



Pic: Paul Cox/LFI

THE CLASH: not sensible

# Rabblе rousing

## The Clash Newcastle

IF YOU don't happen to subscribe to the rugby scrum/Black Hole Of Calcutta school of rock appreciation, watching the Clash can be a very uncomfortable experience. Avoiding the fights, ignoring the beer permanently being spilt over your new jacket, sweating like a pig, attempting to rationalise something that so obviously appeals on a gut rather than cerebral level.

These days the Clash do close on a two hour show that pulls from all the singles, the three albums and unreleased items like 'Bank Robber' and 'Someone Got Murdered'. Their material has acquired structure and matured nicely over the past three years to the extent where the band have to overreach themselves to play it. Always a shade vulnerable, the Clash's weaknesses are on show now even more than ever. If

the crowd are just a couple of notches off being a rabble, then the band are similarly shambolic.

From the (relative) calm of the back the Clash sound like a record player that's been tossed downstairs so that nothing works except the bass, which is jammed on full. While Paul Simonon threatens to dislodge the floorboards Mick Jones' guitar comes and goes more times than Jimmy Pursey has announced he's packing it in.

But it's vocally where their inadequacies are most glaring. Strummer, the punk Brando, is largely unintelligible (not, please note, inaudible) while Jones, although getting more powerful as the set progresses, still sings like he's got a clothes line full of pegs clipped to his nose.

Never a band to do anything by halves, the Clash are all too guilty of taking a good idea and flogging it. Every other song seems to delve into dub at some point, with the ultimate being the version of

'Armageddon Time'. Mikey Dread and an unidentified mate who bears more than a passing resemblance to Huggy Bear are wheeled on and from then on the number degenerates into the most pointless, unfocussed piece of meandering encore I've heard in ages. Boring.

Having had their fun, the band then fulfil their obligation to the people who buy the tickets, by keeping 1977 alive. As 'Janie Jones', 'What's My Name' and 'Garageland' are being racketed through, the louts who live under the permanent delusion that no gig is complete without them join their heroes on stage and do their stuff. A skinhead clamps his arm round Strummer and the two of them bellow their way through 'London's Burning'. Nobody attempts to remove the interloper, probably taken in by his resemblance to the Angelic Mensi. By this time next week he'll have a band together and be advertising himself as 'ex-

Clash'.

Throughout this the invasion that followed and the various stoppages caused by the usual lunkheads punching each other out, Strummer doesn't budge.

When chaos breaks out around them, Mick Jones snarls and tells the 'Fucking cunts (that they are) fucking it up for everyone else', but keeps glancing over his shoulder to make sure that the interlopers are escorted off the stage in as peaceful a manner as possible. But Strummer is like a man possessed, easily as spellbound as anybody in the audience. A study in intensity, it's like he's worked himself up into a dervish-like trance so that he notices nothing but the music.

Viewed on any sort of sensible level, this was a mess. But if it's spirit you want, the Clash have still got it in spades. And who ever claimed rock'n'roll was sensible anyway?

IAN RAVENDALE