

= London Calling =

London Calling is the third studio album by English punk rock band the Clash . It was released as a double album in the United Kingdom on 14 December 1979 by CBS Records , and in the United States in January 1980 by Epic Records . London Calling is a post @-@ punk album that incorporates a range of styles , including punk , reggae , rockabilly , ska , New Orleans R & B , pop , lounge jazz , and hard rock .

The album 's subject matter included social displacement , unemployment , racial conflict , drug use , and the responsibilities of adulthood . The album received widespread acclaim and was ranked at number eight on Rolling Stone 's list of The 500 Greatest Albums of All Time in 2003 . London Calling was a top ten album in the UK , and its lead single " London Calling " was a top 20 single . It has sold over five million copies worldwide , and was certified platinum in the United States .

= = Recording and production = =

After recording their second studio album Give ' Em Enough Rope ( 1978 ) , the band separated from their manager Bernard Rhodes . This separation meant that the group had to leave their rehearsal studio in Camden Town and find another location to compose their music . Tour manager Johnny Green and drum roadie Baker had found the group a new place to rehearse called Vanilla Studios , which was located in the back of a garage in Pimlico .

Prior to this move to the Vanilla Studios rehearsal space , the Clash 's songwriters Mick Jones and Joe Strummer had experienced a period of writer 's block . They had not written a new song from scratch in over one year , with the material on their recently @-@ released Cost of Living EP , composed of a cover song and three songs that had all been written over 12 months earlier . The Clash arrived at Vanilla in May 1979 without a single new song prepared for their third album .

Once in Vanilla Studios , the group began performing cover songs from a variety of genres , such as rockabilly , rock ' n ' roll , rhythm and blues , and reggae . In contrast to previous rehearsal sessions , the band kept these rehearsals private , and disallowed hangers @-@ on from attending the Vanilla sessions . This seclusion allowed the band to rebuild their confidence without worrying about the reaction from outsiders , who were familiar with their older punk rock musical style .

The band developed an " extremely disciplined " daily routine of afternoon musical rehearsals , broken by a late @-@ afternoon social football game , which fostered a friendly bond between the band members . The daily football match was followed by couple of drinks at a local pub , which was itself followed by a second musical rehearsal session at Vanilla Studio in the evening .

The band gradually rebuilt their musical and songwriting confidence during these rehearsal sessions during the summer of 1979 , with the styles of the sessions ' early cover songs setting the template for the diverse material that would be written for London Calling . The band were also encouraged by a growing appreciation of drummer Topper Headon 's drumming skills , which they realised could be used to perform music in a wide array of genres and styles beyond punk rock . The Clash wrote and recorded demos , with Mick Jones composing and arranging much of the music and Joe Strummer generally writing the lyrics .

As early as their second album , the Clash had started to depart from the punk rock sound . While touring in the United States twice in 1979 , they chose supporting acts such as rhythm and blues artists Bo Diddley , Sam & Dave , Lee Dorsey , and Screamin ' Jay Hawkins , as well as neotraditional country artist Joe Ely and punk rockabilly band the Cramps . This developed fascination with rock and roll inspired their approach for London Calling .

In August 1979 , the band entered Wessex Studios to begin recording London Calling . The Clash asked Guy Stevens to produce the album , much to the dismay of CBS Records . Stevens had alcohol and drug problems and his production methods were unconventional . During a recording session he swung a ladder and upturned chairs ? apparently to create a rock & roll atmosphere . The Clash got along well with Stevens , especially bassist Paul Simonon , who found his work to be very helpful and productive to his playing and their recording as a band . The album was recorded during a five- to six @-@ week period involving 18 @-@ hour days , with many songs recorded in

one or two takes .

= = Music and lyrics = =

According to the music critic Mark Kidel , London Calling is the first post @-@ punk double album and exhibits a broader range of musical styles than the Clash 's previous albums . Stephen Thomas Erlewine said that the album appropriates the " punk aesthetic into rock & roll mythology and roots music " , and incorporates a wider range of styles such as punk , reggae , rockabilly , ska , New Orleans R & B , pop , lounge jazz , and hard rock . According to Greg Kot , the band 's embrace of specific musical traditions deviated from punk 's " blow @-@ up @-@ the @-@ past attitude " . Writer Jack Sargeant remarked that " whether the Clash completely abandoned their punk roots or pushed punk 's musical eclecticism and diversity into new terrain [ on the album ] remains a controversial issue . "

The album 's songs are generally about London and feature both fictional and life @-@ based characters , such as an underworld criminal named Jimmy Jazz and a gun @-@ toting Jimmy Cliff aspirer living in Brixton . Some have more widely contextualised narratives , including references to the " evil presidentes " working for the " clampdown " , the lingering effects of the Spanish Civil War , and how constant consumerism leads to unavoidable political apathy on " Lost in the Supermarket " . Sal Ciolfi of PopMatters felt that the songs encompass an arrangement of urban narratives and characters , and touch on themes such as sex , depression and identity crisis . Music critic Tom Carson viewed that , while the album draws on the entirety of rock and roll 's past for its sound , the concepts and lyrical themes are drawn from the history , politics and myths associated with the genre .

" London Calling " , the album 's title track , was partially influenced by the March 1979 accident at a nuclear reactor at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania . Strummer 's lyrics also discuss the problems of rising unemployment , racial conflict and drug use in Britain . The second track , " Brand New Cadillac " , was written and originally recorded by Vince Taylor and was the first track recorded for London Calling . The band cite the song as " one of the first British rock 'n'roll records " and had initially used it as a warm up song before recording . " Rudie Can 't Fail " , the album 's fifth song , features a horn section and mixes elements of pop , soul , and reggae music together . Its lyrics chronicle the life of a fun @-@ loving young man who is criticised for his inability to act like a responsible adult . Strummer wrote " Lost in the Supermarket " after imagining Jones ' childhood growing up in a basement with his mother and grandmother . " Clampdown " began as an instrumental track called " Working and Waiting " . Its lyrics comment on people who forsake the idealism of youth and urge young people to fight the status quo .

" The Guns of Brixton " was the first of Paul Simonon 's compositions the band recorded , and the first to have him sing lead . Simonon was originally doubtful about its lyrics , which discuss an individual 's paranoid outlook on life , but was encouraged by Strummer to continue working on it . On " Death or Glory " , Strummer examines his life in retrospect and acknowledges the complications and responsibilities of adulthood . While working on " The Card Cheat " , the band recorded each part twice to create a " sound as big as possible " . " Lover 's Rock " advocates safe sex and planning . The final track , " Train in Vain " , was originally excluded from the back cover 's track listing . It was intended to be given away through a promotion with NME , but was added to the album at the last minute after the deal fell through .

= = Artwork = =

The album 's front cover features a photograph of bassist Paul Simonon smashing his Fender Precision Bass ( on display at the Cleveland Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as of May 2009 ) against the stage at The Palladium in New York City on 20 September 1979 during the Clash Take the Fifth US tour . Simonon explained in a 2011 interview with Fender that he smashed the bass out of frustration when he learned the bouncers at the concert would not let the audience members stand up out of their seats . Pennie Smith , who photographed the band for the album , originally did not

want the photograph to be used . She thought that it was too out of focus , but Strummer and graphic designer Ray Lowry thought it would make a good album cover . In 2002 , Smith 's photograph was named the best rock and roll photograph of all time by Q magazine , commenting that " it captures the ultimate rock 'n'roll moment ? total loss of control " .

The cover artwork was designed by Lowry and was an homage to the design of Elvis Presley 's self @-@ titled debut album , with pink letters down the left side and green text across the bottom . The cover was named the ninth best album cover of all time by Q magazine in 2001 . In 1995 , Big Audio Dynamite ( a band fronted by former Clash member Mick Jones ) used the same scheme for their F @-@ Punk album . The album cover for London Calling was among the ten chosen by the Royal Mail for a set of " Classic Album Cover " postage stamps issued in January 2010 .

= = Release = =

The album was released in the United Kingdom on vinyl in mid @-@ December 1979 , and in the United States on vinyl and 8 @-@ track tape two weeks later . A gatefold cover design of the LP was only released in Japan . Though London Calling was released as a double album it was only sold for about the price of a single album . The Clash 's record label , CBS , at first denied the band 's request for the album to be released as a double . In return CBS gave permission for the band to include a free 12 @-@ inch single that played at 33 ? rpm . Ultimately , the planned 12 @-@ inch record became a second nine @-@ track LP .

Upon its release , London Calling sold approximately two million copies . The album peaked at number nine in the United Kingdom and was certified gold in December 1979 . The album performed strongly outside the United Kingdom . It reached number two in Sweden and number four in Norway . In the United States , London Calling peaked at number 27 on the Billboard Pop Albums chart and was certified platinum in February 1996 . The album produced two of the band 's most successful singles . " London Calling " preceded the album with a 7 December 1979 release . It peaked at number 11 on the UK Singles Chart . The song 's music video , directed by Letts , featured the band performing the song on a boat in the pouring rain with the River Thames behind them . In the United States , " Train in Vain " , backed with " London Calling " , was released as a single in February 1980 . It peaked at number 23 on the Billboard Hot 100 singles chart and " London Calling " / " Train in Vain " peaked at number 30 on the Billboard Disco Top 100 chart .

A UK only cassette was released in 1986 . A CD was released in the US in 1987 , with a remastered version in the UK in 1999 followed by the US in 2000 , along with the rest of the band 's catalogue . In 2004 , a 25th anniversary Legacy Edition was published with a bonus CD and DVD in digipack . The bonus CD features The Vanilla Tapes , missing recordings made by the band in mid @-@ 1979 . The DVD includes The Last Testament ? The Making of London Calling , a film by Don Letts , as well as previously unseen video footage and music videos . A limited edition picture disc LP was released in 2010 .

= = Reception and legacy = =

London Calling received widespread critical acclaim when it was first released in 1979 . In a contemporary review for The New York Times , John Rockwell said the album finally validated the acclaim received by the Clash up to that point because of how their serious political themes and vital playing were retained in music with innovative features and broad appeal : " This is an album that captures all the Clash 's primal energy , combines it with a brilliant production job by Guy Stevens and reveals depths of invention and creativity barely suggested by the band 's previous work . " Charles Shaar Murray wrote in NME that it was the first record to be on @-@ par with the band 's hype , while Melody Maker critic James Truman said the Clash had " discovered themselves " by embracing American music styles . Rolling Stone magazine 's Tom Carson claimed the music celebrated " the romance of rock & roll rebellion " and was vast , engaging , and enduring enough to leave listeners " not just exhilarated but exalted and triumphantly alive " . In the opinion of Down Beat journalist Michael Goldberg , the Clash had produced " a classic rock album which , literally ,

defines the state of rock and roll and against which the very best of [ the 1980s ] will have to be judged . " Charlie Gillett was less impressed , believing some of the songs sounded like poor imitations of Bob Dylan backed by a horn section . In Sounds , Garry Bushell was more critical and gave the record two out of five stars , claiming the Clash had " retrogressed " to Rolling Stones @-@ style " outlaw imagery " and " tired old rock clichés " .

London Calling was voted the best album of 1980 in the Pazz & Jop , an annual poll of American critics published by The Village Voice . Robert Christgau , the poll 's creator and supervisor , also named it the year 's best record in an accompanying piece and remarked that " it generated an urgency and vitality and ambition ( that Elvis P. cover ! ) which overwhelmed the pessimism of its leftist world @-@ view . " In a retrospective review , he called it the best double album since the Rolling Stones ' Exile on Main St. ( 1972 ) and said it expanded upon rather than compromised the Clash 's driving guitar sound in a " warm , angry , and thoughtful , confident , melodic , and hard @-@ rocking " showcase of their musical abilities .

According to the English music writer Dave Thompson , London Calling established the Clash as more than " a simple punk band " on what was a " potent " record of neurotic post @-@ punk , despite its amalgam of disparate and occasionally disjointed musical influences . Don McLeese from the Chicago Sun @-@ Times hailed it as their best album and " punk 's finest hour " , as it found the band broadening their artistry without compromising their original vigor and immediacy . PopMatters critic Sal Ciolfi called it a " big , loud , beautiful collection of hurt , anger , restless thought , and above all hope " that still sounds " relevant and vibrant " . In a review of its reissue , Uncut wrote that the songs and characters in the lyrics cross @-@ referenced each other because of the album 's exceptional sequencing , adding that " The Vanilla Tapes " bonus disc enhanced what was already a " masterpiece " .

= = = Accolades = = =

London Calling has been considered by many critics to be one of the greatest rock albums of all time , including AllMusic 's Stephen Thomas Erlewine , who said that it sounded more purposeful than " most albums , let alone double albums " . According to Acclaimed Music , it is the 6th most ranked record on critics ' lists of the all @-@ time greatest albums . In 1987 , Robert Hilburn of the Los Angeles Times named it the fourth best album of the previous 10 years and said while the Clash 's debut was a punk masterpiece , London Calling marked the genre 's " coming of age " as the band led the way into " fertile post @-@ punk territory " . In 1989 , Rolling Stone ranked it as the best album of the 1980s . In 1999 , Q magazine named London Calling the fourth greatest British album of all time , and wrote that it is " the best Clash album and therefore among the very best albums ever recorded " . In 2002 , Q included it on its list of the 100 Best Punk Albums , and in 2003 , Mojo ranked it twenty second on their list of the Top 50 Punk Albums , while British writer Colin Larkin named it the second greatest punk album of all time .

London Calling was ranked as the sixth greatest album of the 1970s by NME , and the second best by Pitchfork Media , whose reviewer Amanda Petrusich said that it was the Clash 's " creative apex " as a " rock band " rather than as a punk band . In 2003 , London Calling was ranked number eight on Rolling Stone 's list of The 500 Greatest Albums of All Time . Entertainment Weekly 's Tom Sinclair declared it the " Best Album of All Time " in his headline for a 2004 article on the album . In 2007 , London Calling was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame , a collection of recordings of lasting qualitative or historical significance . The album was included in the BBC Radio 1 2009 Masterpieces Series , marking it as one of the most influential albums of all time , some thirty years after its original release .

= = Film = =

In December 2010 , the BBC reported that a film about the recording of London Calling was in the early stages of production . Mick Jones and Paul Simonon are working as executive producers for the film . The script was written by Jez Butterworth and shooting would begin in 2011 . Alison Owen

and Paul Trijbits had been chosen as the producers .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Joe Strummer and Mick Jones , except where noted .

On the original version of the album , " Train in Vain " was not listed on the sleeve , nor the label on the record itself , but an extraneous sticker indicating the track was affixed to the outer cellophane wrapper . It was also scratched into the vinyl in the run @-@ off area on the fourth side of the album . Later editions included the song in the track listing .

= = Personnel = =

The Clash

Joe Strummer ? lead and backing vocals , rhythm guitar , piano

Mick Jones ? lead guitar , piano , harmonica , backing and lead vocals

Paul Simonon ? bass guitar , backing vocals , lead vocals on " The Guns of Brixton "

Topper Headon ? drums , percussion

Additional performers

Mickey Gallagher ? organ

The Irish Horns ? brass

Production

Guy Stevens ? producer

Bill Price ? engineer

Jerry Green ? additional engineer

Ray Lowry ? design

Pennie Smith ? photography

= = Charts = =

Notes

= = Certifications = =