

Sandinista**The Clash's answer to a brave new world**

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THE CLASH/SANDINISTA

Is this an album or a political thesis outlining a new social evolution?

The three-record set contains 36 songs espousing the ills of society, the ravages of war and the corruption of money. Few radical protest stones are left unturned by this four-man social conscience.

On the positive side, however, *Sandinista* is filled with music; strange and exciting music that blends reggae, jazz and rockabilly with The Clash's own brand of rock 'n' roll. It's this attempt at fusing different musical styles that mark the latest musical innovations by the English band, famous for political messages mixed with strong, new wave rock 'n' roll riffs.

But the message of the music, while biting and often brilliant, gets old fast. Yes, there is a civil war going on in El Salvador, where *Sandinista* is located, that is brutal and deserves concern. But 36 songs devoted to the cause seems a bit much. Couldn't the band have done one, or maybe two records worth of music to publicize the civil war? Even The Clash members themselves admit that civil strife will continually occur and reoccur in the world in the song "Rebel Waltz." After describing the battle where the rebels were defeated, the singer drifts into a dream: "As the smoke of our hopes rose high from the field/My eyes played tricks through the moon and the trees/I slept as I dreamed I saw the Army rise/A voice began to call stand till you fall/The tune was an old rebel one."

The musical arrangements also contribute to the feeling of reoccurrence. Many of the songs fade, only to resurge and continue for a few more bars, as if to say a situation may end but will arise again.

The question surrounding this album appears to be, "Does the music stand up throughout three records and can it hold its own musically while protesting some unpleasant topics?"

The answer is yes. Out of the 36 songs, only two sound similar to each other, *Magnificent 7* and *Lightning Strikes Not Once But Twice*. The variety of musical styles aides the effort to be original on each song. However, while the musical styles are not new, The Clash even have one irreverent gospel song, the fact that they are blended with The Clash's style makes them into brand new music.

If one song could be pointed out as summing up the album, it might be "Washington Bullets." Singling out several uprisings in Chile, Cuba and Afganistan, the lyrics blame both the U.S. and England for shipping arms to the countries for their own purposes.

"When they had a revolution in Nicaragua/There was no interference from America/Well, the people fought the leader and up he flew/With no Washington bullets what else could he do?"

Old Clash fans, who developed their affection through the band's driving rock 'n' roll, may be a bit surprised at *Sandinista*. But the band is growing, although it remains political, and is exploring new ideas. *Sandinista* is not an album that can be absorbed in one listening. There is a whole world offered here.

The Clash got its start near London in 1976. Despite the fact there were few rock clubs in London at the time, the band managed to land a contract with CBS Records and began touring with an impressive cast consisting of The Buzzcocks and The Slits.

Each album (*Sandinista* is their fourth) was an innovation, with new musical ideas being created each time. The Clash was one of the first bands to bring reggae into the rock scene with the song "Police and Thieves," inspiring bands like The Police.

A majority of the songs on the band's latest album are reggae with strong bass lines and non-stop percussion. Each of the band members, Paul Simonon on bass, Topper Headon on drums, Joe Strummer on guitar and Mick Jones on guitar, sings at least one number, each using his individual style to accenuate the song.

There are a few rock offerings, however. "Somebody Got Murdered," "Police On My Back" and "Midnight Log" should keep old Clash fans happy but the rest ranges between disco on "Ivan Meets G.I. Joe," reggae or jazz on "Look Here."

One could reasonably argue that the band takes on too many new ideas in *Sandinista*. There is no base the music builds around which allows the listener to walk away with a feeling of continuity. It is a flighty offering with unconnected ideas shooting off into space. This album contains so much that it is difficult to assimilate it all.

But who cares? The Clash is The Clash and even if a portion of the album sinks in, we are still ahead of the game.



SEMI-LOCAL NOTES: Walk, don't run to the Hotel Diplomat in Manhattan for one of the freshest vaudeville, or voidville as the performers call it, acts around town. Billing itself as a New Wave Rock Review, "Vandals of 1981" combines a cast of six and a five-piece band into a very funny evening.

Written by the show's stars, Ruby Lynn Reyner and Gordon Bressack, the cabaret utilizes contemporary humor and energetic humor to perform an unaverage slice of life. The music isn't exactly new wave but it is rock and roll and it is stimulating.

While the show is a little rough around the edges, the stage should have been miked to catch every word of the comedians, the brilliance shines through as each member of the cast has his or her moment in the spotlight. Most of the songs are exceptional. The humor is raunchy and points out nuances of today.

The show starts at 11:30 p.m. Thursday through Sunday at the Hotel Diplomat, 108 W. 43rd St. Reservations recommended at 212-221-9088. At \$5 a shot, it can't be beat.

The CLASH: Mick Jones, Paul Simonon, Topper Headon and Joe Strummer. The new album, right, a three-record set, contains 36 songs espousing the ills of society, the ravages of war and the corruption of money. Few radical protest stones are left unturned by this four-man social conscience.

