.

CREEM: *I always hear that in your music, like I'm being transported into downtown Cleveland.*

TM: There are these private roads in the Flats which is this valley where all the steel industry is, and we know our way around them. We drive around and take pictures and make tapes and drink and . . .

SK: Lay on the railroad tracks.

DT: All the neat stuff, like the parks, was built when the city was rich. But it's decaying now and falling apart. Euclid Avenue used to be called Millionaire's Row, with incredible mansions.

CREEM: *On a song like "Sentimental Journey," you seem to create the sensation of inertia or*

LETTER FROM BRITAIN



I Don't Like Hangovers

by Penny Valentine

I hadn't been to Clash for a while (we missed their Christmas concerts due to being in America and soaking up Talking Heads at the Beacon and the fireworks in Central Park) so we decided to combine enjoyment with political conscience and catch them at a special Rock Against Racism gig "People Unite—Southall Kids Are Innocent". The gig was one of two especially put on to raise money for the hundreds of people arrested at Southall during an anti-Nazi demo during the election campaign, when the police Special Patrol Group swung into action killing one young white schoolteacher and manhandling not a few Asian kids into the bargain. The night before, Peter Townshend had headlined a special show. This was a surprise since Townshend has never come up front with any solid political commitment before. It seems now that he's involved with the British reggae band Misty, his consciousness has been raised as to what's actually going on out there in the streets.

The extraordinary thing about the Clash gig was that the audience proved punk's alive in no mean way. It reminded me of the first time we went to a punk gig a couple of years ago—and the odd thing was it felt just the same as though we were interlopers, observers. It was really a massive reassertion of punk. I suppose really there's a new (how weird!) punk underground who move out en masse to celebrate an occasion like this. Apart from the once *de rigueur* bondage stuff and spiky hair, the really together punkettes seemed to have a uniform of short tartan skirt, thick tights and what looked like pixie boots. I was the only person in the auditorium in dungarees.

Clash followed Aswad who'd come on after a friend of the dead teacher had sung a number about the SPG. He'd had a hard time at the start with a bit of barracking from below us where the seats had been taken out to give everyone room to pogo (last time the kids had ripped the seats out themselves). Even when Aswad yelled out about the Southall kids the response seemed more half-hearted than to their reggae vitality on stage. It's the usual question RAR gigs pose. The kids come in but really the audience just wants the music, not the messages. Still the badges move and something gets through here and there and without RAR there'd be nothing at all. By the way, a point here. RAR in Britain seems very different from what we've heard of the American organization. Here it's definitely not a bunch of yippies.

Clash's politics are firmly entrenched in their attitude to the music business but I kept wishing they'd say something political on stage. I mean Strummer did mutter as usual between songs so it was impossible to hear exactly what he was



Adrian Boor/LHI/Reino

I know what's going on in the streets.



(Above) We told him.
(Below) But will I have time for the Hollywood Squares?



saying but I didn't catch any particular reference to the reason for the gig and although "I Fought The Law" had a certain irony under the circumstances they could have made more of it. Maybe it's expecting too much, I don't know, but it's a shame because Clash still have the power and really they're the only surviving punk band. Currently they seem to have got themselves in an exhausting situation where Strummer is a sort of manager; they still refuse to bow to the establishment and make sure of a hit record by appearing on *Top Of The Pops* (a TV show here that assures you of a hit even if you can't string two words together); and continue to cling to a single-minded ethos that prevents them writing anything that looks like it's been specifically moulded for the commercial market. I think that's one of the reasons they've not had an easy time in America. It's a rotten situation. Admirable but at the same time defensive, too pure in a way. There is a kind of middle path but I guess when you feel the record industry is waiting for you to cave in under the pressure and do it their way you hold on for grim death.

There's another problem. Live they are still playing specifically for a punk audience. At the moment it's OK and probably why the underground punks emerge so confidently at their dates. But I'm always hyped up to the idea of seeing them, then after the third number I begin to submerge. Maybe it's my problem. Perhaps I want them to be showmen in the traditional rock way, rather than a superior punk band. But equally I look on them as leaders and right now they don't seem to be leading anywhere.

I admire Tom Robinson too, for roughly the same reasons, though I get the feeling his personal/public politics seem to be under stress these days. I keep being reminded of Elton John. There seem to be whirlpools round him and a protective managerial coating building up. Dangerous stuff if you want to stay ahead of the crowd and in touch with your own reality. Too redolent of all those real rock stars and everything THAT stands for. During Gay Pride Week here Tom did a series of solo concerts with a jazz backing group. A couple of camp Noel Coward numbers, a few new love songs. They were pretty uninspiring and I really missed some of the bite I'd been expecting once he had the stage to himself. But he was nervous out there alone and it was odd how few gays actually turned up (the majority of the audience seemed to be cosy couples that used to attend EJ concerts en masse). The thing is that Tom's becoming very acceptable and I'm not sure that's a good thing. Much as I was against the critics who put his last album down (there really isn't anything wrong with providing melodic, good commercial rock music we can all get off on) he seems to be following the old pattern. And that disturbs me. First his original drummer "Dolphin" and he parted company, now it looks like the whole TRB situation has fallen apart, with Danny Kustow going off to play with other groups. I'm really beginning to wonder if Tom really doesn't just want to be another Elton John with a slightly better political perspective. And maybe he'll even finally ditch that in public too.

The problem's always the same. Once you make the decision to sign a record contract you've already hit a major snag, you become part of the establishment. And maybe we all expect too much. Maybe it finally does get impossible to ignore ego, success and how to achieve it and easier to sing along with Abba because they never had anything to sell out in the first place.

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