

Clash-greatest rock & roll ever

T. Ozere. Originally broadcast on CKDU.

The Clash have a new album out; it's called **London Calling**. It includes 18 new Clash songs and sells for 10.99.

How does one classify the Clash? They're not my favorite punk band. The Sex Pistols are unchallenged there. The Rolling Stones, despite their recent career lows, remain my favorite group. They don't go out of their way to endear themselves to the public as the Who did, nor are they collectible as the Who were. The Clash are not the band I'd most like to see in concert. Springsteen and the E Street band are. So how to classify the Clash? It's very simple. The Clash are the best rock n'roll band in the world, bar none.

The Clash's first album entitled simply **the Clash** was the best record to come out of the punk period. Although they couldn't play as well as the Sex Pistols (the harsh trebly sound the Pistols got on **Never Mind the Bollocks** remains unique in rock n' roll) they wrote better songs.

More importantly, however, they showed the beginnings of integrity and staying power. Compare the two most similar songs on **the Clash** and **Never Mind The Bollocks**. **London's Burning** is an anthem of horror, the Clash on the barricades genuinely trying to help. **Anarchy in the U.K.** presents Johnny Rotten and co. gleefully dancing around the fire, blaring exciting but ultimately hollow rhetoric about being the 'Antichrist'. While the Pistols were pounding out 12 to the bar rock the Clash were experimenting with different styles notably reggae.

The Pistols burned out. The Clash intend to stick around. Thus another problem presents itself. How to survive and sell records while maintaining one's roots and integrity? Ever since their first album, the Clash have concentrated on meeting this

problem head on. In a series of singles released after the first album the **Clash** struck a pose of troubled indecision. In a song called **White Man (at the Hammersmith Palais)** they veered between reportage and soul searching; on one hand they castigated the now prominent reggae groups for "Turning rebellion into money", while on the other they wondered how in the hell they were going to avoid the same trap themselves. Executed in a style that posits reggae against punk, the song reels on the edge of parody and yet becomes one of the most powerful songs the Clash have ever done.

For some people the Clash's second album **Give 'em Enough Rope** seemed to solve the problem. The playing had improved and the songs were more confident than before, but the production by Sandy Pearlman (of Blue Oyster Cult fame) reined in most of the Clash's spontaneity and presented the picture of a hard working almost heavy metal band that wrote unusually good songs. It was miles ahead of what a band as downright lousy as Van Halen were doing but not in the least what the Clash were capable of. There was hardly a bad song on the record but the laboured-over layers of production maintained our uncertainty about where the Clash were headed.

With the release of their new album **London Calling**, the Clash became the best Rock 'n Roll band in the world. The fact that it is a double album illustrates just how confident the Clash are in their abilities. There are few double albums around that come this close to perfection. The Clash do not stoop to the use of filler (i.e. live cuts, or elaborate musical one liners of the sort that plagues so many Frank Zappa records) in fact it is impossible to imagine this album existing minus any of the songs. Even the 'bad' songs, like the ill timed **Guns of Brixton**, the

premature **Four Horsemen** (there are four Clash members, four, get it? Why would the Clash seek to mythologize themselves this early in their career?) and the excruciating **Lover's Rock**, illustrate a desire to take chances, not to rest on easy punk granted laurels.

London Calling is about taking chances. The Clash expand their experimentation with styles, there is lots of reggae, ska, pop, and rockabilly featured on this album in addition to the

straight-ahead familiar rockers. They have finally brought their lyrics into focus, a move that required a lot of courage for a band that depended so much on surprise and nuance. We know exactly what the Clash are trying to say on this record: They address the problem of integrity in **Death or Glory**: "N' very gimmick hungry boy 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 been tested by research/that he who fucks Nuns will later join the church"; They attack the rock 'n roll bourgeoisie in **Koka Kola**: "Your snakeskin boot and your alligator suit/ you won't need a Launderette—You can send them to the vet" and so on.

The surprises on this record are in the music. Guy Stevens, who produced, has created the perfect Clash sound. As turgid as any Phil Spector record, the production nevertheless has a loose almost sloppy quality (at one point in the record you can

hear a piano string breaking) that complements the Clash's spontaneous rave-up style perfectly. Stevens packs so many instruments into a song like the **Card Cheat** (out of tune horns, several pianos etc.) that one steps back in awe when the song is over. I haven't heard a record that sounds so good (so right!) in a long time.

The album finally hinges on its song writing. These are simply the best songs the Clash have ever written. From the chilling title song to the final uncredited cut (**Train in Vain**) the Clash push with an energy that is absolutely unrelenting; even the bad songs (like the aforementioned **Lover's Rock**) are not skipped over or given light treatment. There is nothing offhand on this record, no momentary lulls, every moment is superb, archival Rock 'n'Roll. Musically superb, and thematically faultless, **London Calling** is a great record.



Birdy: 'no fear of flying'

Book Review
by Darrell Dexter

Birdy—William Wharton—Avon Books—\$2.50—Paperback Edition.

Look at the sky. What do you find?

There's everything there to strengthen your mind.

—Pepper Tree

William Wharton's **Birdy** is destined to be one of the stunning novels of 1980.

The story of a boy, his friend and a fascination with birds leads into one of the most refreshing outlooks on life and the frustration with reality. Wharton captures the imagination and feelings of young people growing up in a world they do not understand.

Symbolism and the didactic

purpose reign supreme in a genre that brings **Birdy** out of the abstract and into the life of people everywhere. His truths threaten the existences of purpose in our society. Wharton speculates; "We built this cage, civilization, because we think and now we have to think because we're caught in our cage."

Birdy teaches by learning along with the reader. We share the experiences of understanding and are left waiting for more. The impact of each new level of learning heightens the expectations of what is to come. We are never left waiting in the wings for more than a flash in time and the rewards are well worth the effort.

Birdy keeps coming toward the reader from beginning to

end. Although it is set in a suburb of Philadelphia before World War II, it is filled with passions and needs of yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Birdy takes time to read and requires the work of the reader and cooperation in understanding. It is a book that demands to be read regardless of preferred taste and demonstrates that a new understanding may well be one of the trade marks of the 1980's. It is a book for those that have no fear of flying.

High in the clouds far away from it all

You get the feeling you can touch God.

Chasing the wind for as long as it blows

Seeing the world pass away down below.

—Pepper Tree

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. 19 **Good, Bad, & Ugly**

. 20 **M*A*S*H**

McInnes Rm
7:30pm

* Tickets for all three movies: \$5.00 (students) / 6.00 (guests)
or individually : 2.00 / 2.50

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