

Monday, November 22, 1999

[More Concert Reviews](#)

He strummed to success

By [KIERAN GRANT](#) -- Toronto Sun

JOE STRUMMER

The Warehouse, Toronto
Saturday, November 20, 1999

■ TORONTO - Joe Strummer's show at the Warehouse Saturday would have worked just fine had the former Clash singer-guitarist taken the easy route.

It was that much better because he didn't.

Strummer had it all sewn up: A sold-out house of 1,800 punters out to see him serve up their Clash favourites (the show's promoters even took out ads saying he'd play them).

He has under his guitar strap a classic repertoire of late '70s and early '80s punk rock, much of it tinged with funk and reggae, which he's rarely played live since dissolving The Clash in 1985.

Like so many resurrected rock heroes, he could have messed that music up royally, but he's been absolutely nailing it in concert these days with his keen, fresh-sounding new band, The Mescaleros.

Add that to the fact that Strummer just released his first solo album in 10 years, *Rock Art And The X-Ray Style*, and the singer was holding all cards for a triumphant return-to-form.

Strange, then, that he didn't reveal his hand until well into Saturday night's gig.

There was deadly suspense as Strummer and the five-piece Mescaleros calmly stepped into place and rolled into the slow-building new rocker *Diggin' The New* -- an ironic choice for an opening tune considering that, judging by the blank stares and folded arms, much of the crowd wasn't diggin' it.

Strummer plugged away and won the crowd over row-by-row, shaking them loose with a handful of new tunes.

It was as if he was determined to work for it, to earn a victory -- or at least prove that this



Joe Strummer rocked his fans with original songs and classic Clash material in his show at The Warehouse. -- Veronica Henri, SUN



RELATED LINKS

- [Set List](#)
- [More on Joe Strummer](#)
- [More Concert Reviews](#)

soundscan charts

- [Top 100 Albums](#)
- [Top 50 Singles](#)
- [Top City Albums](#)
- [Top 50 Alternative](#)

[[Complete Charts](#)]

FAST FORWARD music

- [Artist Archive](#)
- [Cdn. Music Index](#)
- [Indie Band listings](#)
- [Cdn. Encyclopedia](#)
- [Future CD releases](#)
- [Music Sked](#)
- [Album reviews](#)
- [Reissues archive](#)
- [Concert Reviews](#)

[an error occurred while processing this directive]

crowd wasn't too tough for The Mescaleros.

He ultimately did both, but not before delivering devastating blows by way of The Clash songbook.

Strummer took nothing for granted. Focused, almost possessed on stage, he didn't get cocky or goofy with his audience, rarely making eye-contact with people in the pit unless in the throes of a tune.

He clearly wasn't comfortable taking credit for songs he didn't write. Rock The Casbah, the first true rabble-rouser of the night, was dedicated to former Clash drummer Topper Headon. Strummer gave a shout-out to Clash co-writer and singer-guitarist Mick Jones before the glorious Safe European Home. A stock version of Toots & The Maytals' Pressure Drop turned into a show-stopper.

Likewise, old tunes were lovingly updated to suit the electro and dub leanings of his young band: Casbah featured fat, rollicking piano from former Black Grape key-man Martin Slattery; the group cut some of the rock gristle off the punk-reggae number White Man In Hammersmith Palais.

The Clash were always good at re-thinking their songs for a live setting, and Strummer can still do so naturally.

To his credit, some of the show's most memorable -- and forgettable -- moments came during solo tunes. The new Yalla Yalla offered captivating and beautiful techno-dub, while Tony Adams and X-Ray Style sounded bold and original. Techno D-Day fell flat, but Strummer stirred up some unexpected memories with 1988's Trash City, an emotional slice of Latin-punkabilly written for the soundtrack to a Keanu Reeves movie that turned out to be a mini-hit in these parts.

The interplay of Jones, Headon, and Clash bassist Paul Simonon were missed at times -- Tommy Gun, Rudie Can't Fail -- but in Strummer's capable hands, the room was rocking and rolling like a soccer terrace.

By encore closer Bankrobber, perhaps Strummer's greatest contribution to recorded sound, it was a religious experience: Vital, immediate, as special as rock music gets. ■

Set List

1. Diggin' The New
2. Nothin' 'Bout Nothin'
3. X-Ray Style

4. Rock The Casbah
5. Quarter Pound Of Ishen
6. Brand New Cadillac
7. Tony Adams
8. Trash City
9. Nitcomb
10. White Man In Hammersmith Palais
11. Safe European Home
12. Yalla Yalla
14. Rudie Can't Fail
15. London Calling
16. Pressure Drop
17. Tommy Gun

Encore

18. Techno D-Day
 19. Straight To Hell
 20. I Fought The Law
 21. Bankrobber
-



E-MAIL TO A FRIEND

[[**Concerns or Feedback? E-mail us!**](#)]

[**JAM!**](#) | [**Music**](#) | [**Movies**](#) | [**TV**](#) | [**Theatre**](#) | [**Books**](#) | [**Video**](#) | [**Country**](#)