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★ Part V

ROBERT HILBURN

WHO, CLASH AMID ROAR OF CROWDS

The Who's two Southern California stadium concerts next week are separate, but certainly not equal, affairs.

On Wednesday at San Diego's Jack Murphy Stadium, the classic British rock group will be joined by two acts that are long on record sales but woefully short on original or compelling vision: Loverboy and John Cougar.

At the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum on Friday, however, the Who bill will feature a band that may eventually be regarded in rock with as much reverence as the Who itself: the Clash.

Indeed, the Clash's performance preceding the Who earlier this month at New York's Shea Stadium was more consistently involving than the headliner's. That's because the Who's best moments are tied to songs that are a decade or more old, while the Clash is on a creative roll that is one of the most rewarding ever in rock.

As the Clash ripped through such blistering numbers as "Police on My Back" and "Career Opportunities" at Shea, you could almost feel a torch being passed from one great band to another, younger one. But the Clash's Mick Jones isn't about to make such a claim.

Backstage after the Shea set,

GEORGE ROSE / Los Angeles Times



Clash's Mick Jones to appear.

Jones said, "I think it's a good bill, but I don't feel any passing of the torch or anything. I just see the tour as another step in a very long process of trying to build an audience in this country. But I feel very good at the moment, better than I did a few years ago. It was disheartening when we couldn't get any air play or even get our record released here. But I've never really lost hope. I've always been an optimistic person."

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POP: CLASH IS GAINING LEGITIMACY

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The fact that a band with as much integrity and talent as the Clash is only now receiving widespread recognition in this country is an example of how sluggish the pop machinery has become.

Part of the original punk movement in England, the group was viewed with such suspicion by the pop establishment here that its record company, Epic, didn't even release the Clash's first British LP in this country.

Thanks to the air play being picked up by its spunky "Rock the Casbah" and seductive "Should I Stay or Should I Go" tracks, the group's new "Combat Rock" album, however, has just gone past the 500,000 sales mark.

While the exposure gained from appearing on some of the Who dates will push sales even more, the most important aspect of appearing with the Who is that it should give the Clash legitimacy among conservative rock fans who still think of the band as merely a trendy or extremist punk outfit.

The truth is the group, without sacrificing the intensity or socio-political foundation of its early goals, has moved in its last three albums considerably beyond its punk base to include reggae, funk and even rockabilly touches in its music.

If mainstream fans here are warming up to the Clash, some of the group's early allies, however, may be puzzled by the band's participation in stadium shows. The massive outdoor gatherings were attacked by the punk contingent in the late '70s as a sign of rock's greedy superstar syndrome.

Replied Jones in New York, "The reason we're doing these shows is quite simple: The week we started doing the Who shows, we sold twice as many records as we did the week before. I don't mean to be cynical but that's really great for us because we are actually reaching some more people.

"That doesn't mean we're out to be like Burger King or something and be everyone's favorite, but it's no good just sitting in a hall somewhere in obscurity. We've got to go out there and compete or all these other groups will slip by us. And they're rubbish"

Continued the outspoken Jones, who co-writes most

of the Clash's material with lead singer Joe Strummer: "To me, rock means Elvis (Presley) before he was in the Army and Eddie Cochran and Gene Vincent, the early Stones, Beatles and the Who. And, of course, Dylan, but he was really another thing—the king of words. I don't think of rock as going much further than that. Most of the stuff that calls itself rock today is terrible.

"We're trying to demonstrate that you can play real, honest music and still reach and excite people. We're also trying to show that you don't have to play by pop 'rules.' We like to change, try new things. In a way, you might say we're the guinea pigs of rock: *Oink, Oink.*"

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MEANWHILE: THE WHO—Kenney Jones, who replaced the late Keith Moon as the Who's drummer in 1979, said in New York that he's not surprised the group is now on its farewell U.S. tour. "I knew when I joined the band that it was basically on its last touring legs," he said at his Manhattan hotel the day before the first of the group's two sold-out Shea Stadium dates. "That's only because I know how I feel. I've been touring with the Small Faces and the Faces for almost the same amount of time and quite frankly I'm fed up with doing these long, grueling tours."

About the tour so far, Jones added, "The audiences have been amazing. As soon as we walk on stage, the noise has been deafening—louder than us. I guess they just want to show us they're strong and they care. It's going to be strange not hearing that roar any more. But we'll have time to wind down.

"The Who have another couple of albums to make so that means another couple of years together, and the band may even play an occasional gig during that time. But it'll be a special thing, no more tours. We won't miss that at all." In Sunday's Calendar magazine, the Who's Pete Townshend talks about the end of the Who and the state of rock these days.

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LIVE ACTION: Tickets go on sale Monday for Judas Priest's Nov. 21 show at the Long Beach Arena. . . . Also available Monday will be tickets for Motley Crue at Perkins Palace Nov. 19 and a second Joe Jackson concert Nov. 8 at the Hollywood Palladium. . . . Tickets go on sale Monday at 1 p.m. for Crosby, Stills & Nash's Nov. 26-28 engagement at the Universal Amphitheater. . . . T-Bone Burnett will open Friday's Who/Clash show at the Coliseum. . . . A second Public Image Ltd. concert is set for the Pasadena Civic Nov. 8. . . .