

RECORD COLLECTOR

Nov. 1980

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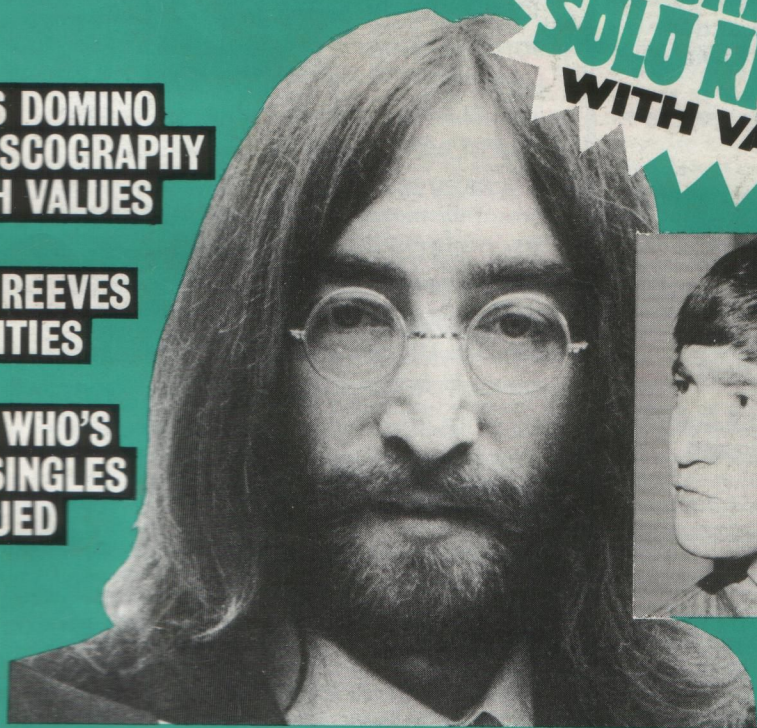
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U.K. SOUL: CAMEO-PARKWAY

**COLLECTING
THE CLASH**

THE CLASH

ONE OF THE MOST COLLECTABLE NEW WAVE BANDS
BY DOMINIC PRINCE

New Wave is still very much a problem area for collectors at the moment, as no-one is sure which artists will become collectable — and which will disappear without trace.

The bands that are selling records now are not necessarily those whose discs will be sought after in years to come; for instance, the Tremeloes and the Bachelors sold millions of records in the Sixties, but you can pick up their discs now for only a few pence each; and although the Boomtown Rats were huge for a year or so, they now seem to mean very little — but they still may become collectable sometime in the future.

Obviously the most collectable artists are usually those who sustain a following over a long period of time — and of today's New Wave stars, the main candidates are Elvis Cost-

ello, the Jam, the Police, and the Clash, who have managed to broaden their popularity without losing their hard-core of fans.

REHEARSALS

The Clash first began playing together in a squat in Shepherds Bush in London in May 1976. They had no drummer, so when rehearsals began, the band consisted of Paul Simonon, a London art-school drop-out who had only been playing bass for six weeks, Mick Jones, another ex-art-school student who played guitar, and Joe Strummer, former lead vocalist and guitarist with the 101'ers, who were regulars on the London pub circuit and had a single, "Keys To Your Heart", released on Chiswick Records.

Jones and Simonon told Strummer that

they hated his band, but liked him, and the following day he agreed to join them. Within a few days, Keith Levine (now with John Lydon/Rotten's Public Image Ltd) became the band's second guitarist, but left shortly afterwards to form the Flowers of Romance with Sid Vicious and two future Slits. In August 1976, after auditioning several drummers, the band chose Terry Chimes to complete the line-up.

By this time, the Clash had moved their rehearsal rooms to a disused warehouse in Camden Town. Although they were now competent enough to play live, there were few London clubs willing to allow a punk band to play on their premises. But when the band enlisted Bernie Rhodes as their manager, he was able to get them a few gigs in and around London. Following the interest in the Sex Pistols' early releases the record companies were keen to sign up the most promising new bands. Yet at the same time, it was considered a 'sell-out' for a punk band to sign contracts with one of the major companies, so their fans were not amused when the Clash joined the massive CBS organisation, though they justified themselves by saying that they would be able to reach a larger audience than if they formed a small independent label.

The first Clash single was released on March 18th 1977. "White Riot" (c/w "1977") immediately became a cult song among punks — and later a millstone around the necks of the band, as they were expected to play it at every live performance. Despite an almost complete lack of radio plays, the single reached the lower regions of the Top Fifty.

OFFER

Less than a month later, their first album was released. Called simply "The Clash", it entered the charts at No. 12. Its release coincided with an offer in "New Musical Express" through which 10,000 copies of the album were available with red stickers saying "NME offer". If these stickers were sent to a special box number, the sender received a free single, one side of which was a then unreleased song, "Capital Radio", while the other side featured an interview with the band by NME journalists on a London underground train. Apparently only half of the 10,000 singles were actually claimed, and originals sell for at least £40 in Mint condition, so you can be sure that if you see copies selling for around £8/£15 they are in fact some of the many counterfeits of this very collectable item.

The band were surprised at the success of their album, as it had been recorded in three

quick weekend sessions using their soundman as producer. The release of the album coincided with a change in the group's line-up. Some say that Terry Chimes became tired of the bottles and spit that flew his way on stage; others accept a rumour that the rest of the group were not satisfied with his drumming. Whatever the reason, he left the band surrounded in acrimony (he was credited on the album as 'Tory Crimes') and after auditioning 206 possible replacements, the Clash chose Nicky 'Topper' Headon as their new member.

WISHES

In May 1977, a second Clash single was pulled from the album, against the wishes of the band — "Remote Control", which featured a live version of "London's Burning" on the flip. This was again popular among the punks, but failed to chart. More usefully as far as the band's future was concerned, a copy of their album fell into the hands of top Jamaican producer Lee Perry (alias Scratch the Upsetter), who was very impressed with their version of "Police and Thieves", which he had written with Junior Murvin. He volunteered to produce their next single, "Complete Control", which was a thinly-veiled attack on CBS for putting out



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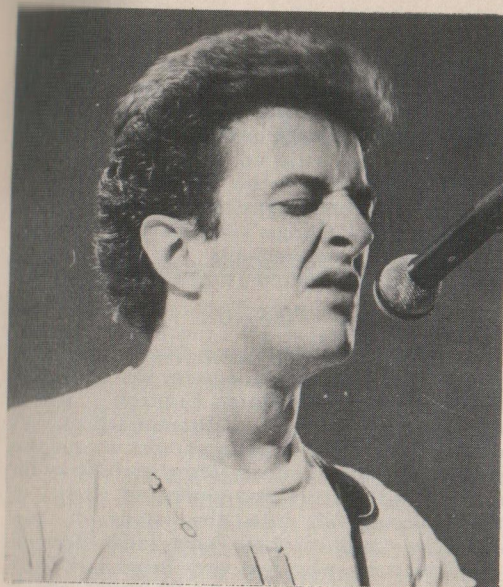
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The Clash on stage. Left to right: Paul Simonon, Joe Strummer and Mick Jones.





Joe Strummer in a prison tee-shirt.

album, "Give 'Em Enough Rope", which quickly rose to No. 2 in the LP charts — although many of their fans complained that the Clash's natural sound had been submerged by Pearlman's production, and that the LP made them sound more like heavy metal than punk.

Another U.K. tour followed, during which they dispensed with the services of manager Bernie Rhodes, and in February 1979 they embarked on their first American visit, the "Pearl Harbour Tour". They played in all the major cities in Canada and the U.S.A., and were joined at some venues by Bo Diddley. They were well received by critics and fans alike, which opened the door — partly at least — to the lucrative American market, although as in England they were hampered by the lack of air-play which other British acts like Elvis Costello, the Police and Joe Jackson were receiving.

"RUDE BOY"

On their return to England, the Clash began work on the film "Rude Boy", which was a small success when it was released in early 1980 with much stage footage of the band. They released an EP on General Election Day, May 11th 1979, entitled "The Cost Of Living". The EP came in a fold-out cover with special inner sleeve, and featured a new version of "Capital Radio". It reached No. 22 in the charts, probably due to the inclusion of their long-time stage favourite, Bobby Fuller's "I Fought The Law". A single combining "I Fought The Law" and "Hammersmith Palais" was released in the U.S.A., and gained a surprising amount of air-play, which held them in good stead for their next American tour later in the year. Before that, they played a Rock Against Racism benefit gig at London's Rainbow Theatre with Pete Townshend, the Members and the Pop Group; and began recording sessions for their next album with legendary producer Guy Stevens, who had a reputation for producing high energy rock and roll records.

After their American tour (named "The Clash Take The Fifth"), when the band were joined by 'fifth' member Micky Gallagher, keyboards played with Ian Dury's Blockheads, they began re-mixing the album. The tentative title of "The New Testament" was abandoned, after someone pointed out how pretentious the title would sound, and the album was named after one of the songs, "London Calling". It was finally released at Christmas 1979, with two albums in a single sleeve selling for the price of one, and again was a big chart success. Many punks disliked



Guitarist Mick Jones and vocalist Joe Strummer perform a dynamic musical duet.

the album, saying that the Clash had 'sold-out', and drew comparisons between the band and the Rolling Stones, whom the Clash disliked for their superstar status. Others, however, saw the album as a welcome progression, a sign that the band would be able to move beyond the essentially-limiting sound of 'pure' punk. The band defended themselves by saying that they had never intended to stick solely to punk, and that many of their fans were just as stuck in their ways "as the people they were supposed to replace".

UNOBTAINABLE

The title track of the album was pulled from it to become a big hit single, issued both in 7" and 12" form. The 12" version included an otherwise unobtainable long take of "Armageddon Time". More recently a British tour with the Joe Ely Band and Mikey Dread led, eventually, to the release of another single. "Bank Robber"/"Rockers Galore" was subject to a long delay before it was issued, with, depending what you read, neither the band nor CBS being very keen on its release. To meet the demand during the delay, large quantities of the German import single were brought into Britain. This contained the two tracks on the British single, plus "Train In Vain", which appears (unannounced on the

sleeve) on the final side of the "London Calling" album.

Recording sessions for another two-for-the-price-of-one album are underway at the moment, and despite the constant rumours of arguments within the Clash camp, the commercial future for the band seems very bright. Joe Strummer has recently been producing the Little Roosters, and although he is given to remarks like "I don't believe we've done any good at all", he still appears to be the motivating creative force behind the band.

As far as New Wave collectors are concerned, this is a good time to start getting hold of the Clash's records, as all of their singles and LPs are still available at the moment, though it is likely that some of the early singles will be deleted shortly. I believe that it is the singles rather than the albums which will become collectable in the future, as first of all, they have almost all been issued in picture covers or special sleeves, which are already starting to fetch money. The market for these is shown by the quick turnover of European and Japanese picture sleeve singles, many of which include lyric sheets as well. These foreign singles are selling for around £3, which is the kind of price which is starting to be asked for the early British singles in special sleeves — although if you search around you

should be able to find almost all of these in record shops at normal retail prices. Every one of the Clash's singles to date has contained at least one track which is not available on a British album, while "Clash City Rockers", "Complete Control", "White Man In Hammersmith Palais" and "Bank Robber", besides the EP, contain no otherwise available tracks.

Obviously the free "Capital Radio" single, issued in a limited quantity, will maintain its value as long as collectors are interested in the group; and another single that is sure to shoot up in price as it becomes harder to find is the 12" "London Calling". We have had reports of dealers already selling this single for £8, and even £12 in one case, although it is still officially available and retails for around £2. Supplies are getting short, however, and the price is liable to rise in the near future.

CONFUSION

Whilst on the subject of 12" singles, there is some confusion over the "Cost Of Living" EP. The catalogue number on the label is CBS 7324; however, on the sleeve, the number is given as 12-7324, and this seems to have led some catalogues to list the record as being available as an official 12" single. To our knowledge — though we'd welcome any further information — only promo copies were issued in 12" form, and these are selling for between £12 and £15. In fact, promo

items are very popular with Clash collectors at the moment, as there are a whole number of 7", 10" and 12" discs going the rounds, many of them emanating from the U.S.A. A 7" promo of "Gates of the West" fetches around £5 in Mint condition, while there are 10" promos in circulation of "Working For The Clampdown" and "Train In Vain", both from "London Calling", which I have seen offered for £15. Almost all of these items come in plain white sleeves, with very simple white label designs, and so are very easy to counterfeit; and there are so many copies of some of these discs around that it is more than likely that only a few are originals. Once again, it is very useful if you can obtain some proof of authenticity from the person you buy these records from, as whenever the market is flooded with counterfeits, the price of the genuine item drops, except in cases where collectors can prove they have the real thing.

Before buying any official British Clash releases at what may prove to be inflated prices, it is always worth checking to see if the record (and picture sleeve) are still available from CBS. Although there is no way of telling whether the Clash will be a collectable group in years to come, Clash fans should still take the chance to seek out those picture sleeve singles before the prices start to rise!

CLASH DISCOGRAPHY

U.K. SINGLES

CBS 5058
CBS 5293
CBS 5664
CBS 5834
CBS 6383
CBS 6788
CBS 7082
CBS 8087
CBS 12-8087

WHITE RIOT/1977 (March 1977)
REMOTE CONTROL/LONDON'S BURNING (May 1977)
COMPLETE CONTROL/CITY OF THE DEAD (September 1977)
CLASH CITY ROCKERS/JAIL GUITAR DOORS (March 1978)
WHITE MAN IN HAMMERSMITH PALAIS/THE PRISONER (June 1978)
TOMMY GUN/ONE, TWO, CRUSH ON YOU (November 1978)
ENGLISH CIVIL WAR/PRESSURE DROP (February 1979)
LONDON CALLING/ARMAGIDEON TIME (December 1979)
LONDON CALLING/ARMAGIDEON TIME/ARMAGIDEON TIME (Justice Tonight; Kick It Over) (December 1979)
BANK ROBBER/ROCKERS GALORE (August 1980)

CBS 8323
U.K. EP
CBS 7324

THE COST OF LIVING (I FOUGHT THE LAW/GROOVY TIMES/GATES OF THE WEST/CAPITAL RADIO) (May 1979)

U.K. LPs

CBS 82000
CBS 82431
CBS CLASH 3

THE CLASH (April 1977)
GIVE 'EM ENOUGH ROPE (November 1978)
LONDON CALLING (Double album, December 1979)

U.S. SINGLES

Columbia 9-50738
Columbia 9-50851

I FOUGHT THE LAW/WHITE MAN IN HAMMERSMITH PALAIS (Jan. 1979)
TRAIN IN VAIN/LONDON CALLING (February 1980)

U.S. LPs

Columbia JE 35543
Columbia JE 36060
Columbia E2 36328

GIVE 'EM ENOUGH ROPE (November 1978)
THE CLASH (July 1979)
LONDON CALLING (January 1980)