

Richmond rocks!

Everyone is aware of Richmond's glorious place in the rock'n'roll pantheon. *The Rolling Stones* started life here and, throughout the 60s, the area hosted a vibrant alternative scene. Today, as a thriving community of musicians and artistic types has been busy proving over the summer, it still does.

"I started *The Monk Club* simply because so many people asked me to," says Simon Klein, art lecturer by day, maverick guitarist/frontman by night. "We tested the water with a couple of nights in July, and it was obvious we'd tapped into something," he adds.

Housed in the bohemian basement of *The Vineyard Project*, on the lower slopes of Richmond Hill, *The Monk Club* opens every second Thursday. By day, the building is a drink and drug rehabilitation centre. By night, the space plays host to some extraordinary happenings.

Inevitably, there are bands with guitars and all that. Others turn up with tablas and Pixiephones, vintage organs and Echo units. There is no DJ. Instead, someone might seize the mike and improvise while the main acts change equipment. Sometimes a writer or poet may fill the space with a reading.

Rock journalist Mark Paytress, who read extracts from his new Sid Vicious biography at a recent *Monk Club* night, reckons it's about time that Richmond rediscovered its creative roots.

"I love the fact that, within earshot of the rock nobility at the top of Richmond Hill, the great unwashed are seizing that tradition and doing something new and interesting with it," says the writer who works for *MOJO* and *Q* magazines. "This place has been crying out for something like this for years."



The Monk Club has already aroused the interest of the music press, attracted both by the Club's adventurous booking policy and by the venue itself, which looks more like a sixth form clubroom from 1972 than a music haunt.

"That's part of its charm," says Simon Klein. "Art school veterans and new school idealists mingle freely there, and seem to find the low-rent, booze-free nature of the surroundings more inspiring than your typical rock club."

Another name closely associated with *The Monk Club* is Rob Simmons, who played at the original *100 Club Punk Rock Festival* with the Mortlake based *Subway Sect* in 1976.

"I've organised a spin-off event, 'A Night Of Treason', which will feature the *Monk Club* house band (fronted by Klein), my own band and *The Fallen Leaves*, plus two London legends of the garage rock scene, all-girl group *The A-Lines* and cult hero *Billy Childish*," reveals Rob.

And, with club regulars already talking about taking the *Monk Club* 'on tour', things finally seem to be happening again in the place they used to call *The Thames Delta*.

■ *A Night Of Treason* takes place at the *Black Horse*, Sheen Road on Nov 5. Next *Monk Club* night is at *The Vineyard Project*, *The Vineyard*, off Hill Rise on Oct 7