

THE CLASH'S FORGOTTEN YEARS, 1984-1986



The Clash during a live show, 1985.

In its official version, the story of The Clash ends with the firing of lead guitarist Mick Jones in 1983. Though founding members Joe Strummer and Paul Simonon subsequently led a five-piece version of the group until the summer of 1986, it's not a widely known or mentioned chapter. [Dig into our archive](#).

Why did the band split up? The Clash's original lineup of four members—Mick Jones, Paul Simonon, Topper Headon, and Joe Strummer—was the result of a long and turbulent history. The Clash as we know them existed as the 1980s evolved. The new Clash on the scene was the new Clash.

While no one would dispute that it was a poor choice to fire Mick Jones, the Clash did a few things worth remembering between 1984 and 1986. Determined to make a radical break with their past, they went on a headlining tour of the U.K. that included a stop in the parking lot of an Alamo, where the rockers' reputation came out of their 1980s-era rockabilly roots. They also performed at the 1985 and 1986 and rock critic Geoff Maclean reported that, despite the new Clash's shortcomings, he'd "never seen Strummer more unshowered, or more convincing" than at January 1986 shows in California.



Strummer and Simonon interview, 1984. [Watch](#)

Clashy Gem's documentary [The Rise and Fall of The Clash](#) is a historical about the band's rise, in the first movie to shed light on this obscure period. Based on interviews with original members Mick Jones and Tony Chace, who joined members Paul Simonon, Topper Headon, and Vince White, co-wrote Paul Headon, Vic Albertine, and Vic Costello, and others from the band's circle, the movie largely focuses on the rise of manager Bernie Rhodes.



The Rise and Fall of The Clash trailer

Evaluations of Rhodes' actual contribution to the band vary widely, but most parties agree that Strummer handled the manager while Jones did not. The Clash Year (1975) was never managed by the former. Rhodes' management during the recording of London Calling and Sandinista—just may have. Rhodes back in 1981. "One reason Bernie back because there was no endorsement in the situation with Blackie and Joe needed to have someone like Bernie around to give him confidence," Simonon says in the [archive](#).

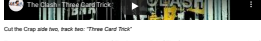
The documentary makes it clear that Rhodes exploited Strummer and Simonon's resentment of Jones's "rock star" behavior during the band's heyday. It's hard to know Jones' role and even control of the band. The part of the story reveals a different dimension of Rhodes. For instance, according to Jones, in the days before the new band, the band's manager had Rhodes to write new material. There, Jones says, without manager Rhodes had the Clash working on the follow-up to the platinum-selling *Combat Rock*. An album... [New Clash era?](#)



Rhodes apparently culminated in the recording of *Cut the Crap*, an utterly strange blend of contemporary punk and top-notch blues, co-written and co-produced by Strummer and Rhodes. Drum programming replaced Paul Howson's playing, and much of the material is covered with tape-based synth beats that sound like a cut-throat on a CD. There is a particular anecdotal story that a contemporary British music magazine described *Cut the Crap* with the shortest review ever printed: "Cut the 'cut the.' Side two, however, has no moments."



The Clash: This Is England (Cut the Crap side two, track one: "This Is England")



The Clash: Three Card Trick (Cut the Crap side two, track two: "Three Card Trick")

There is a touching moment near the end of *The Rise and Fall of The Clash*. In a moment worthy of a comedy, Strummer, having suddenly realized he was unable to tell Rhodes that Mick Jones had been the true and honest man all along, rushes to Jones's house and from his former brother-in-law's house to tell him the story. This shows a soft Strummer, one who is, and together they fly to Hawaii. Jones would come back into the Clash, because he'd formed Big Audio Dynamite, but Strummer and Jones would collaborate on 1985's second album, *Guerrilla*.

Here's little-known footage of The Clash 2 performing "Straw Hat Cadillac" at the 1985 Riverside Festival, one of their final performances.



The Clash 2 Live at Riverside 1985 Brand New Cadillac

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