

New Clash album won't blend

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Hopefully, *London Calling*, the latest from The Clash, will prove to be one of the more morbid albums of the '80s. If you are already familiar with The Clash's music, you know that it does not fall into the Rock-a-Billy-Boogie, good time tradition of rock 'n' roll. Rather, The Clash is the closest living thing to the Sex Pistols in American today.

Most new wave albums consist of 10 or 11 cuts of raunchy, paranoid, and often excellent rock 'n' roll. *London Calling* is an exception, containing 18 selections of monotone paranoia. Simply, The Clash has dared to do what

most new wave groups have wisely avoided—it has released a double album.

This length creates several problems, the most serious of which is keeping the listener's attention. Frankly, it is not an album to which you will want to spend an hour and a half listening to. It is more disturbing than many new wave releases.

At the same time, a lot of this album deserves play for the lyrics and accompaniment which are especially unhealthy and stimulating.

'N' every gimmick hungry yod digging gold from rock 'n' roll
Grabs the mike to tell us he'll die before he's sold.

But I believe in this—and it's tested by research
That he who — a nun will later join the church

Although rock 'n' roll nihilism is limited and often redundant, The Clash manages to crank out some inspiring lines on age old complaints:

Spanish weeks in my disco casino,
The freedom fighters dies upon the hill
They sang the red flag, they wore the black one
But after they died, it was mocking bird hill.

If you have never listened to The Clash, it won't take you long to realize it is the most political band in pop music since Dylan, and the members of The Clash

know it.

Musically, the group is competent; its sound does not require elaborate rhythms or satanic guitar solos to get them through. What they do, they do well enough.

Vocally, they lack traditional ability—as is the case with most rock singers—and range in sound from Dylan with laryngitis to the average pseudo-Buddy Holly croon.

Still, The Clash retains a style of their own. They are no second hand Sex Pistols. *London Calling* explores new territory. The cuts on this album are more widely varied in tempo and style than most three chord bands.

Cuts like "Wrong 'em Boys" incorporate a reggae beat and a horn section to produce a surprisingly melodic sound. The Clash has clearly realized that survival in the pop music world requires a diverse sound and has



The Clash
...London Calling

consequently modified its previous extremely abrasive style. Yet the band has not sold out to spineless pop and manages to remain faithful to the underground tradition.

In fact, some of *London Calling*

remains faithful to tradition to the point of being predictable. A good part of the album is reminiscent of disco music with a beat that goes on with little or no change. The album would be much better if it were a one record set.

The Clash remains one of the better new wave groups which emerged in the late '70s, yet it seems uncertain about what direction it wants to pursue. By experimenting with different styles, they have met both success and failure. Overall, *London Calling* represents a step ahead for The Clash, and at the same time, it leaves much room for improvement.

One of its positive points is that it is well produced; the sound is appropriately rough, almost to the point of being live. Incidentally, *London Calling*, despite its cover boasting concert shots, is not a live album. All 18 cuts are new.

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