

KIM FOWLEY ★ LAURA MARLING ★ JOHN CARPENTER

THE HOME OF VINYL

# RECORD COLLECTOR

SERIOUS ABOUT MUSIC

## THE REDEMPTION OF **STRUMMER**

HOW JOE GOT HIS  
GROOVE BACK

### MAN

The 70s' most underrated band?

### ROZZ WILLIAMS

The chaotic life of the Christian Death legend

### 41 PICTURE DISCS

A collector's guide

GRAB  
AN UNKNOWN  
KEITH EMERSON  
10" VINYL

**PLUS:** CLAYTON SQUARES | BJÖRK, FOTHERINGAY, SPECIALS ALBUM REVIEWS  
RAY CHARLES | REZILLOS | MICK ABRAHAMS | UFO | DANKO-JONES | HALESTORM  
PARADISE LOST | MENDES PREY | CABARET VOLTAIRE | WIN A COLTRANE ALBUM!

APRIL 2015 No 439 £4.20  
www.recordcollectormag.com



# RETURN OF A DAMNED JOE

Slated for making a mockery of The Clash, then drifting between acting roles and creating unfocused music, **Joe Strummer** spent a long period as a lost cause to rock'n'roll. But redemption came from unlikely sources. Kris Needs charts the fall and rise of a hero

“This one’s for Joe Strummer; I know he’s here somewhere,” grins Mick Jones, returning to the stage of the intimate Milton Keynes theatre where he is about to lead his band Carbon/Silicon into a robust encore of Howlin’ Wolf’s Spoonful, the first song he ever learned on the guitar.

That warm June 2004 night was only 18 months after Strummer had unexpectedly fallen victim to the congenital heart condition he had been carrying for years, and an intangible sense of disbelieving shock still hung heavy. In many ways, it’s still there, despite Joe having long been a favourite subject of documentaries, books, magazine spreads and tribute gigs; a posthumous deity up there with Lennon, Morrison and Marley; guaranteed to raise a buck as easily as a misty-eyed memory.

Those fortunate enough to have met Joe or witnessed him in action now treasure



whatever impact that had on their life, however small. After his death on 22 December 2002, the world does seem an increasingly grey and shallow place, Mick’s simple stage declaration speaking volumes for the way his old friend’s philosophies, foibles and sense of mischief had now become some kind of spirit guide manifesto to stop life becoming too cold, dull and predictable.

Joe was a living, breathing impulse made flesh, a contagious dynamo who loved music and people but, it has to be said, could also be riddled with basic human weaknesses and negative traits, including the notoriously ruthless ambition which left casualties in its wake – from when he ditched The 101ers to join the fledgling Clash, to allowing a bogus travesty of that band to claim the name with himself the star. Joe was a mess of contradictions. He sprayed “Chuck Berry is dead” on his boiler-suit, forgetting that the first record he bought in the 60s was an EP by the

guitarist. At our first interview in 1976, he crawled under a pub table to pull angrily at my semi-flares, bellowing “Whaddaya call these then?” and loudly extolled the joys of the city (“I love the place. Blocks of flats, concrete...”), but spent his final years in the Somerset countryside proudly admitting he had always been a hippie.

Thankfully, there are near-to-definitive documents on Strummer by Julien Temple and Chris Salewicz. Anything else has to be seen as a personal tribute, new insight or further addition to the ever-swelling archive. From my angle now, it seems inconceivable to think that next year will mark 40 years since Joe was collared to join The Clash by Mick and Paul Simonon at Lisson Grove dole office and I first experienced the band as they ram-raided an anonymous leisure centre in Leighton Buzzard, for the next six years watching from inside the eye of the hurricane as they became the most vitally important British group since The Beatles and Stones. No band since has come close to the



seismic impact of the classic line-up of Strummer, Jones, Simonon and Headon, or the immortal musical legacy preserved on 2013's spectacular *Sound System*.

They were the golden years, before it all went horribly wrong after forces, with Strummer as their hapless spearhead, coalesced to cut off the band's vital organs by sacking Topper, then Jones, by September 1983. Though another group called The Clash existed after Mick's dismissal in September 1983, it's simply not worth thinking about now. Few wanted to then. But, for his last 19 years on the planet, Joe knew he was the one who had shut down The Clash. Within a year he was admitting to those close to him that he had made a terrible mistake, solidified by the odiously shallow mess of the final Clash album *Cut The Crap*, which saw his beat poet lyrical complexity reduced to the kind of facile sloganeering found in lowest common denominator punk. His dire situation was exacerbated by Mick's riotous new band, Big Audio Dynamite, emerging as the country's freshest new outfit at the same time; still presenting life on the streets while continuing The Clash's mission of pushing out cutting-edge sonic boundaries.

Nick Hall's *I Need A Dodge! Joe Strummer On The Run*, the latest film about Strummer, adds a fascinating footnote to those last, best forgotten, days of the last line-up because it doesn't directly concern it, instead focussing on a previously-uncharted episode in Strummer's life. The film is based around Joe doing a runner to Granada in 1985 while the bogus Clash was floundering in London. As hapless members drummer Pete Howard and guitarist Nick Sheppard (who can now be seen as victims) attest in the movie, Joe knew he had made a hideously wrong move and wanted to either drum

up some press, in the style of his 1982 disappearance to Paris, or simply escape the consequences of this major aberration when he landed in his beloved Granada in 1985. Perhaps both. By then, press and public cared little as the damage had been done but, as the film shows, Joe made for a place he felt a great affinity with, somewhere he was still treated like a punk messiah rather than a pathetic caricature of a once-glorious icon.

While Joe basks in the devotion shown by disbelieving local fans, the film also depicts elements of his personality which characterized his later life as, looking for music and likeminds, he cruises the streets in the Dodge automobile, sowing the seeds of his celebrated lifestyle and rebirth with The Mescaleros 14 years later. Displaying his ability to embrace people and their cultures, Joe ended up producing local band 091, with chaotic results, including an album left unfinished when he had to return to London (its title refers to the film's tenuous plot thread, which revolves around Joe forgetting where he had parked his car and director Nick Hall's attempts to track down its fate 30 years later).

Granada and its lifestyle helped shape Joe's worldview, while its introduction to the joys of foreign cultures started bringing other colours into his music. This is also outlined in the other highly worthwhile Strummer-related project to emerge recently, former 101ers drummer Richard Dudanski's warmly affectionate book, *Squat City Rocks: Proto-punk And Beyond, A Musical Memoir From The Margins*. After Dudanski's finely-hued account of west London's squatland, the birth and destruction of The 101ers and his subsequent exploits with PiL and The Raincoats,

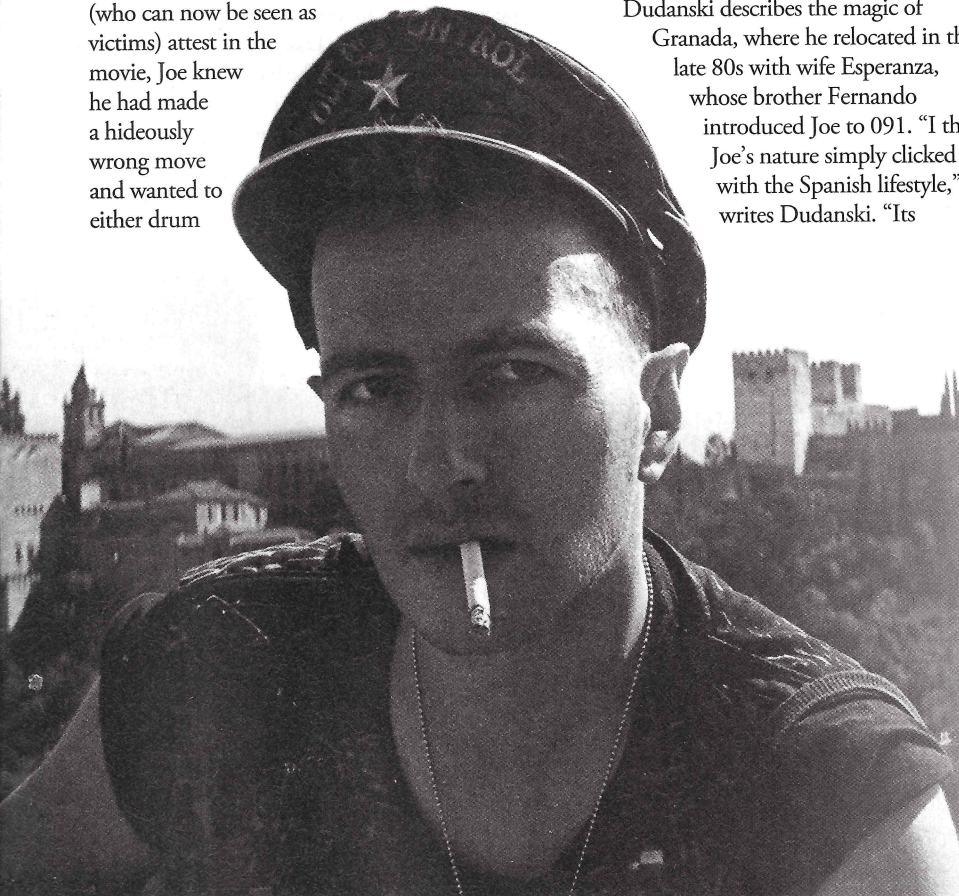
Dudanski describes the magic of Granada, where he relocated in the late 80s with wife Esperanza, whose brother Fernando introduced Joe to 091. "I think Joe's nature simply clicked with the Spanish lifestyle," writes Dudanski. "Its

openness, its street life, the passion, and importantly, its nocturnal bias."

The film provides the first documenting of Joe busting out of the previous year's regimented schedules and regulated image. It also shows how traumatic the dissolution of his old band had been, as he tells an interviewer that he had come to Andalusia to escape "depressed" London and "feel the pain and understand the mistakes of the past." This relief was only temporary as Joe had to return to London in January, 1986 for the birth of his daughter Lola, as related by then-partner Gaby in the film. With the Spanish adventure over, he was back at the scene of his calamity. Seeing Joe around Portobello Road in 1986 could be a depressing experience. He would always stand by his dislike of Mick's rock star antics (as would Jones himself in later years) but was more concerned that he hadn't seen beyond Rhodes' long knives power play and insisted the band take a break, regarding Topper's sacking as first nail in the group's coffin (though the drummer now says it could have been years before he was ready to fully quit smack). Joe could often be found in the Warwick Castle pub, once confessing, "I fucked it up by listening to the wrong people. That was one of the greatest bands. I'll always regret it. I really stabbed Mick in the back. It was just awful with Bernie. It destroyed me and our group."

"That's one thing that Joe had to live with for the rest of his life," says Robin Banks, long-time friend (who'd taught Mick that Willie Dixon-penned Howlin' Wolf song when the pair were at school together in south London). "He knew he'd been involved in the most profound mistake. He never came to terms with it. Every time I came across him after that he would always say, "That was one of the

**"I think Joe's nature simply clicked with the Spanish lifestyle. Its openness, its street life, the passion, and importantly, its nocturnal bias"**



dumbest things I ever did.” He had 10 years in the wilderness because I think he felt so guilty about being conned by Bernie. Ultimately, he did come to terms with it, but it haunted him. It really haunted him.”

Joe was like a shadow of the tornado I had first encountered 10 years earlier, a broken soul adrift in what he himself called “the wilderness years”, drained of confidence and, it struck me then, maybe (but hopefully not) destined to just join the other derelicts talking about the golden years in the bars of Notting Hill. It would be another 14 years – twice the time The Clash was together – before he would be cooking with five star rock’n’roll petrol in a proper band.

For years, Joe found himself out in the cold, making films, sporadically recording and performing, often finding that the fleeting, sometimes desperate nature of these projects only seemed to contribute to his guilt-fed depression and dwindling confidence. It would not be till the 90s that he became rejuvenated by the love and respect he started getting from the next generation.

Once the bogus Clash was dispelled, Joe gamely pursued Mick to apologise and shamelessly beg him to reform The Clash, tracking him down to Nassau in the Bahamas, where he was on holiday and doing some recording with Talking Heads spin-off the Tom Tom Club at Compass Point Studios. “I’d just finished the first Big Audio Dynamite album, and Joe came over and rode round the island on a bicycle for two days looking for me,” Jones told me a few years ago. “Finally he found me, and he said, ‘C’mon, let’s get it back together again.’ And I’d just done the first BAD album, and I said, ‘No, I’ve just done this record, come and have a listen to it.’ So we went over to Compass Point Studio’s special listening room. I came in really excited about it. I said, ‘What did you think?’ Joe just said, ‘I’ve never heard such a load of old shit in my life!’ He didn’t mean it. He just wanted me to get the group back together again.”

But Mick had just spent over two years picking himself up, forming his new group and creating their first album. He accepted Joe’s apology, but wouldn’t ditch BAD.

Joe’s wanderings led him to the next stage of his career when, just before Christmas 1986, he sneaked into an end-of-shoot party at a Portobello canal basin bar for Alex Cox’s new film, which told the story of doomed lovers Sid Vicious and Nancy Spungen. Cox buttonholed Joe for a theme song for the film, which was to be called *Love Kills*. Joe was initially reticent but saw a rough cut and relented, coming up with a song of the same title that took the form of a dialogue between Sid and the cop arresting him for Nancy’s murder. In a gesture of reconciliation, he invited Mick to play on the session and he accepted. By the time the film was released in late July, its title had been changed to *Sid And Nancy*, which meant Joe’s song had nothing in the movie to pin it to.

That summer, Big Audio Dynamite started recording their second album at



Joe Strummer, Sy Richardson, Dick Rude in *Straight To Hell* (1987). Below left, Joe in *Granada*

Trident Studios in St Anne’s Court, Soho. Joe popped into the sessions on Mick’s 31st birthday after bumping into Don Letts in the street, and never looked back, remaining at the studio until recording was finished, working round-the-clock and sleeping under the grand piano. Though Joe didn’t sing or play, he ended up co-producing with Mick, and co-wrote five tracks. Joe also suggested the album’s title, *No 10 Upping Street*.

After *Sid And Nancy*, Cox’s next film was going to be *Walker*, a comedy about vile mid-19th century US colonist, William Walker, who took a posse of mercenaries called The Immortals and invaded Nicaragua in 1855, setting himself up as a dictator. Cox drew parallels to Ronald Reagan’s administration, then operating in the same region, and Joe signed up. Before filming started, he took part in a spring benefit for the Sandinistas, which Cox had organised at Brixton’s Fridge with former Roxy promoter Andy Czewowski. Also appearing were Elvis Costello and The Pogues. *Sid And Nancy* producer Eric Feller thought that it would be a great idea to take the bill on a tour of Nicaragua, and film it. When the necessary financial backing failed to materialise, Fuller and Cox decided to make a movie with the same line-up.

This would become *Straight To Hell*, after Cox, Strummer and writer Dick Rude conceived the idea of a spaghetti western during a drunken night at the Cannes Film Festival. The film was shot over three weeks in Almeria, Spain with a budget of £900,000 from Island Pictures. The cast also included Elvis Costello, The Pogues, Courtney Love, director Jim Jarmusch, and Zander Schloss, ex-guitarist from LA punk band, Circle Jerks. Based on Giulio Questi’s 1967 western *Django, Kill (If You Live, Shoot!)*, the story concerned three inept hitmen and Velma, their trailer-trash female accomplice (Ms Love). Joe took his part as a hit man seriously by wearing the same clothes for the duration, drinking in local bars wearing his gun and holster. As was the way with everything that he did, Joe plunged wholeheartedly into

acting, deciding this was his new vocation.

While in Almeria, Joe, Schloss and Michael Sandoval wrote Salsa Y Ketchup, about Schloss’s character’s hot-dog stand, Disco Wiener Haven. Back in London, Joe, Costello and The Pogues wrote songs, but film and soundtrack both stiffed. Joe slipped in another movie late that year when he took the bit part of a rocking security guard called Mario in *Candy Mountain*, a road movie set in Canada. Joe’s involvement came about through the film’s co-director, Rudy Wurlitzer, who was also writing the script for the upcoming *Walker*. His previous work included *Pat Garrett & Billy The Kid*, a favourite of Joe’s with its soundtrack by Bob Dylan. The film also featured Tom Waits, Dr John and David Johansen, but sank into obscurity after gaining only limited UK distribution in 1989.

In January 1987, shooting started on *Walker*. The budget was nearly \$6,000,000 and shooting in Granada lasted over eight weeks. Joe played the mercenaries’ dishwasher, Faucet, but his thirst for thespianism was already drying up as he wondered if he should be concentrating on music. He asked Cox if he could score *Walker*, buying a little Casio synth, cheap guitar and four-track tape recorder to use on location, soaking the atmosphere of his surroundings into his compositions while banging down rough musical sketches. Fourteen tracks were selected from Joe’s “method composing” sessions, resulting in his first solo album as recording commenced in San Francisco after shooting.

The *Walker* soundtrack was released in February 1988 to much acclaim, giving Joe a much-needed boost. The film itself wouldn’t be released until the following year and suffered from going against the grain of what was considered commercial in US cinemas. *Walker* only received limited distribution in the UK when it was finally issued in March 1989.

The summer of 1987 saw Joe back in the UK. After playing on a version of London Calling with The Pogues for Irish radio programme *The Session*, he was asked to fill in for sick guitarist Phil Chevron on the band’s

November US tour. Joe enjoyed the low-profile gig, concentrating on his rhythm guitar, stepping up to sing London Calling and Bobby Fuller's I Fought The Law.

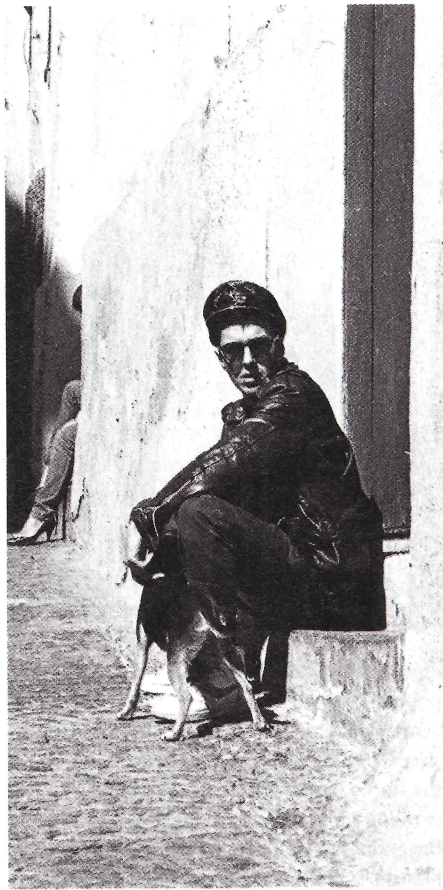
While Sony released a retrospective album *The Story Of The Clash, Volume One* (compiled by Mick) in March, which climbed to No 7 in the UK charts, Joe started work on the soundtrack to *Permanent Record*, which starred Keanu Reeves in a story about the impact of a Midwestern schoolboy's suicide on his classmates. Recording in LA, Joe put together a band, which he called The Latino Rockabilly War, including Schloss on guitar and local Latin percussionists Poncho Sanchez and Ramon Vanda. Four vocal tracks Joe recorded made it to the film and soundtrack album, spawning a single called Trash City. Firing up Latin, primal rock'n'roll and New Orleans gumbo, Joe seemed bent on raising some ruckus again.

Next, he was offered a role in Jim Jarmusch's *Mystery Train*, which featured three interwoven tales with Elvis Presley as their common theme. Joe played an English rocker called Johnny, but nicknamed Elvis. Jarmusch had enjoyed success with *Down By Law*, featuring Tom Waits, who provided DJ narrative. Joe filmed his parts at night, alongside ghoulish rock legend Screaming Jay Hawkins, who'd once toured with The Clash. *Mystery Train* would be released to acclaim in the UK in December 1989.

Strummer then relocated to LA to record his first solo album under his own name, *Earthquake Weather* (title inspired by tremors that rocked LA a couple of times during recording). Still called The Latino Rockabilly War, the band included Schloss, bassist Lonnie Marshall, Jack Irons and Willie MacNeil using 60s ingredients such as valve amps and open microphones on a brace of tough rockers, spiced with reggae and Latin flavours; the sound of a man finding his feet again. The cover showed Joe standing on the diving board of an LA swimming pool clutching his faithful Telecaster guitar.

Released in September 1989, the album only made No 58 and failed to chart in the US. He spent the last three months of 1989 touring Europe and America but would now ease off on high-profile activity for 10 years. In mid-1990, The Pogues asked Joe to produce their next album, *Hell's Ditch*. Joe rose to the occasion, introducing his Spanish flavours and sporting a straw hat as he extracted killer performances from the group and earned the nickname Strumboli.

March 1991 saw The Clash get their first UK No 1 single after Should I Stay Or Should I Go was used in a Levi's ad. The band had been asked for commercials many times but turned them down as a matter of policy. This time they left the decision to Mick, who reasoned that everyone wore Levi's, the trouser of rock'n'roll. If The Clash had wanted to cash in, they would've reformed then. *NME* reported the band had been offered £10m for a US tour. By 1993, the *Daily Star* had the figure at \$50m. There were always too many



**“Joe took his first pill sat around the campfire and the revelation for him was, ‘Now I know why Mick likes all that stupid dance music!’”**



factors against it, including Mick's BAD, Paul's painting, Topper's addiction and Joe's diverse projects. The Clash only planned to reform once, to celebrate their 2003 induction into the Rock'N'Roll Hall Of Fame by setting up at an alternative venue from the highly-priced event and playing for the fans. This got as far as bassist Mani getting a call on Primal Scream's tour bus from Joe, asking if he would stand in for an arthritis-stricken Paul Simonon. "I came that close to playing in The Clash!" sighs the Madchester legend. "A lifetime ambition, but it sadly wasn't to be."

In 1992, Joe decided he wanted to get close to his family, taking Gaby and their

daughters on holiday to the Granada home of Richard Dudanski and wife Esperanza, from then on returning every year. The Strummer family also relocated to a farm near Andover, Hants, where Joe installed a home studio and tried to learn the new technology. Though he contributed to the soundtrack of a movie called *When Pigs Fly*, directed by Jim Jarmusch's girlfriend Sara Driver, Joe spent most of 1993 trying to settle at the farm, but split up with Gaby in early 1994 and moved back to London, where he embarked on a relationship with Lucinda Henderson, known to friends as Luce. The couple were married on 31 May 1995 at Kensington & Chelsea Registry Office.

Around then, Joe heard via Rick Rubin that Johnny Cash was looking for songs for the American Recordings albums that would revitalise his career. Fired up, Joe sat down and wrote *The Road To Rock'N'Roll* and sent it over. It didn't get used but would be the first song he wrote for *Rock Art And The X-Ray Style*, his first proper album in a decade. When Joe went to see Cash play at a Hollywood club, Rubin introduced him to the Man In Black, who told Joe: "You know you really confused me with that song, boy!" (The pair eventually duetted in 2002 on Bob Marley's Redemption Song, Rubin also producing Joe singing it alone, and Long Shadow, Strummer's last great ballad, which he had also composed for Cash.)

After the Cash boost, Joe was further energised and placed on the flight path back to the main stage by the maybe unlikely combination of acid house, festival camaraderie and ecstasy, embarking on a joyful, months-long sesh that would change his life. Driving his old Cadillac and accompanied by Luce and comedian Keith Allen, he went to the Glastonbury Festival where he created the campfire session that became known as Strummerville. The trio were joined by a gang of relentless revelers, including the infamous 'Dodgy' Roger Goodman, who recalls: "We got the idea to set up Strummerville around the campfire. There was me, Joe, Damien Hirst, Keith Allen and Chrissie Hynde. That's where Joe took his first pill. His revelation was, 'Now I know what Mick was all about with Big Audio Dynamite. Now I know why he likes all that stupid dance music.' It was like an epiphany for him. Tons of them were consumed that week. We didn't come down for days."

Joe didn't want the party to stop, so the posse continued to the Reading Festival, where he got talking to Gary Dyson from world music-techno outfit Azukx, who was planning to move on to Peter Gabriel's Real World studios near Bath, after the festival. The Real World Recording Week started on 22 July, and involved 90 or so artists collaborating in the studio.

"We got on really well," recalls Gary. "I phoned to see if it would be OK to bring Joe along. He did have a bit of an entourage with him. It was messy, but it wasn't bad. He was really on one! He'd just discovered ecstasy, so he knew the score."

"We camped outside the front gate,"

explains Roger. "The studio staff's backs were really up. The only chilled person there was Peter Gabriel. He said, 'I love the anarchy you've created in my camp and the way that you're scaring everybody.'"

Joe and his loved-up crew didn't stop the party the whole time they were there. "They nearly threw us off the site," recalls Dyson. "All night we'd be playing drums and banging away. Joe was there just egging everybody on. He was totally in his element."

Here, Joe also hooked up with Richard Norris, then half of hot production team The Grid, alongside Dave Ball, Marc Almond's former Soft Cell sidekick. The pair had taken dance music into the charts with cinematic stormers such as Swamp Thing and Diablo. "It was a family atmosphere at that studio," recalls 'Norro', as Joe soon nicknamed him. "You went down and were treated like a long-lost old mate. So I just went down to check it out. I was sitting in the sunshine outside this amazing studio in an old mill, and heard this voice saying, 'Can anyone programme this drum machine?' It was Joe. So I said, 'I'll do that for you'. He gave me this weird old drum box and I started doing some techno beats. They didn't have any equipment or production sorted out, so we just went round borrowing bits and pieces and just started recording; Joe with his shaker, singing, then some troupe from Bangladesh in the corner playing bongos, Vernon Reid from Living Colour doing a bit of guitar. It kind of took off from there really."

Norro would spend the next 18 months working, hanging out and witnessing Strummer discover the joys of big gatherings and techno music, whose DIY ethic and revolution recalled the previous decade's punk. Joe started DJing at raves and clubs, in back rooms or between headliners, spinning reggae, world music and classic rock'n'roll.

After Real World, the party moved on to Glasgow's T In The Park, where Black Grape headlined. Strummer and Norris continued going to clubs and raves and started working together. I remember DJing one night at the Rocket in North London and being visited at the decks by their party, which now included Shaun Ryder. Joe, who I hadn't seen since the mid-80s, was a changed man, obviously having the time of his life, digging the electronic bangers booming out of the speakers.

At the time, Keith 'Vindaloo' Allen was pulling together a football single for the 1996 European Championship, with Black Grape. Ryder asked Strummer and Norro if they could help out. "Me and Joe just sat up all night creating this riff like 'Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough!'" recalls the Norro. "Joe had his typical enthusiasm, going, 'Come on! Let's get this to really work!'"

"We went to Shaun's hotel and got him to come back to my house. It took until about two o'clock in the morning, but we got him back and just cranked it up really loud. Joe was vibing around the room with a bottle of brandy in his hand. The neighbours came down from upstairs, totally irate. Joe just answered the door and said, 'It's for England!'"

"I had a great time. I remember Joe, typically, would be in the middle of the room just writing with pages of lyrics everywhere. Another night I remember I'd gone to bed and Joe and Shaun just stayed up all night ranting at each other. Just coming down in the morning and seeing Shaun's eyes and his face. He was just really vibed up in the way that only Joe could do to people."

Titled by Joe, England's Irie featured his lyrics and vocals, while Norro handled remixes. The single was released in June and made No 6 in the charts. Joe even made his *Top Of The Pops* debut.

Norro and Joe decided to knock some of their "mad festival jams" into songs. Their artist friend Robert Gordon McKarg III, self-styled 'King Of The Cut-outs', was putting together an album called *Sandpaper Blues*, getting names including MC5 guitarist Wayne Kramer, Wilko Johnson, and John Mayall to record their own tune with the same title. Joe, Richard and Gary Dyson recorded at London's Orinoco Studios, appearing on the sandpaper-sleeved CD under the name Radar.

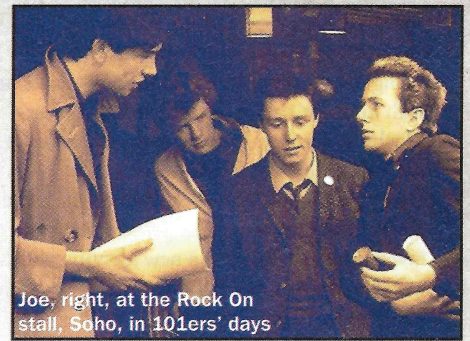
"It kind of snowballed from there really," says Norris. "When I was working with Joe he hadn't really done any stuff for a while. The thing I did with him was the bridge to actually get him back on stage and finding, 'Yeah, I really wanna get a band, I really wanna tour.' It wasn't that easy initially, because he was pretty self-conscious and his confidence wasn't as high as it could've been. It took quite a lot of effort. He was wanting to push it and when he was recording he was always very self-critical. He'd really beat himself up if it didn't go right. I just remember being in the smallest room at Orinoco. Joe would be putting down a guitar and he might as well have been at Shea Stadium. Blannng!! It was fantastic. The spirit was always there."

"It was beautiful chaos. There was no management, no record company... just us with a new vision, a new idea, trying to do something that hadn't really been done."

During these sessions, Masatoshi Nagase, a Japanese actor who was in *Mystery Train*, gave Joe money to record for a collaborative project. "We'd write a track a day," recounts Norro. "I'd be programming really hard and Joe would be playing guitar and at the end of every day Joe would go, 'No, this is too good for Nagase,' so we ended up creating nearly half an album of 'too good for Nagase' tracks."

These included early Mescaleros outings Yalla Yalla (Arabic for "Come on", Joe's favourite exhortation) and Diggin' The New which, explains Norro, "was very much about Joe not really getting techno and dance music for years. He thought of it as machine music and very faceless, but once he got into the whole spirit and going out to festivals, he really got into it. He thought nothing of driving 200 miles to go and see Leftfield playing. There was a lot of crossover and respect from people from the dance end, like Andrew Weatherall and myself. I took Joe to the Heavenly Social and Metalheadz; the loudest, noisiest, most airless place. We went

## POURING PETROL ON PUB ROCK



Joe, right, at the Rock On stall, Soho, in 101ers' days

Joe Strummer was so vehement in the instant punk makeover he imposed on himself when he joined The Clash that, for a few years, his previous band The 101ers was all but consigned to the level of undistinguished pub-rock trundle. Time has taught us that this band was equally as dangerous, energised and unique as the first Dr Feelgood and Ian Dury's Kilburn & The High Roads, a full-pelt free-for-all which really did cut through the crap during its short tenure on London's pub scene between 1974 and 1976.

Onstage anarchy, offstage bad behaviour and rock'n'roll's primal spirit was already running riot, just waiting to be rogered by whatever magic ingredient would give birth to the strain of punk later seen in the catalogues. Underpinned by the jazzy beats of drummer Richard Dudanski and enlivened by its dishevelled squad of hippies, freaks and Chileans, the band congealed in the early 70s squatting community around Maida Vale; the closest London got to downtown New York in terms of music being created amid urban dereliction by outsiders, social outcasts and rebels without a formal lesson between them. The name came from their address, 101 Waltherton Road, probably now a yuppie condo.

The 101ers held their own weekly knees-ups at the Chippenham then Elgin boozers, cutting their teeth and building a following, while the experience gave the already-astute Woody Mellor his trial by fire, learning curve and stepping stone to world domination with The Clash as he morphed into Joe Strummer by the week, catalysed by the night of April 3, 1976, when the support band was the Sex Pistols and nascent Clash members were in the audience, looking for a singer. By the time The 101ers debut single, Keys To Your Heart, was released, Joe was in The Clash, visually denouncing his former band by spraying his boiler-suit "CHUCK BERRY IS DEAD" and swapping the covers and Rabies (From The Dogs Of Love) for White Riot.

Tellingly, characters from Joe's earliest musical exploits remained lifelong friends, notably Tymon Dogg, who joined The Mescaleros in 2001, and Dudanski, whose book gives the most vivid account to be found anywhere of the UK's most anarchic band and the environment which spawned it, while the *Elgin Avenue Breakdown (Revisited)* bottles some of their rip-roaring live onslaught on CD.

to loads of Black Grape gigs and festivals.

"My take on it all now, which was probably the downfall of our collaboration, was I really wasn't thinking of it as a Joe Strummer project. I was really into this idea that we were gonna create this punk rock-acid house monster together. It was more the idea of trying to mix it up. It was a band. We came up with different names, including Radar, then Machine. Damien Hirst thought it should be called Middlesex, because the chorus of Diggin' The New was, 'Boy, tran or girl'. The problem was, we were trying to create a band involving Joe, but it was a new identity, which was obviously quite a tall order really. We were never going to top The Clash!"

In early 1996, Joe was asked to do the soundtrack for a black comedy called *Grosse Pointe Blank*, co-written by actor John Cusack, who played a hitman alongside Dan Ackroyd. Two days after going to LA, Joe summoned Richard Norris to join him in the studio with the demos they'd been working on.

"We were just going to add to that and do lots more," he recalls. "We were going out all the time, round to Rick Rubin's, Oliver Stone, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, who we'd met when I put their gig on over here through Joe, Axl Rose. It was continual partying. He was obviously looked on as rock royalty over there."

Joe felt good being the centre of attention again. His relationship with Rick Rubin was cemented then, as Norris recalls. "It was very much me and Joe going around his house, getting a big ghetto blaster and putting The Meters on, sitting around the pool with Rick saying, 'You should be making records like

this.' But it didn't really work out in the studio. In the end we basically used the backing tracks we'd done for the earlier stuff in the film. Me and Joe just fell out, basically.

"The scenario just wasn't working out. Joe wouldn't come into the studio to record. I think it was just being in LA and having this very different scenario from when we were mucking about in Ladbroke Grove. It just put a different perspective on everything and it didn't really pan out. It was great hanging out, but I kind of went home under a black cloud. And that was it. We didn't work after that. It was really sad. Quite emotional. I got paid really well. A lot of the stuff went in the movie. It said 'Music by Joe Strummer'. I didn't get a credit, but it was an amazing experience.

"Some of the time it did get problematic. You just had to catch the point before he was a bit fucked, which was definitely down to a confidence thing that was emerging. He was getting back into it. I think some of the things we were doing definitely sparked his enthusiasm to get back and do it live. There were loads of weird things we were possibly gonna do. We were going to produce Morrissey. We got picked up by the record company to see Morrissey supporting David Bowie. We were meant to meet Morrissey after the gig, but he was too shy to meet us.

"The Mescaleros eventually took quite a lot of the stuff that we did and remixed it. I think if it hadn't been for this bizarre culture mish-mash that we were trying to get, he would never have done The Mescaleros. It was the bridge to that."

After Norro recommended the idiosyncratic career which has taken him

**"We were going out all the time, round to Rick Rubin's, Oliver Stone, the Red Hot Chili Peppers. It was continual partying over there"**

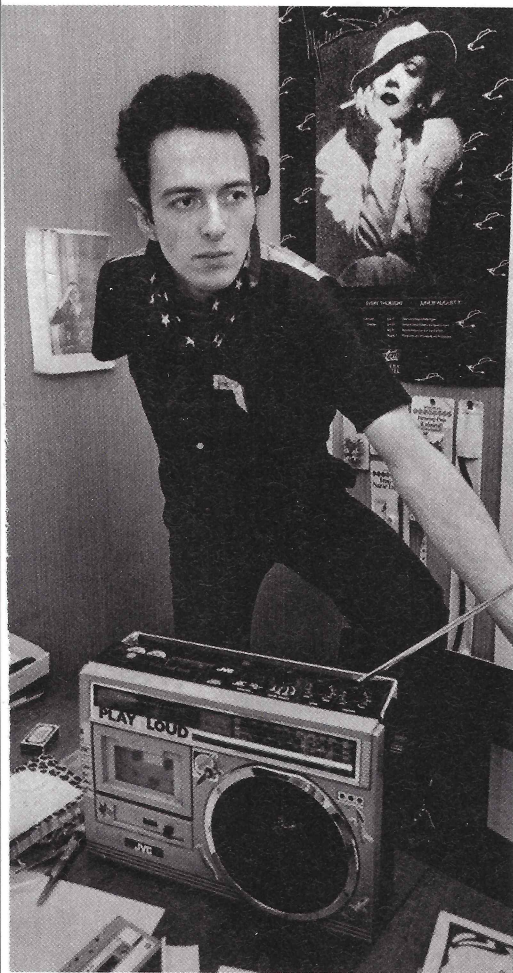


through psych and dance with projects such as Beyond The Wizard's Sleeve, Joe stayed in LA, working with former Stray Cat Brian Setzer before hooking up with Damned drummer Rat Scabies, in town licencing a live album. The pair made plans to form a band and start a record label, recorded at the palatial Westlake Studios in Santa Monica for three months, Joe sleeping under the piano again. Using bass player Segs, formerly of The Ruts and now with dance titans The Chemical Brothers, they formed a band called Electric Dog House, exploring drum 'n' bass in 18-hour marathons.

Joe had befriended local producer and label



The leather boys: Joe, right, with The Clash Mk II



boss Jason Rothberg, who was putting together a compilation album in aid of the Human Rights Action Centre. Electric Dog House hammered out a psychedelic-tinged outing called *Generations*, which named the album, *Generations 1: A Punk Look At Human Rights*, when it appeared the following year.

Throughout these sessions, Joe and Rat stayed in a plush house high in the Beverley Hills, while Joe drove around in his '55 Cadillac, complete with mysterious authentic bullet holes. "Joe had this great sense of humour," recalls Rat. "He had a brilliant knack of being able to change an atmosphere. He'd just come in and everyone would be really pissed off about something. He'd just crack a couple of jokes. I don't know how, he'd just turn it on, then everybody would feel better."

Joe and Rat planned to launch a record label in LA over Christmas 1995, but the idea stalled when the Strummers decided to return to the UK the following spring, leaving Electric Dog House in the pound after plans to record with Chems' engineer Steve Dub stalled.

1997 saw Joe trying to construct an album using material recorded with Norro, producing with former Grid percussionist Pablo Cook. One of the first things Joe came up with was its title, *Rock Art And The X-Ray Style*, from a chapter in a book on anthropology, referencing the way that Australian aboriginals painted animals on rocks with their bones showing through their skin.

Joe's campfire was one of the highlights of the 1997 Glastonbury Festival, cementing his eternal link with the event as he rallied sodden punters beset by the monsoon weather

conditions, his good humour bolstering spirits and the performance passing into legend. Continuing his mad-for-it roll, he laid an album with Bez, who'd left Black Grape. Recording at his home studio, he even managed to get the infamous freaky dancer singing, which may be one of the reasons they couldn't get a record deal. Joe and family moved to a large manor house in Broomfield, near Bridgwater in Somerset, where he would spend the rest of his life.

That August, Joe was asked to present a series of weekly shows on the BBC World Service, titled *London Calling*. He rose to the occasion, playing a mixture of his favourite reggae, world music and rock'n'roll.

When Joe joined Keith Allen in Real World studios to record a Christmas novelty song called *Naughty Christmas (Goblin In The Office)*, he bonded with Antony Genn, who had played with Elastica. Soon the pair were working on the album Joe had the title for. In America, he signed with the independent Hellcat, while UK's Mercury let Joe have his own label, which he called Casbah.

Time was booked at Battery Studios, Willesden, north London, starting on 14 February; the date Joe would give as the start of the band he now named The Mescaleros. Along with Pablo Cook, Strummer and Genn were joined by multi-instrumentalist Martin Slattery, at a loose end after Black Grape's demise, who became one of Joe's main musical collaborators, along with bassist Scott Shields, who Martin knew when both were in a band called Bond. This pair became invaluable mainstays, who would bring home the posthumous *Streetcore* set after Joe died. Drumming was shared between Ged Lynch from the Grape then Steve Barnard, who'd been playing with Robbie Williams. Recording sessions commenced and seven finished tracks added to the three Norro songs.

First Yalla Yalla was released as a single. It didn't chart but announced that Joe Strummer was back, setting the warm, low-key tone for *Rock Art And The X-Ray Style*, released in October 1999. The pattering X-Ray Style boasts the poignant line, "I wanna live, and

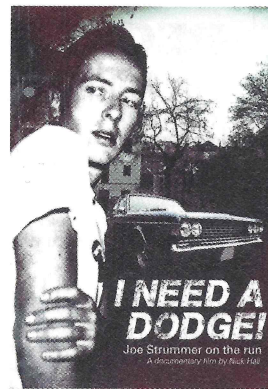
I wanna dance awhile." Nitcomb is a poignant ballad which Joe turns into a declaration of defiance, meaning it'll take one of the narrow-toothed combing devices to get rid of him.

When Joe and the band took to the road in the UK and US, they played the new album plus Clash faves including *White Man*, *Straight To Hell*, *Bankrobber* and *London's Burning*. At last Joe Strummer had returned; on his own terms and relishing the lack of pressure. After the "wilderness years", he could approach the 21st century with fresh focus, a full-tilt rock'n'roll band and his most acclaimed music since the heyday of The Clash. His mojo was back, making itself at home with likeminded (equally-billed) collaborators, who soon included earliest busking partner Tymon Dogg, and producing the vibrant new music, which continued on 2001's *Global A Go-Go*.

Joe was loud, living proof that the kind of lowest ebbs he experienced after the colossal mistake of demolishing The Clash could be overcome like another trough on life's roller coaster. In the three years before he died, The Mescaleros became the most solidly promising career phase he had enjoyed since The Clash 20 years earlier. One of the worst things about him going when he did was that things hadn't looked so good for a long time, but Joe went out on a high and who knows what new peaks he may have reached?

All this is mere speculation now. As Mick Jones, his most lasting foil, said when Joe died, "I cherish the time we had together, rather than regret the time we may have lost." And as Joe liked to say more than anything, "Come on!" <sup>RC</sup>

*I Need A Dodge!*  
Joe Strummer  
*On The Run* will be out on DVD from Cadiz in April/May



## Joe Strummer UK collectables

### 101ERS

76 Chiswick (N)S 3  
76 Chiswick (N)S 3  
79 Big Beat NS 3  
79 Big Beat NS 3  
80 Big Beat NS 63  
81 Andaluca AND 101  
81 Andaluca AND 101

### JOE STRUMMER

89 Epic STRUM 2  
89 Epic STRUM E 2  
  
03 Hellcat 1137 7  
  
03 Hellcat 1149 7  
  
87 Virgin V 2497  
88 Epic 46116 1 1  
  
89 EPIC 465347

*Keys To Your Heart/5 Star Rock And Rock Petrol* (p/s) .....£30  
*Keys To Your Heart/5 Star Rock And Rock Petrol* .....£10  
*Keys To Your Heart/5 Star Rock And Rock Petrol* (reissue, p/s) .....£10  
*Keys To Your Heart/5 Star Rock And Rock Petrol* .....£8  
*Sweet Revenge/Rabies (From The Dogs Of Love)* (p/s) .....£5  
*ELGIN AVENUE BREAKDOWN* (LP, gatefold flipback sleeve with booklet) .....£40  
*ELGIN AVENUE BREAKDOWN* (LP, without booklet) .....£25

*Island Hopping/15th Brigade* (p/s) .....£8  
*Island Hopping/Cholo Vest/Mango Street/Baby O Boogie* (12", all tracks on A-side, B-side etched, die-cut sleeve) .....£12  
*Coma Girl/Yalla Yalla (Live)* (with The Mescaleros, picture disc, stickered polythene sleeve) .....£10  
*Redemption Song/Arms Aloft/Junco Partner (Live)* (with The Mescaleros, picture disc, stickered polythene sleeve) .....£12  
*WALKER* (LP, soundtrack) .....£20  
*Permanent Record: Music From The Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* (LP, five tracks by Strummer) .....£10  
*EARTHQUAKE WEATHER* (LP, with inner) .....£20