

# Clash's ferocious combat rock attacks inequities in life

By Jill Schensul  
The Arizona Daily Star

Passing the \$9-apiece T-shirts inside the Mesa Amphitheater, I was hit by a sinking feeling in the pit of my idealism. Oh no, is the Clash really just in it for the money? Say it ain't so!

My fears were allayed when Joe Strummer, Mick Jones, Paul Simonon and guest drummer Tory Crimes invaded a stage draped with camouflage netting and attacked the crowd of 3,000 with heartfelt, ferocious combat rock.

From the opening, urgently snapping guitar chords of "London Calling," the Clash split the heavy night air of the outdoor amphitheater Sunday with politically acrid observations about the depths of the working person's oppression. This brand of British post-punk is born of rage, not ennui.

Kids who'd driven up in their parents' BMW's, folks who'd Mohawked and tie-dyed their hair for the occasion,

chicsters in dog collars and leg warmers, business people and closet revolutionaries coalesced and listened closely. The event could have turned into a slam-dance maelstrom, but all ears were on the Clash — after a great warming up by the English Beat, playing mostly ska.

This was at least partially because Strummer is not a lead singer to be easily ignored. Since his now-famous escape to Paris, on the eve of the Clash's European tour (so he wouldn't go "barney," he explains), Strummer has assumed a modified Mohawk haircut. When he closes his eyes and hoarsely screams (Strummer can't very well sing words like: "Murder is a crime! Unless it was done by a policeman or an aristocrat") and the veins stick where his hair used to be, he demands your attention.

And the rest of the band is quite capable of deftly laying down any music necessary to keep the generally apathetic, the scared stiff or the too oppressed interested in the message of revolution. Although drummer Topper Headon recently left the band and the Clash is calling itself a trio now, Crimes (the Clash's original drummer) filled in perfectly.

With all the ferocity of one-time punk contemporaries the Sex Pistols, the band reaffirmed the efficacy of the high-powered thrasher with songs like "Career Opportunities," a tune about the wonderful choice of jobs some people are given — dedicated Sunday to Reaganomics.

## Review

But it could also pare down the sound and put guitarist Jones in harness with a march like "The Guns of Brixton," which had the band moving through paces of variations on a beat. While Simonon sang "When they kick at your front door, how you gonna come? With your hands on your head or on the trigger of your gun?" projections of somber bobbies and street riots underlined the reality of the question.

Included Sunday was a lot of material from the band's new album, including the melodic "Rock the Casbah" and the haunting paean to the underdog — the

person who's "forced to watch at the feast and then sweep up the night" — "Ghetto Defendant."

But the most powerful song of the evening — from the new album, too — was "Know Your Rights." The crowd was electrified immediately as Strummer snapped out: "This is a public service announcement with guitar — know your rights, all three of 'em." Then, as he proceeded to enumerate — to the accompaniment of bashing drums and off-the-beat guitar chords — the right not to be killed, the right to food and the right to free speech, projections were flashed on a backdrop: people queueing up for welfare, fighting in the streets, and that hair-raising Life photograph of the North Vietnamese prisoner getting his head blown off.

After 105 minutes of snarling and slashing, Strummer stepped out into the moat that separated the stage from the audience and splashed water on all us sweating, exuberant fans during the band's encore.

I bought a T-shirt on the way out. Well, they do usually cost \$10. . . .