

# THE FACE

Four-fifths of B-52's  
Photo Lynn Goldsmith

## SOME ENCHANTED EVENING the B-52's

ROCK'S FINAL FRONTIER No. 6  
OCTOBER 1980 MONTHLY 60p



MADNESS  
GRACE JONES  
CLASH BOW WOW WOW  
HUGH CORNWELL BURNING SPEAR





# THE FACE

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**Publisher/Editor**  
Nick Logan

**Design**  
Feet First Graphics  
and Steve Bush Inc.

**Contributors**  
Janette Beckman  
Adrian Boot  
Julie Burchill  
John Cooper Clarke  
Anton Corbijn  
Gary Crowley  
Kevin Cummins  
Chalkie Davies  
Geoffrey Deane  
Fred Dellar  
Robert Elms  
Kevin Fitzgerald  
Tony Fletcher  
Jill Furmanovsky

David Hepworth  
Conny Jude  
Mike Laye  
Ray Lowry  
Rick Mann  
Neil Norman  
Tony Parsons  
Deanne Pearson  
Sheila Rock  
Chris Salewicz  
Jon Savage  
Tom Sheehan  
Pennie Smith  
Mike Stand  
Steve Taylor  
Vaughn Toulouse  
Virginia Turbett  
Stan Westwood  
Ian Wright

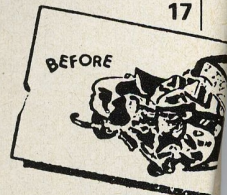
2nd Floor, Lisa House,  
52-55 Carnaby Street,

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You know how *shy* she is! Well,





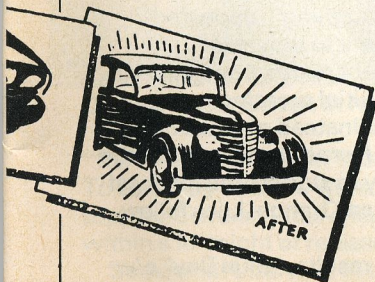
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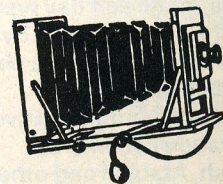
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## CLASH BEFORE & AFTER



## PHOTOS PENNIE SMITH

Pennie Smith in the one corner of her Osterley home not wall to wall in photos of The Clash.

**P**ENNIE Smith doesn't regard herself as a professional photographer but as "someone who takes pictures". This is what she's been telling writers from the specialist camera magazines interviewing her in connection with her book *The Clash: Before & After*, to be published next month by Pete Townshend's Eel Pie Publishing.

When she's not taking pictures, mainly for *NME*, she runs a second-hand bookshop in a converted station waiting room at Osterley in Middlesex. She has a non-commercial attitude to her work and an idiosyncratic technique—"You mean my photos are

highly individual style made her a major influence on the developing art of rock photography. Before then, rock photography was largely Mickey Mouse stuff, Top Of The Pops type group shots or screaming guitar poses, the kind of thing you can still see on the cover of *Melody Maker*.

Pennie took her first photos of The Clash at a 1976 gig. Shortly after she went on the road with them, taking photos to accompany a four-part article in *NME*. Pennie's harsh monochromatic style and The Clash's grainy charisma might have been made for each other. It became a sort of mutual

for their photos to be taken. I like taking photos of anyone who knows a bit about themselves, and puts that across; people who exhibit a certain sort of inner content."

A particular attraction of The Clash—as opposed to, say, Bryan Ferry who she also always enjoys working with—is that they photograph well as a group. Most of Pennie's best photos are of individuals, or of two people; she feels that three or more people together don't produce the necessary empathy or feedback to construct a good shot. But it happens to come off with The Clash.

Pennie's special casual

my concert photos never any good? I tell them I don't know, mine aren't any better."

She dislikes colour and stubbornly refuses to use flash, a factor which accounts for many of the technical inconsistencies of her photos; she acknowledges that this can make her work a hit and miss affair.

Flash is unnatural, she says. "I tend to think that those occasions when you should be using flash are the occasions when you shouldn't be taking photos anyway, like at a concert or when, say, someone's fallen asleep in the corner of a room. Flash is like firing a gun at someone, it's artificial. Half of my photos are sometimes out of focus but I





Pennie Smith in the one corner of her Osterley home not wall to wall in photos of The Clash.

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When she's not taking pictures, mainly for *NME*, she runs a second-hand bookshop in a converted station waiting room at Osterley in Middlesex. She has a non-commercial attitude to her work and an idiosyncratic technique—"You mean my photos are sometimes out of focus," she smiles—but her eye for the outstanding visual image is one of the most acute among rock photographers of her generation.

In the early '70s Pennie was a layout artist for *Frendz*, the underground magazine which also featured the writing of her friend Nick Kent. When the *Frendz* photographer got fed up taking photos without pay Pennie took over. And when Nick Kent started contributing to *NME* in 1973 Pennie just sort of came along with him.

I was editor of *NME* at the time, and never knew—until she told me the other week—that Pennie had so little previous experience. Appearing increasingly in *NME* through the '70s, Pennie's

highly individual style made her a major influence on the developing art of rock photography. Before then, rock photography was largely Mickey Mouse stuff, Top Of The Pops type group shots or screaming guitar poses, the kind of thing you can still see on the cover of *Melody Maker*.

Pennie took her first photos of The Clash at a 1976 gig. Shortly after she went on the road with them, taking photos to accompany a four-part article in *NME*. Pennie's harsh monochromatic style and The Clash's grainy charisma might have been made for each other. It became a sort of mutual appreciation society, though there has never been any business arrangement between them. She's been on two of their America tours. They like having her around, she likes them as people and finds them almost ideal as subjects for her camera.

"They make good shapes," she says, picking her words carefully. "They like to pose. That may sound a little insulting but what I'm trying to say is that they enjoy having their photos taken. They are aware of the photographer. So often you're just the thing that the journalist drags along."

Like most rock photographers she detests the press office photo session, having to shoot groups in a record company office while the journalist conducts the interview. "I like people who don't just stand there and wait

for their photos to be taken. I like taking photos of anyone who knows a bit about themselves, and puts that across; people who exhibit a certain sort of inner content."

A particular attraction of The Clash—as opposed to, say, Bryan Ferry who she also always enjoys working with—is that they photograph well as a group. Most of Pennie's best photos are of individuals, or of two people; she feels that three or more people together don't produce the necessary empathy or feedback to construct a good shot. But it happens to come off with The Clash.

Pennie's special, casual relationship with The Clash is reflected in her book. She says she feels always at ease with them, able to shoot at any time whatsoever. But there are obviously times when it would be insensitive to produce a camera, and no-one acquainted with Pennie would doubt her ability to respond correctly to these moments. On the other hand she resents the idea that she is a some sort of official photographer, the fifth member of The Clash as she was described in a Japanese magazine.

Her technically idiosyncratic style is derived in part from her dislike of the actual equipment of photography. She distrusts gadgetry. "I turn around at a gig and there's all these kids behind me with more expensive cameras than me. I get people asking me, Why are

my concert photos never any good? I tell them I don't know, mine aren't any better."

She dislikes colour and stubbornly refuses to use flash, a factor which accounts for many of the technical inconsistencies of her photos; she acknowledges that this can make her work a hit and miss affair.

Flash is unnatural, she says. "I tend to think that those occasions when you should be using flash are the occasions when you shouldn't be taking photos anyway, like at a concert or when, say, someone's fallen asleep in the corner of a room. Flash is like firing a gun at someone, it's artificial. Half of my photos are sometimes out of focus but I don't think that's important. What's important is that it has the atmosphere. I hate the whole equipment side of photography, being weighed down by gadgets."

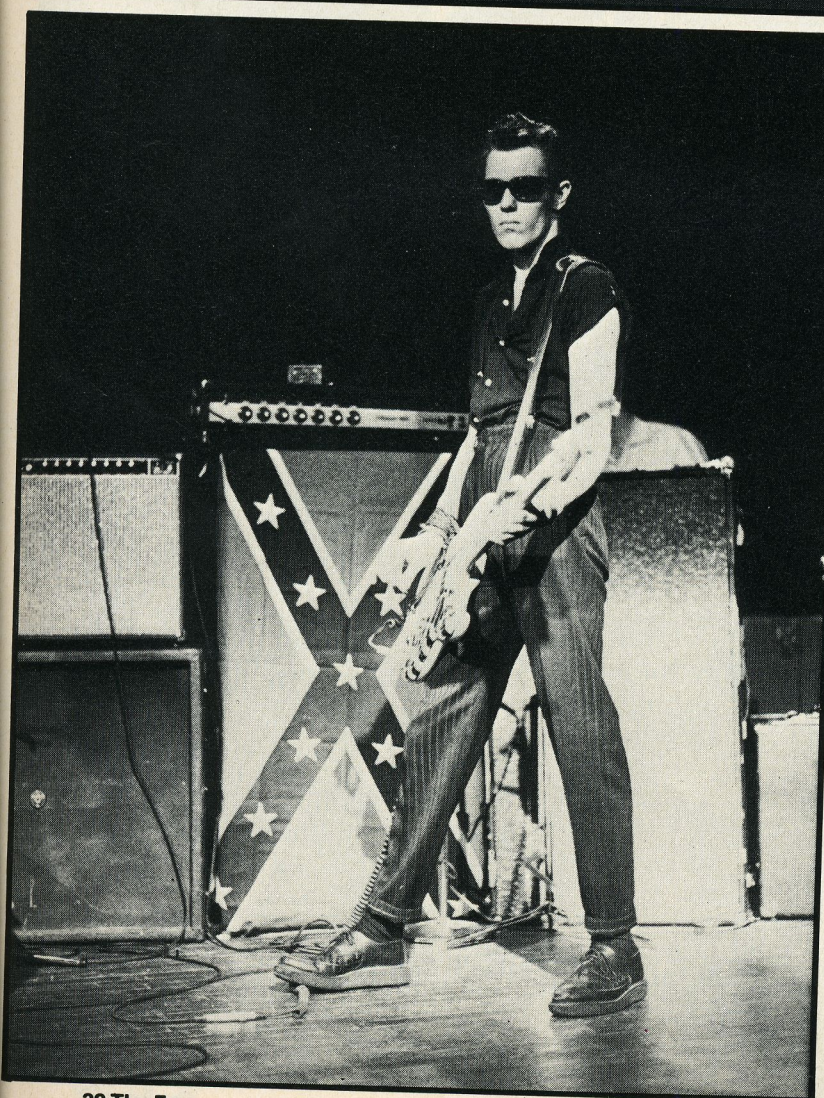
*The Clash Before & After* is Pennie's book and not, it should be emphasised, a Clash merchandising ploy. The group cooperated and wrote the captions but there was no question of them exercising approval over the choice of photos. Pennie followed them on tour to Germany for the captions, although they were actually completed in Norway after Joe Strummer's bust caused the tour to move on more rapidly than scheduled.

NICK LOGAN





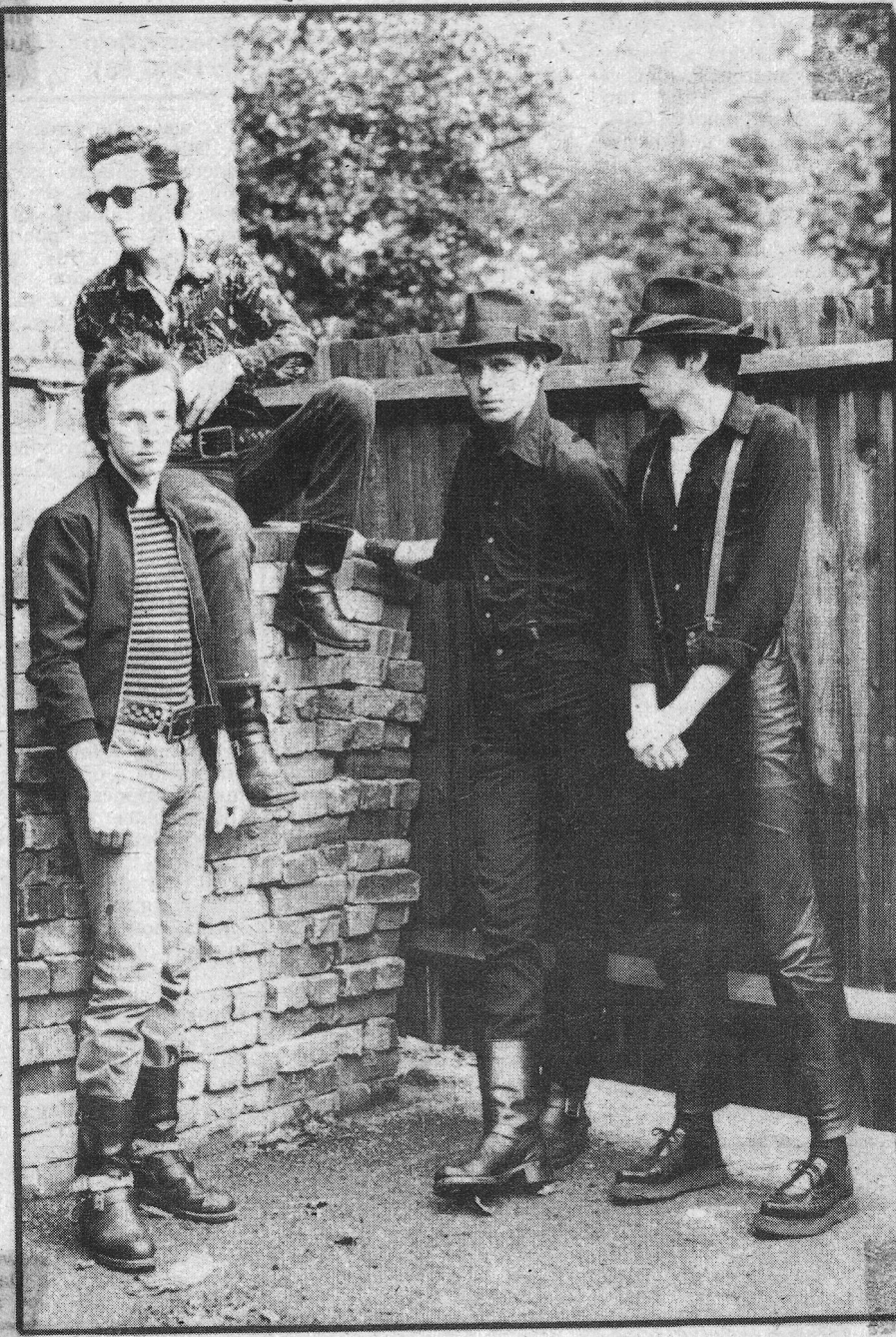












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PENNIE SMITH