

# AS A WHITE SUBURBAN PUNK GROWING UP OUTSIDE VANCOUVER

in the early 1980s, I took DOA's lyrics and album covers (like those of Crass and the Dead Kennedys) with a deadly serious, youthful intensity. I couldn't always figure out what they were singing about—I still to this day have no idea exactly what "Nazi Training Camp" is a metaphor for—but their political leanings were always pretty clear, and the angry declaratives at the heart of many of their songs ("I am the prisoner!") were usually more than enough for me to use them as I saw fit. If I wasn't sure exactly what they wanted to burn down in "Burn It Down," there was no shortage of things to choose from. I glowered through the halls of my high school, convinced that "You got to know who your enemy is." (I suspected it might be the vice principal.) DOA singer and guitarist Joey "Shithead" Keithley may not be

quite as slickly articulate as Jello Biafra, but he was local, a gifted sloganeer, and there was something in his gruff, no-bullshit self-presentation that really appealed to me... even though, as a middle class kid, I doubted I could keep up. "We want a world so free we can run wild," I read on one album cover, and I shuddered in fear, wondering what exactly DOA running wild in the world would entail. (Liquor stores would have to post armed guards).

When five local radicals, including Subhumans' bassist Gerry Hannah—an old friend of Joe's—were arrested in 1983, it was DOA that put things in perspective for me, issuing a single and doing benefit gigs to help "Free the Five," including with the 7" a letter Gerry had written from prison, calling attention to the Five's aims. I couldn't help but ask Keithley about such

matters, and to get his take on one of the most interesting and under-appreciated chapters of Canadian history—"When Punk Was a Threat." To crib from Jello's song (which mentions the Five)—where exactly did Joe draw the line back then? Now that he's the owner of a successful punk label, Sudden Death Records—a businessman, when you get down to it—did things look at all different?

As remarkable as the recent Pointed Sticks reunion is, it kinda puts things in an interesting perspective to consider that the Sticks' first gig was opening for DOA at the Quadra Club. Coming back after twenty-six years is something to remark on, but so is NEVER HAVING GONE AWAY IN THE FIRST PLACE. Joey Shithead deserves some sort of Punk Rock Lifetime Achievement Award.

**Allan:** In the dead wax around the label, for DOA's *Triumph of the Ignoroids* EP, there's a message scratched in—"The Pointed Sticks are Out of Luck, 'cause DOA are the Real Thing."

**Joey:** [laughs] They were pretty pissed off at that, and so was their manager, Steve Macklam. That was Ken Lester's idea, our old manager, and how I ever agreed to that I don't know, 'cause that was their single at the time, right. We did a lot of shows with them. Their first shows as Ernie Dick and the

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Pointed Sticks, at the Quadra Club, which became Club Soda and the Starfish and all that. And they got successful when Brinsley Schwarz or whatever was gonna produce them, they got signed, and I think some people got a little jealous that they were getting a lot of hype, right, but when you're young, I think that kind of thing happens with people. But, to me, when you look at it, the Pointed Sticks were the real thing for what they were trying to do, and so were DOA—one was a pop punk band, the other was a punk band. I always really liked the Sticks. I didn't see them too much in the interim. I'd run into Ian Tiles and Tony Bardach more than anybody else, but Nick, I hadn't seen for fuckin' ages.

**Allan:** Ian toured with DOA, right?

**Joey:** He roadied on our very first trip and he was goddamn useless, and ate twice his own weight in food and drank three times his own weight in beer, but other than that he was great. [laughs]

**Allan:** There's a great story in *I, Shithead* (Joey's autobiography) about the merch he made.

**Joey:** Aw, fuck, those buttons in Seattle. It's great. The top would pop off and the badge was gone. You'd just see these people... when they get home, they'd probably go, "Aw fuck, DOA ripped me off for a buck!" [laughs].

**Allan:** There were also weird rivalries between DOA and the Subhumans, right?

**Joey:** Totally. We wouldn't do shows together at all, 'cause the two managers, David Spaner and Ken Lester—David had managed the Subs—were really good buddies, and what happened was, they were anarchists, and then Ken went into business and opened a yogurt shop. David called Ken a sellout, and at the same time Ken started going out with David's sister, so that made him doubly mad. So then we wouldn't play together on the same bill, because we're like, "We're not going to open for you!" and they're, like, "No, we're not gonna open for you, either, so FUCK OFF" type thing. I think the only time we got together was a fundraiser for the original release of the *Vancouver Complication* record (a compilation of the early Vancouver punk/new wave scene, originally issued on LP in 1977 and reissued by Sudden Death in 2005). Macklam and Grant (McDonagh, of Zulu Records) and (local musician) Phil Smith organized this show at O'Hara's and that was the only time we ever did a show with them.

**Allan:** There was some story in *I, Shithead* about you causing trouble for the Subhumans on the road.

**Joey:** [laughs] On their last tour, which kinda helped break them up, they were about two weeks behind DOA doing a lot of the same venues and the same towns and what happened, they had a bunch of shows get cancelled on them or the promoter would be really mad, because DOA had gotten fucked up with like, a riot, or we had once wrecked the stage, or the police had busted the place, and then the Subhumans came two weeks behind us and they're like, hey, "We're the Subhumans from Canada," and the promoters go, "Yeah, another bunch of fuckin' Canadians. Fuck off!" And that was

their last tour, so I'm afraid we're a little bit responsible for the break up. And then we snagged Wimpy to play bass in DOA. Band killer, band killer.

**Allan:** Sudden Death was not involved in the new Subhumans CD.

**Joey:** No, we weren't. We wanted to do the new album. Those guys are great friends of mine, especially Wimpy and Gerry. I grew up with them on Burnaby Mountain, like, within two blocks of each other—Dimwit, too, rest his soul. Maybe it was a little bit funny because I'd been in a band with Jon and Brian and they went, uh, "Well, maybe this is a little too close," or something like that. But

**Allan:** There was a CD put out, too, wasn't there, of Japanese bands covering DOA songs?

**Joey:** Yeah, we all just put two songs on there. There were seven bands, from Japanese pop bands to noise bands, doing DOA songs, including us. They were all different, no repeats, so there's like twelve different Japanese versions of DOA songs. It was just a riot listening to this, because they had the music down really well, and their singing is really good, right in tune, but with a heavy Japanese accent. It's a great record, actually. It's called *We Still Keep on Running with DOA*. Sudden Death has it on our website. Let's just say it hasn't topped the Billboard charts.

**YOU HAVE TO HAVE CHAOS IN ORDER TO HAVE A GOOD DOA SHOW. IS WHAT I'M SAYIN'. THAT'S THE MATHEMATICAL FORMULA.**

they're out on G7 Welcoming Committee in Canada and Alternative Tentacles in the States, and you know what, I couldn't think of two better labels to have a great band like that be on.

**Allan:** There are no hard feelings?

**Joey:** No hard feelings at all. Brian and Gerry and Dimwit and I, we were like the four amigos, and we started music together, and we did everything through high school and moved out of home together. We're friends for life. And the Subhumans are a fuckin' great band—on a par with anyone who came out from those days, from Black Flag to the Dead Kennedys to the Avengers.

**Allan:** DOA toured Japan in 2001. What were Japanese fans like?

**Joey:** Aw, fuck, they were, like, nuts, right? They were so respectful—it's funny. Well, it's not funny, I shouldn't say that, but, it's like a very respectful culture. I don't quite understand it. I'd have to know more about Japan, but, for instance, we were playing a show; one of the opening bands was on, and I was on the stairs, and all of a sudden these guys started fighting—these Japanese punks are having it out. I guess this was at the back of the hall, and the fuckin' band that was on stopped playing and the whole crowd turned around and stared at these two guys. No bouncers came and grabbed them by the collar like they would here. Then they walked outside, and of course, I walked after, because I wanted to see what happened, right? And they were both mad, but they stopped fighting and they bowed at each other and they went back into the venue. I'm going, like, "Ohhh-kay, that's a little different, isn't it?" Usually blood is the order of the day, y'know, some stupid and pathetic thing that we would do in our culture.

**Allan:** But Japanese fans were enthusiastic about DOA?

**Joey:** Oh, man. We had this show in Miyazaki, down south, and it's like tropical down there, right? We were amazed at how fuckin' hot it was. It was like bein' in Hawaii, almost, but when we went there, there were screaming people at the airport, going "DOA wah wah wah wah!" and it's like, "Oh my God; you've hit the home run in the World Series!" The fan devotion is amazing.

**Allan:** (Pointed Sticks guitarist) Bill Napier-Hemy was telling me about how one of the opening bands for a their show over there did some fairly obscure covers off the *Vancouver Complication* CD. How's that CD doing?

**Joey:** That one, because it was a benefit record, we ended up giving \$5,000 through a donation, and through the show, and through sales, to the Vancouver Food Bank. There's another accounting coming up—I gotta figure out how many more we sold and make another donation to them. It won't be \$5,000, but it'll be something. That one was a funny record, because a lot of people were really, really worked up about it when it came out. I think it's a fuckin' great record, right, but—and I knew this would happen—all the hype was totally concentrated in Vancouver, so people were going, "This is gonna be big!" and the sales went great for about three weeks, and then just completely slacked off, once the hype died down and the show was over. It's just kinda one of those things. When people do find it, you know, from out of town, they'll be like, "Wow, what a fuckin' great scene," I have a friend, Jack Rabid, who runs *The Big Takeover* magazine, and he goes, that's the most creative—he says it's the best scene compilation for this kind of music that ever came out. He's talking North



Dave Gregg, at the Smilin' Buddah, June 11, 1982, photo by Bev Davies

America, Europe, not just talking Canada. And whether that's true or not, y'know—because I'm from Vancouver, I'm inclined to agree. He's a musicologist, and he's been around—he's heard everything, so that's pretty high praise.

**Allan:** The CD release gig for that was incredible. I thought the Dishrags really stole the show.

**Joey:** I thought so too, because they were so nervous. It was just really funny. I went over to Jade (Blade, Dishrags guitarist and singer) and said, "How long since you played a show?" and she said, "Twenty-six years." And then I went over to Chris (Arnett, leader of the Shades and the recently-reunited Furies) and said, "How long has it been since you played a show?" He said, "Twenty-six years." I went, "Holy fuck. Don't you guys ever do reunions?" I mean, all these other bands have done reunions. The Subhumans would do a reunion every five or six years, in some form or another. I guess the Pointed Sticks were really only the other ones.

**Allan:** The Complication gig also got Randy Rampage back in the band (Rampage was DOA's original bassist, and was the original frontman for the metal band Annihilator. He's been in and out of DOA a few times).

**Joey:** It was really a funny a thing. We were playin' with Dan Yaremko for about two years, I told Dan we're gonna do a few songs with Randy for like old times' sake. Dan started—we did about six

songs with him and about nine with Randy. If Chuck (Biscuits, original drummer) had've been in town, it would've been great to have him there too, obviously, and I'm sure Jan (Rodgers), our current drummer (aka The Great Baldini), would have understood: this is the original guy type thing. Anyhow, it just went off like a bomb exploded. There was just a real connection there. Me and Randy—we've argued and bitched and I kicked him out of the band and all that kinda stuff, but he didn't hold a grudge against me, and it was just a good connection. And he's a total riot to travel with. He's a fuckin' nut.

**Allan:** Any amusing tour stories for us?

**Joey:** All right—this is like a ten minute story, but I'll try to get it down to five. We were in Germany with Randy in Europe in 2001, right? We've just played southern Germany, and everything's good, but we have to play in Milan the next day, and it's about 1,000 miles and you have to go over the Alps. I get these fuckers up at seven o'clock in the morning and they all pile into the van. It's like one of these Fiat turbo-charged diesels, and they can really fly. I've got the thing rolling down the autobahn at about 160-170 kilometres an hour. I'm passing everybody except maybe the fastest Mercedes. And all of a sudden it's like BRRRRRAKAKAKAKAKAKA and I'm like, "Aw fuck!" I look out the driver's-side window and I can see blue smoke billowing out of

the tailpipe, right, so I know the engine's fucked.

I look over and I see this Esso sign, the only Esso sign I've ever seen in Europe, right, and I fuckin' barge my way through, across four lanes of traffic—'cause you're on the autobahn, the countryside, it goes for miles and you're just fucked. So I got off, and those guys kinda woke up and are goin' "What the fuck's goin' on?" I say, "Get out, get out, start pushing!" And those guys are jumpin' out on the fly—the DOA "men of action" thing—and we push the van up this hill to this gas station. The engine's just fucked—like, we poured some water in the radiator and it came out the tailpipe. We finally get the European equivalent of AAA out to look at the thing. It takes two hours, we're wastin' time, we've still gotta go like 800 kilometers, and the guy looks at the engine and goes, "Kaput!" We go, "YEAH! We KNOW it's fucked. We knew that two hours ago!" But they have to see that the engine's not running before they'll pay for a rental vehicle. So we call up the rental company. We're just waitin' waitin' waitin', and finally this middle age woman shows up with a minivan—a minivan, right? There's a baby seat in the back and baby supplies and all this crap. We go, "Fuck, how are we gonna fit in there?" It turns out that it's a religious holiday, so there are no vans for rent, everybody's rented them to go do these Catholic ceremonies or



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whatever. Anyways, we rip out the back seat and only take about half the stuff for our tour of Italy and we're gonna do six of us in the minivan. The dilemma is, there are only five seats and we've got to go across the Alps! Right away, I go, "Okay, I'll drive!" Rusty, the new guy, has got to sit in the middle with half his ass on the passenger seat, and every time I shift the gear I hit his cheek with my hand, and it's a five speed tranny, so this is goin' on *constantly*. Anyway, it's a fuckin' disaster, we get lost in Switzerland somehow, a tiny little country, a traffic jam in the Alps. It's getting later and later and finally, we get to Italy, and I phone the promoter, and it's this outdoor festival in this old rail yard. "Okay, where the fuck is it?" And we finally get there. We've been travelling for sixteen hours, and the guy is going, "Okay, you're on in five minutes!"

**Allan:** [laughs]

**Joey:** There are fog machines, and they're just pumpin' this shit out, and we can barely see each other—I can't see Randy on the other side of the mike—and there's major aggro between the bouncers and the crowd because they want to get up on stage and dive off, so there are punch-ups on the other side of the barrier. Anyways, we play the gig. The next day we get down to Rome, and we play this big show at this outdoor place in an old squat, in a big fort that was built for the defense of Rome in the 1840s called Forte Prenestino. It was the German headquarters in the Second World War, and it's been squatted.

**Allan:** Right.

**Joey:** This show is like 3,000 people, and the stage is one of these big flatbed trailers. We do really well in Italy, and the people there are just fuckin' nuts—it makes for a great time. So we're playing away, and things are goin' pretty good, and me and Jan are playing, and we're lookin' at each other—and we're like, "Where the fuck is Randy?" And we're hearing this bumbabumbabum from the bass, and all of a sudden, there's nothing. What he's done is; he's come around behind me while I'm singing, he's jumped up in the air, but he didn't realize where the edge of the stage was, and he's gone flyin' into the fuckin' audience with his bass. Later on, he claims, "If they had've had some gaff tape to mark the edge of the stage I wouldn't have fallen off," and we're like, "Aw, fuck, yeah

right, how many drinks did you have before you got onstage," type thing, right? [laughs]

**Allan:** [laughs]

**Joey:** So me and Jan are goin' "Where the fuck is he?" We launch into, like, a ten-minute version of "Folsom Prison Blues" to fill time so Randy can get back on stage. I look at him—instead of landing on the crowd, it parts like the Red Sea did for Moses, and he lands in the fuckin' dirt. As he's goin' down, he realizes that he's gonna break the neck of his bass, so he spins around and lands on his tailbone. He ratches his fuckin' tailbone.

**Allan:** Oh, jeez.

**Joey:** So we stay in the squat, and word gets around that Randy's injured 'cause he's bruised his tailbone. The Italian tour manager comes around, and we're all sitting there—Randy's all, "Auughh. I don't feel so fuckin' good," right? And we're kinda half-laughing, half-sympathetic, and the Italian tour manager goes, like, "I hear you have medical problem with your ass." So that became the watchword for the tour, "medical problem with your ass."

**Allan:** [laughs]

**Joey:** Just after that, then we went to Palermo and Sicily and we all got food poisoning, and we're stopping every hour and you've either got to puke or have diarrhea, so we all had medical problems with our asses.

**Allan:** You must be thinking at some point, "I'm too old for this."

**Joey:** The tour started in Poznan, Poland. There were skinheads hiding weapons around the stage, like bats and bricks and these sticks with metal objects in the end and stuff like that. We found the stash and threw them out so they couldn't kill each other while the show was goin' on, right? But a riot happens at the first show. The vehicle is totally fucked up the second day of the tour, so we almost miss a show in Prague. The third day we get held up at the border comin' from the Czech Republic into Austria, when it wasn't part of the EU, and we've got all of these Polish tapes and CDs 'cause a buddy of ours runs a record company there. We didn't declare them, so this guy fines us, like, \$10,000, and we missed the show, and it was totally fucked. This was the *st* of that tour. At that point I'm going, shit, this was supposed to happen when I'm twenty-five years old, not when I'm fuckin' forty-five years old.

It doesn't matter how long you go on, punk rock is still fucked up. [laughs].

**Allan:** Clearly.

**Joey:** But I still really enjoy it, because to me, that's, like, an adventure. If you go from place to place and everything's calm and easy, it becomes this faceless thing. The guy hands you a guitar and there's instructions on the stage—"Don't forget you're in Boise, Idaho, tonight"—y'know, the big shows, they have that, right? "Oh yeah, here I am." You're just puttin' on a show with no reason to be other than the fact that you're playin' these notes—it just becomes a mindless exercise. But when you gotta fight your way through this crap, it kinda keeps you alive. It keeps you thinking. If you don't have a challenge, it's just like old people who, if they can't read and work on stuff, they get Alzheimer's, right?

**Allan:** No danger of that here.

**Joey:** Not in the foreseeable future... both these stories will be in a new book that I'm workin' on. It won't be exactly the same as the other one, but it'll have a bunch of interesting stuff in it.

**Allan:** Do you have a title yet?

**Joey:** No—I've got a summary and I've got one chapter written. It probably won't come out 'til next year.

**Allan:** Another question from the old days has to do with DOA's old slogan, "Talk—Action = O." I'm pretty fascinated by the history of the Squamish Five. They went by the name Direct Action. I was talking to Glen Sanford, the filmmaker who made the documentary about Gerry, *se*. He says he saw around town variations on that, reading, "Talk—*i* Action = O." How much were you a supporter of the Five?

**Joey:** Well, just to clarify how that came about, "Direct Action" came before our slogan, because it was in 1979 and 1980 that two banks and three government buildings got firebombed, right? The police and CLEU—the Coordinated Law Enforcement Unit—they never really came up with an answer to that, or if they did they made some kind of side deal with whoever was involved and it never came out in public. Direct Action would send communiqués to (local newspapers) the *un* the *vin* and the *i* and they called themselves Direct Action. And then we got the slogan, it was on the front of this anarchist magazine called

*Open Road*—a pretty good magazine—and Lester thought this is perfect for DOA, and we kinda just asked them if we can use this slogan, and they went, “Yeah, sure, sure,” type thing. It appeared on the back cover of *War on 45*, and then we started using it a lot after that. But to answer your question: well, if people are being really downtrodden, sometimes they gotta fight back, but to me, the most effective guy ever at fightin’ back was, Mahatma Gandhi, for example, or a guy who fought back against extreme conditions, and had peaceful protests that sometimes went violent. Look at South Africa and apartheid: Nelson Mandela. So, to me, that’s the kind of action where they would just take a strike and try to make the government change the rules, and to me I kind of always envisioned that, as opposed to going and blowing stuff up.

**Allan:** I really admired how DOA and other local bands rallied around Gerry, though. I mean, it sucks that people got hurt. But it was good to see the scene supporting its own.

**Joey:** Absolutely, we did lots of fundraisers for him and put out the *Right to be Wild* single. When we got the story, we were in Detroit. We were just sittin’ around, “Oh, what’s Gerry doin’,” and about two hours later Ken phoned: “Gerry’s been arrested on this highway in Squamish.” Then there was all this sensationalist news coverage. They had the cache of weapons they had stashed, or whatever. We didn’t know what was really true, so it seemed at the time that they would have a really hard time getting a fair trial. And that was a lot of the impetus for doing fundraising for them. Now, don’t get me wrong, the points they were making—talking about Litton weapons systems being morally wrong, about people destroying the environment and propagating violence against women—yeah, those were the right causes. They were fighting against things that were totally fucked. And people still are—this is the whole anti-war thing, anti-globalization thing, the degradation of the environment—these are things that, if anything, have gotten worse, not better. But I would not say then that I thought, “This is the way to go fight the man!” I never really felt that way, but I thought Gerry’s one of my best friends, and we should go support him. And they made some good points.

**Allan:** I actually interviewed Terry Chikowski, the guy who was blown up at Litton. I know Gerry wasn’t part of that, but still, it’s heartbreaking, because, I mean, I thought this would be moving to you in



DOA takin’ care of business with Randy Bachman, 1986, photo by Bev Davies

particular, because one of the main effects is he can’t play hockey anymore (DOA are known hockey maniacs).

**Joey:** Yeah. That’s a lousy thing, you’re takin’ a real chance, right. I mean, they phoned a warning in, but things like that are always screwed up, right? Someone diverts the phone call the wrong way or they don’t call in time or they don’t take it seriously, or whatever? You can’t take a chance on blowing somebody up. You gotta get a whole bunch of people to agree with you, to change things. If you can empower people and get them thinking and working together, you can change the fucking world, but there’s gotta be respect for other people and their lives.

**Allan:** I agree, but with songs like “Burn It Down,” is that what you thought back then, in the time after the Five were arrested?

**Joey:** I don’t know if I totally remember. Everything’s just kind of an impression as it goes by. It was a big event; we never had anything like this happen in Canada for years. It’s hard to say *exactly* what I thought then, but I don’t believe the violent aspect of it was right, and I don’t think I believed it was right at the time, to blow things up. If somebody’s right at your head with a gun, then, presumably, if you got a chance, you’ll try to knock that gun out of their hand, and disarm ‘em, or, who knows what you’ll do, but you’ll try and defend yourself. That’s an understandable action. But to go out and perpetrate violence: violence only begets violence, I guess that’s kinda my summation of it.

**Allan:** Jon Card was telling me that for awhile around that time, the Vancouver police were really targeting punks. He said that they actually kicked Ken Lester’s door in, looking for weapons.

**Joey:** Yeah, when that firebombing stuff happened, like, in ‘79 and ‘80, then mysteriously, you couldn’t play anywhere. All the clubs we used to play at like the Windmill and the Buddha and a few other ones around town, all of a sudden said, “No, no, no, can’t book you.” So then we started

doing shows at little halls out the ‘burbs. It was never completely confirmed, but the police suspected this as being the anarchist gathering place, and it got to the point where—I guess this is early 1980, late ‘80, or something like that, what’s now (Vancouver club) Richard’s on Richards was called the Laundromat, for about eight, nine months. I know a bunch of people who claim for sure that the police rented a place across the street, like, the CLEU guys, and videotaped everybody goin’ in or out, so they could get a profile of everyone who would go to this kind of anarchistic punk rock gathering. It was like a DOA show, right? But as far as being directly hassled—I kinda only vaguely remember the thing about Ken’s place, but I can see that happening.

**Allan:** Did you have any problems with being investigated or such?

**Joey:** I never got directly hassled. I mean, I wasn’t around town a lot. In those days we toured constantly. We always suspected our phone was tapped, that type of thing. Maybe it was, maybe it wasn’t.

**Allan:** There was a period right after that when the mood was pretty intense, locally. Where it seemed like shit might actually start happening, around the time of the “General Strike” single and just before.

**Joey:** I still believe that was a good period, when people really expressed themselves, and I was very proud to be part of that—and I still believe if you can upset the apple cart, that’s a good thing.

**Allan:** Let me ask you, then—what happened? I saw you representing Vancouver in the film *American Hardcore*, and their thesis seemed to be that one of the things that really caused the political energy of punk to dissipate, in the mid-‘80s, was Reagan getting elected a second time. I’m not so sure about that, but things certainly seem to lack an edge these days.

**Joey:** Yeah. I don’t think the artists are as powerful or as passionate—that was a unique time. But I don’t think that the politics of punk or hardcore punk—whatever you want to call

it—dissipated because he got elected a second time. Fuck, the one more term of Reagan was even worse! He became more obnoxious as time went on. It sorta like intensified the thing, right? I think what happened—why the hardcore scene split and changed—is that you started to get a lot of bands like the Cro-Mags, or whatever, that started to get a real skinhead thing. And not the S.H.A.R.P.s, but the dumb ones, right? And so that made for a period where—like, we were playing these shows all over the place where it's just like, fuck, we had nothing but fighting with these fuckin' guys, these racists, and sometimes they'd hold a mini-racist-type rally in front of the show. And I think at that point that's when a lot of people didn't want to go to punk rock shows anymore. Rather than getting pushed around in the pit and having a great time, and somebody would eventually pick you up if you fell, it changed and you'd fall down and somebody would try to put the boots to you. And I think that happened much more so in the United States than it did in Canada, 'cause I remember we had nothin' but fuckin' troubles in San Francisco, in Denver, in Houston, in a half-dozen other towns down there, where the racists would just come and start shit. To us, that was the antithesis of punk rock.

I mean, think of the shows we used to do here. It'd be the Pointed Sticks and DOA and U-J3RK5—that'd be a big variation! That's a quite a few years before '86-'87, but having this variation, and having a kind of fun aspect to it, and also a political liberalizing/revolutionary nature, that drew in a lot of different elements that made it really, really interesting. When the music kind of hardened, when it crossed over to the hardcore and you got a bit more of the metal influence, and drew this kind of "dumb factor," shall we say, that made it a lot less interesting and a lot less pleasant to go to these shows. So that's, to me, kinda what happened. The whole underground thing about being political never really died. It's just never quite come to the forefront like it did in those days.

**Allan:** Right.

**Joey:** To me, that's kinda the message for younger artists today, that if you get these kinda pop punk bands and bands on the Warped Tour and MTV and Much Music—if they got off their ass and really pushed some stuff, if these guys kinda used the power and the energy the way guys like Jimi Hendrix did, when you're a really popular artist, you can change a lot of things. I think that if you have that ability, fuck, you should use it! I'm not saying they all don't. Some of them do. There was the whole Rock Against Bush and PunkVoter.com, which I thought was real cool. But not enough people are, that's what the problem is.

**Allan:** What about bands like Anti-Flag?

**Joey:** Anti-Flag, that's an interesting one, 'cause now they're on a bigger label. I haven't heard the new record, but I really doubt that they've changed their tune. I think they would keep promoting the same kinda causes that they have been. To me, that's a cool band, but for every Anti-Flag, there's a hundred bands that... [pauses]. I'm not really

a name-caller, calling somebody out, 'cause I know how hard it is to make a living at this, but it's almost like the '60's, where you just sing about cars and girls and trouble in school, you know what I mean? And just because they have a loud, obnoxious punk rock guitar, that doesn't make it punk rock. There has to be an unsettling, confrontational-type, I'm-gonna-fuck-with-you perspective to make it punk.

**Allan:** Do you think that the Squamish Five getting arrested had anything to do with taking the wind out of the sails of political punk? It wasn't a very inspiring thing to happen. Stand up against the man and go to jail.

**Joey:** No to me, because not long after that and the potential general strike thing happened in British Columbia in '83, and in '84 and '85 and through the '90s, for us personally, as DOA, we started going to Europe a lot, and the places we would play would be these big factories that punks and leftists and anarchists had squatted and turned into their own place and didn't pay any rent on, and they had these fantastic places where they'd have concert halls and workshops and little mini-schools and libraries, and we were goin', "Fuck, this is the way to go, if you could do this in North America," right? And it was really confrontational, too. We stayed in this one place in Denmark where you couldn't get in through the front of the building. You had to walk in through the back alley, and then climb over this wall, and inside the first wall was a big pile of rocks and bricks. I looked and said, "What's that for?" and the guy said, "That's our first line of defense, when the police come." [laughs]. Then we walked across this big, open courtyard and climbed up this big steel ladder, and went into the squat, and they could pull the ladder up and bolt the door closed. He said, "That's the second line of defence, when the police come—then we just rain this shit down on their heads!" Y'know, when they come to try to kick them out. And to me I went "Wow." And a lot of them were punks, or were slightly sympathetic to it. So in certain areas, it got *more* confrontational, and it had a real point. And like I said, these guys had a real productive nature to it—it wasn't just about chuckin' a brick or somethin' like that.

**Allan:** Is it still that confrontational?

**Joey:** Not so much anymore. The squat scene is not as big as it used to be. The music scene is the same as here, and the punk rock scene is still goin', but it's not as volatile. Things are calmer than they used to be, so things are not as much fun. We used to say, with DOA—our template for a good place to visit was like—we hated Sweden and we hated anyplace that was really organized, because



Photo by Cindy Motherel

there was no chance of chaos or anarchy. We always liked Germany, Italy, and England because the punks were always in some sort of confrontation or doing these anti-nuclear demonstrations, and you just kinda got caught up in it. You have to have chaos in order to have a good DOA show, is what I'm sayin'. That's the mathematical formula.

**Allan:** Tell me about the back cover of *Something Better Change*. What's the story there? (The cover shows a very pissed off guy charging a falling cop with both fists raised).

**Joey:** I don't know who took the photo, I don't know who the guy is, and I don't know who the cop is, but it's like when Charles de Gaulle came to Quebec in 1968 or '69 on St. Jean Baptiste Day, and went, "Vive le Quebec liberte," like, "Free Quebec," a "fuck you Canada" type thing, a riot broke out and I guess the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) tried to bust it up and were unsuccessful, obviously, at least based on that photo, so Kenny came up and said, "Hey, it's a great picture," and it kinda fit in with the theme, 'cause the photo on the front is pretty cool—let's stick this black flag up on there, so you got the anarchist flag type thing, so it kinda tied in.

**Allan:** John Armstrong (Buck Cherry of the Modernettes) has the joke in his book, "How many punks does it take to change a light bulb?" And the answer is, "Punks can't change anything." Do you feel like DOA has

been able to accomplish anything politically?  
**Joey:** John's a really funny guy and he's got a great wit and sense of humour and stuff like that, but, to me, comin' from being an activist for half my life or more, you *can* change things—it can be incremental, small changes, where you go out and do a kind action to help somebody, or you go out and you raise some shit. As far as things I've been directly involved in, I remember goin' to a bus fare protest with Gerry and I and a bunch of our people, and we sat there and blocked the buses on Burrard Street and stuff like that, and the bus drivers got fuckin' pissed off, and yelled and swore at us, and then we'd go on the buses and not pay, because of the fuckin' fare increase, and they'd all be mad. Stuff like that, to me, is really effective, because it got a lot of notoriety. I'm not sure if it slowed down the fare hikes, but it certainly made people a lot more aware that transportation for people without money is a right. How can you get to work if you have no money? How can you get to school? And stuff like that I thought was really cool.

Then there was one show we did—Randy Bachman organized it, I guess this was at the Commodore—I guess about '88, '87, maybe—it was us and Randy Bachman and a couple of other bands, maybe even 54-40, and it raised a bunch of money and the money went to Oxfam, and they used the money to help buy an ambulance to put in Soweto, South Africa. Okay, we didn't change the world, we didn't raise ten million dollars like Bob Geldof or something like that, but this is a way of showing people that you care, or if you do a little thing, that can help people along. I can't think of half the things we did. Another one we really liked—Terry Jacks was doing this thing, like about '88-'89, about pollution from pulp and paper mills in British Columbia, and about how cancer rates were higher in the areas with the mills and crustacean life was getting mutated because of the effluence in the water and the air. So we ended up organizing this benefit—Dale Wiese, it was actually his idea—and I contacted Terry, and, strangely enough, we ended up meeting with Bruce Allen, and we did this show with Bryan Adams, BTO, Terry Jacks and DOA, a *really* strange combo, and that helped create so much press. I'm not sayin' we did it alone, I'm not tryin' to claim this at all, but eventually even the (right-wing) Social Credit government tightened up the rules on the kind of effluence that could come out of the plants, or the amount. And, to me, that's kinda how you change things. People thought, "Wow, is that ever weird, DOA with Bryan Adams," and yeah, is that ever weird, but it had a very good effect, 'cause we were able to parlay Adams' superstar status into a good cause.

**Allan:** Is there any activism you're engaged in now?

**Joey:** For a few years there I was kinda involved in the anti-globalization stuff. To me, that was pretty interesting, tryin' to show people that free trade is one thing but what we need is fair trade. And it's kinda gone off the burner now, it's not quite as big an issue as it was, but I still think that's a pretty

valid issue, rather than having our workplace standards and our environmental standards being dragged down to the Third World level, we should try and help drag them up to ours and level the playing field that way. I think the big one that I've always been into, and it's coming back up again in popularity—I thought it had totally died off; people didn't give a fuck, they were too concerned with money—is the environment. And now all of a sudden politicians are all tripping themselves to prove that they're greener than the others. And this will probably be the Conservatives undoing. I don't know if it will be (Canadian Liberal party leader) Stephane Dion's saving, or the Democrats in the United States, but it's good that this is a big issue that this is a public. We're finally realizing that we've been fuckin' things up for a long time, and it's time we cleaned up our act. To me, that's something I'm going to try to get back into a bit. I haven't done too much with it lately, but I think that's the number one cause.

**Allan:** To go back a bit, you were sort of involved with plugging Warren Kinsella's book, *Fury's Hour*, in which he really trashes Gerry.

**Joey:** I think Warren pretty well misunderstood Gerry's actions and just sort of did a newspaper account of it. I don't know if he actually talked to Gerry.

**Allan:** No, he didn't.

**Joey:** Yeah. So I would say Warren made a mistake with that, and I'm sorry if I helped that along by participating in Warren's book, but Warren's a friend of mine Warren asked me to write a bit for the back of the book. I've known him for like twenty-five, twenty-six years, and most of the rest of the book, I thought, made sense, at least from the perspective that he was coming from. But I thought that was unfair, too, when I finally read the whole thing. It was kind of a rush-type thing. I went through the book really quickly and he said, "Give me a quote" and I gave him a quote. But anyways, I'm not gonna absolve myself and say, "Oh fuck, I didn't read that." I read parts of it. And I didn't think it was fair either. From a guy coming from a socially liberal background, he sorta missed the boat on that.

**Allan:** Let's move into the present day. What projects are in the works now?

**Joey:** I just started a subdivision of Sudden Death. I kinda wanted to branch out a bit, right, then we could put some stuff on like, y'know—'cause I like all kinds of music. Let's say I signed a country band, a jazz band, and a reincarnation of Benny Goodman in all of one week, and I sent the CD out and it's on Sudden Death Records, there's a weird aura to it that doesn't quite fit. So this is Joe JSK Media—like Joe Shithead Keithley. It's the same thing, the same staff, and basically we got the same approach—well, hopefully we'll improve our approach. [laughs]. "Not the same approach! Shit!"

**Allan:** Sudden Death is doing okay?

**Joey:** Yeah, it's doing great. The next thing I'm working on—me and Baldini are recording—is a new solo album called Band of Rebels. Joe Keithley Band of Rebels, or Joe Shithead Keithley Band of Rebels—it'll be one or the other. It's got acoustic guitar,

but it's very lively, and it's got ska in it too, right? The stuff we're doing tonight, the three songs, they've got a little touch of Eddie Cochran in 'em. It's a funny, rockin' mix, but I'm pretty happy with it. Sean from Profile and I have been workin' on it for a couple of months, and it's cool. It's taken a life of its own. We didn't know what the fuck it would be at first, but now it's honed itself into something that I think is gonna work, put it that way. Soon is *DOA: Punk Rock Singles*, twenty-six tracks, that's all the singles that came out on 7 inches. If there were splits, we didn't put those tracks in, it's just the DOA portions of it. And that runs from '78 to '99—I guess we haven't done any single vinyl in awhile, obviously. And there's another one I'm working on now that will probably be out by May, I'm hoping. It's called *Smash the State*, and it talks about some of the stuff you and I were talking about here, and it's a DVD of DOA from about '78 to '83. I've got all the footage, and I'm just goin' through it trying to pick out the best stuff. We're just gonna do live stuff—some great footage where people can see the original DOA firin' away, which to me was always a great time.

**Allan:** Do you feel like more of a businessman or a punk, now?

**Joey:** I guess a little of both. There's definitely a business sense involved in there—there couldn't help but be, otherwise we'd be bankrupt and out of business.

**Allan:** Do the two threads ever connect—being a punk and being an independent business person?

**Joey:** To me, the ultimate thing is for people to achieve freedom, and that's gonna take an awful lot of work, because we're not anywhere close. We're really constrained by the monetary system. By the banks, by the big businesses, and they run our lives. If people could take more business and more matters into their own hands and be more self-sufficient and deal with less companies... I mean, everybody pretty much ends up using UPS. Everybody ends up using something that was produced by Microsoft. And even though Bill Gates has a kind of egalitarian manner and is charitable and that kinda stuff, it's still a big, huge, obnoxious company that would squish any competition at the drop of a hat. If you think of anarchist theorists, that's the kind of thing where they would say, you work together within your own block to make things free, and then it spreads out through your neighbourhood, through your town, through your province, through your country. And that way people can achieve freedom and equality too. You gotta work. You gotta think for yourself, and be your own boss.

**Allan:** Any word on a new DOA release?

**Joey:** Probably when I get Band of Rebels done I'll start working on a batch of songs. In 2008, that will be our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, so there's a pretty good probability that we'll have a new album out by then, with Randy, myself, and Baldini playing on it. It'll take some sort of form—probably a DVD, some tours. We haven't really thought about it, but it's pretty inevitable that it'll come up. Holy fuck have we been playing a long time!

