from the other side of the mirror connecting the dots of what matters **Unpublished Joe Strummer Interview Part-3** Search Here's the final part of this unpublished interview with Joe Strummer of The Clash Enjoy! **F**ACEBOOK From the ... 2.4K followers Subscribe ubscribe in a reader EMAIL SUBSCRIPTION Enter your email address to subscribe to this blog and receive notifications of new posts by email. Enter your email address Sign me up! Join 73 other followers What sort of numbers had you worked out for that first gig? EMAIL SUBSCRIPTION I suppose some of those ones that I can't identify, 'Listen' and a few of the Clash Subscribe to From The Other Side of the standards, I suppose we had about ten numbers. Mirror by Email CONNECT Did you wear the paint spattered gear? Email Yeah, we didn't have anything else. It was cheap. All the stuff about Pollock was a bit of a Facebook Fan Page veneer on it, cos what actually happened was Bernie rented that British Rail warehouse in LinkedIN Camden Town and we painted it, and we didn't have any overalls or anything, we didn't have any clothes at all. We got all covered in paint and we saw it was a good cheap way to @jt1anglais put an image together, something to wear onstage, we didn't have the backup of the Sex boutique, Bernie had already broken away from that. Paul knew something about Pollock, SHARE THIS BLOG he'd just come from art school. Share | PAGES So it was a bit like the Who, smashing up the instruments and then calling it autodestruction. About the owner Archived Radio Shows Yeah, after the fact. But it was out of necessity. We had to adapt what stuff we could find Contact in the second hand shops, which was really horrible. We used to take jackets round to the Media Coverage car spray shop in the railway arches round the corner and saying, okay Pete, give us a Portfolio spray. **Published Print Articles** You were wearing that jacket in the first showpiece gig. Archives Then we got into stencils and stuff, I think Bernie got us into that. April 2022 How much was Bernie guiding you and packaging you? September 2019 June 2019 Very much so, I would say. He said to us, write about what's important. He never actually said write about this or that, but he used to watch us rehearse and say this is good, this is February 2019

bad. He was very creative, his input was everything. January 2019 May 2018 Where did his ideas come from? He seems to have been like an old style coffee bar April 2018 intellectual. March 2018 Right, he'd read all the books, knew all the trends. He probably suggested, after the January 2018 Pollock business, look at Jasper Johns, and we ended up stencilling words on. I never knew November 2017 much about that Situationist stuff, to this day, but he probably suggested that we write September 2017 words on our clothing. May 2017 So the next gig you played was the Showcase? March 2017 Yeah, then a few gigs supporting Crazy Cavan at the Roundhouse and ULU. February 2017 November 2016 What was the point of the Showcase? September 2016 Just to get a bit of press, but not many people turned up. There was about seven people July 2016 there. It was quite hard to find. April 2016 March 2016 How many gigs did you do with Keith? January 2016 Six or seven, I'd guess. December 2015 November 2015 The fest was after Keith had left, wasn't it. The tape was the 23rd of September, October 2015 maybe August. September 2015 'White Riot' was written after the bank holiday in August, so we would have been working July 2015 on it in September. Is 'White Riot' on that tape? No, we were still working on it. The reason June 2015 for all the chat was that Keith broke a string, he had to go find a string, put it on and come May 2015 back out, tuned up. I don't know why we didn't just kick into the next number, that's what I'd do now, cos we had three damn guitars. After that gig Bernie was laughing. He said, April 2015 where did you get those old Johnny Rotten scripts from? I used to always have a transistor March 2015 radio with me, cos there was those cool pirate stations, you could flip between them. I was February 2015 carrying a radio at the riot, cos I remember somebody tried to mug it off me. I didn't let January 2015 'em. But we didn't have spare guitars then, so I just switched on the radio and held it up to November 2014 the mike. Dave Goodman was hip enough to put a delay on it, and it happened to be a August 2014 discussion about the bombs in Northern Ireland, and there were some journalists who couldn't believe that it hadn't been set up. It was pure luck. I suppose, instead of having July 2014 something to say. It's just reminded me what that radio was about. We'd decided, as a June 2014 question of purity, that we were never going to say anything in between numbers. It May 2014 probably only lasted a few gigs, but we'd stand there all solemn in between songs, but April 2014 then when someone broke a string March 2014 Was that idea of being pure very important? February 2014 January 2014 Yeah, we'd look at everything and think, is this retro? There's a picture there of the Chuck November 2013 Berry is Dead shirt that I painted. If it was old, it was out. October 2013 Is that why quite a lot of these songs got the boot? August 2013 Yeah, we thought they weren't good enough. I'd forgotten they existed. July 2013 June 2013 Why did 'I'm So Bored With You' change to 'I'm So Bored With The USA'? May 2013 I'd gone to the squat in Shepherd's Bush, and Mick had this riff, and I thought he'd said I'm April 2013 So Bored With The USA, I jumped up, said that's great. Let's write some lyrics. He said, its March 2013 not that, its I'm So Bored With You. But he agreed that USA was much better. It was more February 2013 interesting. When Mick wrote it, it was a love song. But I thought it was more interesting, January 2013 cos Kojak and all that stuff was big at the time. Columbo. That lyric's not bad, even now, December 2012 although its cave man primitive, it says a lot of truth, about the dictators, yankee dollar talk to the dictators of the world. November 2012 October 2012 Ted remembers you going down to Rock On and looking for 'Junco Partner'. September 2012 By James Wayne, that's the person I learned it off. Ted's first stall was in the back of that August 2012 one now. There's an interesting guy in there now that I go in and get ancient obscure July 2012 records off, a guy called Mark the Ted. It's a really great store. June 2012 May 2012 So what was the Screen on the Green gig like? April 2012 The Pistols were brilliant that night. We built the stage, and The Outlaw Josey Wales was March 2012 playing that day, and two of us were elected to sit there and watch the gear, cos our gear February 2012 and the Pistols' gear was underneath the stage while the film was showing during the day. I January 2012 remember sitting there watching The Outlaw Josey Wales about two and a half times December 2011 through, and about the third time through, three black blokes shot underneath the stage, trying to grab some of the gear, and we leapt up and grabbed them, and hustled them out November 2011 the back door, and they never got anything. We weren't very good that night, cos we were October 2011 exhausted from building that stage, we were up very early, unloading the scaffolding and September 2011 building the stage. August 2011 July 2011 Were they playing funny games with the sound mixers as well? June 2011 I'm not sure about that. May 2011 Somebody said they were. April 2011 March 2011 I remember how mean we were to the Buzzcocks, cos we were the London crews, and we

my temper with him when he rang up and we were doing 'White Riot', he said what you working on, the 'White Riot' tune? Well, there's no need for me to come up then, is there? I said make that never, man. Bernie was quite shocked when he arrived at rehearsals and I'd sacked him. Keith was always a favourite of his, when he'd come to the Golden Lion that night, he'd come with Keith. I can see now that he was worried about losing control, cos we'd done something without him. You had a hole to fill in the sound, didn't you? Mick and Keith had a competition about who was going to be the lead guitar player, so Mick was quite pleased that Keith was sacked. Did he write anything? The chorus of 'What's My Name'. It must have been just before I saw you at Fulham Town Hall. There could only have been about two hundred people at that stage, less. That was the hard core, those in the know in the West London area. I'd been a real big Kinks and Small Faces fan, and I'd come out and I'd been waiting for it. I'd been out of London for six months and I couldn't find any pub rock concerts, I didn't go to the 100 Club, the Pistols weren't playing much at that point, and me and the girl who became Poly Styrene both took speed and went along to this concert, and that was it. At that concert, somebody asked Bernie if he was Gene Vincent! What did it feel like doing those concerts. The Pistols weren't playing and you were coming up real fast, weren't you? No, I don't remember noticing, we were just doing what came naturally, we had a group, we had a set, a will to perform. From that moment that the Pistols perceived us as a

looked at them, sitting in a row, thinking, you measly berks from the north, you know? There was no solidarity. Now I really like those Buzzcocks records. It shows how mean we

were, we didn't think of them as part of our scene. But they were very good that night, the

Buzzcocks. That was the night that Charles Shaar Murray wrote that we were the type of

garage band that should be speedily returned to the garage, preferably with a motor left

I read his things and I think, look, mate, its not my fault your crummy rhythm and blues

want to be a writer, I could never be a writer. Nick had that group, the Subterraneans.

band didn't make it. He's beating us with that stick. Nick Kent had that same thing. I don't

If he hadn't been taking so much drugs he might have made it. Nick makes me crack up.

Cos we were taking them as well, we were all on speed. Not that we could afford it that

much, but our drug intake was financially limited. Our idea of a good time was scoring a

lump of dope the size of four match heads. Now and then we'd get some blues, or a little

bit of sulphate, but Keith was much more pro on the speed, sometimes I'd see him with a

plastic bag of resiny balls, speed in a very pure form. Keith began to lose interest and I lost

running. I remember we were slightly pissed off by that.

He had to eat humble pie after that.

Tell me about the Notting Hill Riot. For some reason, we weren't that aware of the carnival, but we knew it was on, so we went down to check it out. It was a lovely day. Me and Bernie and Paul, we were under the Westway on Portobello Road, and we were standing there, grooving to the reggae, and I can still see that coke can. About twenty coppers came through in a line, and I saw this coke can go over and hit one of them on the head. Immediately, twenty more were in the air, and then the crowd parted to get away from the targets, and there was this whole line of cops crouching, swivelling this way and that, to see who they should attack, and the women began to scream, me and Bernie and Paul were thrown back against the wire netting as the crowd surged back. I thought we were all going to fall down into this bay

underneath the Westway, but the wire held, and Bernie's glasses flew off. I lost Paul and Bernie for a minute, and chaos was breaking out all over the Grove, and Ladbroke Grove

was lined with rebels, and cop cars were speeding through, these Rover 2000s, and they

threat, out the window went punk solidarity. We still had solidarity on the Anarchy tour,

but the Damned were kicked off the tour pretty sharpish. I can't remember why.

Thought crime! We had to audition to see if our stuff was decent. Imagine!

They decided to play for the councillors.

were being pelted with rocks and cobble stones and cans as they came through, it was like a bowling alley, and I thought, fucking hell, and I ducked in the Elgin and said, gimme a couple of drinks here! And I downed one and took the second drink outside, and standing there, and I saw Paul with one of those plastic cones, and a police motorcycle came bombing down the road and Paul slung this plastic cone across the road and hit the front wheel of the motorbike and, but he managed to keep on the bike and carried on. Then it was like Zulu. The coppers started to come down from the north end of Ladbroke Grove in a line, and we started to chuck everything we could at them. Then the fight boxed into these six streets here, and we were boxed in with the rest of them. Me and Paul were standing on Lancaster Road, and I hadn't really noticed that all the white faces had gone. Suddenly this young posse came up and one said Yo man, what you got in that pocket there, and I had this transistor radio, but I had this brick in the other pocket, and I said don't say that shit to me, if you're not ready to fight what the fuck you doing here? And the posse like shrank back, cos I was shouting really loud, and eventually an old guy came up and said, leave these guys alone. Then darkness fell and it got really ugly. We trudged off back to the squat, and Sid was there and we said, Sid, where've you been, there's been a most amazing riot, and Sid said, come on then, lets go and look again, and we went back to have a look. By that time there was a crowd of like five hundred young black guys around the Metro club, and we were walking up Tavistock Road, and this black woman leaned out of her window and shouted at us, don't go up there boys, they're going to kill you. We said bollocks, but another black woman came out of a basement somewhere and grabbed us,

and we could see there was these five hundred youth, the hard core of the hard core, they weren't fighting, they were just standing, cos the police were regrouping. That was when I realised I had to write a song called 'White Riot'. Cos I realised it wasn't our fight. It was the one day of the year when the blacks were going to get their own back against the really atrocious way the police behaved. I went up on the Sunday and there was this spontaneous chant going on, Coming, Coming, Coming Down. It was really heavy. There were police everywhere. I thought, this isn't their party, what are they here for? That must have been one of the first recent urban riots. I've never tried to set light to a car before, but there was a car flipped up on its side down on Ladbroke Grove, and there was a burning car already a couple of blocks away and I was admiring it, thinking, what a lovely plume of smoke that car is making, and I had a box of Swan Vestas on me, so I approached this car, and two or three young black blokes came up, and we were trying to set this car alight. We never did get it alight. Who took the pictures there? Rocco McAuley. He's now a porn photographer, he lived in the squat at Orsett terrace. I was living with Palmolive, we split up before punk really happened, but we had a Spanish connection and Rocco somehow came in there.

Yeah they were Bernie's discovery. Vic was always very close to Bernie's heart, much more so than the Clash ever were. They were brilliant. Bernie used to tell me he'd get demo tapes and in the middle of a song he'd stop, and with the tape still running, he'd light a cigarette, smoke the whole thing and then carry on from where he left off. Its a Vic thing. Who did the posters for the ICA gigs?

No, it was completely off my turf, I had no idea what was going on down there. I was in the

Did you ever go down to the Sex shop?

By the autumn you had Subway Sect in there as well.

hippy squat end of the scene.

Bernie. We didn't have any books.

The ICA was the famous Shane and Jane incident. Yeah. I've got a good Rocco story there. He's Spanish, he comes to England, he married a woman to stay in the country, and he's just learning English, and learning that he wanted to be a photographer. The punk spirit inhabited him, and we were playing either the ICA or the RCA, I can't remember which, and he was taking photographs of us, and on the second

number, he was just about to take a picture and this hippy jumped onstage and started

idiot-dancing, and he put down his camera and went, will somebody get this hippy off the

stage? What is this? I'm not taking a picture till this hippy gets off the stage! The next day he found out it was Patti Smith, and he could have sold those pictures to the music press. To me, he was the purest man in the house, cos he wasn't going wow, its Patti Smith. Terrific. He didn't even know. He was seeing it true and clear: there was a hippy on the stage! What happened at the RCA? There was a big fight, me and Sid waded in. After those bottles started coming over, we'd finished our set, we didn't stop, but I knew as soon as we finished I knew I was going to go

I think so. It was drunken, oldish students. But they were throwing glass bottles, they could

have murdered somebody. I put down my guitar at the end of the last number, went

straight off the side of the stage and Sid had been really supporting us, and I stormed off the stage, through the swing doors into the auditorium, Sid was with me, and I saw this student with a beard that I'd recognised from the stage, and hit him so fucking hard, he went down, poleaxed. It was all dark, and somebody was going hey - and I turned round and smashed this other guy in the face, and Sid was getting stuck in, and I looked round for the rest of the band, and they weren't there, and me and Sid went back after we'd sorted

caught in the crowd, couldn't quite get through the glass doors!

over there and get stuck in, I could see roughly where it was coming from.

Was that the first time that had happened?

second or third punk gig, and there was this fight going on in the middle of the floor and I thought, Mmm this is something new. I think it was Edwin Pouncey playing the discs that night, Savage Pencil. How did you get the name The Clash? For about a weekend we were called the Psychotic Negatives, then we were the Weak

Heart Drops, after a lyric in a Big Youth record, then Paul thought of the name The Clash.

out these bozos, who were chicken and ran away, and I said where were you? Oh, we got

I remember the disco was playing 'I Wanna Be Your Dog', it was perfect. It was only my

I think May 2nd '79 was when the Cost of Living EP came out, and I'd designed the cover as a DAZ packet, and on the back, remember they used to have this woman holding up a sheet, with a basket of washing going, how wonderful and white my washing is! I said to Mick, I want to make that woman Margaret Thatcher, and I want a swastika in off white, imperceptibly there, and he went, I'm not having politicians on rock'n'roll records! So I dropped that idea, but I wish we'd done it, in view of what's happening now. Anyway, who cares about that. That's where I'm ending the book, with Thatcher winning the election, and the court It was the end of an era, and we couldn't survive that era either. We went on and had some success in America for a couple of years, but all the fun had gone out of it, really.

Are you kidding? We went down to sign with Polydor, and the cab took us to Soho Square

That was when the balloon went up, cos they'd done that Grundy thing, and the Pistols were the hottest news in the country, the Sun and all those people were following them

the Pistols definitely weren't allowed out, and they didn't want any of the musicians

around, we were confined to the hotel rooms, gigs being cancelled everywhere, and places the coach would pull up there was a choir of religious people singing, like from the deep south or something. I remember going down to the bar and brining up a tray of pints, cos

pumped by any of those gutter people. We felt pretty small just then, cos the Pistols were

The best time we had was in Bristol, we checked into this bed and breakfast, and I was so

instead, we were completely in the dark. We didn't know anything. Mick was the one who was sharpest about business, but we let Bernie handle everything. We were really the people we were supposed to be. What did we know about record companies and contracts? What about the Anarchy tour? What can you remember about that?

front page news and we were just nothing. We were bottom of the bill.

Can you remember much about the CBS negotiations?

tired I fell asleep immediately, it was like four or five to a room. Meanwhile Bernie and Malcolm decided that this wasn't really happening, and they walked over to the Holiday Inn, and checked everybody in there, and everybody moved, but I was forgotten about, fast asleep in this bed and breakfast, till eventually Debbi came and woke me up and brought me over. Good times were had there, they broke into the swimming pool at night, rock'n'roll madness. That was when Mickey Foot got the scar on his forehead, he got

What was the problem you were having with your drummer at that stage, Terry?

Terry wanted to join a pop group and get a Lamborghini, your average suburban kid's

dream, right? And we used to have discussions, we were quite rigorous, and when he said this about the Lamborghini, it was heresy! We were laughing and jeering at him, and he

completely drunk and dived into the shallow end of the pool and split his head open on the tiles. He was staggering around laughing his head off, blood gushing everywhere. Madness.

took it very seriously, and one day he just didn't show up for rehearsals. He phoned up and said he quit. But he was cool enough to come and do the album with us, cos we'd rehearsed the numbers with him. You had problems finding another one, didn't you? Yeah, all the drummers that later became known in London, we rehearsed. Who did you do the Roxy Club on New Years day '77 with? A bloke called Rob Harper, who said he was nineteen but was actually 35. Eventually he became the mentor of the New Hearts, and they dumped him, stabbed him in the back a

It was special in that the club was opening, and we all felt good about that. But Johnny

experience, that painting dead men's clothes wasn't really it had gone as far as it could.

That was the night the Buzzcocks wore their Mondrian shirts, really cool. I bet they painted

Thunders had just sold me his Gretsch White Falcon, because they were desperate to score.

And you had a shirt with 1977 on it, that's right when you did Harlesden, that was the first time you changed out of the paint spatter stuff. Yeah, that was when Bernie found Alex Michon, and Paul and Bernie began to design clothes for us. We all threw our bit in. First it was just a zipper here, and it grew into pockets and D-rings and stuff I think Bernie was probably repeating his Sex shop

good one. But he played a tour with us, the Anarchy tour, I think.

Did you feel that gig was in any way special?

We moved one step away again.

The Pistols didn't write much either after a while.

bastard who wasn't a communist, they'd support, you know

what's affecting you, what's important.

you?

that themselves.

When did you do the album, in March? You seemed to move away from personal songs to songs more about issues. Is that fair? We'd got so involved in the lifestyle of the group that we no longer had lives to write about. I think Bob Dylan feels that today, being singer songwriters, he hasn't really got a life to write about, its too far removed from people's ordinary experience.

After they sacked Matlock, that was the end, because Matlock was the tunesmith. That shows how crazy they were, just because he liked the Beatles, they sacked him. With the album, we you trying to write songs about specific things, rather than just write about yourselves? 'Bored With The USA' goes on about heroin coming back in body bags, soldiers become

addicted, the way American foreign policy operated imperialistically on any right wing

Did that come from discussions within the group? Yeah, after these discussions, Bernie would say, an issue, an issue, we'll all fall down. But he never told you what to write?

To me, a really important thing was from seeing you, I had a particular image of the Clash, then you had that really good piece in the NME, with Tony Parsons. The Circle Line interview

That seemed to change it into something that was a lot more sociological, more to do

No, he just said, write about what's important, don't write about love, really. Write about

No, when you're part of it, you're so close to it its hard to get an overview. Sometimes I wished I could have a weekend off, not that there was anywhere to escape to, but when you're young and stupid, you don't think about anything. You just go straight ahead. © Jon Savage, 1988

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