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Local Current Blog

International Clash Day: Remember when the Clash played St. Paul?



Minnesota for the last time. (STR/AFP/Getty Images)

installment in KEXP's annual celebration of "the only band that matters." 2019 is the 40th

by Lydia Moran **FEBRUARY 07, 2019**

Perhaps every day should be International Clash Day, but today in particular marks a special

job at J.C. Penny."

anniversary of the band's seminal release London Calling, and, as the Seattle station puts it, "all across the globe, we're celebrating music as a tool for social consciousness, a band that made it sound so damn good, and an iconic record that still changes lives 40 years later."

For our part, let's look back at when these seminal punk rockers played it big in the Twin Cities. On

Sept. 12, 1979 the quartet stepped on stage for the first time at the St. Paul Civic Center, located

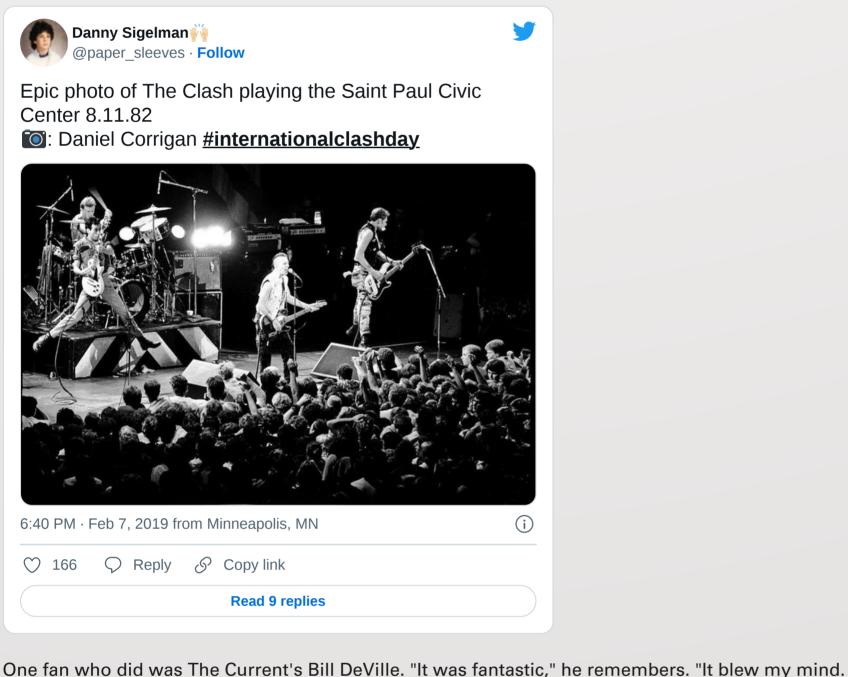
where the Xcel Energy Center now stands. The crowd, "just a few thousand," according to Star Tribune critic John Kerans, danced ceaselessly throughout the 70-minute set. Though, funnily enough, it seems both Kerans and Jon Bream, who was then reporting for the Minneapolis Star, significantly favored both openers (the Undertones and David Johansen) over the headliner. The performance, according to Bream, "was hardly cathartic or transcendental," making a point of distinguishing himself from coastal critics who drooled over the band at the time. After the group's

opening track, "I'm So Bored in the U.S.A.," front man Joe Strummer quipped that the Midwest is a wasteland and asked that the fans "tell us limeys" where to go. According to Bream, punk rock had

died earlier in the year with Sid Vicious of the "defunct" Sex Pistols. Sharing photos from that show, local record retailer John Kass remembers meeting the Clash "in the parking lot of Sun Ray Shopping Center on the east side of St Paul. They had stopped to buy liquor and groceries on their way to Chicago, and I just happened to be next door applying for a

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oxviK1LVFg

While the Clash sparked a movement in the UK, they didn't make it big in the US until 1982 when "Combat Rock" sold more than 500,000 copies. The Clash returned to the Civic Center that very year to 8,300 attendees (including Bob Dylan) and more lukewarm (at best) reviews in the local news — this time followed by a defiant reader rebuttal published a couple days later. "The Clash's stage performance was outstanding," the reader wrote," Maybe your reviewer could have asked a few fans whether they enjoyed the concert."



DeVille remembers a crowd that was "very receptive, very enthusiastic. It was electric." He continues:

They were my favorite band at the time, by far. Went to Ragstock to get some new duds for the

show. Went with all my buddies. We drove to St. Paul...it was a big night.

thinking back to that concert that happened a few years earlier by the Who where people died. I thought when they opened the door the same sort of thing was going to happen, because people bum-rushed as soon as they opened the doors.

The local band Shangoya, who were kind of a reggae/ska band around here, took the

I still remember getting there, in line really early. It was festival seating, and I remember

stage, and once they started playing there was a lot of pushing and shoving going on. This friend of mine ended up falling down, and he literally had to grab the tails of my shirt to pull himself back up again. Some people were actually jumping on stage. It was just insane.

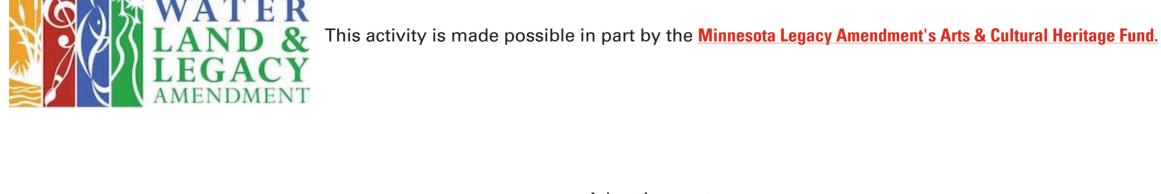
never forget. As far as concerts, it's probably my strongest memory of a show that I have. The Clash - Live In St. Paul, Minnesota, 1982 (Full Concert!)

Then, once the show started, I forgot about all of the nightmares. I had lost both of my shoes; I was barefoot. It was just insane. It was a big night, and one that I'll certainly



the size of the audience at the band's '82 show. Bream wrote, "the teenage guys had come in their combat fatigues and the gals in their Flashdance fashions to vent some energy and witness (for the first time for many of them) a legendary name in rock history. However," he continues, "many of these young concert-goers found a legend that had lost its luster." Just two years later the band dissolved, ahead of their time to the end. "They're not Top 10 material," a fan told the Star Tribune in 1979, "They're loud, fast, and simple. They're not a cerebral

experience." Lydia Moran is a music and arts writer in Minneapolis.



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