



CLASH

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CLASH IN BELFAST — NO PRETENTIOUS PICTURES THIS TIME, BUT ONE GREAT GIG

"**H**IYA!" SHOUTED JOE STRUMMER, punching savagely at a big Christmas balloon decoration hanging from the ceiling above his head. A sweating hall full of Ulster's punk population leapt in the air with a great roar. The Clash had come back to Belfast.

The roar continued more or less unabated throughout the hour-long set, which also saw a lot of frenzied gobbing. At one point Mick Jones had to stop playing to unclog his strings.

There were two Saturday shows originally scheduled for Queen's University Student's Union — which had tried to stage the band's aborted Ulster Hall gig in October, but which was also stymied on that occasion by insurance problems (see *Thrills* 29.10.77). This time around, only one Clash performance actually got off the ground, the first one falling down over a travel hold-up after The Clash apparently missed their plane.

About 650 punks bought tickets for Saturday's show. Each ticket was accompanied by a personal note from student organiser Eamonn McCann, appealing for cool on the part of the audience, "so that other punk concerts might be possible in the New Year."

The entrance hall to the union looked almost like a pet shop as the show got underway. Tables groaned under assorted belts, buckles, leads, studded collars and safety pins, all taken off fans as they came in and each carefully labelled with the owner's name.

The Clash lashed into their programme at sub-sonic speed, throwing almost unnoticed Northern Ireland asides into familiar songs ("Police And Thieves" became "Police And Priests"), and pausing only to wipe down between numbers.

The set finished on "Garageland", which seemed to catch the crowd by surprise. It took them a full 30 seconds to realise that the show was

indeed over, and the mighty roar then started up again with a vengeance.

The band came back onstage almost immediately with "London's Burning", only it was now called "Belfast's Burning". The audience went ape. By the final encore number, "White Riot", the bouncers were no longer able to hold the front-line control, and several people broke through onto the stage to share vocals with Strummer. He passed the mike to one to finish the song for him.

The band left the stage as chaos became general.

When they got outside the fans were in for a shock. In the normally middle-class Elmwood Avenue four or five armoured Land Rovers were pulled up, ringed with police carrying rifles.

The crowd, which had shown no hint of aggro throughout the evening, stood about in groups, looking bemused. The police, several with rifles held on the hip, moved amongst them,

presumably looking for the expected violence. None came.

Suddenly a ligger at the back of the crowd, jumping piggyback on his mate's shoulders, became the target for action, and a handful of cops rushed in to collar him. He was hustled off into one of the waiting Land Rovers.

As the punks moved off down University Road, the Land Rovers kerb-crawled beside them, occasionally stopping for armed constables to jump out and stand guard at street corners. If it was provocation, as some of the fans muttered, it didn't work. Most of the crowd seemed to be in a hurry to get to a party somewhere.

The success of the Clash concert means that Queens will now be able to go ahead with their projected New Year programme. First confirmed date is January 26 for Buzzcocks.

COLIN McCLELLAND

THRILLS