



The Clash Black Market Clash [10-inch] (1980)

EPIC



REVIEWER

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REVIEWER RATING



LOGIN TO RATE

Black Market Clash bears the rare distinction of being both a budget compilation and a rarities collection. Yet, who else but the Clash could turn either of those two categories into one of their best releases?

Released as part of Epic's ill-fated and short lived Nu-Disk series, the release was intended to squeeze a few dollars out of the band on American shores. As previously discussed, in the 60s and 70s, it was common practice for labels to snip a track or two from UK releases when those were issued in North America in order to save material for 'extra' compilations- in fact, somewhat ironically, the Beatles and Rolling Stones were the first bands to really put this practice to heavy use.

Despite the commercial angle of the release, whomever curated the release (maybe the band themselves) didn't set to make this a rip-off release. Rather, following hot on the heels of London Calling in the USA, Clash-mania had more or less overtaken the Yankees. And quite mysteriously, Black Market Clash played to both the band's past and future.

Side A was essentially singles that didn't make it onto the USA version of The Clash. Playing straight into the definition of punk as it had become to be known in 1980, Side A features propulsive bangers, spearheaded by 'Capital radio' which had become so popular in the UK that it was re-recorded and re-released. Here, the band is at their simplest and purest. Mick Jones snaps out powerful, effective riffs while Joe Strummer growled his anthemic lines and Paul Simonon plucked those distinctive bass lines.

Of course, the band did nod to other cultures, namely their cover of Toots' 'Pressure Drop' and the rocking cover of Booker T Jones' 'Time is Tight.' But, even in those covers, the band was firmly driven by the classic punk performance ethics. And hell, 'Cheater' is just a straight up, nihilistic punk banger. All in all, Side A served to remind listeners who the Clash were and to set the band's foundations once again.

And then, along came side B, which surely, must have been a brain-scrambler to many-a punk in 1980. London Calling showed that the Clash were capable of spreading their wings, but however 'different' those four sides were, side B of Black Market was about seven miles passed that.

Comprised of just two songs, 'Bankrobber' and their cover of the Willie Williams classic 'Armageddon Time,' the band once again paid tribute to their Jamaican influences, stitched together the tracks with their corresponding dub mixes, and blew both songs up into massive Jamaican style discomixes, ala Lee Perry, Joe Gibbs, and Junjo.

Firstly, both massive sets show just how fundamentally great these songs are. At 7 minutes and 10 minutes, these songs should be way too long. They're not. With a true understanding of rhythm, the band to able to ride the groove and through dub techniques, continually evolve and grow the songs without any sharp cuts.

And likewise, both of these tracks deal with a topic that crosses from punk to reggae and back again: economic and social inequality. And again, the band shows their skills and strong drafting and interpretation. Instead of ranting a political treatise ala Crass (no dis intended) the band attacked the ills from the eyes of the common man- the worker, the man on the street. It is he who is affected the most by the system in place. So, in lieu of spouting out high level political theory, the band, through story, simply said 'here are the results you are getting- is this fair?'

Somehow, the Clash were able to sermonize on economic injustice all without ever telling you know that's what they were doing. Fitting that it was tucked onto a budget priced comp'

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