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Hi guys-

Here's the Marky Ramone review. Remarkably calm guy for what he does for a living. Talk soon, Big P

Marky Ramone
Gagarin Club, Athens
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After Iron Maiden and Metallica, Ramones T-shirts are the third most omnipresent sign of fan allegiance in the world of rock music. However the cultural import and significance of these various allegiances are profound. The Ramones, through their ethos of every-man selflessness and kitch, madhouse bohemianism, touched peoples lives in a personal, empathetic way that Maiden and Metallica could never hope for.

While most metal/hard rock/punk bands play up themes of exaggerated, humorless bloodlust and violence, the Ramones, in nearly all of their 3 chord/2 minute masterpieces, deal with societal, mental and familial stress and try, with twisted attitude and grit, to smile through the difficulties. They connected with the societally dispossessed youth of the entire planet during their nearly three-decade career and the aftershocks are still being felt in the music world today. Every teenage, garage rock band on Earth still play Ramones songs. No other band in punk history, including the Sex Pistols, generates such allegiance and reverence from their listeners.

Marky Ramone is the last of the long-term players of the classic punk band. He was their flawless drummer for more than 20 years and brought his show to the Gagarin club last Saturday night. Legions of Ramones fans, both young and senior, were in attendance to witness the performance of the legendary punk stick-man.

Drummers, in general, have a difficult path to follow in this life. They're the butt of every joke in the music industry and have a, sometimes justly deserved, reputation for self-destruction and psychological instability. John Bonham of Led Zeppelin, Keith Moon of the The Who, and Jerry Nolan of New York Dolls are all textbook examples of this distinct personality type and all are dead as a result of their excessive lifestyles.

Marky Ramone, at least on the surface of things, appears to be pretty stable, but faces other difficulties in his chosen career. For a drummer who doesn't sing, he must put together an entire new band, to play classic punk, in the footsteps of the most worshipped and imitated punk band ever. He is essentially the only genuine participant in what has become something of a symbiotic, group lifeform, formerly known as the Ramones.

He and his band play 90 minutes of vintage Ramones material, with all the drive and spirit of religious devotees in the shadow of their inimitable mentors. Now, where once stood the titanic images of Joey, Johnny and Dee Dee, we have a trio of super-inspired, very capable kids who have eagerly and deftly

learned their material to memory. However, the spiritual core and epiphanous glow of the band is gone. The seed-crystal of goofy gabba-gabba-hey-ness and creative playfulness with objective, psychotic conditions is no longer evident in the group.

But, as a flat-out, good-time rock show goes, Marky Ramone's band gets very high marks. The crowd at Gagarin pogo-danced themselves into a mouth-lathering, group psychosis and couldn't get enough of the whip-cracking, staccato-speed performance. Two screaming encores were literally demanded by the concert's attendees. The Ramones never had a Top-40 hit in the US, but the crowd knew every word of every song that was presented to them. Set highlights included "Poison Heart," "I Don't Care," "Chinese Rocks," and "Commando."

CBGB's, the famous punk club in the Bowery area of New York City, and the Ramones, have a well-known historic link. They also appear to have something of a similar end to their tales. The Ramones left an indelible mark on popular music in the 20th century. They weren't only the first punk band, they were the first "anybody can do it" band. You didn't have to look like Rod Stewart or play guitar like Eric Clapton to play Ramones songs. Three chords, lots of confusion and unbridled energy would do just fine in their stead. CBGB's, in the mid to late 1970's, became the focal point of the entire music world for a few years. 1975-1978 were unparalleled years of creativity and such ground breaking bands as Ramones, Talking Heads, Blondie, Television, Patti Smith and Johnny Thunders's Heartbreakers were all discovered and signed at the tiny nightspot. Many years later the club became something of a holy shrine in the global rock community. No name and little-known bands from every corner of the world came to play for one night, essentially as a tribute to the house where punk was born.

Marky Ramone has also become something of a holy entity in the music world. People come to see his show not because of any new material he is presenting, but to spend some time with one of the guys who opened the door for all of us to actively participate in the music scene. Because of guy like him, we could all get our ya-ya's out no matter what we looked like or how well we played our guitars. God himself loved the Ramones for making the world a more equal place for its participants and I'm sure he's happy with the way things have turned out for Marky, CBGB's and all of us who grew-up listening to their warped, comical and endlessly listenable power-chord cries for help and declarations of tough love.