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## Mick Jones collection on show

**The Clash guitarist's Chelsea College of Art and Design exhibition is less Rock and Roll Public Library, more charity shop**

Douglas Anderson

Picture the scene. It's 3am at the Clash guitarist Mick Jones's domicile. A drunken reveller staggers into the host's garage, which is piled high with the detritus of 53 years. "Shish stuff is shmashing," he splutters, as he picks up a tatty 1979 Beano annual. "Oi betta lotta people would love to shee this."

Remarkably, the folly of a drunken evening resulted in a phone call to the lord mayor and, soon, Steptoe's wagon was wending its way down John Islip Street to Chelsea College of Art & Design. I can imagine the fortysomething curator, Donald Smith, and his cohorts at the iron gates, rubbing their hands together at the prospect of the seminal punk songsmith bringing his Aladdin's cave of countercultural artefacts. What do they get? VHS copies of Only Fools and Horses, Music for Pleasure budget albums and that priceless rarity, a paperback copy of Mario Puzo's The Godfather.

It is difficult to fathom the significance of Jones's boarding pass for a 1997 flight to America. Hardly a momentous event for the world, or even him, I'd wager. Then there's his cassette collection, which features gems such as his home-taped copy of Television's Marquee Moon and a box marked "Seventies" — bereft of its cassette. Were we to have placed a Pot Noodle and a half-eaten sandwich on the shelves, I'd fully expect them to stand with comparable gravitas for the remainder of the event.

Of course, there is Clash memorabilia: a few guitars, stencilled shirts and a rusty snare drum insulated with a filthy hand towel. Nothing is signed, marked or explained. Two dusty gold discs lie unwanted at the bottom of a trunk. His band items, if this constitutes their bulk, are the minimum a non-destitute performer would be expected to have retained — I'd parlay there are fans around the world who have deeper and more revealing archives.

If anything, more care has gone into his Rorke's Drift display, featuring a model-soldier diorama (factory-painted), a Zulu video and a poster for the 1964 film. The remainder is a formless mass of junk, generally in such poor condition that it gives the exhibition the appearance of a charity shop. Except that the entire accumulation is housed in a space smaller than most charity shops. I defy you to spend more than 25 minutes in there (five as a non-fan), given that much of this aggregation does not sit under even the broadest canopy of its name — The Rock & Roll Public Library. I therefore propose a Trade Descriptions-approved alternative: Things I Bought in Oxfam for Less Than a Pound.

Jones, whom I have met on three occasions, is so ineffably charming to his fans, one can understand the media goodwill that greeted the announcement of this folly. Moreover, one of the things that made the Clash the greatest rock band in the world was their self-belief. And it's this that adds a delightful naughtiness to the sniggers that this collection engenders.

Jones recently described his delusional display as "one big living artwork", adding: "Ultimately, I'd like to have a permanent place to exhibit the whole collection, like a museum, like a library". Well, if this really is a library, surely we should be allowed to borrow the items? Bags I the Harry Enfield video.

The Rock & Roll Public Library is at Chelsea College of Art & Design, SW1, until April 18;  
[chelseaspace.org](http://chelseaspace.org)