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POP REVIEW

Horror, Horror on the Wall, Who's Etc.

By JON PARELES

Glenn Danzig sounds a little scarier than he looks. His voice is a deep baritone, full of portentous Jim Morrison mannerisms, and his songs take up Satanism, death, sadomasochism and nearly everything else he could glean from old Black Sabbath records. "I am a walking screaming hell/A thing of torture to behold" he vowed as his band, Danzig, started its set on Monday night at a sold-out Roseland. Actually, he was a stocky, long-haired 35-year-old man with Elvis Presley sideburns, black jeans, cowboy boots and a rubber top that might have come from a wet suit, doing his best to glower as seriously as his songs required.

Mr. Danzig first made his reputation in the 1970's leading the Misfits, a punk band with a horror-movie fixation. Danzig is actually more old-fashioned; it draws on the blues-rock and heavy metal that punk-rock wanted to shake up. The four-man band — with John Christ on guitar, Eerie Von on bass and Joey Castillo on drums — is breathtakingly predictable. Every riff pounds its appointed number of times, every guitar solo delivers the appropriate squiggles. The band knows its dynamics, inflating Mr. Danzig's pronouncements with measured crescendos; its best gimmick, used sparingly, was to switch suddenly into double-time, which threw the mosh pit into a joyous frenzy.

Danzig proficiently taps into the high school alienation market, which is thrilled by glimpses of dark impulses and taboo subjects. Every few years, young fans need new favorites as older siblings' idols grow stale. Mr. Danzig's gift lies in making broad, but not too specific, hints of dreadful scenarios. He sings in a self-important croon, not the harsh bark of many rock doom-mongers, and he draws a sizable female following as well as traditionally male heavy-metal fans. In the band's big hit, "Mother," Mr. Danzig sets himself up as a pinup for adolescent



G. Paul Burnett/The New York Times

John Christ, left, and Glenn Danzig at Roseland on Monday in an evening of songs about Satanism, death and sadomasochism.

transgression, carefully explaining that he's something parents would not approve. "Mother," he sings, "tell your children not to walk my way/Tell your children not to hear my words."

He offers sympathy for adolescent identity crises in songs like "Am I Demon," which closed the concert: "Am I beast or am I human/Am I just like you?" He personalizes himself as vast, malevolent forces — "I wanna be your misery/I wanna be the world you fear" — and describes one death scene after another, often throwing in a touch of religiosity:

"All the devils do the work of God/In this season of the world's demise." Suicidal longings and glimpses of apocalypse, preferably in E minor with a thudding beat, are his home turf.

But the more Mr. Danzig growled and swaggered, pumping his hips or clawing the air, the more he projected the aura of pure kitsch. The music is a retreat; the postures are second hand. As much as Danzig pretends to contemplate the profundities of evil and mortality, the band merely offers one more spin through a familiar haunted house.