

# ALBUMS

+++++ Unbeatable  
 ++++ Buy it  
 +++ Give it a spin  
 ++ Give it a miss  
 + Unbearable

**CLASH: 'London Calling' (CBS CLASH 3)**

## The call of the wild

THE MECHANICS of selling musical product has always been subject to many unwritten laws. One of the laws refers to longevity. Generally, a third album is a crossroads that leads either to success in either financial or aesthetic terms (or the desired combination of the two) or a limp slither over the precipice back to square one.

The Clash have the distinct disadvantage of not only spearheading a movement but also defining and articulating its major facet.

The now boring clichés of dole queue tower blocked boredom were angry, coherent innovations. Their passion and bitterness against the wastefulness of capitalism brought politics from out of the distant realms of Westminster and the media.

It opened and assimilated the ears to other musical expressions and provided the platform for others to build on.

Of course not everybody got the point.

Soon the countless zipped and bonded imitators cursing and shouting in neanderthal cockney tones made a mockery of the original intentions. The revolt had turned to style and was soon boring.

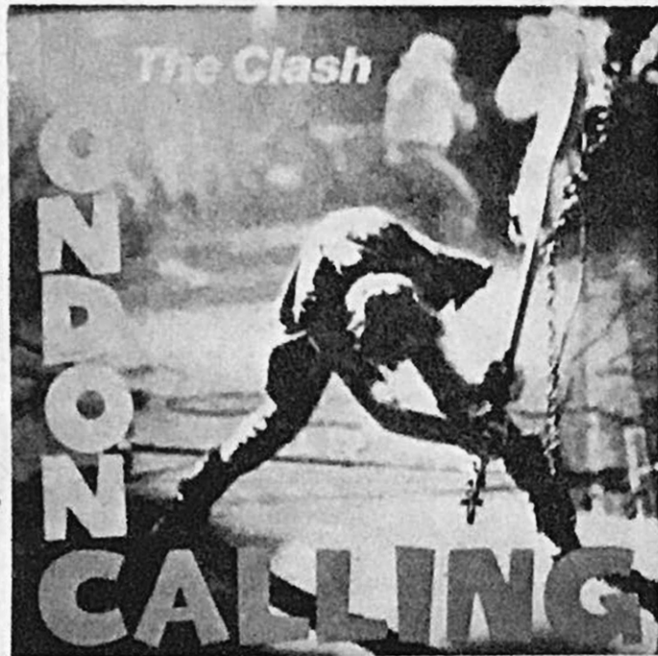
'London's Calling' is a 19 track double album retailing for the price of a single.

It's produced by Guy Stevens who was a key figure in the original mod era, the birth of Island records and the growth of Mott The Hoople.

The album finds the Clash more at ease within the shadow of their astonishing debut album with all the attendant frustration, contradiction and compromise that was thrust upon them.

The direction that they have chosen to take is a harvest of traditional music sources. The music explores the past with a vigour and determination to enter the eighties on a surer footing.

It will obviously irritate those who want an action replay of 1977 styled 1-2-3-4 ramalama revolution. The Clash that enters the



THE CLASH: weakened resolve?

1980's attempts to be a more reflective unit but with a more comprehensive grasp on their passion.

The title track is a typical example as they manage to merge the swing and bouyancy of reggae with the understated stridency

and menace of Bowie's visions and the political reality as shaped by the bulldozing Tory government.

Joe Strummer's voice is more relaxed and assured, lacking the frantic, clipped rush of yesteryear. 'Brand New Cadillac' is

a forceful foray into traditional rock 'n' roll. Paul Simemon's thrusting bass conjures up the sleazy evil of 'Peter Gunn' while Joe Strummer crystallises the essence of Gene Vincent.

However, the experimentation fails on the lazy excursion across the airy terrain of 12 bar jazz on 'Jimmy Jazz'. It turns out as a messy hotchpotch of forties styled jazz with a mid period Stones feel.

But when they hit the buttons they do it with a vengeance. 'Hateful' explores the dependencies that build up with drug abuse without preachiness. It merges a glitterrock corruption of the infamous and much abused Bo Diddley riff with neo 'Suffragette City' backing vocals and a rousing terrace styled chorus. It showcases the Clash at their best integrating the elements of the past with a concern for the future.

They nearly repeat the success with a neat cross of Bo Diddley and Prince Buster while still retaining the identity and

individualism of the Clash.

But the experimentation tends to lead the Clash down a downhill path after the first side.

Despite its title 'Spanish Bombs' is a gentle but racy reflection on the Basque bombings of last summer featuring acoustic guitars and a catchy chorus. This coupled with Mick Jones' 'Lost In The Supermarket', which points out the gap between the processed image of happiness in advertising and its reality, show the Clash at their most self-conscious, particularly on the pitifully sickly 'Supermarket'.

However 'Working For The Clampdown' is a precision attack down old Clash territory of aggression against the various forms of facism of the personal, racial, class kinds.

Paul Simemon's debut as a singer songwriter is the repetitious but starkly intense 'Guns of Brixton' and features a bubbling bass riff that ripples over

the steady drums and slivers of icy tremolo.

The second album is more confused and lacks the direction of the previous record. It kicks off well with a spirited version of 'Wrong Em Boyo', an extension of the Stagger Lee myth but soon questions arise with the Stonesish groove of 'Death Or Glory' which tells cynically of the inevitability of every gloryboy succumbing to the system sooner or later. Could this be an admission that the Clash's association with the CBS corporation has weakened their resolve?

The fourth side continues in the same monochrome way with only the defiant 'I'm Not Down', a personal statement of commitment to carry on despite the pressures of their position, and the extra track 'Train In Vain' showing any of the traditional Clash sparkle.

So here endeth the Clash's new testament and a brave venture it is. But keeping in mind that a double album will always need more than the few days given to assimilate its various twists and turns, this experiment is vital to the Clash. +++ 1/2 MIKE GARDNER