



The Queers:

Suspended Adolescence Never Sounded So Good

While few may remember it, there was once a period of time when the term 'pop-punk' actually contained elements of punk rock. Before the Blink 182's of the world dropped a cherry bomb in the toilet of popular culture, bands like Screeching Weasel, Sloppy Seconds and the Dickies worshipped at the feet of 1-2-3-4 demigods the Ramones. At the forefront of the scene rode the Queers, a band whose high-energy live shows were equally matched by their seemingly effortless melding of punk chops and Beach Boy-esque harmonics.

Re-emerging with a new album (*Munki Brain*), a new DVD (*Queers Are Here*) and a never-ending supply of live dates, the Queers seem intent on continuing their endless summer for the impending future. *Altercation* staff writer Lana Ysmael caught up with the always outspoken Joe Queer recently to find out why the Queers are still here, and why we should all get used to it.

Altercation: So I, and I'm sure the many other Queers fans out there, am wondering, why five years since your previous release?

Joe Queer: I don't know, we just kind of kept touring...we took a little break, and were on the road so much. And, so, all of a sudden we were like, "Fuck, man. We gotta do an album!" (Laughs) There was really no big reason except that we've been really busy. We meant to do one about two years

after our previous release, but we were on the road and had never gotten around to it.

A: Were the keyboards a new addition to your music?

JQ: We've used keyboards a little bit in the past. We just had a couple tunes on this album that we wanted to add keyboards to. I don't think we'll play live with them. Anyway, we kind of wanted to branch out. I like to try different stuff musically, so that is why we used them.

A: How would you compare *Munki Brain* to previous albums? Would you say it's pretty classic Queers music?

JQ: It's one of our wimpier albums. I like it, but I don't know if it's one of our best. It's got some great songs on it, though. Some of the punk rock kids think it's too wimpy, but I don't give a shit. Our next one might be all hardcore stuff, but this is just the way we did this album.

A: Queers are known for having many lineup changes. Who did you recruit for this album?

JQ: The lineup for this album broke up shortly after we did it. We did a tour down in Brazil, and those guys would not stop drinking, so I had to get rid of them. That was Phillip Hill and Lurch. Our new lineup is actually an old lineup. It's the members from the previous album *Pleasant Screams*,

they're all back, Matt and Dave. Matt got married, and Dave got a job, so they drifted off for a couple of years, but they're back now. It keeps it fresh with people coming and going. We don't make that much money, so it's hard to keep a steady lineup.

A: Do you have any other jobs besides the band?

JQ: No, I used to when I lived in New Hampshire. I used to work on my brother's commercial fishing boat when I wasn't touring. I live in Atlanta now, so now I do this full time. We're so busy with the band, it's all I can do anyways.

A: It's pretty awesome that you guys have been around for twenty-five years and are still able to keep things upbeat and still have fun...you know, not take it so seriously.

JQ: Yeah, we have fun. That is the buzz for me at this point. I get to go out on the road once or twice a year over to Europe. I get to see a lot of my friends that I've known there for years, so that is really fun. That is the important thing for me now, all the friend's I've made. We still have a good time. We have a great crew.

A: I heard you're going to be doing some sort of project with Marky Ramone, what can we expect from that?

JQ: Dave and I are going over to Europe to open shows for Marky Ramone. I am playing guitar for Marky, and Dave is playing bass. We'll do our set and then we'll jump up with Marky for his set, so that is cool. I had asked him to do a project and he said yes, but this is just live shows for right now. Maybe if we had time we'd hit the studio, but it's just all live festival stuff. It's fun for me, because Marky is the drummer whom I've seen play more than anybody. I've seen the Ramones play so many times, and it's exciting that I get to play with him

A: Queers are not a very politically aimed band, but the song "Monkey In a Suit" is obviously about the moron we currently have running our country. What is the story behind this track?

JQ: I just can't stand George Bush, so when people ask me about this song and say, "Oh, well I thought you were against politics in your music," my answer is, well, I am up on the politics of the day, and I certainly have my opinions. I just don't like it when bands get up there and pontificate on who to vote for. I think it's pompous, arrogant, and conceited, and I don't like it. If I want to be informed about these issues I am going to investigate them myself, rather

than go to a show and have some moron with a mohawk tell me who to vote for. But, having said that, when you have an idiot as bad as George Bush in the White House I think it calls for comment. He inspired me to get up on the holy pulpit and write a song! (Laughs) I cannot stand that motherfucker.

"I'm wishing one of these punk bands would get offered a million bucks and they would draw a line in the sand and say, "No, we are not crossing it. We have our fucking morals."

I'm so far to the left, I'm off the cliff. I don't really like the media these days, and I certainly don't like the fucking Republicans. Like Rush Limbaugh, Savage, Glenn Beck and all those other motherfuckers, they're horrible. It's a weird time in our country. My wife, Mimi, she's Japanese, she was asking me about George Bush and I said you will never see a president this bad again. He will go down as the worst president in history, and I truly believe that. Don't get me going on that one. Anyway, the song could have turned out a little better, but I think we got our point across with it. George Bush is so stupid, he says stuff like, "I use the Google." (Laughs) We had a ball going through George Bush clips and looking for quotes to use in the song. There are thousands of stupid things he's said. But, yeah, that is where that song came from.

A: Have there been any other songs dealing with the government?

JQ: No, not for us. I think a lot of the bands that do write songs about the government, however, have their hearts in the right place, but I think their message today is different from a lot of the stuff that came out of the 60s. I think they come off as being somewhat sophomoric. So, at any rate, no, I have not done too much politically driven writing. Except maybe I've written a song or two about skinheads, whom I don't like.

A: Oh, yeah, I think I saw somewhere on the Queers message boards some irate guy telling you to do your homework before you bash skinheads.

JQ: Well, I've been around for about twenty-five years in the punk scene, and MY experience with skinheads has not been very good. (Laughs) I don't find them to be particularly enlightened souls and I don't think they add too much to the punk rock scene. You know, these guys who say, "Oh we're Irish!" It kind of harkens me back to white power. When you start saying you're Irish, it creates prejudice and pride, and it's racist in a way, separatist. It's a weird punk rock scene

Queers Releases You Should Own



Are Here DVD • MVD

You do not want to miss this DVD, especially if you're like me, a recent fan to jump on the Queers lovin' band wagon and have never caught a Queers show in your entire twenty-one years of existence. *The Queers Are Here* gives great insight into what an awesomely kick-ass live show these guys put on. I honestly wish I could have started a pit right in my living room, but the downstairs neighbors wouldn't be too happy with me jumping around at 1 am.

Though some of the low budget footage was so shaky I could feel myself getting a bit queasy at points, it was absolutely a blast to watch, especially their horrid, yet humorous attempts at music videos. But, with the side affects of nausea accompanied by random dizziness, you get a nice ear and eyeful of rockin' Queers music, along with some personal time with founding member Joe Queer himself.



Munki Brain • Asian Man

Yes, this may be one of the Queers wimpier albums, but it's still a great one. After being around for twenty-five years, the Queers still know what it means to have a good time. I doubt that the Energizer Bunny (that fuzzy, pink, excuse for a rabbit) is still having as much fun as this band after that long, beating his drum everyday. Can we say, "monotony"? Well, that is exactly the opposite of what *Munki Brain* delivers. It's a punk party bingo packed into a little over a half an hour of catchy surfer riffs filled with ooh-wee-oohs, shoo-bee-dos, bah-bah-bas, and woah-oh-ohs. All in all, I give it four shoo-bee-do-bee-do-wops out of five.

these days. I thought people would be smarter than that. A lot of these guys want to go out and get drunk first thing in the morning and go beat up people at the punk rock show, and that is no path to enlightenment. It's strange, I don't get too involved with it. I think it's because I grew up on Black Flag, the Ramones, and the Circle Jerks, shit like that, so I have a problem accepting all the shit I see in punk rock today.

A: I understand that you're planning on writing a book, is it possible for you to share any details?

JQ: Yeah, I am slowly writing a book. It's not coming around too fast because I've been so busy. It's about the history of the band and my life, which is a tale that has certainly been told. I've always liked biographies and autobiographies; there are a lot of good band books out there. I like to see where the person started, where they ended up, and the journey they made, so that is what my book is about. And of course it's pretty humorous. I think a lot of people write off punk rockers as being a bunch of morons, and certainly a lot of them are, but I think a lot of the old punk rockers have something to share just as much as old rock-n-rollers like Bob Dylan.

A: Ok, this is a pretty obvious topic and question for an old punk band like the Queers, but punk as a state of mind and a way of living is not dead, while punk as a genre of music or a 'scene', if you will, is constantly changing, as all art forms do. How do you feel about this? Where do you think punk is now, and where do you see it going?

JQ: Well, I'm kind of jaded...like I said I grew up listening to Black Flag and the Ramones. I think the biggest change in the punk scene was the Warped Tour and money coming into it. Before, it was just a loser proposi-

tion. Yeah, you could go on tour, but you weren't going to make any money. And then, all of a sudden, with the advent of bands like Green Day, Rancid and NOFX, and all of the other bands making it in the business, it became a viable thing. It became a career move. In the old days it was either punk rock or, "Welcome to Burger King, may I take your order?" Now you see bands with two cents worth of talent, like Good Charlotte, becoming millionaires. You see on MySpace these bands advertising, "Vote for us so we can get on the Warped Tour!" It's a total 180 degrees against why I started and what I got into punk rock for. Money has changed everything.

Unfortunately, the agenda from day one for a lot of these bands who say they're punk rock and all that shit, with their mohawks and their little studded jackets, and all that other bullshit, was to make as much money as they can. Punkers are only human too, and I think they put money in front of morals. As soon as that line is put in front of them where they can cross to a major record label, they do it. Take a band like Anti-Flag, I'm not faulting them, they were all about anti-corporation, and then as soon as they were offered some money, they went to a major label. I'm wishing one of these punk bands would get offered a million bucks and they would draw a line in the sand and say, "No, we are not crossing it. We have our fucking morals."

A: So how much more can we expect out of the Queers?

JQ: I don't know. Right now I'm just getting through this year. There are still some projects I want to do, some tours, some albums. Then after that, I don't know; when it's all done, fuck it! I'll stay home and walk the dog, or write my second book. [Laughs]

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