

## INTERVIEW WITH MATT DILLON

MD: Listen, Joe was like a hero of mine, I loved the guy. He was such a great guy. The coolest thing about he and all those guys was that you never got the feeling they were for sale, ever, under any circumstances. And that sort of thing, I never realized how rare that was. And as you get older you realize what a rare quality that is, to be really principled. They really were, and Joe especially.

INT: Do you think they instilled those principles in the generations that came after them?

MD: I think a lot of people have had a lot of admiration for the Clash, but they never got their...I don't think that they got their due recognition. But the funny thing is, year after year after year, you meet young kids that are huge Clash fans. Kids that were really not conscious of the Clash, they were too young.

INT: I know 13 year olds who are into them.

MD: Yeah. Cause they have this kind of...I guess they really...they had a message. And it wasn't always crystal clear, it was just that they were always saying something. It was never...

INT: There was never one exact message.

MD: Yeah, that was what made it very interesting. And that's what made the Clash.

INT: Where did you first hear them?

MD: I think when I first heard them...it didn't hit me the same way. Because in America, the songs that got popular...I liked them, they were very cool...it was like...what was the first song...

INT: Train in Vain?

MD: Train in Vain...no. I Fought the Law...I Fought the Law had a lot of play time here. And so you heard it, it was very fun and catchy, it was very...I don't know if it was considered a hit or not, but it was definitely...I remember the first time I saw them live was much later. I didn't see the Bond's show, that was the famous show that everybody talked about. And it is always one of those things, that I get a little envious that I wasn't there. It really had this kind of...the Bond's show

had real cachet for Clash fans. But I did see them at Asbury Park, at the Convention Centre. And they started off that siren going on the ceiling with Police and Thieves. And I remember a bunch of buddies of mine cutting out of school early, getting a case of beer, and from where I grew up in Westchester, just north of the Bronx, we drove all the way out there, drank the case of beer and went to see them at the Convention Centre. To me, really I guess Joe Strummer was really a hero. I was a high school kid.

INT: What year were you born?

MD: '64.

INT: So you were like 17, 18.

MD: And I first met Joe...Annie Leibowitz was photographing me for Rolling Stone Magazine. She knew that I was an avid Clash fan, right around when Combat Rock had just come out. And she said...I got tickets for Saturday Night Live and she got me on the list there, and I got to see the Clash play at Saturday Night Live, which was great. And I remember going there and they told them who was here, Annie Leibowitz and Matt Dillon was here...and this fucking guy with a dirty tank top, with a cross...and it was really a cross, really graphic, with like a Jesus crucified and a floppy mohawk, and it was Kosmo. And he

comes in and makes this dramatic, looks at us and goes... 'Alright.'  
Lets us through. And I was really thrilled. I was with my girlfriend at  
the time...and I went right in and I hooked right into Joe and we talked.  
I don't remember what we talked about, I was in awe of meeting  
this...he's a musical hero to me. And Mick too, for that matter. And I  
just thought these guys were...for me, what the generation before was  
like the Rolling Stones, something like that, they really had that...and I  
was a little bit star struck to tell you the truth. Which was great,  
because I later became friends with Joe, which was really nice. And  
he's a very genuine guy. And they were just...Joe had a Mohawk at  
the time.

INT: I didn't necessarily approve of the Mohawk...he was kind of  
Travis in Taxi Driver.

MD: Exactly. And then I remember at that time...there was a guy, Jack  
Checker, an interesting guy. During the Bond's concerts he met them.  
And they didn't have any money, he talked about how they were  
broke. They somehow didn't have any money after the tour. And he  
said, All they wanted...and they were in New York... was to get little  
knick knacks like snow globes to bring back to their friends and family  
in London. I remember him telling me that one night at Danceteria.  
And they didn't have a limousine...and they didn't want a limousines  
and car

services like other rock stars. They had this guy, Jack, who drove a yellow checkered cab, which they thought was great, being big Taxi Driver fans...and they...all they wanted to do was see New York. And not see the touristy shit, they wanted to go up to Harlem and the Bronx...and Jack Checker was a checkered cab driver from New York and he used to drive them around New York. That was their form of a limousine. And he would take them around everywhere. And the thing about it, is that you get to know everybody in the Clash family. Once you got to know Joe and Mick and Paul, no matter what state of dysfunction they were in, there was always a sense of family.

When they came to New York, it was Josh, it was Jim, it was even Jack Checker, Bob Gruen...the crew of guys would always get together and there'd be lots of laughs and drinks and benders and fun and good times depending on what we were doing. And so that was really nice. And so over the years, there's this group of people that always seems to get together.

INT: Cause I see the Clash as this big soul group, I don't mean the group, I mean everyone around them. Its always like this...cause you feel like you know all these people.

MD: And looking back at it with some hindsight, it's a real rare thing, in a funny way, because it was genuine. There was a very egalitarian

feeling about it. And I think that Joe was a socialist at heart, I think he really was.

INT: Well his dad was almost a Marxist.

MD: Exactly. The Clash were into a genuine experience. And they did things like...I don't see that any more. I think it's something that you used to see with rock bands, where they would go...the feeling that I got when I listened to Sandinista, that Sandinista was really a New York record. Even though they were a London band, it was a New York record. It was made in New York, they were talking about Washington bullets and Sandinistas and rebels and something going on in London, but it had this feeling of New York. And the first song that I identified with that was a song called Broadway.

INT: Which is a great song.

MD: When I first heard that record I didn't like any of it but Broadway. By the end of it, it was by far my favourite Clash album of them all. And I remember all those stupid cracks...from those hard-line London punks are calling Cantstandinista...but to me its my favourite Clash album. And real Clash fans identify with that.

INT: So when did you first get success?

MD: That first film was Over the Edge...1978, I did my first movie.

So I started at 14. I already was a famous person.

INT: So how do you see what they're doing with their fame? How are they coping with that?

MD: To me, they were always real...that was something to strive to be.

To me, they were very uncompromising, and they were macho, like a lot of rock bands weren't. And I mean macho in a very admirable

sense, in a way that I think of...I don't know...they sang some pop

songs like Train in Vain, and they had that sensitive side to them...but

there was something,

and I mean it in the best sense, but like they had balls or something.

They had balls, they were macho. And I loved the photos by Pennie

Smith...they were great. They were into Westerns and gangsters and a

lot of mythological

American stuff. So then Joe and I become friends, like we would see

each other whenever...

INT: Was this during the Clash or after the Clash?

MD: I think I knew him a little bit during...like I said, I met him

during and then I met him in London. And I knew Kosmo and

Mick...and I actually got to know Mick a little bit better at first. And Mick was always a very sweet guy...and that was like the greatest combination since Jagger and Richards. They really were, they complimented each other so damn well.

INT: So what did you think when you heard that Mick had been chucked out?

MD: I was disappointed that they were going that way, but they were still the Clash as far as I was concerned. And I remember a bunch of my punk friends down in the East Village, we all jumped in a car, had our hair spiked with soap...and going up to fucking Poughkeepsie and seeing the Clash Out Of Control. And it wasn't the same. There was a lot of enthusiasm and energy, but it wasn't the same.

INT: Yeah, I went to see them a few times...

MD: And it was great to see Joe, and Kosmo...and I always thought that Kosmo seemed to be a perfect kind of...I don't want to say mascot, but mouthpiece...he just had the right attitude.

INT: Even though he wasn't a member of the group, The Clash is sort of personified in Kosmo.

MD: In a certain way, in his brash attitude. So I'd see them there, and I saw Mick early on when he was doing the Big Audio Dynamite stuff, which I thought was really great stuff. He played me some early demos...I had an English girlfriend at the time...and I'd spent some time in London. And I remember saying to Mick, You look like you stepped off a New York City Subway...cause he had the sneakers on and looked very New York...he had that hip-hop look. And I was wearing a torn T-shirt and Doc Martens, and he said, You look like you just stepped off the Kings Road. But...the thing I remember and when I feel I really got to know Joe and Mick was when they reunited and they were doing Big Audio Dynamite. I ran into them by chance...what year was that?

INT: I think it was '86...

MD: I'll tell you what I remember...Tyson was getting ready to fight Bruno, it was a big deal. And to run into them together was a big shock.

INT: What, here you ran into them...

MD: Yeah, I was getting ready...it was in New York, '85...ran into them there, and they said, Hey, we wanted to get in touch with you,

Joe said. We wanted to get you and Fishburne to do a skit for...cause we were Clash fans, and it was sort of bringing that back. And Larry...Lawrence Fishburne was a Clash fan...Larry and I were friends, we'd done Rumblefish together...and so we did this kind of little skit, Larry and I...I know that's not what he goes by these days, but I knew him as Larry...it was Hit Man for Hire. And Joe would go into the think tank for the name of the new album. And he had all the names for the album, and he had them in the think tank there. I guess there was a fair amount of weed being smoked...drink beers and smoke weed...but it was a good time...we watched the Bruno fight, Tyson killed him. But it was a lot of fun, we were hanging that time. And I think that's when I really felt I bonded with those guys, we became friends. Friendly, but in a way that was like we might not see each other for a long time, but it was always easy to fall right back in.

INT: Always a good sign.

MD: Always a good sign. If I came to London, I could call any of them up and we would hook up, if they had time and vice versa and meet up in New York.

INT: Did you go to Joe's house in London?

MD: I've been there, yeah, and I've been to Paul's and Mick's house.  
Trying to remember Joe's house...

INT: Off Portobello Road.

MD: Yeah. How long did he have that place?

INT: About seven years.

MD: And anyway...and then I remember doing a film...and when we were doing that, I remember he goes, You have to meet Jim Jarmusch. I'd never met Jim before that and I was a big fan of his work too. And we met and we went to a place called Tin Pan Alley, we did some drinking in there.

INT: I know that place. I introduced him to it.

MD: Did you? I'm developing a film about these guys, these hoods from the West Side in New York...and there was a guy named Richard Jason, an Irish crew from the West Side, and he got gunned down at that place.

INT: Really?

MD: Trying to think...Joe could hang late too, we had some real late nights. But one that I remember was great...we found some piano in some apartment on Avenue C and everybody had got in a sing-along with Junko Partner. I don't know how much piano Joe played...

INT: He could play a bit...

MD: Yeah, he could play that tune really well.

INT: I was in a rehearsal studio, and suddenly they're playing this new number...and Joe was actually on the Hammond organ, I think it was Bank Robber...and it was just after London Calling had come out, and it was a bit confused, and he was playing the Hammond organ. So, he can do it.

MD: It's interesting...I think there's a part of him, I understood it creatively, and I might be wrong about this too, but he was having a little trouble finding his niche. He did that great score for Walker, which was beautiful, but musically...

INT: I think he was very confused.

MD: He was like uh, a soldier without an army, he didn't have his

cannon. I remember, I was over there, he did some acting jobs....I was over there making a film and I rented an apartment, had an English girlfriend at the time. She lived off Portobello. So we'd go out to dinner sometimes. I was making a film over there. I rented a nice house on Holland Park. I remember once, asking Kosmo, I said, Hey, Joe's doing an acting job in Mystery Train, what do you think of that? And Joe... and I don't think at that time they were on speaking terms...let's say they were estranged...everybody seemed to be estranged from each other...and he says, I don't know much about it, but I think he'll be fantastic. Cause Kosmo had a lot of faith in Joe.

INT: Sure. And it was fantastic.

MD: I thought he was great. But I remember Joe didn't feel too good about his work, he was pretty self-deprecating about his ability to act. And he said, Well I'll tell you what, I'll stop acting when Eddie Murphy stops making records. Cause Eddie Murphy had made that really cheesy song, My Girl Wants to Party all the Time. So Joe said, I'll stop making movies when Eddie Murphy stops...

INT: But I mean the self-deprecating...I think he was self-deprecating about everything that he did. He kind of said to me later, cause I said to him once when he came back with the Mescaleros...actually, I was

under the impression that you were undergoing a low-key nervous breakdown for years. And he said, I wouldn't say it was a nervous breakdown, but I would say it was depression, serious depression. And you could see it on him sometimes.

MD: Yeah, I could see it on him. There was a part of him, of Joe that was tough, he was a tough guy. I mean physically. He was the kind of guy that seemed like...like I said, he stood for the right thing...but he was not an easy read all the time. What was really going on underneath, you could not always tap into. And...but he was smart and interesting, and I remember like...I remember I ran into him at one point, Josh was with him in London...and I had this girlfriend like I said, Emma Wollard...she was living over on Ladbroke Crescent...and I was really deliberating on whether I should do this movie or not with this director that I was working for, Tim Hunter, who directed Over the Edge, he wrote the first film I did...and it was about this homeless, schizophrenic guy...and I was concerned that the script had a lot of sentimentality in it. And I remember what came about, but I was on the fence about doing it. And I remember going to the...that that pub they used to hang out in...

INT: The Warwick.

MD: Yeah. And I ran into he and Josh and we went up there drinking and I was trying to figure it out...and in that pub I made a decision that I was going to do the movie. Cause Joe was like, Do the movie.

Cause it stood for something, it was about homeless people...maybe its too sentimental, whatever. And I just remember that being a moment.

Like well

if Joe gives his stamp of approval, I guess its worth doing. Maybe its not a perfect thing, but...I like to think in a really weird way...it was great to be friends with the guy, but he really shaped...he was really a guy I had great admiration for, I really mean that.

INT: Well you see him doing things in a certain way and you emulate them.

MD: I was always a little sad to see that these guys were estranged, Kosmo and Joe. Joe and Mick. Paul seemed to be...he was too.... And I gotta tell you, I like them all, I always did like them all. There wasn't a bad person in the group. I didn't know Topper at all, never met him.

INT: Topper is also great...I went down to see him the other week.

MD: I hear he's doing great.

INT: Yeah, he's doing great. Even at the funeral. Were you at the funeral?

MD: I didn't go. I remembered I wanted to go...but there's a reason I couldn't go, holidays or what happened, something had come up. But I was able to contribute something...I got a call from Dave the Potter. And he said, Matt, I need a Gadsden flag, it was Joe's favourite flag.

INT: What are they called?

MD: A Gadsden. A Gadsden is a Don't Tread on Me, a rattlesnake. That was Joe's favourite flag. And that of course made perfect sense somehow, for Joe, don't tread on me. And also I think somehow it's the United States but I think it was really a Texas flag. Maybe it's the Texas state flag or something, but it's an old American flag. So I had to call around all these places, and I found this place called Flags Inc. out in Texas. Bought a Gadsden flag...I don't know if Jim Jarmusch...I called, I said, Gruen's going over, and I got it to Gruen and to put over his coffin.

INT: Which was there. And the only reason I ask that is because Topper was there, looking not good, really not looking good. And now he looks okay.

MD: Kosmo said he looked good at the Hall of Fame inauguration. He said he's doing well. The Mescaleros, the last group, they were great. And I saw them, that was the last time I saw Joe. I was cutting my film in LA....and they were phenomenal. I thought it was just...I loved the group. They had an accordion player, a trombone player, and a violinist...Fantastic. And it was the best I heard him since the Clash. I liked him when he was with the Pogues, too. I remember we'd all hang out...when he was touring with the Pogues that was a great show.

INT: Weren't you in a video?

MD: I was in a Pogues video. But I remember when he toured with them it was winter, it was great. So them at the old Ritz, going out in the East

Village and drinking and everybody, good times. It was the...

INT: You were saying about the Mescaleros, you saw them in LA...

MD: Yeah, they were fantastic.

INT: Where were they playing?

MD: They played at the Troubadour, like five nights. I was having

some problems with the German financier of my film. I think Joe had asked me...and I said, its German finance. And he said, You'll be speaking German soon.

INT: Have you heard the new album?

MD: No, I haven't heard it yet.

INT: Get it, it's fantastic.

MD: Is it? When did it come out?

INT: Only about a month ago.

MD: I have to say, I've only been listening to Afro-Cuban music lately, but I'll get it for sure.

INT: It's really great, its like the most direct record he's done since the Clash, which is ironic.

MD: I remember busting his chops, telling him that he looked like Margaret Thatcher. Cause he kind of did. You know who he reminded me of? He looked a bit like Alec Guinness. He reminded me of Alec Guinness somehow.

The Clash weren't just a typical snot-nosed punk band; they were different. I think they had a unique sound, absolutely...it was a different sound, very different. I defy anybody to really tell me what genre Rock the Casbah is. You could say it's a dance tune, you could say it's a rock tune, you could say it's a great fucking song is what it is.

INT: And all that stuff that's built around Mick and jangly guitars as well...its very unique, actually, where the sound is structured, its got layers, which is Mick's thing of course.

MD: They played the Strat, they were both Strat men.

INT: No, that was just Joe. Mick was a Gibson.

MD: Get out of here, really? I remember I had to play a rock musician, and I was getting ready, it was like 1990 or so, 1991...and I was getting ready, Cameron Crowe had called me up, doing this movie Singles...and I had to take some guitar lessons, just to look like I knew what I was doing. And I really didn't know what the Seattle music scene was like. And he said, Look, there's this group out here, Mother Love Bone, Cameron Crowe was like. And it's really no music scene happening in LA or New York, it's really something that happens outside the main cities in America. And I said, I really don't know much about it. And he said, They're really good and they're going to

be in New York because they're meeting with their label.

And I went out...Eddie Vedder and all that...and they weren't called Pearl Jam, they'd only played two gigs together...and I went out and got hammered with them, late night, just going around to bars...and I was in such pain the next day, I remember. And then I happened to run into Joe, and he was with Josh...

INT: Where is this?

MD: In New York. They had come to New York, the guys from Pearl Jam had come to New York and I had to meet them to decide if I was going to do this movie playing a rock musician in Seattle. And I went out with these guys and had a late night, really tied one on...and I'm just recovering, like, I don't need another night like that, and I swear to God, I was somewhere, I think it was the east Village...and I turn around a corner and there was Joe and Josh, and like, Here we go again. And it was like all night, that's when we were out, going from bar to bar, and Joe's like, Come on, we're going, you got to come. And its like you get on a train and you go.

INT: What sort of bars did Joe like?

MD: In New York? Jimmy's Corner. He liked Tin Pan Alley...the Dublin House, and that was a big hang for Kosmo...

INT: Kosmo took me there.

MD: And then there were a whole slew of places in the East Village. And I'd say, I know a really great place, and I'd take Joe to someplace he'd never been before.

INT: He didn't like hip and trendy bars...

MD: No way, he liked down and dirty bars in the East Village. He liked joints. And I always remember the sun coming up when I was out with Joe. I remember picking up a stray cat...it was right when he did that Big Audio Dynamite thing, and I ended up with Josh and Daisy was hanging out and a bunch of us down in Soho. And we were walking along Canal Street and we parted ways and the sun was coming up. And I picked up a stray cat, I brought it down to my loft. And I had to fly to Indiana to do some research for a character I was doing, and I didn't know what to do with the stray cat I picked up. So I gave it to Kosmo who was renting a storefront down in the Garment District. And Kosmo and Joe...those guys were not on good terms at that time. And he said, I need to do something with this cat.

And he wasn't living there, he was renting a space there, just as some kind of work space, Kosmo. And I gave him this stray cat. And I went to Indiana and came back. And the cat had sprayed the whole office, I felt terrible. I gave it away. Oh...my decision when I had to learn to play to be this rock star...and I didn't know from these grunge bands, they weren't called grunge bands yet...and I remember I was taking guitar lessons from this friend of mine. And he said, you've got to decide right away if you're a Strat man or if you're a Strat man or a Gibson man. And I said, Well what's Joe strummer? And he said, A Strat man. So I'm a Strat man.

INT: Joe got into having a Strat by watching Wilko Johnson with Dr Feelgood. They're an English group who were quite big in the mid-seventies and had an important influence on punk. And it was through him that Joe got into it. Did you do the film?

MD: Singles? Yeah. I have really long hair in it.

INT: I was just thinking about...what Joe liked to drink.

MD: He liked tequila. And he had a real...I remember we did some drinking, I remember that. Gruen was always there, he was always

hanging out. He was always like the trusted photographer... I really got to know him. He was just really friendly. Mick was always really interested in whatever you were doing, and so was Joe for that matter. But I remember, they were warming up the Clash...I saw them in New York and LA...what was that album...

INT: Combat Rock.

MD: And I remember talking to Mick, and I remember this feeling like, We finally got a hit record. A real hit record. And I remember that it was really too bad that he went...I remember being disappointed because as a fan it was...

They really had this great, genuine quality. They were like a hybrid of different influences, but there was something very authentic in them about their music, just authentic and unique. And even if they were like messing around with hip-hop, early on, before a lot of people were doing this...they did something very unique with it. Some people might say it was a failed attempt at it.

INT: What, Magnificent Seven?

MD: I thought it was brilliant. But what I'm saying is that it doesn't sound like hip-hop. It sounds like...but its like their attempt at doing hip-hop...turned into something better.

INT: I never think of it as a hip-hop tune.

MD: I don't think of it as that...but it is like rap...what they're doing, in a way.

INT: It's something about the rhythm.

MD: It's like its own form of soul. Really great stuff. And I remember my first trip to London...they whole thing, the whole fascination with it, was really punk, but really the Clash. And I remember there was this sense that, Oh, the Clash...they went to America and...The Jam is the English group. And I thought that was fucking bullshit, I didn't care. I had nothing against the Jam...that song, That's Entertainment, was a great song.

INT: Yeah, they were really good, but I didn't like all that pettiness.

MD: Yeah, there was kind of that cliqueiness. But the Clash really did have an appeal to Americans. And the only thing that I would say was too damn bad was that the stodgy old deacons who run the radio in the States at that time...the Clash couldn't get much real radio.

INT: Didn't they get played?

MD: I'll tell you what got played a lot. I Fought the Law, London Calling...in the end, yeah, Should I Stay or Should I go and Rock the Kasbah. But to me, they had so many songs that were great that never really got to play...oh, Train in Vain got a lot of play. You'd hear Magnificent Seven or Radio Clash periodically...I just wanted to hear it all the time, and I didn't get it enough.

INT: I remember at Bond's, WBLS was playing Mag Dance all the time, which was considered very groovy... So really, how did they get so big here? Its like in England, it's a real word of mouth thing then.

MD: But you know what? People...

END OF SIDE A

SIDE B

MD: And in my opinion, there was no U2 without the Clash. They were very influenced by the Clash.

INT: And they don't have too many jokes, the Clash had lots of jokes.

MD: What do you mean?

INT: There's no jokes. The Clash were funny, that was one of the things about them.

MD: Musically funny?

INT: Yeah. Their lyrics were funny.

MD: Coca Cola...and I always thought there was an interesting link...and I grew up listening to Irish folk music, like the Dubliners and the Clancy Brothers...

INT: You're Irish?

MD: Yeah, my family. So my father had all these old records that we'd scratched and hacked up on the hi-fi when we were kids. And when I heard the Clash, I got a little bit of that sense. And sure enough, Joe was into that music. And I thought when he joined up with the Pogues that was a great move. Great call, a total natural move for Strummer to come and step with them. And I thought it was great the way the Pogues invited him in. and that was a great period, I thought, for Joe. Touring around with them. And to Joe's credit, he never really did a Clash tune. He'll never do a

Clash tune. Maybe we think they're Clash tunes, but they really weren't.

INT: He did do London Calling.

MD: Did he do that? But mostly he didn't. You're right, he did do it. But he was very careful. He'd do six songs, but there was a Bobby Fuller song...maybe some of them he just thought were rightfully his. But I remember telling Mick that one of my favourite songs was Spanish Bombs...and Mick said, Yeah, Joe wrote it, but I really wanted it. I always felt like I wanted to sing it. Cause it was interesting to me...why certain songs were sung by Joe and certain songs were sung by Mick, and how do they come to that decision. But it gave it that extra dynamic, was these two different...Mick was a great counter...

INT: Because he had all that sweetness.

MD: Yeah, always heartbroken crooner. But the Clash was a very unique and special time and space and experience...and when I think about the things that I wasn't able to...when I wasn't on the train and the bandwagon hanging out, with everybody...I always think, God, it must've been a ball down in New Mexico with Joe Ely, you know? And you hear those stories. Because I remember hearing all those

stories. And it was always interesting, the people who would fall in stride with them, it was kind of cool. Like Joe Ely. I remember a funny one...I don't know if Kosmo would mind me telling this story...Kosmo told me that they were playing in Detroit and Ted Nugent showed up with his guitar, The Nuge. And like, I heard the Clash are hear, I want to play with the Clash. And they were like, You're welcome to hang out, but you can't play with the Clash. It's just not the same thing. And remember at that time, the Clash were very militant and anti-hippie long hair, they really were. And I think that there were a lot of people that denied having a Led Zeppelin record when the Clash were like...and the first record I ever bought was a Led Zeppelin record. I didn't find myself bragging about that when you were hanging out on St Mark's Place, you know. And I had friends...and all my punk friends in the East Village were...and these guys were definitely hard-core punk and it had to be the Ramones, it had to be the Clash, it had to be the Dickies, the Dead Boys, or the New York Dolls. It couldn't be anything but that. They were very strict. It was very specific.

INT: It was year zero, basically.

MD: It was year zero, exactly, perfect analogy.

INT: But in England, it was even more so...

MD: And I remember there was some anti-Clash stuff in England. And maybe it's just an English thing...it was such a sensibility of year zero, like you said, but if a group puts out a first record and you love it, with their second record you're automatically not going to love it because it's not the first record. So I think everybody suffered from that, and I think the Clash kind of suffered from that too. A lot of...backlash. The Clash never sold out...that's the thing, I thought, They didn't sell out and they're getting the shit kicked...

INT: I remember arriving at a gig with the Clash Friar's Aylesbury...and Mick said to the tour manager, Has it sold out? And he says, Yes. And Joe says, But we said we'd never sell out!

MD: Well, God bless them, they weren't for sale. I admire that, really. It is admirable really, it truly is.

INT: Well that's what I mean about the inspiration that they kind of inspired....

MD: I really feel that, they inspired me, I really feel that. And I hope that I carry a little bit of that with me. Those were people that...I was drawn to that band and I was really...I feel honoured to have known Joe, a good man and somebody that I could count as a friend.

And not hang out with him all the time, but...

INT: Where were you when you'd heard he'd gone?

MD: It was right...

INT: Three days before Christmas...

MD: I know man, hold on...three days before Christmas...here's what was crazy: the last conversation I had with Joe was on the phone. I was in London a couple of weeks before that. And I had called...maybe it was...maybe it was a year apart...no, I hadn't spoken to Joe in maybe a year or so, I don't know. But I remember Kosmo was in London visiting because his father had just died and I had told Joe over the phone that Kosmo's dad passed away. So I knew it. And I didn't get to see Kosmo and he was really dealing with his father and I was still working on a film...but when I heard about it was...I called Kosmo about something, and said Hey Kos...and he goes, Matt, sit down. And he just said, Joe...Joe. And I couldn't...and I remember he said to me, Joe...and he just couldn't...and he said, Joe, Joe died. And I remember, it was devastating really. I remember I turned on the radio to see what they would be playing. And then I spoke to Mick who was there at the house with...

MD: I kind of feel bad that I wasn't able to go out for the funeral.  
But it was I guess the holidays and stuff.

INT: There was a big wake afterwards, there was kind of a big party afterwards that was really good.

MD: I'm sure it was. And that's exactly what he would've wanted. Joe wouldn't have wanted a lot of dry...I can tell you though...after they broke up, I saw Mick and Paul together, I'd get together with them for dinner, or drinks, whatever, we'd meet at a party, I'd meet up with them. And I'd see Mick and Joe together, or I'd see Joe and Paul together, but I'd never see all three of them together.

INT: Gruen took a picture of them all together somewhere.

MD: I can say honestly since the band broke up, I never remembered seeing them...and I saw quite a bit of them together in twos in any combination, except I never saw all three of them together, it was weird.

INT: Yeah. They were together, you know...

MD: And maybe I did see them, maybe that's an exaggeration...I think

I must've in London.

INT: But often one would be there and then they'd leave and another one would come. It was often a bit like that. Cause there was that sort of magic, I don't know if you noticed that, how like around Joe that synchronicities and all sorts of things would go on around him...

MD: They all had sort of a dynamic thing, you know.

INT: But also its that art school training from all three of them. Its like that's something important in the Clash, being around real artists, and their canvas happens to be this group. It's a collaboration, its interesting.

MD: Yeah. And they had artists' sensibilities for sure. They weren't business men underneath it all, not at all.

INT: Hardly. Sometimes not very good at that...

MD: I'm not too good at that myself, maybe that's why I can relate. Try and be better, but...

INT: And that's what you're saying, that's why he seemed so right with the Pogues, its because its that Celtic thing. And that Celtic thing

and the...and his big thing was like, three weeks before he died he's up there in Scotland for a relative's wedding. And he said to his cousin, I haven't been a good Scot as of late, but I promise I'm going to be better.

MD: I thought he was part Russian.

INT: He was part Armenian. And possibly part Indian blood as well, because on his father's side they're Anglo-Indian.

MD: I'm quite happy to see all these young kids that are into the Clash.

INT: It's very good for them.

MD: It's cool to see that, there is justice in the end, the cream rises to the top. In a way, they were really overlooked. But I really think that they didn't get their shot in their day, but that's it. You know what, there's somebody that once said, It's good to be ahead of your time, but not too far ahead of your time.

INT: Yeah, I know that one. Exactly. It struck me at the time.

MD: And I think these guys were maybe too ahead of their time.

INT: But one of the things was, and you were saying, they could be in touch...and they had hip-hop and whatever...but they were always just a bit ahead of the other guys...they were there before people sussed it out.

MD: And its not always an easy thing to be. Because you see other guys come in and lead the way and...

INT: And that's why U2 are so huge. It is why U2 are so huge. But they've got the legacy...because they split up when they did, and you can sort of forget that the Clash...because when the original group split up they were really big.

MD: And they...and Cut the Crap...I think I have it at home. I think I bought it...

INT: You must get the Mescaleros' new one, its great...And so there wasn't a lengthy decline, like with the Rolling Stones. I mean the Rolling Stones...they're not really good on record at all now.

MD: And that's what's really great about it. Its kind of like James Dean...like it happened at a peak. And looking back, at like Combat Rock, looking back on it, it's a really goddamn good record. And as good as anything they did.

INT: It's fantastic.

MD: But the collaborations...always the interesting collaborations with Ginsberg...and they did a song about Sean Flynn...that guy who disappeared in Cambodia. Really good stuff. They were really doing ambitious, doing epic stuff.

INT: And I think things like having Ginsberg was kind of like...it kind of takes you back to the tradition of the Beats, obviously...but all those cultures within what they were doing.

MD: Yeah, they never let a certain lack of musical expertise get in the way of their ambition doing something. I think that Mick was probably...and I'm not a musician, so this I'm really probably; out of school saying this, but...I don't think that...I think that Mick was a really good stylistic guitar player, and Topper was a great drummer, I think Joe was more like the songster.

INT: Yeah, he was.

MD: Like a troubadour, he could play the music. He really fits into some kind of bohemian, Beat thing too. In a real classic way, even

though it was a later period. I never thought that he would die so young.

INT: I always thought that we'd still go see Joe when he was 75. I really did. I thought that, now he's back on...

MD: Cause he's one of those rare rock and rollers...a certain kind of dignity that he could age well. And because he was a kind of Kerouac vibe...Joe would've looked good old. He would've...and he had that, a real classic...it wasn't just spiked hair and safety pins, they kind of had a style.

INT: Joe was good on details, they were all good on details.

END OF SIDE B