



THE QUEERS

By Janelle Jones

While on the road in January on his way to Grand Rapids with his band the mighty QUEERS, 'LFR' rang up frontman Joe Queer to talk about the legendary band's most recent happenings: the stellar new record 'Munki Brain' (Asian Man), their new DVD crammed with live footage and interviews through the years on MVD, their re-issuing of their back catalogue with Asian Man, and some tantalizing news about THE DRUNKEN CHOLOS. And, of course, being the outspoken man he is, Joe wasn't afraid to discuss the current shaky state of punk rock and what woefully constitutes the genre now, which sets us up for the following somewhat bad lead-in for an interview.

[TALKING ABOUT TELLING THE TRUTH AND GIVING AN HONEST OPINION] I'VE BEEN PIGEONHOLED INTO BASICALLY WRITING ABOUT ONE GENRE AND CENSORED IN CERTAIN MAGAZINES!

People always say to me, "You're a shit-talker," and I go, you know, No. Someone has to speak the fucking truth and in this day and age in this punk-rock scene

I think a lot of it is smoke and mirrors and bullshit and punk rock used to be a way of seeing through all that and now I think some people don't see through it. If you tell the truth on an album, how you feel, and it's from honesty and not some hidden agenda, like you don't like a person in the band, then there's nothing wrong with that.

WELL, I KNOW MUSIC IS A PERSONAL OPINION

AND SOMETIMES IT JUST SEEMS LIKE ADVERTISING DOLLARS, THINGS OF THAT NATURE.

Yeah, I totally understand. I always say that. They're like, "What's the difference in the punk scene?" I say money has really ruined the integrity because money gets run around and then you have to deal with that - like you say with ads, and you don't wanna piss off big labels because they take big ads out. I understand that. You're running a business too. Bands like ANTI-FLAG, they've been saying for years, "We're anti-corporation," and then they sign to RCA. That's fine. I have nothing against you earning money off music, punk rock or whatever, but if your agenda for years has been one thing and then as soon as that money's dangled in front of you your morals go out the window, then it's like 'Animal Farm,' and that's when the integrity goes out. And I really wish bands like them would've drawn a line in the sand and said, "No, we were offered a lot of money but we're not going to do it because we have our morals and convictions." And that's kinda where I am on the Warped Tour and stuff. I grew up on BLACK FLAG and THE RAMONES, the DKs, and that means something to me and I'm not going on



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that big rock star stuff. If other bands want to, fine. I'M NOT DOING IT because those are the bands that fuckin' made me who I am and I'm sticking with it for good or bad. I put my morals in front of money and that's me. People think we play pop-punk and all that shit 'cause we don't have purple mohawks so we ain't punk, and I go, "We put our money where our mouth is, we never did any of that rock star shit and signed to bigger labels for big money and all that crap. We stayed playing in front of 200 kids in a crowded little club and not some rock star bullshit fucking big, huge stage where kids have to pay 50 bucks to see us. I just don't like to do that to our fans. And I'm happy to be able to do this at this level.

DEFINITELY AND YOU HAVE THE RESPECT... ANYWAY, I SAW THAT YOU'RE GOING TO RECORD AN ALBUM WITH DRUNKEN CHOLOS...!

Yes. That's my side project with the original QUEERS - Tulu and Wimpy. We did one little EP. Tulu moved back to NH so we're gonna do that. We're pretty psyched. That's with Wimpy singing and

our old drummer. That's gonna happen hopefully at the end of [February].

YOU MENTIONED THE OLD EP. SOMEONE IN A REVIEW DEEMED IT, "HOPELESSLY DATED."

[LAUGHS]
On the CHOLOS?

YEAH. I FOUND THAT FUNNY. A COUPLE TIMES IN NYC WHEN I'VE SEEN YOU GUYS, WIMPY'S COME ONSTAGE AND I LOVE THAT YOU DO THE SET WITH THE OLD CLASSICS.

Yeah. It's goofy. It's tongue-in-cheek. It's a band called THE QUEERS and THE DRUNKEN CHOLOS are really THE QUEERS, but I don't wanna confuse people too much because they know me as the singer now, but it's tongue-in-cheek. There's not supposed to be any big message. And really our hearts during the early stuff were in BLACK FLAG

"TV Party" and 'Damaged,' and ANGRY SAMOANS, and DICKIES, and that was the whole thing. And Wimpy sings with the English accent, you know 'cause when we started way back when, one of the bands in Boston that was big was THE CARS and we knew some of them and the guy sang with a real English accent. It was like, oh, you had to have an English accent. So it was a goof on rock 'n' roll, which is how punk rock started anyway. So "hopelessly dated," that's true. [Laughs] Maybe it's not a bad review.

[LAUGHS] NO, IT'S NOT!

That would be a good name for an album, though. THE DRUNKEN CHOLOS 'Hopelessly Dated.'

[UNCONTROLLED LAUGHTER] SO YOU THINK YOU'RE GONNA RECORD ANY OF THE OLD CLASSICS?

We're gonna re-record some of the stuff we did as THE DRUNKEN CHOLOS 'cause we don't own those performances, Hopeless does, our old label. But as far as the old QUEERS stuff, no, I don't think we're gonna record any of that. We'll do all new stuff that we got. Tulu's got a song called "Five Days on Crack." We got some funny stuff we're kicking around. I don't know quite what we're gonna do but I know it'll all be new songs.

DID PAPPY DIE OR ANYTHING? IS HE STILL AROUND?

We don't know. I did a people finder search and I couldn't find that guy. I found his son and daughter-in-law are in Pennsylvania, but I couldn't get a phone number. I think he's still alive. Something tells me he is. I haven't talked to him in a long time, 15 years or something, but for some reason I think he's still kicking around 'cause he had stopped drinking. We'll try to find him as a matter of fact. I may have to pay a little more money to get somebody to really dig some dirt up, someone like a detective who has more power than me that can get phone numbers. I'd love to find him.

[AS FOR THE RECENT QUEERS ALBUM,] JUST THE SONG "MONKEY IN A SUIT." YOU GUYS AREN'T KNOWN FOR YOUR POLITICAL COMMENTARY PER SE...

Yeah. [Laughs] The song started out called "Marky Don't Surf" and then the guys in the control room started singing "Monkey in a suit" and doing monkey noises, and I go, jeez, that's a good idea. And then we're like, let's make it about George Bush and then we kinda turned the whole thing around. Yeah, we're not too political, but I think when you have a president as bad as this one it calls for comment even from pop-punk bands like the Queers! [Laughs]

DEFINITELY.

We were raring and fired to step up to the plate so we did it this time. That's kind of a funny little song.

AND YOU END [THE RECORD] WITH "BRIAN WILSON." I'VE SEEN IN SOME PLACES WHERE PEOPLE HAVE WRITTEN THAT YOU'VE ACTUALLY SURPASSED BRIAN WILSON'S SONGWRITING ABILITIES. WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THAT?

That's nice of people to say, but no. It's just I like that BEACH BOYS-type stuff, so that was another song that just kinda evolved. I had the chorus and then Lisa Marr came and wrote a couple of verses with me. It's kind of a goofy song, but a little different from what we would normally do music-wise, it's mainly acoustic guitars on there and brushes on the drums and shit. ...I just really like the BEACH BOYS. I can't write songs like Brian Wilson. But that song "I Think

She's Starting To Like Me" is kind of my stab at a 'Pet Sounds' BEACH BOYS thing. I really thought that one came out pretty good. Sometimes I get bored with the three-chord stuff. Joey Ramone always told me always move, move, move, keep trying stuff. So we did. It's fun. That's where the real buzz comes from. Just doing a three-chord song is great too, but it's more of a challenge to try different stuff. We really had a ball with [those two songs], working on the vocals and trying the keyboards, and really creating it in the studio. And I wanted to do stuff that like maybe some bands could write "Houston We Have a Problem" or some of the other stuff, but I don't see a lot of pop-punk bands that have evolved and that could even try

"I Think She's Starting To Like Me," so I'm pretty proud of that. If you can surprise people in this day and age in the punk-rock world, I think that's pretty good. A lot of bands do some great stuff, but it's not surprising. I don't wanna get locked into one genre. So, that's kinda where all that stuff comes from and it was fun. A lot of people like that stuff. And it sucks we don't play it live, but one of these days I wanna get a pop-punk line-up together and just do all that pop stuff and record it. 'Cause live we just play the "fuck-you kicked-out-of-the-webelos-kill-mom-and-dad-go-do-drugs-and-get-in-the-mosh-pit" type songs, which are great live. But the pop-punk stuff I love to do, but we don't get much of a chance. [Laughs] You know, our audience would stand there. We can't play that shit. They'll rush the stage and attack us.

IT'S SAD BUT I FIND AT LEAST POP-PUNK OR EVEN JUST PUNK IN GENERAL HAS THIS DEROGATORY MEANING NOW.

Yeah, 'cause the bands out there that get all the fuckin' press, the jocks and it's bullshit, these moronic fuckin' bands like DROPKICK fuckin'... You ever go to their shows? It's like white-power motherfuckers fighting and shit. Not all of them, but a lot of them. There's a lot of great people who go to those shows too, but it's like a big brawl. And it's like, fuck man, this is what people think punk rock is. And I look around and I

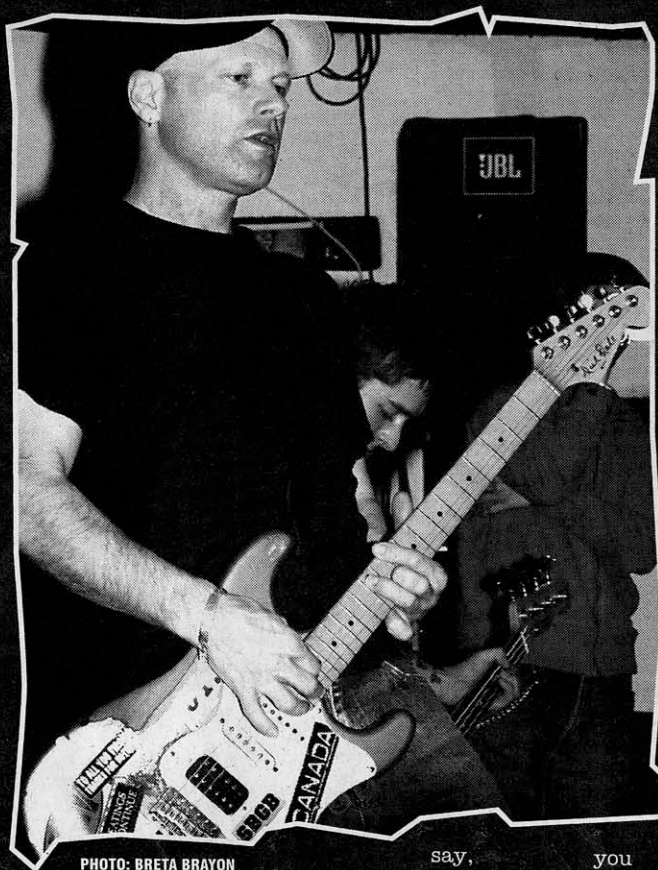


PHOTO: BRET BRAYON

say, you know what? I don't think anybody's learned anything from the scene. You gotta go through this journey and learn something. You don't go into punk rock to go to a show to beat up people smaller than you. But a lot of people do. I think that's where the pop-punk message and the punk-rock message that the RAMONES gave us is don't take yourself too seriously, which is what all these bands do now. They think they got the cure for cancer and they're all onstage and they don't put the RAMONES up there and the punk ideals - don't take yourself too seriously motherfucker, be able to laugh at yourself, question things, whether it's from the fuckin' asshole in ANTI-FLAG or the guy who's running the country George Bush, and be your own person, and that's what punk-rock taught me. And all the great bands like the RAMONES and ANGRY SAMOANS and DICKIES and DESCENDENTS and BLACK FLAG, DKs, they got a great message across and they all did it 'cause they used humor as a tool. That was the bottom line - that they were goofing on the rock stars and they were making people look in the mirror and question themselves. And now everyone takes themselves too seriously, and I think THE QUEERS are like, okay, we're a goofy band. We don't have a huge message. I think it reminds me, when kids sing along to "Punk Rock Girls," it's fun and everybody's just

having a good time. And when we used to go see the RAMONES, like life sucks but when they were onstage [playing] "Sheena Is a Punk Rocker" or "Rockaway Beach," we had the world by the balls. For those two fuckin' minutes, everything was okay with the world. Bubblegum pop-punk was saving us, and that was the RAMONES, and the DICKIES singing "Gigantor" and shit. I don't wanna go to a show to fight and get beat up and to hear some dumb motherfucker tell me who to vote for because I'm not so smart, but I think I'm smart enough to think for myself. I'm a guy who just loves the RAMONES. I don't like anybody else. Us RAMONES fans didn't like anybody else, really. I mean, I do like a lot of other bands, but they made me who I am. So those are the punk ideals for me. Just a lot of fuckin' people forget that shit. Start putting the money in front of your ideals and then you lose all credibility. Say what you want about us, we're still driving a shitty van, going on to the next show, and having a good time. It's fun and that's our message.



PHOTO: BRETA BRAYON

RIGHT. JUST YOU SAYING THIS, I REMEMBER THERE WAS A PLACE ON LONG ISLAND [YOU PLAYED ONE TIME] CALLED THE DOWNTOWN [RIP], AND I TALKED TO YOU AFTERWARDS AND YOU WERE TOTALLY BUMMED. YOU WERE GOING ON ABOUT THE BANDS WHO TAKE THEMSELVES TOO SERIOUSLY.

You gotta learn something from this voyage you're on. If you're gonna be in punk rock, at least try to be a better person. I think a lot of these bands people put up on pedestals and [they're] fuckin' morons. I don't know.

[JUST AS A MUSIC JOURNALIST] I FEEL WEIRD ABOUT ADMITTING THIS, LIKE HALF THE BANDS THAT ARE AROUND TODAY [THAT GET A LOT OF PUBLICITY] I'VE NEVER HEARD AND I'M OKAY WITH THAT.

[Laughter] Well, I don't think a lot of them have too much to share anyway. The great thing about the SEX PISTOLS was that they just did their whole goofy little thing and just exploded and I thought that was true punk. Or like BLACK FLAG. You know, their audience was really into the fuckin' hardcore shit then they grew their hair long and started doing all that slow, dirgy shit like 'Slip It In' or 'Loose Nut,' I can't remember, I don't listen to that. Musically I didn't like it, but I was like, damn, it was so ballsy and punk rock to piss off your own audience. They DELIBERATELY did that. Oh god, I love that, man. It's so punk rock.

TOTALLY! WELL, EVEN TSOL DID THAT WITH THEIR SECOND ALBUM, 'BENEATH THE SHADOWS,' WHEN THEY BROUGHT OUT THE KEYBOARDS. NO ONE WOULD HAVE THAT.

Yeah, I didn't listen to them too much. I had my favorites [like] CIRCLE JERKS and BLACK FLAG. But yeah, TSOL. That's a great story right there. Jack [Grisham] from TSOL, we did two shows with them and man, they went through their drugs, crazy shit, and they came out at the end of it sober and Jack, he was running for governor. What a great message he had for the kids. It's just incredible that he went through that and came out a better person.

[TALKING ABOUT A BOOK JOE'S THINKING ABOUT WRITING ON A BUNCH OF THE OLD PUNK/HARDCORE LEGENDS. DON'T WANT TO PRINT THE DETAILS LEST ANYONE STEALS HIS IDEA] SOME OF THE PUNK BANDS NOWADAYS SEEM LIKE THEY'RE JUST JUMPING TRENDS: THEY DID THE WHOLE SKA THING, NOW THEY'RE DOING PUNK 'CAUSE THAT'S WHERE THE MONEY IS...

It's a fuckin' schtik. If heavy metal was big they'd grow their hair long and get fuckin' Flying V guitars and dress up like POISON. Fuck that. I wanna make money too, but really to me music was something that hit me like a drug. I don't know, it was just something. I wanted to travel around,

I wanted to do drugs, I wanted to get drunk, I wanted to be irresponsible. I wanted to fuck chicks, but the real reason I wanted to play music was because something inside me told me I had to. And I did. And bands like the BOSSTONES to me and GREEN DAY and SCREECHING WEASEL and MR. T EXPERIENCE and there's a lot of other ones out there, TSOL and BLACK FLAG, did it, and there was no safety net under them. Now it's a career move. Now you got idiots like GOOD CHARLOTTE and ALL-AMERICAN REJECTS and bullshit like that kinda under the punk heading, but they can try it for a while and bands get huge. It's a career move now. But when we started, all those bands, RANCID and TSOL and BLACK FLAG and SCREECHING WEASEL, we didn't have a safety net under us. It was either "Welcome to Burger King, may I take your order?" or "Paper or plastic, ma'am," or punk rock. That was it. We ain't gonna fuckin' go work a corporate job. We don't have a gold card in our fuckin' wallet. We don't have computer jobs waiting for us. It's punk rock or Burger King. [Laughs] So I like that about a lot of bands. They were fuckin' living it: GREEN DAY, RANCID, OP IVY. And that's not the case with a lot of these yuppies now that play music. So I think that lends a certain honesty that I really miss now.

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