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Joe Strummer in Andalucía

Part One - Spanish Bombs

by Chris Chaplow

Joe Strummer (1952-2002) was founder and lead singer of the punk rock band **The Clash**. His life story and the rise and fall of The Clash are well documented. Less known, especially in the UK, is his strong association with Granada and San José (Almería) in Andalucía. Detailed below is this association, presented in chronological order and including as many detailed place names as possible so that Joe Strummer and The Clash fans can follow the trail.

101ers

John (Woody) Mellor's first band was the 101ers, playing mostly in a rockabilly style, formed in May 1974 with a group of friends who lived in a squat at 101 Walterton Road, Maida Vale, London. (The original terrace has since been demolished.) The group played their first gig at The Telegraph, a music pub at 228 Brixton Hill, and established themselves on the London pub rock circuit. The 101ers' recorded output was limited to one single called "Keys to Your Heart".

PALOMA ROMERO

Fellow 101er Richard Dudanski moved into 86 Chippenham Rd just before Christmas 1974 with his new Spanish girlfriend from Málaga, Esperanza Romero. Her sister **Paloma Romero** arrived and they suggested she look for a room at 101. She went around there, Joe fell for her immediately and their first date was at a Chuck Berry concert. She was known in the group as Parmolive (as the English could not remember Paloma).

When it became clear in the summer of 1975 that the two sisters were likely to be deported Richard married Esperanza (they are still together living in Granada) and Joe was to marry Paloma, but there was a problem. Joe was already married, earlier that year to Pamela Moolman, a South African friend of a girl who used to live at 101. She gave him 120 pounds so he could buy a Fender Telecaster guitar. Luckily Richard's brother Pat stepped in to help out.

About this time Richard and Joe and their girlfriends hitch-hiked to Morocco via Madrid, presumably Granada, [Málaga](#) (staying two weeks at the sisters' family home). For Christmas 1975 the four and

the sisters' mother and friend Julio travelled to London. Joe called old friend Paul Buck, who invited them all to his parents' farm.

The 101ers were regulars at the **Nashville Rooms** next to the tube station in West Kensington. The 3 April 1976 was going to be like any other night. They were supported by an unknown band called the **Sex Pistols**. Joe became suddenly interested in the punk scene, declared to Paloma, "I am going to be a punk rocker", and soon left the 101ers and Paloma behind to form **The Clash**, who made their debut on 4 July 1976, supporting the Sex Pistols and Buzzcocks at the **Black Swan** (later nick-named Mucky Duck and later Boardwalk (1982 to 2010, later [Bassbox](#) 2018-? and currently closed.) in Sheffield (corner of Snig Hill and Bank Street). Joe split with Paloma, and in a rage she formed the all-girl punk band **Slits** playing drums.

SPANISH BOMBS

The account of the rise of The Clash to fame has been told frequently so we will not repeat it here. In 1978 Joe started going out with 17-year-old **Gaby Salter**. In the 1979 The Clash song "[Spanish Bombs](#)" Joe referred to [Granada](#) as his "corazón" ("heart") and he paid homage to poet [Federico García Lorca](#).

In 1981 as interest in The Clash was at its height, Joe worked with Richard to produce a 101ers compilation album called "Elgin Avenue Breakdown". It was released in April 1981 as "AND101" on a one-off label called Andalucía Records and distributed by Virgin Records.

The Clash released their last LP, "Combat Rock", on 14 May 1982, a huge international success, selling five million copies. Strummer bought a substantial terrace house in London, in Notting Hill. On 28 May the increasingly wayward founder member Mick Jones made his last appearance with the band. In September 1983, Strummer issued the infamous "**Clash Communiqué**" and fired **Mick Jones**, the decision that led to the band's downfall.

Joe and Gaby's first daughter, **Jazz Domino Holly Mellor**, was born on 18 November 1983.

The new line up of The Clash is often referred to as The Clash Mk II; they played their first concert in January 1984.

GRANADA

Apart from the holiday with Paloma in 1975, Joe made his first trip to Granada in October 1984, wanting to explore the legend of Lorca and find lyrical inspiration. He met up with **Jesús Arias**, an English-speaking journalist and guitarist of local band TNT.

Joe agreed to an interview with **Juan Jesús García** of **Diario de Granada** (published 18/11/1984) which took place in **Restaurante Juanillo** in the [Sacromonte](#). Jesús Arias was on hand to help

translate. Most of the interview was about The Clash but when asked why he was in Granada Joe replied, "For many reasons. Obviously because I am obsessed with Andalucía. Secondly, because the atmosphere in London is depressing, the people are depressed. Thirdly, and most importantly, I have come here to think."

Jesús tells us that they were drinking in a bar in the [Albaicín](#) one afternoon when Joe asked about a song he heard on the jukebox. Jesús told him it was by local band 091, who hung out in the **Silbar** (Calle Pedro Antonio Alarcon, 63).

That evening **Pitos**, one of the 091 band members, thought he recognised the foreigner sitting quietly drinking at the bar. They asked the barman to put on a The Clash song and, judging by the stranger's reaction, in disbelief they knew who it was. After a few days hanging out with 091 Joe disappeared from Granada.

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