

# Banned book exposes sordid French underground

by Alec Bruce

**J'Accuse.** By Graham Greene 35 pages. Lester and Orpen Dennys. \$5.95.

"Let me issue a warning to anyone who is tempted to settle for a peaceful life on what is called the Côte d'Azur. Avoid the region of Nice which is the preserve of some of the most criminal organizations in the south of France."

— Graham Greene, *J'Accuse*.

What's fascinating about *J'Accuse* is not how author Graham Greene dissects the workings of particularly sick and criminal minds. I'm not now any more compelled to learn about the rogues who infest the Riviera, those upstanding members of the French Mafia, than I ever was.

But that, in barely 35 pages of writing, Greene has offended or frightened some of the most important people in southern France makes me wonder how thick runs the blood in the French publishing industry. *J'Accuse* has been condemned and banned throughout France since it first hit the "etallages" late last summer. Greene now walks the streets of Nice with a hand grenade in his pocket.

I honestly don't know what all the fuss is about.

In *J'Accuse*, Greene tells a sordid but — he claims — true tale of an innocent young woman who meets and marries a young man with underworld connections. For six years, Martine and Daniel live happily in Nice. Daniel it appears has a good job; and Martine gives birth to one child, Alexandra. Things turn sour when nefarious types begin frequenting the house, asking Daniel for favours and money. Martine soon discovers that Daniel has a lengthy prison record and important connections in the French Mafia. Daniel rewards Martine's curiosity by beating her up. With another child on the way, Martine sues Daniel for divorce and custody of Alexandra.

Greene devotes the rest of his book to portraying Daniel and his friends in the worst possible light. In Daniel we see a tyrant, a vengeful child using every connection he has to make Martine's life miserable and to regain custody of Alexandra. At one point Daniel even tells Alexandra that Martine is no longer her "maman." "You see," he says, "Martine no longer has the same name as you."

What gives *J'Accuse* its driving force are the documents Greene provides to substantiate the story. Six appendices containing everything from Daniel's official prison record to Martine's secret testimonials on her husband's nocturnal habits occupy ten pages of the book.

Greene uses the evidence to weave an incredibly complex tapestry of life in the French underworld. He applies his considerable writing skills to the material and elevates the saga of Martine and Daniel to the timeless conflict between good and evil.

That's fine; but after Greene has said and done all he will, I say: so what!

First, I'm not shocked or dismayed there are criminals running around the south of France. They've been wheeling and dealing longer than I have.

Secondly, though I sympathize with Martine, I'm not really sure what Greene wants me to do. If he just wants me to be aware that organized crime hurts the innocent most of all, then I can safely say I am aware of that fact and have been for a few years.

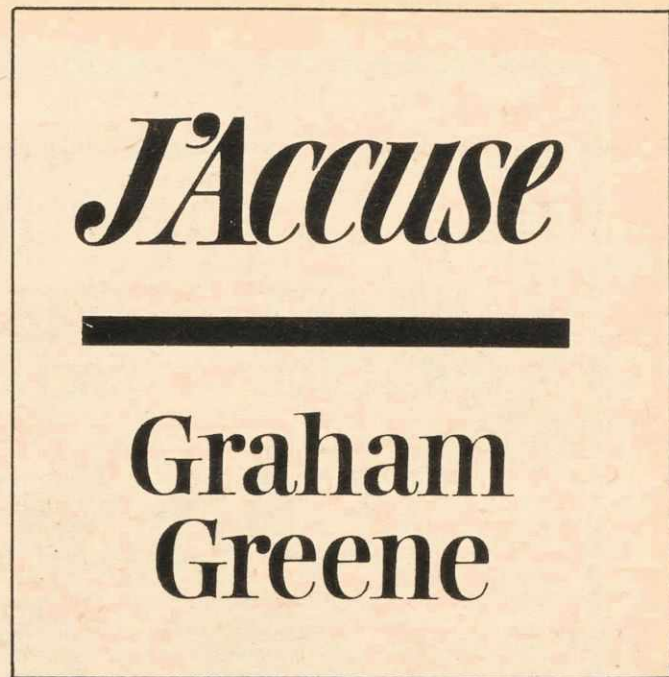
But if *J'Accuse* is supposed to put me in a fighting mood, prepare

me to take on all but the toughest criminals, then I'm baffled. Greene is going to have to put a few more facts on the table — tell me the government of François Mitterand has Mafia backing — before I risk my neck.

This is why I'm amazed such a little book can get so many people nervous. Greene is never libelous in *J'Accuse*: he documents all quotations scrupulously; and he never slanders. At the same time, he names only a handful of characters involved with the French Mafia,

and these only in connection with Martine's and Daniel's story. In the final analysis, while *J'Accuse* is not lightweight material, it contains nothing that could legitimately offend politicians or frighten criminals.

Ultimately the ban of *J'Accuse* in France may say more about the ties between "legitimate" society and the criminal element than Greene ever could. The political mandarins of the Côte d'Azur will really worry if ever this little book hits the black market.



# Local bands thrive on that dirty rock'n'roll

by Edd Hansen

I caught *Moonbuzz* at the Art College over the weekend. They're a tight, well accomplished young band who've got they're sound down. They're rough, full sounding, and very good musicians. Always a bit spontaneous and chaotic, their performance never sounds over-rehearsed yet they stay together all the way. It even gets furious occasionally.

*Moonbuzz* have some of the quirky flair of punk in their mostly Stones sound, probably because they include a few ska numbers and an uptempo version of the Clash's "Police and Thieves."

What makes *Moonbuzz* good is their roughness. Sometimes it seemed they were really screwing up. The guitarist hit a mass of notes but the band never let go. It is this franticness which electrifies them.

Their guitarist stole the show. He ran through "Carol" and "Route 66" with a violent enthusiasm, making the occasional jerky leap off the floor.

What I liked best, however, wasn't the Stones stuff, but "Police and Thieves" which they played with some of the riveting passion of the Clash. The vocals certainly weren't

the Clash, though, because to the singer, it didn't seem to matter if the lyrics were about a riot or a port.

Their singer has loads of energy and an OK voice but no unique force or presence, no urgency to express anything individual. As a result, words get lost in a wash of party/dance energy that's fine for dancing but pretty inconsequential otherwise.

Rock'n'roll is more than dance music, it's about saying something with passion. *Moonbuzz* is still a solid band, don't get me wrong; they just don't seem to have any

desire to reach beyond the safe confines of a college dance.

The *Brats* don't have the full-frantic sound of *Moonbuzz* but they have a dedication and desire that makes them more memorable.

They're more amateurish and more awkward on stage and they don't have a rock star look. Yet, with their determination, it was that tackiness which made them immediately impressive.

Playing at the Derby Tavern made it perfect. The Derby is the sort of plain, unpretentious tavern that advertises its bands in the front display with a simple, block-lettered sign that reads; "THIS WEEK ROCK TO THE SOUNDS OF .....". It doesn't smell a bit of any middle-class, college security.

So the *Brats* looked and sounded a bit cheaper than *Moonbuzz* but overall they tried a lot harder making their Stones and Chuck Berry covers more memorable with their fiery drive.

Their singer looked and sounded like a sweeter Buddy Holly, without the edges, and came off with an alright 50's imitation.

Again it was the guitarist who was the focal point. He looked a bit like Keith Richards, rough and shabby, holding his guitar low-groin level, and churned out those dirty riffs with a real Richards' swagger.

This cheesy, tough band brought punk into the suitably boony Derby. The drummer mentioned something as an introduction, about not feeling right, and they started thrashing out this awfully fast, undistinguishable, crude rhythm. Then I really got punk. "Jesus Christ!" I thought, "is this the Ramones?!" And, sure enough, the guitarist was trying to sing "I wanna be Sedated" and he couldn't sing at all. It didn't sound quite right (they were screwing up something) but it was wonderfully chaotic — I mean, it was true punk-frenzy.

There was something else about that Derby show which made it very special. The lead singer allowed the others to sing a couple of numbers and to my surprise they started into the Clash's version of "Brand New Cadillac."

Although the bassist's singing wasn't anything to cherish, he wanted it to rock hard and it sure did.

The whole audience was riveted to the band, all perfectly attentive and quite. That is rare and I couldn't help but love it. Everyone applauded when they finished.

I have to confess that I haven't been as electrified after a group's performance in a long time.

Allright! Here's to bringing punk to the Derby!

## TRIVIALITIES

I guess it's about time to make a few things clear.

1. All the trivia questions used in each weekly quiz come directly from the imagination of our Arts Editor, not any Trivia-buff-type paperback book.

2. If a question has more than one part to it, a point is awarded for each part. That is, if you are asked to name the Magnificent Seven you get 1 point for each person named.

3. We have never referred to ourselves as or claimed to be "experts." Our weekly quizzes are designed solely for the amusement of those who love and respect the magic of the entertainment world enough to appreciate its subtleties and lore.

I hope this allows you to get into the proper spirit of things (especially you, Cincinnati). So relax, participate, and most importantly, enjoy.

Remember, our submissions deadline is noon Tuesday.

### This week's quiz (Tribute to Hammer Films):

1. Who played the creature in *Evil of Frankenstein*?
2. Name the actors and films associated with Quatermass.
3. Hammer and Walk Disney made films based upon the same character. Name both films and the star of each.
4. Why were the zombies being created in *Plague of the Zombies*?
5. What Hammer star appeared in Olivier's film-version of *Hamlet*?
6. Who played the creature in *Frankenstein: The Monster from Hell*?
7. Who was the Vampire Fighter (hint — not Van Helsing)?

8. What story is *House of Fright* based on? How is Christopher Lee's character killed?
9. Who said "Mary Clark. Are you Mary Clark? Where can I find Mary Clark?"
10. Who played the lycanthrope in *The Curse of the Werewolf*? Why was he a werewolf?

### Last week's answers

1. Brian Jones
2. Sebastian Cabot
3. King Kong
4. Hamlet
5. Jane Asher
6. H.P. Lovecraft
7. Fred MacMurray
8. Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd
9. Lee Van Cleef (Corporal Stone)
10. Garrison (Ron Harper), Goniff (Chris Carey), Chief (Brendan Boone), Casino (Rudy Solari), and Actor (Cesare Danova)

current leader: Cincinnati Kid

