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Marley talks of his roots

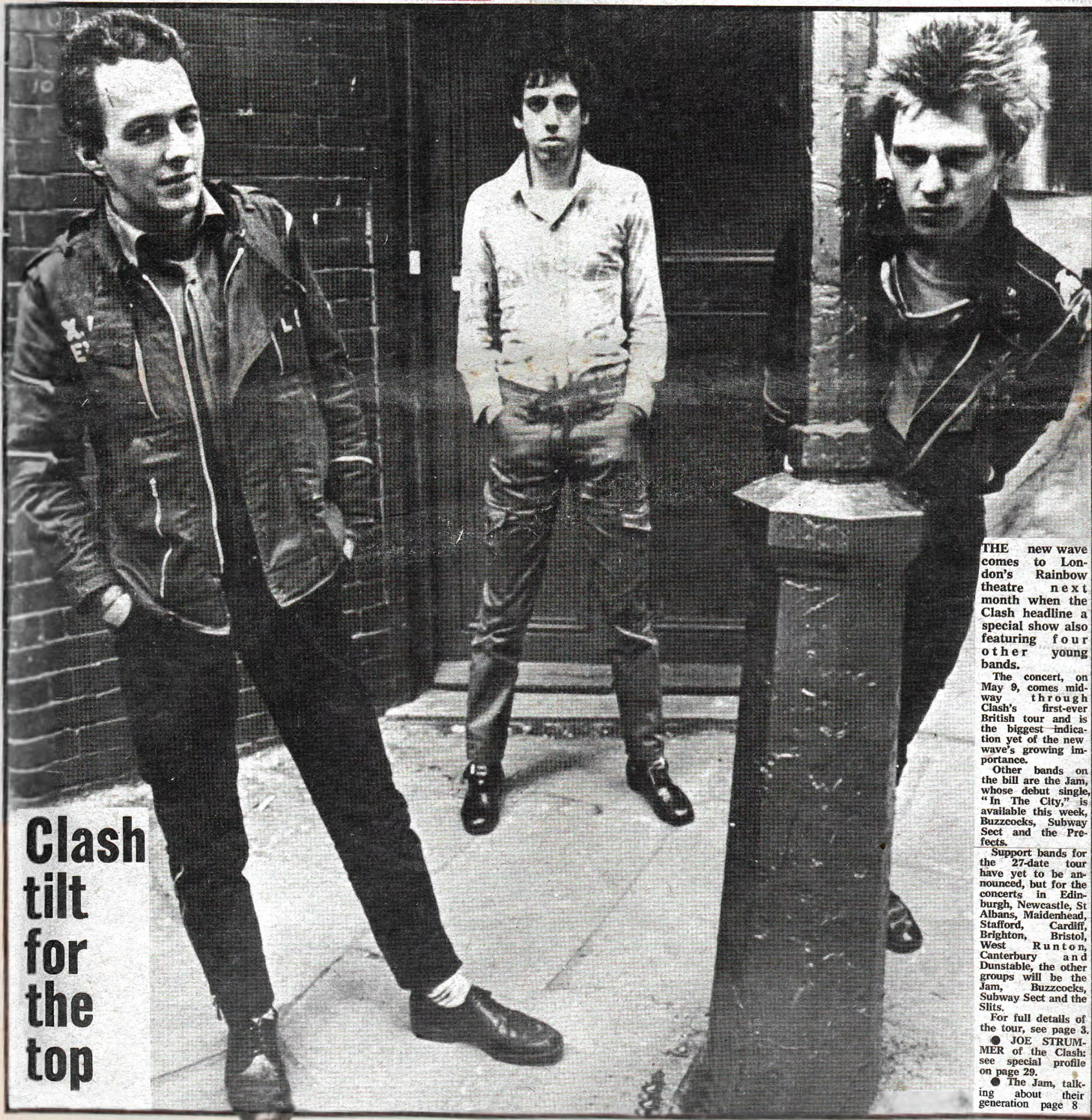
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Clash tilt for the top

THE new wave comes to London's Rainbow theatre next month when the Clash headline a special show also featuring four other young bands.

The concert, on May 9, comes midway through Clash's first-ever British tour and is the biggest indication yet of the new wave's growing importance.

Other bands on the bill are the Jam, whose debut single, "In The City," is available this week, Buzzcocks, Subway Sect and the Prefects.

Support bands for the 27-date tour have yet to be announced, but for the concerts in Edinburgh, Newcastle, St Albans, Maidenhead, Stafford, Cardiff, Brighton, Bristol, West Rington, Canterbury and Dunstable, the other groups will be the Jam, Buzzcocks, Subway Sect and the Slics.

For full details of the tour, see page 3.

● JOE STRUMMER of the Clash: see special profile on page 29.

● The Jam, talking about their generation page 8

IN THE past, Joe Strummer would return to his squat from the dead-end gloom of the Lisson Grove dole queue and come up with sneeringly cynical "Career Opportunities."

When he and Paul Simonon got caught in the racial no-man's-land between charging police and angry black youths at the Notting Hill Carnival riots, the experience was poured into another rock 'n' roll song, "White Riot."

More recently, "Hate And War" and "Remote Control" (written around the time of the banned Sex Pistols tour) were reactions to the general condemnation of punk music.

But, considering their formidably exciting stage presence and ever-improving technique, it was only a matter of time before a record contract lured the Clash away from their squat/starve/steal lifestyle. A pox on the irony!

With CBS's hefty six-figure advance and perhaps two years guaranteed security, what price songs inspired by street-level survival games? Would they vanish as fast as ink dries on the dotted line?

"No" counters 24-year-old Joe Strummer, offering "Garageland" in evidence, "I never want that to happen."

"After our second gig, a critic wrote that we should be returned to the garage and locked in with a car motor running until we died. 'Garageland' is about that."

"I was trying to say that this is where we come from and we know it and we're not going to get out of our depth. Even though we've signed with CBS, we aren't going to float off into the atmosphere like the Pink Floyd or anything."

Admirable sentiments which cynics, no doubt, will find hard to believe. But, in truth, the band have changed little over the last six months.

In the early days, they returned to their rehearsal studio one night so hungry and broke that over the one bar of their electric fire, they cooked and ate what remained at the bottom of a bucket of flour-and-water paste.

Today Joe Strummer, on a basic £25 a week, looks a picture of health but, if anything, an adequate diet has sharpened his reactive wit.

"The only person who played 'White Riot' (their recent single) on the radio was John Peel — and he's gone on holiday," says Joe, his voice a mixture of amused incredulity and frustration.

"You play our record against any of the other stuff and it just knocks spots off the left, right, and centre. They must be — for not playing it."

"I want to slag off all the people in charge of radio stations. No 1: Radio One. They're the pirates and then didn't, as they promised, cater for the market the pirates created."

"Radio One and Two, most afternoons, run concurrently and the whole thing has slid right back to where it was before the pirates happened. They've totally f— it."

"There's no radio station for young people anymore. It's totally down to housewives and trends in Islington. They're killing the country by having the playlist monopoly."

"No 2: Capital. They're even worse because they had the chance, coming right into the heart of London and sitting in that tower right on top of everything."

"But they've completely blown it. I'd like to throttle Aidan Day. He thinks he's the self-appointed Minister of Public Enlightenment."

"We've just written a new song called 'Capital Radio' and a line in it goes 'listen to the tunes on the Dr Goebbels Show'."

"They say 'Capital Radio, in tune with London'. They're in tune with Hampstead. They're not in tune with us at all. I hate them."

"What they could have done, compared to what they have done, is abhorrent. They could have made it so good that everywhere you went you took your transistor radio."

"They could have made the whole capital buzz. Instead, Capital Radio has just turned its back on the whole youth of the city."

Radio stations are not above criticism but what does Strummer think of the punk scene at the moment?

"I don't think there is one really. The only thing that could count as a 'scene' is the Roxy. And the Roxy is the DOB. The last time I went I was

Joe Strummer talks to Caroline Coon

feeling really uppity.

"I stood in the middle and looked round and all these people were slumped around dozing! I threw tomato sauce on the mirror and stormed out. And I haven't been back there. I don't think I will go back. The sooner it closes the better."

However, bad vibes or not, surely it is better to have somewhere to play than nowhere at all?

"No, I think it's better to have nothing than have that," says Joe, acknowledging that his "selfish" attitude might have something to do with the fact that the Clash are temporarily out of action since drummer Terry Chimes decided to start his own band.

The social scene aside then, what does he think about the way the music has developed?

"All I care about is the groups. If there're good groups then it's got to be good. There's bound to be a lot of rubbish but I've changed my opinion of the Damned."

"I've seen them a lot and I think they're fun to watch. They play good. The only thing I have against them is that they can't play as well as us."

"Number One for me at the moment are the Subway Sect. They've got some good ideas. The Slits are good too. Palmolive on drums! She's the female Jerry Nolan. But like everyone, they need to do 30 gigs in 30 days and they would be a different group. Then they'd be great. The same with us."

How has Joe been affected by the ban on punk music, which has effectively kept the Clash off the road since Christmas?

"I feel really bitter. We've tried our hardest and we've worked and slogged at it. Then we've had drummers quitting, which was just what we didn't need. We wanted to get going and move forward."

"All that business on the Pistols tour I hated it. I HATED it. It was the Pistols' time. We were in the background. The first few nights were terrible. We were just locked up in the hotel room with the Pistols, doin' nothing."

"And yet, for me, it was great too. We had the coach and we had hotels and we had something to do — even though they didn't let us do it that often. We did it about eight times. It was good fun."

"But when I got back to London on Christmas Eve I felt awful. I was really dejected, because after a few days you get used to eating. We were eating Holiday Inn rubbish, but it was two meals a day and that. And when I got off the coach we had no money and it was just awful. I fell twice as hungry as I'd ever felt before."

"I had nowhere to live and I remember walking away from the coach, deliberately not putting on my woolly jumper. I walked all the way up Tottenham Court Road and it was really cold but I wanted to get as cold and as miser-



JOE STRUMMER: 'There's no radio station for young people anymore. It's totally down to housewives and trends in Islington'

able as I could.

"Christmas was here, and me and Micky Forte, our sound man, had our little bags in our hands and I just felt like the worst thing in the world that the tour had ended. I wanted it to go on and on. The coach had been like home in a way and I didn't want to get off it."

On stage, Strummer wires himself up into an inhuman dynamo of sweaty, trembling flesh, fearful enough to have one wondering when the ambulance brigade will rush to his rescue with a straitjacket.

While he tilts his bullet head at acute angles, his agonising face screwed into an open wound, he wields his Telecaster like a chain-saw. His magnetism is totally original — more like an Olympic strong man forcing all his energy into a final record-breaking lift than anything seen on a rock 'n' roll stage before.

Offstage, he's the Clash member with the lowest profile. Guitarist Mick Jones (21) is the most verbal. Bassist Paul Simonon (20), who was educated at schools in Brixton and Notting Hill, where 90 per cent of the kids were black, communicates more easily with animal physicality than with words.

Much has been made of punk music's tough roots in

Clash personality

"It wasn't a public school. It was a school where thick rich people sent their thick rich kids — another perk of my father's job, it was a job with a lot of perks — all the fees were paid by the Government."

"When I was eight he made me sit all these exams for these flash public schools. But I failed the lot. Finally I got into this semi-crummy school where they have this thing going where, if your brother passed the entrance exam, me, his brother, was let in too."

So Joe has a brother?

"No. I did have, but he's dead. He committed suicide in 1971. He was a year older than me. He was a Nazi. He was a member of the National Front. He was into the occult and he used to have these deaths heads and crossbones all over everything."

"He didn't like to talk to anybody and I think suicide was the only way out for him. What else could he have done?"

The Clash are being attacked for their "intellectual" approach to music. They certainly appear to be the most politically aware of the new-wave bands. But I'm suspicious. Until recently, Paul thought David Steel was Tommy Steele's brother. Does Joe read at all? Does he know who the Prime Minister is?

"Yeah, I do!" he replies patiently. "I'm up to page 984 of The Rise And Fall Of The Third Reich (the hardback edition has 1245 pages). And I've read everything that T. E. Lawrence wrote. He was my hero."

"And Jim Callaghan, right? You know, I got a TV recently and the other day I was punching between him on one channel and Jimmy Carter on the other. Well, it struck me that Jimmy Carter had more going for him than Jim Callaghan."

"I don't know whether this is true, but I heard that Fidel Castro, when the mood takes him, just goes to the market place and starts babbling. All the people gather around him and listen to him and he talks for five hours and walks off again. And that to me sounds as if he's got something to say."

"Whereas — like Carter and Callaghan have probably got 50 people telling them what to say. They're just robots. They haven't got any personal zing. Like Hitler. He wasn't a robot, whatever you say about the —. Although, look what he did."

Joe defends the band's "politically aware" stance then?

"Well, the trouble is the word political. I just leave it as awareness. You get all these smart-alec young groups coming out — and more power to their elbow — sneering to the Clash, they're too political — who wants to care about that —"

"That's like the flash thing to say now. But I sit back and think about it and it strikes me as rubbish."

"I don't think about Jim Callaghan any more than the newspaper vendor does. Politics, as the word describes itself, means Grey Boredom Talk Long Words Impossible Sentences — rubbish."

I don't think about that stuff. I just think about who's doing what to me and what I'm going to do

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The Clash

from page 29

about it. That's what I call politics."

Joe would like the lyrics of the Clash's songs to exacerbate political awareness in his audience. But, how pertinent does he think a rock 'n' roll band is when it comes to changing anything?

"Completely useless," he replies with hesitation. "A rock 'n' roll group! None of us is going to change anything. Everyone goes, 'Punk! Hurrah!'"

But in three years what do you think I'm going to be doing? What do you think the guys who buy our single are going to be doing? I'll still be walking around muttering to myself.

"They are still going to be shovelling s— down some old shoot and, maybe with their wages, they'll buy the Clash's fourth album. Rock doesn't change anything."

"But after saying that—because I want you to know that I haven't got any illusions about anything, right—having said that, then I STILL want to try to change things." What does Joe think the important issues are now? What does he feel he is fighting against?

"Well, the only thing I'm interested in is my personal freedom. I just want the right to choose. Obviously, it ain't no use me having the right to choose unless everybody else has too. Everyone's got to have it, right?"

Before Joe stumbled into music, what had he planned to be?

"I went to art school like everybody else. I wanted to be an artist. But when I got there, phew! When I got a lousy set-up, it just f— me up completely.

"I'd walked straight out of this dead strict school environment right into a seething orgy! At the time there were loads of drugs and one day I took about 50 trips in a row."

"I remember finding my way into the studio and then it suddenly struck me that the teachers were conning us. They were not teaching us how to draw

but how to make a drawing LOOK as if you knew how to draw—which is an enormous distinction."

Two years of dissipated youth of casual jobs but mostly unemployment, passed before Joe "fell in" with a busker.

"I was earning some money holding his hat. We were down at the Underground and I was watching his fingers and it suddenly occurred to me that if he could do it, then so could I. But I was really nervous about actually playing."

"Now everybody knows it's dead easy. It takes three weeks and you can play every tune in the book. But in them days I thought it was something you had to slog at for years. There was this really big mystique. I'm really angry about people who spread that s— about."

"Anyway, I brought a ukelele. No kidding. I saved some money, £1.99 I think, and I brought it down Shaftesbury Avenue. Then the guy I was busking with taught me to play 'Johnny B. Goode.'"

"Well, there came the day when he said, 'Right, you do this pitch and I'll head off down Green Park and do the pitch there. And he just walked off down the passage.'"

"And it was rush hour. And the passage was jammed with people. And I was on my own for the first time with this ukelele and 'Johnny B. Goode.' And that's how I started."

Joe's advance from busker to lead singer was no less opportune. A friend "gave" him a camera which he was quick to exchange for another Avenue drum kit. This he loaded into an old van and drove to yet more friends in Wales.

They, as chance would have it, had a rock band—with a drummer, but minus a drum kit, Joe, nothing if not a main chancer, offered them the services of his drum kit on condition he became the band's lead singer.

"I wanted to be the star of the show." He re-named the band the Vultures.

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Any Questions?

SEND your questions on the music scene to ANY QUESTIONS, Melody Maker, 24-34 Meymott Street, London SE1 9LU.

SEEING the Tommy Dorsey Band on the John Denver Show on BBC-TV on April 2 started my friend and I wondering just what happened to Dorsey. Can you enlighten us? — Howard Jones, Matlock.

George T. Simon tells the story in his book, *Inside The Big Bands* (Collie Books), which is available from Cressenden Publications, 122 Wardour Street, London W1, and specialist bookshops, price £3.85.

He recalls: "I saw quite a bit of Tommy during those final days. He was by no means a contented man, but then he always seemed to be fighting for something that he didn't have. But the general demise of the band business, as well as the change in musical styles and values, depressed him. Then too, despite all his efforts and keen desires, his last marriage, complete with two adorable children and a wonderful house in Greenwich, Connecticut, was working out badly. Who knows what went through his mind on the night of November 26, 1956, exactly one week after his 51st birthday? Certainly he must have been filled with all sorts of conflicts. He dreaded his impending divorce. The thought of the disintegration of his home life was upsetting him, for just as Tommy had been a man of intense hatreds, he had also been a man full of love, which he gave and shared willingly. He was impulsive, too, impulsive and impatient, and the two traits of character formed a lethal and fateful combination that night, when, possibly to get relief from the terrific tension that had been building up at home, he took several sleeping pills in hope of getting a good night's rest. That was the night he reported to have eaten a huge dinner. It was a dinner that apparently did not sit well in his sleep, it has since been surmised, he became violently sick, he then vomited and then to gag... and then to choke... and all the while the sleeping pills kept him in such a state that he was unable to rouse himself. The next morning he was found dead in his bed. Apparently he had choked to death."



COLIN COOPER of the CLIMAX BLUES BAND: didn't get a pick-up or any effects for his alto sax on 'Couldn't Get It Right' — it was just miked up in the ordinary way.

Dorsey's dilemma

tection also affects its "hearing" and, of course, frequency responses are often specially tailored to eliminate such things as feedback and handling noise, etc. Microphone choice depends on the application. I use AKG mikes in the following ways: AKG-D12 on bass drums. Mike's large diaphragm capsule and enclosure, capable of high undistorted bass output, has led to it becoming the standard mike for this purpose and it is rugged enough for use on the road. AKG-D200 for snare drum. Used with the EQ switch in the mid-position, the bass end rolls off a little, giving hard, clean, close-miked snare sound. It has a strong, unobtrusive case with a hard capsule protection. AKG-D200 for tom-toms (also ideal for vocals). This is designed for close-miking work with well-protected capsule, important in the exposure of tom-tom situations. It has good anti-boom and feedback characteristics. AKG-D224 used overhead for cymbals and hi-hat. A sophisticated full-range twin-capsule mike ideal for the difficult hi-frequencies associated with cymbals, which so easily become nasty when poorly miked into a large pa. Sensitive and "ear seeing", they add overall stereo ambience to the whole kit. AKG-C451S for gongs. These super sensitive condenser mikes, with slightly brightened top end, are ideal for the complete tonal range of the seven gongs which, because of phasing problems, are ideally miked from 2-3 feet behind the rig. — JON HISSEMAN.

near Penny Lane, along with John Lennon, although the ever knowing McCartney's family moved to Speke and George went to Liverpool institute, where Paul McCartney and his brother Michael McGear were also pupils. Aged 13 in 1955 George bought a £3 10 guitar from a school chunter for £3 and began to explore it. It was soon replaced by an electric guitar costing £45. George met Paul McCartney and some friends made their debut at Speke British Legion Club, calling themselves the Rebels. In 1955 George met Paul McCartney and together they played Lonnie Donegan songs. Paul joined John Lennon's group the Quarrymen, and the resulting George, who left school in the autumn of 1955 and got a job as an apprentice electrician. The Quarrymen disbanded in November 1959 and in 1960 John, Paul and George formed Johnny and the Moondogs. They changed their name to the Silver Beetles when they auditioned for impresario Larry Parnes at the Jackaranda Club and were sent off gigging in Scotland. Returning to Liverpool they began to back strippers and get their feet in the door of the Cavern Club, where it all started in a big way. The intensely detailed chronology covers the life of George Harrison from 1943 until 1976.

Sax music

WHAT equipment did Colin Cooper use on the Climax Blues Band single "Couldn't Get It Right"? Is the tenor sax music for this number available? What is the band doing at present? P. W. Paulson, Nottingham.

I used a Selmer Mark VI alto sax on the recording. I don't use a pick-up or any effects whatsoever — the sax is miked up in the ordinary way. Unfortunately tenor sax music is not available but it would be quite a simple job for any good transcriber to jot it down from the record. At the moment we are completing a new single and album at AIR Studios in London. "Couldn't Get It Right" has just entered the US Top 30 as I write, and we hope to play a few dates over there before the summer recess. COLIN COOPER.

In the book

WHAT is the personnel of Lynrd Skynyrd and is the music for any of their recordings available? — Tom Beswick, Redhill.

The line-up is Ronnie Van Zant (vocals), Allen Collins and Gary Rossington (guitars), Leon Wilkerson (bass), Artimus Pyle (drums) and Bill Powell (keyboards). The songs are selected from their albums "Pronounced 'Luh-Nuh' Skin-Nerd", "Nuthin' Fancy" and "Gimme Back My Bullets."

Seeing sounds

AT a concert recently I saw Jon Hisseman using a wide variety of different mikes. Unfortunately I saw many different models and for what reasons. — Alex Dunbar, Sheffield.

All microphones hear or "see" sounds differently. The capsule diaphragm (the mike's "ear drum") varies in size and number as does its position in the casing. The capsule suspension and pro-

By George!

WHERE and when was George Harrison born and how did he start his career? — Alan Munday, Portcawli, Glamorganshire.

According to a George Harrison Chronology included with his album for Dark Horse Records, "33", issued in the UK by Warner Bros., he was born on 25 Feb 1943 at 12 Arnold Grove, Wavertree, Liverpool and attended Dovedale Primary School,

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