

Clash: rock with crunch

By Philip Elwood

The Clash came to Kezar Pavilion on Saturday night — along with crunch, confusion, near-chaos, and (when the band finally got on stage) a remarkably powerful performance of the New Rock sounds.

The Clash, a British quartet in their early 20s, has been working under the hardship for most of 1979 of not only being called the "greatest rock band since the Rolling Stones," but also of having been given lavish national and New York City press coverage.

It's a wonder they've survived, musically, as well as they have. It's also remarkable that they've survived physically, too; what with a regular 75-minute stage performance at superhuman energy levels and a near tug-of-war with the down-front audience (who barrage them with thrown junk) which goes on intermittently throughout the show.

The Clash's performance emphasizes high-gain volume, especially in rhythm (drums, bass, 2 guitars — and a new keyboardist) as well as shouting, heavily percussive vocals by Joe Strummer (the Clash leader) and guitarist, frequent composer (with Strummer) Mick Jones.

Unless a listener is familiar with the words, the vocals by Strummer and Taylor are inaudible above the din of the electronic output, which seems even louder when the crowd gets to screaming and hollering. The general themes of Clash's songs, all of which are quite short (in new-wave style) are opposition to war, opposition to both police and crime, opposition to poverty, and opposition to racism. At the Kezar Pavilion there were a handful of blacks (mostly Bill Graham's security personnel) in a crowd of, perhaps, 3,000.

Strummer sings "I'm So Bored with the USA," but there's also one called "English Civil War," which is an ingenious thump-rock variation on "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." There are selections like "Hat and War," "White Riot," "Fought The Law," etc., and nary a slow ballad — plenty of blues-based numbers, but they're all screamers.

For what it is, The Clash is superb; and its followers (dedicated they are) don't want to talk about definitions of exactly what The Clash are playing — they want to jump up



The Clash lived up to its name at Kezar Pavilion

and down (the "pogo dance") and yell.

Prior to The Clash, Saturday, an exquisitely awful New York band called The Cramps was virtually yawned off the stage.

And before that, the local Dead Kennedys band, featuring mayoralty candidate Jello Biafra, played a set. Biafra is a quite good singer and actor. He plunged into the audience at one point, had his clothing torn up and

performed the remainder of the set with shredded trousers which frequently revealed his private parts.

The sight of it all tended to distract an observer from the sounds of the Dead Kennedys, and from Jello's political ambitions.

And although Biafra announces "I don't want to see no Nazi salutes" before he sings the group's hit, "California Uber Alles," the fascistic theme of the number (which is a comment on Gov. Brown) is not a pleasant one.

In between the various performances at the Saturday evening Kezar Pavilion show a British d. j. named Barry Meyers spun discs and made long, generally incomprehensible, comments. Before The Clash came on stage the crowd began impatient, rhythmic clapping; Meyers said, "I don't know what's bothering you people — the band will be here."

I know what was "bothering" the crowd — they had waited an hour and a half between The Cramps and The Clash and they were getting fed up.

Kezar Pavilion, never before utilized for rock shows, is a nice size (about 5,000 capacity, I'd guess) but the acoustics are poor and the hall's two entry doors much too narrow. The crowd pushed and shoved a good deal, and were, of course often outrageously attired and decorated. No major problems, inside or out, as far as I could detect.

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accusing Quentin Kopp of "manufacturing"
a budget crisis for political purposes.

Marilyn