

Clash set to rock the Civic Center Theater

Pete Howard is playing drums for The Clash during its tour of six Southwest cities.

The group, regarded one of the most important forces in today's rock music, will perform in El Paso for the first time at 8 p.m. Wednesday in the Civic Center Theater.

The Clash — guitarist/vocalist Joe Strummer, guitarist Mick Jones and bassist Paul Simonon — has been without a drummer since Terry Chimes left the group earlier this year. Chimes was the band's original drummer, but left after The Clash released its self-titled debut album in 1977. He was replaced by Topper Headon, a jazz-style drummer who left the group last year after the release of the group's first platinum album, *Combat Rock*, and an ensuing American tour.

The Clash came together in the English working class city of Brixton, which experienced racial rioting last summer.

Born amidst the clamor and volatility of the British punk movement in 1976, the group began to garner attention in the clubs thanks to its reworking of the Junior Mervin hit *Police and Thieves*. An original song, *White Riot*, set the tone for future Clash music, drawing from Joe Strummer and Simonon participation in a riot in England in 1976. The group had an early hit with *I Fought the Law*, which gave former El Pasoan Bobby Fuller his greatest fame in the 1960s.

After an opening date for The Sex Pistols, punk's most cataclysmic act, The Clash soon gained the attention of English record companies. Ironically, its first American set, *Give 'em Enough Rope* (hailed as a masterpiece by critics in this country and Europe), actually preced-



The Clash is, from left, Joe Strummer, Paul Simonon, Mick Jones.

ed the group's self-titled debut album here.

Though originally part of the the British punk movement, The Clash rapidly outgrew that genre's limitations, dropping its nihilistic stance and incorporating its black music roots with lyrics that represented an activism and world community consciousness.

Hardly the kind of group that dominates radio playlists in this country, The Clash foreshadowed its recent success here in 1979 with the hit single *Train in Vain*, from the highly regarded two-pocket album, *London Calling*. A three-record excursion entitled *Sandinista*, a musically vast production that drained the band of all its financial resources. The group fought with its label, Epic Records, to keep the list price down to an unconventional \$14.98.

The payoff came last year when the album *Combat Rock*, spurred by singles *Should I Stay or Should I Go* and the gold *Rock the Casbah*, sold more than one million copies, the first Clash album to do so.

The group has worked with several diverse talents on its records, including avant-garde country singer Joe Ely, poet Allen Ginsberg and reggae singer Max Romeo.

Currently, the band is coming off a string of European concert dates and is touring six Southwestern cities — Amarillo, Laredo, Wichita Falls, San Antonio, El Paso and Tucson — before headlining the first night of the US Festival, a major concert spectacle staged annually in Southern California that is expected to draw up to 500,000 people when it begins next Friday.