

TV SMITH WAS THERE AT THE FIRST SPITS OF PUNK. 30 YEARS ON, HE'S STILL ANGRY, AND STILL GETTING ON STAGE TO MAINTAIN THE RAGE. HE ATTEMPTS TO DRAG **ROSS CLELLAND** BACK TO THE BARRICADES.

KEEPING YOU INFORMED

The class of '77 was such a serious bunch. The Clash wanted revolution; The Pistols believed in...well not much really. And among the big names, there were those whose one magic moment wrote them into the histories. The Adverts were such a band. Their three minutes of 45rpm fame, was a tune called *Gary Gilmore's Eyes*, an ode to an American killer on death row. These were not the days of love song dedications.

TV Smith was The Adverts singer. They now call him things like 'punk rock troubadour'. Three decades later, he's averaging over a hundred gigs a year, has bumped out 16 albums under his own name, and looks with derision and despair at Blair and George W. as he once did with Thatcher and Reagan.

A career across two centuries wasn't much in the planning back then. "I didn't give it much thought, to be honest," he admits. "It had nothing to do with 'punk' or 'nihilism' - it was just the blind luxury of youth." There's a laugh. "To imagine yourself 30 years down the line is just impossible when you're a teenager. But if I could have known that I could get older and keep my integrity, it would have been a heartening piece of information."

Talking to him, and hearing the warning bells of his latest album, *Misinformation Overload*, it's obvious he's still thinking about the shit going down in the world. He's got a perhaps surprising assessment: "There's more to be angry about now. You knew where you were with Thatcher - everyone hated her! - but Blair put on his smiley face and then dragged us into a brutal unjustified invasion of Iraq that has led to the slaughter of hundreds of

thousands of innocent people and made our country a target for revenge attacks." As with some other survivors of the punk wars, the soapbox is often close at hand.

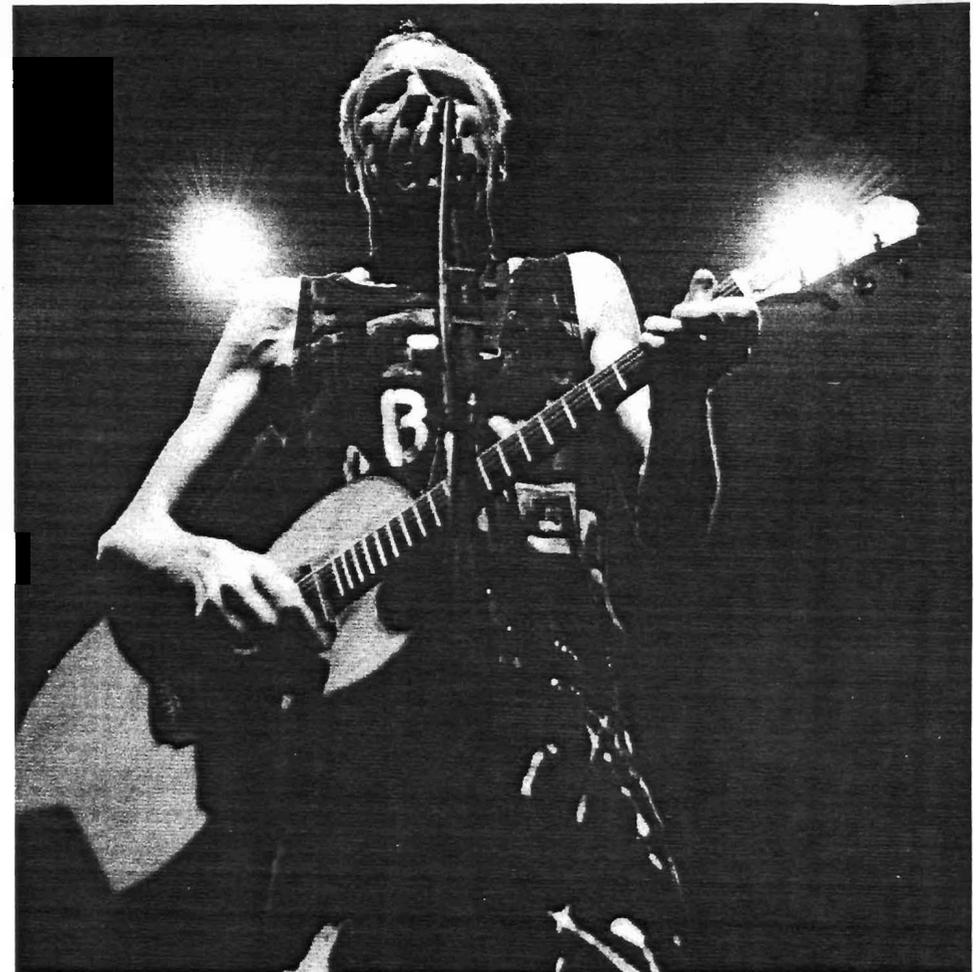
"The problem is people feel so beaten down by it all, that they forget they can still be angry about it. The first thing to do if you want to make things change is to stand up and say, 'This is wrong!'"

Guitar in hand, he's on a one-man crusade to encourage that: some later musical notables at least noticed. The angry man from a couple of generations on, Henry Rollins, is one who sings Smith's praises. "He continues to amaze and inspire me," has declared Hank. TV takes it with good grace. "That's cool. In the end we're all dipping out of the same well. It was a big boost to me when I was struggling round Europe 15 years ago, playing to a handful of people most nights, to get a letter from him saying how much he respected me. That's the kind of little thing that can give you the strength to carry on through the hard times."

He also sees the line that puts the anger of punk on the same line as the protest and folk tradition that dates back centuries.

"Well, it's nothing to do with how many chords you know, for a start. Punk never said that you should only use two chords, it said that if you had great ideas BUT only knew two chords you could still form a band." (This from a man whose band once delivered a song called *One Chord Wonders*).

"There's the comparison between folk and



punk because not many musical styles these days try to connect with real issues or have a political element to their lyrics, but folk and punk sometimes do. On the other hand, there are still plenty of folk songs that just say 'Hey nonny, nonny, my darling's eyes are blue', and plenty of punk tunes whose lyrics never get beyond yelling 'Fuck off!' over and over."

And then there's his most famous song. Has 30 years of looking through *Gary Gilmore's Eyes* made him tire of it, or the people who are bound to yell for it from down in the pit? "I play it, of course! I had a period after the Adverts broke up when I got precious and refused to play any of the old songs - but you get over that.

"Mind you, I never know myself what I'm going to play before I go on stage. I have a couple of hundred songs to choose from, so I make up the setlist as I go along - but if someone yells for a song I usually play it."

WHO TV Smith

WHAT *Misinformation Overload* (Bass Tuneage)

WHEN & WHERE Friday 2 February, The Annandale Hotel, Annandale; Thursday 8, The Oxford Tavern, Wollangong; Friday 9, The Hapetoun, Surry Hills