

*****VERY IMPORTANT PLATTER *****GOOD ALBUM, HEAR IT IF YOU CAN ***WORTHWHILE **DULL OR DISAPPOINTING *RE-CYCLE

a l b u m s



THE CLASH: Irishman avoids facile put-down

The last gang in town

THE CLASH
'Give 'Em Enough Rope'
(CBS 82431)!!!!!!

NO STARS for this at all. No way I'm going to categorise this album with anything. No way I'm going to insult *this* band by associating them with the gutless crap that's eked its way into our lives following those halcyon months when we beat against the lot, the stinking musicbiz bureaucracy, the lies and the terrible dishonesty from within. This is the one band that *emerged*. This is the end result. This is it.

The whole bloody scene stands desolate and depressing with only the burnt-out shells of things we can't (or don't want to) remember sitting propped up, ugly and embarrassing. The fall-out. The germs of new groups, of hope for the future, are beginning to appear. But it's The Clash that alone still shine with any semblance of life and I think it's probably wise to tell you now that if you want some facile, false put-down of their new album you'd better look elsewhere. I'm not into kicking people just 'cos they make other people feel threatened or unhip.

THE FACTS. I've listened to the album 11 or 12 times now. I've heard it on three different systems, ranging from the duff to the fairly high class. At first I was openly disappointed, not with the songs, but with the presentation. Presentation that is as opposed to production (the first time I *thought* about production was after two days of almost continual listening, which speaks for itself really—who is this Andy Oyster-Cult bloke anyway?), presentation in the sense that I'd been led to expect a mega-layered, multi-manipulated sound. No. The opening 'Safe European Home' is superficially swash-buckled heavy-metal but the sound is unmistakably The Clash and roars its way into your head, raw (yes, *raw*) and with the *style* that's been accrued from the experience gained since *The Album*. A mighty opening.

'English Civil War' stomps along and the sound is perfect, loose, hollow with lots of gaps poking through. The whole great hulking mass thundering forward like a plane taking off, the lyrics gradually broadening out into meaning and direction, Strummer's voice a battle cry that is stirring and burgeoning with character.

'Tommy Gun' and it doesn't really matter if they deny it hit single status 'cos we've got it here, pinned up amidst a collection of classics. As a song it strokes the globe of perfection, Strummer's voice ensnared with emotion and vibrant anger. 'I'm gonna get a jacket just like yours/Give my support to your cause...' and 'You'll be dead when your war is won...' A warning. Think.

'Julie's Been Working On The Drug Squad' is astonishing and, yes, it *does* sound like Little Feat, man, but Jesus, do I feel sorry for you. This is so funny it'd make your dead budgie laugh. Brave and Beatlesque in positioning.

'Last Gang In Town' closes the side with a jail-guitared flourish

and a positively wicked break from gangly Micky J. 'The sport of today is exciting/The in-crowd are into in-fighting...' Word music. More.

WHIP IT over quick and it's Hitchcock's City Rocker's nightmare with the throbbing beep-beep of 'Guns On The Roof', Strummer sounding like a realised Lennon, sharp, wary, tough. 'Drug Stabbing Time' skims along à la 'City Of The Dead', funky and so American it's not true. It has the best bass line on an album of sublime bass lines and the merging and separation of Jones' and Strummer's wall of harmonies is breathtaking. Sax solo, the shiny sixpence in the cake.

'Stay Free' is so good it's bad 'cos it hooks you on its cosy, whimsical pathos and emotional warmth and you can't move on, Jones singing his way into history. But it's the last two tracks that scored latest and most deeply with me, 'Cheapskates', pointed lyrics ('... You think the cocaine's flowing like a river up our noses/Well, I hope you make it one day/I'll get out my money and make a bet/I'll see you down the launderette...') against a scorching guitar skyline, and the camp-fire 'Garageland' bravado of 'All The Young Punks (New Boots And Contracts)' which is gloriously jerry-built and has *that* guitar break on it. The winner.

AND THERE you have it. The best LP since the last Clash LP, both, I personally feel, transcending *anything ever* recorded. Whether it's better or less excellent than the first album, only actually living with the record for a few months will tell, but, whisper it, at the moment I have a suspicion 'Give 'Em Enough Rope' will prove the stronger.

It's true. If you don't like The Clash you don't like anything.
DAVE McCULLOUGH

THREE DEGREES
'New Dimensions'
(Ariola ARLH 5012)1/2**

CRUNCH CRUNCH crunch. Boom boom boom. Ooh ooh, aah aah. And The Three Degrees plus producer Giorgio Moroder clean up again. Sex meets the synthesiser in London and Los Angeles over six segued songs. A teasing double spread photo (they stop short of showing nipples). Bob's your greenback.

By the time records such as this one meet your average non-sexist reviewer any arrows to be thrown are just a minor irritant in the trio's well-groomed scalps.

So for what it's worth, we could have done without four Brotherhood Of Manly slowies (betcha thought they'd not get a plug in the paper) to douse the fire kindled by the scorching single 'Giving Up Giving In' and side two's opener 'The Runner'.

'Runner' is Giorgio to a tee — a bubbling cauldron of sound coming at you from all directions with such intensity you barely notice its melodic 'bite' is toothless. Mr. Moroder is a master of illusion. But on two tracks at least he keeps it up beyond a zippy intro. And with Sheila Ferguson yelling her head off the con-job almost comes off.

PAUL McCREA

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