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AT VIRGIN RECORD STORES, SEE PAGE 19

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FIVE PAGES OF CHARTS

CLASH

COMBAT CALLING, SANDINISTA ROCKIN' NO ELVIS, BEATLES OR THE ROLLING STONES

Photo by Joe Shuster



● **A myth begins!** Paint splattered, short haired, angry — a myth is born. It is 1976 and members of the happy music press are invited to a showcase gig by a new band set to take the world by storm. Choking on their free wine, they vainly hide behind their 36 inch lung pants. For assorted breadheads, deadheads and airheads this was something of a culture shock. They hadn't reckoned on Strummer, Jones, Simonon and Crimes (aka Chimes). They hadn't reckoned on the Clash.

Months later, March 18, 1977, the band sign to CBS as a corporate answer to those tiresome Sex Pistols and release a single 'White Riot' (1977). While Rottem and McLaren dedicated themselves to cash, money and anti glamour, the Clash built themselves a solid base of slogans and run-ins with the law (who always win) which secures them a reputation and career still limping on toward the arse end of 1985.

Their debut LP 'The Clash', released three weeks after 'White Riot', makes them stars. A record which sounds like it was recorded in an hour or two, but has more balls than Adidas, includes a crop of instant classics: 'London's Burning', 'Career Opportunities' and 'Georgeland'.

The punks love it, but probably don't realise the significance of the presence of Marvin/Peavy's 'Police And Thieves'. Tucked away on side two it's the first sign that the Clash have one amphetamine-eyed set towards the black music scene in all its guises.

Singles are what 1977/78 is about, and the Clash release four in just over a year. In tandem they build up a considerable live reputation and headline the odd Anti Nazi rally in London. Heady days lived out to a soundtrack of 'Complete Control' (perhaps their finest early moment), 'Clash City Rockers', the astonishing 'White Man' in Hammersmith Palais' and 'Tommy Gun' which includes "the best one note guitar solo ever put to vinyl". Buzzcocks fall over again and it is like the Stones and the Beatles all disintegrate.

The critical backlash had to happen of course, and it comes with the delivery of the much awaited 'Give 'Em Enough Rope' LP, released on November

11, 1978. "It's just heavy metal," claim the punks, pointing to the production credit for Sandy Pearlman, a man more used to twiddling studio knobs with Blue Oyster Cult than London's finest. He goes to see the Clash, orders them to buy new equipment and turns them into an effective rock outfit.

'Safe European Home', 'Julie's Been Working For The Drug Squad', 'Drug Slabbing Time' and Mick Jones' pleading 'Stay Free' are all great songs. But there is a feeling that the Clash are being groomed by those around them for mainstream stardom — an anathema to their fans who forgive them when the Safe European Tour comes to town. The Clash are marvellous, backed with a huge multi-faceted backdrop and supported by the Sits. To the real Clash fan, the sleeve of 'Give 'Em Enough Rope' is the worst thing about it. The LP sets about mythologising the band's own past and we all fall for it. 'I have been a washer up' — indeed!

Six months later 'The Cost Of Living EP' hits the decks, including 'I Fought The Law', and the anthem for pirates everywhere 'Capitol Radio'. A double LP, 'London Calling' is released on December 14, 1979, and immediately hailed as something of a masterpiece. There is an increasingly apparent nod to reggae with 'Guns Of Brixton' and the excellent version of 'Revolution Rock'. It takes a bit of time to take on board a double LP from the Clash, but the value for money aspect helps.

Those of us who'd popped to 'I'm So Bored With The USA' on the first LP, note with slight concern the abundance of American references — cowboy hats, American tours, a liking for big American cars. The boys have seemingly deserted the Westway for Hollywood. The title 'London Calling' seems misplaced.

The title track is released as a single so we move into the Eighties and yesterday's punk heroes begin to hit the charts with astonishing regularity. The Clash enjoy great success with the single 'Bankrobber', released in July 1980, a mighty dub song with Strummer's increasingly cracked voice signalling a hit.



Things seem to be going smoothly, but little does anyone suspect what the Clash have up their ambitious sleeves.

'Sandinista', released on December 12, 1980, is a little too much to handle. A triple LP containing no less than 36 tracks just has to be too ambitious, flabby and unfocused. It is, even the band's most ardent fans will admit, an unsuccessful experiment. Too much studio nonsense — dub this and that with the occasional great song. It would have made a great single LP, but the Clash's penchant for following black music has gone a little haywire. Nonetheless, the rapwise 'The Magnificent Seven' released on April 10, 1981, is a classy single.

'Combat Rock' is for many the Clash LP they'd been waiting for since 'London Calling'. Released on May 14, 1982, it is a remarkably mature record. Funky as hell, with some wonderful clapping rhythms and an economy of sounds and arrangement that do the band proud. 'Rock The Casbah', released as a single a month later, is still as classic — the Clash at their best even without Jonsey's searing Les Paul. He is to claim later that his influence pushed the Clash on beyond rock and into their reggae and funk expeditions.

If this is indeed the case, then it comes as an even bigger surprise to hear his wonderful bleatings on 'Should I Stay Or Should I Go' released as a single a month later, a sub-Stones guitar riff which you either love or hate. Perhaps Mick Jones really meant those words, for he wasn't to appear again, save for a crop of re-releases and special offers that plugged the gaping hole between 'Should I Stay' and the Clash's new single and line up.

This is England, still lodged in the charts, is bought eagerly by starved Clash fans, though in truth it lacks spirit. Swamped by legal hassles, claims and counter claims which mean the name the Clash may be frozen for posterity, the single isn't the Clash of their best. Maybe Mick Jones really was the lynch pin. He's currently coming up trumps again, accompanied by old cohort Don Letts, in Big Audio Dynamite. Topper Headon also releases a single this month.



Photo by LF

GRAPHY

STONES IN THE CLASH OVERVIEW: SPIT AND DISCOGRAPHY: ANDY STRICKLAND

KUUF! KEEF UP!!



Photo by Justin Thomas

UK DISCOGRAPHY

SINGLES

- Mar 77 **WHITE RIOT/1977**
 May 77 **REMOTE CONTROL/London's Burning**
 Sept 77 **COMPLETE CONTROL/The City Of The Dead**
 Feb 78 **CLASH CITY ROCKERS/Jail Guitar Doors**
 (WHITE MAN) IN HAMMERSMITH
 Jun 78 **PALAIS/The Prisoner**
 Nov 78 **TOMMY GUN/1-2 Crush On You**
 Feb 79 **ENGLISH CIVIL WAR/Pressure Drop**
 May 79 **THE COST OF LIVING EP**
 Dec 79 **LONDON CALLING/Armageddon Time**
 Jan 80 **LONDON CALLING/ARMAGIDEON TIME**
 /Justice Tonight Kick It Over 12"
 July 80 **BANK ROBBERS/Rocker's Galore ... UK Tour**
 Nov 80 **THE CALL UP/Stop The World**
 Jan 81 **HITSVILLE UK/Radio One**
 Apr 81 **THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN/The Magnificent Seven**
 THIS IS RADIO CLASH/Radio Clash
 Dec 81 **THIS IS RADIO CLASH, RADIO CLASH**
 /Radio 5, Radio 6 12"
 Apr 82 **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS/First Night Back in London**
 Jun 82 **ROCK THE CASBAH/Long Time Jerk**
 Jun 82 **ROCK THE CASBAH/Multitapha Dance**
 Sept 82 **SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO**
 /Straight To Hell
 Nov 82 **COMPLETE CONTROL, LONDON CALLING/Bank Robber, Clash City Rockers special cassette single**
 Sept 85 **THIS IS ENGLAND/Do It Now**

ALBUMS

- Apr 77 **THE CLASH**
 Nov 78 **GIVE 'EM ENOUGH ROPE**
 Dec 79 **LONDON CALLING**
 Dec 80 **SANDINISTA**
 May 82 **COMBAT ROCK**

All records released on CBS



Photo by P. Terrasano

Pictures clockwise: Benefit for Sid Vicious, Music Machine, Dec '78; Current line-up; Hangin' out in '77; With Pursey and Steve Jones, "Clash On Parole" tour, July '78; "Daddy Was A Diplomat"; "Combat Rock" posin' '82; Re-united with Terry Chimes, USA '83.



Photo by LFI



Photo by Pamela Smith