



The Clash

crests a new new wave

LONDON CALLING/The Clash (Epic). London Calling is the first two-record set produced from the new wave/punk movement. It is also a jump beyond much of what passes for new wave these days, be that lightweight '60s pop or musical brute force.

Yeah, but is it the Clash? That question nags me, even as I acknowledge that London Calling will probably turn out to be one of the best albums released in North America this year. (It was released in England in late '79.)

Up to the release of London Calling, a Clash record meant savage, uncompromising music from a band that pioneered the anger of punk rock. The first Clash album, *The Clash*, released in 1977 and re-released last year, is the definitive record of its period, standing ahead of even the Sex Pistols' one and only LP. On record and in concert the Clash has easily lived up to its reputation as "the last gang in town."

rock/pop vaughn palmer

Now, with its third album, the Clash enters the rock mainstream. Sellout? No, London Calling has many compensations, not the least of which is seeing a promising collection of rock artists develop and flourish.

This album had to happen. Punk rock, as defined by the Clash and the Sex Pistols in 1976-77, was fiercely limited. The Sex Pistols couldn't survive it. The Clash — guitarist Mick Jones, vocalist Joe Strummer, bassist Paul Simonon and drummer Topper Headon — has.

They did it by refining the stage act, by bringing influences of reggae and rhythm and blues, and by searching for lyrical meaning beyond "tear down the walls." Another step was to try to go beyond the uncontrolled energy of the early album and singles.

The second album, *Give 'Em Enough Rope*, signalled the band's struggle to become complicated. It was uneven, but it showed how the founding energy could be combined with a variety of sounds.

London Calling states the case more forcefully. Having earlier stripped away the pretensions and trappings of mainstream rock, the four members of the Clash are now engaged in a process of building their own sophisticated style.

Four Horsemen has the guitar-driven energy of a Who song. The Card Cheat thrives on the horns and keyboards of weighty '70s pop. The Right Profile, a backhanded version of the story of Montgomery Clift, is sharp-tongued social satire.

Revolution Rock, which closes the album, is a mix of Clash city rocker and reggae, with a double-headed message about "the second coming in rock." Wrong 'Em Boyo is a reggae-style retake of the Stagger Lee rhythm and blues yarn with a British working-class flavor. On *The Guns of Brixton*, bassist Paul Simonon makes a surprisingly strong venture into reggae and revolution.

The music on *Lost in the Supermarket*, a track that is getting airplay on CFUN locally, is easily mistaken for any one of a dozen British pop bands. There's no mistaking the lyrics: "I came here for that special offer, guaranteed personality. I wasn't born so much as I fell out, nobody seemed to notice me. . ."

Spanish Bombs, and Koka Kola repeat this approach, concealing Clash-style invective in the gloved fist of pop. Other songs, like *Death or Glory*, *London Calling* and *Working for the Clampdown* do it without the gloves.

But this scattershot survey of the album makes it sound like the songs don't hang together. They do. There is no mistaking Strummer's persistently raspy lead vocals, nor the fundamental energy and commitment that lies at the bottom of each Clash song.

In all, *London Calling* has 18 songs, each deserving a spot on an album, which is a rarity for double discs. It is selling around town for less than \$10, which makes it a bargain, too.

THE CLASH'S Mick Jones, left, and Joe Strummer at the PNE Garden last October IAN LINDSAY

P R E T E N D E R S

Recommended

The Specials (Chrysalis) and **One Step Beyond/Madness** (Sire). These two records are so much fun. . .

The Fine Art of Surfacing/Boomtown Rats (Ensign/Polygram). A lot of people, me included, assumed this was a misstep.

Listen again. Almost as good as Tonic for the Troops.

The Pretenders (Warners). Led by a siren of a vocalist, Chrissie Hynde, the Pretenders are trying to be the most exciting new wavers from England this year.

top twenty clox fm

1	The Wall	Pink Floyd
2	Damn the Torpedoes	Tom Petty
3	The Long Run	The Eagles
4	In the Heat of the Night	Pat Benatar
5	Bobo le Strange	Heart
6	Drums and Wires	XTC
7	Uncut	Powder Blues
8	In Through the Out Door	Led Zeppelin
9	Armageddon	Prism
10	But the Little Girls Understand	The Knack
11	Keep It Alive	Stonebolt
12	Pleasure Principle	Gary Numan
13	Hydra	Toto
14	The Fine Art of Surfacing	Boomtown Rats
15	I'm the Man	Joe Jackson
16	Cornerstone	Styx
17	Regatta de Blanc	The Police
18	Freedom at Point Zero	Jefferson Starship
19	Permanent Waves	Rush
20	Discovery	ELO