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new MUSICAL EXPRESS



Steve Harley meets his critics

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I'm in there with the New Wave

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PH: CHALKIE DAVIES

THRILLS

ONE LITTLE PIGGY WENT TO MARKET



Lone Joe Strummer being handed back into his limo. Pic: CHALKIE DAVIES

— three little piggies stayed in the CBS car . . .
The **CLASH** in Birmingham

WAKING UP in the back of a van crammed with Slits may be some people's idea of heaven, but after the Pyrrhic victory of The Clash City Rockers Alternative Event, all you're thinking about is the hounded boot that someone has lodged in your ribcage.

After the proposed One-Day Punk Festival featuring The Clash and several less revered New Wavers was cancelled by Police Order, the band issued a communique stating that they still intended to show. The Law then warned that such action would result in charges of conspiracy and incitement to riot, and required that The Clash issue a press release to the effect that fans should stay away from the arranged location of the Event — Digbeth Rag Market.

But a convoy carrying The Clash and others headed up the motorway on Sunday afternoon, and there was no law to stop them.

"Driving two tanks right up to the gates of the market," Clash manager Bernie Rhodes had said wistfully. "Imagine that! But even if you hire them you can't get a licence to drive them on the motorway."

In a Consul, not a Sherman, Joe Strummer bounced and sang along to the endless reggae coming from his cassette machine, occasionally adding to the book he calls "The Thoughts Of Chairman Strummer". The tranquility of the trip was enlivened only by the mildly "High Noon" ambience of police surveillance and the taking of registration numbers, at a service-station tea-break.

The convoy comes to rest in the vicinity of the Rag Market at seven in the rain. Joe and the NME Kinder-

bunker can't persuade Jones, Simon and Headon to leave the car of the American CBS Press Officer for a pilgrimage to the closed market gates of red steel, and Strummer delivers the first of many tirades that cease only when the gg at Barbarella's is confirmed.

Some thirty kids, soaked to the skin, have ignored the repeated police warnings broadcast on the radio and swarm around Strummer.

"Where's the rest of the band, Joe?"

"They're over there . . . in the car." Moved on by two amiable cops, refused entry to a nearby pub, all "High Noon" fantasies are temporarily dismissed as our vehicle follows the convoy to the only pub in town not too terrified to take our money.

Really, there was nothing to fear. Nicky Headon expresses his disapproval of all authority by firing peas at innocent drinkers while Paul Simonon

favours a pink plastic pistol as a means of inciting teen rebellion.

In a corner away from the rest, Strummer seemed genuinely brought down by the others' lack of interest in making the gesture he had to the kids that care about them. "I feel like a stranger in my own band," he repeated several times. "I feel like a pimple that's about to burst . . ."

"Abstract Theatre!" Bernie says, hurtling into the pub pursued by hordes of Clash supporters. "It's great . . . everything's spontaneous. If we were at home we'd only be watching television . . ."

"What are we doing, Bernie?" Mick demands.

"You're gonna play Barbarella's," smiles Bernie. "While The Jam are gonna be playing Hammersmith Odeon. How does that make you feel?"

"I just want to play," Mick says. "It doesn't make me feel what you

think I should be feeling," Joe slurs, before demanding that the whole band returns to the Rag Market. Mick agrees enthusiastically and a kid in the now-crowded pub calls out that there's about five hundred kids waiting for them.

"I'll tell you what," Bernie says. "I'll drive you back and you can lean out the window and call to them. But you've got to stay in the car."

The band immediately dismiss this idea as preposterous. "That would make us as bad as fuckin' royalty," says Strummer.

So the band takes off, Joe hanging out the window like a demented wild-eyed Moses in a bondage suit. The reported number of kids is accurate and the Law move in swiftly, threatening arrest if the crowd doesn't disperse pronto, Tonto. The band are forcibly assisted back into their car but not until the word has been passed, and the troops troop off to Barbarella's.

Back in the pub people soon begin to harangue the band with complaints that the management of the club is too frightened to open their doors to a seething mass of 500 punks when the small annex adjacent to the main ballroom holds only 250. "It's OK, I'll take care of everything," Bernie reassures all and sundry. "Everyone will get in and the bands will all play."

By now The Slits have arrived to a jubilant welcome from the same Clash member who only fifteen minutes earlier had quipped: "The Slits are cunts!" Anxious youngsters Shag Nasty asked Bernie again if they will really get to play a set tonight. Bernie assured them that they will, obviously relishing the prospect of power-struggles galore on behalf of the three bands.

"Abstract theatre," he chuckles gleefully, brilliantly pulling off several complex manoeuvres, enabling the whole crowd of waiting punks to gain entry to the large ballroom where he persuaded the management to allow The Clash to play three numbers as a frantic finale to the headlining Heavy Metal locals, Warhead.

Shag Nasty played their three chord Teenage Wasteland set in the smaller venue and all that prevented The Slits from a similar victory was the cute cussing given by lead singer Arianna to the band who were to lend them their equipment, New Heart. The only obstacle in the way of The Clash's set of three numbers was the stubborn refusal of Warhead to permit the band use of their drunkit and amps. But Bernie had come too far to give up now.

"We are all creative people," he reasoned. "This is all spontaneous . . . are you artists, are you musicians?"

The Clash came on at midnight and the three numbers multiplied to a full fifty-minute set which served as a suitable climax to a day of — uh — abstract theatre. They gave everything they had and it hurts to admit that it wasn't enough.

With just one microphone in working order, sometimes with none, the new songs' quality was buried under a morass of noise, the feedback whine cutting through all the songs you love from the album, a couple of ecstatic kids being hurled back onto the heads of the crowd and rich-bitch strangers with painted faces tapping their toes and pantomiming applause at the back of the stage.

But the ultimate contradiction is that if you really want a riot, you're not going to get it in Barbarella's Dancehall.

Or Rock and Roll.

□ TONY PARSONS
JULIE BURCHILL



NEW WAVE NEAT SAY NAZIS

THESE days the National Front — and Fascist trash in general — got no comp when it comes to the Contemptometer! Before — dear, unconcerned, sooo cool Reader — you bleat: "Politics got nuthin' to do with rock an' roll!" you might care to clock a publication called *British Patriot* (motto: ham-fisted hammer et sickle with words "Communism & Immigration — The Poison For Britain"), the 47th edition of which, sent us by an Essex reader, bears an article cryptically entitled "Rock And Reich."

This effort (by the oddly-baptised "A Critic") goes on to praise the recent return to short hair and violence, opening with eloquent Eric Clapton's infamous Birmingham Bluster: "Vote for Enoch Powell! Stop Britain becoming a black colony — get the foreigners OUT!"

Nice one, Eric! Also approved are the antics of David Bowie (*Hitler was the first super-star. He really did it right*), Elton John's "Texan Love Song" (*Your long hair's gonna die — waitaminut, thought that was meant to be satirical*) — and Mod the Sod (*My brother said he saw you in a downtown bar with a black man on your arm and a price on your head / Sister, I'd rather see you dead*).

Great stuff, boys! Natch, such a true blue backlash has caused the reds to slide their slimy way out from under the bed; take for example Rock Against Racism, which is — uh — "an International Socialist front organisation". According to the *Patriot* such idealists are DOOMED to DESTRUCTION because of their mouly music, lousy long hair and dumb dope-smoking.

On the BALL, however, are all you PUNKS, because of your "short hair and clean cut appearance," not to mention your "Iron Crosses and Swastikas" (you still wearing them? You jerk) and the fact that you're beating on the hippies in no uncertain terms.

The *British Patriot* wipes the grin from its grotesque visage to end the article with an alert against "the most Left wing of the contemporary groups". That's your friends and mine, the cuddly Clash, who according to the *Patriot* "proudly proclaim their anti-racialist views to anyone who cares to listen".

We are advised to help annihilate "these musical Marxists" by keeping "an eye out for posters that advertise Clash concerts so that they may be removed from walls and hoardings and reconsigned to the gutter where they will reach a more appropriate clientele".

That's you and me, pop kids! So where do the Fascist finks figure their support is coming from? The Jam wear Union Jacks, love the Queen and hate the National Front.

The Stranglers' Hugh Cornwell idolizes Trotsky though his band's music has undeniable undertones of emotional Fascism, and their most rabid fans are the Swastika-daubed Finchley Boys. Says Johnny Rotten: "The National Front would love to be part of us, but I don't like what they're doing. They are ridiculous. They are elitist. If you could see what they'd do when they get in . . . it wouldn't be very pleasant". And The Damned just don't care.

Reds under the bed, huh? I should be so lucky as to find The Clash under my mattress.

□ JULIE BURCHILL