

SEPTEMBER 29 1979 20p

FREE HEAVY METAL LP

INCLUDES PRIEST, BOSTON, NUGENT, AND OTHER
SKULLBUSTERS. DETAILS PAGE 24

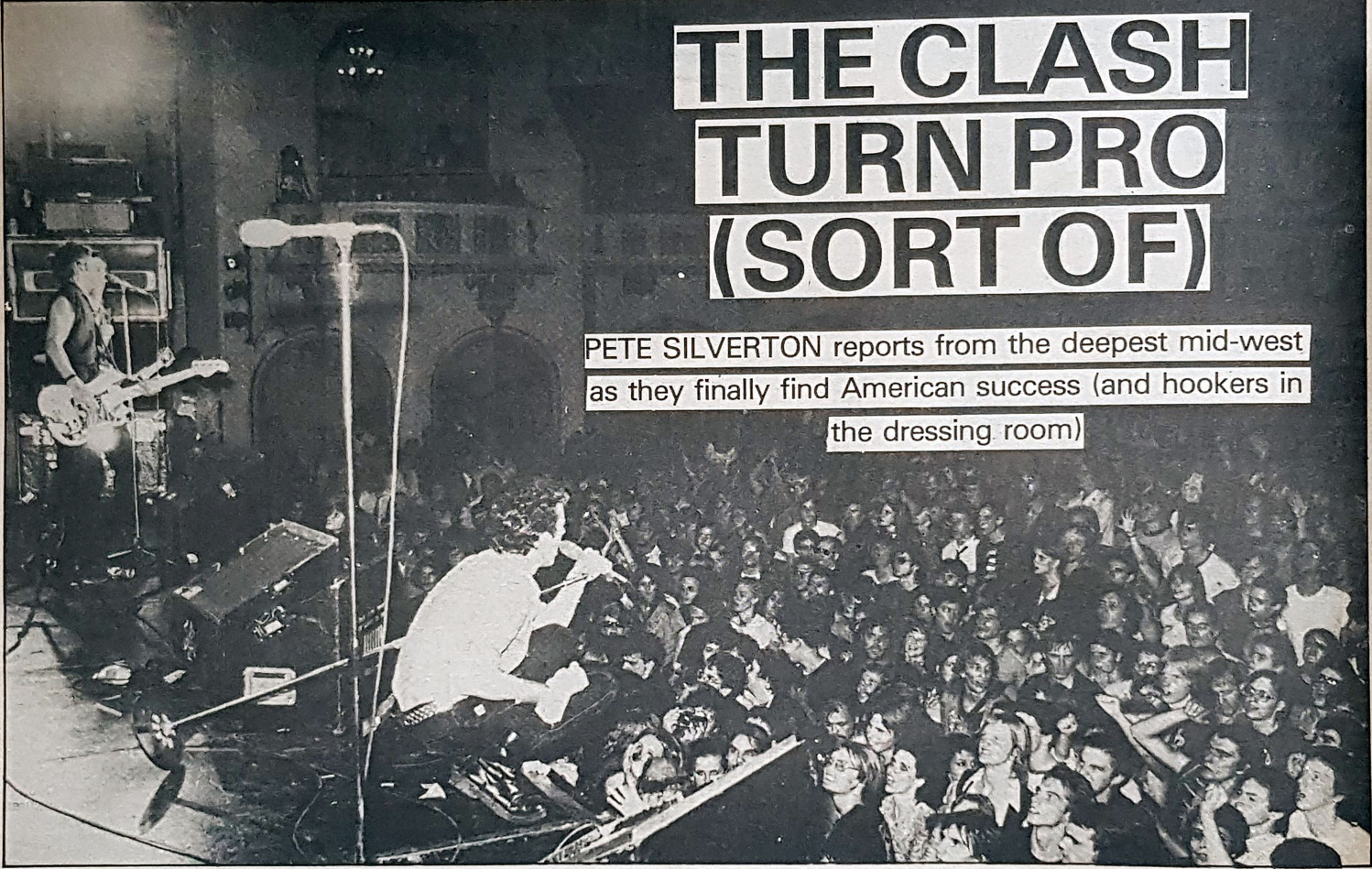
SOUNDS



PLUS: CLASH, SIOUXSIE, RUTS LP,
BACK TO ZERO, HEADBOYS

THE CLASH TURN PRO (SORT OF)

PETE SILVERTON reports from the deepest mid-west as they finally find American success (and hookers in the dressing room)



TUESDAY LUNCHTIME: Cleveland Airport. With a couple of hours to kill before my one-stop-only flight to Minneapolis and the first date on the Clash's second American tour (bewilderingly named 'The Clash Take The Fifth'), I dragged out the Corona Calypso, balanced it sloppily on a tubular chrome ashtray (*everything's* bigger and shinier at

Cleveland Airport) and started attacking the keys. Unfortunately, this attracted the attention of a perambulating mahogany tree.

"Hey, you man, whaddya doin', man? I was goin' buy myself a fuckin' Remington, man. That's the best fuckin' typewriter in the world, man. And it only a cost a hundred bucks."

The giant interloper paused to fiddle with his oversize shoulder bag before adding somewhat perplexingly: "But I never did get it 'cos my apartment

got burgled . . . Hey man, what *are* you?"

"A Journalist". He wandered off to allow this piece of information time to find his brain and then eased his three hundred and fifty pounds on to the blue vinyl upholstery right slap next to my right ear.

"You're a German, huh?" I chose to ignore this Pinteresque reply.

"Which part of Germany?"

Remembering what my mother told me about talking to strange black men in airport lounges I kept my lips tightly clamped on my Kent.

"Hey man, you some kind of fuckin' communist?" This last word was spat from his gullet like he thought he was just about to choke on his gum. "I fuckin' hate communists, man". (This from a man who looks like he drew a five, a seven and a three in the Great American poker game.)

"I fuckin' wish I could fuckin' kill you, you motherfucker. If I had a gun on me right now, I'd blow your fuckin' head away, you goddam motherfucker." He drifted away.

America is a foreign country. They do things differently there.

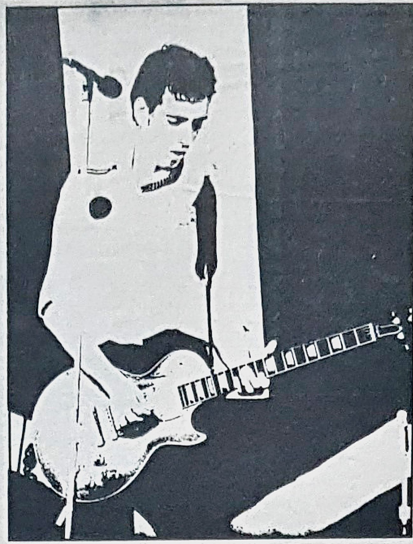
TUESDAY TEATIME: A Minneapolis hotel room. Having just left Paul Simonon in the nineteenth floor bar with a brace of double Brandy Alexanders and his girlfriend Debbie who he introduced to me with the words "This is Debbie, she takes photographs", I'm sitting in Room 511.

Kosmo Vinyl and his yellow blond with black roots hair is sitting at the coffee table. I'm perched by the window. One of Ian Dury's managers, Andrew King, is lounging on a bed talking into the phone.

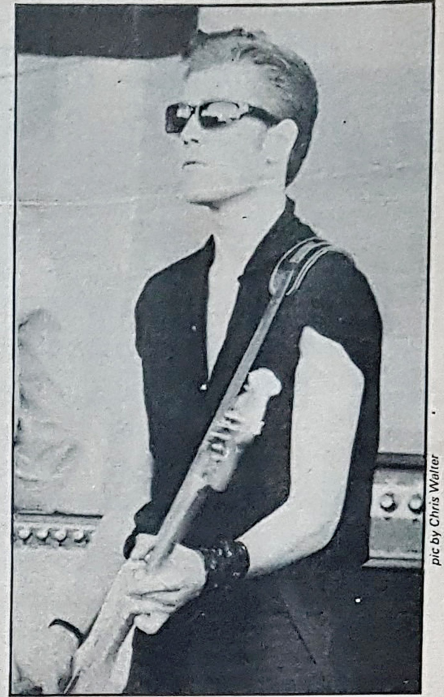
Both Kosmo and I remain conspicuously silent.



pic by Chris Walter



pic by Chris Walter



pic by Chris Walter

Although we can only hear one end of the conversation, it's obviously one of those phone calls that are awarded the respect normally reserved for the dead. With half the information trapped in the confines of a long distance line, little of it makes much sense. I do, however, pick up on a couple of phrases — "Get out in the market place" and "shift some units".

The Clash turn pro in the depths of the American heartland, indeed.

Being a naturally inquisitive sort, I wonder exactly why Ian Dury's PR and manager are sitting in an American hotel room, dealing with Clash business. It's explained to me that this is one of those most modern of relationships, a trial marriage.

The Clash, although still connected to Bernard Rhodes by law and contract, are technically without management. At home in England, they'd taken turns — one week Mike would carry the attache case, next week Joe would get the honour. But, on the road in America, they desperately needed someone to take care of the business.

And, after all, Andrew King did have the necessary experience of American backwaters — he'd seen 'em all handling Ian Dury's failed attempt to interest the Yanks by supporting Lou Reed.

And so the Clash, Kosmo Vinyl, Andrew King and his partner, Pete Jenner, are all currently huddled together under the church porch trying to make up their minds and waiting for the priest to arrive.

By the time this is all clear, Kosmo is beginning to enjoy himself. "So I asked him if he'd got a copy of the new album (the new album, for the purposes of this article, refers to 'The Clash' You Ess of Eh style) an' 'e said 'e 'adn't. . . ooh, is there gonna be some fun at Epic tomorrow. I'll get right on the blower and they'll get a bloody vice president down there."

Relations with Epic, their American record label, are, I quickly discover, far from conjugal.

(Not that the Clash ever bitched to me about Epic. They learned that lesson long ago. Blabbing off to the press about what is essentially a family affair can make you look like the silly, whining children of the relationship. They didn't even moan in public about CBS England insisting on a £1.49 cover price for the 'Cost Of Living EP' when

they wanted to keep it down to a quid.)

I don't know for certain why they're not exactly cuddling up under a nuptial blanket with Epic but I'd hazard a guess that it's not because Epic don't think they're worth it, can't see their effort being returned in hard currency but precisely because Epic figure (ha, ha) they stand a more than fair chance of using the Clash to buoy up their books as their profits slide nearer and nearer the red column and the total of Indians they've sacked starts pushing past treble figures.

Figure it this way. Having originally decided not to release the debut album, Epic were taken aback by the relative success of 'Give 'Em Enough Rope (which the did put out), the following tour of North America and, perhaps most tellingly, the overwhelming critical acclaim for the band, writ largest in 'Rolling Stone' and 'Village Voice', respectively the Bible and the Koran of the American music consumer press as it's viewed by the American record industry. (Being suggested as an escape valve for the fear and frustration engendered by China invading Vietnam might seem a touch hyperbolic to English ears; to an American record company it quite likely seems understated.)

So, after putting out the debut album (which has already set a record by selling 100,000 on import) to keep the band and the potential audience sweet, Epic reckon that the third album (which only needs to be mixed at the end of this tour) could maybe 'be the big one for these boys, elephant dollar time'. But, if that's to work out to Epic's advantage, they need a degree of control over the band they've so far been unable to gain . . . even without management the Clash have retained their independence (of sorts — they still needed tour support for this swing through North America).

Accordingly, the label put the bite on the band, saying no to this, maybe (if you do this) to that and generally making life not easy for a band on the road. That way, if Epic play a careful game, by third album time, they hope the Clash'll be doing it their way.

Add Kosmo Vinyl and Andrew King to this mess of divergent ambitions and you have the perfect recipe for tension between a band and their record company.

This, you understand, is all supposition but I was told by one of the Clash's

two American tour managers, that if Billy Gaff (Rod Stewart's manager who was once rumoured to be taking over the Clash) was in charge, he would be getting *everything* they wanted out of Epic *with ease*.

Also, I couldn't help but overhear someone saying that, if they didn't get the extra money out of Epic, the tour wouldn't even get as far as New York on September 19/20. Maybe I heard the figure of twenty thousand dollars mentioned. Maybe I didn't.

TUESDAY EVENING:
St Paul Civic Centre.

We'd been told to be ready to leave for the rehearsal around six thirty — the following day's show was to be the first gig of the tour proper; the only previous date had been an open-air show in Monterey — we finally left around ten.

The journey from the safe Minneapolis home of the Sheraton hotel along a dark and drizzly freeway and

across the fledgling Mississippi took a good half hour. As we arrived, we were greeted by an illuminated sign outside the St. Paul Civic Centre promising the Clash tomorrow and Abba next week and the four Clash bouncing around the stage in mufti.

Paul as always in a peaked cap and black, swinging his bass like he was building a railroad. Mick in trilby, white vest and black pegged pants — Bruce Springsteen's obviously big in the Jones book this year. Topper's behind his kit and Joe's in a green shirt and shouting down at me "'Ow long you been 'ere?"

"Since last Friday."
"Oh, I thought you'd been here for ages. You've got fat."

Retreating in shame to the back of the hall that Peter Frampton couldn't fill the week before, I joined Andrew King who was dancing along to Paul Simonon's first song, 'Guns Of Brixton', which

was him and Joe switching instruments — Paul on the 240 Volts Killer Telecaster and Joe on the Pressure bass. It's a moody dub-like nonentity, which doesn't improve with subsequent listenings.

Really, it's like a side-show to the main action which is Mick running the show from the centre of the stage. It's him who's arguing with the roadies, chivvying the sound guys and deciding which song they're gonna run through next.

Now they've got someone running the road show, Mick's free to concentrate on the music while Joe messes around with the presentation, getting Johnny Green, the band's 'personal', to shine a torch up into his face as a dramatic addition to their

new reggae cover version, 'Armageddon War'. A few more runs through new songs like (The Police Walked In On) Jimmy Jazz', an R&B number with a heavy debt to 'Staggerlee' and 'London's Calling' which is a bridging link between the historicists of the past and more measured pacyings of the present.

On past midnight when the union crew for the whole hall switches on to treble time and I fall asleep and get woken by a bottle of beer over my head courtesy of Topper.

The band return to the hotel and their girlfriends — only Mick didn't bring his beloved; she's on tour with the Slits.

CONTINUES OVER

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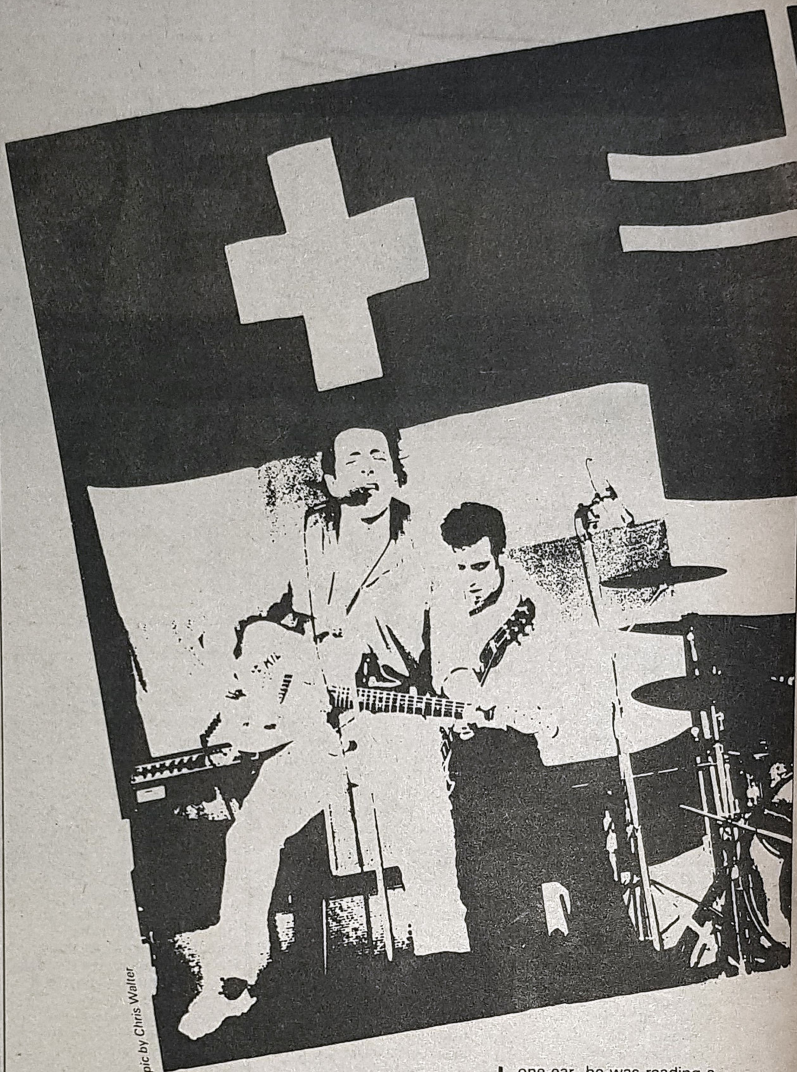
▶ ON TOUR WITH LABELLOVE

- ▶ 12 BRADFORD PARK (12 SHOWS)
- ▶ 13 LONDON (SHERWOOD UNIVERSITY)
- ▶ 14 BRADFORD (TOPHAM)
- ▶ 15 MALLS (MINTON GARDENS)
- ▶ 16 BOSTON (12 SHOWS)
- ▶ 17 BOSTON (UNIVERSITY)
- ▶ 18 BOSTON (LOCAL)
- ▶ 19 BOSTON (JOSON)
- ▶ 20 BOSTON (VICTORIA HALL)
- ▶ 21 BOSTON (UNIVERSITY)
- ▶ 22 BOSTON (APOLLO)
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CLASH USA

FROM PAGE 21



pic by Chris Winter

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON: Dressing room. "So what I did was put the jacket carefully in the case so when I took it out there were no creases in it". Topper's girlfriend, Dee, in a multi-coloured spotty suit, is explaining to Gabby, Joe's blond-haired girlfriend who's in a more functional olive drab boiler suit and white boots.

"My mum ironed all my shirts before I left", replies Gabby.

Back in the hall the American sound mixer, Shorty, who's identifying the band by means of the cartoons from the *Sounds* Christmas Clash game taped to the desk, announces: "The hall union has requested we break for fifteen minutes so they can fly the curtain."

Still puzzled by the rigidity of American unions, the band wander off the stage and watch the union crew go for their tea break. I overhear one of the union men telling another: "Christ, didja ever see such a bunch of pricks?"

WEDNESDAY EVENING: The Clash onstage (finally). And tactfully opening with 'I'm So Bored With The USA' as the Stars and Stripes beams benignly down on them from the centre of the backdrop butted right up against the red, white and green of Italy.

All in black apart from Topper's white shirt and Joe's red shirt with the

collar points aiming for the sky and running around the stage Clash-wise as Mick "testifies about Brixton" on 'Stay Free' and starts to take chances with his solo on 'Complete Control' — longer, freer, less structured and, for once, not an almost carbon copy of the recorded version.

Joe reaches for the mike and starts blurting: "I come over here and I switch on the radio and all I hear is the Eagles and Steely Dan . . . so I turn it to a country and western station."

The crowd boo. Country and western is not the coolest thing in the world to a Clash fan who doesn't know that in Monterey they brought Joe Ely on for the encore to do his 'I Keep My Fingernails Long So They Click When I Play The Piano' and 'White Riot'. Later in the tour, they plan to play a roadhouse with Joe Ely in his hometown of Lubbock, Texas.

The gig starts to disintegrate as Joe's guitar refuses to work, leaving him skanking guitarless in front of the mike, sticking alternate hands in his pockets and wailing through 'The Prisoner'. As the crowd wildly applaud 'White Man', Joe tells them: "It's no good. It's a pile of shit." And later: "You gotta say 'Fuck off, you limeys. Give it some stick, you cunts'."

The crowd is perplexed and next day the Minneapolis Star interprets this as 'punk rock's offensiveness' instead of an honest admission to being at less than peak form.

Mind you, the monitor mixer didn't help. Deaf in

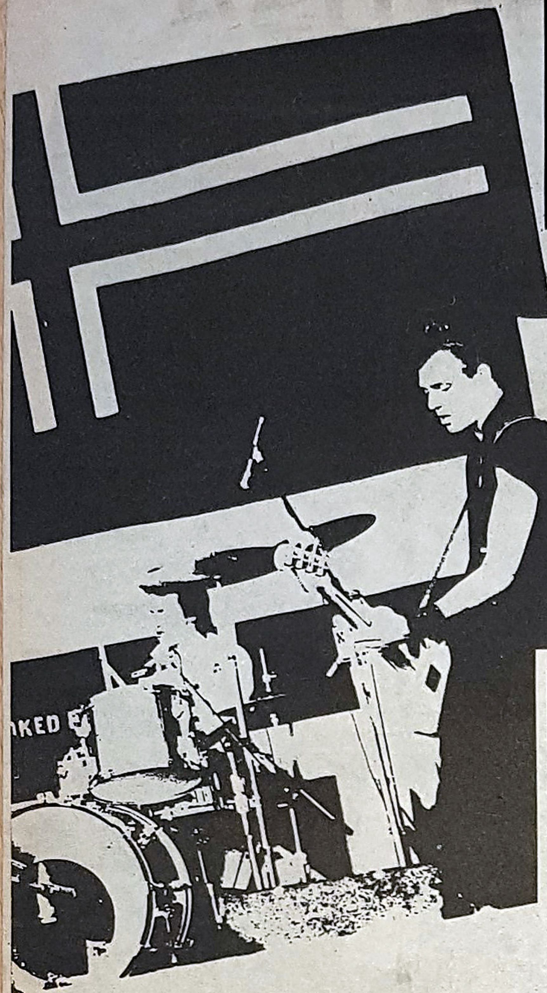
one ear, he was reading a book throughout the set. (He wasn't there the next show.) Surmounting such odds, they played a solid rearguard action, making it on guts, charisma and the strength of new songs — 'Waiting For The Clampdown' about the Three Mile Island near meltdown and 'Koke Adds Life' which they segue into 'I Fought The Law'.

The crowd didn't care that it was 'hardly transcendental' (Minneapolis Star headline); they wanted their encore. Paul and Topper came on first, then Paul and by the time they were locked into the thudding rhythm of 'Armageddon Time', Joe strolled on in the total dark carrying a candelabra, its candles the only light on the stage.

(The candelabra later disappeared which cost the band two hundred and fifty very useful dollars.) The sweet and sour tones of Strummer's 'A lot of people won't get no supper tonight' wound into the first-album-greatest-hits-sprint-to-the-end-and-off.

Andrew King's mellow voice told me "I don't think I'll go backstage for a few moments. I'll let them kill the road crew first."

When all's cooled out, Mick sits in the dressing room, drawing on some herb and chatting to his mum and chat-dad, Renee Jones (as was) lives in Annwood Michigan with her copper-mine engineer husband, George. They'd driven down specially for the show and both had obviously got themselves dressed up for the night out. He's in a neat, well-cut



in Chicago. It holds four thousand. The Clash played the Aragon which holds six thousand and drew maybe four thousand to their first gig in the city.
The Aragon looks like the architect couldn't make up his mind on which style to copy . . . so he used them all. It's got a little bit of Mexican, a touch of Inca, some Spanish and an entrance hall that looks like a catacomb.
An old ballroom that once played host to the

likes of Glenn Miller and Count Basie, it's got history, the Lawrence 4800N 1200W E1 running right up its side, level with the stage, a warm feeling and lousy acoustics. Topper sounds like he's the Scots Guards. And the Coldstream Guards.

Supporting them this night (as well as the Undertones who are on all of the first half of the tour and got two encores in Chicago) was the mighty lumberjack himself, Uncle Bo Diddley, in his element and his hometown. With his computer assisted guitar and primal rhythms, he's the point where the jungle and the research lab walk and he plays the drone guitar to beat all drone guitars.

Holding 'USA' back for the second number, the Clash opened with that R&B song 'Jimmy Jazz'. Most of the audience stared hard at the stage trying to work out if they'd turned up on the right night but by the end of 'USA' you could tell Mick was enjoying it — he did a giant leap in the air for the final chord.

Already by this second date the band are beginning to work out a new

choreography — Joe advancing to the front of the stage during the subdued section of 'Complete Control' and all of them retreating to the back of the stage in 'I Fought The Law' which the audience interpret as drama and I reckon is maybe 'We can't hear the drums'.

Joe: "This is an American song. I want you to put your hands on your heart like this and . . ."

Mick straps on a blond Ovation acoustic guitar.

'When Johnny comes marching home again Hurrah Tra la He's coming by bus or underground . . .'

The acoustic has everyone confused but the crowd still applaud convincingly. Having survived this test and wading through Paul's-song, they push on through to the end of the set on at least five out of the six cylinders. The shouting, screaming, dancing, cheering and lighted matches (lighted matches? who do they think this is, Bob Dylan?) make it clear that if the Clash want to take America, it's theirs to take.

Amidst the Epic execs and fans in the dressing room are two bovine women looking very out of place in halter tops, fishnet tights, hot pants, garters, gloves and very heavy eye-shadow. They look like ten bucks for a blow job hookers and the least likely people you can imagine in a Clash dressing room. Later I'm told that they were brought by a local dee-jay — a little (refused) present for the band. I realise America is obviously ready to shower its fruits on the Clash.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON: Air Canada 727 smoking section window seat. I leaf through a copy of People Magazine, the one with the 'Music Biz Blues' cover story. A flighty, unthoughtout and soft piece on the recession in the American record business, one line caught my eye. 'Most of the major record companies have fired at least fifty employees. At CBS Records, where the body count was 172, victims took to wearing t-shirts reading THE CRASH OF '79.'
How long before Epic alter that R to an L?

suit and tie. She's got a mass of black curly hair topping a copper necklace and a black, translucent shirt covered with what look like white apples.

Both of them are obviously very proud of Mick. George has never been to a rock show before. He keeps mumbling: "My God. It was amazing. I've never seen anything like it before." When Mick wanders over to the other side of the room, Renee keeps stealing glances at him just like any proud mum.

In the other corner sit the road managers discussing the equipment failures. "Those mikes just aren't built for Strummer", says Andrew King. "They're for folk-singers like Roy Harper. What we need is some hydraulic ones. Two of those should last us the whole tour."

THURSDAY: Seven hours on an Arpeggio tour bus. As body after body is squeezed on the tour bus, the size of the entourage becomes inescapable. The band, three girlfriends, the personal roadie, Rory, a mate of Mick's and one of the America tour managers and a great fund of stories about Mick at art school and in the Delinquents, two

journalists, two photographers and an artist. Throw in a juggler and they could open a circus.

Minnneapolis to Chicago. Seven hours on a bus with one short stop. The tinted windows make it almost impossible to see but the comforts of the bus make it seem more like a vibrating hotel room than a means of transportation.

By squeezing against a window and squinting, you can see out.

'Holiday Inn 41 Miles. Exit 53 North.'

'County Line 62 Miles.'

'Howard Johnson's Travel Lodge Exit 3 South 26 Miles.'

We pull up by the Chicago Downtown Holiday Inn three hours later than originally scheduled — on this tour, everything except the and going onstage seems to happen three hours late. I'm last off the bus and as I'm about to wander into the hotel, Johnny Green rushes out and grabs me.

"Have you got your credit card? They insist on either full payment in advance or a credit card and we haven't got either. Just stroll in there looking like you're the manager — I'll take that bottle of Jack Daniels off you — and give 'em the card."

(I oblige. Putting thirty people up at a hotel for three nights is just the kind of thing my bank manager loves me doing. I finally have to drag the other American tour manager, Mark Wissing, out of bed fifteen minutes before I leave for the airport to settle the bill.)

FRIDAY NIGHT: Aragon Ballroom. On this summer's tour of the States, Rod Stewart played the Uptown Theatre

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