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THE INDEPENDENT

Culture clash

24 December 2002

Joe Strummer was, for more than two decades, an outstandingly refreshing figure in British music. His contempt for racism, his frustration at social injustice and his refusal to slavishly pursue financial profit reflect rather badly on the vapid apathy of many of today's musicians. In a week when two untalented, cynically marketed groups from ITV's *Popstars* fester at the top of the music charts, Strummer's real achievement is stark. He wrote intelligent lyrics, the Clash played real instruments and they had something brutally honest and exciting to say. Their records sounded brilliant. Strummer could, of course, have spent the past decade traipsing round the world's stadiums with a reformed Clash making piles of cash. Instead, he chose to perform to fresh audiences in cramped clubs with his new group, the Mescaleros. That's a testament to his devotion to his music. So this Christmas, rock the casbah.

Across the site

Joe Strummer

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