

Vice Squad: Standing Strong

VICE SQUAD are back - and that's official. The music press have been falling over themselves copying interviews as the abrasive wheels of the publicity machine stand poised to finally make or break the group. Meeting the press duties have been divided out, and so **Venue** ended up talking with two of the 'three bland blonde boys' (*Paul Morley NME*), guitarist Dave and drummer Shane.

Vice Squad have currently been busy gigging to promote their second EMI LP 'Stand Strong, Stand Proud'. There were plans to undertake a tour of the States but, as Shane explained, "EMI don't want us to go". The slog goes on, with the group aided by their two managers, Sooty and Ken; their progress seems far removed from Shane's old, naive hope that "once Beki got on the front page of Sounds we were made". Talking with the pair, they seem bemused by the events and manoeuvres

Will Resurrection be what Riot City *should* have been? Mark: "It wasn't Simon's fault they way things happened, it was just that we didn't have time to run things whereas he did and he kept things going. It got to a point, though, that when we started discovering bands we wanted to record it was a question of either giving them to Simon or setting up our own label.

"Now that Simon has decided to trim down Riot City and concentrate on groups like Abrasive Wheels

surprising to discover that (for example) Dave left school with 3 'A' levels (Maths, Physics and Economics) and that the individual members of the group are prepared (and able) to discuss serious matters without resorting to sloganising or sub-cultural sectarianism.

Dave expressed a sympathy with any group trying to counter apathy which he felt had crept into punk: "it goes against the ideas of creative destruction. Where punk is

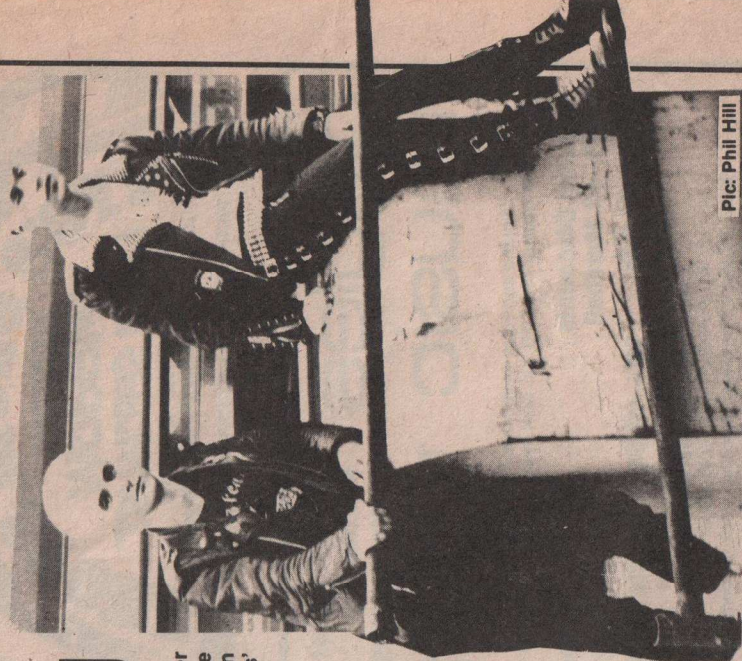
"... a lot of journalists are only interested in Beki whereas the punks are interested in all of us"

that affect their future and equally cloudy about the turnings taken in the past; that move from Riot City to EMI; the debacle of the first LP; the accusations of 'sell-out' from fellow punks...How did they sum up the background to some of these questions?

Dave: "Riot City started off with us. We thought of the name - the idea of it - and wanted some say in what bands would go on it, but we didn't know how to go about setting up the label. The first two bands put out after us we didn't have anything to do with, but there's been some of the other records on the label that we've worked on. We're not so much worried about the money but we'd like some of the credit".

Mark laughed nervously. The group don't want to upset label boss Simon Edwards as "we get on really well with him, personally and business wise".

A necessary diplomacy perhaps as Simon handles the group's merchandising and publicity activities (see last issue) and is also assisting with Dave and Shane's pet project - their response to the sell-out mongers - a new label for punk and skin bands called Resurrection Records. The pair have borrowed a thousand pounds and plan to release a single by local outfit Lunatic Fringe which was recorded at SAM studio and has Dave and Shane involved on its production.



Pic: Phil Hill

Perhaps that's the attitude that prevents us getting on the TV. We were turned down by the Old Grey Whistle Test!"

'Stand Strong, Stand Proud' is a far cleaner record in terms of its production when compared to the debut LP. A desire for greater accessibility? Dave and Shane are adamant that it was merely the fulfilment of a promise made in an interview. The mistakes made during the recording at the now defunct Facility, they insisted, would *not* be repeated. The group were

Dave and Shane: punks with a message

well aware that their debut did not do them justice.

Dave: "The original sound was so muggy that the group wanted to go to the other extreme to show how we really sounded... the record company certainly had nothing to do with it. We did the recording at Cave and gave them the end result".

Finally, who did Dave and Shane think that Vice Squad had achieved their popularity and what advice would they give to other budding hopefuls? Mark: "I think we were lucky in that what we were doing was fashionable again; but it wasn't a question of starting up a punk group because of that. We already had a big following in Bristol.

"We hope people will like us for what we are, not because of fashion or because of Beki. To be honest it seems sometimes that a lot of the journalists are only interested in Beki whereas the punks are interested in all of us".

Dave: "What's happened with us shows that anyone can do it really. Anyone that saw us treading the boards at youth club gigs three or four years ago with exactly the same line-up, making a godawful racket; it shows that you can do something it you get off your ass and get on with it".

DAVE MASSEY

Groups wanting to be considered by Resurrection Records should send tapes and info to 37 Tudor Road, Hanham, Bristol.

constructive it can be dangerous, which a lot of it isn't these days.

"But as Vice Squad have discovered to their cost there are still plenty who regard punk as undesirable. Dave again: "It's ridiculous. Our album is number 47 in the charts but Woolworth's won't stock it. Because it's punk, they think we're subversives. There's not ONE swear word on the record... O.K., it's got some controversial ideas on it - but it's not offensive.

and Court Martial and is not looking for new bands it means we can take up from where he left off".

One of the more heartening aspects of the resurgence of punk is Vice Squad's success when compared to some of the more neanderthal units that grace the pages of the music press. Vice Squad write songs that are intelligent and articulate and are prepared to ring the changes in the standard 'rock' format of the group. It's not altogether



Pic: Phil Hill