



## JITTERY WHITE GUY MUSIC

A music-obsessed, retired San Francisco lawyer, and author of the rock & roll memoir *Jittery White Guy Music* (available on Amazon)... picking a random album or song in his collection every day or so and sharing a few thoughts.

October 18, 2020

### THE CLASH: GIVE 'EM ENOUGH ROPE (1978)

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When I first got into the Clash (back around 1980, when *London Calling* hit the States), *Give 'Em Enough Rope* had

a lukewarm rap. It had the misfortune of falling between one of the 3-4 truly seminal punk era debuts and the Greatest Album of All Time. The consensus at the time seemed to be that it was a little short of solid material, and that the production -- from Blue Öyster Cult producer Sandy Pearlman -- seemed designed to make it feel more like a hard rock/metal album than a punk record.

All these years later, the basic rap isn't entirely unfounded; but it's still a pretty great record. Because, c'mon, it's the Clash.

The album is rendered essential largely by virtue of two of the band's greatest songs. "Safe European Home" is one of the band's most riveting rave-ups, a whiplash-paced hangover from a disillusioning visit to Jamaican fantasy-land ("I went to the place, where every white face, is an invitation to robbery"); while "Stay Free" is a poignant pop tune about Mick Jones's (real or imagined) youth, a celebration of an old pal who ended up on the wrong side of the law, and if you're not choked up by Mick's promise that when he gets out "we're gonna hit the town, we'll burn it fuckin' down, to a cinder," there is something seriously wrong with you. Other stand-outs include the chipper "Julie's Been Working for the Drug Squad," with its Chuck Berry 12-bar blues and barrelhouse piano; and closing

track "All The Young Punks," a band autobiography which finds the Clash already feeling cynical about punk rock (prefacing *London Calling's* outstanding "Death or Glory").

The production is, as noted, not ideal, certainly a far cry from the crystal-clear production of *London Calling*, which stands alongside Big Star's *#1 Record* for its pin-drop clarity. But some muddiness aside, there are some nice flourishes--the pounding tom-toms as the music fades away at the close of "European" before crashing back in for a brief coda; the unexpected flash of acoustic guitars in the "Stay Free" fade-out. And the remastered CD sounds perfectly respectable.

And, ok, the song selection could be better; much of the band's best material recorded between the first and third LPs ended up on singles (or on the US re-release of the debut), and had a couple of the less memorable tracks ("Last Gang in Town," "Cheapskates") been dropped in favor of contemporaneous outtakes like "White Man in Hammersmith Palais" or "The Prisoner," this would certainly be held in as high esteem as the rest of their catalog. But as it stands, it's still an outstanding record, far better than I'd been led to believe back when I was discovering the band.

Here's a live take on "Safe European Home":

## The Clash - Safe European H...



...and a live "Stay Free":

## The Clash - Stay Free (Live in...



Here's an audio rip of "All The Young Punks":

## The Clash - All the Young Pu...



### Give 'Em Enough Rope (Remastered)

Preview

- 1 Safe European Home - Rem... · The Cl...
- 2 English Civil War - Remaste... · The Cla...
- 3 Tommy Gun - Remastered · The Clash
- 4 Julie's Been Working for the D... · The...

File Under: 1970s, Clash, Punk

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## COMMENTS



JohnDouglas 18 October 2020 at 18:50

Right. And don't forget Tommy Gun. For any other band this would be a career climax. For the Clash, 3rd or 4th best.

[REPLY](#)

Evan 30 October 2020 at 12:05

I think it's pretty undeniable that if the albums that preceded and followed this record weren't so amazing that this would get talked about more because it is a pretty damn solid album with a few really top notch songs.

[REPLY](#)

Anonymous 13 March 2023 at 15:14

Well 1st. Any cunt to slag producer extraordinaire Sandy Pearlman is a 🤢 snob(& if Joe was here He'd tell you in THAT eloquent way that Mr Strummer kids show brilliantly and one of the main reasons why I personally miss him so much -also if anyone's 🤔 B.O.C./soft white underbelly live-They were more punk in attitude-Joe Strummer couldn't stand posers more than anything else trust me the average fake punk rocker I see in Thompson square park, I ❤️ to ask them:'Hey My fav.punk rocker is the son of a diplomat & I just step back & watch these posers get get all violence and tell me they're going to kick my ass and to bring my diplomat's son over so they can work him over too because anyone who's a diplomat son isn't punk rock at all and they rant and rave and show how ignorant they are as I'm laughing at them I say hey do you guys like The Clash well get your facts straight posers because Joe strawberries father was an exceptional diplomat & It's moments like that make life sweet 😊

[REPLY](#)



Will Dockery 9 June 2024 at 03:27

America's introduction to The Clash, since CBS wouldn't release the first album here for whatever reason. I had to special order it in Columbus Georgia because this sort of thing was shunned here for st least another decade or so.

REPLY



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