

ALEX COX

CAN YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU VERY FIRST MET JOE?

It was a party for Sid And Nancy. Sid And Nancy was shot in two different sets of locations, and so I had two different wrap parties.

There was one in London, and I think somebody must have invited him to it. So I seized upon him: 'Great: you can do some music for the film.' There was never a Strummer character in the script. One of the few important people from punk who wasn't in it. there was a Mick Jones character.

But he became very attached to the project. I must have shown him a rough cut in London. And then he just became part of the post-production music department. And although he was only credited with about 2 songs, he did about eight, under different pseudonyms: there's a reggae song, a couple of country and western songs, and various other things, all of which were done by him. One is a country and western song, which is sung by Pearl Harbour: I think it's when Sid Vicious is cutting himself on his chest, with all the girls watching, in Texas, I'm told. I don't remember what it's called.

THERE WAS A SONG DUMDUM CLUB.

That's the B-side of Love Kills. Which were the two things he was actually credited for. But on the credit rolls there's a whole bunch of other songs. There's about 6 other songs with fake composers. Because he was only allowed by the record company to do two songs. I'VE GOT PRAY FOR RAIN AND DAN WALL.

No, they're real. there was a rumour for a while that Pray For Rain was Joe's pseudonym, and Dan Wall was his pseudonym, but it's not true. Dan is the brother of Felipe and Abby Wall, who was the co-author of Sid And Nancy. With me. And Dan is this composer who with the band called Pray For Rain does film soundtracks. But there was this rumour that he was Joe's pseudonym.

HOW DID HE SEEM AT THAT STAGE?

He was always a man of mystery, wasn't he? He would always appear and disappear like a character in a spaghetti western. He'd be there and he'd be gone.

And I always thought that because this guy has been in the Clash, and has gone through experiences I couldn't possibly imagine...to have been one of the founders of the Clash, and gone through that entire trajectory and then just broken up the band a year previously...and yet to be not really weird: a lot of rock'n'roll people - especially celebrities, really feel as though they are encased in a weird glass bubble of celebrity and protectiveness. He didn't feel like that at all: he seemed

like a really vulnerable person, a tough person, but a person who wasn't immune to what was going on around him. He was very (pauses, as he searches for the word), empathetic. And self-protecting, at the same time.

TOTALLY SELF-PROTECTIVE AND YET TOTALLY OPEN AT THE SAME TIME.

I don't think I had such a revelatory experience with him. I always felt really that he was the man of mystery: he was there, and he was terribly involved...if he was going to do something, he really did put extraordinary talent and effort into it, and never did a second-rate job or a lazy job. He would take on jobs, and just give far more than you thought you had anticipated.

But what he was like as a person, or what his real feelings were, I never felt close enough to him as a person to know.

I thought he was kind of like a boxer who's been smashed back onto the ropes. He was trying to stake out a new part of the arena, a new corner. And I think that the movie thing...Movies were great for him in that way, because you sign on with it, and if you're lucky you put in a period of time, you go to some very exotic locations, there's a lot of camaraderie, for a younger, more free person, there are opportunities for amour...all that stuff. And I think he wanted to sign on for that, he wanted to sign on for a trip, for somebody else's trip, as

opposed to having to create another version of himself that was even more sensational.

I THINK TO GET AWAY FROM THE JOB OF BEING JOE STRUMMER WAS VERY NECESSARY FOR HIM AT THAT POINT. AND ALTHOUGH IT SEEMED TO TAKE A STRANGE COURSE, IT ALL SEEMED TO MAKE SENSE IN THE END.

It was like the beard... Like the identity switches he would go through on those films, and he really did become like a Gabby Hayes character in a John Ford movie on Walker. Subsumed in that. And Dick Rude too: Rude was like his henchman, always hanging out with him, just like in the film, and then when it was over and we shot the last day of his character, and he didn't have to do it any more, he shaved off his beard and had big facial hair, with big sideburns and a handlebar moustache, and he looked like one of those extras out of Gunsmoke or Wagon Train. Yeah, man: if only there was a market for Westerns, but he knew within a day that there wasn't a market for Westerns. And then he was back in Strummer mode.

I REMEMBER IN NICARAGUA, HE WAS DEFINITELY IN CHARACTER..

Joe had to walk past the barebreasted women doing their laundry, and it was Strummer who put in the line, 'I think some of us should go in the water and get them.' It was his idea. Because he was very in

character. You see very little of him in Walker, but he was even more so in Straight To Hell. He was very comfortable to be in Nicaragua: he was very happy to be there. We were all quite happy to be there. Not just because of the politics of it, but because it's a nice place.

WHY DID YOU GIVE HIM SUCH A SMALL PART?

Everybody had a small part. Because there were so many actors, it took them a long time to get ready. Some of them lived in Managua, and we were shooting in Granada. At one point we tried to shoot extra scenes involving the supporting characters, so somewhere in the outtakes of Walker there's all these scenes, half a dozen scenes with Joe and Dick Rude, pushing their cart, and buying provisions, and engaging in banter with the locals, pissing off the Germans - that kind of thing. All of it was cut out, because the film was called Walker, and it was all about Ed Harris's character. And everybody in the film, bar Ed Harris, was disappointed with it, when they saw it, because they'd all had their parts cut away. Every scene is about Ed, or the character that he plays. And Joe was totally cool with that, because he liked being a henchman, he liked being part of that gang. And he had his moments, like when he runs after the women, like when goes AR-MEE-AR-MEE, and that's when they meet and control the country. And also he was happy that he was going to do the soundtrack.

HAD YOU DECIDED BEFORE HE WAS GOING TO DO THE

## SOUNDTRACK?

He was going to do some music for it. Originally he had the idea that he'd do some of the music and he'd have Nicaraguan musicians do some of the music, with this guy who was one of the poets of the revolution. So that was the original plan. But he was clever: Joe manipulated that situation in a very nice way. He didn't like the work of the editor, David Martin. I thought David Martin was a very good editor. But he thought a failing of *Straight To Hell* was that it hadn't been very well or sympathetically edited. Although, again, I thought it was quite good, Joe didn't think the editing was really up to it. So he started this movement for the last two or three weeks of shooting that we should stay in Nicaragua and edit the film there. That we shouldn't just go back to London right away, but we should stay in Nicaragua, out of solidarity, and because it was so nice, and what did we want to go back for anyway? So I felt very sympathetic to that idea: that sounded really good.

David, who lived in London, had other things to attend to. It wouldn't be so easy for him to stay out in Nicaragua. And his assistant also didn't want to stay in Nicaragua. So it came down to this point where the editorial department said, 'Well, you guys can stay if you want, but we're going back to London. That's what our deal was.' So they did. And that's how I ended up editing part of the film. Although

some of the original cuts David did are still there, so it's a mixture of all our work. But Joe made that happen.

At the same time as this was happening, Joe was also saying, 'Yeah, I'll rehearse with the Nicaraguan musicians to play with them on the soundtrack.' But although he did work with some local musicians, he mainly sat there composing music himself. I said to him at one point, 'What if we go to Managua,' because we were still in Granada. And he had his little house in the countryside, which was really like down a leafy lane - it could almost have been in England, a little bungalow. So he was still in there, writing and playing music. And I said to him one day, 'Why don't we go to...because we would meet up at the end of the day in the editing room or in town...It was a house off the main road, going in from Managua, first of all you'd turn off left about two miles out of town to get to Joe's, and ours was also on the left, just as the buildings began, just after a military camp. We'd hook up, and one day I said 'Why don't we go to Managua tomorrow, so you can talk to the Nicaraguan guy about doing the soundtrack. And Joe said, 'I've been thinking about that. Because the music for Sid And Nancy and Straight To Hell is all a bit of a mishmash, because you've got so many bands. I think that it would be better if the music for Walker is all written by one person.' Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!

That was also his actual considered opinion as well. And also

he'd kind of found his way, because having had the experience of Cut The Crap. What he did on Cut The Crap was that he mixed his vocals very well. And I think what he would do if he lacked confidence was to mix his vocals very low, he'd keep his vocals down. So it had come to the point that he wasn't just going to do a couple of songs on a movie soundtrack, or do uncredited stuff, he was actually going to do an entire soundtrack album. And he mixed his vocals on the two songs he sings there way up, and you can hear everything. He's full of confidence. Really into it. Very enthusiastic.

And so we never went back to London. We stayed in Nicaragua for a few months. He composed most of the score there. And then we went back to San Francisco and recorded the music there and did the mix.

#### YOU DID THE VIDEO FOR LOVE KILLS IN ALMERIA

We shot on an old fort set which has now fallen down, which was the location of a film called El Condor. We shot in the other Western town there, which is called Decarados. The other one is called Texas Hooleywod: the guy who had the other Western town couldn't spell Hollywood, so there are a variety of different spellings. And it's called Texas Decarados Hooleywod. The one which they call Decarados is the one where we shot most of that video. But we shot the part where this guy gets put in prison in this fort.

I'VE NEVER SEEN THE LOVE KILLS VIDEO.

No-one has seen this video. I had my retrospective at Bradford in the Museum of Moving Image, and they couldn't find a copy of it. I mean, this whole thing about Joe: Joe paid no attention to his back catalogue at all. Because I did pursue him about reissuing Walker, because I had a feeling he might have kept some of the rights for that. And also I tried to dig up a copy of the promo, but to no avail. When it's done, it's done...

YEAH, THAT WAS EXACTLY JOE'S WAY:

ON TO ABERDEEN.

SO GARY OLDMAN IS IN THE VIDEO?

Joe had this idea that the song was about what would have happened if Sid Vicious had escaped. He hadn't stuck around to get arrested, but took off on a long-distance bus to Mexico. And we shot this in Almeria. Because Joe had been going down to San Jose for his summer holidays. He'd actually found this beautiful little beach town called San Jose, in the province of Almeria. And I knew Almeria because of the western sets: I'd hung out in the tavernas.

So he says, 'We've got to shoot the promo in Almeria. Pretend it's Mexico, and we'll do it as Sid Vicious goes down on the Mexican bus, gets off the bus, goes to a saloon, meets a young girl. But this young girl's boyfriend is the local cop, so he gets in trouble with the

cops and gets thrown in jail. And Joe plays the cop. So Gary Oldman is down there playing Sid Vicious in a bar, eyeing up this girl, and in come Dick Rude and Joe in their Mexican policemen's outfits: they get in a fight; Sid headbutts Dick Rude; Joe arrests Sid, and marches him to jail. And then that night the Mexican girl comes to see Sid, and then in the morning, invigorated by this girl, he dresses up as Sid Vicious, he puts on all his rock'n'roll gear, his boots, his belt. And then he just kicks the door of his cell down, liberates all the prisoners, and they all run off into the desert. And that was Joe's script. So that's what we shot. It's really a good promo. I don't know what became of it. It was really messed up in the States, because they took the story version of the promo and they interspersed it with clips from the film Sid And Nancy. So it doesn't make any sense at all.

It was produced by Eric Felner. And it had the same make-up artists who did Gary Oldman on the film: Peter Frampton, no relation, came to Almeria with Gary to do his hair and his makeup like Sid. So it's a very bizarre continuation of the Sid And Nancy film.

WHAT WAS THE BUDGET? CAN YOU REMEMBER?

I don't remember. We got paid to do it. It was about whatever was average for a promo in about 1986.

He started going down there of his own accord. What he had done was to go to Granada, and he'd produced a band in Granada.

And I remember seeing the album and hearing that he was the producer of it.

So I imagine that while he was down there, he and Gaby had gone down to the coast, and found this town San Jose - somebody turned them on to it. At that time it was a very small fishing-town: white buildings, one telephone in a bar on the edge of town. It only had a population of some 500 people. Now it's about 7,000, but it's still a very small town. They kept going there for a long time.

It's beautiful. Absolutely beautiful. I must have heard the record he produced played at his house, but I don't remember it very well.

SID AND NANCY COMES OUT AND YOU GO TO CANNES.

Yes, that's right. We had the official screening of Sid And Nancy and...there were some guys from a pop group there - Duran Duran or somebody - and the lights go down and the film starts. Jack Lang is there, the minister of Culture. And then when Gary Oldman first appears one of these pop guys calls out, 'Johnny Thunders!' And Strummer just stands up, 'Shut the fuck up!' That was very funny.

DID HE ENJOY CANNES?

I don't know. I think that was the only time I was there as a director.

And it just seemed like mindless bullshit to me. I imagine he thought it was bullshit too.

We went back years later, because there was a gala for two

British producers. I think they tried to get the A-team there - Daniel Day-Lewis and Gary Oldman - and they couldn't get them to go. So then, late in the day, they invited me and Joe to go, to make their homage to these producers - Eric Felner and Tim Bevan. This was about four years ago.

There was one of those dos at the Palais or wherever. And I thought, I'm just going to walk over. But no: 'Hey, you've got to wait for the car.' So he goes in one limousine, and I go in another. We all get out. There's the red carpet. Television at the top. And he turned to me and said, 'When we get to the top of those stairs, and they see who we are, they're all going to turn their backs.' And I went, 'No-o-o-o-o-o, Joe, some of them will remember: you'll see.' We walk up there like kings. We go up the steps. They all turn their backs! Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha. Because who the fuck cares? They wanted Nicole Kidman. But he said what would happen. He was so familiar with the mechanics of that: celebrity, and what applies to who.

DID YOU ALL STAY THERE AT THAT POINT?

We stayed the night. And then we went back the next day. Because Joe and I were going to have gone and introduced the screening of Sid And Nancy. And they said, 'Oh, don't do that: because you'll all have to go back for it.' Will you introduce it before the other film, which was My Left Foot. And I said, "But the Sid and Nancy audience isn't here

yet: they'll come later.' But they go, 'No, we'll introduce your film now anyway.' By which time Joe's already gone. So I did this very lame introduction to Sid And Nancy to the audience for My Left Foot. Because they just wanted to go and move on to the ceremony and dinner. And the organisers were very annoyed because they hadn't produced any of the A-team. It was just a dismal occasion.

The nicest thing was that Joe was there, and that his and Lucinda's reactions seemed identical. But then you just get through it: that's what drink was invented for.

SO THERE'S THE FAMOUS STORY OF THE FIRST TIME YOU WERE THERE, AND WAKING UP WITH HANGOVERS...WHERE WAS THE HOTEL?

Oh yes: that's definitely true. It was a hotel that wasn't on the very front, a modern hotel, with a swimming-pool. And I remember they electrified the swimming-pool in the evening to kill the bugs and germs. But we didn't know this. So we'd swim up and down it anyway while it was electrified. And these guys would come out and go, 'No-no! C'est electrifiquee!' So we'd been swimming in that, and then we'd gone to this Cannes party and got paralytic. They hadn't provided a room for Joe or any of the supporting actors, but what happened was that we shot the video, and then gone back to Almeria in the immediate aftermath, and then we went down to Cannes. Because

I had this motorcycle that I had left down there. So the motorcycle must have got driven...

But anyway, shortly after the video with Joe we all must have gone down to Cannes to this..you know, thing. Totally drunk. Sleeping on the floor of my room were Tom Richmond, Dick Rude, Joe, Sara Sugarman, and somebody else. And the next morning I had to go and do something connected with the film. I went to that, came back, and there outside the hotel in the bright sunlight, still in their evening wear, black suits, white shirts, black dickey-bows...It had been another party that we had been invited to, at the British Pavilion. And they just seemed so much like characters in a film - sweating, drinking coffee, trying to get over their hangovers. The pool is there, and the lights reflecting on it, but they can't even look at it. That was the origin of the Straight To Hell thing. Because we were still full of the energy of the video in Almeria, and really wanted to go back. And there was this image of these guys in the bright sun the following morning. And writing Straight To Hell was like a fantasy of having a job to go and do, because we didn't have anything to do, except hang around.

SO DID YOU RIGHT IT THEN?

It was written soon thereafter. Because Joe and Elvis Costello and the Pogues were all going to go with us on this tour, in August of '86, a rock'n'roll tour of Nicaragua, paid for by the proceeds of the video that

we thought we could sell. Because they had all done this benefit for Nicaragua at the Fridge in Brixton: 2,000 people got in, and another 2,000 were turned away. But we couldn't get the money for the video.

So Eric, who was the producer, said let me try and get you the money for a film instead. So that's how Straight To Hell came about. I REMEMBER YOU SAYING THIS WAS LIKE A DRY RUN FOR WALKER.

Well, it was. It was very good. Because it was with a largely Spanish-speaking crew. It was very good practice.

Because it was so tongue-in-cheek, and so referential to other films, to cult films, to Spaghetti Westerns, and perhaps they weren't as well established. The movie references were to Once Upon A Time In The West and Django Kills and they weren't quite as cemented in the popular mind. Even now, they are probably not, because what the popular mind knows now is probably things like John Woo, with the Tarantino references.

If we had done a completely serious Spaghetti Western, where Joe really was a Franco Nero-esque hero, who gets crucified at the end, I don't think people would have liked that any more. Just as offensive and weird. Because there are moments in the film which really are very authentic to Spaghetti Westerns. But it does get a bit camp at other times. That thing where Joe is kind of twirling his pistol is a bit corny

really: we could have done better than that.

I ALWAYS REMEMBER JOE'S QUOTE - 'IT'S LIKE GOOD CHEESE: IT AGES WELL.'

That's exactly right.

WAS IT SHOT IN 28 DAYS?

24 days, I think. Probably really about 22 days. It was supposed to be done in 18, but we couldn't manage it.

WHERE HAD YOU COME ACROSS COURTNEY LOVE?

She had come to an audition for Sid And Nancy in New York, and she really wanted to play Nancy. Although she seemed to be very good, Chloe seemed perfect. But I liked Courtney and I thought she had a lot of talent. So we wrote the part of Velma in Straight To Hell specifically for her.

I REMEMBER SITTING IN THIS CAR ON THE SET WITH JOE, DICK AND COURTNEY, AND SHE SEEMED THIS QUITE SWEET GIRL.

I really fell off the guest-list with these guys, because I never got invited to the funeral. It was just pure chance that I saw Joe at this thing in Cannes.

IT WAS AN ERROR.

But it was a Joe thing. I think that was just his way. But I wasn't always aware of what it was. Because we were very thick for about

three years. But it was like he was moving through: he was moving on. AND I THINK SOMETIMES OTHER PEOPLE WOULD MAKE HIM FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE ABOUT OTHER STUFF. A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE THIS EXPERIENCE. I THINK PEOPLE REMINDED HIM OF STUFF HE FELT UNCOMFORTABLE ABOUT.

I think that's right. I also think...After we had made Walker, I tried to get Joe to spend some time in Mexico. And he didn't. And I did: and I really got into it. I could never lure him down there after Walker. I would leave messages: 'Come on, Joe: let's go down to Mexico.' And then suddenly I was out in the outer-circle. I wondered if he decided he wasn't going to go down Mexico-way - that was a phase he had now completed.

BUT I ALSO THINK THAT THAT PERIOD WAS VERY DIFFICULT FOR HIM.

But he did a great piece of work in the score for Walker. But maybe that's it: maybe that's why he didn't like to deal with the back catalogue, because it reminded him of a period when he felt he wasn't happy. But the quality of his work...I think post-the Clash it was the best thing he did. I liked the recent albums very much.

I don't think the acting thing was marking time, because it wasn't really his area of specialty. It was composing, and being a musician and

singing that was his genius. It would have been nice if he could have separated it out: the acting thing that he did for various films, and the Walker soundtrack...I said when he said that only person should write this soundtrack that only if it was as good as Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid. And he said, 'Alright then.'

And he would come and bring demos and stuff, and I would say, 'Yeah, that sounds great,' and he would scrap them and turn up with something different: he liked that more. So he was determined to produce a great, great film score. And it is a great film score, on a par with something like Pat Garrett and Billy The kid. It's not a kind of compilation score, like Repo Man is or Sid And Nancy. It's a one-man score. With a lot more diversity, and a lot more different music in it than Pat Garrett.

I enquired if someone at EMI/Virgin because they said they had the rights to it. I didn't hear from them. So I e-mailed them back and said I haven't heard from you, so what I'm suspecting is that you've found you just have a licence to release it for a period of time and that licence has now expired. I got an immediate response from EMI: 'No, we do own the rights. We found out today.'

WHAT DO YOU THINK TO JOE'S ACTING IN STRAIGHT TO HELL?

I thought he was not the worst of the rock'n'roll actors, which was

Shane McGowan. Although I don't think Shane would mind anyone saying that, I don't think he aspired to be an actor at all. I think the best of the rock'n'roll actors was probably Elvis Costello. He's an amazingly good actor - really has an ability for it.

I don't think Joe was such a strong actor. I like him best in Walker, and he's hardly in it. But what he's doing in Walker is very valuable. I think he's a little more tentative in Straight To Hell. That's my fault: I should have directed him better.

Even though Joe wasn't necessarily the best of the rock'n'roll actors, he would come up with the most inspired ideas for lines. For example, in Straight To Hell, when he and Dick Rude are on their deathbeds, Dick is lying there, groaning and moaning that he's dying, and Joe comes up with 'Still, musn't grumble.' And those were his last words. He improvised them, these very mantra-like final words that were so authentic to his character. The words written in the script were probably something like 'Adieu, hombre', or something like that. He was always trying to get other lines or even songs into the film, like the Weiner song. He just liked the creative process.

WHAT SORT OF FILMS DID HE LIKE?

I don't know if we ever had a real cineaste conversation. He was really into spaghetti westerns, and James Bond things. I watched Ran with him in Nicaragua - I watched it about 20,000 times there, but I

think he just sat through it about once. I think he was less of a cinephile than Mick Jones. He was like one of those guys in a spaghetti western, just edging in from the corner of the screen, like Franco Nero - the man of mystery. He'd seen things like Django Kills or A Bullet For the General, and I know he'd been to see The Harder They Come many times. He was a real midnight movies person.

HIS MUM DIED JUST BEFORE WALKER.

So maybe it was very propitious that all that was going on. Maybe it was good that Nicaragua and all that was happening.

That was a very tough time for him. I had no idea that was going on. It could have been that it was mentioned to me, and I selfishly blanked it and carried on. But we were in our early thirties, and I think you're all more defensive/defended then, we're all more uncertain of ourselves. I would let people know what is going on in my life now, because I'm older and more confident. I'm not embarrassed to have had parents. But when you're a younger person, your family are an excruciating embarrassment to you and a great problem. And I guess Joe just dealt with that as valiantly as he could.

He was certainly into disseminating information, wasn't he? It was very important to him. I remember him doing that with records, when he felt there were things missing in my musical education. Quite early on after we'd met, he was doing me tapes: twenty different tracks

that he thought I should listen to - reggae, or other types of music that he thought I didn't know as much about as he thought I should do.

He'd start out making the tapes at about six o'clock in the evening, and the writing would be perfect - very, very musical-looking handwriting, and it would start to go a bit scribbly about halfway through the bottle of wine, and by the end of it it was a spider walking all over the tape-box. But really: a desire to educate.

YOU USED TO HANG OUT QUITE A BIT, DIDN'T YOU?

At that time. For about three years. That was the time that it took to edit Sid And Nancy, and to shoot Straight To Hell and Walker; about three years, a very productive three years. Then I suppose I saw him for the three years after Walker was finished, and they were in Los Angeles, doing Earthquake Weather - he and Zander Schloss, and those guys, and I saw him a couple of times on their English tour - in Doncaster and Poole. Poole's a horrible place. And that was the last time I saw Strummer play until last year, the Mescaleros supporting the Who at Wembley.

I went because I've been hired as the co-author of the Keith Moon Story. And I'd gone because I had to go along because they were my employers. And it was by chance that I saw the Mescaleros were playing.

BUT YOU SAW MICK JONES FROM TIME TO TIME.

I saw him, and also Don Letts, because they had Big Audio Dynamite. And they were so film-orientated... That was the funny thing: you'd have thought it was Mick Jones who would go off and do film soundtracks, he was so into films. A Spaghetti Western: maybe that's it, Joe and Mick Jones were engaged in a kind of spaghetti western battle.

DID JOE TALK TO YOU ABOUT WORKING WITH MICK AT ALL?

No, I never enquired about that. We never had a conversation about it. I mentioned to him that I had been to see the Clash. I'd spit on him on a couple of occasions, at Santa Monica Civic in Los Angeles, and then also at a big stadium in LA where they were too far away for my spit to reach.

I KNOW THAT ON THE SET OF STRAIGHT TO HELL HE WAS HAVING A GREAT TIME, LOTS OF PARTYING.

And also just really into it. He would always insist on keeping his shoulder holster on. They weren't allowed to keep their guns when they went to town. So he would walk into town in that same sweaty black suit, a polyester white shirt, and a shoulder holster. And he just loved it: Joe was into it, more than anything, the theatricality of it.

DID HE TAKE THAT SHIRT OFF?

I think they did have changes of attire. Whether they took advantage of

them or not, I don't know. But they were available.

WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THE HOTEL?

The Grand Hotel.

I REMEMBER THERE WAS A CARNIVAL OUTSIDE.

Yes. All night long. And that's the hotel where everyone used to stay:

Henry Fonda, Lee Van Cleef, Clint Eastwood: they all stayed there.

That was the finest hotel in Almeria. All that mismatched furniture in the bar...They were all there.

HOW WERE THE ORDINARY ACTORS INTERRELATING WITH THE ROCK'N'ROLL PEOPLE ON STRAIGHT TO HELL?

I think it depended really on who they were. The actors took to Elvis Costello because Elvis was really a good actor. Joe got along with everybody: he made an effort to get along with everybody. I think Courtney grated on him occasionally. Courtney was not sufficiently serious, and a bit loudmouthed. And I think that some of the Pogues were a bit of a handful, because they were so out of it, and not natural actors that that made it a bit wearing, I think, for some of the more serious-minded actors from the States. The English actors were more used to people staggering around paralytic - on the English stage, you know. But the American actors were used to an atmosphere of slightly more professionalism. When in fact some of their co-actors were particularly shitfaced.

But the funny thing is, I was watching this at the time, and I was having a few beers and a few spliffs as well. I'd watch the Pogues queueing up for their B-12 shots every morning so they could act, and I'm thinking, 'It's a bit much isn't it, chaps? Surely we don't need shots in our bums in the morning, do we?' But then recently I read that Mrs Thatcher, in exactly the same time-frame, throughout the '80s, was drinking whiskey, and then getting a B-12 shot in her bum first thing in the morning, so she could go out and be Mrs Thatcher. They'd give her a B-12 shot in her bum and set her loose, because that apparently was the antidote to having a terrible hangover. For Thatcher and the Pogues.

So the Pogues were these slimy, horrible exponents of decadence and naughtiness - and if they weren't Irish, they'd pretend to be Irish. And Thatcher was the antipathy of that, yet she was exactly the same.