

"I know, but that's a game they play. You can't really rely on any of their opinions. They're either too over the top about us or too against. There's no real common sense, it's really down to 'Well, do you like the record or not?', and I think that's all that matters. If you like it, buy it, if you don't, don't. There's no real pressure."

*"I'd rather us do it than Barry Manilow or someone like that."*

Was it hard finding the right people for PiL?  
"Well, we've made mistakes with certain ex-members, but we're alright now. PiL now is just a trilogy; me, Keith and Jeanette, and I don't think we're ever going to have new members. There'll sometimes be auxiliary units like Martin, because he's got his own band. We'll never enlarge our company. We like it small, it works better."

So why did Jah Wobble quit? This has never really been explained.

"Just personal differences, that's all. No huge bickering. I mean, he just went about things differently from the rest of us, and his idea of where we should be going musically was very different from ours. He wanted to go into jazz-funk and stuff like that. To me, that's an old, tired cliché. I don't need the limitations of one form of music."

Wobble has not been seen in some time. He was last heard of driving a taxi.

PiL also wants to get more involved in films, but is running into union problems. You need a union ticket to get anything shown on British TV, which is important if you want to be known. And, as Lydon says, PiL doesn't want to be anonymous. The company had agreed to write the soundtrack for a horror movie being planned in Hollywood. But that's currently in abeyance because filming has stopped. Does Lydon have any misgivings about being associated with such a Megabuck industry?

"No, if we can make a good soundtrack, then we should. I dearly like being given a chance to do that, and it has the makings of a very good film, and I think we could improve it. I mean, I'd rather us do it than Barry Manilow or someone like that. All we want is to be given the chance."

We return briefly to *The Flowers Of Romance*, the title of which has associations with a band whose former members included the late Sid Vicious.

"The name is mine, and Keith was a member of it," says Lydon. "It's got nothing really to do with that band. It's just a similar situation of people turning themselves into parasites for social reasons. It's just about social climbers."

*"Live gigs are really a thing of the past."*

PiL has only gigged sporadically since it formed. The quality of the performances has varied, the best moments being captured on the *Paris In The Spring* album. But it's unlikely there'll be any more concerts.

"Live gigs are really a thing of the past. They were well

and fine in the Who's era, in the 60's, it was a good thing, but it isn't no more. They've become too institutionalised. It's a real pain now to go and see a band live. You're forced into your seat, the bouncers can be brutal, and it's all at a very high cost. It's just like bad theatre, you have to sit there. You can't really enjoy yourself. There's not enough activity. You end up a pantomime horse."

Despite all that, Lydon is happy with the live album, saying it's better than the bootlegs, which is why it was released.

Keith Levene walks in, complaining about a power failure which has stopped the underground, stranding a friend across town. A cab is despatched, and the conversation continues.

*"He made Malcy look like a big tosspot. Well done, Adam."*

I hesitantly raise the subject of the Sex Pistols. Lydon's face is resigned, his answers mechanical. It's old history, and a part of his life he obviously wants to forget. Law suits are continuing, and Lydon has seen plenty of tax bills, but no money. Malcolm McLaren is also a touchy subject. Lydon hasn't spoken to him since the split, nor does he care to.

"It's a waste of time talking to him, he's just an egotist. He's stuck on his cloud. He'll remain convinced he's an artist. I think it's really good, what happened with Adam Ant. Malcolm kicked him in the teeth and he came back shining. He made Malcy look like a big tosspot. Well done, Adam."

At the same time, Lydon is not entirely convinced about the Antboy's sound.

"I don't really know what they mean when they say 'tribal'. They don't sound very tribal to me. But good luck to 'em. We need those different attitudes in music anyway, or it becomes sterile."

He agrees that the approach recalls the days of Gary Glitter, the Sweet and Slade.

"That's the trouble with 'the music biz' at the moment. It's all going backwards, nobody really wants to go forwards. But I never think about the future. We just do as we want, and that's that."

One thing Lydon never does is to presume he's influencing others.

"I would hate bands to start imitating us. I think that would be awful. But I hope people pick up on the right side of us, that we're doing what we want. I think that's what all bands should be doing. What they want, not what they're told to do, not what some crummy record producer says to them. I mean, if you make a record, who better to know what it should sound like than the person making it? You don't need someone to tell you how your own songs should sound."

"It's not that difficult to work out how to use a studio. It just takes a bit of effort."

*"He got the name Vicious from*

*that Lou Reed song. But he was a weed."*

Is John Lydon happy with his lot these days?

"I'm always happy, just as long as I can do what I want, without infringing on others. I just do it. I'm not the misery-guts the world would want to believe. That's just convenient bracketing for the press, innit?"

Yet the punk days seemed to have a very negative outlook.

"It was looked upon as negative, but I didn't think it was negative at all. I thought it was all jolly good fun. 'Look, we're destroying your horrible industry. Titter.' It stopped being fun when Malcolm started to take himself too seriously. That was in America."

"People love a demise. I mean, the Pistols were never successful until they broke up. The same thing happened with guys like Jim Croce. It would have been very convenient to a lot of record collectors if I'd hit the bucket."

Instead, it happened to Sid.

"Sid fell into the trap. You know, 'Oh, you've got to be a martyr to be a real rock n' roll superstar.' Fool. I don't think he'd enjoy what's happened since his death. It's a farce. They've turned him into a puppet."

What was he like, as a person?

"He got the name Vicious from that Lou Reed song. But he was a weed. He was OK up until he met Nancy, then he started fooling around with drugs because he thought that was the big thing to do. And he just ended up a vegetable. He became very gullible."

Lydon dismisses Steve Jones and Paul Cook with ease. He considers they're living a hasbeen life, making hasbeen music.

*Like to be unknown again?*

End of interview. Pub time. Lydon carefully combs his shocking orange hair into a mess, and covers it with one of a number of baseball caps he carries in a Boston Red Sox bag. It also contains a pocket cassette recorder, for random thoughts and snatches of songs, none of which will ever see the light of day.

We retire to a pub down the road, where Levene gets engrossed in a Space Invaders game. We are joined by Vivien Goldman, who writes for NME and is an old friend of Lydon's. Over a few jars, John speaks of his desire to one day record a nostalgia album, a la *Schmilsson In The Night*. Goldman says he's been threatening to do this for ages. We finish up doing a little harmonising on one of his favourites, Skeeter Davis's 'The End Of The World'. This is all becoming a little bit unreal.

Lydon's parting shot comes when I ask whether he'd like to be unknown again.

"God, no! That would be awful! What's the point of being unknown, like some sort of cult hero?"

The famous face registers the well-known look of disgust, mingled with amusement. And John Lydon says goodbye.

Duncan Campbell

# JOY DIVISION

## A SHORT STORY FOR THE UNINITIATED

### CHAPTER 1

Not so long ago, Brian Pitts phoned Rob Gretton at Factory Records in Manchester and reminded him it was time Factory sorted out New Zealand distribution. Thousands of discerning people wanted Joy Division singles and albums and couldn't get them.

### CHAPTER 2

So Rob was told all about RTC (small is beautiful?), that RTC was an independent record company and all manner of amazing things (it was a good sales pitch). Rob said, (sort of): "Great, I'm getting a bit choked with getting no response from multi-nationals."

### CHAPTER 3

Then, after sorting out mundane things like royalty advances and royalty rates, we agreed it was essential that all the record covers, inner covers, labels etc., had to be exactly like the English releases: and the deal was done.

### CHAPTER 4

Then came the fun part, the long wait for production parts (you know, tapes and cover films) — something to do with Very Fast Airlines Ltd. Anyway, they're here now.

### CHAPTER 5

(If you've got this far you may as well wait round for the finale.)

The first Joy Division releases will be in your nearest record store by about 5th June. They will be:

### SINGLES

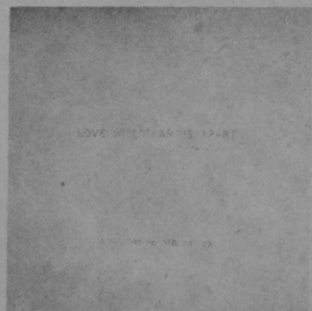
'LOVE WILL TEAR US APART' (FAC 2312). A *very* limited edition 12 inch single in a picture sleeve.

'LOVE WILL TEAR US APART' (FAC 23). A 7 inch single in picture sleeve. Special labels.

### ALBUM

'UNKNOWN PLEASURES' (FACT 10 & FACTC 10). Special sleeve and labels.

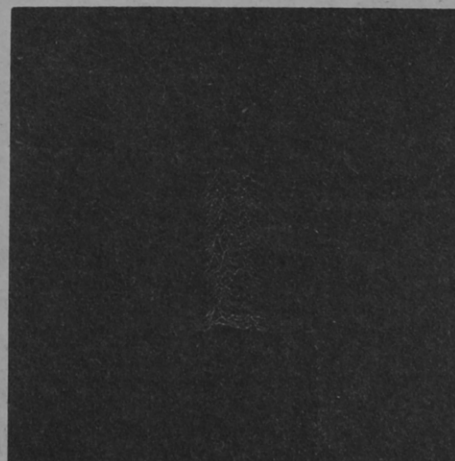
### THEY LOOK LIKE THIS:



FAC 23



FAC 2312



FACT 10

FACTC 10

## THEY WILL BE YOUR MUSICAL EXPERIENCE OF 1981