

NASHVILLE INTELLIGENCE REPORT BACK IN BLACK

MAY 1984
ISSUE
#2!

FREE!

SUBURBS
CLASH



DEAR READERS,
HI THERE! YES, IT'S BEEN A LONG
TIME BETWEEN ISSUES. I'M SORRY,
BUT I HAD TO FINISH UP MY SCHOOLING.
N.I.R. IS BACK, HOWEVER, AND IS VERY
HAPPY TO HAVE SURVIVED TWO YEARS.
THIS ISSUE IS A JAN-PACKED FOUR PAGER
THAT CLEANS OUT OUR BACK INTERVIEWS
WITH VARIOUS OUT-OF-TOWN BANDS. I
WISH THERE WAS MORE LOCAL STUFF, BUT
THERE JUST WASN'T ROOM. OUR NEXT
ISSUE SHOULD BE OUT IN 3 WEEKS AND
WILL SPOTLIGHT THE BANDS WHO ARE
PERFORMING AT OUR JUNE 2 BENEFIT, AS
WELL AS HAVING INTERVIEWS WITH CH-CK,
GET SPART!, AND JOE "KING" CARRASCO.
WELL, ENOUGH OF THIS. THANKS AGAIN
FOR YOUR SUPPORT. HAPPY READING,
I'LL SEE YOU AT THE BENEFIT!
---ANDY

LONG RIDERS
GREEN ON RED

CLASH Joe Strummer SPEAK

Editor's Note: Enriani's prototype punks the Clash kicked off their American tour at Vandy's Memorial Gym on March 27 before a sold out audience of students and scenesters. Given the highly publicized falling out between founders Mick Jones and Joe Strummer, one question was on everyone's mind before the show: Could what was once "the only band that matters" still deliver the goods? After the show, it was hard to say one way or the other. It was certainly a great rock and roll show on a purely entertainment level—the band's energy never let up and the crowd was on their feet throughout the 90 minute set. The lighting and 16 TV sets on stage (displaying everything from the Marx Brothers to Ron Soble) augmented the band's delivery without detracting from the songs. New drummer Pete Howard was stunning as he bounded out the beat, and Mick's replacements, guitarists Vince White and Nick Sheppard, played their licks and the crowd well. The band did several new tunes (i.e. "This Is England" and "Are You Ready For War?") in their punk/funk style, as well as all the old thrash out favorites, a substantial number of which were from the band's '77 debut LP. On the other hand, I missed Mick, rock star personas and all. The new Clash also took a while to get up to full speed; it wasn't until their 25 minutes of encores that I felt there was passion and intensity coming from the stage rather than a more or less greatest hits montage (minus Mick's tunes of course). My verdict: They sure ain't the only band that matters anymore, but don't write them off yet. The Clash is Strummer's band now, and one wonders where he will be leading the rest of the guys, but they're still worth watching and listening to. The interview that follows gives some hints. It's by Regina Gee and Duwana Calahan, was broadcast over WYU and originally published in *Yerpe*, Vandy's literary mag, but due to the limited range of both, *W.I.R.* has arranged to print it here for our readers.

I'd like to ask you first of all about a quote that has been circulated in American magazines about The Clash wanting to get back to the job they'd intended. What is that job?

Well, I feel that, looking around at the scene, it doesn't seem any different than from when we started out in '77. I mean you've got groups that got nothing to do with the way people live; people on the street, people with no future, people who are finding it hard to feed themselves, people who can't find any entertainment or satisfaction, and there's no relation between the music that's being made, say by Duran Duran, or whatever's around these days that's popular, with the real, how it is to live. It's just like it was when we started out with Emerson, Lake and Palmer: they were up there, and we were down there, and how could we go onto their shows, and get off on what? It was just Pictures of an Exhibition by Mussorgsky. Big deal. There was nothing to do with the way it felt to be alive. There is a feeling — and our job is to accurately reflect the feeling of the dispossessed.

I mean, even in a university like this place here. No matter how many philosophy degrees or qualifications you manage to stack up — it doesn't matter how many you got — you're just as likely not to find a job as somebody who hasn't got any qualifications. You know, like people fight to stock shelves in supermarkets, with PhD's and stuff, and Bachelors of Science and stuff. It's a dead end. The Clash as a group is supposed to be a part of that scene, be aware of that scene; not be an escapist actor who goes off into "boy meets girl" or completely unrealistic songs. We're just a group. We've got no answers, but we've got questions. And these questions we want everybody to think about, 'cause I just feel that everyone just wants to take the easy way out, watch tv, put their feet up, and get blown to Hell by a nuclear bomb. That's as much as they want to get involved in this thing called life.

When you said in the quote that you wanted to get back to that, does that imply that you feel you have strayed from that in other albums?

Yeah, by the sound. I've always written the lyrics, and the lyrics have always been on that train. But the sound, I felt we began to do the flavor of the month rather than incorporate into our sound, because when we started, The Clash had a sound — a very basic, guitar, drum sound. I feel we've abandoned that by going flavor of the month. Like, "Let's do a calypso tune," or "Let's try a Mose Allison jazz number."

"Let's do a bluegrass number, or a Cajun number." It was the flavor of the month. And I want to retain our sound. I feel that once you've got a sound, it's a rare thing to get your own sound, and it's so easy to forget about it. I feel we've forgotten about it, and I just want to get back to that all over again.

What made you go "flavor of the month"?

I don't know, it was like, well, we found out we could play. And in the studio with all the machines and all the limitless things you can do with them, you get carried away. Before you know where you are everything, but the kitchen sink is overdubbed. And seeing those machines with 24 tracks, and each track is saying like "record on me, fill me up, put something on me," and you end up with 24 tracks of what, when you only really needed about eight. And I feel we got sucked up into that studio thing — I think every group does. But I feel I've come out the other side, and I'm not now into the studios at all.

Do you think you've come closer to accomplishing this initial goal since Mick Jones has left the band?

Well, I'm not sure we've accomplished anything yet. We're still young, about 33 shows into our second career, here. And that's why we haven't made any record, and I don't want to make a record until we've got a group that's a group. We just want to knock it together in front of people, get people's reactions. I think rock and roll should be lively. I'm bored stiff by all my competitors — they're

boring me stupid. Nothing bores me more than the albums of today. I just feel like, does it have to be so boring? Isn't there any way it can be lively and also stimulating to the mind?

I want to ask you, given what you've just said, what is the last album you were pleased with?

I was pleased with "Straight to Hell," and "Know Your Rights," and "Car-jammin'," and "Should I Go." I mean they were clear in what they were. But on side two, which had a lot of experimental things like "Death is a Star," "Acid Tan," and things like this, I feel didn't quite work. And I don't think it's good enough to release something that doesn't quite work. Maybe it was fifty percent good and fifty percent not so good. I don't think that's good enough anymore. I really think it should be a hundred percent good.

All records are full of filler these days. You get one good track, one decent track, and eight more tracks of disposable stuff, and it's not good enough. It's a waste of time.

How much control do you have over what's put on an album?

Completely total control. We can't blame anybody, except us.

What do you think the major differences are between the last album, *Combat Rock*, and the forthcoming album, that is, without Mick Jones and Topper Headon?

Well, I don't know. I got no idea what the album will be like. But I just want it to be packed with good things, no filler. The difference will be in that we used to write half the album and make the other half up on the spot, when we were in the studio like for *London Calling* and *Combat Rock*. But the next album, I want to do it like we did the first album; I want to know exactly what we're going to do before we go in there. Have it all written. And that's why we're playing stuff on the road, and we're bashing the songs into shape by playing them in front of people, so by the time we get to the studio, we're going to know what we want to sound like, and there is less chance that it get perverted or warped.

I think it is more artistic, more creative to say "yes" or "no." On some of our records we said "why not" when we should have said "no." Shall we put the sound of this thing falling down the stairs on it? Why not? The more the merrier was our philosophy. And I think this is artistic sloppiness, and we should be mean, and mean, and mean.

To some people, *Combat Rock* was the most commercial album that The Clash ever put out. Was it intended that way?

No, we don't even think about what we're going to do before we go in there. I feel sometimes people think it's all part of a master plan, and you sit down like a board meeting of a giant corporation, and you plan out your next thing with a sort of cold, ruthlessness. Really, you just go in with a bunch of songs, half of them written, and half of them you make up on the spot; and you see how it comes out. *Combat Rock*, that album was a real mess when we finished it. I mean, there were reels and reels of tape. It was hard to make head nor tail of it — it went on for hours. We had to take it to Glyn Johns, an outside producer, to give it someone who knew nothing about it, and he just mashed it into shape in a week, and that's how it came out.

There's no big plan on the way of the sound. We got slugged off to Hell in Britain for *London Calling*, because they all said "Ahh, they've made a record for American radio—cunning career move!" The whole fact was that we decided there were so many punk bands jumping on the bandwagon, it was becoming unbearable; so many imitators. We just decided to leave it alone; we decided to just play. And then we went on tour and left it with an engineer and a producer who produced it up, and so that was one album that we had very little to do with the sound of, 'cause we were working hard and we thought we'd do it that way. We never thought it would swing on American radio — we were far too naive.

Were you pleased when it happened?

That we hit in America? Pleased, we were more than pleased! It was desperation city — if we hadn't hit America, we'd have gone down the pan, because we owed so much dollar to the company, and certainly we weren't getting it back in England; in Germany they wouldn't even spit on us, much less buy our records. If we hadn't hit it in America, we'd have been down the pan.

Through your presentation of politically oriented music, do you generally hope to change the political thought of most people?

You're damn right! The thing is, listen, I'm not going to lay down the law and say you must think this way or you must think that way. All I'm begging people to do is to think at all, 'cause nobody cares to think. They think money is old people's business. I want to bring it back to that radicalism of the 60's when people said "it's our business to stop the Viet Nam War." They felt personally responsible for what was happening. Young people seem to think that "oh, it's for the old people to run the world." But I disagree with that, I think that's drug addict talk.

That's why we're coming down against drugs, because I believe we can control what's going to happen.

Are you trying to produce a result from your music rather than trying to find an outlet for your political unrest?

Yeah, exactly. Maybe that's a dumb move, but that's what we're trying to do.

What's more important to you right now, the medium or the message? Do songs come first or is it just a way to tell people something?

No, I'm a singer before I'm anything. All I am is a rock and roll singer who believes that lyrics should deal with real life. I'm not a politician using rock and roll songs toward some wicked end. I come to think the music must have a message to make it vital 'cause I saw the true nature of capitalist society. I say justice wasn't justice, and the police were for whoever could buy them, and corruption was corruption. I saw all that, and I feel it's hypocritical the way we go on about the Western world, freedom of speech.

In England, they're so secretive you can't even get the menu of a government cafeteria, it's double classified. I mean, we've got a lot of work to do in England on that score. It's unbelievable. And here, 92 percent of the American population don't even know where Nicaragua is or anything about it. And meanwhile your people are pouring in across the Honduran border tonight shooting people up.

How do you feel about the infiltration of electronics into modern music? Do you ever intend to use that, or do you think it would detract from the sort of raw sound that makes your political statement more effective?

I feel like a hillbilly farmer when I see all these Simmons kits and all these noises coming out of computer linked, pulse linked keyboards. One guy with one finger sounding like ten philharmonic orchestras. You know, I feel like a hillbilly farmer, and my first instincts is to get all that stuff and burn it, but then again I draw back on my second line thinking and think "well, you know, whatever need be." Whenever you hear Grand Master Flash's "The Message," you know that electronics can be used with a bit of soul. And maybe I agree with Herbie Hancock, who says it depends on who's using the machines.

What kind of music would you take to a desert island if you could take three albums?

Obviously, I'd take Motown record, because you never get tired of it. And then I'd take maybe a Hank Williams record, and then I'd take George Gershwin, I think.

A lot of people have called in wanting to know how you feel about punk.

The trouble with punk is that it became guessology. What I mean by that is that it became purist, cliques, cultist, and all that stuff — it became into a waste of energy. You had to wear all this stuff, and rules. When we first started, what we were saying was to Hell with the rules, anything goes. And so it should. Let's have individuality, spontaneity, madmen...but it developed into another set of rules, as if we needed them.

I don't care if a person is a punker or not; the question is are they active, are they involved with the human race? Or are they closed off in some rathole. A lot of punkers are very cynical, very snobbish. I don't know if you have that word in America. Inverted snobbery — I'm dirtier than you, I'm poorer than you, I've got more studs on my leather jacket than you.

I don't want to deal with any hypocrisy.

Many of your songs deal with revolution of one form or another. Do you believe in revolution?

I believe in a thinking revolution. I don't believe in enforcing a new regime with the power of arms on an unprepared people who ain't ready for it. Before you have revolution, you've got to have education. The trouble with the Soviets was that they took power, and in order to preserve that power they've had to enforce a police state. I think that if you educate people enough into thinking, revolution, you wouldn't need such fascist machinery to uphold a state. I believe in changing the economic order of the world, but I ain't going to do it by force, ordering people around at the end of a sting gun.

How did you decide who would replace Mick Jones and Topper? Did you already have someone in mind?

No, by audition. Put an ad in the paper, and see what turns out. That's the only way to do it, because then it's all comers. All comers. I like that. It's not restricted to some untouchable clique, pop-star buddies. Let all comers have a crack. We let like 200 drummers and 350 guitar players — they all had a crack.

Joe, I know you have to go to rehearsal. Is there anything you would like to say before you head out?

I'd like to say, your grandfather is now taking drugs, and how hip can your grandfather be? I mean we've got a modern world where machines can compose music and stuff. So how hip is drugs? I think drugs are a bore. Maybe in five or ten years the rest of the nation will agree with me, but I'm trying to save a lot of people a lot of leg work, a lot of money, a lot of lungs, a lot of brain cells, and tell them now, let your grandfather take drugs and you mother take drugs because I'm sure a new generation is coming that will offer you for it, and that's what I got to say.

The Pretenders are sold out but

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VANDERBILT



CONCERTS

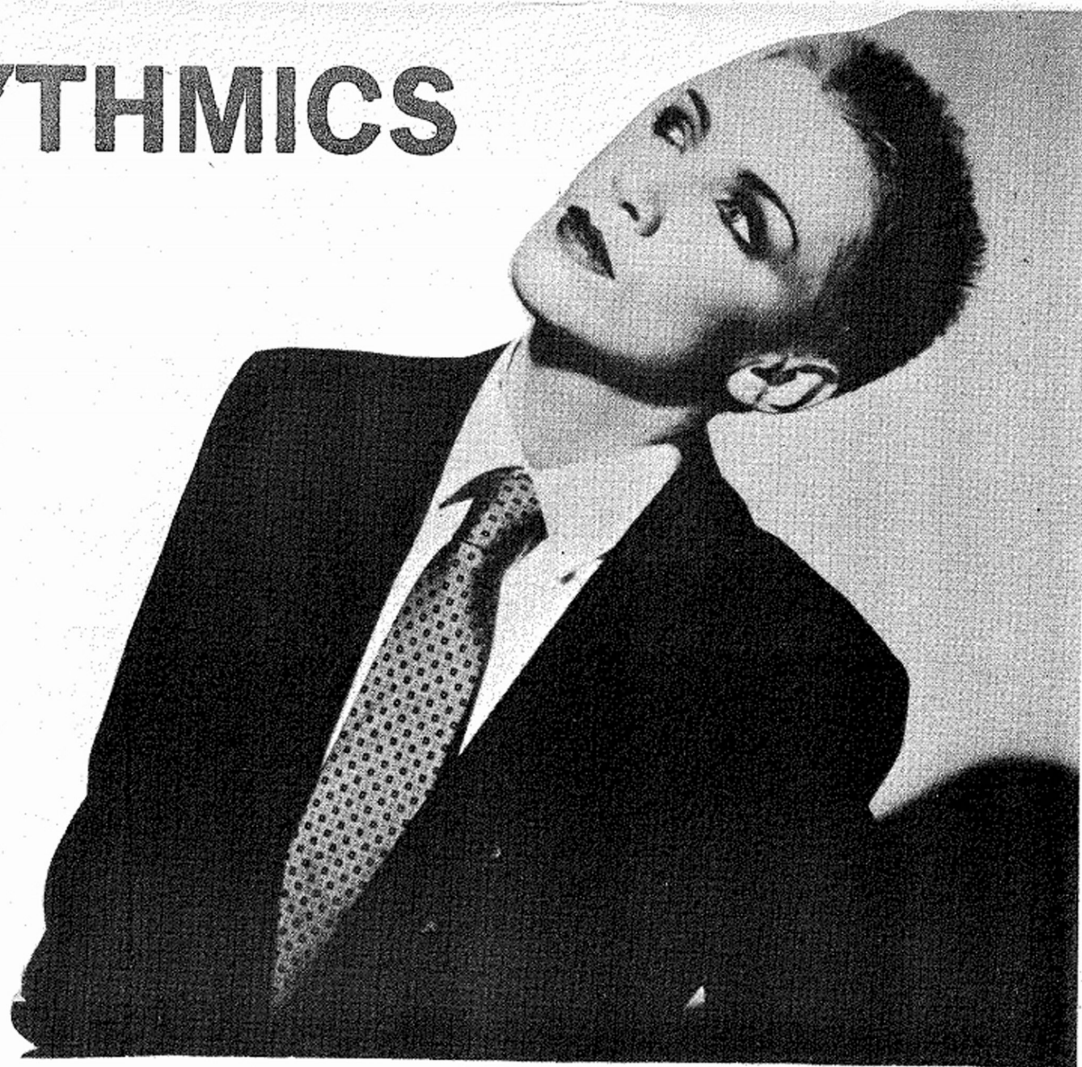
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THE CLASH



Tuesday, March 27 — 8:00 p.m. — Memorial Gym \$10 Public

EURYTHMICS



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