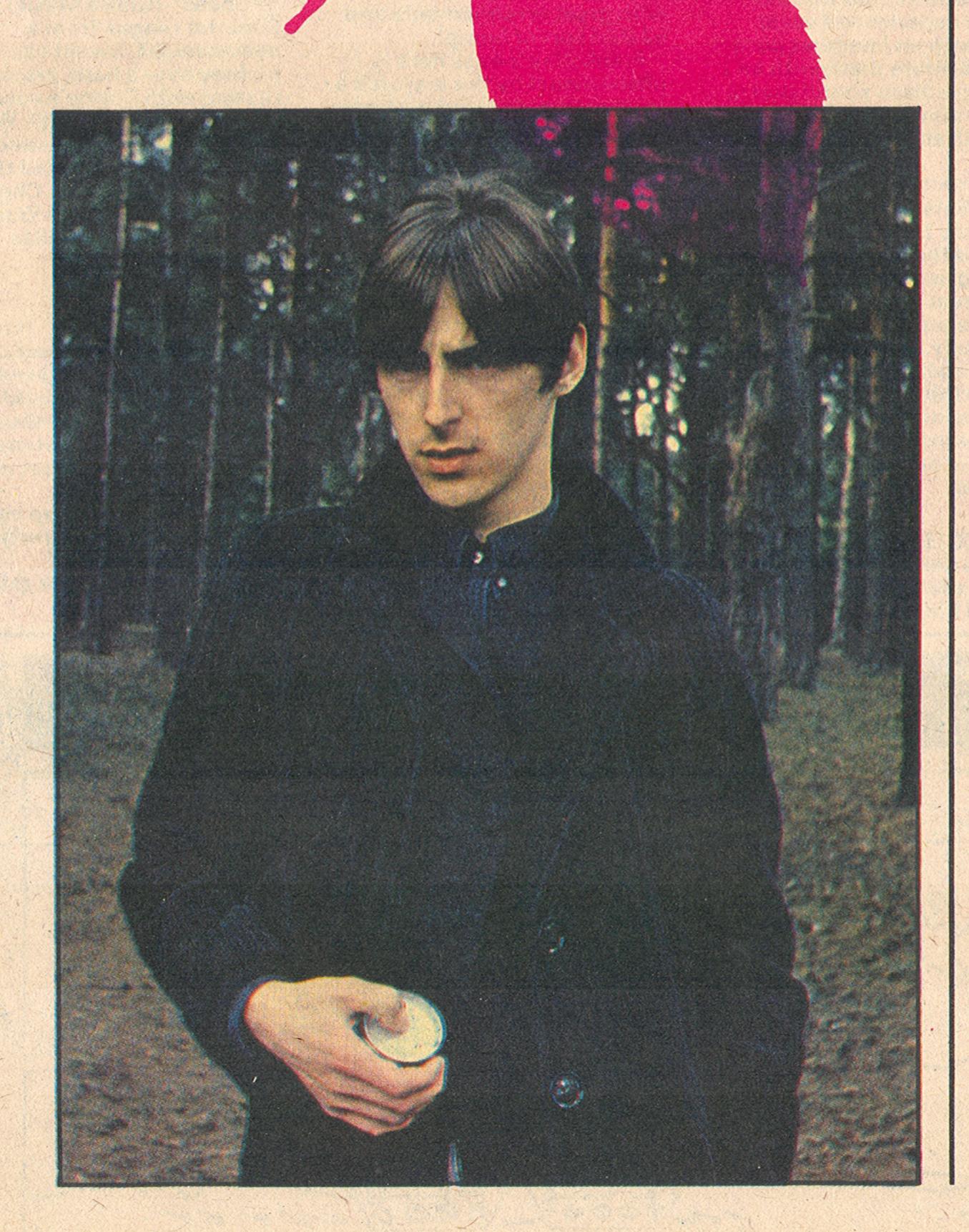
Lynden Barber goes down in the woods with THE JAM Girl Guide photography

badge: Janette Beckman





WICE AS difficult to find as El Dorado and about a hundred times less enticing, the Sandpits of Wo-king were rapidly approaching the status of myth as we received an ever-increasing quantity of blank looks and quizzical

eyebrows from the natives. And what a strange people they were, their voices redolent of plums, their dwellings hidden darkly behind hedges. The popular legends had suggested "backstreets", "corner shops" and "girls working in Tesco's and Woolworth's"; but none were visible as we cruised around in a daze.

At last, an old timer put us on the trail, pointing deep into the forest with a knowing glint in his eyes. We beat back the undergrowth until we

finally reached the clearing. The expansive hollow, banked by

sand and dotted with murky pools

and clumps of bushes, was totally

Were we the victims of some unamusing practical joke?

▲ COUPLE of hours later the scene was virtually unrecognisable. When I'd heard the Jam were filming a video for their new single in the woods of their home town of Woking I'd imagined three blokes prancing about in a sandpit with a couple of cameramen looking gormlessly on, but this was more like Francis Ford Coppola on location in the Phillipines jungle.

Further down the path was a carpark full of the sort of vehicles you normally see when an American heavy metal band's playing the local city hall -a massive refreshment truck full of beer (as essential to roadies as oxygen is to the rest of us), a portable caravan the size of a luxury yacht.

All this just for a bloody video?? A few dozen people scurried about doing nothing in particular, others were strolling around trying to look important. One of them sourly demanded to know what I was

doing there in a bid to justify her

Yeah, the Big Shot, you heard her right the first time. "We're here for a reason and

that's to film," she snapped, playfully. "I can't have you interfering with my crew". Viv Stanshall would have smiled

Some of these people were taking the whole damn thing so seriously. mean "seriously" as in the "major conceptual artists at work" attitude, normally associated with the kind Covent Garden advertising execs who treat dog food and bog roll promotion as a field of brow-

furrowing human endeavour. Without demeaning the Jam, the film was presumably only being aimed at 'Top Of The Pops", and n as the next British entry to the Cannes Film Festival, but you'd never have guessed.

Julian Temple, of "The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle" infamy was supposed to be directing this three minute epic, but was nowhere to be seen. Probably a good thing, I thought, recalling the direness of

that piece of celluloid junk.

Three areas were being used for shooting: the large "sandpit" area where a bonfire was being built for the "Funeral Pyre" of the song's title, an open path and a proverbial leafy glade, where the band's equipment had been set up, where I was sitting under a tree (really!) talking to Paul Weller while the cameramen were getting ready to

Weller, dressed in his sharpest "Ready Steady Go" togs and sporting a neat Dave Berry haircu was explaining his reluctance about the words of the new since

"Whenever I try and explain the lyrics it always seems to limit the songs, 'cos I try and condense it and ideas come out sounding a bit limited. A lot of kids might just get a set idea about it and won't look any further into it".

The song opens with the lines, "Down in amongst the streets tonight, books will burn, people laugh and cry in their turmoil."

On the most obvious level it's a comment on the insidious attraction of right wing authoritarianism in a

time of crisis, but like other Jam songs different levels can be read

Changing tack, I asked Weller about the "Something Else"

sharply on his fag.

"I wrote to them and ask could take over one of the and surprisingly enough back and said 'Yeah'. Use done in certain areas and they get local kids to direct it and take part in

"We're gonna do a thing on class

"Hopefully something will come of it. If we can get petitions up in different areas, actually film them handing them over to different councils and see the outcome of it over about six shows."

It's ironic. Out of all the bands that emerged during '76-77, it was the Jam who were most reluctant to identify with the wave of social and political rebellion associated with

I remember talking to Weller on the 'phone when I was working on a local paper in South London, asking him why the Jam were doing a "Jubilee Concert" at Battersea Town Hall and being told "we like the Queen, she's good for the country" (or something equally

When I'd asked why they took such a different stance to that of groups like the Clash he'd replied simply: "We just wanna play rock 'n' roll." A quote so ridiculously forgettable that I can still remember it clearly four years later.

If somebody had told me that the Jam would turn out to be the most committed survivors of that era l would have laughed at the time.

"Some songs, every line, 'Strange Town', there's lots of different things in that really, it's not about one particular thing."

programme he's getting involved in. "It's a community arts programme on BBC2, they usually have a couple of bands on," he said, dragging

"It's just something out. I just felt a lot di kids seemed to wast about how bored the unemployed and not whereas they never seem to actuall state why they are, the rea it, or how they can go about stopping it. I wanted to do something a bit more positive with it, try to get something out of it.

also we're gonna talk to some publishing companies, why they don't take on young writers; a thing about clubs . . . councils, like, giving kids premises, an actual place they can run themselves. The core of it is about giving kids more responsibility. And also I want to do something on education.

concert in London). live in," scowled Weller angrily, when I commented on the group's

positive attitude. "You've got to face up to that to some extent, but if you

Now that radical chic has

actually displaying any class-

and they're doing something

upturned into depressive blues.

Jam are of the few groups that are

in lying down while Thatcher and

set off from Merseyside towards

London on May Day the Jam held a

concert in Liverpool specifically to

raise money to help finance it (the

her henchmen grind their boots in,

When the People's March For Jobs

conscious anger; they don't believe

for a party, you know." But could a group like the Jam of an effect in countering propaganda fed to ople every day? music that I'm always is what final stage you . whether you're g to be preaching to the ted, so to speak. I think music lly important, I think you can chieve a lot through it, but I don't know how far you can actually take

"The thing is that at some point in time you have to acknowledge that you have a certain amount of influence over your audience, so therefore you've got to decide if you're gonna take it up and use it in a good way, or discard it and use it for just music's sake.

Specials played a corresponding "I think if you've got that influence you might as well use it, without "It is a depressing, crappy time to preaching to people, because we try and keep out of that anyway. That's

I commented that he tended to communicate his ideas in songs by



do it totally you just go under.

"Like that tape that was playing a minute ago," (a cassette of Talking Heads, U2, the Bunnymen and other stuff that was coming from a car tape machine). "All them bands -I'm not really knocking them, they might be quite good groups - to me they don't say nothing, they don't do anything, you know? It's esed to be all involved, music but it doesn't say

thought there could be els between what had in Brixton recently and What Weller sang about in "Eton the idea of popular

s taking place in the streets Well, I thought even more so a couple of years ago with the Right To Work March, there was a minor incident in Eton College," he said. "So looking back, 'Eton Rifles' is a quite feasible story really. It wasn't as ridiculous as people make out,

He paused for a moment. "What always amazes me is the way rich people continue to flaunt

class warfare, it's quite possible."

writing about very personal situations

"I'm writing the same way as I've always done, really, writing from me own standpoint," Weller agreed. "If it relates to other people or it means something to them or influences them in any way, then great."

N THE background various members of the film crew were getting ready to start shooting.

Weller walked over to join Bruce Foxton and Rick Buckler, about to do the woodland bop.

"Funeral Pyre" is a move away from the sparser sound of "That's Entertainment" (imported from Germany without the band's approval) and "Start", back to the metallic crunch of classic Jam.

The annoying thing is that after hearing the song fading to nothing during the first verse at least ten times during the afternoon's filming I can't listen to it now without

expecting the same thing to happen. Did somebody say 'That's

entertainment'?