

# **PUNK** lives

**WE'RE  
BACK  
THE MAG  
THEY CAN'T  
GAG**

No.3/70p

**JOE** THE CLASH  
MAN CAN  
STILL GIGGLE  
**STRUMMER**

**PETER AND  
THE TEST TUBE  
BABIES**

**CAPTAIN SENSIBLE**

**DAMNED**

**EXPLOITED**

**GBH**

**VICE SQUAD**

**UK DECAY**

**RUBELLA  
BALLET**

**NEW YORK PUNKS**

**STIFF LITTLE FINGERS**

**LORDS OF THE NEW CHURCH**







# CLASH DISCOGRAPHY

- SINGLES**  
CBS 5058 WHITE RIOT/  
1977 Mar. 1977  
CBS 5233 REMOTE  
CONTROL/London's  
Burning May. 1977  
CBS 5664 COMPLETE  
CONTROL/The City Of The  
Dead Sept. 1977  
CBS 5834 CLASH CITY  
ROCKERS/Jail Guitar  
Doors 1978  
CBS 8383 (WHITE MAN) IN  
HAMMERSMITH  
PALAIS/The Prisoner Jun.  
1978  
CBS 6788 TOMMY  
GUN/One, Two, Crush On  
You Nov. 1978  
CBS 7082 ENGLISH CIVIL  
WAR/Pressure Drop Feb.  
1979  
CBS 8087 LONDON  
CALLING/Armageddon  
Time Dec. 1979  
CBS 8323 BANK  
ROBBER/Rockers Galore  
Aug. 1980  
CBS 9339 THE CALL-  
UP/Stop The World Nov.  
1980  
CBS 9480 HITSVILLE  
UK/Radio One Jan. 1981  
CBS A 1133 THE  
MAGNIFICENT  
SEVEN/The Magnificent  
Dance Apr. 1981  
CBS A 1797 THIS IS RADIO  
CLASH/Radio Clash Nov.  
1981  
CBS A 2309 KNOW YOUR  
RIGHTS/First Night Back In  
London 1982  
CBS A 2479 ROCK THE  
CASBAH/Mutapha Dance  
Jun. 1982  
CBS A 132479 (12" pressing  
of above) Jun. 1982
- EP**  
CBS 7324 THE COST OF  
LIVING May 1979
- ALBUMS**  
CBS 82431 GIVE 'EM  
Apr. 1977  
CBS 82431 GIVEW 'EM  
ENOUGH ROPE Nov. 1978  
CBS CLASH 3 LONDON  
CALLING Dec. 1979  
CBS FSLN SANDANISTA  
Dec. 1980  
CBS FMLN 2 COMBAT  
ROCK May 1982



Departures and disappearances. The Clash have had both but Joe Strummer still manages a giggle. Interview by Kolly Kibber

# STRUMMER

**S**TRUMMER WAS talking about his most remarkable pratfall. Possibly seeking to put himself in the correct mood, he played a small gamble with the laws of gravity, tipping back in his chair till the rear legs began to slip on the floor, teetering on the very edge of stability. In the Mid West of America, he explained, he'd been deep into a song, he couldn't remember which, but it was very soulful, and he'd been giving it all he could. As his passion was really taking flight a member of the audience removed his jacket, threw it at the stage. Falling in a gentle arc, it landed full square on Joe's head, covering his head, the microphone and every drop of his vocal passion.

Giggling away at himself, loving the idea of what a fool he must have seemed, he shook so much the chair began to topple, threatening to dump Joe in another remarkable pratfall. Then, at the very last moment, he realised what was about to happen, tipped himself forward. "You thought I was going to fall over didn't you?"

Both The Clash and Strummer himself have the remarkable ability of turning back from the very brink of disaster. This year has seen a schedule of potential diasters averted by The Clash which would have sunk *any* other band.

Their previous album, the triple 'Sandanista!', while being a work of fascinating inconsistency and a reasonable commercial success, had alienated a lot of their long term fans.

Then, on the eve of the album's release, Strummer decided to run away, causing the band's UK tour to be cancelled at the last moment, not once but twice. When Strummer did finally return to the fold of The Clash their long-serving drummer, Topper Headon, departed from their company. Depending on which source you prefer to believe, he either left of his own accord because he no longer felt up to handling the band's fearsome discipline or, on the other hand, he was sacked personally by Strummer who had finally decided to stop tolerating Headon's long-term love affair with heroin.

And yet The Clash have not only survived such upheavals but actually prospered. 'Combat Rock' was their richest, most direct, most mature work to date and surprised even the band themselves by entering the UK charts at number two. Their UK tour — with Terry Chimes who played on their debut album under the name Tory Crimes replacing Topper — was a triumph of sorts.

**W**hen I spoke to Joe in the middle of the tour he was just recovering from a bad throat caused by over-enthusiastic air-conditioning at a Midlands hall. He'd spent the day off recuperating by going for long walks along the Western Scottish sea-shore at Troon. The week before, Troon had been the focus of the world's attention, the home of the British Open Golf Tournament. This week it was deserted as any resort town in the off-season. The temporary grandstands stood around in front of Strummer's hotel as empty as ruined temples. Strummer enthused over the local air. "Nothing like a day off." He sucked in a lungful of oxygen with the delicacy of an industrial vacuum cleaner. "Clean air for a change. Wuuuuuuugh." Another lungful. "Just the smell of the air. Weeeeeuuuugh." More deep throat exercises. "It's clean and fresh and — aaaaaaargh — strong." And with one last lungful for luck, he moved on to some shouts, his form of limbering up for the stage.

"Stevie Wonder warms up for half an hour. Weeeeeuugh. I do this once or twice."

Despite every good intention Joe can never quite muster up the energy to practice anything. He's always been more an intuitive guitarist than one given to deep study of diminished chords. As a runner, he's something of a dilettante. He's run in two marathons but on neither occasion did he do anything like the kind of training necessary to actually do well at them. "That's the stupid thing. Next time I'm going to train for it. Actually go out and do some running for it, instead of drinking."

But when he needs to concentrate he can be single-minded to the point of sheer bloody obstinacy. When he fled to France, he did so to find out if he "was still a person". He wanted to find out "if you could still get a kick out of life" — and hang the fact that The Clash were about to start a tour.

He had a great time there. "It did feel good to be a tourist. Well a cross between a tourist and a wino. I spent most of my time sat around looking at the Sacre Coeur with a bottle of wine in my hand." The experience taught him just how much he liked being famous. "It's a love affair with your own ego... But I'd always had a sneaking suspicion that was true about me anyway. Every time you get onstage you have to be aware something's driving you up there."

**H**is first show with the re-united Clash was particularly memorable. "It was an open air mud festival in Holland. Every time we play a European festival it's always the same recipe. We get there, it rains, we play, the crowd rips the security fence down and the security people run for it. Every time. It's happened three times now. I think we've saved three festivals from being complete wash outs, making something happen at the end that's worth coming for. I think that's why the crowd haven't burned the stages down — or the promoters."

How did it feel being back on stage after discovering how much you needed to play?

"I notice it went very quickly, like we were on there for five minutes. And also I felt as if it were a different person doing the singing."

But does that mean you could live the rest of your life without being recognised in the street?

"Yeah, I hope so. But I don't know if I could in fact... but I expect I'll find out. Who do you reckon will be Top Of The Pops in the year 2000? It certainly won't be us."

But you're doing better than you've done for a lone while with 'Casbah Rock'.

"That's a blatantly commercial attempt to flog our arses up the charts." As he said it, he grinned like Lewis Carroll's cat, in the full knowledge that that was only part of the truth. They might try to conquer the charts — hardly the most heinous of ambitions — but The Clash still stand alone as the only band to refuse point blank to dignify Top Of The Pops with their presence. Men of lesser conscience would have bowed to the lure of the Lime Grove sirens long ago.

Strummer is pleased that the album has done so well in America. "That is good. We need that to survive." And he's gratified by the way that the general opinion of 'Sandanista!' has risen and its sprawling length has eventually become manageable to the average listener. "Yeah, it's lovely to see people eating — what is it they call it? — crow pie."

Strummer, despite his bad throat, seemed a man of new energy and purpose. He talked of Topper's departure without rancour but with more than a measure of sorrow. "It was obviously a sad wrench at first but we're only here to play music, we're not here to f-k about. I mean, there's a lot of energy being wasted screwing around."



THE CLASH: "C'mon lads, give us a smile"

**M**ore than anything, he's conscious of his responsibilities, of what makes The Clash more than just another pop group.

"Our first album seems even more relevant now than when we made it. That's good because we're pretty different from what's happening in the pop world. Like all the synthesisers, pop moguls, three piece suits and expense accounts. We're almost like from the stone age compared to all this. So when I see the first album seeming even more relevant now, I need that kind of thing

to tell me I'm still on the right track. I see all these people in make-up carting away paper bags of five pound notes. I wonder, who needs us?"

Although his sense of duty to his audience is deep and wide, he does draw the line. "If we're going to make a record, we owe it to anybody who's going to buy it to really knock ourselves out, to make something worth the vinyl it's printed on. And also, doing a tour, we hate to get up there and have everything screw up so it's a lousy show."

"But I do draw the line somewhere. Sometimes you can't talk to everybody. I hardly ever go out but when I do I don't want to talk to hundreds of people about The Clash. I mean, I get in moods where I don't even like talking to anybody I know."

I suggested that this pressure from the audience was a result of The Clash having set themselves impossible tasks when they started out.

"Oh, I hope we did. Why ever shouldn't you?"