

New Album Shows The Clash To Be The Crap

By JEFF TEWLOW

Upon my first perusal of the new Clash record "Cut The Crap" I became so angry that I had to prevent myself from making it impossible to ever hear this record again. Upon my second perusal, I said, "Gee, maybe you're just not willing to let this band change." Upon my third and final perusal, I said, "Screw that! This record should've been called 'The Crap,' or once you're familiar with it, simply, 'Crap.'"

This was once the band that could rightfully claim its self-titled epithet, "The Only Band That Matters." I think this was the same band that put out three timeless, but long forgotten records: the self-titled debut, *The Clash*; the metallically brilliant *Give 'Em Enough Rope*, and the epic *London Calling*.

Then our heroes began to stray. They experimented on six sides of vinyl with "Sandinista," but this experiment did have worthwhile results, even though it was a bit misguided. Then came "Combat Rock" (Schlock) and alas, the band, having trouble stomaching their success, promptly began to have internal strife, which was marked by the expulsion of drummer Topper Headon for heroin addiction and the splitting up of co-song writers Mick Jones and Joe Strummer.

Mick Jones now has his own miserable band, Big Audio Dynamite (BAD), while Strummer stayed on with bassist Paul Simonon. Added were two guitarists and a drummer. The two new guitarists (in addition to Strummer) are Pete Howard and Vince White, with Nick Sheppard on drums. I'm not sure, however, because the album sleeve doesn't tell who plays what - it just lists the names in seeming order of importance, with Strummer on top and Simonon following. The record was produced by the great Jose Unidos whose surprising identity will be revealed later in this review.

If Phil Spector had the "Wall of Sound," then Jose Unidos can be credited with the



"Wall of Flatulence." Almost every song sounds not like three guitars, but like one buzzing machine. The production is dirty: it attempts to copy a street-like sound, but winds up burying the vocals with buzz and boom. There is no real drums to be found on this here disc. All of the drums have been programmed into a drum machine to give this record a simply grand feeling of spontaneity. And I did promise that the identity

of Jose Unidos would be revealed...here it is... Joe Strummer, the great linguist that he is, has permitted himself the title "Joe Cool," which translates into Jose Unidos.

Strummer has always been a biting social critic and an advocate for his own brand of confused socialism, and there is still evidence that he is a strong writer on two or three songs. The Pressure Drop/Revolution Rock sound of "Three Card Trick" emphasizes

that The Clash can play rock/reggae with meaning. "Movers & Shakers" contains the strongest lyrics on the record next to the surprisingly good single "This Is England." In "Movers & Shakers" we see Strummer in fine style: "He shines Glass and he cleans chrome/He'll accept what he gets thrown/Down on him but he's got it beat/He's working coin from the cold concrete."

Almost every song starts off with a catchy buzz guitar riff that makes you say, "Hey, this one's got potential," but even though the catchiness stays, every chorus sounds like the cast from a Broadway musical getting up on stage, thrusting their arms forward, and singing the finale to the *H.M.S. Pinafore*.

The only case where this mass chorus works is on the anthemic "This Is England," which is quite simply the best song on the record. Strummer cuts through his ideological garbage and says what he means: "I got my motorcycle jacket, but I'm walkin' all the time/This Is England."

The rest of the album's tracks (with the exception of "Cool Under Heat" which has some hope) left me breathless, because I was hyperventilating with outrage. Many of the songs sound like themes to bad TV cartoon shows, or worse yet, like parts of a rock opera - I always knew Strummer had it in him.

In "Movers & Shakers," Strummer says that life was so bad that "a friend was anybody with food to eat/Make a drum from a garbage can." Well, Strummer may just be having those problems soon enough (although obviously, he doesn't approve of drums), because Strummer and Company may be very, very poor if they dare to give a repeat performance.

If you feel that you must have this record, then do yourself a favor and wait till it's released domestically....Clash-trash, sounds the same I think...

Squeeze's Latest Has Something For Everyone



By ADAM LANGER

It seemed as if we had heard the last from Squeeze when they broke up a couple of years ago. After the breakup, the two leaders of the band, Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook came out with a pretty sappy effort entitled, originally enough, *Difford and Tilbrook*. At this time, it looked like the once clever and daring band was kaput. Until now, that is.

The thing I always liked about Squeeze was that they were what you might call an

intelligent group. Their songs were filled with intricate melodies and imaginative lyrics containing words of more than two syllables. The songs actually told stories rather than accosting the listener with dumb, repetitive lyrics about what's going to be done to which orifice.

On *Cosi Fan Tutti Frutti* (yes, you cognoscenti, I know *Cosi Fan Tutti*'s a Mozart opera. So there!), we get more of the usual Squeeze tradition. The songs are a rather downbeat lot, mostly about marital squabbles and drinking to excess.

One particularly moving song on the album is a depressing ditty called "Break My Heart." A continually thumping bass and pounding of percussion emphasize the desperation of the narrator who drinks alone while his wife is out with another man. "I hit the bottle. I hit the high. Blue is my color. Dark is my night."

Taking a quick look over the lyric sheets, one can see that this is not your usual, "WE'RE NOT GONNA TAKE IT! NO WE AIN'T GONNA TAKE IT. WE'RE NOT GONNA TAKE IT ANYMORE," kind of record. There is a certain poetic quality working here which heightens the power of the songs by conveying a stark sense of honesty.

Still, however, *Cosi Fan Tutti Frutti* is able to maintain a pleasant sense of humor

alongside all the bleakness. The ability to juxtapose humorous anecdotes with stories of domestic difficulty has always been a trademark of Squeeze.

In particular, "Hits of the Year," combines a story of nervous tension with a bitingly humorous narration. The story of passengers aboard a hijacked jet is told with just enough tongue in the cheek: "Off to the airport to check in the bags. Proud of the suntan and good times I've had...Suddenly someone has pulled out a gun. His shout for attention has everyone stunned. Hands on our heads there's a new kind of fear. We're over the barrel with the hits of the year."

Much of *Cosi Fan Tutti Frutti* contains some of the most intricate production work I've heard in a while. There are spooky sounds galore and keyboard melodies which intertwine and overlap. Squeeze even borrows Jack Nicholson's voice and Shelly Duvall's screaming from *The Shining* to punctuate "Last Time Forever."

There are however, some problems with this album. Despite the great ambitions present on the record, some things just don't work. The piano parts on "I Won't Ever Go Drinking Again" are so complex that they tend to get annoying and downright dull.

Some of the songs of the album seem to have been dusted off from the old Squeeze vaults and chucked onto the new album. "I

Learnt How to Pray," sounds like a combination of every song Squeeze has ever done, but duller: It's like listening to processed cheese.

Now, I don't want to be overly cynical, but after a while, I got a little sick of hearing about wives deserting boozing husbands. Seven of the album's ten songs deal with this theme.

The problem with this theme is that the point of view is rarely varied. The story is usually told from the boozing lug's point of view and we get to hear a bunch of songs about how his wife left him and he's left with nothing but his booze. "Got to get sober or get kicked out the door," the narrator of "King George Street" tells us.

Maybe I'm biased, but despite the flaws, I really enjoyed this record. After all the drivel I wake up to about "Lovin' every minute of it," or "steppin' inside my sleepin' bag," even a decent Squeeze album seems magnificent.

Yes, Squeeze has done some better stuff. But, as opposed to most other Squeeze albums which were rather uneven affairs, *Cosi Fan Tutti Frutti* is probably their most consistent record. It has some bad points, but you can play it all the way through without wanting to skip over any of the songs. And, coming from an impatient button pusher, that is high praise indeed.

Enthusiased Audience Sings Praise Of Gospel Choir

By SARAH COLLINS

It wasn't exactly the same as any other Vassar College musical event. If you took the time to read the program carefully, the difference between this and other choral performances was made clear in one word. On the back of the program for the Ivy League and Seven Sisters Gospel Choral Festival, there it was: "We would like to extend our thanks to God."

"Extending our thanks to God" was what last Saturday's Festival was all about, and everyone there did so with skill and enthusiasm. Vassar College Choir President Lisa Thompson '86 said at the beginning of the afternoon, "Our mission is to spread the

word of God in song." In works that ranged from the lively, infectious, bass-propelled music most associated with the genre, through more traditional and solemn hymns, six gospel choirs "spread the word of God" in a way that reached even a secular audience.

The Vassar College Choir set an energetic pace for themselves, bouncing down the aisle accompanied by a strong bass line and exhortations to the audience to feel free "to shout and clap your hands." As almost all the choirs did at the Festival, the Vassar group performed music that showed how easily one can cross over from the spiritual to the secular. "Jesus Is Right on Time" was one of their more poppy numbers. Vibrant

and lively, the song had less of a sense of abandon in its expression of spirituality than it did of a sense of control and organization. The choir took an almost maudlin top-forty ballad, *An Officer and a Gentleman*'s theme song "Up Where We Belong," and gave it some punch with sharp drumming, strong bass and guitar work, and a kind of solemn fervor that belied the song's roots in Tin Pan Alley.

The Dartmouth College Gospel Choir was by far the most powerful performance, never losing the exuberant spirit of the pronouncement made by one of its members: "I'd like everybody just to give the Lord a handclap."

The Vassar College Gospel Choir return-

ed in the electrifying finale to the Choral Festival. All the songs in the finale were rousing and joyful: "Walk With Me," "It Won't Be Long," "Was Jesus There" and "Blessed Assurance." "It Won't Be Long" was notable for its jazzy piano score and the pull-out-the-stops air of its chorus: "I'm going to Heaven/To sing and shout/Ain't nobody/Gonna put me out." "Blessed Assurance" had much of the audience standing and clapping, even those who had sat through the previous numbers. Vassar College Choir member Karen Roberts '86 grabbed members of other choirs to participate, and they did so with the kind of enthusiastic unity that suggests this could well work as a yearly event.