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The CLASH

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BY MCR THE VIEW JAMIET GALLOWS THE LIBERTINES MANICS & LOADS MORE

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WHY WE LOVE

It's been 30 years since The Clash released their eponymous debut album, igniting the touch paper for a journey that took them from the garageland of Ladbrooke Grove, west London, to the annals of infamy. Whether you're a new band, an old hand, a seasoned fan, or merely coming to this special group for the first time, we're sure you'll find something in this tribute issue that resonates with why Joe, Mick, Paul and Topper are still the most exciting, visceral and influential group in our hearts and minds. Over the next four pages, the band's guitarist Mick Jones remembers Joe Strummer nearly five years after his untimely death, *NME* offers you its opinion of new Strummer-centric flick *The Future Is Unwritten*, while a cast of 21 show you how you can burn your own definitive 'Best Of'. First, Carl Barât, Manic Street Preachers, My Chemical Romance, Gallows, The View and more offer their thoughts on why The Clash's importance refuses to die and, why they deserve tribute today. Death or glory!

THEY WROTE LOADS OF BRILLIANT SONGS

KYLE FALCONER, THE VIEW

"They wrote the coolest, most attitude-filled songs I've ever heard. I find their attitude absolutely inspiring, and those tunes – man, I'd kill to have written 'Clash City Rockers'! You'd think by listening to them that they'd be the easiest things to write – yet, if you listen to them closer, there's loads more about them than you'd first think. I'd give my left eye to go back in time and see them play..."

THEY WERE AMAZING LIVE

BILLY BRAGG

"I saw them at the old Rainbow Theatre in Finsbury Park – one of the first nights of the White Riot tour in 1977. They completely had it. They had a backdrop from the Notting Hill carnival riot the year before with the line of coppers charging along Ladbrooke Grove, and they just had the best sound – they really connected with the crowd. I think they started with 'London's

THEY LOOKED FUCKING AMAZING

JAMES DEAN BRADFIELD, MANIC STREET PREACHERS

"Without them, the Manics would be a completely different band – they're the biggest road-to-Damascus moment I've ever had. When I was 17, I saw [former Factory Records

supremo] Tony Wilson doing this TV show full of footage from his *So It Goes* programme. It showed some footage of The Clash in Manchester doing 'What's My Name' and 'Garageland' and Joe Strummer looked absolutely fucking amazing. It was earth-shattering. I remember me, Nick [Wire], Sean [Moore], Richey [Edwards] and our old bass player Flicker calling each other and just saying, 'Wow...' Knowing how political they were – and remember, back then, you equated politics with smoke-filled rooms full of people talking about dogma and drudgery – to see them... well, politics looked glamorous for the first time ever."

THEY BROKE PUNK IN AMERICA

GERARD WAY, MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE

"The Clash are the British punk band who made the most inroads into America. They're the most important British punk band to Americans – no question. How did I get into them? I think it was hearing Big Audio Dynamite, Mick Jones' band after The Clash. I had a friend who loved that band, and he said, 'You should check out this dude's earlier group...' When MCR first started, we used to play at this place, the Loop Lounge in New Jersey, where they'd show films on a screen between the bands. I remember standing there and watching the 'London Calling' video



and just being amazed. This other time, I went to the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame and got to walk through the Clash exhibit – it was a big deal for me because they've got the actual bass Paul Simonon smashed on the cover of 'London Calling'. They were a great band."

Burning' and then it was just mad jumping up and down for 45 minutes. The audience sitting further towards the front trashed the seats – it was reported as a riot, but wasn't really, it was just exuberance. I think that show was the moment when punk stopped being a cliquy phenomenon and really grasped the popular imagination. It was the most amazing thing."

music and message has transcended generations – that's why they are still so relevant today."

WITHOUT THEM, THERE'D BE NO LIBERTINES

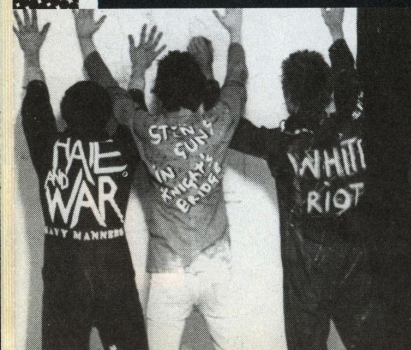
CARL BARÁT

"I came to the Clash late and it wasn't until I met Mick Jones when he recorded the first Libertines album that a picture of The Clash formed for me. Consequently, I was lucky enough to hear The Clash's back catalogue for the first time with one half of that brilliant songwriting partnership. Not only that, I got to see Mick dancing along as well – it was almost like watching a Clash musical. I think Mick recognised the parallels in mine and Peter's writing partnership, and how a certain way of life manifests itself as a band. The funny thing is I actually met Joe when I was a kid – my sister used to babysit for him. It would have been great to meet him when I knew who he was, though – I was going to before he died. Joe and Mick had got back together onstage and Joe wanted to hear what Mick had been working on. I'd like to think he heard our debut, though I don't know if he did..."

THEY FUSED POLITICS AND POP PERFECTLY

SAM DUCKWORTH, GET CAPE. WEAR CAPE. FLY

"The Clash were the first incredibly successful band that had a massive political outlook – you just have to think of them playing the Rock Against Racism shows at Victoria Park in London – and their actions were a significant part of increasing action against the fascist movement of the '70s and '80s. You have to remember that, within punk, there was a certain blurring of the lines – some skinheads into punk were getting involved with the National Front. By introducing so many black elements into their music, like with the reggae and dub influences of tracks such as 'Rudie Can't Fail', they tackled racism, fascism, corporate responsibility and people's roles in society. Their



THE CLASH

THEY EMBODIED THE BAND AS GANG



FELIX WHITE, THE MACCABEES

"The Clash are The Maccabees' favourite band ever – they're the best gang that have ever existed and we owe everything to them. I remember us watching *Westway To The World* when we first started out, back when we were shit, and it was like our rulebook. There's this line in it where Joe says something like, 'If you find something that works, do everything you can to make that thing work...' He's talking about his regrets at kicking Topper out, and his voice is quivering, like he's about to cry or something. Whatever problems our band has had, it's about being a gang and sticking together. Because of Joe and that line, that'll never change..."

The Clash (l-r) Topper Headon, Joe Strummer, Mick Jones, Paul Simonon



THEIR INSPIRATION LIVES ON TODAY



JAMIE T

"The Clash were the band that made me want to form a band. When I was younger, everyone was into metal, but I listened to Desmond Dekker and old ska stuff, then got into '70s punk. I listened to 'London Calling' again recently and it made me want to get a band together. It's got such different styles, and it's all coming from different members – it can't be done solo. Last time I went to the Shepherds Bush Empire was to see Joe Strummer & The Mescaleros. I met him and he was a lovely man. People in bands are often pricks, but he was a really, really great guy."



FRANK CARTER, GALLOWES

"I absolutely fucking love The Clash. What is there not to love? It's all about the songs for me – I really like 'White Riot' and 'I'm So Bored With The USA'. Amazing songs. I remember running around the dancefloor with all my cousins, dancing like a dick to 'London Calling' at my auntie's wedding when I was six. My auntie was cool – she was into ska and stuff. And bingo..."

HATE
AND
MARR

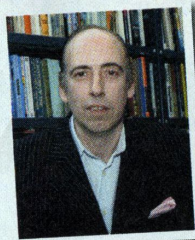
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Joe, left, and Mick: "He was such a vital guy"

MICK ON JOE

Five years on, the former Clash guitarist shares his memories of his late, great bandmate...



My first impression of Joe was that he was great – I imagined him a little bit like Eddie Cochran; a real frontman, and very rock'n'roll. One night Paul [Simonon, bass], myself and Keith Levene [guitarist in an early Clash line-up and later of PiL] went to see him play with his first band, The 101ers, at The Golden Lion in Fulham. That was the night he was approached by Bernard [Rhodes], our manager, to see if he wanted to meet us to talk about forming a band. He came to meet us a few days later at our squat in Davis Road [in Shepherds Bush] – we were a bit starstruck, because he was already out doing stuff and making quite a name for himself as 'Joe Strummer, the singer of The 101ers'. At that point, we hadn't done anything.

"We quickly got into working together, and we went into Paul's small bedroom lined with egg boxes. We all crowded into there and we started laying out some numbers. We swapped each other's songs – I had 'Protex Blue' and 'I'm So Bored With You,' but Joe misheard it and thought it was 'I'm So Bored With The USA', so we kept that and took it from there. My favourite Clash song? I like all of them, even the ones on 'Sandinista!'. I like 'Lost In The Supermarket' a lot – Joe wrote the lyrics for that with me in mind to sing, and I usually prefer the ones that Joe sings. When I listen to them, I'm pleased. They're all so different. They're all documents of their moment in time.

"Mine and Joe's relationship was up and down, but we really were deep friends. The only time we didn't see each other was for about nine months after I left The Clash – he stewed for a bit and then we became friends again. He read a lot – all the time – and he

always had a book with him. He read everything: Jack London, *The Call Of The Wild*, beat poetry, biographies, historical shit. He was always taking inspiration from everywhere. His hotel room was always interesting, too. He'd take his bag, empty it all on to the other bed, then start decorating his room, putting stuff around it – books and bits of pieces. I think he wanted a bit of home with him wherever he went.

"The Clash was all pretty volatile – we all had things that annoyed the other members, and occasionally, Joe could have quite a temper. We were under a lot of pressure, so sometimes one of us would flip out – that happened with all of us at one time or another. Joe was a couple of years older than the rest of us, so we looked up to him. He'd done stuff before with The 101ers, and we hadn't, so there was a certain amount of deferment on most matters. He seemed to have a sensible head on his shoulders.

"I was at home when I heard about his death. It's always hard when you lose someone close to you, and I was devastated and very shocked. He was such a vital guy – every day brought something interesting, and it was usually really good, even if we did fight sometimes. His drive and vitality was there for all to see and everybody who met him was touched by him.

"I think Joe would have liked the current music scene – it's really healthy at the moment. He would have liked Peter [Doherty], I'm sure. I'd done the first Libertines album before Joe died – I sent him a copy and I think he was pretty into it. If The Clash hadn't been around, I'm sure another band would have come along. I'm almost sure these things are fate, you know..."

THE FILM

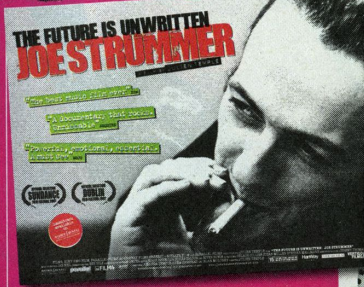
Joe Strummer is remembered on the big screen this week with the debut of a new documentary. Here's NME's verdict...

"Death or glory/becomes just another story" – so sang Joe Strummer in 1979. Maybe so, but that was never gonna be the case with the great man himself. Now, nearly five years after his premature death, aged 50, it's time for that story to be told.

And what a story. Kicking off with footage of a young Joe spitting out the words to 'White Riot' with a raw passion, Sex Pistol collaborator and punk archivist Julien Temple's film pogs through the life of the diplomat's son born John Mellor. It's exhaustive – but never exhausting – stuff, starting with the embarrassing public school childhood, the Ladbroke Grove squat years and his rock'n'roll apprenticeship in proto-Clash pub rockers The 101ers, and ending with the 'lost years' after The Clash's split, the Mescaleros-birthing renaissance and his untimely death.

In-between, of course, it's all about The Clash – because Strummer was The Clash in a way that few musicians ever embody their band, giving them the spirit and ambition that took them out of the punk dead-end and on to something much bigger. That journey's covered here in full, from the illuminating footage of early recording sessions, where musical ambition clearly outstripped ability, right through to the US mega-gigs: ability no longer an issue, but principles – and inter-band tensions – stretched to breaking point.

Interspersed throughout are snippets of speech, archive film clips and comments from those who knew Strummer way back when, and those who stayed with him to the end. And then there's the celebrity fans: rock stars Bono and Anthony Kiedis, movie stars Johnny Depp and Matt Dillon, all-round genius Martin Scorsese... they all queue up to pay tribute to Joe, although Bono's typically self-aggrandising comments drew multiple cries of "wanker" at the London screening attended by NME.



Temple's an old hand at this game, having created last year's *Glastonbury* festimentary and such Pistols-centric classics as *The Filth And The Fury* and *The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle*, and in fitting with his style, his new work is a messy joy of cut-and-paste edits. There's no narration as such; the film instead drawing its cohesion from the clever use of graphics and recurring themes – dotted throughout are audio snippets from Strummer's radio show *London Calling* and tributes from friends gathered round the campfires he so loved. Amid the sensual overload of scatter-gun clips, these elements help keep the film together like safety pins on a shredded T-shirt.

So the direction is near-perfect and the material essential, but the real star of *The Future Is Unwritten* is the story itself. The best rock films are always the ones which would work just as well without the 'rock' element. It's why *Walk The Line* is a better romance than anything dreamt up by Richard Curtis, why *Dig!* is funnier than anything dreamt up by Richard Curtis, why *Gimme Shelter* is more horrifying than anything dreamt up by... well, you get the idea. And while this is a film about The Clash, and about punk, and about the death of that scene's ideal, above all it's a film about a man who tried to change the world – or at least tried to change his world. It's a film about what you can do if you dare to try and it's a film that should inspire all who watch it to do everything they've ever wanted to. Death or glory? Not just another story.

Joe Strummer: The Future Is Unwritten Opens May 18, Cert 18, 124 mins

WIN A SIGNED GUITAR

Your chance to own a Gibson guitar signed by *The Future Is Unwritten* director Julien Temple

So you've read about the film and learnt why The Clash still evoke so much fervour in our hearts. Now, here's your chance to get your hands on your own piece of that history – namely an exclusive Gibson Epiphone guitar signed by the film's director, the acclaimed Julien Temple.

To be in with a chance of winning, all you need to do is head to WWW.NME.COM/WIN and answer this simple question:

What is the title of The Clash's debut album?

- a) The Clash
- b) Give 'Em Enough Rope
- c) London Calling

Usual terms and conditions apply. Comp closes midnight Monday, May 21.



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- 3 LONDON CALLING
- 4 COMPLETE CONTROL
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- 21 THE STREET PARADE

1 THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

(From the album 'Sandinista!', 1980, CBS)

John McClure, Reverend & The Makers: "This is great - it mixes funk and early electronics and it's got an irresistible Simonon groove."



2 LONDON'S BURNING

(From the album 'The Clash', 1977, CBS)

Steve Diggle, Buzzcocks: "I'd much rather have been in The Clash than the Buzzcocks. It's like the rebirth of rock'n'roll."



3 LONDON CALLING

(From the album 'London Calling', 1979, CBS)

Matt Bowman, The Pigeon Detectives: "They were a lot closer to The Beatles than the Pistols. This sums them up."



4 COMPLETE CONTROL

(Single, 1977, CBS)

Liam Watts, The Enemy: "This is about resenting all these management people saying, 'Do this, do that.'"



5 HATEFUL

(From the album 'London Calling')

Wade Keighran, The Scare: "We always used to sing this song when we phoned up our dealer - that's what the song is about."



6 CLASH CITY ROCKERS

(Single, 1978, CBS)

Thurston Moore, Sonic Youth: "This was the song that made you feel part of the band - the way they used their name in it."



7 DEATH OR GLORY

(From the album 'London Calling')

Kate Nash: "It's a real fists -in-the-air song - it really gets the engine going. It's got such a punk attitude."



8 WHITE RIOT

(From the album 'The Clash')

Laura-Mary Carter, Blood Red Shoes: "Listening to The Clash turned me on to more political bands like Gang Of Four."



9 ROCK THE CASBAH

(From the album 'Combat Rock', 1982, CBS)

Alan McDonald, Kubichek!: "This was welcome respite every night out clubbing in shit indie dives when I was 18."



10 1977

(B-side to 'White Riot', 1977, CBS)

Paul Weller: "I like that it's only one minute and 40 seconds. I was really impressed with how powerful and short it was."



11 THIS IS RADIO CLASH

(Single, 1981, CBS)

Chris Shiflett, Foo Fighters: "Musically, it was such a blend of things that were going on at that time and it still sounds modern."



12 (WHITE MAN) IN HAMMERSMITH PALAIS

(Single, 1978, CBS)

Bobby Gillespie, Primal Scream: "This song reminded people what a horrible, racist country '70s Britain was."



13 THE GUNS OF BRIXTON

(From the album 'London Calling')

Alan Donohoe, The Rakes: "I didn't realise this was The Clash for a while, and in a club once, I was like, 'This is Beats International.' God I felt stupid."



14 POLICE & THIEVES

(From the album 'The Clash')

Ian Moreno, The Little Ones: "Even though this is technically not a Clash song, it's a great cover. To have the fucking balls to put a reggae song on their album is great. As is the Lee Scratch Perry original."



15 IVAN MEETS G.I. JOE

(From the album 'Sandinista!')

Davo, Pull Tiger Tail: "It's weird disco-punk madness, full of squiggly computer noises, and any disco dramatisation of the Cold War is good by me."



16 BANK ROBBER

(From the single 'Bankrobber', 1980, CBS)

Shaun Ryder, Happy Mondays: "That's a good one. You don't need me talking bollocks about it - it's just a cool track."



17 STRAIGHT TO HELL

(From the album 'Combat Rock')

Tim Wheeler, Ash: "The Pogues used this as their intro music when they came onstage in New York. It's such a great, dark song."



18 WASHINGTON BULLETS

(From the album 'Sandinista!')

Craig Finn, The Hold Steady: "This is so evocative of when I was getting into music, going to rock shows for the first time."



19 TRAIN IN VAIN

(From the album 'London Calling')

Charlie Waller, The Rumble Strips: "This is so poppy. You could probably mistake it for a Wham! song or something."



20 LOST IN THE SUPERMARKET

(From the album 'London Calling')

James Johnston, Biffy Clyro: "This song reminds me of when I first heard The Clash, a moment I will savour for a long time."



21 THE STREET PARADE

(From the album 'Sandinista!')

Mick Jones, The Clash: "This is one of my all-time favourites - it really reminds me of us in New York; me and Joe just walking around, looking at St Patrick's Cathedral and Fifth Avenue."



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