

## Clash guitarist reveals his Rock & Roll library

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By Dominique Vidalon

LONDON (Reuters) - As a young boy, Clash guitarist Mick Jones would chase his football idols all over London for autographs. Then he discovered music and dropped the autograph book but not his manic collecting.

Over the years, the 53 year-old co-founder of one of Punk's biggest bands has amassed a mammoth collection of books, magazines, records, posters alongside artwork, recording gear, stage clothes and song lyrics from his time with The Clash and his other bands Big Audio Dynamite and Carbon/Silicon.



Jones is finally showing this personal archive of popular culture at London's Chelsea Space gallery in an exhibit called the "Rock and Roll Public Library" that runs until April 18.

"I started collecting things when I was very young and I did not really know why. Then at the Millennium, the change of the century, it started to become clear. I realized I wanted to share it," Jones told Reuters.

"It's a fantastic collection people can take great pleasure from and also learn something," he added.

Jones, who went to Hammersmith art school before co-founding The Clash in 1976, says he thinks of the collection as "one big living artwork" that he is still working on.

Many of the items on display had been crammed into his west London recording studio for years and Jones would not guess how many pieces he owns.

"I have kept everything, if it exists it's probably there somewhere," he jokes.

### FOOTBALL OR MUSIC?

An only child, whose parents divorced when he was 8, Jones says he started collecting odds and ends as a way to create his own world. Football and later music became escapes for a boy left "with little parental control."

"If you are like a young working class boy in London, you have to make a choice between sport or music. I made the choice for music," he says.

The installation, which seeks to recreate Jones' recording studio and adjoining store room, offers a rare insight into the life, times and influences of the musician.

Album covers dangling on threads from the ceiling like mobiles, books and films about Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash but also Frank Sinatra, The Beatles or The Rolling Stones testify of Jones's deep and obsessive love of music.

As a teenager Jones recalls "bunking" fares to follow his favorite bands like Mott the Hoople or Rod Stewart and the Faces around the country or standing outside Mick Jagger's house in London trying to get a glimpse of an idol.

"We used to stand outside like urchins. I was a stalker then. I never knew I would have my own stalkers one day."

The late Johnny Thunders was a key influence. The New York Dolls guitarist was the reason why a young Jones can be seen donning platform shoes on some pictures taken in his pre-punk English Glam days.

Many of the music magazines and fanzines on display have deep personal meaning. Jones recalls that his mother, who moved to America when he was a young boy, used to send him issues of "Creem" and "Rock Scene" magazines every month.

Creem's star writer Lester Bangs wrote about the early New York punk scene and artists such as Patti Smith or The Ramones.

"I was really up on that stuff while not many people here were. Bangs was one of their main writer. So it was such a joy to get to know him when he came to write about us," he recalls.

Bangs wrote a famous article about The Clash in a 1977 review for the New Musical Express (NME).

Also on display are Clash memorabilia such as the famous pink flight cases, plane tickets, access badges or a hastily scribbled note to Jones by Clash frontman, the late Joe Strummer.

True to his punk ideals, Jones hopes the collection can one day become a permanent and freely available resource.

"Ultimately I'd like to have a permanent place to exhibit the whole collection like a museum, like a library where you can come and see the stuff and maybe get a copy or sit there and read it. I also would like to bring artists there because it's history really," he says.

Jones would not pick a favorite item among the whole collection but admits that his old footballer's autograph book is now "one of my most treasured possessions."

"I have the whole England World Cup winning squad. The managers, the trainers, everything. That was 1966 when we won the World Cup. Biggest thing ever!"

"The Rock and Roll Public Library"

Chelsea Space  
16 John Islip Street  
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(Reporting by Dominique Vidalon)

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