

Acknowledging their musical roots

The Queers

By John B. Moore

Alongside bands like the Descendents and Screeching Weasel, The Queers were one of the most consistently solid pop/punk bands throughout the 90s. There was no deep political message behind their songs, no rallying cry to the mosh pit; just quirky three-minute bursts of wry - sometimes juvenile - humor, picking up where The Ramones left off.

Nearly two decades later, and boasting a band roster that holds nearly 30 current and former members, The Queers are still churning out solid pop/punk rock songs. With a new DVD (*The Queers Are Here*) and a new record (*Munki Brain*), The Queers are about to spend the better part of 2007 trekking the globe to promote both.

Joe Queer, the one constant in the band, spoke recently about the group's beginnings, The Ramones and the current state of punk rock.

Innocent Words: How much has the band's sound, or more specifically, your sound changed since the 80s?

Joe Queer: Well, we started with fast, short stuff, kind of angry, like a lot of bands, and we kind of grew from there. We had people come and go, so it's almost like a solo project now for me. I always loved the pop stuff and the Beach Boys stuff, so the longer I go, the more I'm into that type of stuff and not so angry. Playing longer, you just dare to try different stuff.

IW: You've got more of the surf guitar sound on the newer records.

JQ: Yeah, ever since we did *Don't Back Down*, which was about 10 years ago, on that album we started doing more back vocals. I don't know. The punk rock scene is kind of dumb and really insulated. If you don't work by these guidelines then you're a pussy or you're not cool or whatever. To me, my music always started with The Ramones, they were always a good punk Beach Boys to me.

IW: So what does your audience look like nowadays?

JQ: It's funny because we'll get pretty normal type people, we'll get a lot of girls, we'll get kids with mohawks, because we do a lot of the fast stuff live, so we kind of cross over. Each album has the in-your-face-fuck-you songs and then you've got some poppy things with Beach Boy harmonies. It's kind of a weird thing.

IW: I'm finding that a lot of the younger punk

bands cite Green Day as an influence, but don't really go back further than that.

JQ: Right, they don't do their homework and see what the influences were for a lot of the bands or go

platform to exhibit their stupidity do we and actually glorify it on a poster? Having said that, I know Al the singer and the guitar player, he's a good guy and he'll always come to our shows. I don't hate them personally. Then again, some of the shit they do is questionable, but that's

what makes the world go round. They make different decisions than me. People ask me about Billie Joe from Green Day wearing eye-liner and I go, "Well I wouldn't, but I don't think he's any less of a person because he does."

IW: Did you have any idea when you started, some 20 years ago, that you'd be able to make a career out of this?

JQ: No. The band really got together in 1990, Hugh (O'Neill) and me and B-Face. Up until that point it had

been more of a jokey thing and we'd go a year without playing and have different line ups. We played around Boston and did open up for The Ramones, The Descendents and The Dickies and The Samoans, those were the biggest gigs we got. We never toured. It's an acid trip to start thinking that you could tour around and do this shit. Then all of a sudden we met Ben Weasel (of Screeching Weasel) and he got on Look Out! (Records) and then Look Out! wanted to do an album with us. Then we did a couple of tours and started getting royalty checks and thought "Good God," because before that, really the best you could hope to do was some loser kid in a band, Black Flag type tour. Yeah you could do it, but it wasn't viable economically. Then we went on tour with Screeching Weasel and then we did one tour with Rancid and we'd get a royalty check for something like \$2,200 and we're like "Whoa, are you fucking shitting me?" It's like that old George Burns thing, by the time we realized we had no talent we were already famous. So we kind of stayed with it. Some people drifted off and some died and I don't know, I'm still doing it for a few more years. We never thought we could do it this long.

IW: You've got a new record and DVD. What are The Queers doing next?

JQ: We're going to be touring two weeks in April, then we've got three weeks in June, then off to Europe in July - we're doing a bunch of festivals opening for Markey Ramone, and Dave the bass player and I will play with Markey too, so that will keep us busy for July.



photo by Jake Mecklenborg

back to the early days of punk rock, The Sex Pistols, The Damned, The Clash, Black Flag and listen to that stuff. A lot of these bands now, Black Flag and The Ramones are like a clothing line almost. Kids don't do their fucking homework and if you grow up and really live that credo of bands like Black Flag, The Dead Kennedys, The Ramones, The Angry Samoans, The Damned, it doesn't give you a stomach to tolerate much bullshit in the punk rock world these days. People always think I'm shooting my mouth off, but there's a difference between shooting your mouth off and talking the truth.

IW: Have you gotten any flack from others about your opinions on the current punk scene? I remember you making reference at some point to the Dropkick Murphys or similar bands.

JQ: Right. We had one song a little bit loosely based on them called "Little Rich Working Class White Boys." I'm just not into that scene. It's not the music so much. I don't think they're anything special at all compared to my heroes, but that's just me. That whole scene at those shows, it's so violent and I look around like "Oh man, nobody's learned anything by this fucking trip we're on." With them, I remember I was in Australia at this radio station and there was a poster of the Dropkick Murphys and it was a drawing of a kid in a wife beater, with a studded wristband on and cocking his fist back to fight and I go "What kind of fucking message is that?" I mean the world's full of assholes, but we don't have to give them a