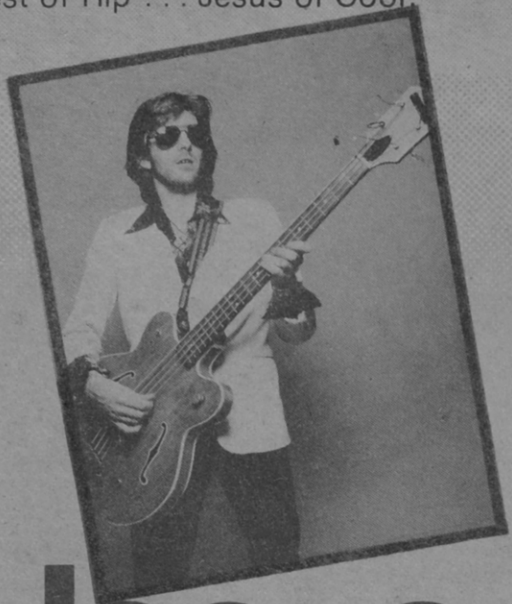


Nick Lowe is best known as producer of the Graham Parker and Elvis Costello albums but he's also a songwriter and singer with his first album, most recorded with The Rumour, about to be released. Pure Pop for Now People is what you'll find on the record. So here's an interview with the High Priest of Hip . . . Jesus of Cool.



Jesus of Cool

Not meaning to be a name dropper y' understand, but T.S. Eliot once said that the mature artist steals while the immature artist borrows.

Well this makes Nick Lowe a mature artist of gigantic proportions. For this is a man who *steals*.

When a member of Brinsley Schwarz, Nick Lowe had an uncanny ability to write in the style of other tunesmiths, and Brinsley's first album was very noticeably influenced by Crosby, Stills and Nash.

. . . if I hear a good lick on a disco record or something I'll just pinch it . . .

But that's all over now, says Nick Lowe. "Nowadays I just steal the stuff. I don't try and write in anybody's style, if I hear a good lick on a disco record or something I'll just pinch it and by the time it's come out only students of the genre know where I pinched it from."

Nick Lowe continues to expound his plagiaristic philosophy: "Everybody does it. It's all been played — C. A minor, F and G been going for donkey's years. They've all been strummed. I mean look at Jeff Lynne, Nick says laughing, "look what he's done and he's made a fortune out of it."

Nor is Nick above nicking a good song title as well as a good lick. You see there's this song called "Little Hitler" on Lowe's soon-to-be-released album, *The Jesus of Cool*. Nick explains: "Elvis Costello was going to call his album *Little Hitler*. I thought it was a really good title and he changed his mind, so I thought I'd pinch it **I try to make records in a very quick way so you almost don't know what you're doing**".

and write a song." Elvis it seems was a little piqued at Lowe's light-fingered methods and suggested Nick's next album be titled *Grand Larceny*.

Nevertheless, Lowe has won the respect of his fellow musicians. Dave Edmunds said: "there are loads of guys around in bands or whatever writing songs but Nick Lowe is a songwriter in the classic sense."

Nick Lowe agrees: "I mean I can write those hard-rock songs like two a penny. Playing bass is nothing to me. I'm a songwriter. Period. If this was the 60's I'd be . . . no I don't think I'd be good enough to work for the Brill Building. I'd be one of those Tin Pan Alley junk-pop tunesmiths knocking out an album worth of tunes for the Peters and Lee of my time. Christ, I could write any song to order."

Since Brinsley Schwarz split, Nick Lowe has shown an uncommon ability to be where the action is. He produced the first and third of the Graham Parker albums, the first British punk rock album (*Damned, Damned, Damned*) and both: Elvis Costello albums.

Somehow in the middle of this kind of activity, Lowe has assembled his first

album. But he admits he resisted the idea for some time.

"Solo albums always seemed a bit of a joke. They always smack a little of sensitive singer/songwriter photographed by shady nooks." But Lowe's methods of working — recording songs in skeleton form as he writes them — soon put the idea into his head.

"Whenever I wrote a song I was just recording it. I'd recorded 70 or 80 tracks, most of them were terrible but as time went on and some of my singles became popular, it became obvious that I'd have to do a solo album. I listened to some of the stuff I'd done and thought 'Hmmm, with a bit of work here and there this could shape up.' Before I knew it, I had enough stuff for the record and it was very varied which I liked."

Varied is the word. The album moves from the semi-disco rhythms of "Breaking Glass" to the wimp-rock of "Tonight" and the appalling heavy metal of "Music for Money". All are distinguished by Nick's "instant" style. His methods at best give a raw, vital quality to the music and at worst the songs seem merely underdone.

"I try to make records in a very quick way

Pop has been an ugly word for so long. Now suddenly it's good news.

so you almost don't know what you're doing. I think as soon as you start thinking about what you're doing, you start to sound pompous and pretentious.

"I generally throw them down quickly. I hardly think about the words or anything like that. I can hardly even recall writing a song. It's a process over which I've got no control at all, it just sort of comes out. Sometimes I listen to some songs I've written and I think — 'I don't remember doing that at all'. But I did." Nick says laughing

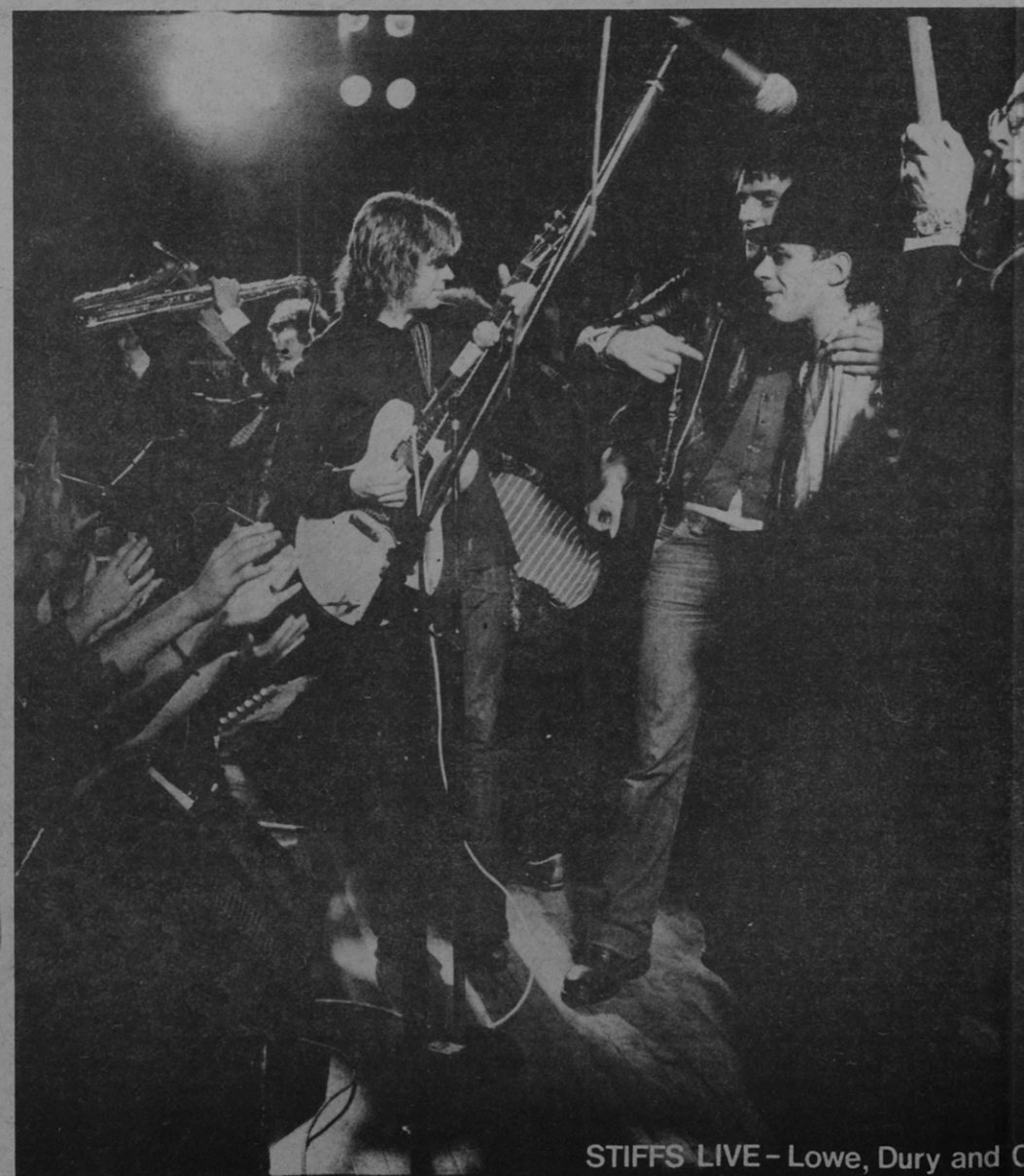
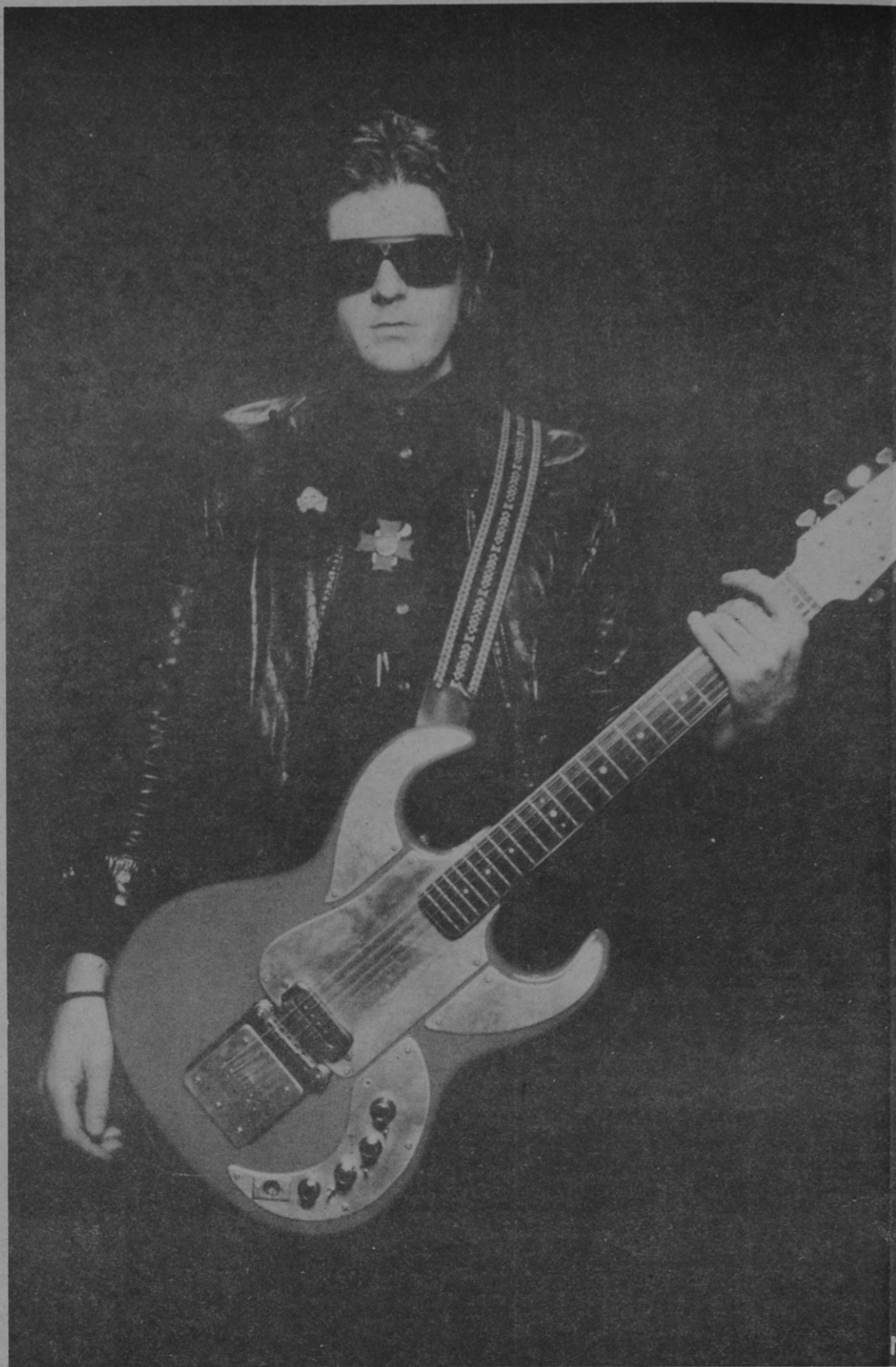
It's people like Nick Lowe who've helped restore credibility to pop music. Pure pop for now people was a slogan he coined that has now become the American title for his album.

"Pop has been an ugly word for so long. Now suddenly it's really good news. With a poppier approach and a bit of common-sense you can do whatever you want."

"The sort of songs I write are generally very obvious—they've got a beginning, two verses, a middle eight, a little bit of a solo, another verse and ride out. It's a very straight pop song formula I got from listening to the radio."

With the success of the single "I Love the Sound of Breaking Glass" and the album attracting similar interest, Nick Lowe seems to be sure of success for the first time in his lengthy career. And Nick Lowe is glad of that: "I want to be a commercial success. I want to sell lots of records. That's success to me now. I don't want to make clever little recorded statements for a small clique of admirers . . . and besides," he adds hurriedly, "I want to get the girls."

Alastair Dougal



STIFFS LIVE - Lowe, Dury and C