

# reviews



**"Greatest Hits"  
The Boomtown Rats  
Columbia Records  
★★★★**

It's hard to imagine calling a Boomtown Rats album "Greatest Hits." Despite 10 years of popularity in England, the band never cracked the Top 40 in America. The album ought to be called "Greatest Songs."

The Rats deserve a good "Greatest Songs" album for two reasons: 1) They put out several great songs, and 2) Those great songs were surrounded by several not-so-great songs on the band's albums.

Forget about the band's publicity stunts, like sending dead rats to radio stations to inspire DJs to play their records. Forget about the band's flamboyant leader, Bob Geldof. Look at the band's music. It was spotty, directionless, random, snotty, pretentious and obnoxious, but occasionally brilliant.

With the exception of 1978's "A Tonic for the Troops" album, the band

never released a whole album of worthwhile material. Each album contained a couple of songs that shined like diamonds in a garbage heap. That's why a "Greatest Songs" album was needed to take those diamonds out of the garbage and present them in their full splendor. "Ratrospective," a six-song EP released in 1983, was too short to do the job properly.

Of course, "Greatest Hits" contains the masterpiece "I Don't Like Mondays," from the 1979 "The Fine Art of Surfacing" album. "House on Fire," from the 1982 "V Deep" album, and the reggae-sounding "Banana Republic," from

the 1981 "Mongo Bongo" album, are also included. These three songs mark the high points of the Rats' career.

The Springsteen-ish "Joey's on the Streets Again," was originally included on both "The Boomtown Rats," their first album, released in 1977, and on the American version of "A Tonic for the Troops." "She's So Modern," a hot and trashy dance number, and the anthemic "Rat Trap" also come from "A Tonic for the Troops."

The playfully sexy — and sexist — disco number from the "V Deep" album, "Skin on Skin," would be awful if taken seriously. "Never in a Million Years," also

from "V Deep," is a sweet song uncharacteristic of the Rats' image. "Up All Night" and "Elephants Graveyard" stand alongside "Banana Republic" as the only reasons to buy "Mongo Bongo."

Now that all these songs are on one album, you don't have to waste money buying any Boomtown Rats album, except "A Tonic for the Troops." The only thing wrong with "Greatest Hits" is that it doesn't include "Lucky" or "Hard Times," the only good songs from "In the Long Grass," the Rats' final album.

—Review by Karl Pallmeyer

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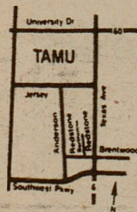
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