

# CAUGHT IN THE ACT

## Combat city rockers

### CHARGE

Marquee, London  
THE Stones were playing round the corner in Oxford Street. "Hello," said Charge guitarist Stu P. Didiot. "We're the Rolling Stones". And belted out the "Satisfaction" riff.

Fact: Charge have a sense of humour. They'd have to, really, considering the nearby competition, considering the Marquee was sold out and considering... the way they look.

They may have walked onstage as if they'd just fallen out of bed, but in fact they'd just fallen out of the infamous Ship pub, Stu ejected on account of his mini skirt, make-up and fishnets, and the rest abandoning Ship in protest.

The band are as interesting musically as they are visually, spurred by punk but creating round its basis a dramatically imaginative atmosphere, vocalist Moose giving an appropriately theatrical performance (despite a sore throat).

Charge supplied a varied set that reached from the hard-line thrust of their early days to the more adventurous investigations of recent material like "Absolution" and "Fashion", the current single. And so what if the Stones were round the corner? We had a good time in the Marquee too... CAROL CLERK

### THE ICICLE WORKS

Pickwicks, Liverpool  
WHAT kind of group has a synthesizer as an integral part of their sound and plays songs based on lush melodies and vocal harmonies? What kind of group go on stage in drab grey and black clothes and intense demeanour?

What kind of group has the appearance of what is still sometimes called "new wave", yet has obsessions which predate that era? What kind of group plays in front of a kaleidoscopic projection of coloured light and writes songs with long descriptive lyrics about subjects like trees and nature and the climate, with titles like "As The Dragonfly Flies", "When Winter Lasted For Ever" and "Factory In The Desert"?

The Icicle Works do have a basis in certain local traditions: the use of the synthesizer is an obvious one, but there are others. The impassioned vocalising for example, or the sardonic commentary from the lead singer that passes for communication or stage presence ("I'm doing this so you'll all think I'm arrogant and hate me."). A few observations instead of answers might clear the confusion.

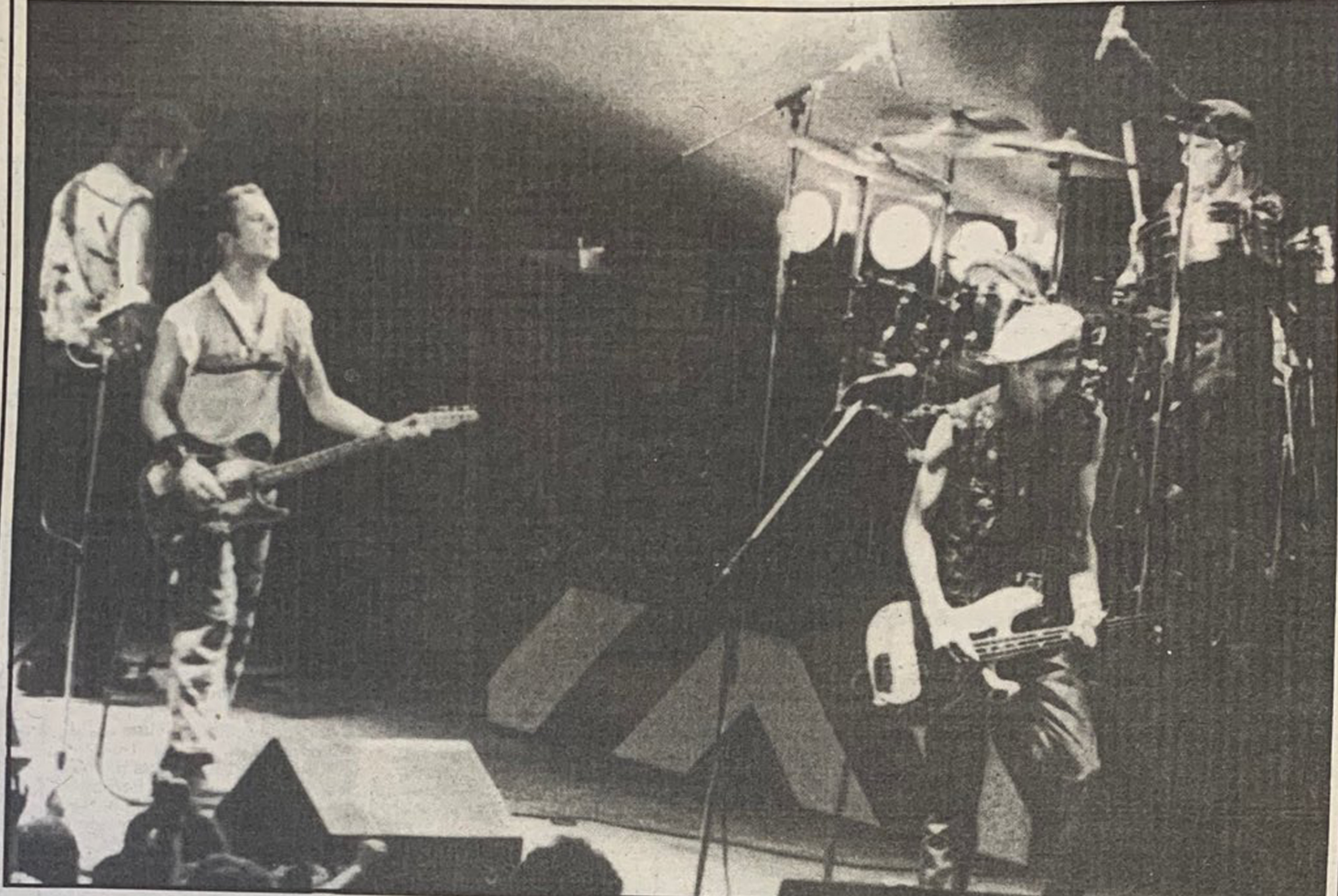
The sounds: after being together for just over a year the group is obviously in a process of continual change, as their gaining a harder edge than their old recordings (on tape and the John Peel show) would suggest. On this particular occasion they played with plenty of muscle especially in the drum corner. The result is a full sound from a mere three-piece.

The group: they're young; quietly unremarkable in appearance (the light show is the most colourful thing about the group); obviously ambitious; sound serious but look as though they're enjoying themselves.

The songs: some, such as the melodic "Love Hunt" are very appealing. Others are frankly embarrassing. One day this group will make an "album" and people will play it to their friends and say "listen to the lyrics, man". This group have been listening to the sort of records that the rest of us keep very well hidden at the back of the collection because we're too embarrassed to even take them down to the second hand shop.

The conclusion: none, but another question. What kind of band ends their set by playing a guitar solo; quoting the last song from the previous group; and quoting the first song from themselves?

Well, what are they? I still don't know - that much makes them interesting. - PENNY KILEY



The Clash conquer New Jersey. Pic: Keith Bernstein.

### THE CLASH

Convention Hall, Asbury Park, New Jersey

"How'd ya like the London fog outside?" Joe Strummer cackled playfully between numbers. The body heat generated by the maddening crowd inside was in stark contrast to the dark cool ocean mists that had settled over this sleepy beach resort town. "We imported 22,000 tons of fog just for you - we figured we'd show groups like Styx and Foreigner how to do it right."

On the second night of their 1982 American offensive, establishing their beach head in Bruce Springsteen's backyard. The Clash didn't just do it right. They did it real. In a sly bow to the rampant press speculation over Strummer's recent AWOL escapade and the sudden exit of Topper Headon, they

prefaced their appearance on stage with a prerecorded tape of Roy Orbison's "Runnin' Scared".

But if they were at all scared, it didn't show in the strident goose step and upper cut guitar punch of the opening serve "London Calling", or the hard metallic return of "Safe European Home".

With typically heroic Clash perversity, they were at their tightest, their most aggressive, their most committed when they were at their most desperate. And ironically, the heart and soul of the storm were its most unpredictable elements: the return of the rejuvenated Strummer and "pick up" drummer Terry Chimes kicking into the hard funk of "Radio Clash" one minute and the next anchoring the liquid mutant reggae of "Combat Rock".

Chimes played this show like he'd been rehearsing the set for a year instead of less than a week. He was the boot in the band's pants during "Clash City Rockers" and even the hall's trash-can acoustics couldn't deaden the crack of his machine gun drum fill in "I Fought The Law".

Then there was Strummer, rallying the troops on and off stage in his chic new combat fatigues. Whatever the cause and effect of his recent bug out, he still sang with spirit and bite. He spat out the poisonous satire of "Know Your Rights" and "Go Straight To Hell", then lead an angry romp

through "Garage Land" to close the show, returning for a pained meditation on "Armageddon Time" with Mick Jones' guitar slicing the humid air over Chimes' and Paul Simonon's hard reggae thrust.

What Strummer and Chimes had was obviously contagious because Jones traded in his occasional guitar hero overkill for dramatic power chord and clipped riff punctuation, adding his own vocal muster to a stirring version of "Somebody Got Murdered" that, in one fell swoop, buried the accusations of diluted passion and commercial rock flab dogging the "maturing" Clash.

In fact, the longer they played, the clearer it became that The Clash were playing hard here not just for their reputation but for their very lives as a rock 'n' roll band. Pop fashion has left them eating clouds of its smug dust; the changes of the last month threatened to blow them apart.

Yet they responded with the best show I have ever seen them give and they did it in front of a crazed cross section of disenfranchised American rockers, from hippies in Grateful Dead tee-shirts to hard core punks in their Dead Kennedys regalia to stunned Jersey beach bums. The Clash fought the odds and we all won. It was only one battle, but the war is far from over. - DAVID FRICKE.

### SQUEEZE

Fair Deal, London

SQUEEZE albums go with Danette record players, "A Kind Of Loving" and formica topped tables. A Squeeze gig is a pint of lager, lathering into a sweat and forgetting Monday follows Sunday.

Initially it looked like the size of Brixton's Fair Deal would overwhelm the impact of Squeeze music. Removed from the intimacy of the drawing room Squeeze sounded like they were struggling. Oh, the hits just kept on coming - "Tempted", "Another Nail In My Heart", "Black Coffee In Bed" - but they were getting lost in the Moorish village surrounding the stage.

I was getting anxious, then Glenn Tilbrook pulled every tear-jerking stop out on "Labelled With Love", and the hairs on the back of my neck went on strike, and you just knew everything was going to be alright. Squeeze's finest music is

vulnerable; contemporary love songs that wryly chart emotional encounters. That sensitivity was lovingly evoked on "Labelled With Love". As a single, I'd always found it a mite turgid, but live it conjured up everything Squeeze are capable of, and what their audience expects; the stalls wrestled the final chorus away from Tilbrook, and from then on Squeeze never let go.

Bursting straight into a joyous "Cool For Cats", no one looked back, only forward to the favourites. It's only when you see them live that you realise just how many great songs Squeeze have written and if a "Squeeze Greatest Hits" isn't under everyone's Christmas tree this year, A&M want their bumps felt.

As a band, they are so likeable: bassist John Bentley prowling round the stage, living out a rock 'n' roll fantasy; drummer Gilson Lavis never missing a beat; new keyboardist Dan Snow enriching the sound. And the front men... Tilbrook was cute enough to charm a mussel from a shell and Chris Difford effortlessly out-spined George Cole. Stage front, they were the focal point: admirable, but not aloof, revelling in the music they have created. The night grew old, the temperature rose and the band played on. A "Tears Of A Clown"/"Time Is Tight" medley got the thermometer working overtime. An invigorating diversion down Memory Lane brought the evening to a close, "Up The Junction", "Pulling Mussels" and "Take Me I'm Yours".

## The Likely Lads

They did, I was!

It was a great evening, with Mari Wilson and the Wilsations a perfect appetiser. Their act has improved immeasurably, and Mari's version of the classic torch ballad "Cry Me A River" almost brought a tear before bedtime. But the night belonged to Squeeze, they managed to make the Fair Deal feel like a Deptford pub on a Saturday night. Madison Square Garden watch out. - PATRICK HUMPHRIES.

### RE-FLEX

Embassy Club, London

IF THERE'S one golden rule in surviving calamitous gigs, it's this: never step up to the microphone and announce, "Surely nothing else can go

wrong now." Believe me, John, it always does.

They must have had more technical problems than the Channel Tunnel and were understandably pissed off by the end of the night, especially as this was a showcase gig in search of a deal.

Presence isn't enough for Re-Flex, it's pressure they want to apply, driving home what are really curly haired pop songs at honed needed point. The effect is exhausting, compulsive and could have been exhilarating if the broken leads and duff connections hadn't got them down.

That was a shame since the power and the spikey melodies would be enough on a strong day to carry anyone. Covering the cracks involved too much animated jumping, sweating and fabricated bonhomie until the strobe lit Embassy resembled a colour your own edition of "Top Of The Pops". I left battered, but still brightened. - PAUL COLBERT.

### DIANA ROSS

Wembley Arena

"It's not television," said the lady after about four numbers, as a gesture for audience participation. And she was right.

A quiet moment - "the evening's just going too quickly, so I'd like to slow things down for a minute..." "Sit down!!" comes a shout from halfway back to some over-enthusiastic fans standing at the front.

"It's really great to be back in England..." "SIT DOWN!!!"

A pause. A thought. And she starts to sing...

The first of four nights for Diana Ross at Wembley Arena certainly didn't prove to be the well-oiled ride into glory that everyone, including the lady herself, expected.

The sound wasn't right (she threw down her mike and stormed off at one point), she was almost knocked off the stage by one fan and there was a bunch of barrackers.

But though it spoilt the dream it perhaps helped to illustrate the resources and tremendous talents of the lady as a performer. She quashed the hecklers with a song and with all the guts and composure of an old blues singer in some sweaty dive.

And when the sound just wouldn't behave on "Upside Down" she stripped away all the instruments and sung it bare and beautifully. Never before has a soundcheck been performed so elegantly!

She promised to touch on all 20 years of her bountiful career and for the most part she did. Songs from "The Wiz" and the gorgeous theme from "Mahogany", a couple of Chic tunes, a few recent hits and a quick dip into the Motown bag with "Stop! In The Name Of Love", "Reflections" and "You Keep Me Hanging On".

Even recent slighter numbers like "Mirror Mirror" and "Why Do Fools Fall In Love?", which perhaps seemed to indicate the end of her reign, were pleasant surprises. Lifted out of the studio by sheer power and glory of her voice, they took on overgenerous proportions.

Halfway through the set the lady on stage, looking out on the audience, caught sight of the blissful, idiotic grin of yours truly in the sixth row.

"You smile", she said with a lovely fleck of irony. And for her trouble, her spirit and her voice, I, and many others, did. - PAUL SIMPER.

### MOOD SIX

The Venue, London

WITH the so-called newspaper coverage of the Falklands fiasco effectively murdering the myth that the collective power of individual consciences can influence international affairs, the dailies whipping up an image of jingoist support against a strong anti- or at least, apathetic public trend, Mood Six's insistence on the all-conquering power of love seems somewhat hollow.

With record sales and gig attendances plummeting as the "kid on the street" loses interest in pop, the ritualistic innuendo and suggested star worship that permeates Mood Six's single, "Hanging Around" seems a self-deluding, anachronist noise.

But, given that the new psychedelia is little more than a failed fashion launch, Mood Six have shored up against the inevitable jibes in the only way left open - by beginning to make some strong, vibrant music. Their stance - the dry ice and films - may be more corny than cute, but the poppy protest of "Plastic Flowers" carries a commitment beyond their polished professionalism.

Mood Six are a gimmick that may yet catch on; Phil Ward is a mean Jagger impersonator, Tony Morley reshapes the odd neat Sixties song and any band who could so blasphemously misunderstand and overstate the kitsch subtlety of Andy Williams' "Music To Watch Girls By" and still have the savvy and style to pull it off without the deserved barrage of plastic beakers must have something going for them. Even if it's only more bottle than brains. - STEVE SUTHERLAND.