The Clash Plays To Their Audience

By STEVE WYNN

"The only band that matters," otherwise known as The Clash, once again did their best to make sure that they continue to matter—only to the group of fans who are already aware of the band's talents.

While the sound and conditions at San Francisco's Fox Warfield last weekend were infinitely better than during last Fall's Clash outing at the cavernous, cow-barn Kezar Pavillion, a newly aroused Clash fan would have probably been confused by the band's failure to bear any semblance of their studio discipline in concert.

For those, like myself, who didn't need to be convinced of this band's appeal, the Fox Warfield show was awesome. Led by the alternately sloppy and crafty lead guitar of Mick Jones, The Clash wage a decibel attack on your ears that makes it easier to remember the performance for a couple of days.

This band's power, however, owes itself to more things than sheer volume. Rhythm guitarist/vocalist Joe Strummer conveys more passion and emotion than most singers achieve on even their best nights. Unlike most British punks, Strummer's emotional arsenal isn't limited to anger; The Clash's ability to be personable, humorous and even a bit self-mocking is a key to the depth that puts The Clash miles ahead of the competition.

Even though hints of *London Calling*'s pop stylings creep into the live show, The Clash are still very much a punk rock band when they hit the stage. On-key vocals and instrumental perfection are of lower priority than sheer guts. Again, such credentials can be respected by those who already back The Clash, but can be quite repellent to a newcomer to such music.

Of course, The Clash could probably care less if Joe Public can enjoy their music, and such defiance is one of the keys to The Clash's greatness. Yet, a good live show is usually the key to mass acceptance, and with records as tremendous as *London Calling*, an LP that should and probably will be regarded as one of the best rock and roll records ever, The Clash deserve to be a smashing success, rather than a well-kept secret.