

Jett Set

Whether She's a Record Mogul, Girl-Rock Icon or Actress, Joan Jett's *Happy Days* are Here Again
by Stephen Pitalo

From the Donnas to L7 to Cibo Matto to Bikini Kill, the girl bands bow in reverence. Paul Westerberg collaborates with her. The Gits asked her to fill Mia Zapata's shoes on tour. Legendary producer and Blackheart label-cofounder Kenny Laguna refers to her as "the Elvis of her day." Filmmakers want her looks and sounds on the screen. The WNBA got her to record a rocked-out version of "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" theme as their anthem.

The recent past of the five-foot-five women's rock pioneer known as Joan Jett sounds as sweet as her first number one hit back in 1982 telling someone to "put another dime in the jukebox, baby."

The 20th anniversary of the creation of her label, Blackheart Records, coincides with the release of her latest CD, *Fetish*, which is part bondage grind, part old favorites, and part summer dance party. And although she's a woman of a few words, we squeezed a few answers out.

R: How did Blackheart Records begin?

JJ: Well, we went to the labels, and nobody wanted me. We were getting turned down all over. I knew the songs were good.

R: Why haven't you recorded a version of the Replacements' "Androgynous," which shows up in the lineup of your live shows frequently?

JJ: We DO have one. Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill is on it and [producer] Ted Templeman helped produce. I don't know why we haven't done anything with it. We probably will.

R: What made you appear in [the independent film] *Boogie Boy*? You hadn't done a full length feature since *Light of Day*.

JJ: It was an opportunity to act AND perform with the Blackhearts, which is something I hadn't gotten to do before.

R: You and the Blackhearts did a one-nighter on Broadway long ago. Any chance we'll see you on a Broadway stage again?

JJ: May-BE! Either with the Blackhearts or some other incarnation. Something on a Broadway stage or an off-Broadway stage — I'd be into that. [It has since been confirmed that she'll be appearing in the long-running musical revue *Smokey Joe's Cafe*.]

R: What do you think of so many young women rockers citing you as an influence or a role model?

JJ: It's really cool when the up-and-coming women think of me that way. It makes me feel good.

R: Any advice for women forming bands?

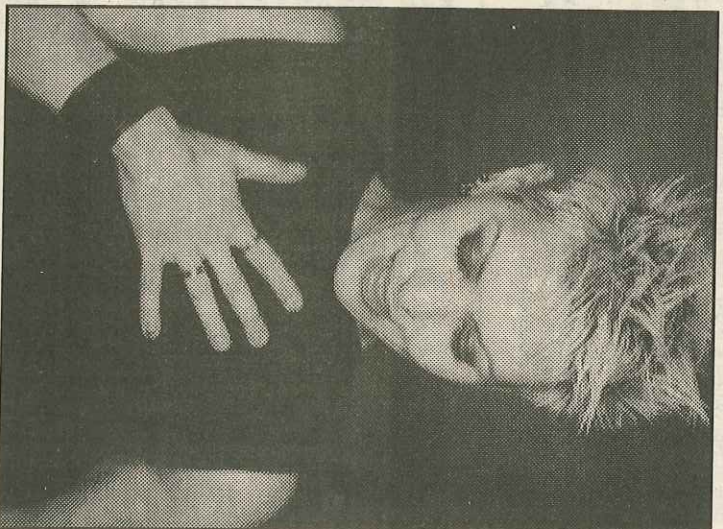
JJ: It's hard. It's really hard. Just start playing and writing and get out there.

R: How long did the "Fetish" song [an ode to bondage and worship, complete with whip-lash sound effects] take to write?

JJ: I wrote it in one day, basically. I came up with it rather quickly.

R: Playing for the U.S. troops in Bosnia was a great thing to do.

JJ: Playing for the troops, which the bands been doing for a while, is more about performing for those guys than anything. It's not really a political statement. I never really talked publicly about that because people in the [U.S.] Army aren't always there to fight for a cause. Some of those guys are in the army just because they grew up in a place where joining the army gave them an oppor-



Not So Blackheart-ed: Joan Jett is reveling in her recent success — from her new album to the 20th anniversary of her record label

tunity to make a better life for themselves.

I thought about joining the Army after the Runaways broke up. I was depressed and didn't know what I was going to do.

R: Speaking of the Runaways, there are always people talking about a reunion.

JJ: We've talked about it. As for getting together to do a project or something, yeah, I'd be into it. As for a full-scale reunion tour, I don't think that's going to happen.

R: What's the biggest misconception about you?

JJ: That I'm mean.

R: Because you cut a rather imposing figure, can you see why someone might get the wrong idea there?

JJ: What I do may be — I mean, I may come off as intense, but I'm not mean. I'm an imposing five-foot-five. (Laughs) ■