



COURTESY PHOTO

JOE KING (far right) of the Queers returned to his life as a punk rock sardonicist after regrouping on his father's fishing boat last year. He now commands the helm of a reborn Queers, which is composed of members of fellow tour mates, The Jon Cougar Concentration Camp.

The Queers seek change

Group heads for the road with a new band, CD

BY JASON HARDY
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Concert Preview

A little more than a year ago Joe King made some lifestyle changes.

After almost 15 years of playing punk rock, King, known to the world as Joe Queer, frontman for the Queers, put music on the back burner and set sail toward a new occupation.

"My dad called and said my brother needed someone to help on his fishing boat," King explained. "So there I was, working on the Carol Ann in the North Atlantic in late October."

Gone were the late nights of playing poppy-punk ballads and anthems in smoky clubs around the world. In their place were early mornings of backbreaking labor and fish guts, his only comfort being the ballad of the lapping sea.

King's new direction was prompted after the Queers' original lineup disbanded. The group's most widely known and successful incarnation, featuring Hugh O'Neill on drums and B-Face on bass, fell apart after the 1996 release of their critically acclaimed album, "Don't Back Down." After a brief tour O'Neill was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor and B-Face joined the Groovie Ghoulies.

Nowadays King is back on the mainland with a new lineup and a new album and has traded his slickers for a pair of Converse.

The Queers, currently made up of members from the Jon Cougar Concentration Camp, has teamed up with long-time friends and punk legends the Mr. T Experience for a nationwide tour. The show stops in Lincoln tonight for an all-ages gig at Knickerbockers and includes opening acts the Parasites and the Jon Cougar Concentration Camp - yes, they do a cover of "Small Town."

In a phone interview from his home in New Hampshire, King talked about his ocean-inspired return to the world of punk rock and the new pseudo-super tour.

During his stint in the fishing industry King again developed a desire to make music and, after recruiting the members of the Jon Cougar Concentration Camp, he ventured back into the studio to record the Queers' latest full-length release, "Punk Rock Confidential."

Initially King was worried about maintaining the classic Queers sound with new members, but after hearing the recording his confidence returned.

"I knew the band was good, and I knew we sounded like the Queers," King said. "Plus it was really fun playing with new guys."

King said the 15 songs on "Punk Rock Confidential," which was released last month, may be some of his most honest work yet, much of which is due to the time he spent on the Carol Ann, where King still works when not touring.

"I don't listen to what's going on. I'm living in a bubble out here," King said. "It gives you a musical innocence. That's why I like working on a boat, because it has nothing to do with music. It kind of keeps you grounded, plus it's healthy, hard work. The tough punk rockers with mohawks and jackets couldn't do this shit."

Despite decades worth of punk rock recording and touring experience, it wasn't until this year that King and his old pal Dr. Frank, the brains behind MTX, decided to pool their punk rock potency for an extended American tour together.

King said the merger with MTX seemed like an obvious move for the Queers' new tour.

"Basically I just wanted to have some close friends to play with," King said. "Also, there are kids who won't necessarily come out for just a Queers show or just an MTX show, but they'll come out for a show with the Queers and MTX."

In a phone interview from Champaign, Ill., Dr. Frank said he had always wanted to offer fans a stacked bill like this tour's lineup.

"It usually doesn't happen with our types of bands," he said. "It's cool that we've been able to finance this one because there are some kids who've been waiting for this bill all their lives and to a certain type of person this show is a dream come true, and that's who we're doing this for."

Despite the incredibly vast amount of songs the Queers and MTX have recorded over the years, King and Dr. Frank both plan on appeasing fans by granting the inevitable requests for classic tunes - maybe even a Ramones cover.

"We try to do some songs from every era," Dr. Frank said. "We used to do our set and then play requests, but on this tour there isn't much time, so basically the request part has kind of moved to the main set. People come up and ask me to play a song and I write it on my hand with a marker. But it kind of depends on if we remember it or not."

Memory failure aside, Dr. Frank said the show would run the gamut of quality punk rock sounds.

"We've done a lot of tours where the bills haven't made much sense," Dr. Frank said. "It's pretty cool to have a lineup that's like bang, bang, bang with bands that all sound well together."

Tonight's all-ages show starts at 6 p.m. Call (402) 476-6865 for more information.



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POP-PUNK INSTITUTION the Mr. T Experience comes to Knickerbockers tonight armed with a slew of satirical love songs. Dr. Frank (bottom) is longtime friends with Joe King of headlining act the Queers.

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