



Goodbye Cruel World. Strummer considers the Costello way out. Pic. Chris Clunn

# PHONEY CLASH MANIA!

THE CLASH  
SMILEY CULTURE  
Brixton Academy

A SAD night. For all Joe Strummer's renewed vigour and Smiley Culture's wit and wordage, this was one of the worst rock shows your reviewer has witnessed in ages.

From the same South London stable as Asher Senator, Smiley Culture is the prince of the new wave of fast-patter deejays, delivering his raps in double-quick time and with tongue-twisting diction. Remember the days when reggae was supposed to be laid back? Smiley doesn't and his "lyrics of quantity" spout from that grinning mouth at an alleged rate of 195 words per minute.

Backed only by a tape of some looping dubwise rhythms, the man in the tam and the sky-blue tracksuit slam-bammed his way through 'Police Officer' and 'Cockney Translation', the latter now embellished with Yankee-stylee abridgements, but his impact was severely dampened by an overdose of mid-song balderdash.

Stoned exhortations of "Everybody say Clash" and sermons on the joys of sweet sensimella only punctured the pace and timbre of Smiley's double-time talkovers. In the course of half-a-dozen toasts, there was simply too much twaddle and not enough serious talk.

Under the banner Arthur Scargill's Christmas Party and in front of a backdrop depicting the bleak post-industrial silhouettes of a dying mining town, Strummer's three new apprentices struck up the stark opening chords of 'One More Time' and it immediately felt good to know that The Clash were back.

Drawing liberally from a catalogue that now stretches back eight years, The Clash play for close on two hours but there is little coherence or crispness to their set. Compared to, say, The Redskins scampering through 'Unionise' or 'Lean On Me' in Hammersmith only a week earlier, Strummer and company dilute much of their political force by their fanciful and romanticised imagery.

And judging by the reception afforded the speech of a striking miner before their set—gobbed at, splattered in beer and eventually subjected to the indignity of having his papers torn up by a marauding punk who had forced his way onto the stage—any political points being made by The Clash are lost on certain sections of their audience.

The absurdities of regurgitating 1977's sermon in 1984 aside, some of the new songs previewed on the last tour—'This Is England' and 'Are You Ready'—promise better once they have been captured, litigation permitting, on vinyl.

But on stage, The Clash at the moment are a case of an excess of energy at best being misdirected and at worst going to waste. Like a rabbit caught in a snare, the more they kick the more entangled they seem to become.

It's time they quit holding out and drew another breath.

— Adrian Thrills

## SHAKATAK Hammersmith Odeon

WE ARRIVED late, to find our seats already occupied by someone who scuttled away into the darkness at the approach of the usher's torch. That's a good omen: no-one would bother to sneak to the front were it a duff concert. On stage Shakatak were doing what they do best: that is, a lush version of funk—charmingly escapist, comforting, familiar, and as impersonal as black satin sheets. When they stormed into the very brash, almost sardonic street-praising 'Down On The Street' the crowd bristled: the magic of the very bones of that old city dream of belonging but not being known in a crowd was evoked.

Blonde, back-combed vocalist Jill Saward is the undoubted mistress of the proceedings: all revolves round her presence, her ordinary but uncannily powerful voice (with occasional help from two excellent backing singers), and seeming effortlessness with which she controls the emotional intensity of the performance (and playing the congas—eat your heart out Alannah). But Shakatak do not go in for mere tricks of personality: Saward succeeds because she functions as one of a group—the show rests on deeper, prole instincts than the mere appeal to interesting personalities.

In songs like the melodic 'Dark Is The Night' the band show of their talents at escaping the noose of the tedious having-to-be-interesting-individuals bit, by using the *menage à trois* chemistry generated between Jill Saward, doing what any lascivious female singer would do, and the mock-sparring between keyboard player and the bass guitarist, George Anderson Jnr (although there must be better ways than this latter exhibition of virtuosity to celebrate homoeroticism...)

Shakatak are one of the truly proletarian groups: they do not whinge on about how they were brought up in cardboard boxes at the bottom of the sea and beaten 12 times daily in order to prove their pleb credibility, but they just get on and do what their working class audience pays to hear—they play music that's both largely impersonal and unescapably, unashamedly escapist. And they do very well indeed.

— Rachel Wilde



What do ya think? Dunno, there must be a Sandie Shaw-line in there somewhere. Pic. Chris Clunn.

# HIPPY HIPPI SHAKE

KALIMBA  
London Wag Club

THIS MOB have recently dropped the prefix 'Radio' from their name and gained frontperson Andrea Oliver—they must feel like they've traded in a rusty hairpin for the crown jewels!

Kalimba, from exotic Brighton, make a fair fist of producing a fiery dance cocktail from African rhythms, jazz edgings and assorted greasy funk-junk, but with Ms Oliver at the helm I suspect that they could play xylophone versions of Swiss sea shanties and still attract attention.

While the boys in the band concoct an itchy, messy approximation of the Afrozizz, Andrea gets on with the job of rivetting the audience.

Her ace card is not her voice—an expressive enough howl though veering toward the Pauline Black school of

flatness—but her extraordinary dancing.

Drawing on two traditions, the African tribal dance/trance stomp and the more British habit of tucking your skirt into your knickers to allow killer Tiller moves, it's a compulsive, exhausting, unashamedly physical display. Be in no doubt—these are the most active thighs in modern music!

The combination of Andrea's frantic antics and the frothy, often humorous, seltzer whipped up behind and around her, is endearing, an invitation to forget art and shake a tail feather.

In demanding far more of your hips than your brain, Kalimba bring to mind those bands that once existed like fungi in the dank corners of every public bar.

So welcome Kalimba, Afro pub rock for the '80's, Witch Doctor Feelgood!

— Danny Kelly

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