

## Ex-Sex Pistol shooting for honesty and money

By CLINT ROSWELL

**J**OHN LYDON IS sitting back against the wall in the midtown recording studio foyer, licking the remains of his late-afternoon breakfast—a whole barbecued chicken—when somehow talk turns to sharks and his eyes light up.

"That's what I want to do after the album, after the gigs, I want to go shark hunting, really," says Lydon. "Just get into one of those bloody cages and do it. The shark... a creature with absolutely no intellect. It would be fantastic."

Horrific visions appear to delight Lydon, whose ghostly pale aristocratic face and jagged hair sharpen the power of his devilish eyes. They show no remorse as he talks with sometimes brutal honesty about a career that began as Johnny Rotten, lead singer of the Sex Pis-

tols and anarchic godfather to the whole early punk movement.

He now works under the corporate guise of Public Image Limited (PiI) with whom he recorded an album, "Commercial Zone," and is about to launch a 15-city tour Tuesday at Roseland. This is the group's first venture since last year, when a jeering mob at The Ritz didn't like their "live-video presentation," behind a screen and began pelting them with beer bottles. The kindred spirits of punk wanted a live concert or blood.

"I'm not afraid of dying," says Lydon, who has lived in New York the last year. "I only taunt people to wake them up, make them think, and oh boy, that is a terrible thing, isn't it? I'm not trying to lecture people, but maybe they can learn something from us."

"I've always considered myself a positive person," he says with utter sincerity. "I thought the Sex Pistols



The ex-Sex Pistol's back.

made a bigger statement in one swoop than any band in history, but were misinterpreted because we, or I, was viewed as some sort of perpetrator of evil."

Lydon formed PiI with Keith Levene, an uncommonly gifted musician whose ability stretches beyond his guitar work. In four

years they produced three critically acclaimed and commercially marginal albums featuring Levene's chordal harmonies behind Lydon's snarling voice and caustic lyrics.

"I write about real situations, no social protest, no politics, just things that concern me," says Lydon. "I don't listen to anybody else's music, because I find just pure agony. I also don't do songs to please our fans, because I simply don't care who and what they are. We make records to please ourselves and to make money. There's no doubt that I want to become a millionaire, but only if it's on my own terms."

It doesn't seem likely PiI's new LP and tour will produce those magic numbers, even though a tune like "Blue Water" shows PiI still stands above the post-punk minimalists as a creative force. The tune is menacing, driven by Levene's drone-like synthesizer and pushed to an edge by Lydon's seemingly playful excursion with death.

"I want to live until I'm 84," says Lydon, "and if anybody thinks it's decadent to lead a self-satisfied life, then let them look at me as the heart of the devil." ■

## NEWS & REVIEWS COAST TO COAST

Cash Box/November 13, 1982

**POINTS WEST**—Outside, a large moon loomed over Rissmiller's in Reseda last Halloween eve, while inside the crowd settled down for a lengthy set by **Warren Zevon**, who was wrapping up a six-week tour. Other than on-stage guest appearances by **Jackson Browne**, **Danny Kortchmar** and **J.D. Souther**, the best encounter of the evening took place near the back of the club, where **Jack Nicholson** was confronted by **Jesse Campbell**, an **Elvis Presley** clone who's been doing the King's act for 23 years. . . . The night before, **Toni Basil** and **Nina Hagen** were among the celebs who showed up at the Beverly Theatre for the Black Tie Network videotaping of **Devo** and **Wall of Voodoo** to approximately 15 college campuses around the country. Despite an obnoxious and ill-prepared emcee, the show went off very well, with the Spudboys premiering most of their new material from the latest "Oh No, It's Devo" LP during the first set, then going into more familiar turf with "Mongoloid," "Whip It" and "Come Back Jonee" in the second set, shot in "3-Devo" . . . **The Who** stopped in L.A. at the Coliseum Oct. 29 and opened with a tune rarely heard on this tour, the early mega-hit, "My Generation." As with the **Rolling Stones** concert trek last year, the show closed with a tremendous fireworks display . . . **NME** reports **Elvis Costello** is thinking about changing his stage name.



**TWO OF THE WHO** — Roger Daltrey (l) and Pete Townshend harmonize on a tune during *The Who's* appearance at the L.A. Coliseum recently as part of the band's farewell tour.

Cash Box photo by Barbara Dickler

**Johnny Rotten** goes Hollywood? Well, believe it or not, **Public Image Ltd.**, fronted by ex-**Sex Pistol John Lydon**, held a press conference Nov. 6 at one of Los Angeles' swankiest restaurants, Le Dome, on the Sunset Strip. Fellow band members **Keith Levene**, **Martin Atkins**, **Pete Jones** and manager **Bob Tulipan** fielded all questions regarding Public Enterprise Production and its upcoming release, "Commercial Zone." On the next two days, **PIL** performed at the Pasadena Center, with West L.A.'s own **Savage Republic** opening for the band on the first night and "funk minimalists" **ESG** opening on the second night.

**Andy Kim**, whose pop hits include "Sugar Sugar" with the **Archies** and his solo #1 "Rock Me Gently" in 1974, has resurfaced into the music industry as **Baron Longfellow**. Longfellow, who left the music scene when his father passed away during the mid-'70s, now has a single on Ice Records, entitled "Amour," and says a soon-to-be-released LP will be produced by **Michael Omartian** and include such studio heavyweights as **Steve Lukather**, **Jeff Porcaro** and **Abraham Laboriel**. . . . Elektra/Asylum is having its own baby boom with four employees recently becoming proud parents. Congrats go out to Minneapolis promo rep **Beau Siegel** and his new son, **Brooks Richard**, E/A ad director **Randy Edwards** and offspring **Ryan**, E/A A/C promo director **Pat McCoy** and his twins, daughter **Megan Faith** and son **Sean Joshua**, and E/A vice president, promotion, **Dave Russo** and his bouncing baby daughter **Emmeline**. . . . **Ultravox's** "Quartet" album, produced by **George Martin**, is set to retail for \$9.98 when it appears in Canada this month, but will list for \$6.98 when it comes out here this January.

jeffrey resner

## Music Monitor

By CARY DARLING

● **Image Conscious:** While others are diving into video faster than you can say "VCR," one band which says it is getting out of the video fracas is **Public Image Ltd.**, the band which **John Lydon** formed after the **Sex Pistols** blew apart. The band, which consists of Lydon, guitarist **Keith Levene**, bassist **Pete Jones** and drummer **Martin Atkins**, had been immersing itself in videos to the point where in New York last year, the group played *behind* a large video screen. However, the times do change.

"Yes, we spent a year studying the art of video and we found it to be a total phony," said a recalcitrant Lydon at a press conference. He went on to say that the band is now looking into computer graphics. However, there will be a video for **Public Image's** next single, "Blue Water," which will come out as soon as the band finds a distribution arm for its blend of noise and hardcore funk.

"Here you've got eight million channels per square inch and you still turn the dial and there's nothing on, complained Levene in typical **Public Image** anti-establishment fashion. "I thought MTV was going to be *the* channel. It was happening and it was going to be for young people and what do they do, they play the same videos over and over."

● **Supergroup:** **Russell Mulcahy** recently finished **Supertramp's** "It's Raining Again" promo for A&M Records.

● **On The De-Evolution Front:** Director **Chuck Statler** and Warner Bros.' **Devo** have finished a video for the new single "Peek-A-Boo."

NOVEMBER 20, 1982, BILLBOARD

## CITY PAGES' WEEKLY CALENDAR OF SELECT LOCAL EVENTS

# MON 25

### MUSIC

● **Public Image Limited:** The word on Johnny Lydon's (aka Rotten) latest appearances proves to be more encouraging than the much poo-pooed New York gigs

MINNEAPOLIS, MN.

last year. In other words, **PIL's** post-punk scene and be-seen affair may prove that the groups' Mid-Eastern and folkish flirtations are as riveting as the old **Sex Pistols'** thrash sound. The Beantown grapevine says the compelling rhythm section with drummer **Martin Atkins** and Brian Brain pal, **Pete Jones**, tells the whole story. The worshipping crowd and Lydon's mood will tell the rest. First Avenue, 338-8388. (Keller)

# Johnny Sheds His ROTTEN IMAGE

*Hey hey, my my,  
rock and roll will never die.  
The king is gone but not forgotten  
This is the story of Johnny Rotten*  
— Neil Young

**By Charles Walston**  
Staff Writer

John Lydon once vowed to destroy rock and roll, but it nearly got him first. His iconoclastic musical mission as Johnny Rotten backfired even before the Sex Pistols met their fragmented demise.

Lydon's sneering vocals had breathed a fiery new life into rock music, and the Pistols would exert a posthumous influence that far surpassed their actual audience. As rock stars scrambled to tap into the new sounds engendered by the energy of punk, John Lydon was a man without a band — and, worse, a man without a true identity. Johnny Rotten was gone but not forgotten, at least by the public.

So it was that Lydon turned his back on his alter ego five years ago and formed a new band, Public Image Limited. The name grew out of his distaste for the role he no longer wanted to play. Audiences, however, often expected him to resurrect Rotten. "People aren't prepared to accept what they're given," he says. "They're looking for an image. I don't like images. They're so narrow."

Now, after four albums and a handful of sporadic appearances, PiL is embarked on the closest thing to a tour that Lydon wants any part of.

"It's not a tour," he said this week in a telephone conversation from New York, "it's more like an extended holiday with occasional outbursts of work." There will be two such outbursts in Atlanta when PiL plays

the Agora concert club Friday and Saturday nights, Dec. 11 and 12.

Lydon has been here before — once with PiL a few years ago, and once on the notorious U.S. tour during which the Sex Pistols unraveled. Because of visa problems that delayed their entry, Atlanta was the first show the Pistols played here, and the event attracted hoopla in the British and American press. Lydon would only say he remembered the show "vaguely," and was reluctant to discuss what he called "the other band."

"I don't like that sort of hindsight," he said. "I'm still living in the same surroundings as I was then — I just got better at it. . . . It's better now because it's more fun. Everything we do now is more fun as we do it. If I had to do the same thing I might as well call it a day. We're not

manufacturing shoes here."

What PiL does manufacture is music that alternates between jaggedly upsetting and seductively hypnotic. The sound is shaped largely by Lydon — who has demonstrated a range of moods to match his sheer rage as Mr. Rotten — and guitarist Keith Levene. The band now also includes bass player Peter Jones and drummer Martin Atkins.

That sounds like a typical rock ensemble, but Lydon calls rock and

roll "a joke," and he means it, man. PiL's sound is as hard to pin down as a snake's shadow; on the second LP a thumping bass line overpowered the mix, while hardly any bass was discernible on 1981's atonal "Flowers of Romance." The latter featured chanting vocals by Lydon and interludes that bring bagpipes to mind. "It's close to my Celtic roots," said Lydon. "I'd just gotten out of jail in Ireland. I got off (of an assault and battery charge), but they made me sit in jail long enough."

Lydon's distaste for performing was whetted by a fiasco in the spring of 1981 in New York, where PiL now records. A crowd at the Ritz ballroom turned rowdy when band members fiddled with the club's huge video screen instead of playing music. "I've gone down in print as saying that I'd never do another live show, which makes me an utter liar," he said. "And I don't care."

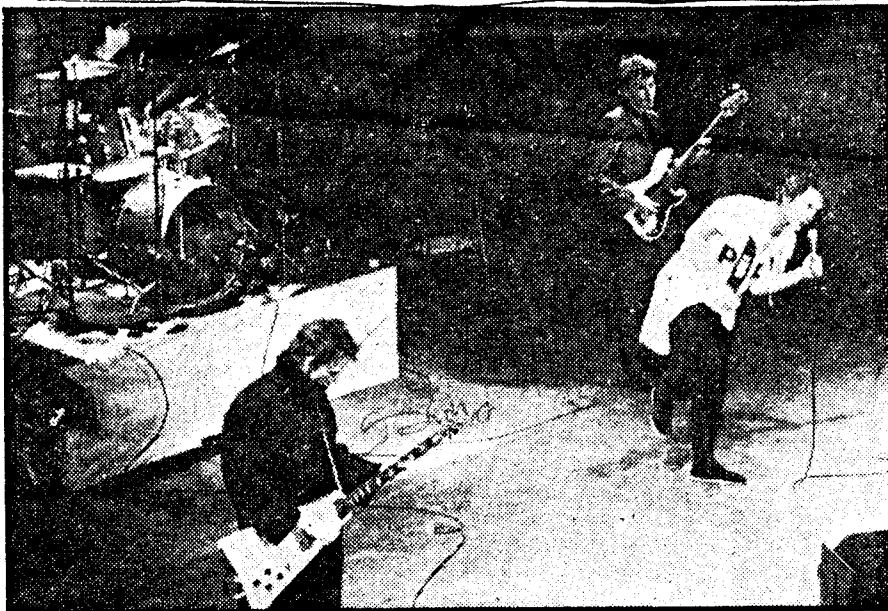
Now he doesn't mind playing because he says audiences are accepting PiL. "They know our songs, not the songs of the other band."

He denies that PiL's songs are gloomy. "Our idea is to go with the feeling. That's what all our songs are about, as emotional as you can get . . . We're positive. We deal with emotions that people want to pretend don't exist. Fear . . . hate . . . even love. But we don't do love songs. What is the point of these unrealistic pieces of trash?"

PiL can draw on a repertoire of about 50 old songs "and a load of new ones.

"You could say we work like maniacs," said Lydon, "but I'd rather people think that we lead a life of idle luxury.

"I suppose we're proving you can do what you want without compromising. It's a lesson most people never take heed of. I guess God loves me."



MAUREEN BAKER/Special Photos

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