

Diverse songs show a 'Clash' of interests

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Best bet of the week

London Calling — The Clash — Epic Records

At one point, a double LP by the Clash would have been virtually unthinkable. The music on the band's first British album was brash and exciting but hardly the sort of thing you would want to hear spread over four sides.

But the Clash have demonstrated remarkable growth over the span of their three albums. Their latest, *London Calling*, is a powerful smorgasbord of pop and rock influences.

The material on the new LP is a little slower-paced than the first two albums as the band places greater emphasis upon melodies and harmonies. However, these niceties do little to blunt the Clash's frequently cynical and pessimistic assault.

The album kicks off with the title tune, a British hit single that proves the Clash don't pander to popular tastes. The song weds a riveting refrain to lyrics more likely to depress than exhilarate: "The

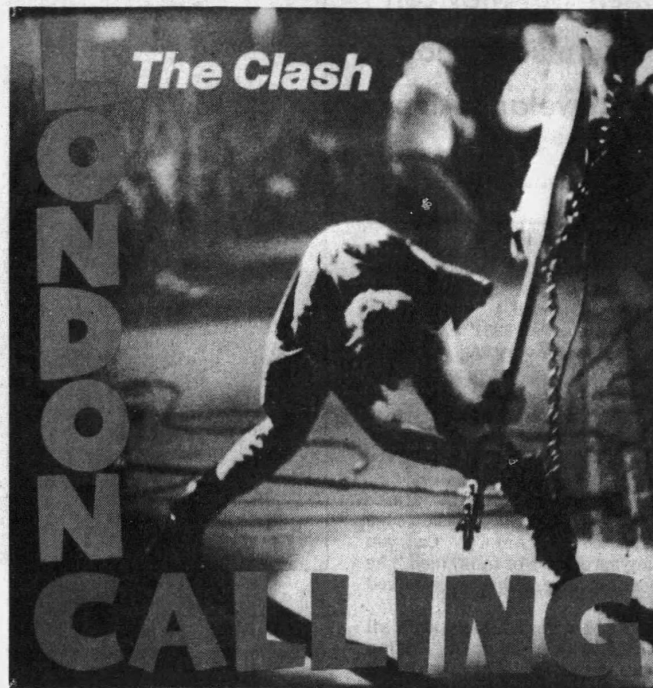
ice age is coming, the sun is zooming in. Engines stop running, and the wheat is growing thin."

The political commentary is no lighter on "Working For the Clampdown," a high-velocity rocker that suggests young men lose the best years of their lives working on assembly lines and waiting to acquire the power to dominate the next generation of factory workers.

"Koka Kola" is a stinging condemnation of high-pressure advertising tactics, while "Death Or Glory" takes a shot at those who sell out their principles. It's heavy metal Phil Ochs as the Clash observe that "every gimmick-hungry yob digging gold from rock 'n' roll grabs the mike to tell us he'll die before he's sold."

Breaking up the album's rhetoric are a handful of cuts that approach mainstream pop. One of these is a tune left off the album credits. The mystery cut evokes the spirit of the Beatles as the Clash ramble through an arresting song about shattered romance.

"Wrong Em Boyo" is another surprising effort. The song begins with a bit of "Stagger Lee" and then explodes into an upbeat mix of rock and reggae. The Irish Horns give the cut an added boost with



their powerhouse brass.

Those on a tight budget, take note: This double album is retailing for less than \$10, quite a bargain as a single disc hovers near that figure.