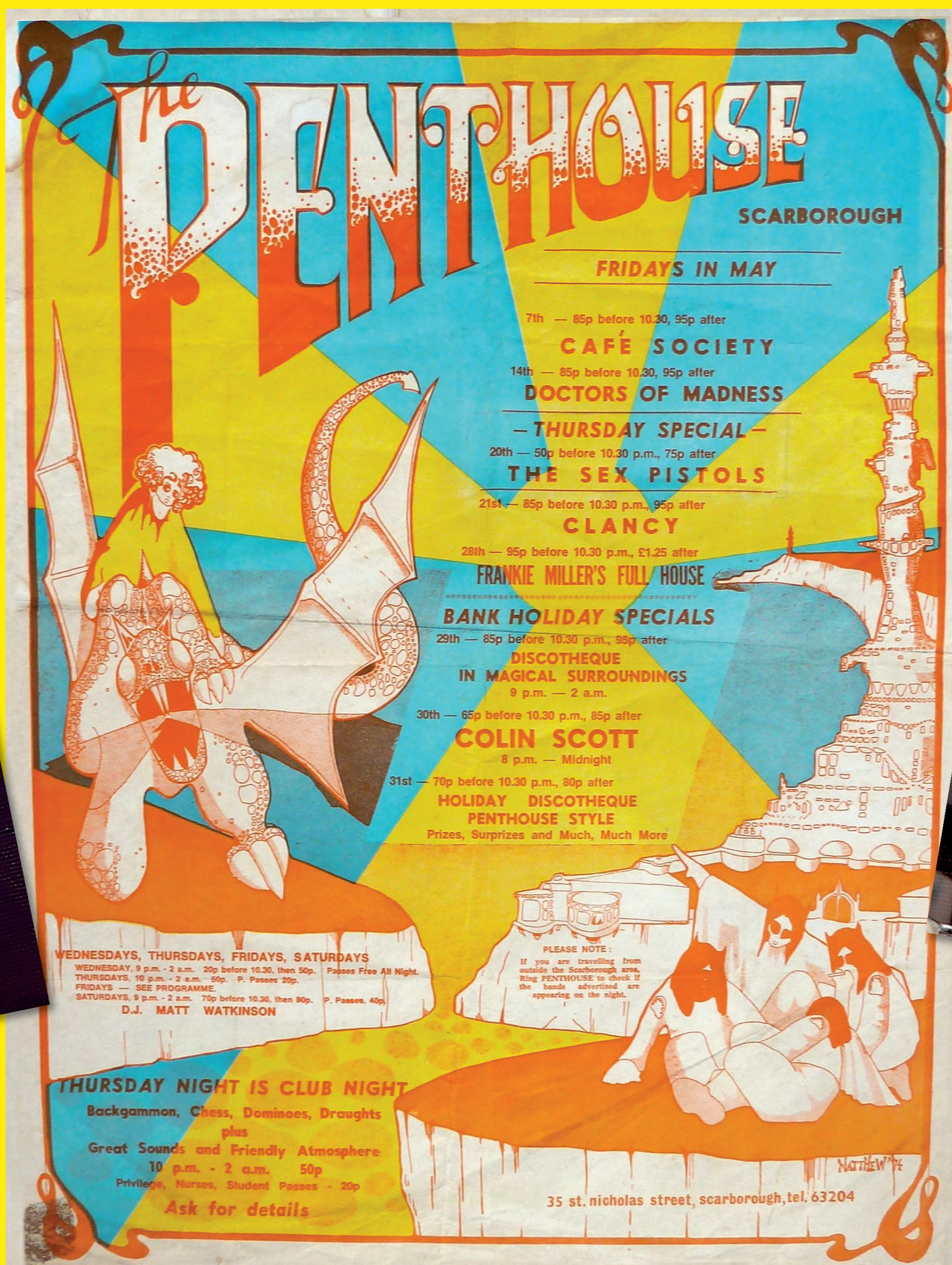


# 'HERE'S THE SEX PISTOLS



"We were so intensely disliked, there was no real audience outside of the 100 Club. Anywhere else you were taking your life in your hands. We'd go up north and we'd be lucky to return. We played all sorts of weird places like Scarborough and Barnsley." John Lydon

The four musicians, road manager and soundman headed north. Memories fade and myths cohere from exaggerations, the mundane supplanted by the epic. The hired van was unable to climb hills, making the journey from Northallerton a challenge and conjuring a vision of colourful, rag-tag delinquents cursing and kicking a stubborn vehicle like a misconceived scene from Last of the Summer Wine. On arrival in Scarborough, bassist Glen Matlock recalls being hastily ejected from a hostelry as he and Rotten sought shelter and a pre-gig beverage. The punk pioneers felt as if they were from another planet.

Situated at 35 St Nicholas Street, the Penthouse club occupied the top floor of a splendid Georgian townhouse previously serving a variety of formal and recreational functions. Whitty businessman Peter Adams converted it into a bespoke venue, motivated by an incident when he was spurned entry into a club due to his bohemian clothing style. The Penthouse was thus defiantly imprinted with Adams' countercultural vision that merged Afro-futurism, Art Nouveau and Tolkienian fantasy - ready to embrace the 70s.

In May 1976 that vision was about to have time called upon it, as a punk advance party arrived in town. They were received by a meagre and unprepared crowd. The Sex Pistols were well-versed and skilled musicians, but they chose to play on the cusp of disorder to wind up audiences. Tonight was no different, the band spending an eternity messing about with tuning at top volume. Patience frittered as Rotten, looking the part in a pink drape jacket, set about insulting people. A few numbers were dutifully performed, tolerance bristled and hostile confrontation inevitably followed. The band beat a hasty retreat to the besieged dressing room. Chaotic, violent and fleetingly insignificant, but a moment of history in the making.

Top: Cindy Stern's vivid photographs of Johnny Rotten on stage at the Penthouse and the hippie-style poster for the Penthouse club designed by and reproduced courtesy of Mat Watkinson (former Penthouse DJ) and photographed by Patrick Argent

Above right: Heading north in 1976

Bottom: Remembering the Penthouse, photo courtesy of *The Scarborough News*

