

LONDON ENGLAND

TEXAS FEVER



JOE "KING" CARRASCO

The Half Moon, Putney

BITS of Texas keep dropping onto Putney these days, like the fall-out debris from the ultimate hallelujah shindig. Last week, it was The Fabulous Thunderbirds whose bare-knuckle R&B stomp turned the venerable Half Moon into a rowdy confederate saloon. This week, it was the legendary madcap Texican Joe "King" Carrasco flying the Lone Star over the Lower Richmond Road.

The Crowns were cruising through a grooving Booker T-in-the-cantina riff when Carrasco made his appearance. It was a vision that might've startled the devil. Carrasco came at the crowd from the back, taking everyone by surprise. The crazed Texan pursued his flamboyant entrance with a piercing war-cry, a wild old *whoooooop!* that jerked the audience back on their heels. Never a particularly sober dresser, Carrasco looked this particular night like a Technicolour whirlwind, a flatland twister in tequila drag.

He wore his battered crown at a rakish angle; a combrero hung like a straw hubcap around his neck; scarves were draped like aztec decorations across his shoulders; his pantaloons were a hoot. The audience scattered sharpish as he ran full-tilt at the stage, leaping from chair-to-tabletop-to-stage, guitar screaming like Concorde between the ears'

During an especially caterwauling "One More Time", Carrasco got a wicked look in his eye, took a flying leap off the stage, landed on a table, did a neat little soft-shoe shuffle, took another flying leap, off the table, seemed to whack out a scorching geetar solo while he was still airborne, landed with an emphatic crash in the middle of the bopping dancefloor hipsters, ran for the door leading into the public bar.

The Sunday night drinkers were wide-eyed in amazement as Carrasco whirled into their orbit: chins hit chests, eyes popped: Joe "King" whacked up the volume on his transistorised guitar and serenaded the Moon with a howl of feedback.

Even this wasn't enough for Carrasco. The kind of maniac who'll look for an audience *anywhere*, the next thing I know is that Carrasco is out of the pub completely, playing in the street, the traffic along the Lower Richmond Road swerving around him as he threw shape after shape in the middle of the road.

Elsewhere the mayhem was more carefully orchestrated. The Tex-Mex reggae of "Don't Let A Woman (Make A Fool Out Of You)" was lulling, a tropical embrace; "Mucho Dinero", "Tamale Baby" and "Let's Go To Mexico" were rushing headlights, bright and unstoppable. Best of all were the vivid anti-nuke "Current Events (Are Making Me

Tense)" and the shattering "Who Buy The Guns", a coruscating condemnation of Reagan's warmongering policies in South America. It started with the kind of lilting refrain that always precedes outbreaks of severe violence in Sam Peckinpah movies and exploded into a hell-bent momentum that recalled the sleek energy of vintage Attractions snarl-outs.

The evening ended with The Equators, Stiff's former reggae outfit, jamming with the Crowns on the immortal "Buena", and former Blondie drummer Clem Burke rattling the traps on "La Bamba". By this time, Carrasco was on top of the speakers, crown brushing the ceiling of the Half Moon.

When last spotted, he was frozen in mid-air, still whooping. I can hear that demented cackle even now, and everything would be duller without it.

Keep 'em coming, Joe.

● ALLAN JONES