

INTERVIEW WITH JOE STRUMMER OF THE CLASH

SITUATION BUTAHE "FANLINE"  
3/80.

- Q: A lot of punks were out there tonight... like it was 76 again!
- J: I know, it's like some sort of 76 revival, I feel like being ill. I'd rather be a hippy... or heavy metal or something.
- Q: Who thought of putting a local band on the support slot of each town on this tour?
- J: Well, that was me, really, yeah, it was a good idea, cos it helps you 'plug in'; no much, but a local scene; you know what I mean? Rather than just poncing through. People slag us off, say: "Well they only do that cos there's a ton of old crap on, and so no-one shows em up."
- Q: What did you think of the support band, the Golinski Brothers?
- J: I only saw the sound check, but I saw all of it, and they done about five numbers. I specially like "I'm Not a Toy", they could be the new Amen Corner.. of the 80's! That's a bit of a faker.
- Q: The biggest local band are the Piranhas...
- J: Space Invaders?
- Q: What do you think of that?
- J: I like it actually...
- Q: What sort of reaction did America have to the band?
- J: Well in L.A. it's like this, IT's like a British audience, but in L.A. amazingly enough.
- Q: Do you continuously get all this hassle, like the gobbing?
- J: Oh the gobbing, Well not much last tour...Bit in Aylesbury...A little bit in Canterbury, but tonight was like , the worst so far...
- Q: I don't suppose it happens much in America, Does it ?
- J: Not much nah...they do the Worm in America; they just throw themselves on the ground and shake! And like it takes four blokes to grab hold of one bloke doing the Worm; and they all smoke E.P.C. or something -Horrible-and they just do 'The Worm' all over the stage ,they dont just come running on and pogo, they all come flooding up, and they're just lying on the stage and wriggling. Thats in L.A. but everywhere else...bit deader than that.
- Q: Is the reggae influence on London Calling derived from your American trips ?
- J: Well it's an untapped market, maybe The Police have got it, a lot of white, middle-class T-shirt brigade in America, they've just sort of gone mad over reggae. You see them in Boston, they're begging to hear more of it really.
- Q: Did that therefore rub off on the L.P.?
- J: We recorded the album before we went there, see? We went in on the first of August, and we banged the whole thing out, and by the fifth of September, we were in Monterey, kickin off the tour, right? And we just laid the whole thing down, and we played the States, while Bill Price fiddled with the mixes, then we came back

- J: listened to all the mixes; and said: "Oh, this bit here," or "That bit there", and most of it was pretty good, and that was it. So it was put down before we went over there.
- Q: Have you got any sort of 'message to the public' on this British tour?
- J: Yeah, like, ah... Do we have to use a sledgehammer? You know? To get the message across...
- Q: Yeah... they want "White Riot" all the time, and it just gets bloody samey...
- J: Yeah, I know! I mean, we're gonna play "White Riot" again, but we ain't gonna play it on this tour. Bollocks to it.
- Q: Do you play "Capitol Radio" on this tour?
- J: Nah, we just bung it out... you get bored with it.. you just get bored with it. When you're in a group, you only wanna play the new stuff... The old ones are the good ones, but we can't keep playing the old shit. Two years ago, we were playing the same venues with the same songs, you're just.. You're dead I think.
- Q: Did you like working with Guy Stevens?
- J: I loved it really, you know: it is a bit of a shock... But, safely now, looking back, I can say "I dug it all"; when at the time wanted to kill im! Well, he ad this fuckin lovely piano, right? An' I was just learnin' to play the piano, a Bausandorfer, like the Gibson of grand pianos, right? No Steinway, it was a Bausandorfer, I never heard of them before, but anyway, there it is; and he, (Guy Stevens) wanted this cab fare, or somethin. He was always short of money! And, he just pulled out this can of beer, he always had beer on him, and he poured it (Joe's voice takes on a note of agony) all over the inside of the belly of this huge piano. I tell you, it cost twenty grand that piano, no kidding.. at least twenty grand. And we were halfway through the session, I was using it everyday on the tracks!
- Q: Really?
- J: Yeah! Like, we called in a piano-tuner, an' he sort of, dried up the beer and tuned it back up. But, you know, I was fuckin crazy I coulda killed the cunt!
- Q: Yeah, but do you like the sound he gets with you in the studio?
- J: I'll tell you the truth; he doesn't have anything to do with the sound at all. This is a misconception that we've hoisted on the whole music business, right? He came in and he inspired us to do the backing tracks, and not just do, ten, like, it was frigid: "Oh dear is that good?" and he inspired us to lay down twenty backing tracks, and then, after that, we had to like, tie him to a chair! And like, that's the truth. But I'll tell you, because I'm hoping that Guy will get some more work and get himself out of this terrible bender.. That he's been on.. like a ten year bender.
- Q: Like a rut?

J: Yeah, he's like a drunk, he's always pissed, his face is a mass of cuts, he's always sort of falling over, and we wanted him to get outa the rut, and that's why we said: "You're gonna be the producer", even though, to be quite honest, Mick Jones, Bill Price and Gerry Green were the three men who probably were most involved with the sound.

Q: Now who was it produced "Clash-City Rockers" single then?

J: Hmm... shit... (Joe's brow furrows with thought) that was actually produced by Mick Jones, but was credited to Mickey Foote; and he was the guy that went in, and speeded it up by nine seconds, after we fucked off somewhere...so when I heard it on John Peel, first time, it sounded like Donald Duck! I was...really! I coulda given up!

Q: Bit of a shock?

J: Yeah! I thought: "That's it", you know, gettin yourself cranked up to hear yourself on the radio, then it comes out like Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck!

Q: When the "Cost of Living" ep. came out, why did you re-record "Capitol Radio" when...

J: Fuck it up, you mean!

Q: Well surely the thing to do, to most people, was to put out the original version and stop all the money-making on the freebie?

J: Yeah, I know; but we were so egotistical, we couldn't help thinking we could do it better, but... even though I admit it now, we could!

Q: Personally, I don't think it was any better...

J: Well I don't now...

Q: Like, that was a part time thing; N.M.E. & C.B.S. and surely C.B.S. had the rights to re-release that original take on another release?

J: Hmmm...tricky question... it might have been owned by I.P.C.... who knows? In those days we just gave things away, you know? We used to think: "Ah fuck, just give it away..."

Q: Well, they sell at big prices now, as you know.

J: Bernie Rhodes has got a box of them, about fifty stashed away, cos he gave me one for a Christmas present, free X-Mas present!!

Q: Just what you needed!

J: Yeah, right!

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