

Bon Scott asked the audience, 'Any virgins in Glasgow?' and the band came on in Scotland tops for the encore. They knew the Apollo was set to close, which is one of the reasons they were recording it: 'At least this way we'll have captured some of its magic,' Bon told the Daily Record.

DAVID Gibby GIBSON: I was there with my mate Jim, who knew the guys from AC/DC, so we were backstage. Jim saw a couple of young guys, only 14 or 15, hanging out to meet the band so he got them back. Bon was talking away to them and one of them said, 'We've got an empty back in Drumchapel – do you want to come over?' And Bon said yes! He grabbed a carry-out and left with these wee guys, and went to their flat in Drumchapel. About two or three in the morning the parents came back, and all the wee guys who'd been partying dreeped out the window and ran for it. So there's Bon Scott, dreeping out a window into a backstreet in Drumchapel, with absolutely no idea where he is or where to go! He told us about it in Edinburgh the next night – he thought it was a great story.

Jethro Tull made a return visit as John Lydon launched PiL and Boney M hit with 'Rivers of Babylon'. Then Black Sabbath brought a young American band with them for their Glasgow debut, and Van Halen blew the Glasgow choir away.

DAVID Gibby GIBSON: The first time we saw Eddie Van Halen he jumped right over from behind his amp onto the stage and landed on his knees. David Lee Roth held a bottle of Jack Daniels to his mouth and he tanned it in a wanner while playing the solo to 'Eruption'. It was cold tea, of course, but who cares? There's no question they blew Sabbath offstage – Ozzy admits it in his book. But Sabbath were good too and won the crowd back. If you listen to the bootleg, though, you hear people still shouting for Van Halen five or six songs into Sabbath's set.

TREVOR FOTHERINGHAM: Dave Lee Roth drawled, 'Glasgow, we hear you are the rock and roll capital of this whole fucking world!' And the crowd responded appropriately. The following week I read a review where the same Dave said, 'Lewisham, we hear you are the rock and roll capital of this whole fucking world!' Lewisham – I ask you!

STEVE HALL: Did Van Halen blow the Sabs off? Nah – as good as Van Halen were, Sabbath stole the night. During 'Paranoid' Ozzy said, 'I'm gonna kiss this effin' stage!' And the crowd went berserk when he did. Then he took off his shirt and threw it in the audience – it landed on me and so did about five hundred other people, but I still have the sleeve with the tassles.

Other memories from this show include Eddie Van Halen playing with his back to the audience and no one believing he was actually doing it, and Lee Roth running off the stage mid-song the

wrong way, winding up in the lane, having to go round to the front of the venue and not being let back in. A similar story is told about Bon Scott making the same mistake, and only getting in the main door when AC/DC fans in the foyer recognised him.

The Tubes had been scheduled to play on May 20, but cancelled when Fee Waybill broke his ankle at a show in England. That saved the licensing board the trouble – they'd been planning to ban the show because 'Glasgow doesn't want anything to do with these sex people'.

The Stranglers returned, for two non-consecutive gigs, and this was the show the tension bubbled over between band and bouncers.

MICK MURPHY: Ricky Jobson must have balls like melons. When the Skids were supporting the Stranglers he came on dressed in teddy boy gear – brothel creepers, drainpipes, crombie coat and a DA. Fantastic – except he did this in front of 3000 screaming punks. We wanted his blood! We booed and hissed till he started singing. I can't remember what, but as soon as he started we all went pogoing and jumping around.

While the Stranglers were on JJ Burnell jumped off the stage to stop a bouncer beating up a fan. Burnell's a black belt in karate – he teaches today in his own dojo – so he soon finished off the bouncer. After that all the bouncers retreated from the hall. We loved that! But apparently they were all waiting for the band after the gig – the Stranglers had to wait for the polis to turn up and protect them from the venue security!

JANE PORTEOUS: I thought I was never going to reach my seat on the upper circle. I climbed the miles of stairs to the roof – I felt more disappointment than anything else because I was so far away from the stage. The Skids came on so I stood up – and I was immediately told to 'Sit the fuck down'. I sat until I couldn't control myself any longer and got up again, got told to sit down again, and it went on and on. Expecting fans to sit down at a rock concert is ridiculous...

The Skids rocked and gradually won the audience over. Then, almost as soon as the Stranglers took the stage, the bouncers started getting rougher with the crowd. Hugh Cornwell got pissed off and stamped on a bouncer's head from the stage, shouting, 'Leave our friends alone!'

The bouncers all deserted their posts and then there was chaos – about 300 people invaded the stage. That was my cue – I raced down the stairs, into the stalls and down to the stage. Someone helped me up and there I was, facing JJ Burnell. He was coming towards me, lips pursed... What else was I meant to do? I kissed him! It had taken me three years but I got on that stage!

DODGER: My fondest Apollo memories are when I was tossed out on the street by the over-zealous bouncers – it happened to me all the time! The best one of all was at a Stranglers gig. The bouncers lined up in front of the stage expecting trouble, then Jet Black and Hugh Cornwell came to the front of the stage and asked them to leave or

they wouldn't play. Sensing this might cause a riot, they left. Next thing, my mate gave me a punty up and I managed to get my elbows on the stage – only to be dragged off by two bouncers. They punched and kicked the shit out of me till they opened the emergency door with my head, and they flung me into the lane, in the pissing rain, landing me in a big puddle. They were standing there laughing, but I found a half-eaten bag of chips so I lobbed it at them and got one full on the coupon. What a shot! Big mistake, though – they dragged me back inside and kicked the shit out of me again. I bet they still laugh about it to this day – I do!

Ian Grant, then the Stranglers manager, recalled: 'I remember the fans set light to the balcony and Hugh Cornwell had a spotlight targeted on the bouncers who were ejecting a fan – although he did supposedly pull a knife. After the show all the bouncers lined up on the stairs to the dressing room. We were holed up. JJ Burnell offered them, 'Outside?' one by one and they were so taken aback we just walked past them all and left.'

In June, the Stranglers' 'Black & White' album made number one, while in the singles charts the summer belonged to John Travolta and Olivia Newton John, who stayed at the top for nine weeks with 'You're The One That I Want'. With time running out for the venue there were only seven shows that month: The Buzzcocks, Thin Lizzy supported by Johnny Cougar, four Bowie gigs, then the Boomtown Rats supported by the Young Ones.

PHIL OSBORNE: Thin Lizzy were brilliant. With the opening notes of 'Jailbreak' the flash-bombs went off – and there was Phil, centre stage, wearing a Scotland top! Well, that was it – the crowd took forever to calm down. Then at the end of the song Phil put his fist to the Scotland badge and said: 'Champions!' The place erupted again. It didn't calm down all night after that. After every song the band had to wait because they couldn't start for the crowd singing, 'Lizz-y! Lizz-y!' Phil was asking us to stop, pretending to be bashful at first and then genuinely humble – but the crowd wouldn't let up.

Then it was July 1978. There were three shows left: UFO on July 1, the Clash on July 4 and the final night on July 5. The biggest story in news terms was the Clash's performance, though – Joe Strummer and Paul Simonon were arrested afterwards, and spent the night in jail.

HOWARD YOUNG: The rumour of the Apollo closing had come up a few times. In practice this meant every gig could be the last – and for it to be a Clash gig... that was an explosive recipe.

If you went there regularly your main ambition was to get backstage – most groups would sign things for you, but only the punk bands seemed genuinely willing to invite you in. The support act was an American electronic duo called Suicide – I'd never heard of them but I waited for them to arrive and asked them if I could help them unload. That was how I got to go backstage for the first time and hang out. The late, great Joe Strummer told me to help myself to the beer.



Above: John Miles. Below: John Cougar, sometime John Cougar Mellencamp, supporting Thin Lizzy





Tom Black



Far left: Scot Brian Robertson doing what Robbo does best.
 Above: Phil Lynott wearing a Scotland top for Thin Lizzy's 1978 show. Left: the band at full force.

My memories of the show are vivid. First thing I saw was a bouncer with a fan in an armlock on the entrance stairs – he was pummeling his head as he kicked the guy out. Suicide were winding up the audience and fights kept breaking out, and the bouncers kept jumping off the stage into the crowd to break them up. I remember the Clash playing brilliant versions of ‘Clampdown’, ‘Train in Vain’ and ‘White Riot’ – it all suited the tense atmosphere perfectly.

I ‘acquired’ the letter ‘P’ from the row my seat was in, as a last souvenir of a great venue. It’s still on my office wall.

JIM WYPER: The atmosphere that night was very bitter. The bouncers have to answer for that. But queuing had been a laugh – I’ll never forget the drunk on the other side of the road looking at all us punks in the bondage gear and multicoloured hair. It’s easy to forget, but all that was a shock to people back then. The drunk came over, grabbed my arm and said, ‘I get it, wee man – it’s Hallowe’en!’ He tottered away looking well pleased with himself.

It all changed when the doors opened. I remember the unnecessary provocation the bouncers were giving us as we went in. They told me to take off the chain and padlock I had round my neck, but I didn’t have the key and the chain wouldn’t fit over my head. They told me I wasn’t getting in because it was an offensive weapon – how could it be when I couldn’t get it off? Soon there were about fifty of us in the same boat, but there was a decent big bouncer, Big Willie I think they called him, and he managed to open our padlocks with a wee penknife.

You could feel the tension as soon as you went into the hall. The bouncers were just out to give people a hard time. And to make matters worse they were playing disco music over the tannoy... I went up to get ice cream from the lady at the front of the stage, and she’d just handed me two when ‘Anarchy in the UK’ came over the tannoy. I threw the ice creams away and started pogoing around like a madman. Punks were jumping around as if a shock current had gone through their seats. It was brilliant!

But the bouncers took it as a cue to start flinging everyone out. It was a shame, because most people were just having fun. After that they didn’t let up all night – taunts and comments. If you went to the toilet they were saying things like, ‘These punks are so thick they need so many zips to find their willies...’ I didn’t take the bait but I saw other people falling for it and getting kicked out. Even during the show Joe Strummer



kept asking the bouncers to leave people alone. They really earned their reputation that night – some of them were just sad people. I can just see them to this day bragging to their grandkids how tough they were. There were some good ones, like Big Willie – but a lot of them should never have been there.

According to the Clash, everyone already knew there was going to be trouble that night. Green and Barker explain in their Clash biography, ‘A Riot of Our Own’: ‘The rumour was the bouncers were going to get revenge on the Glasgow crowd for making their lives hell over the years.’

After the show a number of fans waited in the lane to meet the band. Some of them were critical of Strummer’s behaviour, suggesting he could have done more to stop the fighting. He threw a glass bottle on the ground, apparently in frustration, and was immediately arrested by nearby policemen. Simonon became involved and was also arrested. The following day, Strummer was fined £25 for breach of the peace and Simonon was fined £50 for being drunk and disorderly and for going to the aid of a prisoner. So ended a tense episode.

And so ended the whole story, it seemed. Jan Tomasik had come back to promote the last show, but due to touring and recording commitments it had proved impossible to put a big-name gala night together. Christian, aka Chris McClure, was one of Scotland’s biggest cabaret stars at the time, as well as a Unicorn man through and through, and it fell to him to do the final turn. It was the only night alcohol was ever sold on the premises, and Christian took the final bow with two-year-old Paul Elrick and three-year-old Debbie Ann Nicoll.

It seemed like a bit of a quiet end to a loud story, but you can’t always have a perfect ending.

Courtesy of Scottish Screen Archive



CHAPTER SIX

APOLLO TWO