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Joe Strummer 1952-2002

JOE STRUMMER: TRIBUTES

Tributes are coming in for punk pioneer Joe Strummer.

The former Clash frontman died of a suspected heart attack at his home in Somerset.

U2 singer Bono called the Clash "the greatest rock band" and said they "wrote the rule book" for later acts.

Billy Bragg said Strummer was the driving force who helped give punk its "political edge".

Hugely admired

Strummer was middle class and public school-educated but became a hugely admired figure as the musical voice of rebellion.

He and the band notched up a string of 16 top 40 hits including Rock The Casbah, Bankrobber and I Fought The Law.

The band even managed a number one with Should I Stay Or Should I Go? after their demise when it was used in a Levi's ad.

London Calling

The group's third album London Calling was named the greatest album of the Eighties by music bible Rolling Stone - even though it was released in 1979.

Strummer -singer, guitarist and songwriter - was the creative force behind The Clash, along with Mick Jones.

The pair were seen as the Lennon and McCartney of punk, and like the Beatles stars would alternate singing duties.

World music

They quickly matured from writing brief three-chord wonders to filling double and even a triple album with ever more diverse tracks embracing reggae, funk, blues and even early rap. In many ways they were at the forefront of world music.

But the pair had a strained relationship and Strummer - famed at the time for his mohican haircut - ousted him from the line-up in 1983.

The band limped on with new members but called it a day in the mid-Eighties.

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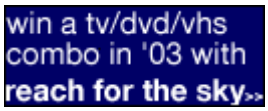

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They always resisted lucrative offers to reform, unlike their contemporaries the Sex Pistols.

Bob Geldof

Bob Geldof - a musical contemporary as frontman for the Boomtown Rats - said he admired their refusal to sell-out.

"I know for a fact they were offered huge amounts of money," he told BBC1's One O'Clock News.

"They just said no, that isn't really what we stood for. That's truly admirable.

"They were very important musically but as a person, he was a very nice man."

His courtesy

Strummer was known for his strong opinions - which filtered into his songs - but he was also known for his courtesy.

Billy Bragg said his political imagination had been fired by Strummer, after seeing The Clash at a famed Rock Against Racism show in London's Victoria Park.

"I have a great admiration for the man. His most recent records are as political and edgy as anything he did with The Clash. His take on multi-cultural Britain in the 21st century is far ahead of anybody else," he told BBC News 24.

"Without Joe, there's no political Clash and without The Clash the whole political edge of punk would have been severely dulled."

Nelson Mandela

Bono was to work with Strummer next month on a Nelson Mandela tribute track for a massive Aids fundraiser show in South Africa.

He said today: "The Clash was the greatest rock band. They wrote the rule book for U2. It's such a shock."

After the demise of The Clash, Strummer went on to a solo career and even acted in a number of films, including a cameo in Martin Scorsese's The King Of Comedy. He and The Clash had become huge stars in the US by the time the film was made in 1983.

He also appeared in films and on soundtracks for his film director friend Alex Cox, including Walker and Straight To Hell.

Mescaleros

Strummer had a brief stint as singer with The Pogues in the early Nineties and by the end of the decade had formed a new band the Mescaleros.

The band finished a tour just a month ago, during which he performed with Jones for the first time in almost two decades.

Strummer -born in Ankara, Turkey and the son of a diplomat - was playing a firefighters' benefit show in west London when he was joined onstage by Jones.

Hall of Fame

The Clash had been tipped to finally play together for a one-off performance next year as they were inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in the US.

A post-mortem examination is due to take place tomorrow to establish the cause of death, which is not thought to be suspicious.

Among the bands for which The Clash were a huge inspiration was Manic Street Preachers.

The Manics' bass player Nicky Wire, speaking on behalf of the south Wales trio, said: "We're shocked and saddened to hear of the sad loss, especially at this time of year.

"Our thoughts are with his family and friends."

Last Updated: 14:54 UK, Monday December 23, 2002

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