

WORDS *words* **words** **WORDS** *words* **WORDS** **WORDS**

LONDON CALLING. *The Clash (Epic).*

At a time when The Clash seem to have alienated all but the devout, along comes the group's most successful album commercially and artistically.

Certainly *London Calling* lacks the impact of the first Clash LP — the fact that it is a double album foretells a war to be waged on all fronts rather than staying with the concentrated blitzkrieg of earlier punk.

Success has become a priority, which was inevitable, since without it there is slim hope for survival, and The Clash make clear that they are determined to survive, even as its bravado is undermined by increasing paranoia. Guy Stevens (who produced Mott The Hoople, a major Clash influence) has created a lively and loose studio sound that represents The Clash today and yet is more accessible than any of their albums.

London Calling is also a roots album that re-states The Clash's punk ethos — its af-

ROCK RECORDS:

Reviewed by
TOM HARRISON

finity for the rebel yell inherent to reggae — and offers a survey of early rock styles from the raunch of Vince Taylor's "Brand New Cadillac" to the Phil Spector-like "The Card Cheat" and the '60s soul of "Stand by Me," which is not listed anywhere on the LP but closes it nonetheless.

The cover, which copies that of Elvis Presley's first album, attempts to corral these echoes of the past but, unfortunately, the parallel it establishes is pretentious.

Yet pretension is hardly new to The Clash. When you fancy yourself a rock and

roll commando with teeth clenched and bayonet fixed, you run the risk of sounding like P.F. "Eve of Destruction" Sloan — as do Joe Strummer on "Spanish Bombs" and Mick Jones on "Four Horsemen".

London Calling addresses itself to the individual, the title cut containing the equivalent of Dylan's "don't-follow-leaders" statement of independence. "Jimmy Jazz," "Rudie Can't Fail" and "Wrong 'Em Boyo" identify The Clash with the rude boy who will not become "Lost In The Supermarket," who will not be reduced to "The Right Profile," and whose strength will not be sapped by the "Hateful" drug dealer. In first-rate songs such as "Guns Of Brixton," and "Death or Glory," The Clash advocates resistance. But finally, after the heroics, "Stand by Me" is a song in which the singer, needing more than comfort, seeks not only love but reassurance.

After 18 tracks planted randomly like a minefield of duds and blockbusters, on the 19th The Clash reveals its wounds and finishes stronger for it. □