

low clouds
weather details on A-2

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US Festival beliefs clashed with the Clash

By MIKE DAVIS

Sun Staff Writer

DEVORE — As rock's angriest, most inspiring and most socially-conscious outfit, the Clash seemed to feel it had something to prove Saturday when it headlined opening night at the US Festival.

Virtually everything the US Fest stands for runs opposite to the Clash's beliefs, and the British band was clearly on the defensive when it delivered an 80-minute,

review

20-song set of furious, impassioned rock 'n' roll — with most of the fury and passion directed at the crowd, the other bands on the bill, and especially at the festival organizers, millionaire computer whiz kid Steve Wozniak and his sponsoring UNUSON Corp.

Throughout the evening, the Clash and its leader-spokesman, guitarist and principal songwriter Joe Strummer, assaulted the audience not just with their music, but with their fiery reactions to questions about their very presence here — questions that had been raised almost since the day the festival lineup was announced. Such as...

Many of the Clash's musical statements are vehemently anti-capitalist and anti-government; why, then, were they accepting a reported \$500,000 out of Wozniak's corporate petty-cash box to headline a festival that positively oozed the trappings of American free enterprise and commercialism out of its every pore? And also, how do they explain all that dirty corporate money they're reaping as the royalties from last year's million-selling *Combat Rock* LP continue to roll in?

Strummer attempted to reconcile all this (and, perhaps, to work out a little guilt) at a Los Angeles press conference a week before the Clash's scheduled appearance. He argued that the US Festival would provide his band with a broader forum to disseminate its beliefs (an estimated 165,000 attended the first day), and further asserted that its presence here was all the more essential because it would be the only band with a meaningful "message" to perform all weekend (the music of Sunday's and Monday's top-billed acts, Van Halen and David Bowie, were described by Strummer as "mindless").

As for the little matter of the Clash's new-found wealth, Strummer indicated they'd use it to help

(Please see Clash, A-5)



Staff photo by Gary R. Voth

British singer David Bowie takes the stage at the U.S. Festival Monday night.

Third day of US Festival cooler, calmer

By MARK LUNDAHL
and CARL YETZER

Sun Staff Writers

DEVORE — The US Festival '83 closed out the third and final day of the rock portion of its celebration early today on a cooler and calmer note.

The high temperature was only 89 compared with Sunday's 98, and a cool breeze stirred.

The crowd — put at 230,000 by UNUSON and 150,000 by sheriff's officials — was smaller and more relaxed than Sunday's sellout crowd of 300,000. At one point, in

keeping with the US Festival's theme of togetherness, the crowd spontaneously broke into a chorus of "Give Peace a Chance" as the Irish rock band U2 performed. And UNUSON and law enforcement officials breathed a sigh of relief, but still stood ready to cope with any problems.

San Bernardino County Sheriff Floyd Tidwell said Monday's crowd — which gathered at Glen Helen Regional Park to witness English rock singer David Bowie's first American appearance in five years — appeared to be orderly,

• Also contributing to this story were Sun Staff Writers Mike Terry and Art Wong. Other stories, B-1.

unlike the "heavy metal Sunday" crowd.

After the Sunday night concert, that audience caused some problems for law enforcement officers when a fleet of shuttle buses that were to carry patrons back to overflow parking lots at Gilfillan Airport in North Fontana was slow to arrive.

Sheriff's Capt. James Ferrona-

to said that the mixup occurred because some of the buses were dispatched to the wrong location initially, then had trouble getting back to where they were supposed to be because of the heavy traffic.

"They were supposed to have 90 buses out there and they only had 30," Tidwell said. "They were throwing rocks at our officers and at each other."

Tidwell said that fences were knocked down by the surging crowds and that some horses of

(Please see Cooler, A-7)

Clash . . .

(Continued from A-1)

develop new talent in the group's homeland. Shortly before the band was to take the stage Saturday night, Wozniak offered the crowd a "message" of his own, in the form of an audio-visual display entitled "Dream Sequence." Integrating lasers with the 400,000-watt sound system and the three huge video screens that frame the stage, this initially arresting light-and-sound show evolved into a torpid, heavy-handed plea for universal peace and brotherhood — a favorite theme of Wozniak's, and the central ideology behind the US Festival.

Then **the Clash** took the stage and preached violence, rebellion and anarchy. Though there had been rumors earlier that the band was threatening to cancel its show (because, it turned out, it disapproved of the festival's commercialism), Strummer finally led the group onstage just past 11 p.m., after a half-hour delay.

With a banner reading "SEX STYLE SUBVERSION, CLASH NOT FOR SALE" draped above the musicians, Strummer greeted the crowd by saying, "OK, here we are in the capital of the decadent U.S. of A. This set of music is dedicated to those in the crowd with children, to make sure there's something left for them in future centuries." Whereupon the band launched into "London Calling," one of several calls to arms on their watershed 1979 album of the same name.

The ensuing set included some of the group's most powerful material, from the anti-corporate diatribe "Koka Kola" to such trenchant tirades against oppression as "Police On My Back," "Know Your Rights," "Clampdown" (their final encore) and even "I Fought the Law," their version of which lends the song a meaning far more inflammatory than its originator, the Bobby Fuller Four, could have intended back in the mid-60s.

Not everyone in the crowd was receptive. Many festivalgoers headed for the exits early in the set, some of them filing out to the mocking strains of "Guns of Brixton," in which bassist Paul Simonon sings: "When they kick at your front door, how you gonna come? With your hands on your head, or on the trigger of your gun?"

Strummer was impatient with his audience's unwillingness to accept the band's lyrical challenges. At one point between songs he referred to the largely passive crowd as "camel dung" and urged: "Give me some hostility — I want to know there's people alive out there." Later he looked out at the dwindling masses and snarled, "Oh, still there, huh?" as the band kicked into "I'm So Bored with the USA." He also assailed the other groups on Saturday's program — including the enormously popular Men at Work and Stray Cats — by saying: "Everyone else up here (on stage) before us was nowhere. Can't you understand that?"

With all this in mind, it couldn't have surprised Strummer when the crowd's most enthusiastic reaction was devoted to the second encore, the hit single "Should I Stay Or Should I Go" — ironically, the most innocuous song the Clash has ever done.

Unlike **the Clash**, which seemed so out of place here, Van Halen, the Sunday night headliner, slipped into the festival setting as easily as you would an old pair of jeans.

Van Halen was born to play festivals; no band better understands the dynamics of entertaining a crowd of 300,000. Their show is mounted on a grand scale, every move exaggerated, larger than life, designed to reach people half a mile from the stage — singer David Lee Roth leaping spread-eagled off the drum platform; guitarist Eddie Van Halen skidding halfway across the stage on his knees; drummer Alex Van Halen pumping out a wall of sound behind a kit that includes four bass drums.

But beyond the sweeping scope of their presentation, what really sets Van Halen apart from their more obnoxious metal-music brethren — and what made their show Sunday so enjoyable — is their attitude, and the music itself.

The Van Halens redeem their lack of substance by not pretending to be anything more than what they are: a turn-up-the-volume, party-down rock 'n' roll band that doesn't ask an audience to take it any more seriously than it takes itself. Their only "message" is: "We're gonna get drunk, play all night, make lotsa money and have lotsa fun; c'mon with us."

Now, how can anyone resist an offer like that? Certainly, Van Halen communicates their "message" more effectively than the Clash does theirs; as Roth noted during Sunday's set, his band played to about twice as many people as the Clash had the night before. Even among non-fans, Van Halen's approach is bound to buy the band a lot of good will — enough to forgive its musical excesses, which are not infrequent.

Besides, when Eddie Van Halen's the guy being



Staff photo by Gary B. Voth

A female fan rises above the crowd Monday with a shirt that reads "Bowie's back."

excessive, who's to complain? On sheer technical prowess alone, the man has to rate among the all-time monster-chiller-horror electric guitarists ever. He may not have Hendrix' expressiveness and flair for experimentation, or Clapton's extemporaneous creativity, but no one in rock has ever played the instrument faster and cleaner than he does.

While Van Halen's original music incorporates a wide enough variety of stylistic elements to make it more interesting than any of the heavy-metal hash slung out by Judas Priest or Scorpions earlier Sunday, nothing in the band's repertoire better exemplifies its refreshing lack of pretense than its rambunctious cover of Roy Orbison's 1964 hit, "Oh Pretty Woman," which brought Sunday's 90-minute set to a fittingly raucous climax.

As a vocalist, Roth might not be able to carry Orbison's mike stand, but the band delivered the song with such exuberance, and with such obvious respect for the spirit of the original, that it didn't matter. It was great rock 'n' roll any way you looked at it.



May their party never end.

Other highlights (and lowlights) from the three-day festival follow. (Note: David Bowie, Monday night's headliner, performed late and will be reviewed in Wednesday's Entertainment section).

MONDAY

Wozniak failed in his efforts to sign up Bruce Springsteen for the US Fest, but he got the next-best thing in yesterday's opening band, Little Steven and the Disciples of Soul, who may well have been the most satisfying act all day.

Little Steven is, of course, Steve Van Zandt, lead guitarist for Springsteen's E Street Band. The Disciples' music encompasses many of the classic rock elements and every bit of the integrity that epitomize The Boss at his best, but there's also a heavier rhythm and blues emphasis the horn section is one of the tightest this side of Earth, Wind and Fire. Too bad more people didn't arrive early enough to see them — there's nothing like a little shot of R&B to get your blood flowing first thing in the morning.

Meanwhile, Monday was pretty much Women's Day, as a procession of glamorous queens (Stevie Nicks, Quarterflash lead singer Randy Rossi) and sexpots (Dale Bozzio of Missing Persons and Terri Nunn of Berlin) sauntered on and off the stage. Overshadowing all of them, however, was the Pretenders' Chrissie Hynde, the most commanding female presence in rock.

The Pretenders were making their first Southern California appearance since the upheaval of last year, when guitarist James Honeyman-Scott died of apparently drug-related causes and bassist Pete Farndon was kicked out of the band (Farndon also died earlier this year).

The band clearly misses Honeyman-Scott's dynamic solos, but has nonetheless lost little of its overall appeal with the new lineup, which includes Robby McIntosh on guitar, Malcolm Foster on bass and Chris Thomas, the group's producer, on keyboards.

It still has one of rock's very best drummers in Martin Chambers, the Keith Moon of his generation. And most of all, it still has Hynde, who brings to the Pretenders what Mick Jagger brings to the Rolling Stones — smoldering sensuality and white-hot rock 'n' roll instincts.

Though Hynde appeared nervous at first (she forgot the first verse to "Talk of the Town" early in the set), in general she performed Monday with as much energy and conviction as I've ever seen from her, and the band stayed with her every step of the way. The 75-minute set, which ended with a kick-out-the-jams version of "Money" (appropriate, considering how much of it some of the bands were paid), was one of the weekend's most exhilarating highs.

The other women on the program suffered by comparison. Nicks is blessed with one of the most distinctive and versatile voices in pop music, but is burdened with flaccid material (some of it her own). Ros at times comes off as a Pat Benatar without the vocal chops, and though she's listenable when she stays within her limits, she, too, tends to get handcuffed by her band's tame, mainstream approach.

Missing Persons offers an even deadlier combination — lame power-pop that wastes the talents of some of the Southland's most capable musicians, and an incompetent vocalist in Bozzio, who dresses like Barbarella and sings like Betty Boop on amphetamines. Their performance Monday was insufferable. Nunn is no virtuoso either, but she's a regular Beverly Sills compared to Bozzio, and Berlin's atmospheric, Euro-synth sound is at least mildly engaging.

Thankfully, the festival organizers provided an oasis by scheduling UB2 between Quarterflash and Missing Persons. The strident anti-warurgings of the Irish quartet's music did more to unite the crowd and remind the '80s peace-movement spirit Wozniak so cherishes than anything he put up on his video screens.

When, near the end of the band's uplifting set, singer Bono Vox climbed a rope ladder to the top of the canopy overhanging the stage and hurled a symbolic white flag of peace into the audience some 10 stories below, the emotional tug in the crowd was palpable.

SUNDAY

Ozzy Osbourne had held a soft spot in my heart ever since my miszy youth, when I was a fan of those lovable drone-music pioneers, Black Sabbath. With his scraggly, pudgy, anti-rock star

appearance, he appeals to me on some perverse level I can't explain and rarely acknowledge.

I suspect that deep down, Ozzy realizes he hasn't got a shred of talent and is just grateful to be along for the ride, as far as it takes him. Whatever the reason, he has a great time when he's on stage, and he all but wails his audience to have a great time with him. I also think his much-publicized bird-descriptions and satanic references are really just harmless, shock-value diversionary tactics to take your mind off the fact that he can't sing; beneath it all, he seems like a pretty nice guy, with a genuine affection for his fans.

It's really hard not to like Ozzy, and heaven help me, I do. When he cranked up Sabbath's "Children of the Grave" toward the end of his set Sunday, it almost made me want to . . . dance.

On the other hand, it's easy to dislike Judas Priest, the vanguard of the late-'70s British metal revival who followed Ozzy Sunday. Although the semi-justifiable homicide they committed on Joan Baez' schmaltzy "Diamonds and Rust" was hilarious, the rest of their act merely cataloged all the most offensive aspects of the genre, from the lobotomizing, power-chord bombast to the adolescent, fat-pumping macho posing.

Then there was Triumph, a power trio with little to offer musically and nothing to offer philosophically. Sort of like Rush, only dumber. It's at times like this that I wish there had never been a Cream.

Whoever made Judas Priest used the same cookie-cutter to create Scorpions, whose only useful accomplishment was giving Van Halen an easy act to follow.

SATURDAY

The program featured a wide variety of styles and talents, from the sophisticated mainstream rock of Men at Work to the Stray Cats' neo-rockabilly, from the deliberately disaffected (but often humorous) cynicism of Wall of Voodoo to the manic, sometimes overbearing intensity of Oingo Boingo, from the buoyant, ska-flavored danceability of the English Beat to the wimpy synth-rock of A Flock of Seagulls.

Oingo Boingo, the fourth band up, was the first to get the crowd really involved. Its complex, relentlessly frenetic arrangements — the musical equivalent, one would imagine, of a Robin Williams monologue played at 78 RPM — proved highly infectious as well, helping atone for leader Danny Elfman's pretentious self-indulgence.

The English Beat kept the pump primed for another hour or so, until (after two encores) it yielded the stage to A Flock of Seagulls, whose rapid, limp-noodle music (devoid of either style or substance) and agonizingly off-key vocals allowed the crowd to catch up on its sunbathing.

There was no sun left by the time the Stray Cats had finished a pleasant but predictable and undiverting set, leaving the stage to Men at Work.

The top-selling Australian band conducted its supportive audience on a brisk tour of all the trademarks that have fueled its unabating popularity — polished, understated pop arrangements flavored with a Police-like blend of jazz and reggae elements; the measured professionalism of singer Colin Hay's Sting-like readings of the group's affably neurotic lyrics; Hay's obligatory trips through the Ministry of Silly Dances; and the sudden, stark intrusions of Greg Ham's stylized saxophone.

It's a sound calculated to please (or at least not offend) the ear, and the band is consistent (if not really fulfilling) in delivering it. By the end of Saturday's classically structured set — which they closed out with three of their biggest crowd-pleasers, "Overkill," "Down Under" and an encore featuring "Be Good Johnny" — the consensus among the 160,000 was that Men at Work had done their job well.

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