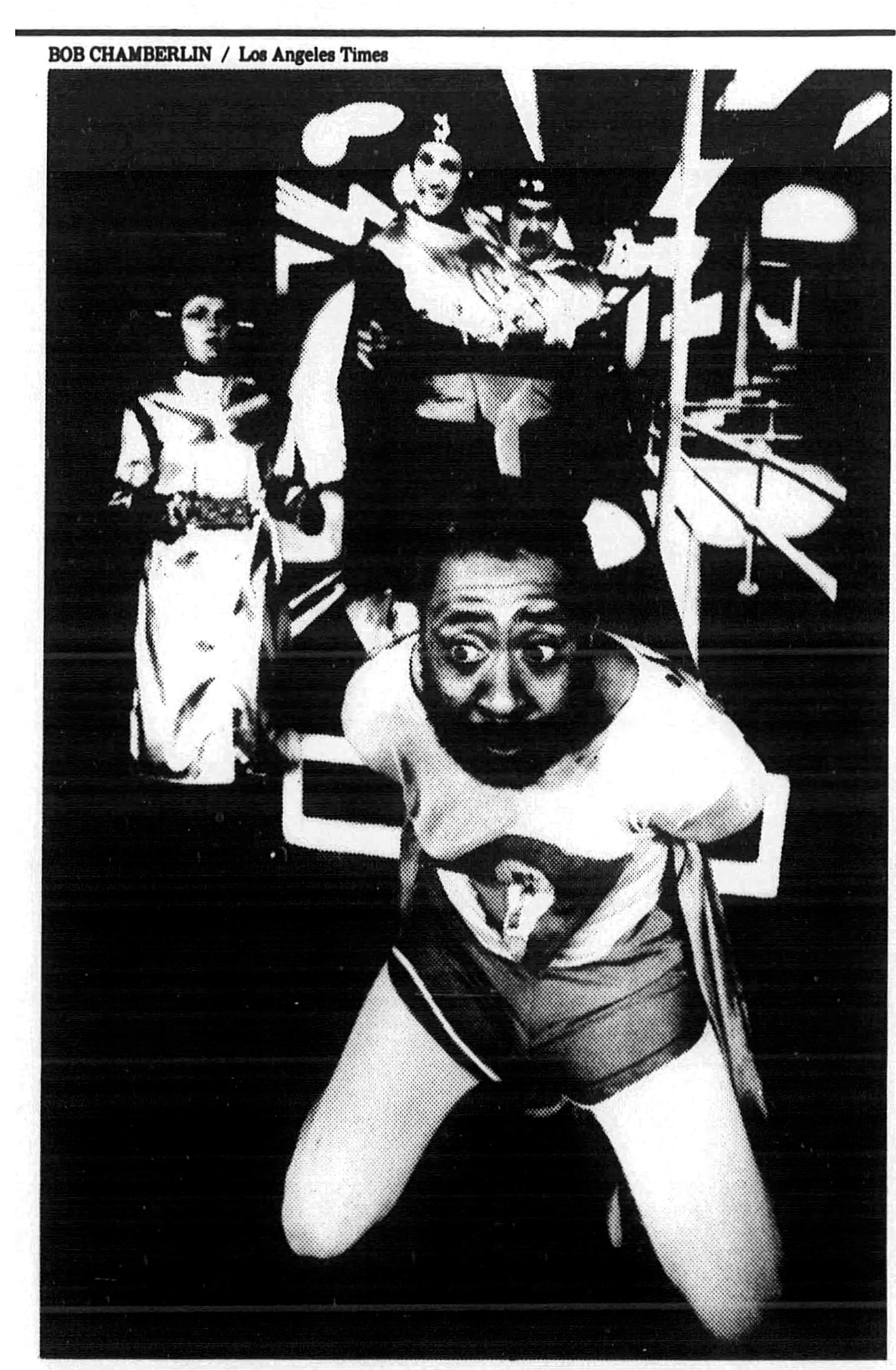


The Clash's Joe Strummer discourses on US Festival to the press.



Factwino (Shabaka) is at the mercy of the bad guys at Fox Venice.

POP BEAT

OPINIONS ON

By MICHAEL LONDON

t's D-Day in Devore. As months of hoopla surrounding the second US Festival come to a merciful end, two questions remain unanswered about the three-day rock megashow:

How many people will attend, and just what are they attending?

First, the attendance. Though promoters originally spoke optimistically of a ticket ceiling of 300,000 per day, they now are hopeful of a peak-day attendance of 200,000.

As of midday Friday, TicketMaster, the festival's exclusive ticket agent, had sold in excess of 250,000 tickets for the four shows, with the heaviest action centering on Sunday's heavy-metal assault.

Since the break-even point for the \$18-million festival is estimated at between 600,000 and 800,000 tickets, commercial success appears to hinge on the number of walk-up concertgoers. The rock headliners this weekend are the Clash, today; Van Halen, Sunday, and David Bowie, Monday. Willie Nelson tops next Saturday's country bill.

If the festival lands in the red, Steve Wozniak, its founder and benefactor, has warned that he'll pull the plug on US. Last year's show consumed between \$4 million and \$10 million of his Apple Computer fortune.

What's the meaning of all this madness? A number of people have been mulling that question over in public lately. According to whom you consult, the US Festival is:

-"Three days to retreat in harmony from the serious world."

-". . Cat food. Because that the way it's being marketed." -"Just another excuse to party."

Those replies come from Steve Wozniak, the Clash's Joe Strummer and Van Halen's David Lee Roth, respectively.

The Wozniak and Strummer comments came at a flamboyant press conference in the ballroom of the Park Plaza Hotel near MacArthur Park. It was ostensibly called to provide the Clash with a forum to explain why a pioneering band of musical and political radicals is accepting \$500,000 to perform with some of the biggest—and dullest acts in the world of corporate rock.

Wearing a black leather jacket and with an acoustic guitar slung militantly over one shoulder, Strummer paced the stage and vehemently insisted that the Clash has not sold out.

The band, which headlines today's show, is appearing, he maintained, to inject some passion and social realism into an otherwise torpid affair. "I refuse to be processed cheese," he said. "We want to stand up and be counted." He claimed that the band's profits will

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be used to help struggling English bands.

Strummer's most emphatic remarks addressed a key theme of the US Festival: the relationship between technology and progress. "So we can mass program any information and send it in the wink of an eye," he said. "What's it going to say when it gets there? . . . I can buy a hi-fi that plays music from every door of my car, but what's that music going to say?"

Wozniak shrugged off Strummer's attack. "I was expecting something stronger," he said afterwards, adding that the US Festival would continue to devote itself to entertainment, not politics.

He won't get any argument from David Lee Roth, whose group headlines Sunday. "The festival obviously means different things to different people," Roth said in a telephone interview. "I fully support the Clash in their search for whatever it is they're searching for. For Van Halen, though, this is just another celebration."

Controversy broke out on another front this week when John Cougar was dropped from Monday's bill, which is topped by David Bowie. According to Unuson Corp., the festival's sponsor, Cougar "demanded an increase in his previously contracted salary price and PG® AMERICA performance."

However, Cougar's publicist, Jody Miller, said that the crucial issue of video rights was not resolved when Cougar first agreed to appear. Later, she said, Unuson insisted that Cougar give up video rights without compensation.

Cougar's disputed agreement was reached with Monterey Peninsula Artists, a talent agency that briefly booked performers for the US Festival until promoter Barry Fey was brought as a replacement.

Although Fey said he never participated in the negotiations with Cougar, he offered a capsule guide to the quarrel: "Take 10% away from what each side is saying, and you'll be in the ballpark."

LIVE ACTION: Tickets go on sale Sunday at noon for U2's June 17 Sports Arena concert. . . . Also available Sunday are tickets for three new Greek Theatre shows: an oldies bill headed by Chuck Berry (July 12), Maze featuring Frankie Beverly (July 16-17) and King Sunny Ade & His African Beats (Aug. 10). . . Black Flag will be at the Santa Monica Civic June 11. . . . Cris Williamson and Meg Christian headline the same hall June 10. . . The Blasters play the Palace June 24-25.

Little Steven & the Disciples of Soul's "Men Without Women" film will premiere at the Fox Venice June

