


# the **Qwake**

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**JOE STRUMMER**  
CHIEF CONSPIRATOR OF  
**THE CLASH**

 **THE SUBURBS**  
**UNITS; SCOTT RYSER**  
**LORDS OF THE NEW CHURCH**  
**TALKING HEADS**  
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# THE CLASH



**J**oe Strummer stopped by the Quake on his way to the "new improved" Clash world premiere performance in Santa Barbara.

**OZ:** Joe strummer has made it. You have the pained look of a new father.

**JS:** (laugh) Huh. You heard. My very own.

**OZ:** I heard about that.

**JS:** You rotten liar. Yeah.

**OZ:** (laugh) I'm not supposed to say it.

**JS:** It's a daughter and it's two months old...she, sorry.

**OZ:** It's a daughter and it's two months old?

**JS:** It's called jazz...after Charlie Parker.

**OZ:** As in Charlie Parker...yeah, I figure if I die and come back I want to come back as a saxophone, a tenor saxophone, yeah, I figure. We heard you were lost between Los Angeles and San Francisco, I'm glad that you made it, uh —

**JS:** Yeah, it was between London and S.F.

**OZ:** I guess the obvious question is, after we say welcome to the City, is, um, the date is not for a week, what are

you doing in town, a week early?

**JS:** I'm on my way to Santa Barbara because...I got...a five piece Clash to uh, make it's premier concert to the world and we're gonna do it in Santa Barbara which is somewhere —

**OZ:** Between here and Los Angeles. (laugh)

**JS:** Yeah, somewhere down the coast, you know. We've come here to give you the full low-down on everything because...

**OZ:** Yeah, because there are a couple questions, since the last time you were in the States.

**JS:** I should think there are, but let me tell you about London because I just come from London... I gotta tell ya... things 'ave gone dead in London, like from, the neck up to the neck down and things 'ave just gotta change, an' that's why we're come back, to... step out there an' say, 'We don't have to go this way, you know, we wanna change it all around an' move it the other way... everything got so tame, you know, Mummy and Daddy loves the records that are being turned out now, everything so safe and predictable, there's no chance for anyone new to burn up... it's all lawyers and accountants an' businessmen are running the whole deal an' people are just swallowing what they're given an'... it's time for us to come out here and go, 'enough is enough!', I've done, every trip in rock and roll from drugs to ego to... fooling around with art and poetry, I've been through every single

one of them and not one of 'em is worth one ol' used Biro?

**OZ:** I guess the obvious question is, now that you're a mother and father, does that put out the fire —

**JS:** I'm only a father!

**OZ:** I have a quote — (laugh).

**JS:** I have a bit of a mother but... we won't say the rest of it...

**OZ:** I have a quote here from your mother, says, 'the baby has had a marvelous calming effect on Joe Strummer...

**JS:** EH! An... let me talk about the media here, cause you introduced the media into this conversation, (OZ: Exactly.) and what we have in England is the most right-wing fascist media on this... unbelievable, and if they can't get any information they just make it up, on the spot, an' what you read me there was some hack in Fleet Street, which is where all the journalists hole up, and they're all drunk, an' they just write the biggest load of dribble an' they pour it all over everything. We don't get one shred of truth in information in...in... England, that's all about anything whether it's my baby daughter or the crucial nuclear issue, we don't get one shred of truth and I think the same goes for America.

**OZ:** I think you're right. Last time I saw you guys I was at the US Festival and they had a press conference backstage that got real weird, the whole thing got real strange and you guys got the short end of the stick because they were writing it, you were performing it

and all we got was 'The Clash wants a hundred thousand dollars, are a bunch of capitalist pigs, and they, and now, they preach, hey, you know, we don't want to make any money, and we're for the Sandinistas and we preach revolution and they want a hundred thousand dollars, and, (JS: Yeah, but wha--) they're turning around, and, an' uh, uh, (JS: Yeah, but--) giving up they're principles...

JS: Yeah, our job was to go in there in the US Festival and say this is not the heavy party that you're tryin' to make it, you're tryin' t'ave a heavy party in a land where there's thirty-two million people living below the official poverty line, just like we 'ave in Britain, and you cannot 'ave Woodstock in a situation like that, without... Woodstock was um, flower power an' all that and there was people believin' in it an' however stupid the ideals were, people were sincere, but you cannot restage Woodstock in California in this day an' age an' 'ave everybody out of their minds on qualudes and say, you know... while people get beaten to death in the car-park an' say everything is cool. We went in there and said, 'It is not cool, this is a disgrace, we, we needed that money 'cause we're gonna develop talent in Britain, we, we need a scene in Britain, I have no scene, I don't wear makeup, I don't wear a frock, I'm not an ambiguous... I don't make love to frogs, you know what I mean? I cannot fit in in England, there is nowhere for me to be in England, so therefore we are gonna take Wozniak's money an' we're gonna put it in there, an'... anybody sayin' that Van Halen's

cool and David Bowie's cool, I mean, we played to more people than David Bowie an' he got paid three times the price of us, an' nobody slacks him off yet. He's the biggest dribbling merchant going as well as all these other... sixties cohorts who, it's about time they were all slung out, you know how long does it have to go on for? How safe an' predictable is it gonna be? Where's all the passion and energy an' excitement gone, its just, this is one long bore and I am fed up with sitting around in a rehearsal room arguing with Mick Jones and I've got rid of 'im, and we've got two new guys called Vince White and Nick Sheppard and they're both playin' guitars and it's the loudest thing you ever heard an' it goes one hundred miles and hour straight down the middle of the road an' it does not stop.

OZ: That's... what I was gonna try and clear up, that was the thing, the show that I saw you (outdoors) was one of the best shows of last year. Bad politics. I mean, the politics were absolutely... garbage. But the intensity on stage was incredible. So, it doesn't seem that you lost the passion for that. So what? Is Mick Jones deciding to lay back, or what... where was the riff there?

JS: He's just, he just wants to be an artist an' a pop star an' he can shove off in some corner an' get on with it, I 'aven't got any time to waste. Do you realize, um, President Reagan is out there in Central America, gunning down people, in the name of America, and only eight percent of the population of this country have, have any idea of what side, or what is going

on, out there. And meanwhile you're shouting freedom and democracy and gunning down all these people, and you... you're all shouting you're scared of communism an' the fact is that the rich are too rich and the poor are too poor an' the, that's just a complete imbalance, an'... there's no way that capitalism is gonna work either here or in England or in Europe or in West Germany, there's gotta be some humanity 'cause we're all going straight for a nuclear power, either a meltdown or a nuclear war, and that is capitalism, I don't care... if you were having a good time, or you're dancing the twist or shaking the watoosie or whatever you're doing, you are not doing what you don't know what's happening in Central America, yet Reagan is doing that in your name, you gotta vote, you go out and use it, you find out what the issues are, where's all the intelligence, you know... all we got here is, like... um, unnecessary nonsense dribbling out of twelve inch disco mixes, I mean, where is the, you know, what d'ya think's going on in the ghettos of this land?

OZ: Does this mean we're not gonna have a dance mix on your next record?

JS: To hell with dance mixes! I haven't got time for a dance mix! By the time a dance mix 'as gone by I could've laid four heavy songs on you, (OZ: Exactly... exactly what I mean). you brain is gonna be blistering, you know. I'm talking about apply a blowtorch to your memory.

*...next month freedom Strummer style, more about Mick Jones & of course politics.*

