

WHO'S IN LOVE WITH JANIE JONES?

It ain't only punks that scare your parents. The Clash meet the woman who was locked up for being a little bit too real

DURING THE hot summer of 1976, a No. 31 bus jolts through Notting Hill Gate. On the top deck is Mick Jones, humming a riff. He is pleased. The riff sounds great and a song shapes up as the bus rumbles on. Then, as Mick's eyes flicker over his fellow passengers, two words jump out of the columns of an evening newspaper and, like typographical guerrillas, invade his thoughts. Janie Jones!

Until that moment Mick had been composing an unspecific rocker about the little guy who gets ground down by dead-end, nine to five office routine. Unexpectedly, and quite spontaneously, Janie Jones sent the song headlong into another dimension.

The Strummer/Jones writing team has a masterful knack of picking images which rub home the Clash's pointed view. Driven along by sounds like a prophesy of the clamour demolition men will make when they start tearing down tower blocks, their songs are direct and eloquent testimonials to 'ordinary life' and street level oppression. Despite critical sour grapes from some quarters, the band remain committed to emotive lines like "Making tea for the B.B.C.", "Being too long on the dole" or "drowning in a sea of T.V." But despite classics like "1977" or "White Man In Hammersmith Palais" they have yet to evoke the drab lot of the ordinary person more vividly than when, in "Janie Jones", an office worker is juxtaposed against a rich man's sex symbol.

HE'S IN LOVE WITH ROCK 'N' ROLL,
WOOH!
HE'S IN LOVE WITH GETTING STONED,
WOOOH!
HE'S IN LOVE WITH JANIE JONES,
WOOH!
HE DON'T LIKE HIS BORING JOB
NO!

AND HE KNOWS WHAT HE OUGHT TO DO
HE KNOWS HE'S GOTTA HAVE FUN WITH YOU
AND HE KNOWS WHEN THE EVENING COMES
WHEN HIS JOB IS DONE
HE'LL BE OVER IN HIS CAR FOR YOU
YOU LUCKY LADY!

IN THE 'IN' TRAY LOTS OF WORK
'CAUSE THE BOSS HAS THE FUN
ALWAYS THINKS HE SHIRKS
BUT HE'S JUST LIKE EVERYONE
HE'S GOT A FORD CORTINA WHICH
JUST WON'T RUN
WITHOUT FUEL
FILL HER UP JACKO!

EVERY INVOICE THAT JUST DONT
QUITE FIT
NO PAYOLA IN HIS ALPHABETICAL
FILE
SEND FOR THE GOVERNMENT MAN!
HE'S GONNA REALLY TELL THE BOSS
GOT TO REALLY TELL THE BOSS
GOT TO REALLY LET HIM KNOW
EXACTLY HOW HE FEELS
IT'S PRETTY BAD!

HE'S IN LOVE WITH ROCK 'N' ROLL,
WOOH!
HE'S IN LOVE WITH GETTING STONED,
WOOOH!
HE'S IN LOVE WITH JANIE JONES,
WOOH!
HE DON'T LIKE HIS BORING JOB NO!
LET THEM KNOW, LET THEM KNOW,
LET THEM KNOW...



Mick wrote "Janie Jones" three years after Janie herself hit the headlines and, like the rest of the band and countless fans who now graffiti her name across their t-shirts, he knew almost nothing about her.

Janie slipped into mythology as The Queen of Vice, the epitome of decadence in high places and suburban titillation via the Old Bailey and the *News Of The World*. Instinctively however, Mick knew she was very different from clichéd sex symbol/objects like Monroe and Bardot. Enough had filtered through between the media lines for him to realise that she had experienced a personal tragedy played out in political terms. Her name evokes precisely those elements of establishment hypocrisy, class discrimination and double standards which are the Clash's raison d'être. It amuses Mick to think that Janie's ex-"friends" and peers of the realm are among those calling for a ban on "Obscene!" punk rock.

In fact, Mick had stumbled across (for want of a better description) another heroine of our times. Janie is in good company. Other names in the Clash pantheon include Anna Mendelson, Leila Kaled and Bernadette Devlin. (No nubile there! The Stranglers, as usual, have a particularly one-sided view of life.)

Even so, Mick didn't write ABOUT Janie. "Her name just got slotted in," he says. "But when it did, the song evolved into something that wasn't really meant in the first place. The

energy of the song got directed to her."

As it happened, when the Clash first stormed through the triumphant "wooh's" of the song in question, Janie Jones herself was on her knees scrubbing floors in H.M Prison, Holloway.

In May 1973 she was sent to jail for seven years for running a call girl system.

"I knew too much about too many people and of course, I took the piss out of the Judge in court all the time..." says Janie, trying to give some rationale to her very severe sentence.

Rarely do prisoners serve sentences in full, youth and laughter but irrepressible good fun too. And resilience. No wonder tired business men and superstars found her such good company.

While her companion/bouncer Denise (an ex-prison warden) makes tea, Janie curls up on the white demask sofa in her genteel

You would have thought four years in Holloway and Style prisons had left some obvious mark on Janie. But no. When she opened the door of her bijou Kensington house, I was surprised. She is thirty-eight, but what few lines there are on her face curl upwards giving the impression not only of youth and laughter but irrepressible good fun too. And resilience. No wonder tired business men and superstars found her such good company.

While her companion/bouncer Denise (anex-prison warden) makes tea, Janie curls up on the white demask sofa in her genteel

sitting room. She talks about her trial as if she had been staring opposite Brian Rix in a Whitehall farce.

"The prosecuting council says to me 'you've had a secretary for seven years and you're married. I put it to you Miss Jones that you're bi-sexual!'"

"I said 'no I'm not. I'm tri-sexual. I'll try anything once'. You see, all the way through I was just cracking jokes.

"The prosecutor said 'all the stars came over to your showbusiness parties and they brought their girlfriends. If they had sex in your bedroom you'd know about it wouldn't you?' And I said 'not really. Unless it was anything unusual'.

"And the Judge boomed 'what do you mean UNUSUAL!'? And I replied 'Ah well, my Lord, if they had sex swinging from the chandelier I'd probably know about it'. And he said 'wouldn't that worry you'. And I said 'No, I wouldn't be worried about the sex, but I'd be worried about the chandelier'. And the whole court burst out laughing. You see, every time I said something like that it was a couple more years down. Judge King Hamilton (who presided over the *Gay News* Trial) is completely puritanical — the you-shouldn't-have-sex-before-marriage type."

Did she expect to be sent to prison? "Not in a million years. Never that. I couldn't believe it when he said seven years. SEVEN YEARS. I thought he was joking. The judge thought I was terribly wicked. He said 'of all the women I've ever tried, you are the most evil. I thought one woman was really evil, but you leave that woman in the shade'. Well, then I started laughing. It was completely sick. I called him a hypocritical bastard and he demanded an apology. But I refused and they had to drag me from the court."

Should prostitution be legalised? "Of course. I don't think what I did was a crime. I knew all girls who wanted to make money so I introduced them to men. And I got seven years for that."

Janie was born in Durham, the daughter of a coalminer. He died fifteen years ago of pneumonia. She liked her parents and still has a steady warm relationship with her mother. "But when I saw all the poverty in the north, I thought 'no, this is not for me. I've got to get out of it'." Her father put up mild resistance and before she finally settled in London she worked for a time as a nurse in a Bedfordshire mental hospital.

Her first real show biz engagement was at the Windmill Theatre, Soho. The girls there were troupers in the good old theatrical sense of the word. They danced through five shows a day, smiling and flashing flesh into a sea of leering male faces. The Windmill had the girls under exclusive contract, but Janie, always enterprising, felt restricted. The Cabaret Club was conveniently close and soon Janie was starring in her own show there as well. Her younger sister joined her and for a while they did a double act. Naturally, rich and titled groupies would chat her up but, since she was already well looked after by "The Colonel" — a sugar daddy who bought her the house in Kensington — Janie passed most of them off to other girls in the show.

In 1966 she recorded a song, written by her sister, called "Witches Brew" and it went to No. 7 in the chart. She married Long John Baldry's friend, song writer Christian Dede and together they went into business promoting his songs, her records and a few groups. Later she found out that her husband was "a crank" (he's now serving ten years in a German jail for attempted murder) but for a while life was very glamorous. If Janie wasn't exactly knocking Shirley Bassey off her cabaret pedestal, her hospitality was much in demand.

Her house had become a meeting place and hot-bed of extra marital activity for the sporting elite of showbusiness.

"It was a kind of private club where they wouldn't be disturbed," explains Janie. "I held parties every two weeks and everybody who was anybody and their friends came. They had a fantastic time. People said they were the greatest parties in London."

JANIE JONES

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The good times lasted for about five years until Janie, probably to dodge various clouds looming on the horizon, and certainly because a Japanese millionaire had taken her under his wing, left London for Hollywood.

She set up as a P.R. on premises just vacated by Ronald Regan (ex-film star and ex-Governor of California) and she'd ferry between the office and her exclusive Hollywood Hills home in a Cadillac. Very nice.

TWO YEARS later the phone rang and an old "titled friend" was on the line in hysterics.

"Janie, your parties are on the front page of the *News Of The World*," he gurgled. "If you don't come back to London on the next plane I'll have a heart attack. It can't come out that I like girls dressed up as school girls with teddy bears. It can't! I'll give you £10,000 to fight the *News Of The World* and to tell them that the prostitutes are lying."

Janie came back to London. But, far from winding down their enquiries, Janie's stand against the *News Of The World* only made them more determined to run their exposé to the limit. You can read about it in Janie's autobiography, suffice to say that central to the whole lurid story were allegations of payola involving BBC disc jockeys.

It was alleged that Janie got DJ's to play records in exchange for feminine (or male) favours. Eventually the Beeb made their own enquiries and the people involved got a clean bill of health. But Janie wasn't off the hook. She was charged with running a call girl racket and the police got four girls, in return for total immunity and anonymity (the first time this ever was allowed), to act as prosecuting witnesses. They were know in

court as Miss A, B, C and D. The titled gentleman was called Mr. Y.

"Well", thought Janie, 'if that lot are going to be protected, then all my friends will be too'. Not one of the stars who came to her parties were mentioned by name but, the list was so long that the Clerk of the Court had to go through the alphabet twice — Mr. F, Mr. G, Mr. AA2, Mr. BB2 etc. . . .

If the trial had its funny side, then Janie makes prison sound like a visit to Butlins.

"I had to make the best of it. I had to see the funny side of it. If you don't have a sense of humour. . . Well, I would have committed suicide over and over again. I was in there so I thought I'd see how the system worked. Then I helped the other prisoners do something about it, the legal way. We wrote hundreds of petitions to the Home Office about this and that. Which is perhaps why they kept me in longer. They saw all the petitions and they thought 'she fights the system all the time and she's not conforming. We'll keep her in till she stops'. But I didn't stop."

"I'd see girls going mental and cracking up. The physical hardship is bad. But prison is really only and completely mental torture."

"On the other hand I think you do have to suffer hardships before you can be a good artist. You've got to go through hard times before you can go on a stage and know that every word you sing means something. And I think that will come out in my singing now."

Janie was released suddenly on May the 2nd. She left Holloway Prison in a battered old mini to escape the hordes of press and TV cameras. On her way up North to her mother's she turned on the car radio — and nearly jumped out of her seat. "Janie Jones" was blaring over the airwaves. Coincidentally, the Clash album had been released the same week.

"They timed it beautifully," Janie laughs. "I'd just got through the prison gates and I heard that. It was incredible."

To-day she has an affectionate admiration for the Clash and she was looking forward to meeting them. We motored up to their rehearsal studio after the interview.

Janie taps her feet as the band polish up the numbers they'll play on tour. For Mick and Joe, however, singing about someone and meeting them in person are two very different levels of intimacy. They are both shy and nervous. It's the wordly Paul Simonon who takes charge.

"Let's go over to the pub," he suggests to everyone's relief.

After a round of drinks the ice is broken and Janie has the band bug-eyed with her racy stories.

"She's great," says Mick later, regretting even more that "Janie Jones" was not the Clash's second single.

When "Remote Control" was released instead, Mick and Joe reacted by writing their latest epic, "Complete Control". Now they are planning to write a song for Janie. "Vice Is Nice" is the working title. Let's hope Janie will be free to sing it when she goes on the road next year.

You see, there is a slight hitch for her future plans. Not content to send her to prison for seven years, the Judge also fined her £16,000 — £12,000 court costs and £4,000 for the prosecution — with another year inside if she can't pay.

Where are all her rich friends now? Commuting between their landed estates and the House of Lords, perhaps? Or flashing from stage spotlights into their limousines and more show biz parties and paid-for fun? A woman's lot is not always a happy one . . .



LISTEN TO THE MAGIC OF

JANIE JONES

'The Gigglewitch'

singing

WITCHES BREW

on HMV POP 1495

The record with the secret ingredient

'GIGGLEBEAT'



You must hear it