



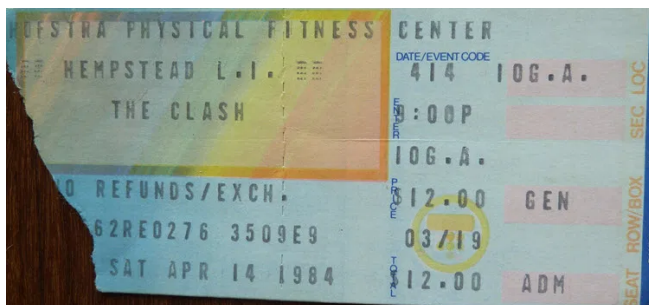
OCTOBER 5, 2014 BY MATT FOGELSON ([HTTP://FINETUNINGBYFOGELSON.COM/AUTHOR/MATT/](http://finetuningbyfogelson.com/author/matt/))
 IN LINER NOTES 2 COMMENTS ([HTTP://FINETUNINGBYFOGELSON.COM/CLASH/#COMMENTS](http://finetuningbyfogelson.com/clash/#comments))

PRESSURE DROP: THE CLASH AT HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY



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Image Credit: Bob Gruen (<http://bobgruen.com/files/clash.html>)



When I was in eighth grade, my friends and I went to see the Clash play the gym at Hofstra University on Long Island (Mick Jones had just left the band which probably explained the lackluster choice of venue). The mother of a friend gave the six of us a ride to the show from Manhattan and instructed us in no uncertain terms to meet back at the car at 11:00 PM. I can still hear that command, which seemed reasonable at the time, ringing in my ears three decades later.

Inside the gym there was a barricade dividing the floor into two sections, with the good seats up front, and a standing room section, where we were, behind. We were standing around for about an hour waiting for the show to start at 9:00. Finally 9:00 came – and went. And so did 9:30. We stood



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I got separated from my friends and ended up in the third row as the curtain drew back and Joe Strummer jumped off the drum kit sporting a white three-piece suit and orange Mohawk, pounding out the opening chords to "London Calling." It was euphoria. I was seeing the Clash from the third row – are you kidding?

I can't remember what song they played next, but I do remember – vividly – glancing at my watch during it. It was 10:30 and I needed to be back at the car in 30 minutes! Seriously? That would have allowed me to see maybe three songs given the long walk to the parking lot. To drive all the way to Long Island and stand around for hours just to leave the show after three songs seemed absurd. I assumed that none of my friends would bolt the show so early. But on the other hand, my friend's mother was very clear that we had to be back at 11:00. And what if she left without me? I equivocated (briefly), but ultimately decided to stay for the rest of the concert – encores included.

I finally returned to the car around 12:30 in the morning. Everyone was already piled in the station wagon. They had been there since 11:00, as instructed. They were stewing. And the mom was hysterical, worried that I had been trampled to death.

To this day I still struggle with what I did. Looking back, I recognize that my selfishness was of epic proportion. I made a conscious decision to break the rules, to put my desires above everything else, and to disregard how my actions impacted others. It may be the only decision I have made in my life that checked all three of those boxes at the same time.

I have tried to understand what it was about that night – and only that night – that liberated me to make the decision I did, that freed me from the strictures of my straight-laced, rules-oriented upbringing. The answer I keep coming back to is simple: it was the power of the Clash's music. The music created an alternate universe in which there were no rules, nobody else existed except Joe Strummer, and seeing the Clash was all that mattered. That alternate universe is the power of rock 'n' roll.

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2 THOUGHTS ON “PRESSURE DROP: THE CLASH AT HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY”



CHRIS NELSON ON NOVEMBER 5, 2014 AT 2:54 PM
([HTTP://FINETUNINGBYFOGELSON.COM/CLASH/#COMMENT-88](http://finetuningbyfogelson.com/clash/#comment-88)) SAID:

As one of the “rule followers” that night who honored the 11pm curfew, let me formally absolve you of all guilt and any sense of selfishness. I've spent the last 30-plus years regretting not staying with you that night. You made the right call.

Reply ↓



MATTHEW FOGELSON ([HTTP://FINETUNINGBYFOGELSON.COM](http://finetuningbyfogelson.com)) ON NOVEMBER 5, 2014 AT 3:45 PM ([HTTP://FINETUNINGBYFOGELSON.COM/CLASH/#COMMENT-89](http://finetuningbyfogelson.com/clash/#comment-89)) SAID:

Thanks for the support! Ultimately, I also think it was the right call, although I may need you to talk me down if Jed ever pulls a similar stunt.

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