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Arrests after The Clash's Glasgow gig were crazy but it's one of best we played, says Mick Jones

MICK JONES logged it down Glasgow's Renfield Street as police chased him and fans after The Clash's concert at the Apollo.

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By John Dingwall
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ENTERTAINMENT

MICK JONES logged it down Glasgow's Renfield Street as police chased him and fans after The Clash's concert at the Apollo.

But his bandmates Joe Strummer and Paul Simonon were not quite so lucky.

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They were arrested by plain clothes cops as they left the venue and banged up in cells at Stewart Street police station overnight.

The date was July 4, 1976, and punk rock had swept the nation.

I was at the gig that has become part of rock 'n' roll folklore.

Things kicked off because of The Clash's fury at the bouncers who had beaten up fans during the gig.

As hands and knees were bloodied by the Clash fought the law in Scotland, he admits it was still one of the greatest gigs the band ever played.

Mick, 55, said: "The true story is that we came out the back door of the venue after The Apollo show.

"Joe was upset about the way the gig had gone because the bouncers had been beating people up.

"We had been saying, 'They're dancing not fighting' and to leave them alone.

"When Joe came out the back door, he was so angry he smashed a bottle and was immediately jumped on by plain clothes policemen and he was arrested. Paul jumped in to help Joe and they got him, too.

"Joe and Paul got arrested and I ran back to the hotel to alert everybody. I was running through the night to warn the rest of the group and crew that the cops were coming.

"The bouncers were chasing us because they wanted their revenge on the fans. Bobby Gillespie and Alan McGee were at that Apollo gig, too. I didn't meet Bobby but his friends escorted me from the gig to the hotel.

"Joe and Paul were in the cells overnight. The jail was packed with fans who had been arrested.

"They were all singing the song, The Prisoner. Despite everything, a lot of people still remember it as a fantastic night and it's one I'll never forget."

The following day, Strummer was fined £25 and Simonon £50 after being found guilty of breach of the peace.

Now Mick is hoping the statute of limitations has run out on his status as a fugitive from justice. The band he formed after quitting The Clash - Big Audio Dynamite - play Glasgow's ABC on Wednesday.

The B.A.D. reunion tour marks 25 years since their first hit E=MC2 and Medicine Show as Mick reunites with original members, Don Letts, Dan Donovan, Leo Williams and Greg Roberts.

Mick admits he is surprised that he has managed to reassemble the pioneering UK group who introduced a generation to a musical phenomenon known as sampling.

He said: "I never thought we would be doing this in 25 years. Not in a million years even.

"I was last to be asked. They were all up for it. I wanted to finish off what I had been doing before I thought about it but the judge drums had already started beating so it was a coup d'état."

Mick, along with fellow Clash member Simonon, had been recording and touring with Damon Albarn's Gorillaz.

"When the Gorillaz played the Coachella festival in California last year, the guy who put it on said the Gorillaz could come back.

"Then he got in touch and offered Big Audio Dynamite a slot this year.

"So we are going to go over and play there. The band members hadn't been estranged - we had been hanging out and were friends all that time so it wasn't one of those situations where you don't like the other people in the band.

"All of the guys have been making music since we did B.A.D. the first time. It is nice to have all the original guys and see what we are like now."

Mick admits the punk ethic remains but the practicalities of being on the road have changed.

He said: "I wasn't sure about it because I have kids. I have two little ones, six and eight, as well as a grown daughter who is 26 and a step-daughter who is 22.

"When you commit to things like this, where you are going away, it can be hard. I'm a better singer, but I was worried I would forget the lyrics.

"It is a leap of faith but I believe it is going to be really good."

He even had to bake the original master tapes in order to transfer the original samples from the two Irish analogue master tapes into digital files for the upcoming show.

"We wanted to keep the integrity of the original samples," Mick said. "What is on the radio now is very compressed.

"We got hold of the old tapes and had to bake them in the oven because the nitrus oxide falls off the tapes if you play them and you lose the music.

"That is what you have to do because the nitrus oxide has to be stuck back on to the magnetic tapes.

"We took the samples with the original quality and put them on a hard drive."

Meanwhile, he admits there is every possibility The Clash would have reformed if Joe Strummer, who died of a heart attack in December 2002, was still alive.

Explaining the split, Mick said: "The Clash never had a holiday. We were the whole of our career without a day off and we got fed up with each other.

"I got to the point where I wasn't in a very good mood because I wasn't getting my own way.

"I became intolerable. I hold my hands up. If we had had time off we might have felt differently about it.

"I was trying to get away from The Clash with the Big Audio Dynamite sound, but a lot of people say we were what The Clash might have gone on to sound like.

"A few years later, Joe got into the music as well. He worked on the second album.

"It's possible The Clash would have reformed if Joe was still around.

"We were one of the groups who would have been able to do that.

"If we had, we would have made a new record. It wouldn't have been a trip down memory lane like those bands who reform but don't make a new record.

"Sadly, it was never the right time. People remember The Clash fondly because we didn't get back together and we were always aware of that.

"But I wanted to inform The Clash and the others did at times, too. But whenever I wanted to do it, they didn't want to, or vice versa.

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"After The Clash, I was hanging out with Don and Leo in a club and I was standing between them listening to club music.

"We decided there and then to make music that was the up and coming thing.

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"One of our problems was how to put guitar with that kind of music. Sometimes we were successful and sometimes we weren't. Because we weren't magic, it will be here to a lot of people who come along, except for those guys who are our age.

"We want to put in something new of us now. That is very important.

"There are songs that were never released that have natural quote well so they'll be new to people and the way we are playing the songs people know are much better now."

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