

# RECORD MIRROR

PRETENDERS  
IN COLOUR



**DO THE  
BEAT**

---

FROM THE DOLE  
TO THE TOP

---

**CLASH  
KATE BUSH  
SIMPLE  
MINDS**



# IF I HAD A HAMMER



**Will The Clash win? Can they knock down the system. Will Joe Strummer get his head kicked in?**

**Interview by BARRY CAIN  
Picture BOB HOPE**

**T**HREE YEARS ago. And it's raining in hoho Soho. The James Cagney of punk Joe Strummer stone faced, steel capped, stacked high, steers and stares, as usual. The pub crawls with music scene middle / muddle men, many of which have since made their quick buck on the shores of insincerity. They deserved to drown. Strummer swam — and found the slow buck.

Back in the buck days he would often switch on the street suss sentiment — like "If the people controlling us now haven't got control of us in the near future they've lost. Therefore they are gonna do everything in their power to increase that control."

"I know I'm never gonna be able to beat them. I don't believe in other people. They are morons. They must be to stand for all this."

"I don't see anything after ultimate control. Just bombsites and a few survivors. Roll the credits — end. You'll soon know when that control comes. Things will start BOOMING. Industry will thrive,

unemployment will come down, people will march through the streets waving banners willing to die for Queen and country. And I'll get my head kicked in."

NOW James, er Joe is holed up in the Clash house, a terraced tenement teardrop 24 hours from Tulse Hill. He sticks his gun out the window ("Political power grows from the barrel of a gun") and smiles.

Next to him Mick Humphrey Bogart Jones is looking depressed. Maybe, he thinks, maybe he wasn't really cut out for this. Casablanca is a million miles away and Claude Rains supreme.

Paul Muni Simenon — or Skatface as his Streatham Locarno lotus eaters dubbed him — sits patiently in a corner. He never did like Mondays anyway.

Edward G Headon works flat out in the basement supplying the ammo. He smiles. Whatever else may happen the humdrum sterile bum life will never snare him now.

Outside they put the batteries into the loudspeaker.

Next door Lester bangs on the wall. So predictable. So dull. He complains about the noise. It's raining. Naturally. Tonight they want to tear down this pothole. They want to re-assert their original strategy.

The guy holding the loudspeaker is wet through. The rain pours down his back after forming rivulets on his trilby. The mushrooms in his ears start to

grow larger in the wet.

"Come out with your hands up."  
"Come in and get us Topper, sorry, copper," says Joe, a bead of sweat rolling down his cheek. "There's no way we're gonna appear on Top Of The Pops alive. You won't get us standing there like pricks propping up a load of old shit. How can we bash our guitars with passion when they ain't even plugged in? How can we sing at machine gun speed when the mike is phoney? The show's like an anaemic rice pudding. Give me Tiswas anyway."

Mick turns to Joe. "But we do lose out by not playing on it. I can't see us ever having a Top 10 single because of that."

"Mugs!" is bellowed around the street through the loudspeaker. Mick reacts — "We'll never change our attitude. We'll never prostitute ourselves."

"You might as well go and give someone a blow job for 10 bob than appear on Top Of The Flops," yells Joe. Lester bangs on the wall again. "Hey you guys, will you shut your noise? I'm trying to write a million word article on The Rubettes in Rock."

The loudspeaker guy decides to goad the band into making a silly move. Snierers are positioned on rooftops.

"Your new album's crap," he screams. Joe understand. "The world is full of assholes. No matter what you do or which way you turn there's always 20 people ready to slag you off — and they're always the loudest. Well they can all go and arsehole. Why should we get upset just because someone's got mushrooms in his ears?"

"When they hear our music they want to be hit over the head with a hammer. But we got kinda bored with using hammers. So now we're throwing

darts in their eyes instead. Subtlety is more effective, more powerful these days. That's better than," he bangs his fist on the windowledge. "I find the Angelic Upstarts or something like that pitiful in their effect on my emotions — absolutely nil. I've heard it all before. Somebody like Jackie Wilson has a 100 per cent effect just singing about lonely teardrops. The Angelic Upstarts are just trying to be like Jackie Wilson.

"Imagine if you saw your imitators getting hits and kudos with their imitations. Wouldn't you feel like leaving them to it and moving onto a new pasture? It makes me sick, watching all these blokes in zipped pants pissaassing around."

**T**HERE'S silence from the street. Mick lights a cigarette and talks through the smoke. "Maybe we should have brought the first album out again for these idiots."

"No," replies Joe. "Maybe we should have brought out a hammer. A nice hammer. Those people who were expecting something heavy from 'London Calling' probably think we sound like Frank Sinatra. But it's a damned sight better than most of the other plastic shit like PIL or The Jam. I don't get no kicks out of listening to that."

"Yeah but that's you," says Mick. "I don't think these bands should be lumbered just because they don't move you emotionally."

"I'm not lumbering them. They're just examples. It's just their style of rock — bam bam bam."

The silence permits frantic thought.

Joe's Bubble — "I certainly feel better these days. I'm more in touch with reality — the reality of all this monkeying about. Before we were losing a ton of money, pockets of it. On our first tour everyone would just jump into the nearest hotel and smash it up then leave. It never occurred to me that they'd send the bills just to us 'cos everyone was smashing it up — all the support acts. No, WE got all the bills for it. That brings you down."

Mick's Bubble — "I used to be optimistic. Not any more. There are so many reasons. Maybe 'cos they wouldn't give me a mortgage. I'm just a misery guts these days. Those that really know me would think my misery was nothing out of the ordinary. I guess it happened ever since I started getting involved in The Clash."

Man with the loudspeaker's Bubble — "What an album. What a light show. What a concert. What a band."

In the flashing blue moonlight he raises his loudspeaker yet again. "You can't stay in there forever." There is no reply from the house. "You're just a bunch of publicity seeking posers."

"You can never have too much coverage," yells Joe. "I don't care if we're on the front of every paper and on every page inside. And we never adopted a posey stance. Things just happened naturally."

"We've always attracted a different attitude from the press anyway. That's because we're not dummies. You know when you're in a class at school and there's always a kid who's off sick — that kid was Mick. He used to spend a lot of time in bed, in hospital or somewhere, reading books. That perhaps made him more thoughtful than most."

"Yeah, we attract journalist orgasms all right. Like with Lester Bangs. See, he only ever tended to see one band and then piss off, but with us he ended up driving round in our van for six days. He must've revelled in it. But I thought all that stuff he wrote was rubbish. I couldn't face reading it. You must be able to say it better than that." He stops, realising his mistake in carrying on a conversation in this way.

From then on the guy with the loudspeaker gets no replies to his goading. He even tries a nice guy approach, without success. "Okay Father," he tells a besmoked Spencer Tracy. You can go in and make a papal point.

The Father dances in and out of the puddles as he climbs the stairs to The Clash house. The band watch him enter.

"This is no place for you," says Joe as Father Tracy walks in.

"Bejassus you're a bunch of folks. You all became too complacent too fast."

"No," says Joe, still keeping one eye on the street below. "I've never been complacent. God, that would be the end. That's the time when people start walking all over you. I always think that we're just about finished, that we're about to be flattened or blown away, or even run off the road by our lawyers. Oh, it's easy for you to say The Clash are doing all right but for us it's much more of a worry. We've never believed that."

"I'd be scared if I had a few mammoth hits. I mean, is there anyone in the whole world who can write a good song after selling a million singles? You can't say John Lennon. You can't say Bob Dylan. The proof is as soon as they make it they don't seem to be able to write decent songs anymore. Like with Leonard Cohen. I heard he wrote all this best songs when he didn't have two ha'pennies to rub together."

"He's an ol' misery guts too," interrupts Mick. "It's in his nature."

Father Tracy fondles his rosary. "But boys, don't you think you write better songs if you suffer?"

"But if you suffer and write bad songs you're suffering even more," replies Mick, philosophically.

"We never get complacent," says Paul, fed up with vegetating in the corner. "We keep checking each other out in case of that. I think the only time complacency set in was when we first signed to CBS. We all walked around in a daze for days."

"Yes my sons, but a lot of people lost faith in you. The band seemed to be doing everything they ever vilified — like touring America for example."

"Look Father, we've got to take care of this business," says Joe. "Instead of sitting in this shithole not selling records we might as well go to that bigger shithole over there and not sell any."

"We haven't been to anywhere like Japan yet but we're certainly gonna try to get there this year. I hear it's a bit creepy over there."

It's only creepy," insists Paul, "because they're all down there and we're up to here."

"We've got to try and get to every place and give them a dose of Clash rock," continues Joe. "See, we wind people up deliberately. Like on the new album cover we wanted to put the most recent photos we had and they were all from the US tour. So we had little captions saying Clash in Texas, Clash in New York. It's a total wind up."

"But a lot of people may not see the joke my son."

"We see it. That's enough. I just love it when some guy writes to the papers saying 'London Calling' — yes I see, from America hohoho' I really get my kicks out of that."

**O**UTSIDE the loudspeaker guy grows impatient. He knows the Clash have still got it. After seeing them live only a few days before he realised their potency hadn't been pummelled by over

enthusiasm on the part of fans and over-indulgence on the part of the press. The show had been a staccato storm of serenade, both stylish and rough — The Clash secret. The new songs were just as exciting as the old — and he found that worrying. Something had to be done to fulfil those three year old predictions, this was the greatest threat to world peace since the Second World War.

"But what about the things you said: People believed in you."

Joe tightened his finger on the plectrum. "I don't care about business. I piss on it from a great height. I'm more interested in the music. If that's going great that's all that matters. It is depressing when you lose a lot of dough or when something goes wrong. But it doesn't really affect me as much as the music. If that's cool it dictates to all the rest."

"You've got to realise that we love music. I'm obsessed with it. You don't think I wander round worrying about the economy all of the time do you? Look, if I had a weekend off I'd spend it twanging a guitar — not going to Karl Marx's grave to make a brass rubbing."

"People took us the wrong way. When I sang 'Sten guns in Knightsbridge' it was about them shooting us. But people started saying 'Yeah, The Clash have got the sten guns'. But we haven't got any sten guns. The army have. That was a small detail. Oh, I tried to make that point clear in interviews afterwards but it was no good. They still kept saying 'if you ever keep that promise to go to Knightsbridge with sten guns we'll be with you'."

"And then everyone thought we used to wear army fatigues. They weren't. They were Clash trousers."

"Yeah," says Paul. "We designed them with so many pockets so you could hide your dope easily. And they were better than the bondage trousers 'cos you could run in them and hop over walls. With bondage ones you kept tripping over the chains."

"But the songs on 'London Calling'. They're, well, not as emotive as before."

"We're just expanding our subject matter," replies Joe. "We don't want to repeat ourselves. That's the most heinous crime you can commit. I mean, do we have to be like The Ramones and release seven albums of the same stuff. If people want the same all the time they can always get it from The Ruts or the UK Subs. There's plenty of groups playing good headbanging music."

"'London Calling' is a musical shark attack. The saxes on it are great. Oh, it's best not to tart the songs up too much. I mean, I wouldn't put horns on everything. But one day I'd like to have a horn section on stage, not standing at one end all night just blowing but like when they have a funeral in New Orleans and walk in a long line. I'd like them always walking, maybe out into the audience. I'm getting nervous now."

Joe looks into the priest's eyes. He sees bombsites and a few survivors. He sees control. And he knows he lives by the river. He'd been smashing grapefruits into people's faces for far too long. It was time to be gunned down on the church stairs.

"Here's looking at you kid," he says to Father Tracy.

"But I'm supposed to say that," says Mick. "Well there's no way you're gonna get me to say 'you dirty rat'."

"Roll the credits. End."

# Girl

## Thru the 80's

### Girl live on tour as special guests of UFO

- |                |         |               |                  |
|----------------|---------|---------------|------------------|
| <b>January</b> | 17 & 18 | NEWCASTLE     | City Hall        |
|                | 19      | LEEDS         | University       |
|                | 20      | OXFORD        | New Theatre      |
|                | 21      | LEICESTER     | De Montfort Hall |
|                | 22      | PORTSMOUTH    | Guildhall        |
|                | 24      | WOLVERHAMPTON | Civic Hall       |
|                | 25 & 26 | BIRMINGHAM    | Odeon            |
|                | 27      | COVENTRY      | New Theatre      |
|                | 28      | SHEFFIELD     | City Hall        |
|                | 29 & 30 | MANCHESTER    | Apollo           |
|                | 31      | HANLEY        | Victoria Hall    |

- |                 |   |             |         |
|-----------------|---|-------------|---------|
| <b>February</b> | 1 | BRISTOL     | Colston |
|                 | 2 | SOUTHAMPTON | Gaumont |

**3,4,5&7 LONDON HAMMERSMITH ODEON**

### Girl The Single 'Do You Love Me'

b/w Strawberries Jet 169 taken from their new album 'Sheer Greed' released February 1st.



Jet RECORDS