

Clash is awesome

The Clash
Sandinista!
(Epic E3X 37037)

review by Michael Skeet

If *Sandinista!*, the mammoth new album by the Clash, was a movie, current critical exultation would have us believe it was *Gone With The Wind*, or *Napoleon*. After three weeks closeted with the triple disc, I have reached the conclusion that the album could be better called the recording industry's *Intolerance*, or maybe *1900*.

Sandinista! is a great recording, and an awe-inspiring achievement. It is not, however, a great rock 'n' roll album. I would even be hard-pressed to call it great pop music. This is not a recording you listen to because the music invokes an emotional response. *Sandinista!*'s appeal is more to the intellect, and you listen to it in much the same manner, and for the same reasons as you would listen to other 'serious' music: a concerto by Beethoven, a quartet by Bartok, or (God forbid) a symphony by Mahler.

With these reservations out of the way, I can safely jump on the *Sandinista!* bandwagon. This really is a remarkable work, and it leaves one to wonder where the Clash can possibly go from here. Rock 'n' roll as we have come to expect it from the band doesn't really figure in *Sandinista!*, but every other style you could possibly desire is explored on one of the album's six sides: reggae, ska, dub, rockabilly, pop and calypso are there, and the sax on "If Music Could Talk" sounds just like Junior Walker.

The individual songs definitely take second place to the overall concept behind *Sandinista!*. There is no frivolity without purpose; each song works toward the album's ultimate political statement. This is not to suggest that the album



contains nothing but dreary political tracts. The band's sense of humor is evident on "Hitsville UK", and who else would portray the conflict between American and Soviet imperialism in terms of a disco dance contest ("Ivan Meets G.I. Joe"), complete with soundtrack by Space Invaders?

As mentioned, the political statement is everything where *Sandinista!* is concerned. The message is ultimately a positive one, reinforcing the value of the individual as opposed to oppressive regimes of all political stripes, with particular attention paid to the American system. The album builds in intensity until side 4, when it reaches its climax with "Washington Bullëts," in essence the title and focal track of the whole album.

As a double album, *Sandinista!* would have been stunning. As a triple, it's merely awesome. There's little on sides 5 and 6 that couldn't have been placed on the first two discs without really suffering any loss of impact. The impression gained is that the band saw the chance to make a bold statement that would be impressive from a physical point of view as well: after all, how many bands these days are releasing triple albums - and for the price of a double, at that?

If I seem to have spent an inordinate amount of time harping on *Sandinista!*'s weaker points, it's only because the work is strong enough that it holds up to closer scrutiny. It may not be great rock 'n' roll (I really miss the energy of the first albums), but it is nevertheless a landmark.

Socialist gives analysis of future

Dowson v. RCMP
no author or editor given
Forward Publications

review by Jens Andersen

Listen to Mr. Dowson, a proud socialist:

The word revolution is a very sacred concept (sic) in my opinion. Not just in the sense of a revolutionary car design or a revolutionary technology, but the very concept itself. It means fundamental changes opening up. As for the concept of violence - I think that must be absolutely, certainly, ascribed to the counter-revolution. It is not the desire and the aim of the revolution.

Neat, eh? The revolution hasn't even started yet and the bloodshed has already been blamed on the capitalists. Dowson should have been a medieval

theologian. Not just because of his sophisticated logic, which makes Duns Scotus look like an amateur, but also the rosy mystical flubdub about "fundamental changes opening up."

If the RCMP is ever effectually criticized it won't be by self-serving propaganda like this.

Films of a woman

Review by Marni Stanley

As part of their ongoing series of screenings the National Film Board will be presenting *Margaret Laurence, First Lady of Manawaka* and *A Bird in the House*, this Friday, March 6, at 8:00 p.m. in the theater of the Provincial Museum. Admission is free.

A Bird in the House is the CBC dramatization of the Laurence short story of the same name. In the Canadian short fiction anthology *Sixteen by Twelve* Laurence makes the following comments about the work:

A Bird in the House is a story which happens to be mainly autobiographical. It sets down, in fictional form, the death of my father... (it takes) the central character, Vanessa, from the age of twelve to the age of seventeen... following one theme through all these of her ages - her relationship with her father; the ways in which his death affected her, her gradual understanding of him as a person... her final recognition that at last she knows enough about him, and about herself, to talk with him, but this is not possible, for he has been dead for many years.

Although this CBC production does not quite do justice to the story, fair performances and an authentic sense of the period make it a worthwhile film. The young woman who plays Noreen, eyes wide and voice tremulous as she describes, with considerable embellishment, the spheres of heaven and hell, is really quite splendid.

The other film, the National Film Board's 1978 documentary on Laurence, *Margaret Laurence, First Lady of Manawaka*, basically consists of an interview with Laurence in the kitchen of her Lakefield, Ontario home, interspersed with shots of Neepawa and other images from her past and present. As the camera moves down small-town streets or through cemeteries Jane Eastwood reads passages from Laurence's 'Manawaka' fiction. The informal kitchen setting of the interview belies Laurence's international status as one of this country's best known and most celebrated novelists and turns her into kind of a matriarch of English Canadian prose.

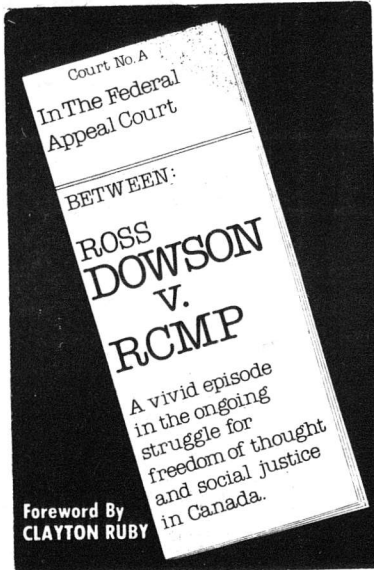
The interviews themselves are not overly revealing - we have the sense that Laurence is talking about her life and work in the same way she might at a college reading. There is a moment of true passion, however, when she talks about the issue of censorship and how it has affected her work, particularly *The Diviners*. Also included in the film is a short CBC interview from England in 1964 that marked the publication of *The Stone Angel*.

First Lady of Manawaka does help us get some sense of the woman behind the writings, and the passages from her work are, on the whole, well chosen and well read. Together the two films present a good introduction to the fact and fiction of Margaret Laurence, or an interesting set of visual impressions for the already established Laurence fan.



photo Ray Giguere

Gerry Boulet and his band Offenbach were at SUB Theatre Tuesday night. The crowd loved 'em, says our intrepid photographer, who claims you can recapture the great sound by holding the picture to your ear.



up and coming

MUSIC

Emmylou Harris; Tues. Mar. 10: 7:30 PM; Jubilee Auditorium; Bass Ticket Outlets.

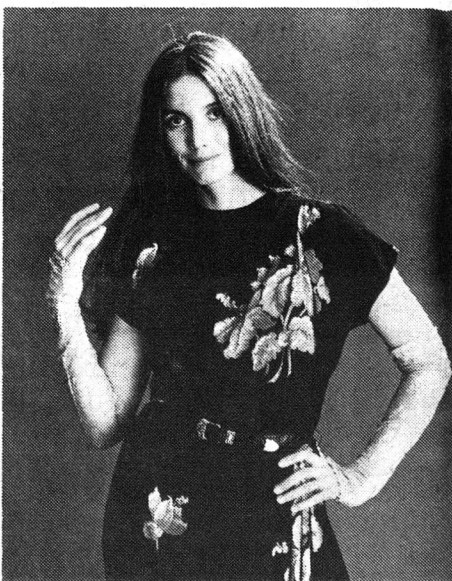
Phyllis Diller and the Edmonton Symphony; Mar. 5, 6; 8:00 PM; Jubilee Auditorium; Bass Ticket Outlets. (Miss Diller, in case you are wondering, will be pianist in a selection of Beethoven, Sondheim, Bach and Herman peices.)

READINGS

Trinidadian poet Claire Harris will read her work and May Diver will read the Bloom soliloquy from Joyce's *Ulysses*; Mon. Mar. 9; 12:00 - 1:00 PM; SU Art Gallery; Free.

GALLERIES

Four Figurative Artists from Ontario; SU Art Gallery; until Mar. 15; Mon. to Fri. 11:00 p 5:00 PM; Sat. & Sun. 1:00-5:00 PM.



Emmylou Harris