

# LPS

## THE CLASH

### Combat Rock (FMLN)

THATCHER baying for blood, screaming revenge, rediscovering the word 'fascist' after a lifetime spent supporting military regimes...

And what do The Clash do? What do the tired, junked out, diseased, redundant Clash do? They bring out a record — a record that spells out the sides, nails the *real* war and says all that needs to be said about the Malvinas schmalvinas farce. Hah!

"You have the right not to be killed!" That's some propaganda!

Five years ago, everybody that was anybody loved The Clash (least, they *said* they did), saviour in combat gear, leather-jacketed messiahs...aw, the pigeon-holes were all pigeon shit.

The Clash were a great rock band, p'raps the greatest, but no revolutionaries. What made them great was the NOISE they produced, the sheer brutal assault of angry guitars. Sure, they had politics too, bitter propaganda, but it was the ANGER of a song as magnificent as 'Complete Control', the crushing ugliness of that single that turned what started as a bitch at CBS into the most powerful two fingers to capitalism captured on vinyl.

Bear with the verbals, The Clash are still a great rock band and still no revolutionaries.

Dispense with The Myth.

One. 'Know Your Rights' is the best Clash single since 'White Man', no sweat. A pointed Anthem, a furious chant with that same ANGER, that same vitality.

Two. 'Combat Rock' is easily the best Clash album since 'Give 'Em Enough Rope'. 'Combat Rock' is a sharp statement, powerful propaganda. Check the two sides: on the one hand you have Haircut 100, Altered Images, Depeche Mode... (Tony Newley, Adam Faith, Cliff Richard...) cooing at each other, cute and ginchy, just like 1961 again, and on the other we have The Jam, The Fun Boy Three and The Clash. Cept, right now, this week, we have The Clash cos 'Know Your Rights' related to NOW, just like 'Ghost Town' related to last summer and 'The Boiler' related to this spring.

Three... This album is an album of war.

You want the songs? The songs are everywhere... funk, rock, punk, schlock — this album diversifies. 'Combat Rock' showcases piano and horns, guitar and vocal roar, shows The Clash are still not frightened to experiment. Cack hacks who once flirted with The Clash will tell us this band dropped out the day they dropped hardcore buzzsaw total-guitar when the truth is their sound never traded solely on trash.

Anger isn't squealing feedback, anger is a rough voice and, sure enuff, Glyn Johns and Strummer have mixed this album for the voice. Recognise it.

Side one starts shouting with the aforementioned blast of sanity that spills on the new Falklands cocktail (one part Pym's and a measure of Haig — a Bloody tragedy) and 'Car Jamming' crashes in on its heels: Malombo drums, scratch geetar and talk of war... "A shy boy from Missouri Boots blown off in a '60s war Riding aluminium crutches Now he knows the welfare kindness and Agent Orange colour blindness..."

'Should I Stay Or Should I Go' sees Jones messing things up with Spanish rock and howls of indecision, a wind up for 'Rock The Casbah', a funk-punching gem of a song. Joe takes on the mullahs to the tune of that terrace favourite 'Fuck The Falklands' and wins the argument. And what a winner! It gives you the ridiculous grinning rush that only The Clash can spark.

Similarly 'Red Angel Dragnet', tuff as a bass bin as Simonon lays down demands... "Just freedom to move, to live For women to take a walk in the park at midnight..."—This rough bastard steals lines from *Taxi Driver* — Travis by Cosmo after god knows how many takes).



The Clash

Pic: Ian Wright

## BLOWS AGAINST THE EMPIRE

Where 'Red Angel' thumps and growls, 'Overpowered By Funk' shakes and shimmers and the voice says...

*Combatative. Repetitive.*

*"Don't life just funk you out?"*

*Asinine. Stupefying.*

*Can the clone line dry you out?"*

And that's *Peacetime!* A life of mindless ritual, on the production line or down the dole, that screws you down and nails a price on your labour / A song that rattled (Strummer haranguing, Futura rapping) and argues over a funk battering.

As for wartime, it's on side two that the argument really starts to burn. The voice of 'Combat Rock' is the voice of sanity, not suitable for blasting out on the World Service right now — this voice gets too near the truth. It goes like this: 'Atom Tan' steps lightly, Strummer and Jones swapping vocals on the sadness, the blood and the madness, of life (or lack of it) after the nuclear ZAP...

*"All night I waited for a horseman*

*And his ever faithful, his Indian friend*

*I'm not the only one of the caped crusader fan club*

*Watching the sky for mankind's friend... There is no god, Marvel Comic character or otherwise, to come to your rescue. Fight for yourself.*

'Ghetto Defendant' and 'Inoculated City' bump along the middle of the road but the message is still hard, never conciliatory. 'Ghetto Defendant' is Allen Ginsberg's tune, complete with poem, but it's Strummer who takes the lead with bitter insight... *It is heroin pity not tear gas nor baton charge/That stops you taking the city...* before 'Inoculated City' pinpoints where the orders come from. We drug ourselves stupid on their propaganda... but then, what drug stupefies more than war?

The message is pile-driven, over and over again: You fight for someone else, you die for someone else and we suffer.

'Straight To Hell' ends side one, Joe Crying soft and painful:

*"As railhead towns feel the steel mills rust.*

*Water froze in the generation, clear as winter ice*

*This is your paradise...*

*It could be anywhere, most likely could be any frontier*

*Any hemisphere — no man's land*

*And there ain't no asylum here*

*'Go straight to hell boys'...*

They won't hear this one (positively absolutely) on the HMS Invincible — jeez, British workers might start wondering what they're doing eight thousand miles away from home killing Argentinian workers...

'Death Is A Star' crystallises the madness of this war. Sure, it's a depressing ending but, 'kinnel, the first album could hardly have ended on a more mournful note ('Garageland' was always the saddest of anthems).

That 'Combat Rock' has inadvertently become the best counterblast on the Falklands is no surprise from a band who have turned out the most brilliant series of anti-war critiques ('Career Opportunities', 'Tommy Gun', 'London Calling', 'Clampdown', 'The Call Up'...) This counterblast belongs to Joe Strummer and Joe's still barking hard: "You'll be dead when their war is won!"

What's surprising is that The Clash have *survived* five albums, after all the years of internal arguments and lingering habits. Schoolboy skinhead or not, Simonon has always had a skin's sass and style and is still the rock solid root of this band, still sharp — it's up to Topper to kick junk and Mick Jones to kick the wimp pop star habit to sort out the mess.

As for Strummer, he's still an impressive propagandist, a vitriolic poet, but for *Answers* we've always had to look elsewhere (searching through the grubby racks of independents for Crisis or turning now to The Jam for a way to fight back). Listen, I'll tell you where the "socially concerned rock artist" stands in the bubblegum environment of today — s/he stands HERE! Strummer should get back and get moving, start arguing positive. 'The Future' Is Unwritten? Yeah? Then start writing it!

This record is for us, not for the mugs — 'Combat Rock' is too important to be snidely lumped with all the other dross, and this band are too important to tear themselves apart.

The Clash still smell good (if they're not in your top ten, you're not in mine) and that war stinks rotten — grab a sniff. Listen to this. Run.

X. Moore



A Flipper and fans

Pic: Vikki Haas

## DOLPHINS IN ROCK (PART 6)

### FLIPPER

Album *Generic Flipper* (Subterranean, import)

A FIRST song, 'The Way Of The World', opens like Hawkwind's 'Silver Machine', and 'Album G.F.' never really lets go from there on in. Flipper are so good it's irresponsible to get sober about them. As they say in their liner suggestions, "NO MATTER HOW FUCKED UP YOU ARE, YOU ARE NOT TOO FUCKED TO GET FUCKED (UP)". This is sense at work, and I'm not even all-American!

Lester Bangs R.I.P. He probably dug Flipper too. "Life's the only thing worth living for", they sing, which

certainly beats his "suicide's a waste of time" number. "I too have sung Death's praise," inveighs Will Shatter at his most sincere, "But I'm not gonna sing that song anymore..."

Fabulously Nietzschean! Having stolen our hearts outright with the implacable 'Sex Bomb' (herein revamped), Flipper take their spirited barrage-of-sound effect one solemn step further with an actual twelve-inch disc. This is no dopey, slobbering frolic. In fact, I deeply appreciate how serious Flipper must be underneath it all. As you would too, if you had the simple sense (of dementia) to buy the darn thing.

"I say 'Who cares anyway? Who listens to what I say?' This song rhymes and we play it in time!"

('Living For The Depression') What charms one so swiftly about Flipper is the way guitar, bass, and drums all become one instrument: there is a harmonious, triumvirate unity achieved on this record, and it seamlessly forces one to think of the Sex Pistols penetrating Suicide, which is indeed what 'Album

G.F.' musically amounts to. And 'Flipper' after all! What a great image, logo, symbol. What a great word! Idea! Culture-cluster! Forget the loaves, forget the crass 5,000, just give us the fishes under the deep blue sea.

Some stray thoughts from 'Album G.F.': "Ever see a couple kissing, and get sickened by it? SO WHAT?"

("Ever") "Life is pretty cheap, Except for the cold... delirious... few."

("Life Is Cheap") Or perhaps they mean 'deleterious'?

"We're living like cockroaches in this place, sprayed with insecticide that leaves no trace. And if we could crawl on you at night, you can be sure we'd love to bite..."

('Living For The Depression') ('Life Is Cheap' carries the organ/bass riff from 'L.America' by The Doors, which is not inappropriate by any means. Other fleeting I.D. marks flaunt themselves, usually without the slightest trace of relevance... or insecticide.)

Flipper say: Don't be stupid. The other guy is the dipshit.