

# Why Joe did a runner

WHEN the unrelenting commercial pressure of the music business finally pushed him over the edge, Joe Strummer did a runner — literally.

The Clash singer caught the night train to Paris on the eve of a British tour and went on a bar crawl — before running a full marathon.

His stay in the French capital lasted about a month. While he was losing himself in booze, his record company CBS was trying desperately to find him to salvage the live dates, which eventually had to be postponed until now.

"I wasn't coming to any particular conclusions, but I did enjoy myself. Then Kosmo Vinyl, the band's 'minder,' found me and took me home," said Strummer, who played two dates with the band at Newcastle City Hall this week.

"I had wanted to come back, but the longer I stayed away, the harder it was to come back.

"I just did it for the hell of it. I felt I had to. I just wanted to do nothing for a while and see what it was like."

The repetitive cycle and heavy schedule of The Clash that eventually took their toll. "When the band comes off the road and you are writing songs it means the hardest job is just starting," he said.

"Then you have to rehearse the songs and record them and once they are released you have to go out and pull attention to yourself, otherwise you get buried. I had been trapped in that circle for too long.

"Hopefully we will plan our lives to have a couple of weeks off here and there."

As soon as Strummer returned to the fold, ace drummer Topper Headon quit and Terry Chimes, who played on the first, unforgettable album, was drafted in.

He slotted in well during the band's

recent American and Canadian concerts and the singer was looking forward to the British dates.

Strummer still views the world with suspicion, although the vitriolic overspill evident when The Clash waved the flag for anarchy with their first album in 1977 has slowly dried up as the music has progressed.

Combat Rock — their current album — was an attempt to compress all the musical styles they had been fooling around with into one sound rather than go on a musical tour around the world, he said.

The Strummer perception, the refusal to let anyone pull the wool over his eyes, is still there.

"I am cooler about the way I deal with life. I am trying to grow up in a respectable fashion with a bit of dignity," he said. "I don't want to pretend I'm a 19-year-old when I'm not" (he's 29).

"I still think about things that upset me. Like why is this country such a racist place? Why do we elect rich men's governments? What do they do to kids between the ages of six and 16 at school? Who is really pulling the strings in the world?"



JOE STRUMMER flanked by Paul Simon (left) and Mick Jones.

## Local gig guide

**TONIGHT:** Raider, 8 p.m., Mingles, Whitley Bay; Warrior/Sidewinder, 8 p.m., Newton Park Hotel, Longbenton; Italian Heroes/Dream Unit, 8 p.m., Walker Youth Centre; Cadabra, 8 p.m., William IV, Birtley.

**SUNDAY:** East Side Torpedoes, noon, Newcastle Playhouse foyer.

**MONDAY:** 21 Strangers, 8.30 p.m., Gosforth Assembly Rooms; Tokyo Treatment, 8 p.m., Honeysuckle, Gateshead.

**TUESDAY:** Italian Heroes/Mistaken Identity, 8 p.m., Newton Park Hotel; Jazawsky/Runnin' Shoes, 8 p.m., Cradlowell, Jesmond.

**WEDNESDAY:** East Side Torpedoes, 8 p.m., Lonsdale, West Jesmond; Satan, 8 p.m., Lemington Comrades Club; Warrior, 9 p.m., Fendango Club, Hexham; Ray Stubbs R'n'B Allstars, 8 p.m., New Crown Hotel, South Shields; 21 Strangers, Coopers, Newcastle, 10 p.m.; Cadabra, 8 p.m., Georgie Lad, Longbenton.

**THURSDAY:** Warrior/The Alphas/Turc, 8 p.m., Waterloo Street Bier Keller, Newcastle; Barfly, 8 p.m., Honeysuckle.

**FRIDAY:** Satan, 8 p.m., South Shields RBL Club; Toy Dolls/The Reptiles, 8 p.m., Honeysuckle.

**Sounds** WITH SIMON MILLS

**New albums**

**FASHION:** Fabrique (Arista).

Fashion's attempt to fuse their various influences of jazz, blue-beat, reggae, funk and Marc Bolan (1) into a cohesive musical unit fell just short here. The different com-

**BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST:** A Concert for the People (Polydor).

Recorded in front of 175,000 fans on the steps of the Reichstag in Berlin, this is the soundtrack of the band's forthcoming film. A