

# Talent booms on the streets; Uncovering the stories behind the buskers on Glasgow's "style mile".

Byline: WORDS PAUL ENGLISH

Rare footage has emerged of Clash frontman Joe Strummer busking in a BBC Alba series to be shown this week.

The grainy film shows the legendary musician playing guitar and singing in an unidentified street. It is believed the footage, shot on a hand-held camera, dates back to the mid 1980s.

It was uncovered by a BBC Alba producer researching the history of busking in new series *Buskers*, which starts this week.

The video had been bought by a music fan from an Edinburgh music store.

BBC Alba bosses are excited by the lucky find, and are hoping the footage pulls in a wider audience on digital platforms as well as BBC iPlayer.

Producer Rebecca MacLennan said: "We don't quite

know where the actual location is, but he's out in the street busking with several others in a way that only Joe Strummer could. It's a very lively performance.

"We're estimating that it was from the latter days of The Clash. The quality isn't great because it was filmed on an amateur video camera.

"Joe was well known for busking right up until the day he died and would do it in pubs and clubs on the street. It was something he'd done since he was in his very early teens.

"As far as we're aware, the footage has never been seen before. We're not actually concerned about the footage - it's more about the fact that this is unseen footage of Joe Strummer of The Clash busking. We're sure Clash fans will enjoy it."

Strummer famously took the band on a busking scramble around the UK in 1985, and visited Glasgow's Dukes Bar on Old Dumbarton Road. They only played the pub because cops arrived at another venue and closed it down.

There's now a plaque on the wall outside the club commemorating the event.

For Rebecca, the series was a chance to discover

something about the talents she - and thousands of others - see every week in Glasgow's city centre without knowing anything about them.

She said: "It basically came about from a shopping trip. I was wondering about the stories behind these buskers.

"We filmed and interviewed some faces who will be familiar to many on Buchanan Street, which we also discovered is one of the most popular and profitable spots in Scotland for buskers."

One of the buskers featured in the series is Sybren Renema, an art student from the Netherlands who "fell into" busking with his saxophone. But he almost ended up with more than a few bob in his hat after one woman took a shine to his music.

"He was approached by a young woman who said she had a saxophone in her flat, but that it was broken, and asked if he could take a look at it," said Rebecca.

"He ended up in this really dingy flat, sorted her saxophone then she asked how she could repay him. The next thing he knew, out came a massage table and some oil. So he took off.

"We also interviewed Jamie Keenan, who busks in Wishaw, and who featured in the Daily Record earlier in

the year when a man and a woman stole his takings because he refused to play The Sash."

The series also features hairy Celtic drummers Clanadonia, whose Braveheart boom drowns out virtually all comers on Glasgow's "style mile", and Matt Johnston. But even the current fad for busking with a microphone is held up to question.

Musicians and singers, including Eddi Reader, Rachel Sermanni, The View, Kassidy, Michelle McManus and Pat Kane - who all profess to having busked at one time or another - ponder whether anyone with a microphone and an amp is busking in the true sense of the word.

"We find that the more 'purist' buskers would go unamplified," said Rebecca.

The series also uncovers Edinburgh regulars, twin sisters Kris and Alix Angelis, who come to the Festival every year from California to hone their singing and playing skills in front of an audience.

The pair are also jobbing actresses, with a string of supporting roles in American film and telly projects such as Bones and Studio 60 on The Sunset Strip. prefer unamplified.

Rebecca said: "They've come every year since 2008.

"They say it's lucrative for them and that they make more than enough to cover their travel, and come home every year with a reasonable profit."

The producers also encounter three brothers who draw a regular audience on Buchanan Street, as well as 14-year-old Murdo Mitchell, who has experienced the downside of playing in the hope that passers-by will drop a gratuity in a bunnet to go on the pavement.

Rebecca said: "Murdo Mitchell is our youngest performer. He has been recording his own material and has made several videos on YouTube.

"He's pushing himself and is hoping for recognition. He really works hard and has done very well.

"But he got his money taken one day. His dad is always with him, though, keeping an eye out for any chancers.

"But that's the only bad experience we have encountered. That and maybe a bit of heckling. But that, of course, comes with the territory."

I was wondering about the stories behind the buskers. We found that some of the 'purists' prefer to go unamplified. on Studio Rebecca MacLennan They've come several videos on

CAPTION(S):

RARE... Unseen footage of Clash frontman busking in the mid 1980s

MUSICIAN... Matt Johnston busks on Buchanan Street

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