

# Originality Counts More

by Erika Y. Gradecki

## JOE QUEER DISHES HIS THOUGHTS ON PUNK ROCK

Photography by Joe Schumacher

**T**wenty-five years of leading New Hampshire-bred band, The Queers, Joe King, a.k.a. Joe Queer, sees a change in the punk rock world. He believes that today it's "more commercially viable to be in a punk rock band. It's always like a career move; back then it was a loser proposition. It was like punk rock or 'welcome to Burger King, lemme take your order.' It was either punk rock or bagging groceries."

"All of a sudden, punk got big, Green Day got big, and kids look at Green Day and Rancid and stuff like that and said 'oh man, I could do that,'" he adds. "Today, Good Charlotte—I think bands like that, all of a sudden, fuck...they come outta nowhere, and are on a major label. Kids buy that now, where kids back then wouldn't."

Joe says that nowadays, we live in a more "consumer-oriented" society and being on a major record label does not make one a "le-

gitimate band. If me, you and my mom put on a grass skirt and ukulele and said we were Irish and would be at the Irish pub, we'd be the biggest fucking thing since sliced bread," Joe says. "I see that a lot with other bands, the alternative bands," he adds. "All these kids look cool and dress the part and look like the Rolling Stones in 1966. Everybody can look cool with this and the rock thing, anybody's gonna look cool with a guitar... it's more of how you look, what label you're on, who your friends are, and the last, and oh yeah, who's gonna write the songs."

Joe says that The Queers pride themselves on originality and "doing their own thing." "The bottom line was, something said, 'I gotta play music,'" says Joe. "We're not a huge punk band as much as we were. I'm not worried about making music in the biz, I'm not worried about who's big and who's not big."

Joe says that his band members live far away from each other and that practice is not quite as often. With members in Tennessee, Ohio, California and Joe himself in Atlanta, they do still continue to meet up to rock shows internationally. "We meet at Indianapolis for rehearsal," says Joe. "When you go away and get together, you get pumped up to do the tour. It's fun doing it that way; it's fun. We're on the road quite a bit touring. This year, we're booked right through November."

Currently, Joe says that the band has been promoting their 2006 live album, *Weekend at Bernie's*, as well as their 2007 album, *Munki Brain*. In addition, they have been working on their staffing, as well as a book on the band in the future. "There's all these little projects. I kind of take it one day at a time," says Joe. "I don't know what's at the end of the river; who knows?" ○

## The (Richie)

# Spice of Life

by Melanie J. Cornish

### THE SHOW MUST GO ON

**R**eggae artist Richie Spice, famed for his global hit "Earth a Run Red," is about nothing but the music. With his humble beginnings playing a major part of his musical makeup, he never vacillates from his mission. Music runs deep in his family's—his older brother is Pliers of Chaka Demus and Pliers—so Richie too would be giving his all to the reggae culture.

Speaking about his recent African tour, he makes the importance of his message clear. "To have people come out and accept me, it was great and to have my work appreciated." Artists like Richie Spice are welcomed with open arms in the motherland as they continue spreading the word of Jah. Performing two shows in Kenya, Richie expressed how important he sees that market: "it is very important, as the work I am doing is not just for local people. This is for everyone in the world."

Unfortunately, Spice was unable to secure a visa for travel in the USA, blunting the spread of his message of "having the ability to believe in yourself." This disappointed audiences in three east coast cities, but red tape never causes Richie's spirit to falter. "That was the first time something like that had happened," he explained. "We just move on. And when people are ready for me on that side of the world, I will be there."

Meanwhile he was keeping busy planning a concert for his Jamaican fan base this summer. For Richie Spice it is really just business as usual. ○