

# Combative Clash lacks firepower

**THE CLASH — *Combat Rock* (Epic FE 37689):**

What with Joe Strummer going AWOL and then Nicky "Topper" Headon permanently deserting the band, things look a bit shaky for the Clash as they launch their new assault on North America.

What the band really needed was a hard hitting album to solidify the excitement first generated by *London Calling* then dissipated by *Sandinista*. This isn't it.

The six-sided *Sandinista* was the most interesting album of 1981 but that doesn't mean it was the most entertaining. Ambitious in its experimentation, the album ranged from the banal to the brilliant with the band getting full marks for audacity rather than commercial appeal.

The album's very flaws — and there were a number — actually contributed to the fascination of the music, making this a truly remarkable piece of risk taking.

But having got *Sandinista* out of their systems, one couldn't help hoping the Clash would get back to the tough, taut, guerrilla rock that animated their previous release, *London Calling*.

Unfortunately, despite its tough-sounding title, *Combat Rock* is merely good, not great, Clash rock.

The album has a number of great moments — including the opening barrage: "This is a public service announcement . . . with guitar . . . know you're rights . . . all three of them" — but not enough to make *Combat Rock* a truly exciting experience.

There's still a stark, biting fascination with urban crisis and world politics but the messages are defused rather than underlined by the untidiness of the music ("Mixed by Glynn Johns" but "Made by The Clash").

There's some fine material here, including *Overpowered By Funk* and *Sean Flynn*, the latter being a haunting tribute to the missing-in-action, war-correspondent son of film star Errol Flynn, but as *London Calling* so ably demonstrated, it really wouldn't hurt the Clash to be catchy as well as powerfull and profound.

*Combat Rock* is good enough to win this battle but not good enough to keep the band from possibly losing the war.



## REVOLUTIONS

by Bill Provick



*The Clash: no longer a quartet?*