

Rudeboy dominated by the Clash

by Michael Brennan

Whatever Rudeboy tried to say about decaying Britain and its youth, it just didn't matter. The plight of Ray Gange was just too forced, botched-up and without direction.

What did matter and what came across with great force was

the Clash. The live concert footage, the backstage scenes and the conversation between Gange and the Clash (mostly with leader and singer, Joe Strummer) all together presented a strong, vital, wonderfully human picture of the band in their early years - even more so than their first two records. To see live the passion,

sincerity and determination in the performance of their first songs and the uncompromising rock and roll energy in their playing, strongly affirmed that Joe Strummer and the Clash are very important, powerful artists. One would almost believe that the Clash are the only band that matter.

Strummer was quite clearly the center and embodiment of what the Clash mean. He had no need to explain his songs and never gave smug, trite answers about his attitude, political or personal, though the movie provided silly, unnecessary storylines for specific songs. In contrast to the violent, harsh energy of his singing, Strummer talked with consideration, compassion and with care. And there was never any academic, left-wing doctrine or dog-good socialist hype in his political thinking. When Gange told Strummer that there shouldn't be politics in the Clash songs, Strummer answered him with a silly little song that was quite funny: "C'mon lady, won't you dance with me," or something of the sort. Of most importance was the way he delivered his songs, singing them with an honest, raw force that was wonderfully captivating. "Police and thieves", "London's Burning" and "White Riot" were especially great. Screaming "White riot/& wanna riot/White riot/& wanna riot of my own" with all the honest, gut energy of his being, Strummer came across more real and more profound somehow than even Dylan and Lennon. Strummer really struggled against being

real man and artist.

Mick Jones, guitarist and occasional vocalist, was also a very strong figure. More like Johnny Rotten, he was quite frank and to the point, and rude sometimes too. Gange said to him that he thought it funny to see a black sing "White Riot". "What's so fucking funny about that?", replied Jones, "I wish more blacks would come to our concerts."

There was one great scene where Jones made a few more good remarks. Halfway during a song, the bouncers in front began fighting with members of the audience. Joe Strummer went down to try and break it up. The bassist, Paul Simonon, took over the vocals and was having a great time. (He was the most sensual of the band, a sort of blond Sid Vicious-Iggy Pop and continually hammered at his bass with a raw, frantic energy.) Jones shouted through the mike at the bouncers, "Leave them alone, they're only dancing," and then at the audience, "Jesus, stop fighting, it's rock and roll."

It sure was.

I hope Rudeboy returns so those who missed it can get to see it. Because if you care about rock and roll, this is it.

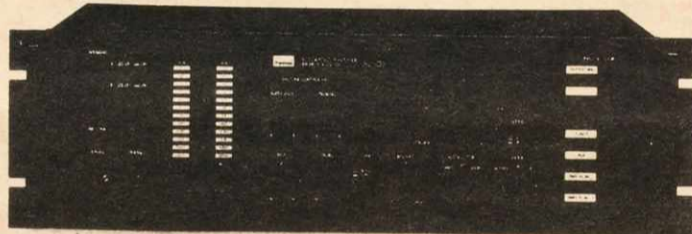
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