

Costello rides high, Clash doesn't

THE TWO LEADING MUSICAL forces of the so-called second British invasion—Elvis Costello and the Clash—culminated American summer concert tours with performances in New York this week. It was apparent from the opening chord that the once inseparable labels of punk



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attributed to the Clash, and new wave accorded to Costello, had in fact evolved into much different musical forms.

The Clash, borne out of the socio-political turmoil in Britain during the late 1970s, still remained the hard-edged, intense quartet who could drive their fans to fury. Costello, the angry loner, whose songs were crafted with a personal message of estranged feelings, conjured up a

less polarized message than the Clash but communicated a deeper alliance with the audience.

Such were the impressions resulting from Costello's magnificent performance at Forest Hills Stadium last weekend plus The Pier on Monday and the three-night stint by the Clash ending Thursday night at the Pier Festival sponsored by the Dr. Pepper music festival.

Ironically, it was Costello, whose real name is Declan MacManus, who wrote his first song in 1976 after listening to the debut album by The Clash. While political and internal struggles have both positive and negative effects on the growth of The Clash as a band and statesmen of the underclass, Costello kept on churning out songs at a prolific rate that undeniably made him the master tunesmith of our age.

Costello has been able to incorporate an eclectic range of musical forms, blues, rockabilly, ballads and rockers to capture a feeling that comes straight from the heart. In his appearance in New York, backed by the impressive four-man instrumental group named the Attractions, Costello hit home without pounding us over the head in songs like "Red Shoes," "Allison," "Pump It Up," plus tunes from the impressive new Lp, "Imperial Bedroom" such as "Man Out Of Time" and "Tears Before Bedtime."

THE CLASH HAD considerable more difficulty getting their point across despite the furious tempos of the music. The departure of Topper Headon on drums hampered most attempts of their recent, more sophisticated work where percussive interplay with rhythms made songs like "Magnificent Seven" and "Somebody Got Murdered" jump with life.

The band, which inserted former drummer Terry Climes in the hot-seat just as the summer tour began, appeared to rely on its older, simpler songs which Climes could better handle. Songs like "White Riot" and "I'm So Bored With The U.S.A." came off well, but seemed dated and hollow. Bassist Paul Simonon also seemed to have trouble interlocking with Climes and the result was the band was often out of tempo, or had to compromise on second-rate arrangements.

It was Elvis Costello who remained true to his musical inclination and whose performance was an uplifting experience. The accomplished songwriter has become an adroit crooner as well. His songs have a timelessness that still sound fresh years after the release. It has been said that Costello may indeed be the Frank Sinatra of this music generation and his songs have a heartfelt reverie.

Costello's two-hour set at Forest Hills displayed a glimpse of his six-year career with 30 songs from a repertoire more than three times as great. When his set ended, after three encores, the crowd called out for more because there were many "favorites" overlooked.

The Clash jammed about as many songs into the same two-hour time frame, but by the concert's end, The Clash appeared tired and worn out. Their music had become almost a parody of what it once stood for: honesty.

While both Costello and The Clash have been in the forefront of new music for several years, and both have shown a diverse and engaging style in communicating new feelings, it's obvious that The

Clash have become dated and any commercial success they receive owes itself to the studio where they can overdub their shortcomings. Costello, on the other hand, is just coming of age.

CLUBLAND: Here's what some of the clubs are spinning at the top of their playlists: At The Peppermint Lounge, 1. Trio, "Da Da Da"; 2. Grandmaster Flash, "The Message;" 3. New Order,

"Temptation;" 4. Bad Manners, "Lollipop;" 5. Disco Four, "Whip Rap"; At AM/PM, 1. Grandmaster Flash, "The Message;" 2. Trio, "Da Da Da;" 3. Snuky Tate, "The Pope;" 4. Wayne County, "Berlin;" 5. Yazoo, "Situation;" Rockpool National Dance Chart, 1. Yazoo, "Situation;" 2. The Clash, "Combat Rock;" 3. Billy Idol, "White Wedding;" 4. The Go-Go's, "Vacation;" 5. Gang Of Four, "I Love a Man in a Uniform." ■



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