



An Aside with Joe – It's just part of the scenery

Mr C: Welcome to an Aside with Joe - It's just part of the scenery. It's a new season, it's a new day and we have a new Grand Prix winner in the shape of Sebastian Vettel. Joe, we've missed a lot since we last talked. How are you?

Joe: I'm very well apart from going to Australia and back, which was joyous and wonderful but it's a lot of travelling. It's something which a lot of people don't think about, is that we actually are mad enough to do this stuff. I'm entirely coherent but nobody understands me, you know?

Mr C: That's not ideal for a podcast, it has to be said.

Joe: Well, I'm sure they'll work a way around it. This is a time of year when things get a bit exciting, keep falling asleep in the wrong places in sentences and things.

Mr C: Okay, we'll see if we can keep you awake for at least the length of the show.

Joe: I've woken up now, so... I only missed it by eighteen minutes, so it can't be bad.

Mr C: It's fine, we'll see what we can pack in. There's obviously plenty to discuss. I think the last time we talked to you, we were speculating on who last year's world champion was going to be and now he's gone. He's not even in Formula One anymore.

Joe: Did we not speak after that? Good lord.

Mr C: I don't think we have, no.

Joe: Well, yes, he went. But I think we knew, well, we didn't know he was going to go. We knew he might win the championship. It was a big shock when he went. I don't think anybody expected. The replacement was fairly expected, just took a long time to go through all the motions. The removal of Mr Bernard Charles Ecclestone was not unexpected but happened rather more quickly than people expected.

Mr C: Sure, yep.

Joe: And it's been generally very good. I don't think there's anybody who would say that things haven't changed. There was certainly a new atmosphere in the paddock, a very different atmosphere in Australia, and I have to say it was better.

Mr C: Okay, what do you mean by that?

Joe: It just was. It was just a happier place.

Mr C: Right, okay!



Joe: It's very difficult to put it into words, but I think I wrote somewhere that Liberty was like a bunch of G.I.s sitting on a Sherman and they've been greeted joyously wherever they go more or less. Thus far they haven't done too much that seems to be... they've done nothing that looks entirely stupid. I think they're doing a lot of good things. Whether they'll continue to do so, that's another matter, but things seem to be moving in the right direction.

Mr C: And has Bernie truly gone? Is there any chance he might turn up and cause more trouble?

Joe: I'm sure he'll turn up from time to time but in reality terms, he's gone. He was in no place to argue when they came and bought the business. He was their employee, so when they decided 'right, we've had enough of you, time for change', there weren't any arguments left. And to be fair, I think a lot of people have been saying this for a long time. I don't think they've done anything particularly radical as yet, but they are doing sensible things. And it needs to be done, because with Bernie, we were just drifting away on the same old stuff. I think a step in the right direction, towards the future, is a good thing.

Mr C: The immediate impact I felt as a fan was the lifting of social media restrictions during both testing and during grand prix weekends.

Joe: Well not a huge lift, but...

Mr C: We have video now.

Joe: We have video of what?

Mr C: Moving cars. Which is a major step up from no video at all.

Joe: Well, you have video of a few moving cars, very limited. It's a step forward, it would have been hard to be a step back, apart from having stone age cars I suppose. No I don't think, what they did was something sensible, they didn't just free it up entirely. I can't just go wandering in and start recording things in the paddock. There's still a lot of restrictions, it's not going to change hugely. But I think it's just an attitude change, really. People needed something to motivate them and I think it's come along and motivated them.

Mr C: It's a more positive outlook.

Joe: There's no question about that, absolutely. I can't explain it in any great detail but the paddock was a happy place. It may have something to do with the fact Pasquale Lattuneddu is no longer there.

Mr C: Who, sorry?

Joe: Bernie's sidekick, who has always been the paddock policeman for twenty-odd years. Called Pasquale, he was removed from the office.

Mr C: Okay, he went too?

Joe: He went, I think there was a meeting of the teams and it was said, 'what do you want changing' and I



think there was a sort of a rough, not rough, fairly clear-cut voice which is 'we don't want this person' and that was the end of that, really.

Mr C: Right!

Joe: So we have new... I don't know, it's just the paddock was different, it was happier, it was much more enthusiastic, much more optimistic and much more creative, I think is a fair way of putting it.

Mr C: Would it be fair to say the teams haven't, or aren't often asked, what would you look changed?

Joe: I think they were asked, they just never got it. We're at the beginning of a honeymoon period for the new people and we'll see what happens. Fundamentally, as of now, they haven't done anything which is daft and I think that there are a lot of people that have a lot of hopes they'll do some good. We'll see. So far I think they seem to be very sensible, they're listening, they're generally doing good things. They haven't done much wrong. One or two of their appointments were a bit bizarre, but there we are.

Mr C: Presumably you're not talking about Ross Brawn?

Joe: No, I'm not talking about Ross Brawn, no. I think it's sensible in lots of respects to... you don't want to throw the baby out with the bathwater, so while you want to change a lot, you need to keep a few things in place and then change them later and I think we'll probably see that happening. When all is said and done, it was a necessary change and they did it quite neatly, to be honest. It wasn't a blood bath, it wasn't like McLaren.

Mr C: Let's turn our attention to McLaren then.

Joe: The blood bath, yes.

Mr C: How do you sum it up? During the off-season, Ron's gone, Zak's in and the engine appears to be slower than ever before.

Joe: I don't think, I think there's a couple of things there which you need to think about. One is, Ron's gone, yes. Zak's in, yes, but he's not Ron. Zak is just part of the future, he is not the future. I think there is somebody going to come in eventually above everybody who will be the new Ron. We don't know who it is yet, but I think there is one. Mind you, who'd want to come in right now?

Mr C: A very brave person!

Joe: It's the age old argument. Why walk into a disaster? And the answer is because it can't get any worse. And therefore anything you do is on an upward path. Now, that's difficult to justify if you're in league with Honda because Honda have just completely screwed up and the question is, will the relationship survive? Because you can only screw up so many times without destroying Formula One teams. I think that it's not indecent if McLaren were to say, 'this is dumb, we want out of here, these guys aren't up to speed.' I don't think that's outrageous, and I think, to be honest, if Honda were put up against the wall, they'd probably say, 'yea, good point, that's true.' Now, there's lots of justifications, they came in before they wanted to because McLaren were pushing them too hard. But they've screwed up too many times, and they're not



listening to the world. They're not bringing in people fast enough and they're producing disastrous new engines. They've got to get it together or ship out.

Mr C: And if McLaren were to pull the trigger on that decision and that relationship, could they do that mid-season or would we have to wait till the end of the season to see any changes?

Joe: They could do it mid-season, and there are some justifications that suggest that it might be... it's never going to be sensible, but you could see why it might happen. It would cost them an absolute fortune, first of all, in terms of money that... because Honda is their primary sponsor to a very large degree. So in addition to having no engines, if they walk, you're going to have no money. In addition to no money, you're going to have to pay a lot for an alternative engine, and the amount of money you will win back if you go from tenth in the championship, let's say, to fifth or sixth, you're only talking about \$15 million, and it's going to cost you a hell of a lot more than that to make all the changes. But in the longer term, if you're looking for sponsors, at least if you're having an engine that is vaguely competitive, you can show that it's not you who is screwing up. And therefore, in the future, you can build on that. We'll see what happens, I don't think any decisions are made yet. I think it's very close to being, I think the relationship is not a happy one. I don't think it's sensible, necessarily, to continue. But I think they've got to go through the processes of saying 'here's your last chance' and we'll see what happens. There is an argument that says Honda is better off with someone else, not quite as demanding, and we have a situation where there are only ten teams in Formula One, so the tenth team is fundamentally... has nothing to lose.

Mr C: Okay. Most likely candidate being Sauber?

Joe: That's it, it's just obvious. You have a choice, you get to pay out, let's say, \$25 million, you pay for a poor engine from Ferrari. Or you get paid about the same for a poor engine from Honda. It's not going to change your position in the championship, it's going to change your position financially to the tune of about \$50 million. So there's nothing to be lost, and if it goes right, you're a factory team moving in the right direction. So, logically speaking, it should be a slam dunk, and we'll see what happens. I don't think that's going to happen mid-season. There is a question about the whole diplomacy, the politics, of quitting, because McLaren walking off to Mercedes, which is not a great choice, they're not going to win races with Mercedes, but if they consider it to be a bit like Williams and Red Bull to some extent too, everyone's in a holding pattern in the moment, for new regulations and they can go and find new partners. And it's better to be in a holding pattern that's up the front as opposed to a holding pattern that's down the back. And in Sauber's case, or whoever, having a holding pattern down the back that's fine. If there were eleven teams, it wouldn't be fine, but if there are only ten, you're safe. You're going to get prize money, whatever happens, for at least the next two years with no new teams coming in. Why on earth pay for your engines?

Mr C: And you don't see Honda just quitting and leaving Formula One?

Joe: You never know, that's up to the management. That would be a gross disaster for them. And it's better for them to keep struggling on, doing the Japanese thing, you know, improving, improving, improving. But they've got to show they can do it. One of the things involved in doing that is to open your mind and let other ideas in. It's all very well to say 'we'll do it all in house' but how can you possibly think that's going to work in a sport where ... there are no restrictions in Formula One if there is talent sufficient. Whoever it is, whoever has got the answers, will get hired. It is a meritocracy, and anyone who says it isn't is a fool. Because anybody will take anybody, even if a penguin comes along and goes 'I'm a better aerodynamicist



than Adrian Newey' and proves it, they'll hire the penguin. It's as simple as that.

Mr C: But Honda won't.

Joe: Well, Honda won't, unless it's a Japanese penguin. And the chances of a Japanese penguin coming along and changing the world is not very high. So, this has been one of the problems. They've got to work out how it is and how it is, you get your information, you get your data, you get everything from wherever you can get it. Not just a bunch of Japanese blokes sitting round a table going 'we're cleverer than everyone else' because the chances are they're not. The chances are, there's a penguin out there somewhere who's smarter than some of the Japanese.

Mr C: Right, that's an image.

Joe: No, but that's the bottom line. The fact is, how arrogant are you to think that your nation is the only nation in the world that can do it?

Mr C: Is that what they think?

Joe: Sadly, that appears to be what they think.

Mr C: It's not like a language barrier or something that makes it harder to integrate as opposed to they genuinely think they are better than everyone else?

Joe: No, I don't think they think they're better, I think they think their system is better. And their system is very clever but you've got to have the right attitude in the company. Honda was founded by a very radical maverick kind of guy. Mr Honda. And the people that followed Mr Honda were the same kind of approach, they were mavericks, they took risks, they took daft risks and they weren't afraid to fail. But what happens is, over time, that's faded away and you have a bunch of people who now, if you get a job at Honda, it's a job for life. You don't get fired at Honda. And if you don't get fired, therefore you have nothing to lose if you're rubbish. I think there's a percentage of rubbish going on now that needs to be fired. Even the boss of the company has said 'we need to have a cultural change in the company'. And certainly Formula One, Honda has been rubbish in Formula One since the days of Ayrton Senna, to be quite honest.

Mr C: Right!

Joe: And there is no way around that. They won one race I think, in the days of BAR Honda, or Honda, Honda, Honda, whatever it was. Then they performed the absolute genius withdrawal, giving \$100 million to Ross Brawn, who promptly won the championship in a Honda car with a Mercedes engine, admittedly, and with a genius piece of aerodynamics which was discovered by Honda. Or at least a Honda-employed engineer, designed the double diffuser which won the championship for Brawn, and when you take a step back and look at it from a historical point of view, what a screw up. We give away the team, with a pile of money, and a little invention we came up with and somebody else, i.e. Mercedes, uses it to win. Not smart. That was a sign of a company that was really all over the shop, and they've got to get their head around it, get it together. But you know, in Formula One, it's easy to say everyone is doing it wrong, but the fact is they are. Right now, Mercedes has been doing it right for a long time, as up until last week at least. And we don't really know whether that's, it looked fairly conclusive that the Ferrari was better. I think in qualifying,



the Mercedes is quicker, but in race trim, in the circumstances we saw in Australia, which were not wildly outrageous. You saw the start of the race, Lewis Hamilton leading Sebastian Vettel, following him, Hamilton couldn't pull away. Pitted. When Vettel came out ahead, Vettel pulled away. All things considered, you've got to say the Ferrari is a better car, because Lewis couldn't pull away. It doesn't mean Vettel could overtake, but Lewis couldn't pull away. When they swapped sides, Vettel could pull away, therefore the Ferrari is a better car.

Mr C: Where has that come from? Because this time last year, or even six months ago, that wasn't an obvious leap that we were expecting from Ferrari?

Joe: That's an interesting argument, because, is it a better car or is it just that they've done a lot of work on the engine? This is an engine Formula at the moment. Things are dominated by the engines. You'd have to say that the Ferrari great leap forward is probably in terms of the engine, more than anything else. But they don't seem to have the ability to turn it up like Mercedes can in qualifying, which I think has always been their big secret weapon. They could turn it up in qualifying, and then in the races they could turn them down again, because you have to be reliable as well. I think that maybe Ferrari have just got an engine that races better, but we've had one races, it's very difficult to judge everything and say this is how it's going to be, because circumstances, conditions, it wasn't particularly cold in Melbourne or anything like that. It wasn't damp, it wasn't anything much, it was just kind of Melbourne-y weather, and Ferrari were right in those circumstances. The tyres worked. Tyres, generally, not really sure what to make of them at the moment, we'll have to see a few more races in.

Mr C: As in, you weren't impressed? Or you were expecting more?

Joe: No, I wasn't expecting more. They're supposed to go longer and then drop off more radically but I'm not sure we ever saw any drop off, to be quite honest. But we just haven't seen enough, I don't think we have a clear judgement of the season. It certainly looks like Ferrari, or did have an advantage. I think we'll see, put it this way, I think it's between Ferrari and Mercedes this year. I don't see Red Bull being in the ball game unless the engine improves dramatically.

Mr C: And you think their drop off in performance is down to the Renault?

Joe: Yes, as I said, it's an engine formula. There's a very tight mid-field, no question about that. In qualifying, we saw a Haas sixth in Australia, now that's down to a Ferrari engine in part. Decent chassis, okay, didn't work in the race, but we've got a whole bunch of teams who are quite competitive and we just have to see who comes out overall on top. I think there are a number of disadvantages that different teams have, Williams for example, the driver line up is not as strong as it could be, because Bottas left. We know that Bottas was better than Massa last year, to some extent. Massa's back, much to his own amazement, I think.

Mr C: Much to everybody's amazement.

Joe: Well, a little bit, yea! Lance Stroll has a lot of money, and thus far has just done very little to show that he's really top notch, but, let's give him some time and see.

Mr C: Giovinazzi did a better job, though, you'd have to say.

Joe: I think that may be due to the fact that Giovinazzi's probably more talented, but there you are. You can't be 100%. Giovinazzi's not twelve years old, as well. Sometimes rich people, i.e. Lance's father, you can do too much, too soon. You have to take things in steps. Maybe Lance Stroll shouldn't be in Formula One, maybe he should be in Formula Two or whatever. But he is where he is and that screws up his career, that screws up his career, it's a choice they made. He's got to deliver, in Melbourne he wasn't in any way, shape or form, impressive. But let's see where it goes. There are better driver line ups than Williams has. We've got Force India, for example, a pretty strong line up. McLaren have a very strong line up, bad engine. Haas - very strong line up. Renault, decent line up. In fact, pretty strong, I'd say, but the engine's not so much there. Toro Rosso, great line up. They never seem to race well, don't know why, they are always quick, they're always there or thereabouts, but they never seem to race as well. It may be something to do with the tyres, I don't know. A whole bunch of teams in the middle ground which are very much of a muchness, and then at the back you have Sauber with the year-old engines. But there is logic in what they're doing, and you have McLaren in their Honda embrace.

Mr C: What's your take on Sauber benching Wehrlein and bringing Giovinazzi in? Presumably they have no choice, they've done that because...

Joe: They didn't bench Wehrlein, Wehrlein benched himself. I think that was a very grown up thing that he did. I actually went to see him and I said 'very good, mature decision' because he basically realised that he wasn't ready to do it. And as a young driver you can say I'm invincible, I can do this, and you end up crashing the car because you can't do it. And he just said to himself, I can't do this. And that's a grown up thing to do, so that's actually a good sign for him. I think, because he's very talented, but he's just rather young, and he's made a couple of bad decisions. One of them was ending up upside down at the Race of Champions, not a great decision. It wasn't necessarily his choice but he shouldn't have been there anyway. And I think last year, there's a couple of things that he did that were just not awfully grown up, and I think Esteban Ocon, who is younger, is more grown up. I think there are signs that Wehrlein is beginning to be sensible and clever, and he's quick. We know he's quick. So, we'll have to see to what extent Mercedes continue to have faith in him. But to actually say I'm not going to do this, is smart.

Mr C: Presumably no Formula One manager or team is going to allow their drivers to take part in Race of Champions ever again?

Joe: That's an interesting question. It wasn't very helpful for the Race of Champions, that's for sure. Whether or not that has an impact, we'll have to see. It's fair to say that all the young drivers will be dissuaded from doing it. To be honest, the amount of investment necessary for drivers in Formula One, messing around in some silly buggies isn't actually worth doing.

Mr C: Not if the risks are this high, the stakes are this high.

Joe: Not if the risks are the impact that we're seeing with Wehrlein, no. It's unfortunate because we want to see people racing in other things but you've got to be realistic about these things as well.

Mr C: What do you make of the new colours we've got in Formula One? We've got a pink Force India, a nice blue Toro Rosso and an orange McLaren?



Joe: Well I've been saying for quite some time, as a reader of the newsletter, you'll know that some point in the winter before it all happened, I wrote a thing all about the real estate of livery, and how there's a whole bunch of colour real estate being left alone, being left empty. People weren't claiming it. All the cars looked the same, they were all sort of grey-ey, blue-ey, blah de blah. And now thank goodness, we've got some pink, we've got some orange. You can tell all the cars apart now, you don't have any problem as to the team. Okay, it's still difficult to tell the drivers apart, but from a team point of view, there is no two teams now which are confusing. The only primary real estate that's gone, we've got some yellow from Renault... you've also got to look at it head on, because the car's do look a bit different head on. Renault is yellow, head on. McLaren is orange. Side on, they're a bit different. But head on, the only colour we've got available at the moment, really, is green. It's nice to see a car in pink actually, I don't mind that, I think it's quite good.

Mr C: And good for the sport that you've got new sponsors coming in, BWT.

Joe: Well yes, it is but also just because it's, it just makes sense to do something different. And the McLaren switch to orange, in part it was the anti-Ron movement, but nonetheless, to make the car's understandable for the public is something that's valuable.

Mr C: It makes a difference. It certainly made a difference in Sunday's race.

Joe: The only thing is when they said Force India, both drivers were going to have pink helmets, I sort of went, oh god. You know, okay, great we've got two pink cars but do we need the pink helmets too. Let's have one red helmet and one pink helmet, and we'll be able to tell them apart, but in fact it's not too bad. But there are teams where it's very, very hard. Drivers spend endless amounts of time with these fancy helmet designs, it's all very twiddly and lovely to look at when you're close up but it's all rubbish because you're not close up. You watch it on television and you can't tell them apart. In the old days, when you had a red helmet and a white helmet, you knew which driver was which. I still think it's a problem, I think those ridiculous dorsal fins should have big numbers on them. It would be very helpful for the fans. We'll see things coming along to help the fans more.

Mr C: Have you made a list that you could subtly pass to Ross Brawn and say 'here's some ideas, go fix these'?

Joe: No, I haven't, it would be arrogant of me to suggest that I would know the difference. If they read what I write and think that's a good idea, that's fine. But I'm not some sort of, I'm not the Angel Gabriel or whatever.

Mr C: It seems like both of those suggestions would improve matters for the fans though.

Joe: They may well do. It's arrogant of anybody to think they know the answers, we can all write things and say 'this is a good idea, this is a bad idea' and if people listen, that's another thing, but to think that we know better is a bit silly really. Some of us have been around a long time, and those who have been around a long time, very often, we've seen mistakes being made. Sometimes new people come along and they don't know about the mistakes, so they make the same mistakes again. It's a bit like voting for Trump, or something like that. The electorates sometimes go bananas, and should be just taken out and beaten on the head with baseball bats. Anyway, enough of that. Don't want to get into politics.



Mr C: Well, if you're going to go down the route of politics, no... I do have a problem actually this week, because normally at this point in the show, we discuss GrandPrix+ but I haven't read the latest issue.

Joe: Why?

Mr C: Because, I got to page nine and there was a great big bum, full page bottom, a ladies' bottom. And I thought, this isn't the magazine for me, I don't think I want to be supporting this.

Joe: What??

Mr C: Well, here's the thing. We are now at a point in society where you've got people like Donald Trump being elected into office, he's obviously not a very nice person. And it feels like, very much, that this is a time to make a stand for pro-equality, and to try and change the world for the better, including Formula One.

Joe: But you can't... no, hang on, you're mixing things up here. Formula One, GrandPrix+ is a reflection of what Formula One is.

Mr C: No, no it isn't. It's your opinion on what Formula One is.

Joe: No, it's not. It's not our opinion.

Mr C: It is!

Joe: No, it isn't! It's not our opinion of what Formula One is. It is a reflection of what Formula One is. If there's a picture of a bum in there, and it's a covered bum, and it has, if I remember correctly, it has a bum with a hat dangling down next to it which says Ferrari or something like that, it's just part of the scenery. Grand Prix racing, whether you like it or not, has got good looking women kicking around the, not just the paddock, kicking around everywhere. It's just part of the scene. So if you ignore this, and we have to take pictures of skinny men, with silly hair-dos because that's what people think is socially acceptable, it's not a true reflection of what it is. What it is, is, sometimes we'll run pictures... I have this fight with the other GrandPrix+ partners. Sometimes I put pictures of hairy bottomed people in as well, which are very ugly, but nonetheless it's part of Grand Prix racing, because not everybody's a pretty bottom.

Mr C: But hold on a second, you don't have to put it in without a caption, or without any comment at all. It's your magazine to frame as you will.

Joe: What you do is, you are reflecting, you have photographs of what is happening. You choose photographs based on things that give an indication of what the sport is all about.

Mr C: Even if you know that to be very backwards, and very 1970s?

Joe: Why is...? What do you want? If we have a picture of little children carrying flags, we'll get accused of being pedophiles. If we have pictures of good looking bottoms, we're accused of being sexist. What do we do? We're just reflecting what there is in... we could have had pictures of little kids with flags because on



the grid there were grids with flags. School children. We didn't use them, but we could have done.

Mr C: But you exercised editorial control over that, you made that conscious decision.

Joe: You make a decision based on the photographs you have, based on the fact that this is how it is. I put pictures of little flowers in sometimes too, because sometimes we go places where there are flowers. Sometimes we go to places where there are bums, big or small. The fact is that it is part of Grand Prix racing. It's like saying you shouldn't put cars which are ugly.

Mr C: Question then, hold on a second, do you think it is a positive part of Formula One racing?

Joe: No, I think it's part of Formula One racing full stop. You can't say its positive or negative, it's just part of it.

Mr C: Of course you can. You can have an opinion on it, you have an opinion on everything.

Joe: No, hello, look, you cannot say this is negative or positive, it's just there.

Mr C: No!

Joe: What do you mean, no? It's there. Sorry. Go to a Grand Prix, and look around, and you'll see some people with bums.

Mr C: No, of course, I understand, I get that it's there. What I'm saying is, you can have an opinion on it. You must have an opinion on it.

Joe: No, why must you have an opinion on it?

Mr C: Because you have an opinion, we talk every...

Joe: Look, ninety percent of the people who go to Grand Prix races are not in the least bit worried if there's a pretty bum walking by. They don't consider it to be sexy or sexist or whatever it is. They just consider it to be there. Being judgemental about it makes no sense at all. It's just there. If you want to say it's right or it's wrong, don't go to Grands Prix.

Mr C: Why can't you go to a Grand Prix and say 'that's wrong, we should change it'? Like we do with things like social media, or all of the things Formula One currently get wrong, we say, that's bad...

Joe: How... who is there to judge what's right or wrong?

Mr C: We are. We're doing a podcast about it! What do you mean?

Joe: What gives you the right to judge what's right or wrong? What gives you the right to say you can't have a good looking bum in a magazine? What do you want boy's bums? The point is, what do you want? I don't judge what I want, I just judge what's there. It's there, whether it's right or wrong. I don't think it's for us to judge if it's wrong. The whole question of grid girls is a very curious argument. Because there's an



awful lot of people in the world who want to be grid girls because it's part of a modelling career. It's a step forward. People do it from choice. They're not forced into their little trousers to go onto the grid to look pretty, they do it from choice. They do it from choice because it will add to their career, who knows, they get to marry drivers sometimes? Whether you think it's right or wrong, there's a reality in it that is people do it from choice. We're not forcing anybody to do it, we're not forcing anybody to go to the Grands Prix, and so all I'm doing when I'm choosing pictures is reflecting what we have.

Mr C: Okay, what if, as a reader, I choose not to read the magazine because I don't agree with that picture then?

Joe: Well that's a choice you make. But what a strange choice to make, surely?

Mr C: Why?

Joe: Well, why is it not strange? What makes you the arbitrar of what's right or wrong? Who are you to judge what is right or wrong?

Mr C: We currently have a situation... well, okay. We live in a world where we are more enlightened than we used to be as a global population and it's now incredibly obvious that sitting quietly and watching things that we disagree with happening and hoping they'll get better, doesn't work. Which is why Donald Trump is in the position he's in, because everybody sat around...

Joe: No, no, because everybody elected him.

Mr C: Because the people...

Joe: No, no, the question is, that's a different question. The people who elected him are people who chose him for whatever reason, they chose him. They have a right to do that, just as they have a right to vote for Brexit. Now, we may say that's dumb, that's stupid.

Mr C: Which I am saying. That's my point. I am saying that.

Joe: You are saying it. But unfortunately, I do it myself about Brexit and about Trump, but when it comes to a good looking bottom in a paddock in Formula One, that's just part of the reality that is Formula One, whether it's right or wrong. But who are we, or who are you, because you're the one making the stand here, who are you to judge that's wrong? It's there. It's a reality.

Mr C: But if nobody makes a stand, it will always be there. Surely you can't see the grid girls still being in Formula One in five years or ten years time, it's an absurd concept?

Joe: Why is it an absurd concept? Why are their grid girls? Answer that.

Mr C: Because we live in a society that is dominated by men, or has been dominated by men until very recently, when finally we have equality, we have globalisation which gives everybody the internet which...

Joe: But we don't have equality because people...



Mr C: We are getting there though. Slowly. It's an uphill battle, obviously, and Formula One isn't helping.

Joe: Well, Formula One's not not helping either. I think you're just reading too much into it. I think just accept the fact this is part of it.

Mr C: I can't do that.

Joe: Hang on, hang on. If there was a good looking bottom on every page then I would accept the argument, but it's not. It was one page, one picture with a good looking bottom, it wasn't that good looking bottom. I actually, to be honest, it wasn't that great a bottom, but it was okay. It was a bottom. Now, you want me to put men's bottoms in there? Fine. I'll put men's bottoms in there, but then again, men's bottoms are not really something that you notice a lot at Grands Prix, okay? You don't notice Ferrari flags. You want me to ban Ferrari flags because you don't like Ferrari? Let's get real, here. I am just reflecting, when I'm choosing pictures to go in a magazine, I'm reflecting what there is there. Now, you say this is not something you want to do, fine. But there are people out there who don't like grass, so we're not allowed to have grass shown. We're not allowed to have...

Mr C: It's not the same thing.

Joe: It's exactly the same thing.

Mr C: It's not the same thing.

Joe: You are passing judgement on what you think is right and wrong, and I'm not passing judgement at all. I'm just reflecting on what is there.

Mr C: Right. Okay, fine, here's a question. You have, on this show, many a time, said that Formula One needs to encourage young fans, it needs to be more family friendly.

Joe: Yes.

Mr C: Is pictures like the one on page nine of GrandPrix+ doing that?

Joe: Well, if you're a fourteen year old boy, probably yes. Because that's what you want to look at. It's really...

Mr C: It's not...

Joe: No, hang on. You've got to think about it in bigger terms than you're looking at it. You can go along and say the future is electric cars.

Mr C: Mmhmm, yep.

Joe: Does Formula One want to be electric cars? No they don't. They want noise. So you have to have, you can't just go along with what you think is where society should be going. You have to just say, what is it



that Formula One is? The whole picture of Formula One. And I'm not being judgemental about any of this. I'm not judging anything. I'm just reflecting what is there. And on one page of an eighty-nine page magazine, or whatever it is. I'm not judging right, wrong, this, that. I'm just saying, GrandPrix+, the pictures in GrandPrix+ are a reflection of what happens in a weekend. They're not a political statement, and god help us, we don't a political statement. There's enough of that rubbish in the world already. Formula One is supposed to be a sport, it's supposed to be enjoyment. And I don't think that one page in a magazine makes a big difference one way or the other.

Mr C: I, personally, disagree with that statement.

Joe: Clearly you do! That's something that we, I don't know how we can find a solution to. Because, if there is a police force on what we're allowed to have in photographs, when we think this reflects how Grand Prix racing is, what are we supposed to do? Because, I'm sorry, but you go walking around the paddock and it's everywhere. Now, does that make it right? Not necessarily, it doesn't make it right. It's just part of how it is. Do we want to change it? Do we want it to be some kind of perfect demographic a-sexual world that is not going to offend anybody?

Mr C: Do you?

Joe: Do we?

Mr C: Do you? No, no, do you?

Joe: I don't honestly care one way or the other. But I think it has character that we're trying to reflect. If they ban bottoms from the Formula One paddock, fair enough. But they're not going to, I'll tell you that. Not for any, not in the conceivable future that I can see. I'm not sure, what are you going to replace things with? What is...?

Mr C: You don't need it!

Joe: You're declaring that something is not acceptable. Well, what is acceptable?

Mr C: Well, I mean, what are you saying? How are we possibly going to cope without a board with the driver's number on it in front of the driver? How will we ever tell who they are? We don't need somebody holding a board.

Joe: No, no, no, but you also need to have character. And if you're not allowed to have this and not allowed to have that, not allowed to have this, not allowed to have that, where are you going to get a sport that has any character that's interesting for people to look at? I'm not talking about female bums or whatever, I'm just talking about in general terms. If you play to everybody who has a complaint about everything, you're going to have a very drab world because there are no... nothing is going to get through because somebody somewhere is going to be upset about it. I don't really understand why one photograph causes such a vast amount of chaos. I know, a McLaren fan might write in and say 'I don't want to see anymore Ferrari flags'.

Mr C: But surely you can see that is different? Am I being crazy here?



Joe: Yes, you are being crazy.

Mr C: Am I?

Joe: Yes, because what I'm saying, it's not...

Mr C: How is...

Joe: No, hang on. It's not based on any kind of moral judgement, it's based on, is this what this is all about? I'm looking at pictures of a weekend and I'm deciding 'I'll choose this picture because it captures part of the weekend'. Okay? Just as I have pictures of people, racing drivers, standing on beaches, because that's what they do in Australia, or playing beach volleyball, or doing something that is just so completely schmucky Australian, and they're all going through these clichés. Should we ban clichés? Should we ban... surely there are more important things to waste energy on than that?

Mr C: No! Than equality? In society? I can't think of anything more important. Myself.

Joe: Yes, but then again, you're looking at a sport that is probably more equal than any other sport.

Mr C: Is it though? Tell me how!

Joe: Well, look, it is a sport that is a meritocracy. If you are good... we've had this conversation many times. If you are good at what you do, you will get the job. That, go through other sports and tell me how many sports are like that. How many women football players are there? None.

Mr C: But there are no women Formula One drivers?

Joe: Well, there could be if they were good enough, and they're not.

Mr C: Okay, define good enough?

Joe: They are good enough, there are people out there who are good enough, they just haven't used them yet. I went to see one the other day, I went to see Simona de Silvestro in the V8 Supercar paddock. She was wasted by Formula One, because she didn't have the money and she could have been a Formula One driver. There are not lots of them, because there are all kinds of questions of strength, all kinds of questions of attitude, all kinds of questions of many different things that make up what makes a Formula One driver. But at least we have the potential to do it, and not just the potential as the players if you like, but we have behind the players, in the teams, there are more and more women. There are large numbers of women involved in Formula One and it's a meritocracy, if they are good at what they do, they get the job. Okay? Now, if you think that Formula One is backward and not keeping up in respect of sexism, you're wrong.

Mr C: That is what I think, from what I see.

Joe: In that case, you need to have a look more closely. Because, yes, there is the age-old motor racing use



of women to do promotional work but that's not just motor racing, it's every kind of thing. If you're ever promoting anything, you'll find it works far better, and it works better not just for men, it works for women as well. Women are good at promoting things. They may not be shapely necessarily, but they are better at doing it. And I think to make it more than that, just makes no sense to me. And I think that Formula One is actually a very egalitarian world, and we have two team principals out of ten who are now female, we have a lot of good engineers, we have almost the majority of the lawyers in Formula One are women, finance people, we have more and more women engineers. But then again, are they coming up through the channels of promotional channels, if you like. Cranfield University has a course for future engineers who will be big stars in motorsport, this year the course has one woman. Is that the fault of Cranfield University? No, it's not. It's a fault of the system and it's a fault of the women themselves, because they don't stick at it.

Mr C: Come on. Hold on, Formula One has to take responsibility for that as well. If you're a young...

Joe: Hang on, why does Formula One have to take responsibility for teenage girls stopping motor racing?

Mr C: Because Formula One is a yardstick. It's inspiration, it's a halo that if you were a young person looking up for inspiration and aspiration, you look to a sport like Formula One for ideas and for something to aspire to be in. Now, if you look at Formula One and all you see is man, man, man, man, man, another man, another man and another man. If you're a young girl looking at that, you'd think well, obviously that's not for me.

Joe: But that's not why they stop.

Mr C: Right, it's why they don't start.

Joe: No, no, that's not true. They do start. If you go and you look and see the work that's being done by the FIA Women in Motorsport Commission, you look at the work that's being done by Susie Wolff, you're looking at these kind of things, the big problem is not that you don't have participation. You have plenty of participation in karting with girls, and girls sometimes are very good at karting, but they get to thirteen, they get to fourteen, and things change. They get family pressures, they get their own sense of 'I'm a girl, why am I doing this?'. There are all kinds of things that come in that need to be looked at as to why it is what it is. But you can't just say it's someone's fault that this happens. It's not someone's fault that this happens, it's a sense that this has been happening forever. It's like boys playing netball, it doesn't happen a lot. You want to change things, you want an egalitarian world with all the boys playing netball, that's fine, but it's going to take a long time to do it. You've got to do things in a sensible fashion. To think that this is relating to Formula One not being a meritocracy, and using a picture of a bum in a magazine, I'm sorry, I don't get that.

Mr C: Fine. I think I've done a terrible job of arguing this point, so I apologise to anybody.

Joe: I don't think I've done a great job arguing back, to be honest. But having said that, I just don't think, I think that you're being a little bit idealistic and a little bit less than practical.

Mr C: See here's the thing, maybe I've got this wrong, maybe I'm over-simplifying this, but you own the magazine. You write the magazine, and you produce the magazine. Surely your opinion is throughout the



magazine.

Joe: But you're missing the point. The point is that I'm not campaigning one way or the other, I'm just reflecting what I see. And where I'm reflecting what I see, that's the magazine. The magazine is about, this is what it's like to be there. Okay? So if we leave out things that we see, if we leave out drunken people leaning up against trees, we don't. We put that in too. We put in the ugly side of Formula One too, if you like. We try to put in a bit of everything. As I said earlier on, if I have twenty-five pictures of nicely shaped bottoms, then I would accept your argument. But one? Come on. You're going to see pictures in GrandPrix+ throughout the year, particularly with grid girls, you're going to get grid girls, because that's what they are. If you can come up with a better idea than grid girls, fine. But they are still there.

Mr C: But what do you mean? I can't understand this. There is no reason for a human being to stand in front of a car with a pole with a number on it. It serves no purpose at all.

Joe: There is actually a very good reason for that.

Mr C: Go on.

Joe: That is because drivers otherwise will end up in the wrong place. They're there to signify something.

Mr C: When a car...

Joe: Now who holds the pole is another question.

Mr C: A car arrives at the back of the grid, it is collected by about nine mechanics, who then push it to the correct spot. Every single time.

Joe: But it's also to do with, it's to do with the show as well.

Mr C: It's silly. It's just silly. It is.

Joe: Okay, so why does everybody do it?

Mr C: I don't know! I honestly don't know. I think if you were going to look at Formula One with new eyes with a new company like Liberty Media, I think the idea of people standing with a pole in front of a car with a number on it is one of the first ideas I'd ditch. It has absolutely no merit, it brings nothing to the sport at all, and could easily be dropped with no consequences. It's not a safety thing, it's not a logical thing, it is purely a traditional and sexist thing. And that's all it is.

Joe: Okay, you go on to a grid and you watch what photographers are taking pictures of. Why are they doing that? They're doing that because it sells. Why does it sell?

Mr C: Because Formula One appeals to men because it's predominately a male audience.

Joe: Yea. Well, that's true.



Mr C: That's a problem.

Joe: Why is it a problem? It's always been a predominately male audience. Girls fundamentally... it's like saying women's tennis, is it a predominately male audience, is it a women audience, I don't know?

Mr C: I watch it every day. I genuinely watched about four hours of women's tennis today.

Joe: Okay...

Mr C: It's a bad argument if you're going down the WTA route, I genuinely love WTA.

Joe: Alright, okay. So why, what are you watching it, for what reason?

Mr C: Because it's a slower game than the male game, I can follow the ball easier, they may play more entertaining tennis. Male tennis is mostly serve, volley, and finish. And it's not that entertaining to watch. The pace of the game...

Joe: Okay, alright, I tell you what. The people who are going to be listening to this podcast probably aren't too bothered about that if you see what I mean.

Mr C: I hope you're wrong about that, actually. I hope that the people who listen to the podcast are very much...

Joe: No, no, your justification about why you watch women's tennis, I mean. Not about what Grand Prix racing is, but I think we've probably done enough time on that particular subject.

Mr C: Fine, I'm not going to change your mind, I understand that. Can I say one more thing though?

Joe: You're not going to change my mind, because I don't think we're doing anything wrong, we're just reflecting what's there, that's all.

Mr C: I understand that. Can I say, so long as you continue to show what's there, I will continue to read to that point and then no farther. Does that sound like a fair compromise?

Joe: Well, in that case, you'll never get beyond the first few pages because when you have pictures they are in that early section.

Mr C: I should read it backwards.

Joe: Well, if you want to read any of the magazine, you'd better start at the back. Because obviously when you have a section that's all about the pictures that show what's happening over a weekend, you're going to fundamentally, on page 9, 10, 11, 12 or 13, you're going to go 'oh I don't want to read any further.' But I think you may be kind of unique in this respect, maybe not unique, but you might be in the very, very, very, very, very, very, very small minority who get worked about something perhaps a little excessively. That's all.



Mr C: Fair enough. I'm, you know, whatever. Thank you for talking to us, Joe.

Joe: Let's try another subject, shall we?

Mr C: I appreciate you talking through this with us. At least, it was better than no comment, they're my pictures, it's my magazine, go away. So that, I appreciate that.

Joe: That's not what I'd say anyway. I'm just trying to reflect what happens, that's all.

Mr C: So very quickly, let's wrap up the show, because we are way, way over time here. You're going to China, you're going to China today, tomorrow?

Joe: Day after tomorrow, I think. I got the visa today, so it's not exactly unstressful.

Mr C: Not exactly unstressful?

Joe: Well, when you don't know 36 hours before travelling whether you're going to get a visa to go.

Mr C: Oh, okay.

Joe: It is a very stressful experience, particularly when you spend a fortune to buy tickets and all the rest of it.

Mr C: I see, but you're sorted now.

Joe: Yes, I'm sorted on this one. But you know, we have a very bad season this year, in terms of the calendar. Because we have a whole bunch of countries that require visas. We have a whole bunch of new countries every year that require visas because the international political scene is getting worse and worse and worse. I had to do nineteen page questionnaire to get a visa for Australia.

Mr C: Why?

Joe: Because that's the way of the world.

Mr C: Wow.

Joe: Whether we like it or not. And we have to pay a large sum of money wherever we go, it's £200 now to go to Australia, it's £200, actually it's not quite, it's less than that, the Australian dollar is weaker. But I paid £200 today for a Chinese visa, I'll probably pay £200 for a Russian visa. I hope to god they're all paying the same money for English visas.

Mr C: Goodness me.

Joe: The world has gone crazy. Canada, we used to just get on a plane and fly there, now you have to do a nineteen page questionnaire and you get your visa. It just makes life more difficult, it means we all have to have two passports and the whole visa thing is becoming more and more stressful, particularly for the



media because we are considered to be spies and subversives. The teams seem to be alright, they get their stuff alright, but we have to jump through flaming hoops and it's a pain in the arse to be quite honest.

Mr C: How does something like the ban on laptops on aircraft affect things like your schedule? Surely you use that time to be productive?

Joe: We haven't even started to think about that. But I'm not putting a laptop in the hold, I've seen what these people do to them. They think it's jolly wonderful to smash up people's stuff because they don't know any different, and my view is, well, we'll just have to find other ways of getting to places. If flying to the United States means I have to put my laptop into the hold, I won't do it. They just destroy it, and you don't get anything back when you try and complain about things, they just say, 'it's security.' Okay, maybe there's a specific threat relating to laptops but come on, you're messing up the world here to such a crazy extent that all the airlines will go out of business in the end. I mean, America's tourist industry is already in a dive because people don't want to go there because they've got a manic president. There's any number of other things going on in this mad world we live in, but to get people to check their computers into the hold is largely insane, I fear. We'll see what happens. I never, ever have checked a computer into a hold, I just don't trust anybody enough to do that. I've seen too much stuff smashed up by people who don't care, so there we are.

Mr C: Well, I hope all your stuff gets there safely this weekend. Are you expecting much of a change or do we think it's going to be a dice between Hamilton and Vettel? Which strengths will it play to?

Joe: I don't know, I don't suspect that Kimi is going to be among them. Bottas, I think will probably do a bit better. He didn't do a bad start, wasn't totally up to speed with Lewis Hamilton, but then again, who is going to be up to speed with Lewis Hamilton in a team that Lewis Hamilton's been in for however many years it is, winning world championships. It is not sensible.

Mr C: In that sense, we're kind of lucky that Ferrari have come on song, because without Vettel in the mix, it almost could be a Hamilton walkover.

Joe: Yea, it is good fortune for Formula One, but then again, it's not good fortune in as much as it's to be expected over time, there should be a law of diminishing returns, and we are seeing now, beginning finally, the other teams getting on song. Now, how long it's going to remain this way, I mean, we're going to have an engine change in 2021, the end of 2020, so we've got three years in which hopefully they will remain pretty close together. And hopefully, when there's a new engine come along, there'll be a whole bunch of people who are competitive with one another. Generally speaking rule changes tend to spread everything out and that's one of the things I just don't understand. They changed the rules this year, I'm not sure they've changed them for the better. The cars are faster but can you tell? The cars look better, yes, they do look better. Are they racing better? The signs from Melbourne are that overtaking is harder, which is not a good thing, and we'll have to see as the racing goes on as to how hard it is. But if they've created a situation where the cars look better but can't overtake, well, what on earth was all that about?

Mr C: Yea. That's a really nice summary, actually. I think it's a nice way to leave it, I like that, that's a nice synopsis of Formula One as we stand at this point. I do hope we can catch up with you post-China, or after Bahrain maybe. See if the picture becomes any more clear, and discuss these things further.



Joe: I think, probably, I mean, we've got, by the time we get back from Bahrain, there's about six days before we go off to Russia, so it's going to be quite tight.

Mr C: Oh goodness, Russia's between... sorry, I forgot Russia's after Bahrain, and Spain. Right. That is manic.

Joe: Yea, no, Russia is... well, as I said, this is a very manic time of year. Certainly after the flying around the world section, and having to spend the rest of our time in embassy's having to get visas, there's a bit more time to do things.

Mr C: Goodness me, that is a packed start of the year. Okay, well, have a good time in China, have a good time then in Bahrain, and then in Russia. And if you have a moment to yourself, any time to give us a call, any time for a chat, do get in touch.

Joe: Very good, shall do.

Mr C: Cheers.