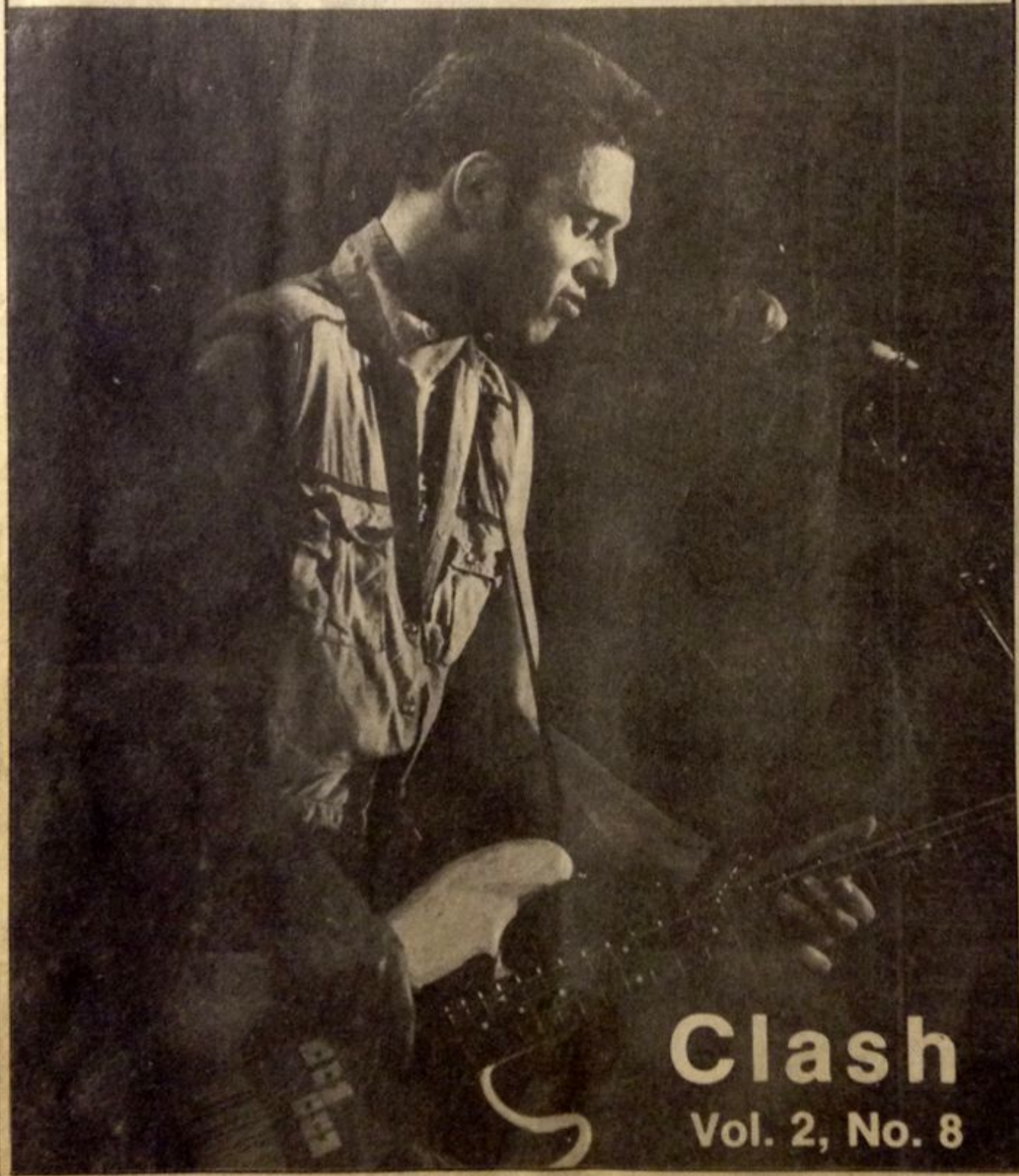


A Listener's Guide to CJSR

August 1982

AIRTIGHT



Clash

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A Listener's Guide
to CJSR

AIRTIGHT

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A Clash Encounter With Paul Simonon and Kosmo Vinyl

Part One: Paul on changes in the Clash.

You don't see many interviews with Paul Simonon, bassist with The Clash. Joe Strummer, being the lead singer, is usually singled out as the leader and he seems to provide those "quotable quotes" journalists are constantly in search of. The truth is the Clash are three people: Simonon, Jones and Strummer, each with their own ideas and opinions. Decisions are group decisions, with the usual arguments when such strong personalities are involved.

The Clash is not an easy group to be in as recent events indicate. A British tour prior to the North American one, had to be cancelled because of the mysterious disappearance of Joe Strummer. For about 4 weeks nobody knew exactly where he was. British dates were postponed and re-scheduled on an almost daily basis. With the help of a private detective, *Kosmo Vinyl*, Clash spokesman and aide-de-camp (more from him later), eventually located Strummer in Paris and brought him back to the fold just in time for *Topper Headon* to announce that he was leaving, after five years as the group's drummer.

Simonon was quick to point out that it was political not musical differences that caused Topper to leave. "He didn't agree with what we were dealing with politically as well as universally, so he just left, he wanted to do something else."

Personal politics involved?

"All sorts of politics. Politics of changing your socks in the morning, whether you put red ones or black ones on. We always think we have the same views, so obviously Topper felt that where he was at wasn't quite where we were at, so he left."

Strummer's disappearance had also helped to clarify things in the Clash camp:

"We all had ideas. Because he left, it sort of brought things more into the open. Topper had ideas, I had ideas, and so did Mick. Things are more redefined. In terms of direction, that just comes as we go along. We don't sort of work it out and sit in a room and spend hours with a blackboard or anything like that. We ain't going to hide under the bedcovers anymore. We're going to come out and say what needs to be said."

With Topper gone, the Clash had five days to find a new drummer before starting the North American tour. They enlisted Terry Chimes, their first drummer back in the early punk days of 77. Ironically, Chimes had originally left the group after the first album, for political reasons. He is not, as of yet, a permanent member of the group and plans to take the situation on a day-to-day basis. Given little time for rehearsal, the Clash have included more of their early songs, more familiar to Chimes, in their set, giving the hard-core fans an added bonus.

As might be expected, the volatile nature of the Clash also carries into the studio. Simonon offered the following when asked to comment on the opinion that songs from the new album sound better live.

"Each individual is in control of his own instrument, that's probably why it sounds better on stage. We always have problems in the studio, in terms of we have arguments and stuff about how it should sound, but that's the way it goes. I was involved with the first mix (of *Combat Rock*). The second mix we decided to let Joe and Glyn Johns have a go themselves. He, (Glyn Johns), was interested in doing it and we said 'why not' and Joe was down there, somebody

from the group, so it seemed the best thing to do."

Glyn Johns is a fairly established producer.

"Is he? I've never heard of him before."

He's been involved with the Stones, etc.

"Has he? That's his problem."

Seeing how the band has problems in the studio, is there any possibility of a live album?

"Very remote. All the live albums I've ever heard sound awful. I've never heard a good one. We're not really interested in doing a live album, not at the present, and probably not for quite a long time, ever."

Part Two: The Clash philosophy: enter Kosmo Vinyl

For the past two years or so, a fellow who goes by the name of Kosmo Vinyl has been the official spokesman for the Clash. He travels with the band, designs logos, and always seems present when the band meets any media. Sometimes Kosmo handles the media alone, issuing statements, handling press conferences, etc. The band trust and confide in him: he's a soul-mate, the "invisible" fifth member of the Clash.

To start with, Kosmo explains the ideas behind *Combat Rock* and the "Know Your Rights" logo which adorns the many t-shirts sold on the tour. Many people see a gun in the design, but Kosmo denies it.

"The gun's missing. It's a book and there was a gun in it, but the gun's missing. Obviously the gun was smuggled inside the book."

"The future is unwritten" is a quote by Joe. What's going to happen to you next week is not written down in a book if you don't want it to be.

The red star is a strong image. A lot of people have used the red star. We use a red star and a black star, but you can't use them all the time. Red and black are the colors we'd rather associate with; as socialists opposed to blue and brown. There's a big difference between socialism and communism. Personally, I see one as potentially working and the other one hasn't worked yet. I don't know how it would work. Russia's no better than America. The red star also attracts attention. I see the Clash fans running with the red star, but what it stands for for them. It's better than having an elephant or something like that."

The military images prevalent throughout the show?

"We live in a very military dominated world at the moment and it's no good ignoring the fact. It's better to pay for it than to get given it. When they give it to you for free, it's a whole different story. We're soldiers of music not soldiers of fighting. Militants have often worn army clothing as a sign of where they're at. If it shows that we are fighting, then good, because we are fighting. We may not be fighting with guns but we're fighting complacency of American youth which one day has got to wise up. It will wise up, it's just taking its time."

You want to shake up the fatcats?

Paul (returns to conversation): "Not just fatcats. A lot of people at your college, I'm sure a lot of them need waking up."

Kosmo: "We're a focus for what they are at. We sing songs of freedom and we're a focal point to people being aware. If we can make people aware and if we can get their attention without doing it in a too disgusting or undignified way then that's what we'll do because as far as I can tell we've got a bit more to say than 90% of the people we're competing with. There certainly are more radical people playing music than us and there probably are more meaningful people than us but they're all playing in basements to fifty people and I just don't see it getting anywhere. You've got to take the media and the industry on. If you're going to deal with it, you've got to take it on and that's what we're going to try and do. Whether we win or not, I don't even know if there is any winning, it's just a perpetual thing."

Kosmo went on to explain that *Combat Rock* can be taken two ways. 'Combat' can be a verb or an adjective: fight the present 'Rock' or 'Rock' to fight by.

Enough semantics and politics, a final word from Paul on the North American tour, of which Edmonton was the last date.

"We're playing a lot of places we never played before and we're playing to more people. We want to work. We want to play in the midwest. We don't seem to do too well on the album charts or the radio but when it comes down to playing a concert, people always turn up. Eight thousand people turned up at the last show (Calgary) or the one in Vancouver, so obviously we're making a hit somewhere along the line."

Is the message getting through?

"Some people get an idea and some don't, but maybe it's a question of time. We don't really want to ram it down the Peoples' throats, it's down to the individual to make his own decision."



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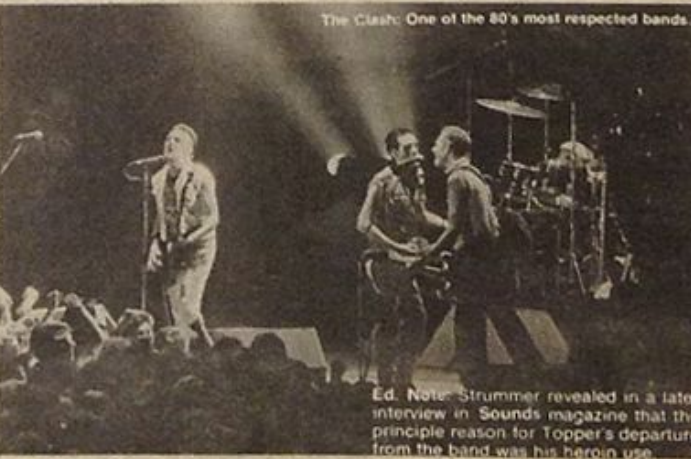
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Ed. Note: Strummer revealed in a later interview in *Sounds* magazine that the principle reason for Topper's departure from the band was his heroin use.



Edmonton Under the Lights



Joe Strummer and Mick Jones at the heart of The Clash.

Bored with Canada too?

The Clash

Kinsmen Fieldhouse
June 29th

The atmosphere was one of expectant disbelief as the **Clash** took the stage at the Kinsmen Fieldhouse. It seems as if no one could quite convince themselves that they had finally come to Edmonton.

It also seemed that the band themselves had trouble realising that they had come; and this fact was reflected in the music that they played that night.

My main complaint is not that they didn't provide an ample sufficiency of material but rather the quality of it. The playing was generally sloppy except for the uninspired Terry Chimes who was content to keep time while Paul Simonon struggled to keep everything together. Notwithstanding, his singing was appalling as was demonstrated on the totally off-key rendition of "Guns of Brixton," for which he stepped up to the central mike. Meanwhile, Mick Jones strummed along through his alcoholic haze, mouth agape, occasionally at a total loss for time. Strummer's playing and singing was at best workmanlike, although he managed to attain all too infrequent peaks of inspiration.

Likewise the choice of repertoire was an assortment of bland rockist tunes. The selections from their new album *Combat Rock* in particular were disappointing. The world hardly needs more tunes like "Rock the Casbah" or "Overpowered By (Pseudo) Funk." The high points of the show were the more adventurous renditions of songs that the Clash so liberally "borrowed" from their Jamaican influences: Junior Murvin's "Police and Thieves" and Willie Williams' "Armageddon Times" and their far too rare excursions into dub. How

can the Clash assume that their audiences are so backward and un-receptive after having sold so many copies of *Sandinista*? And even if they hold their fans in such low esteem, is it not part of their outlook to educate their listeners? Is it not the responsibility of the artists (as they obviously consider themselves to be) to challenge the audience rather than play it safe?

To their credit however was their choice of opening act, *The Harold Nix Band*.

This hot rockabilly outfit will no doubt be familiar to numerous Edmontonians as they have performed around town frequently. Their playing has improved tremendously as shown by the fine bass slapping and energetic piano pumping. They romped and stomped effortlessly through a collection of their own frantic originals and outstanding versions of obscure songs including Junior Parker's "We're Gonna Boogie," Johnny Carol's "Wild, Wild Women" and Sonny Burgess' "Redheaded Woman." They conquered the Fieldhouse's dismal acoustics thanks to their sparse but effective instrumentation, and had the good sense not to try and bludgeon the punters into deafness with sheer volume. Which is more than can be said for the headliners.

by marc coulavin

The Presence

RATT
July 8th

Edmontonians failed to grasp the finer points of a musical lecture taught to them by a Calgarian quartet: there's no crime in sounding a little, ah, well, ... different. While this city is slowly climbing to the point where its artists are

starting to gain a little respectability with original material, Calgary, on the other hand, has finally begun to crawl out of its own dry hole. Aside from this lag in progressiveness between the two sibling cities, most Edmontonian groups have been following the rules of the game, dictated by the music industry, and viola, you have your Interceptors, your Models, your Victory groups, and so on.

Not necessarily bad, mind you, but if Calgary's **Presence** is an example of the rule-making process down south, then maybe we should pay attention to how good innovative material in this province could be. Unconsciously borrowing heavily from such inaccessible acts as **Killing Joke**, and pretty well everyone on San Francisco's Subterranean label, the Presence puts forth a fresh approach to avant-garde new music. With a lead singer that sounds a lot like Iggy Pop, and a rhythm section that plays with total abandon, these cryptic Calgarians tried to get their lesson across. Unfortunately, most of the patrons in little-ole' half-filled RATT didn't get the hint.

by lester dung

Explore the Floor

RATT
July 2nd

After two years as a house band during the Riv Rock Room's heyday, you'd think that **Explore the Floor** would have learned something. Instead, this quartet still stresses virtuosity rather than trying to create a tightly knit sound. The swirling guitar solos they use, for example, though well executed, are too gimmicky and quickly give the listener the idea that they are provided as a diversion from their otherwise mediocre self-penned tunes. Whole sets are primarily an endless game of duelling guitars, but at least they are performed with a much greater degree of discipline than all those countless Nuge sound-alikes. They seem adept at performing their own bland material, but sloppy covers of "Love Her Madly," "Come Together," and Get Back erases any preconceived notions of these individuals being well rounded musicians. Forget it, boys. We'll take Troc '59 anytime.

by lester dung

Hooker: the "Godfather of the Blues"

Ambassador Hotel
July 15th - 17th

The appearance of an actual blues legend in Edmonton is a rare occasion. True, **Muddy Waters**, Father of the Blues, makes an almost annual visit, as does **James Cotton**, but these gigs are generally put on in concert halls such as SUB Theatre and the blues were born and bred in juke joints and bars and still sound best with beer. So hats must be doffed to the Ambassador Hotel for bringing **John Lee Hooker**, self-proclaimed Godfather of the Blues to an environment where blues are best heard.

Hooker is a veritable giant of the blues genre — one of two or three alive today who can legitimately be called "legendary." And godfather he is, too, for the inspiration and assistance he's given to so many young blues musicians, black or white, known or unknown. This time out the Hook's **Coast to Coast Blues Band** consisted of **Annette Ducharme**, piano, **Tim Richard**, drums, **Steve Ermin**, bass, **Mike Osborne**, guitar, and **Deacon Jones** on Hammond organ and M.C. duties. Often back-up bands to the stars are lack-lustre, but this crew shone, with the evening's most inspired playing coming from Jones.

The show opened with a few numbers from the Coast to Coast Blues Band, then Hooker, to a wildly appreciative packed house eased into "She's Gone." Other Hooker classics such as "Boom, Boom, Boom," "Hip Shakin Momma" and "Part-time Love" kept the crowd enthralled but it was the hypnotic boogie beat, saved for the last part of each set that the people obviously came for — and as demonstrated, this is dance music — no one could sit still.

At 65' this could well be the last time the Hook ventures out on a prolonged tour, despite the energy and enjoyment the man did show. If audience appreciation is a factor, though, I'll wager Hooker will be back again.

These three nights certainly demonstrated the viability of the blues in Edmonton, and with plans for the amazing **Fenton Robinson** (another near legend) during Jazz City and a possibility of **Mighty Joe Young** in October, it seems that Peter and his newly renovated Ambassador Tavern have the inside track on becoming the spot for blues in Edmonton.

by a. day



the Presence at RATT.

K-97 Presents

LOCK UP YOUR SONS TOUR '82



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Northlands Coliseum

K-97 Presents



The Return of
GEORGE THOROGOOD
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Fieldhouse

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CHED Presents



With Special Guests PAYOLAS

AUGUST 19 • 7:30 PM

NORTHLANDS COLISEUM

It seemed so perfect — the Clash in town the night after MacEachen's budget. The people's band spreading the message at a time when the people should have been thinking enough about being tromped on one more time to have gotten the message. Well, it didn't happen! So, instead of setting out a glowing review about how much I enjoyed myself listening to a great band put on a great show, I decided you would best be served by a short diatribe on the relationship between art and politics and the special role the Clash occupies in that regard.

There's no question that the Clash take their politics seriously. It is apparent that their music is, to a large degree, aimed at spreading a political message. Although I rarely find myself in agreement with AirTight's Armistice Day, I would be hard pressed to put together a more accurate summary of the Clash's political philosophy than his assessment which appeared in last month's AirTight.

The Clash come out clearly on the side of the people and against authority. It seems the underlying position of the Clash is to get people thinking

As stated earlier, it's my belief that they have failed miserably in their task. This is certainly the case here in Edmonton, although it would be stretching things to extrapolate from red-neck, bourgeoisie Edmonton to the working class jobless masses back in their homeland.

No doubt by now, I've got many of you "true believers" upset. Good! Let me anticipate your counter-attacks. First, you'll be saying that it's ridiculous to claim that you don't understand and secondly, you'll probably claim that the bulk of what the Clash is about doesn't really apply to good 'ol Edmonton. After all, what does a revolution in South America, or race riots in London have to do with us?

Let me say at the outset that if you don't believe the Clash's message is for us then you just don't understand. As good as we have it here there are all kinds of major social and political problems to be solved. Of course we

don't really see a lot of them. How much time do you spend down around Boyle Street? How many people even know about the shanty-town down in Riverdale? But how can you not be aware that the government wage controls mean a real loss in income for working people?!

The answer to all these questions is escapism. Rather than being a means by which to cope with reality, escapism has become, for many, a way of life. Thus, we had the thousands of teenaged rich kids at the Fieldhouse on June 29, decked out in their \$300 leathers — pretending to be working class rebels from London. Thus, these pseudo-punks pushed and shoved each other — fighting for their own

space at the expense of each other until they finally broke the safety barriers and jeopardized the concert they wanted to see so badly. We hadn't even heard the end of "London Calling" when another mindless yo-yo decided it was incumbent upon him to prove what a true-blue punk he was by spitting on Joe Strummer! All this during "London Calling" — isn't that song supposed to be a kind of anthem? Isn't it calling for us to get together and live as civilized human beings before we blow it all? Isn't it an indictment of those who mindlessly follow?

"London calling, Now don't look to us, All that phoney Beatlemania, Has bitten the dust"

Mind you, not all is lost. At least the proceeds from those four T-shirts snapped up at \$10 per (or whatever outrageous price they charged) will eventually find its way to the right places. Yet it remains bitterly ironic that the Clash can play Robin Hood in this fashion — taking money from the rich to give to the poor and having the bourgeois idolize them while doing it! Standing up on stage and calling for the destruction of the privileged classes, looking into the adoring faces of those who represent everything they despise

Art = the Clash = Politics

by Marcus Aurelius



Gee, I only asked for a toothpick!

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How can this happen? I retreat back to my comments about escapism and juxtapose them with Mr. Day's comments about the Clash challenging us to think. The problem is that very few people want to think anymore — it's too much work — they just want to feel — feel good if that's possible. But it seems that any pure emotion is sufficient — even if it's the kind of anger that comes through in the Clash's material. That this should be the case is not surprising — in the words of Rousseau:

... when the art of pleasing [has been reduced] to set rules, a base and deceptive uniformity prevails in our customs, and all minds seem to have been cast in the same mould.

The paradox may best be exemplified by fashion — be original by wearing designer jeans. Be a leader by doing whatever is "in" in New York, Paris, or London? This happens despite the pleas of the real leaders for the masses to think for themselves. That this would be the case has been recognized for thousands of years. Plato noted the power of the arts, and music in particular.

more than anything else rhythm and harmony find their way to the innermost soul and take strongest hold upon it ...

The problem as so brilliantly paraphrased by Rousseau is that generally artists are "men whose talent deceives themselves and others, who claim to be wise men, who are taken to be such, and who are nothing of the kind."

This combination of power and ignorance was perceived by Plato to be so deadly that he opted for strict censorship in his ideal state — *The Republic*.

As a parting thought I leave you with this — one of the most interesting parts of the June 29th concert was the taped material played before the show. Set up as "Radio Clash," the audience's reaction to it — especially its diversity (which I took to reflect the diverse tastes of its creators) — seemed confused at best, and often hostile. What are the implications of that?

Ethical Mind superseded equals Art, Art superseded equals Religion, Religion superseded equals Absolute Knowledge.