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Local News

June 29, 1982: The Clash unleashes furious set at Kinsmen

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Guitarist-lead vocalist Joe Strummer (born John Graham Mellor) exhorted everyone to “try not to be an animal out there,” as police officers (one with cotton balls in his ears) mounted the stage. The boards were removed, the crowd stepped back and “The Clash proceeded to unleash the most powerful and uncompromising rock rave-up since Elvis Costello and Bob Marley visited here in 1978 and 1979, respectively,” the review said.

“True, somebody spat on Strummer during Bankrobber (prompting him to say he would ‘brain’ the offending individual should he continue). True, you had to be in an arc 60 metres from the stage to really appreciate the band, the Kinsmen being an acoustic nowhere land. True, the heat near the stage was almost suffocating. Yet The Clash — not to mention a good number of its 7,000 devotees — persevered.

“In a sense, the show was almost too much to take. Wearing ‘designer’ fatigues (Strummer had a Special Forces-Mohican cut à la DeNiro in Taxi Driver), playing through a brutally loud sound system, the band drove through tune after tune like possessed rock shock troops, as a rear-screen projector splayed pictures of want ads, handguns, Margaret Thatcher, Lech Walesa, the Ayatollah, brick walls and Lord knows what else behind the net-covered stage.”

The highlights of the show were Somebody Got Murdered, The Magnificent Seven, Career Opportunities and Police and Thieves.

The punk band, formed in 1976, disbanded in early 1986. Strummer died suddenly at age 50 from a congenital heart defect on Dec. 22, 2002.

The Clash was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2003, and the next year was ranked No. 28 on Rolling Stone magazine’s list of 100 greatest artists of all time.

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