



MICK JONES

IC CLASH POSES

'THE CLASH — Before And After': Photographs By Pennie Smith (Eel Pie Publishing £4.50)

ON THAT fateful Ladbroke Grove afternoon when Messrs Jones and Simonon ran into Joseph Mellor and told him his band (the 101-ers) was shit but he's great so why not join The Clash, I don't imagine that even they foresaw themselves as the subject of a lavish 160 page pictorial devoted solely to their own mugs

(give or take the odd drummer, cartoonist and roade).

But times change and so have the group and not for the worse. Always game for a pose, their frequent image switching has found as much favour with devotees as their vinyl variations, and with Pennie in there snapping from the start, there's a fairly comprehensive collection of classic stances.

Many of the photos were taken on last year's break-through American tour and as such visually complement their last album. My

personal fave is one of Paul sat in front of a beaten up old Buick (or Chevy or whatever) that wryly captures the band's obsession with the fifties.

Slap 'Jimmy Jazz' on the deck and then flip to the pic of him outside the liquor store or leaning against a gas pump: It's Dean Moriarty waiting for Jack to get him back on the road! Onstage, of course, he's Link Wray or early Elvis and needless to say the 'London Calling' cover is included, complete with an explanation of its spontaneity.

If the bassist seems to be getting too much attention here, it's because the book brings him out as the most photogenic, not that the others are unable to throw the odd shape or two. Fortunately many of these are off-stage which means we get the boys in a variety of moods and enough insight into individual personalities to appreciate that rivalry in The Clash camp is easily outweighed by affection and a commonsense of purpose, however spurious that may be.

Like any good art book, the pictures don't take up the whole of the page, size being dictated by effect. This leaves plenty of room for captions, the lion's share taken care of by Joe. The fact that he put a lot of effort into them yet only occasionally are they funny gives the impression that he's not over-burdened with brains, though Mick doesn't even try, opting for the long-winded descriptive approach. As with The Police's attempt to write Record Mirror, the conclusion is to be drawn is that in their hands the pen is not mightier than the chord.

So what else? The book is vaguely divided into sections like 'In Search Of The Perfect Costume', 'Hanging Around', 'Breakfasts' and 'Transport And General', all of which give the uninitiated some idea of a travelling band's sense of priorities.

Necessarily and suitably monochrome, the book strikes a neat balance between coffee table kitsch and the funky but chic image The Clash strive to maintain. Die-hard fans will rightly forego their next album for it. Those uncertain are advised to do likewise.

MIKE NICHOLLS