

LAUNCH

MUSIC ON YAHOO!

Joe Strummer

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CONCERT REVIEW - The Metro, Chicago

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By Tim Sheridan

Connoisseurs of punk's golden age know the subtle shading of its great singers: the sugary pop bent of [Joey Ramone](#), the snarling vitriol of [Johnny Rotten](#), and the basso-warble of [Iggy Pop](#). But no punk belter was more passionate than [Joe Strummer](#). The former frontman for the [Clash](#) burned through signature tunes like "London Calling" and "Tommy Gun" with a raspy intensity that made these songs unforgettable classics. Now, after nearly 10 years, Strummer is back and, as his second live U.S. date with his new band proved, he's more passionate than ever.

Perhaps the boldest choice of the evening came at the opening of the show, when Strummer rejoined his fans with a (gasp) slow number, fittingly titled "Diggin' The New." With a rather melancholy tone and determined lyric, the song came off as a mixture of retrospection and optimism. But rather than possibly lose his old fans, Strummer proved the new outfit could nail it to the wall with a blistering rendition of "London Calling." The pattern for the evening was now set: tempering new material with classic Clash tunes. After an energetic "White Man In Hammersmith Palais," the band offered the new "Tony Adams," a cinematic soccer saga rich in detail and atmosphere. All the while Strummer was committed to the performance, putting his all into old and new material alike.

"London Calling" "Tommy Gun" "Magnificent Seven" While the new material (from a new disc due in the fall) is uneven, several tunes were quite promising. However, none matched the fire of Clash classics, as evidenced by a tour-de-force delivery of "Straight To Hell" from [Combat Rock](#). Over the rigid rhythmic spine of bassist Scott Shields and drummer Steve Bernard, ornamented by Antony Genn's guitar figures, Strummer extended the song with extemporized lyrics, sounding like a beat poet with a gun to his head. Besides the curious decision to play "London Calling" for the second time in one evening as an encore, the show was a promising sign of the future. So even if Joe Strummer isn't ready to take off his Clash training wheels, he can obviously still ride with the punk kings.



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