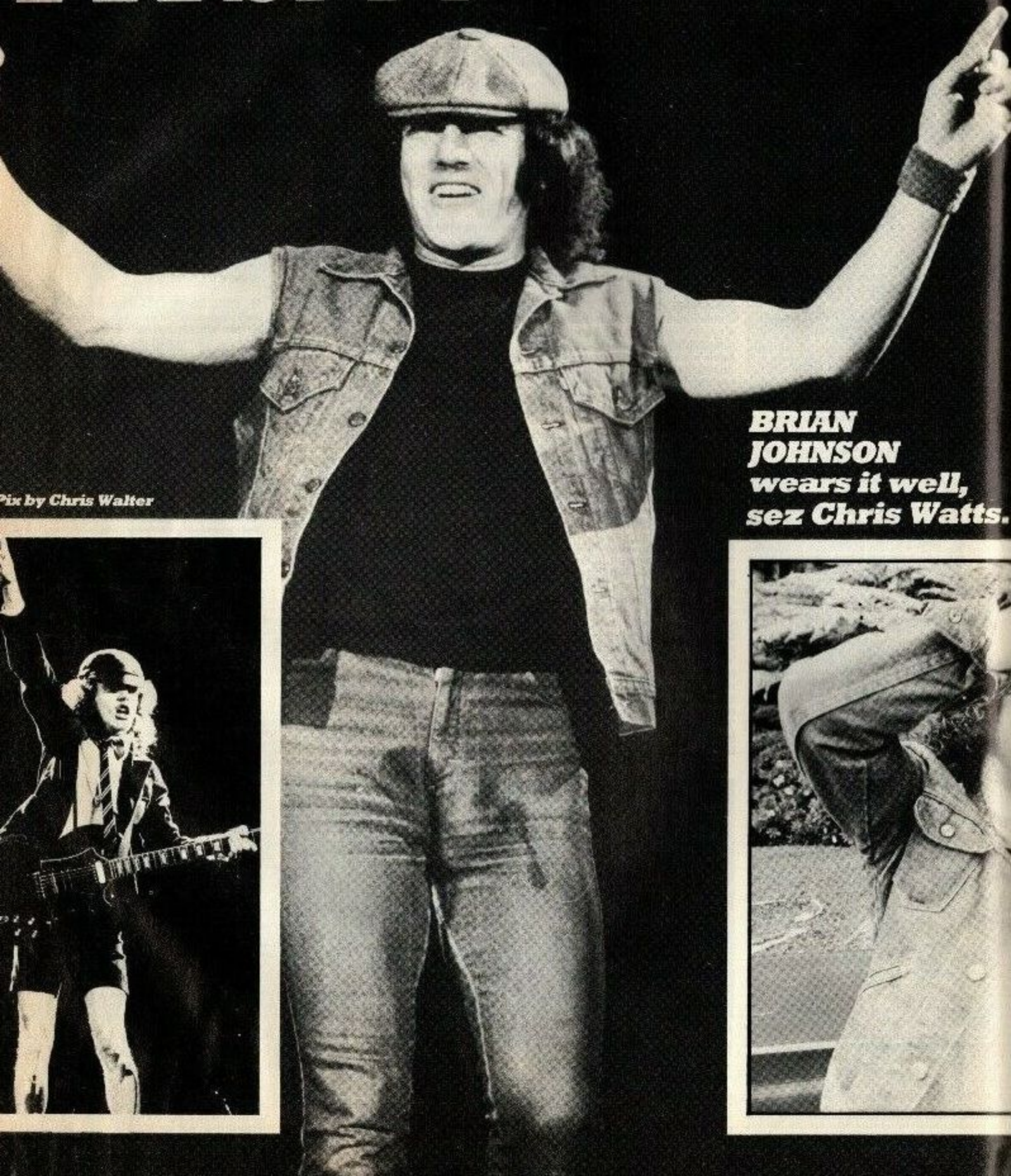


**WORKING ON
THE CHAIN GANG...
THE ROCKSTEADY CRÜE**

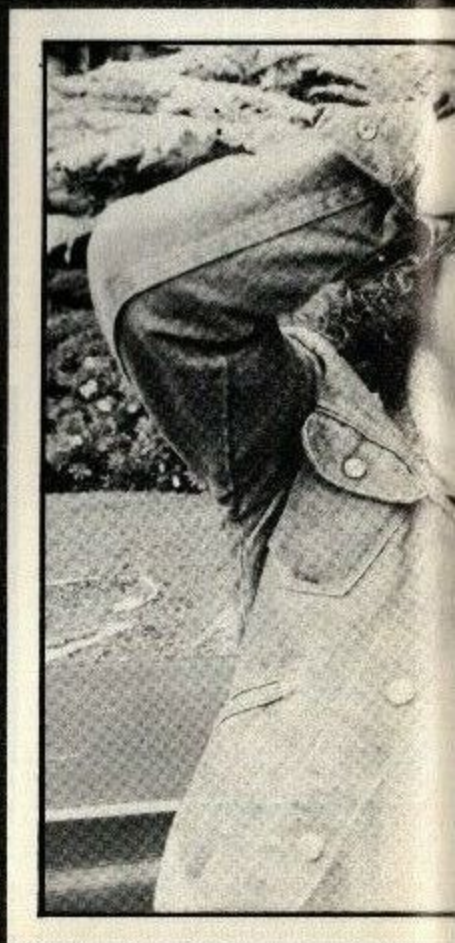
**AC/DC
YES
ZZ TOP
SAVAGE
BRIAN MAY
SCHON/HAGAR**

IF THE CAP FITTS...



Pix by Chris Walter

**BRIAN
JOHNSON**
wears it well,
sez Chris Watts.



IN MANY ways, AC/DC are shining knights to Metal fans the world over and a constant inspiration to those garage rock outfits struggling to write a set around 'Back In Black' between school and homework. Because AC/DC have proved that it's possible to become one of the largest, and finest, touring acts and still keep your feet planted firmly in your roots.

There's no bulls* with AC/DC, never has been, and their willing walk up the stadium circus gangplank has done nothing to convince the band that in true life they are all demi-gods and that subsequently their music should reflect this with majestic epics and heavenly ballads. For AC/DC it's been a constant whirl of bump 'n' grind rock with 'finesse' an unknown word in their vocabulary.

Compare 'High Voltage' with their recent set, 'Flick Of The Switch' and despite a growing slickness, it's the same band with the same sound and the same attack. Assault attack. It's a formula that has found favour in nearly every fan's heart and a formula that is showing no signs of either strain or change.

Yet change is inevitable, and having served seven years in the fold, AC/DC recently bade farewell to drummer Phil Rudd and opened the gates for Simon Wright, ex-Tora! Tora!, A-Z and Tytan and at 20 years of age, rightfully a privileged lad indeed. As far as AC/DC are concerned, it's young blood and energy and although the effects of Simon's battery will not be heard in the UK until Easter at the earliest, there have been no complaints yet from the States where the band are currently on one of their 'tours' - pilgrimages really. San Antonio to be precise.

"It's going great," bellows jovial Geordie, Brian Johnson. "The good thing is that we're going places on this tour where we've never played before and going down really well. It's nice to see the kids are still there and that hits us, you know? That's the best sight in the world for all five of us."

Although it's very much the combination of Angus Young's surrogate sixth-former act and his gruesome guitar work and Brian Johnson's matey charisma that takes the spotlight on stage, it's Brian who has now evolved into the band's chief spokesman.

"I think it's the honesty with this band that people are attracted to as well as keeping the band together. That and good music. Our principles have never changed since we began, at least since I joined. I mean, stuff all yer concept albums and that, rock and roll is supposed to be a laugh, and we've done a hell of a lot of it. We always try to do our best, kids expect so much from us and we try and come up with the goods. I think we still can, and what with this young man here it certainly helps."

THE YOUNG MAN in question sounds confident, brash and rightly proud. Simon was based in Manchester originally, but after Tora! Tora! fell through with only one single recorded, he

moved down to London to join A-Z and subsequently signed with the band to Polydor, although that too hit the deck before anything could happen. From there it was onto Tytan, another semi-deal and then the advert, the audition and the job of powering one of the biggest current names in Rock.

"I was shocked to tell you the truth," he says, "because I didn't know who the band were and when I went down to rehearsals I was a bit taken aback. But the lads all made me feel comfortable and auditioning was a doddle for me because I've loved the band for a long time. The main appeal for me is simply that Malcolm and Angus write brilliant songs. I remember Malcolm just telling me to treat the whole thing as if it were a club band, and it is that sort of atmosphere. There are no egos pulling in different directions."

True: AC/DC have never been a band to revel in the petty squabbles and under-hand gossip publicity and remain one close-knit and rather insular family.

"We try and keep out of those gossip columns," says Brian. "A lot of bands seem to get more coverage in those columns than they do anywhere else which is really stupid, know what I mean? Sure, we all like a drink, or two, and we all go out together for meals with the road crew and people, because all the crew are the most important lads. Without them there wouldn't be a show."

"We'll talk to anybody who cares to come around and say hello, but you'll never find anyone around us who's trying to catch a meal ticket. At least not for long, they'll be straight out the door! Sometimes we lose our temper with people like record company executives or whatever, I often feel like slapping them around the face. But that energy we bottle up and save for the stage when we all just let everything go, there's no one who can touch you on stage and that's why we love to gig."

"As soon as we get tired of touring we'll pack it in and go home, that's for sure. I guess our anger, frustration or whatever comes out naturally in the music because it is aggressive music and we can still do that. As soon as that goes and we feel like turning conservative... we'll be gone. That won't happen for quite a while though, not a chance."

AND IT'S a shattered, drained and totally exhausted AC/DC that makes an impact night after night, tour after tour. Moreover, despite the inherent live quality of their music, AC/DC have always managed to retain that essential stage spark on vinyl. If plastic could express itself then their albums including 'Flick Of The Switch' would be screaming for mercy, through loudspeakers left senseless having been cranked past the gate by trembling hands. AC/DC were not designed for a romantic Sunday afternoon in the rain, they were custom-built for a plug socket.

"Yeah, this album is a really good rock album, that's all it is," says Brian. "We weren't trying to do anything else, we just wanted another album that would burn! It's a little different this time because we didn't have a producer which turned out to be an advantage. Like, we had our own thoughts and there was no outside influence to stop us."

"It was a struggle at times to produce ourselves, but that was half the fun of it. We found ourselves getting trapped by producers who wanted something different from us so this time we thought, bollocks to 'em, we'll do it ourselves!"

"We've always done something because we've wanted to. I don't think we've changed. A gig is a gig is a gig, right? Whether it be 20,000 people or twenty, it's still the atmosphere. If it all fell through, then we'd probably turn around and start back on the pubs again. Pretty stupid, aren't we?"

"It's nice though now to be in a position where we can put something back, like I've just opened this studio up in Newcastle for young bands who want to have a go at it. There are many people out there, really talented people, who just don't get the breaks that we did and so I'd like to do me bit to lend them a hand. It's a cut-throat business and you've got to make the effort otherwise you may as well call it a day there and then."

"It's great at the moment," he continues, "because there seems to be something of a resurgence in rock which goes to prove that you'll never get rid of it. It'll always be there, maybe not so popular at times, but it'll be there sure enough."

"Like Fastway, who are supporting us at the moment - excellent band. We've always tried to get good bands to support us because that way it makes you play better, right? It'd be very easy for us to get a band that was crap to support us and then walk all over them, but that's ridiculous. I love seeing a band out there trying their best to blow us off - that's brilliant."

IN THE possibility of a UK tour in the near future to complement 'Flick Of The Switch', Brian remains hesitant. "Well, we're going to finish up here first, and then basically play it all by ear because I hate planning my life, you know? We'll have a talk when we finish and no doubt Europe, that includes you lot, will come up somewhere. We'll have about a week off which will be enjoyable, and then we'll decide what to do. We'll probably just get off the plane at Gatwick or something and suddenly decide there and then that we're going to start a tour in four minutes! We'll have to see."



TITFER TAT: new man Simon Wright grabs Johnson's crowning glory.