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IN LOVE WITH JANIE JONES: THE CLASH AND THE BAD GIRL WHO INSPIRED ONE OF THEIR GREATEST SONGS

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 Topics: Pop Culture  
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 Janie Jones



Janie Jones was a sixties pop celebrity who went from the clubs of swinging London to a jail cell in 1973. Janie had fleeting success as a singer, releasing several singles, including a novelty hit called "Witches Brew," and performing in nightclubs on bills with David Frost and Peter Cook. But she was mostly known for her uninhibited sexuality and "fuck you" attitude toward the staid and hypocritical British establishment. She hung out with actors, politicians and rock stars, including Marc Bolan, Tom Jones and Dusty Springfield. But her biggest claim to fame was when she was arrested and imprisoned for running a prostitution ring. Her high rolling friends were shocked at what was considered a harsh sentence for something as benign as arranging "dates" for some of London's most famous hipsters. This was the sixties after all. It was as if she were being punished for the behavior of an entire generation. Janie's bust made her an instant cause celebre and the fodder for countless tabloid headlines.

When sentencing Janie Jones to seven years in prison in 1973 after she'd faced charges for vice and corruption, Judge King-Hamilton called her one of the most evil women he's ever sentenced. Janie first hit the headlines in August 1964 when she appeared topless at a premier. A friend of hers, film producer Michael Klinger, had his new production "London in The Raw" opening at the Jacey Cinema in Piccadilly. Topless dresses had proven to be something of a sensation in Paris and Klinger asked her if she would turn up at the film's premier in a topless dress. She was known by her real name Marion Mitchell then and was accompanied by one of her sisters, Valerie. The two arrived in a Rolls Royce, stepped out of the car and let their wraps fall to their elbows, putting up a bold front for the photographers. "One must keep abreast of the times," she said.

After Janie was released from prison in 1977, she became a punk icon when The Clash immortalized her in the song "Janie Jones." She developed a close friendship with Joe Strummer, who supposedly idolized her, and Joe wrote a song for her called "House of The Ju-Ju Queen." Along with the rest of The Clash and members of Ian Dury's band, Joe went into the studio and recorded the tune with Janie doing the vocals. Joe paid for the session. Due to contractual reasons, the record was released with the band credited as The Lash.



Punk stars like Joe Strummer had also known what it's like to have been vilified by the press. But Jones has nothing but admiration for the man whom she now claims, gave me back my dignity as an artist. As a display of her continued affection for the ex Clash frontman, in 1992 she asked her good friend (and songwriter of some repute) Tony Waddington to translate her feelings into song. Two days later, he'd written "A Letter To Joe" for me. I just seem to inspire songwriters, she says.

In the video that follows, The Clash perform "Janie Jones" in 1977 and Janie sings "House Of The Ju Ju Queen" and "Letter To Joe." While The Clash's song is a classic, neither of Janie's songs are particularly memorable, though "Letter To Joe" is heartfelt and tender, but as pop culture artifacts they're rock history. Joe Strummer's muse: Janie Jones... who, by the way, is still very much alive.



And here's "Witches Brew"...

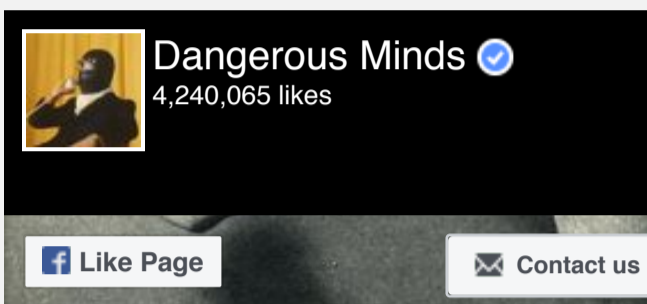


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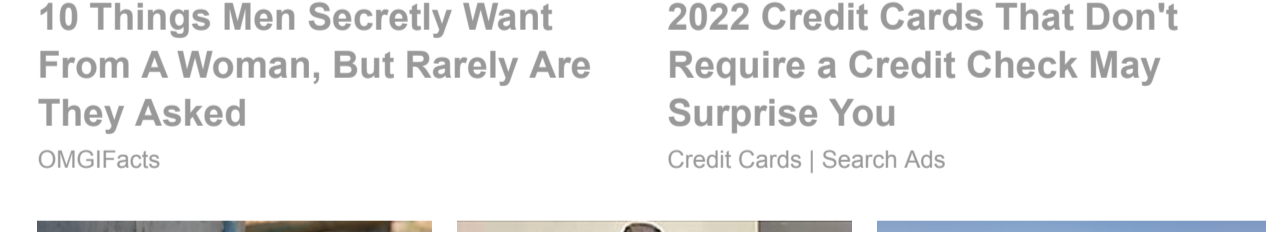
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