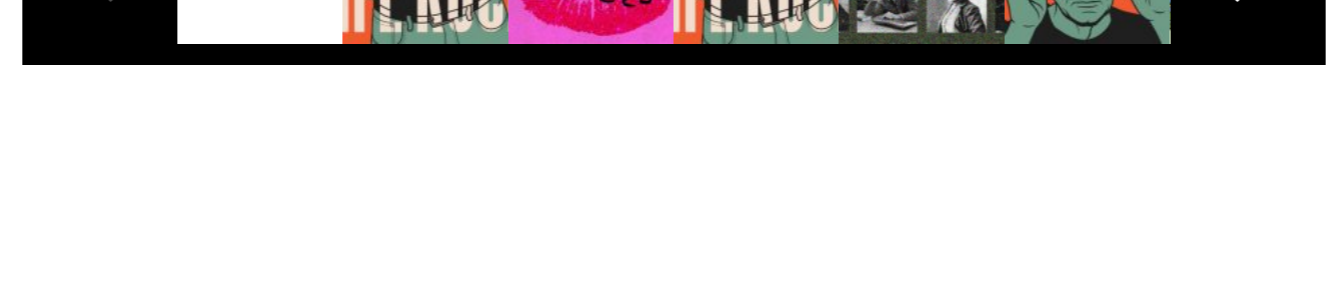


Licks

Garageland



October 6, 2014 by GM Admin

THE CLASH, LIVE (01/31/84)

"This isn't *white* reggae," Joe Strummer shouted, introducing "Police and Thieves." "This is *punk* and reggae. There's a *difference*. There's a difference between a ripoff and bringing some of our culture to another culture. You hear that, Sting?"

It has been almost eight years since the Clash formed in the wake of the early Sex Pistols' performances. On January 21, six years and one week after the Pistols played their last show in San Francisco, the Clash were back in town, not "The Only Band That Matters," but the only U.K. punk band left. "What we play now is what we can do," Strummer had said in 1979. "It wouldn't be fair to do ranting music because now we've mastered a time change. So there's just no point." "We started to think we were musicians," he told reporter Joel Selvin two weeks ago. "When we made the first record we knew we weren't. It's a bad thing to think; it's irrelevant, not to the point."

To a happy, not quite sold-out crowd of perhaps 7,000, the Clash played ranting music. Keeping Strummer's promise to Selvin, they "went back to where we went wrong, and then forward again." Against an industrialist backdrop and eight television sets flashing images of present-day social disaster, Strummer shook, scowled, smiled, and sung as if he and his audience had a life to make within a world they had already lost.

With guitarist Mick Jones kicked out for delusions of grandeur, the Clash is now Strummer, original bassist Paul Simonon, drummer Pete Howard, rhythm guitarist Vince White, and lead guitarist Nick Sheppard—the latter both 23-year-old "ex-punks." The band is ragged, Sheppard plays too many Mick Jones licks, and such rock-star flimsy as leaps from the drum riser or floodlights in the crowd's face is still part of the show. Yet I have never seen Strummer more exhilarated, or more convincing. In 1978 in Berkeley, "I'm So Bored with the U.S.A." was a gesture of contempt to a bourgeois audience; this night it was offered to the audience as their own, and they took it. Some of our culture to another culture.

Strummer performs not as a star but as a man who feels lucky to find himself on a stage facing people who want to hear what he has to say. The band tries to keep up with him. Maybe they won't—and maybe Mick Jones's Clash, which he is now trying to book, will supersede Strummer's. But I doubt it. Jackie Wilson died on the day of this show, and in times gone by the Clash donated \$6000 to his care. This Clash, I would guess—the music said so.

Village Voice, January 31, 1984

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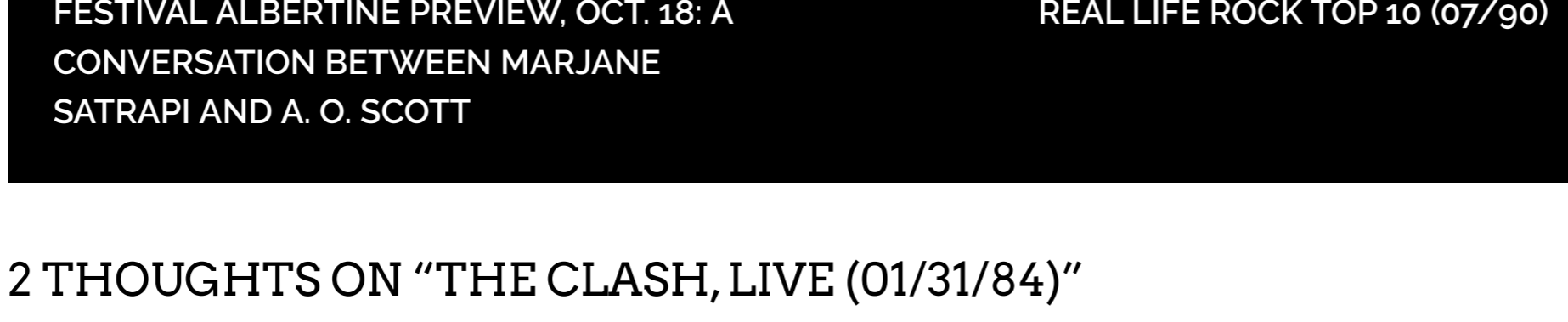
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This entry was posted in Live Reviews and tagged Clash, Greil Marcus, Punk, Village Voice. Bookmark the permalink.



2 THOUGHTS ON "THE CLASH, LIVE (01/31/84)"

steverubio says:
October 7, 2014 at 3:02 am

One fun thing about these nuggets from the past, if like me you are from the Bay Area and of a certain age, is that he is often talking about shows I also attended. My memories match his here: the faux-Clash wasn't much good, so Joe did everything he could to compensate. It was the least-impressive Clash show I ever saw, but Strummer was indeed exhilarated.

Reply

Keith Watterson says:
October 7, 2014 at 1:50 pm

Good to see stuff from this era of the Clash posted online. I always loved that interview in 1986 or thereabouts, in which the interviewer, attempting to engage Joe in conversation about The Clash Mark II, said, quite patronisingly, "You know, I remember seeing you with "that" Clash, the "Cut The Crap" Clash, and... it just seemed like the end..." Joe snorted and eyeballed his inquisitor: 'It was!'

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