



DYNAMIC

A JOHNNY MARR FANZINE

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CONTENTS

Issue #2, January 2015



Interviews

Speak Out: Q&A with Jack, Iwan & Doviak [p.35](#)

Just a Modern(ist) Guy: an interview with Manchester Modernist Society co-founder Jack Hale [p.100](#)

Features

Turning Daydreams Into Sound
Jonny Hughes on Marr's signature sound [p.4](#)

Growing Up With Johnny Marr
From The Smiths to now, by life-long fan Gabe Echazabal [p.12](#)

I Am The Fly
An exclusive look behind the scenes of the UK Playland tour [p.26](#)

The Story Of John Maher
Johnny Marr's Irish heritage and its effect on his music, by Gavin Wynne [p.43](#)

Together In Electronic Dreams
The perfect pop partnership of Marr & Sumner, by Martina G. [p.48](#)

Features (cont.)

Childhood: The Best New Band In Britain - By Ed Nash
Why Childhood is Johnny's favourite new UK band [p.53](#)

Marrchitecture - By Melissa Roden
An analysis of the Johnny Marr aesthetic [p.57](#)

UK Playland Tour: Best of Instagram [p.89](#)

Shopping For Records With The Angel Of Radness On Your Shoulder, Part 2
A regular feature with music connoisseur Andy Campbell [p.96](#)

Boys Get Queer - By Benjamin Laird
A personal story of coming out and cluing in, thanks to Johnny Marr..... [p.110](#)

Johnny Marr & The Jaguar
Edward Kim on Johnny's signature axe [p.116](#)

Absolute Beginners
That fateful first gig, in the words of the newly-initiated [p.120](#)

Reviews

'Playland' album review by Mary O'Meara [p.18](#)

Live in Brixton, 23/10/14 by Gemma Faulkner [p.64](#)

Live in Manchester, 25/10/14 by Ory Englander [p.70](#)

Live in Glasgow, 27/10/14 by Christopher Maclachlan [p.80](#)

Live in Leeds, 29/10/14 by Laura Dean [p.84](#)

Live in Paris, 3/11/14 by Bernadette Rumsen [p.90](#)

'Playland' track-by-track review [p.104](#)

Visuals

Artwork by Amanda Willis [p.11](#)

Artwork by Puteri Nur'ainn [p.34](#)

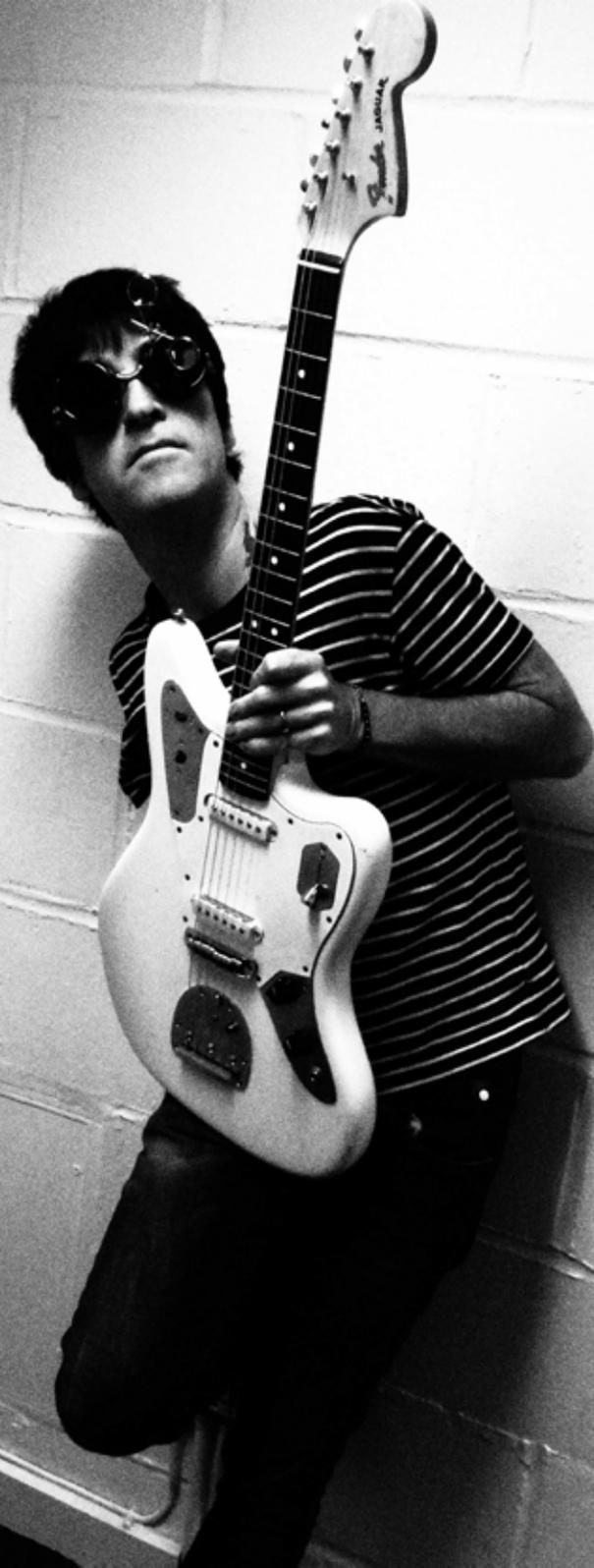
Photography by Mat Bancroft [p.42](#)

Photography by Marc McGarraghy [p.47](#)

Artwork by Melissa Roden [p.56](#)

Photography by Danni Casey [p.69](#)

Artwork by Ellie Home [p.115](#)



TURNING daydreams INTO SOUND

“Analysing humour is like dissecting a frog. Few people are interested and the frog dies of it.”

- E.B White

When the idea of analysing Johnny Marr’s guitar playing came up, the quote above came straight to mind. Would scrutinising the major sevenths and suspended second chords really bring more enjoyment to the music of one of the all time greats? Probably not. However, if you enjoying playing the guitar or pay close attention to detail like me, you can’t help but wonder how

such an array of joyous noise can come from a piece of wood and six strings.

It’s nice to view song writing with an element of mystery. It is easy to look at it as the result of throwing together a finite number of chords in a certain order to make the end product a piece of music. I think the most wonderful explanation of this comes from Johnny himself,

when he described writing songs as “turning daydreams into sound.”

That is what makes Johnny so unique. His guitar playing seems to come via instinct and rather than looking at theory and over-analysing, it is music from self discovery – as he explained to *Guitarist Magazine* in 2009 when asked about his guitar playing, he said “it’s done by instinct and trial; stuff I just discovered in my bedroom on winter nights. When those moments happen, I don’t even want to know what that chord is called, or that some clever-dick in Pat Metheny’s band has been playing it for 35 years. I just call it That Weird Chord.”

That probably illustrates what makes writing songs special, and why it’s greatest exponents are so good – by simply following your own thoughts and not getting bogged down by rules and the mechanics, this frees the creativity of someone as gifted as Johnny to invent something innovative. Former Red Hot Chili Peppers guitarist John Frusciante spoke of his surprise when collaborating on his 2009

His guitar playing seems to come via instinct and rather than looking at theory and over-analysing, it is music from self discovery.

solo album *The Empyrean*, as he was expecting someone of Marr’s undoubtable quality to be guided by theory, only to find “he has really complex chord progressions, but he goes by his instinct and his own mental pictures.”

These mental pictures that Johnny translates into sound convey a vast range of influences. If you were fortunate enough to catch the Playland Tour, you may have been treated to an incredible version of *The Headmaster Ritual*. This song epitomises the versatility of Marr and his craft on the guitar. Johnny describes the track as him channelling “the idea of a strange Joni Mitchell tuning, and the actual progression is like what she would

have done had she been an MC5 fan or a punk rocker.” It sublimely captures Johnny’s wide range of influence in music and his ability to bring together two genres seamlessly.

It is this blend of folk melody and musicality, combined with the energy of punk that makes his music in *The Smiths* and beyond special. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly what you’re hearing as it has the conventional aspects of one piece of music, often melded with several others, making you not exactly sure how to categorise the song. The funk of *Barbarism Begins At Home*, Bert Jansch-esque beauty of *Back To The Old House*, or the sheer other-worldly feel to *How Soon Is Now?* The list is endless.

Many people would be delighted to feed on The



PHOTO BY ALY STEVENSON



PHOTO BY PIPER FERGUSON

Smiths and what happened in the past, but the ability to create and continue to move forward as a guitarist and a song writer is what stands out. To evolve your musical style and have something to say isn't something many people manage from 1983 until now, and we're lucky enough to have had Electronic, Modest Mouse, The Cribs, and many more. Johnny moved out of his comfort zone with the guitar in Electronic, and then years later, jammed with Issac Brock on a whim

innovative and different people has shown the many facets to Johnny's talent, bringing new guitar parts out of him. Johnny even joked that he ended up using a technique mostly associated with heavy metal, tapping, when with Modest Mouse.

When speaking to [FasterLouder](#), Johnny explained how he "tried to rebel against what I was known for. And I think that's a good thing, that's the prerogative of any artist." This is perhaps an indication of an awareness to keep moving as

to try and make new, innovative music. How many artists could write a real anthem like *Getting Away With It* and then come up with the sheer genius of *Dashboard*, an absolute Nile Rodgers infused gem? These records span genres and don't sit snugly in little, categorised boxes. The art of collaborating with

a songwriter. Very few people stay relevant by standing still. Artists such as Neil Young and David Bowie illustrate how constant evolution is important, and you only have to look at The Smiths alone to see how the sonic characteristics of the band changed in a short period of time, just as The Beatles did.

The art of collaborating with innovative and different people has shown the many facets to Johnny's talent, bringing new guitar parts out of him.

That's what I find so remarkable about the press obsession with describing Johnny's playing as "Jangly." To use one word to describe someone so versatile seems to highlight an inherent journalistic laziness, when it can only truly be applied to a small section of The Smiths' early works. *Playland* for example, bristles with energy and has a real post punk feel to it – it seems to encapsulate the energy of new wave, the aggression and

beauty of James Williamson, and yet is still undoubtedly Johnny Marr.

Within his solo career, Johnny's song writing extends to the lyrics. *The Messenger* and *Playland* address relevant and interesting ideas, some "political with a small p" as Johnny has mentioned, but they feel relevant and able to connect with people. Prior to performing *Speak Out, Reach Out* live, Johnny explained how it was inspired by a chance encounter with some undesirable banker types – the reaction of the crowd spoke volumes, as it was clearly a topic that resonated with many in the audience.

On *Playland*, there is a craft to the songs that draw upon life experiences and inspiration, as Johnny explained on several songs in particular. Whether that's the ominous and brooding sounds on *25 Hours* encapsulating a young Johnny, stranded in dangerous parts of Manchester, or *Back In The Box*, representing "either hearing a record you like, waking up on a sunny morning, being in love,"

it works. When you hear Johnny talk about the inspiration of these songs, it soon becomes apparent that this is precisely what he's doing, and the sonic landscapes he is creating – the imagery and pictures are really vivid and his ability to recreate these images and sensations, using just music and words, really is extraordinary. That's why to me, *Playland* is up there with the very best of his work and is a compulsive listen.

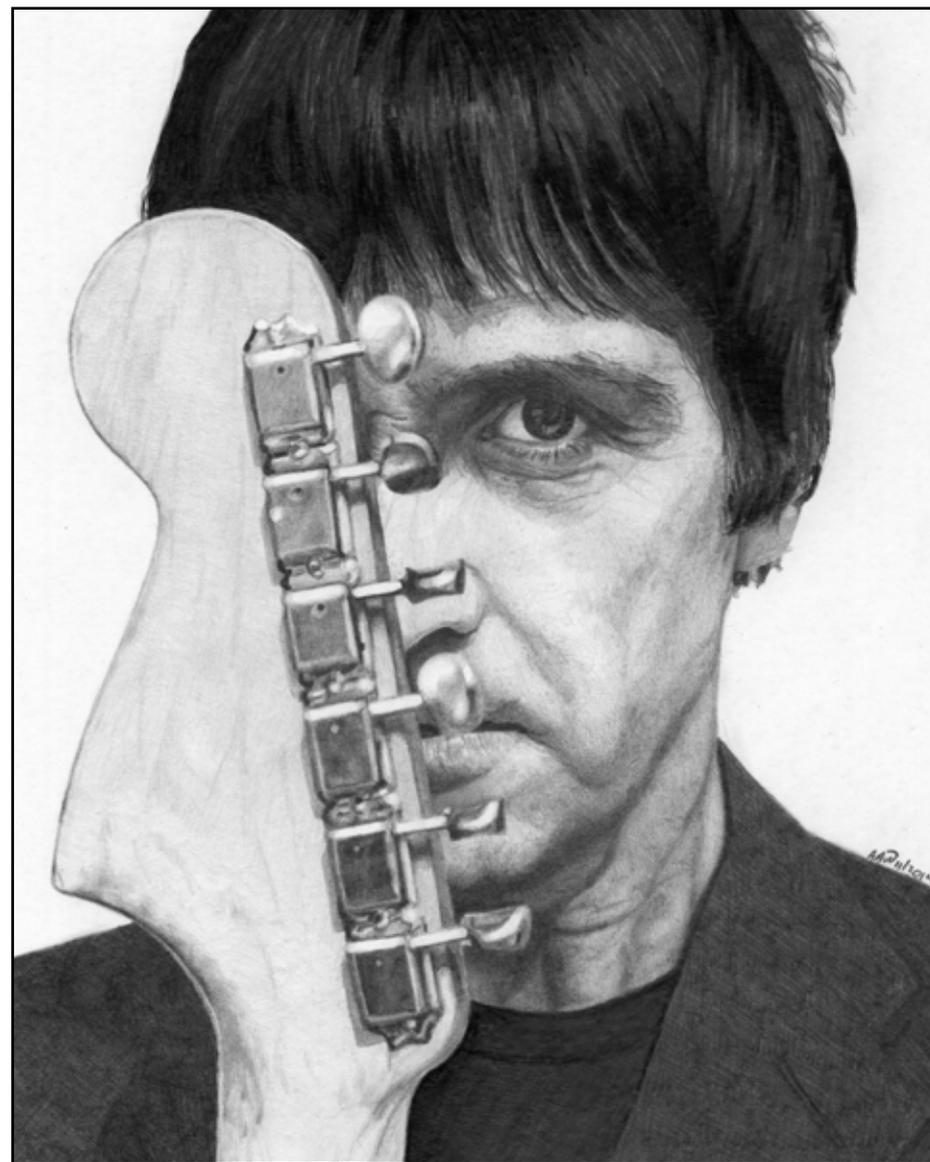
personal – chords he discovered, people he met, situations he experienced. Nothing that has been taught, something that is about life experience and natural talent combining to create powerful music or interesting lyrics. The ability to encapsulate a feeling or an idea or an emotion seems really apparent in all Johnny's work, and there is a genuine feeling of energy and beauty in his music that makes it shine. Long may it continue.

It seems that a lot of the best parts of Johnny's music is very

By Jonny Hughes



PHOTO BY PAT GRAHAM



Artwork by Amanda Willis



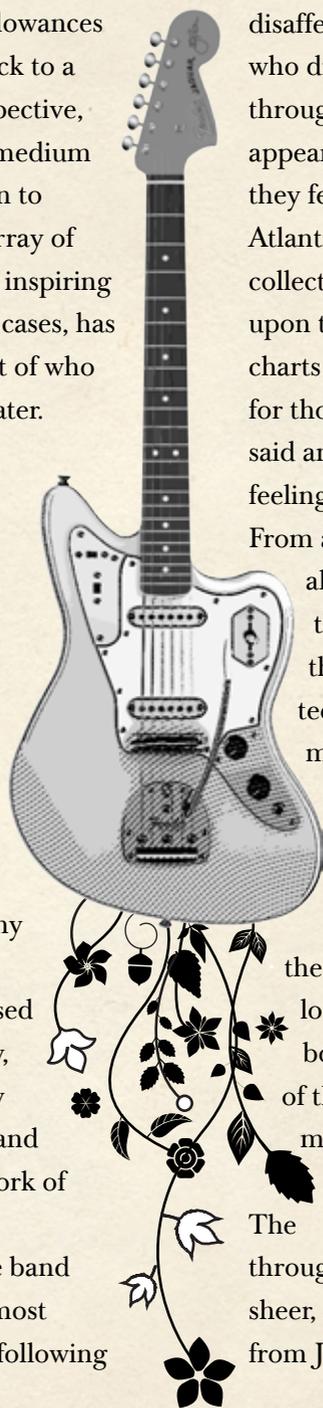
Growing Up

with Johnny Marr

For most of us, a look back at our record collections circa those difficult, transforming, crucial adolescent years of our upbringing can be a scary thing. While we'd like to think that with age and experience we've become musical connoisseurs, let's face it: we all had to start somewhere on that musical totem pole. Whether we were musically drawn to cheesy Top 40, boy bands,

teen idols or something equally embarrassing, it's pretty safe to say that most of us are probably no longer feel any affinity or affection for the tunes that provided the soundtrack for those awkward teenage years of our existence. But something odd happened in the 1980s: teenagers were offered more of a well-refined and tastier palate to choose from in terms of the albums that took up shelf space at our local record shops. While meaningless

fluff was still a viable option to spend our weekly allowances on, music shifted back to a deeper, more introspective, thought-provoking medium and it was our option to select from a wide array of powerful, insightful, inspiring music that, in many cases, has remained a vital part of who we are many years later. Bands like U2, The Replacements and The Pixies have managed to retain a fierce, loyal fan base that mostly consists of followers who discovered them at a very early stage in their musical journeys. Kids who bought albums by any of these bands when they were first released are, more than likely, still pretty moved by those same records and by the bulk of the work of these bands. And then there's the band who've elicited the most ferocious and rabid following



of all: The Smiths. The alienated, disaffected, disenfranchised youth who discovered the band whether through their UK television appearances, the magazine space they fetched on both sides of the Atlantic, or in a hip friend's record collection, discovering The Smiths upon their arrival on indie record charts was a momentous occasion for those looking for a band who said and looked what they were feeling.

From a personal standpoint, although what the words and the music said to me from the perspective of a confused teenager, they almost seem more meaningful to me now.

Morrissey and Johnny Marr were not a whole lot older than me when I first heard "This Charming Man" for the first time decades ago, but, looking back now, they were both leaps and bounds ahead of their time in terms of musical maturity and songwriting craft.

The longing and angst that weaves through Morrissey's words and the sheer, ringing beauty that chimes from Johnny Marr's impeccable

guitar work throughout the entire Smiths catalog was jaw-dropping then; now it seems almost too good to be really true.

What might have been cast off as the flavor of the week as all those brilliant Morrissey/Marr compositions rode the singles charts in the UK for the better part of the 1980's has gone on to become the stuff of legends. No other band was working as rapidly and as prolifically as the Manchester quartet who turned conventions and customs on their ear every chance they could.

And what's occurred in the process is that most of those impressionable kids who marched to the beat that The Smiths were preaching way back when, still hold a special place for the band in their hearts. You never forget the first time you felt something profound and, for many teens in the '80s, the music of The Smiths symbolized a lot of firsts: whether falling in love, experiencing a particularly harsh breakup, or, worst of all, clinging to passionate unrequited love, The Smiths provided the soundtrack for a series of emotions and events that most had never lived through before. For

"No other band was working as rapidly and as prolifically as the Manchester quartet who turned conventions and customs on their ear every chance they could."

this reason, and so many more, the fans of The Smiths have grown up with The Smiths and have never abandoned or forgotten about The Smiths.

The spry, youthful Marr has stayed busy since his tenure as the lead guitarist, songwriter, fashion plate and architect of The Smiths. He's continued working within a massive amount of musical projects all the while maintaining a steady, lengthy relationship with his longtime wife and raising two children who are now adults. Sound familiar? The same can be said about the vast majority of the

fans that discovered the band from the first go-round. Of similar ages as Morrissey and Marr now, they've essentially grown up with their music and have in some ways paralleled their existences.

Not long after leaving The Smiths, Marr paired with his longtime mate Matt Johnson to become a member of his fantastic, broodingly underrated band The The. Marr appeared on arguably the band's finest albums and lent his superior guitar work to their recordings. As we were discovering more adult, complex, cerebral rock, there was Johnny Marr adding his prowess and presence to the brilliant records The The was putting out.

But Marr, never one to rest on his laurels or to not take chances, continued to remain a solid part of the musical upbringing of the fans he'd already captivated. After his tenure with Matt Johnson and company, he teamed up with New Order front man Bernard Sumner to create a dance-oriented duo called Electronic. As we were learning to understand and grow a newfound appreciation for groovy electro-dance pop, there was Marr

laying his savory guitar chops over the infectious singles Electronic were putting out. It must be noted that the band's initial single release, "Getting Away With It", ranks as an electro-pop classic and can still fill a dance floor anywhere across the globe.

After a brief stint as leader of Johnny Marr and the Healers and a fine album under that moniker, Marr again shifted gears and did some fine session work with Split Enz/Crowded House head honcho Neil Finn and, again, graced the two albums released under the band name 7 Worlds Collide with his superb axe work and his personal style.

Marr's subsequent foray into indie rock proved to be a fruitful and prolific period for him. Teaming with UK indie band The Cribs at almost the exact same time as with US indie band Modest Mouse introduced the lush, inimitable guitar work Johnny has been known for to a brand new audience. Up and coming music fans who might not have had the slightest inkling about the man's prior work were all of a sudden familiarized with

the guitarist and, for many of them, it was the start of a long-time appreciation and adoration for the man and his work.

And now, Marr is creating some of the most inspired, raucous music of his career and he's proving that being a dad doesn't mean losing your musical edge. While some who feel they are "too old" to rock or to engage in the enjoyment of music they once had the free time to devote to, folks like Johnny Marr (and fans of similar ages) prove that the bona fide love of music and the need to express yourself with it is in your heart regardless of how old you are.

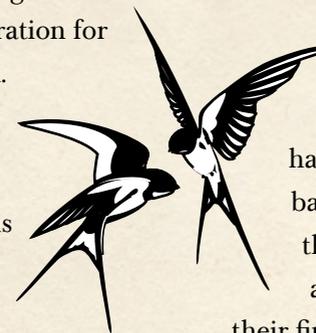
An equally amazing phenomenon is the fact that so many younger kids still feel a love and affinity for the music of The Smiths. Kids who weren't even thought of when Marr and Morrissey were teaching us about lights that never go out are just as devout and devoted to the band's work, thanks mostly to a slew of young, hip indie bands who've publicly sung the praises of The Smiths and admitted to the large

impact the band has had on their lives and their work.

What you have is a huge sect of Smiths fans in their late 40s/early 50s that have never forgotten about the band and some twenty and thirty-somethings who are just as moved by the band and their fine, life-changing work.

Many of us have grown up with The Smiths. Some are still growing up with their work. Luckily, for all of us, Johnny Marr is still out there carrying the torch, speaking musically for all of us, dipping into the inimitable Smiths catalog in concert, and proving that great music is timeless and that there's always plenty more to be inspired by thanks to recent work and new music.

Growing up with Johnny Marr has been a fascinating experience, both musically and personally. His presence has never left the heart of my personal record collection and, at this rate; the light he's always provided will most definitely never go out.



PLAYLAND



The fact that *Playland* arrives so hot on the heels of its predecessor, *The Messenger*, hints at the creative impetus and energy behind it. It's a bit like an attempt to capture the vapour trail of the album that shot across the sky just before it - or more accurately, to re-ignite the intensity of the live experiences that emerged from that trip. Yet, *Playland* is far more than just a by-product of the live *Messenger*. It's not an echo: it's a fusion of many magical things that actually are all the more appealing for not being bogged down in analysis or excessive introspection.

The clue is in the title track, which lights up the stage each night on the current tour - a bit like the giant Hollywood lettering on a cliff edge on the west coast of America....the domain of playing in a theatrical sense where reality and fantasy are virtually indistinguishable. But the **PLAYLAND** letters here have more of a Blackpool amusement arcade style typography about them - Blackpool, the place we go to indulge in play, because society forbids us to play in our everyday lives in the purest, most natural sense of the word (just for fun, for joy, for kicks, for no purpose)

- yet it encourages us to “play the game”; to “climb the ladder”; to “tick the boxes”. This was my gut reaction to the record, but it all made more sense when I read that Johnny had been reading Johan Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens* (which translates as “Man the player” or “Playing man”). I haven’t read the book (yet), but I get the gist of it and see/hear how it is one of the major arteries running through his new album. So, one of the things this record is about is the reclamation of play for fun and creativity – the true spirit of playfulness.



PHOTO BY MAT BANCROFT

Kick-starting this journey is the brilliance of *Back in the Box*. After an athletic burst of undaunted, semi-demented drumming from Jack Mitchell, Johnny’s equally demented and irresistible guitar runs in the room, followed eventually by those three, half-whispered, half-breathed words “Let....me in”. I, for one, don’t need to be asked twice! This song tears along like the sirens on emergency vehicles - it has an urgency and a beauty that belongs to its surrender to the Universe - you can’t control it - why even try? - far better to get immersed in the adventures it throws at you. I’ve been listening to this record whilst driving (or being driven) around Stockport/Manchester and it’s the kind of the song that makes you want to drive through traffic lights and take a wrong turn for the sheer hell of it and see where you end up. Yeah, it’s that element of play again.

Easy Money is a song for our times, for sure - everything’s for sale and at a price you can buy almost anything. Yet because of the long reign of capitalism, much has lost its value. You can buy a degree, a VIP meet and greet, a new face, a piece of the moon - but does

It has an urgency and a beauty that belongs to its surrender to the Universe - you can’t control it - why even try?

that bring happiness? So many people are stuck in dead end jobs trying to pay the rent whilst some others don’t know what to do with their dirty cash. I can imagine the disco-rock guitar riffs of this record playing ironically on the radio on the conveyor belt production line night/day shift in some godforsaken factory as the capitalist machine keeps churning. The biff-bash-bash beat of this record is inspired when married with the lyrics. Its anti-rat race, anti-greed stance reminds us that having a rich imagination and soulfulness is a lot more valuable than money in the bank - and in this apparent age of austerity, we can still have fun if we don’t succumb to the lies and threats the establishment want us to collapse under.

This is a highly politicized album and for that I rejoice. It’s a relief to hear a musician address and comment on the narrow-minded, muddled political

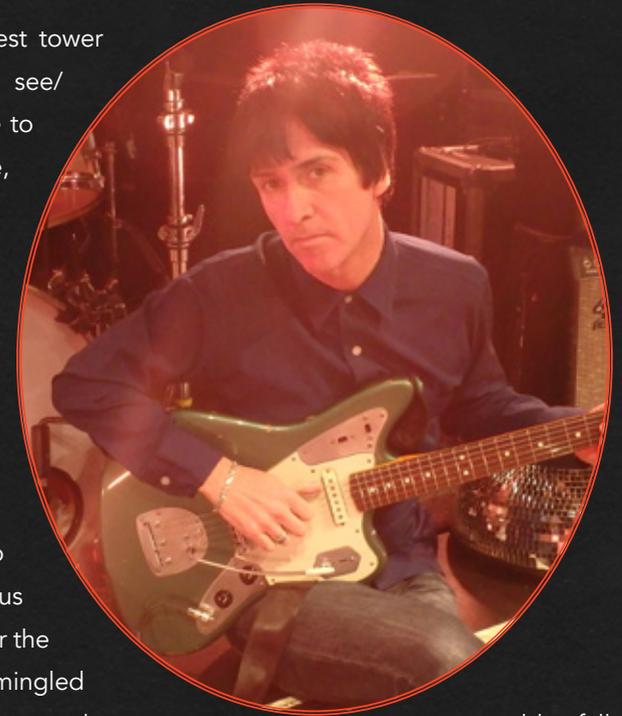
climate prevailing in the UK in recent times and Marr does this artfully on the closing track *Little King* - the lyrics of which should be emblazoned all over Westminster, where it seems each day policies are being made to make "fortunes out of misfortunes", as well as destroying the planet with fracking "tearing up all of this land" and other disrespectful modes of energy production. There are many other references to the rise of the right, self-obsession and lack of compassion scattered throughout the album,

particularly the passionate and moving *Speak Out, Reach Out*, yet the album never feels preachy or messianic in any way. It's more a call for consideration, observation and searching for the truth rather than what is being spoon-fed to us by the media, the billboards, and the constant digital signage bombarded in our faces 24/7.

Dynamo lifts you up like you're being carried by a spiritual crane through the city skyline. Marr has mentioned this track as being inspired by Manchester's

CIS building, once the tallest tower in England. Whether you see/hear this song as a homage to architecture or to a place, time or person doesn't especially matter. To me this song is about upliftment, elevation, a feeling of rising up out of the mundane. I love the lyrics "on the sidewalk beaches/we play like the sun" - perhaps a reference to the Situationist slogan "Sous les pavés, la plage!" ("Under the paving stones, the beach") mingled with Ian Brown's famous statement that "Manchester has everything except a beach." This continues the main theme of the album - that play is an integral part of the human experience, as natural and beneficial as the sun.

The Trap also contains this invitation to rise above, to recognize the trap, to "get out of your mind" (the mind being arguably the biggest trap of all?) It's the sort of song that stops me in my tracks. The melody is sublime, the harmonies, the emotion, the melancholy hover quiveringly over us, attempting to defy that moment of danger where we



could fall into the trap, but the music carries you down another route if you go with it. Then there's the runaway-train rockabilly sound of *Boys Get Straight*, containing the kind of vibrant, merciless beat that Marr excels at - yet it has to be said that he excels at creating a sensitive, delicate, exquisite soundscape just as powerfully.

Another stand-out track is the slightly dark and brooding *This Tension*. Although I don't see *Playland* as being retro - in fact it's decidedly postmodern;

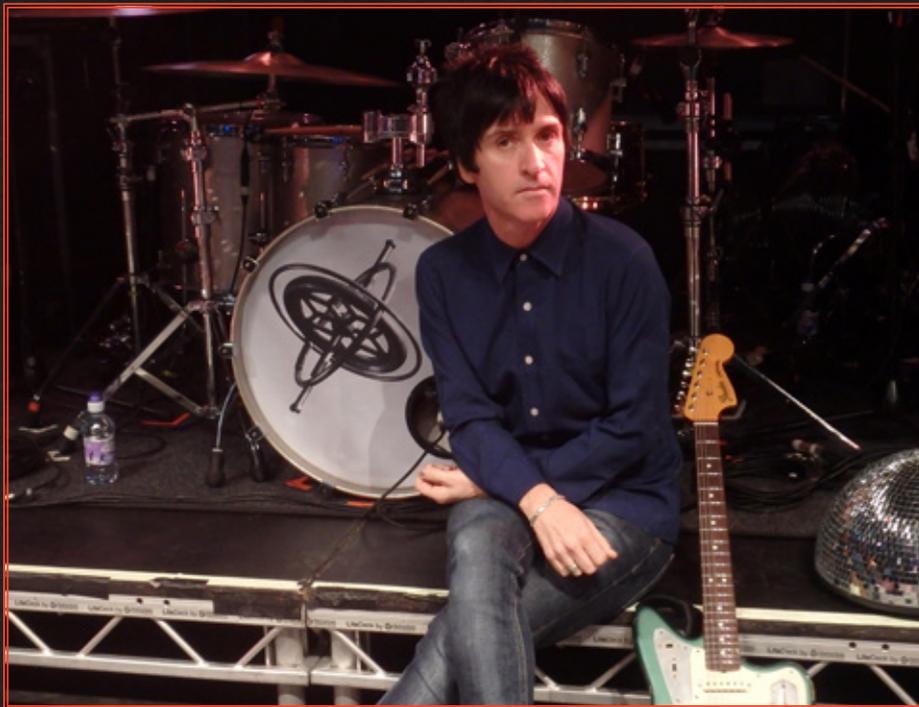


PHOTO BY ALY STEVENSON

very twenty first century to my ears – this particular track makes me feel like I've travelled back to the shivery days of Joy Division/early New Order. This is a soundtrack that could be played while you're driving through a long and lonely tunnel at night-time with the lights playing tricks on the eyes and an uneasy feeling that someone unseen is following you. It's a fantastic, haunting track that may actually be an attempt to escape from the past, even if its sound is distinctively of bygone decades - but perhaps that's the point. "Got to get on... to the future." Marr speaks amongst the shadowy debris as the track closes and we reach the end of that metaphorical tunnel. *Does a new door await?*

I don't know if it's that Marr has become a more confident, stronger vocalist on this album or just that I'm more used to hearing his voice, but either way his vocals seem more at



PHOTO BY MAURO MELIS

ease, more fluid and melding with the music more seamlessly than perhaps they did on *The Messenger*. It makes sense when the band have been almost permanently on the road and those vocal chords have been stretched to full capacity. The ceaseless itinerary of live performances have injected his intonation with a vitality and strength. Just like on the previous album, I find the atmospheric backing vocals (some provided by his son and daughter) add a beautiful texture and mood.

Musically, this record maintains a strange equilibrium between, on one hand, swirling through some kind of maelstrom on tracks such as *25 Hours* and *Back In The Box*, in contrast to the serenity on such songs as *Dynamo* and *The Trap*. Marr has spoken often about his love of running and spends much time engaged in this activity, and it feels to me the rhythm and liberation of the long distance runner is almost a metaphor for the music on this record. Running like this can lull the runner into a beautiful mediation: a waking, moving trance, creating a transcendental experience that glistens like the sun hitting the river in a moment of glorious perfection. This

His vocals seem more at ease, more fluid and melding with the music . . . the ceaseless itinerary of live performances have injected his intonation with a vitality and strength.

feeling gleams frequently throughout the album. There's a feeling of balance between movement and stillness, outside and inside, day and night, male and female, a symmetry, a sympathy, a rock and roll symphony transforming the ordinary "doorways" into portals with "a real buzz" - doors that "really go somewhere". In many ways this record is a refusal to accept a life devoid of magic and an encouragement to find your joy, find your enchanted playground and let the music play on.

By Mary O'Meara

I Am The Fly

From-the-wall observations of life behind the scenes on the Johnny Marr UK Playland tour

It's not every day you get to watch your favourite musician perform, let alone are invited to witness the hectic behind-the-scenes buzz. For a music fan, a gig is 90 minutes of pure joy (not counting pre-gig excitement and the white nights that often follow) - but behind such a show stands an impressive, professional team making sure everything runs smoothly.

Access
All
Areas

MEET DAVE



CRONEN

Founder of Trust Management, Johnny's manager alongside Joe Moss and all-round top bloke, Dave oversees Johnny's hectic schedule with great efficiency as well as a friendly attitude. From press interviews to dinner runs, he's the go-to guy for ensuring life on tour runs as smoothly offstage as it does on.

MEET KEITH



O'NEILL

If anybody is a match for Johnny's own intense energy levels and go-getter attitude, it's tour manager Keith O'Neill. From liaising with venue staff to overseeing the stage crew's activities and even printing the set lists, Keith's superb organisational skills ensure each and every show is a success.



Warming up (in a fab jumper)



Ready for action

PHOTOS BY MAT BANCROFT

'Ta, Joel :-)'



'I stood behind you at the sound check...'

To those observing, it's a mini-matinee; a taste of things to come in the evening's main event. But for Johnny, the band and crew, the sound check is crucial for ensuring everything is in top working order before bounding out onstage a few hours later.

While some bands and artists use their sound checks to sample mere snippets and run through vocal exercises, Johnny & co. treat theirs like a test-run for the real gig: songs, sometimes up to half a show's worth, are run through in their entirety and only occasionally do they pause to discuss or correct technical issues.

Songs that don't feature in the evening's official set list also sometimes get a run-through at the sound check, either for practice (eg. 'The Headmaster Ritual'), experimentation (eg. 'What difference does it make?') or just for fun (eg. Robyn Hitchcock's 'Tell me about your drugs'; The Animals' 'It's my life').

There is a light (or fifty)

The soundcheck also serves as an apt time to set the ambience and feel to each song via the stage lights. Johnny's new lighting director, the energetic and hard-working Carolyn, is the talent behind the impressive light displays seen throughout the UK tour.

From the enormous light panels that alternate between spelling out 'PLAYLAND' (and sometimes, 'JOHNNY FUCKIN MARR') and futuristic abstract patterns, to spotlights, disco balls and even some Duchamp-esque spirals, every lighting sequence is carefully planned out to suit the mood and tempo of the songs they accompany.



Breakout!

PHOTO BY MAT BANCROFT

How to part with your money, easy

From hoodies to plectrum necklaces, the friendly and kind-spirited Barney has it all at the travelling merch stand, carried from venue to venue on one of the tour buses and unpacked for display every afternoon before a show. The many beautiful prints and LPs also

available for purchase

are, to set the doubtful mind at ease, all personally signed by Johnny himself before and after sound checks.



All this and then some



Snazzy!



Be an open door

Getting around the maze of a venue often requires not only a good sense of direction, but a valid pass as well.

A range of different guest passes are issued depending on the purpose of the guest: photographers and journalists, for example, are identified as such (the latter surely for the purpose of easy dodging?), while friends

and other acquaintances are often issued with guest passes simply to grant free entry to the show. For security reasons,



most passes are dated for use on a single night - however,

reusable VIP passes are also occasionally issued to regular guests, such as friends of the artist, and generally permit a higher level of access to private areas.

After-show gatherings are also sometimes held after gigs, often at larger venues with private bar facilities. Access to after-shows is a separate privilege to regular guest entry, although often specified on the same pass. Set with good music, good conversation and drinks a-plenty, an after party allows band members, crew and friends to chill after a hard day and night's work.

Speaking out

Sometimes you just can't dodge a journo though, even when they're clearly identified...

Due to the hectic nature of touring, sometimes there's no other place or opportunity to conduct an interview than backstage before a show. Even photo shoots occasionally occur in the short space of time between the sound check and dinner run. Phone interviews too, are sometimes conducted backstage in the wee hours after the show has ended. A godlike genius' work is never done...



These doors really go somewhere

Although the size and degree of luxury tends to vary from venue to venue, each backstage area generally consists of three main types of rooms:

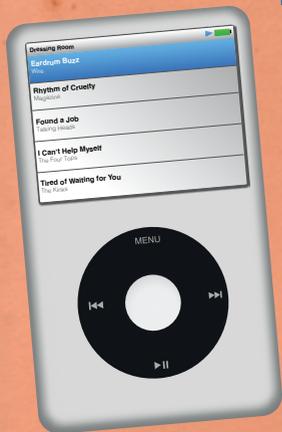
Production Office: The organisational headquarters of the backstage area, here is where you'll often find Keith, Dave and production manager Graham, working hard to ensure that everything is ready for the show to follow.

Crew Room: A lounge usually equipped with comfy seating and kitchenette facilities, this is a much-needed chill-out space for hard-working crew members (...and the occasional hanger-on!). Many a cup of tea is consumed here.



Dressing Rooms: Aside from simply offering a place to get dressed before and after shows, the dressing rooms also serve as lounge areas for Johnny and the band. Even in smaller venues, sofas and mini fridges are standard, while many larger venues also provide attached bathrooms. Generally one room each is provided for Johnny, his band, and the support band.

Dreamer serene, come inside (but please knock first)



The warm, inviting scent of vanilla candles greets you upon entry into Johnny's private dressing room - a (usually quiet) haven from the commotion of both the crew and crowd. Here you'll find the warrior at rest, either reading, getting dressed or warming up for the show. An iPod Classic, hooked up portable Bose speakers, adds musical ambience from post-punk favourites such as Wire and Magazine as well as Northern Soul classics, and a hairdryer and assorted hair products adorn the bench beneath the mirror. Which products, you ask? That's a secret...



PHOTO BY ALY STEVENSON



"Hmm...perhaps the pink shirt tonight..."

Pretty in pink

Dress shirts are an omnipresent part of Johnny's wardrobe. From the early days of the Smiths onwards, Johnny has never been shy of adding a bit colour - from golden yellow turtlenecks to the Playland tour's dusky pink (and flawlessly ironed - ta Keith) button-downs. While Johnny actually does keep an assortment of stage shirts handy (two pink, one orange and one red) - it's clear which one he likes best!

And, thanks to ever-efficient tour manager Keith, Johnny's favourites are always clean and handy: Keith is such a good sport he's even been

known to tend to washing and ironing backstage, and clothes needed dry again in a hurry are taken care of with the help of a Dri Buddi portable electric clothes dryer. Handy!

A Marmy marches on its stomach

Even godlike geniuses need to eat sometimes, but it's not always easy on tour, especially when often on the run, and when catering to a vegan diet as well. Proper meals are provided whenever possible, but Johnny also has the forethought to keep a variety of snacks and quick meals on hand: vegetable noodle soup in a cup; fresh fruit; olives; raw nuts.

And of course, the occasional (or even not-so-occasional) gift of vegan chocolates or home-baked vegan cookies, is always gratefully -and hungrily- accepted...



Tour Essentials

Backstage/dressing room cold beverage of choice: Purdey's Rejuvenate; a carbonated fruit-based energy drink also containing ingredients such as tree bark and ginseng. "Posh Red Bull", to quote a certain support band's keyboardist.



Tea is an essential not just for life on tour, but for life in general. Johnny's preferred blend is Pai Mu Tan: white peony tea from the Fujian Province in China.



When treating the adoring audience to close-ups of fast and furious strumming, Johnny always ensures to add a bit of silvery pizzazz. (Thank you, Kate Nash!)



An avid reader, Johnny always makes sure to have a supply of books on hand for quiet times backstage, and long drives on the tour bus. The above titles are just a small sample from Johnny's travelling library...

An impeccable coiffure like Johnny's of course requires maintenance: hairspray is right up there with tea and plectrums as far as essentials go.



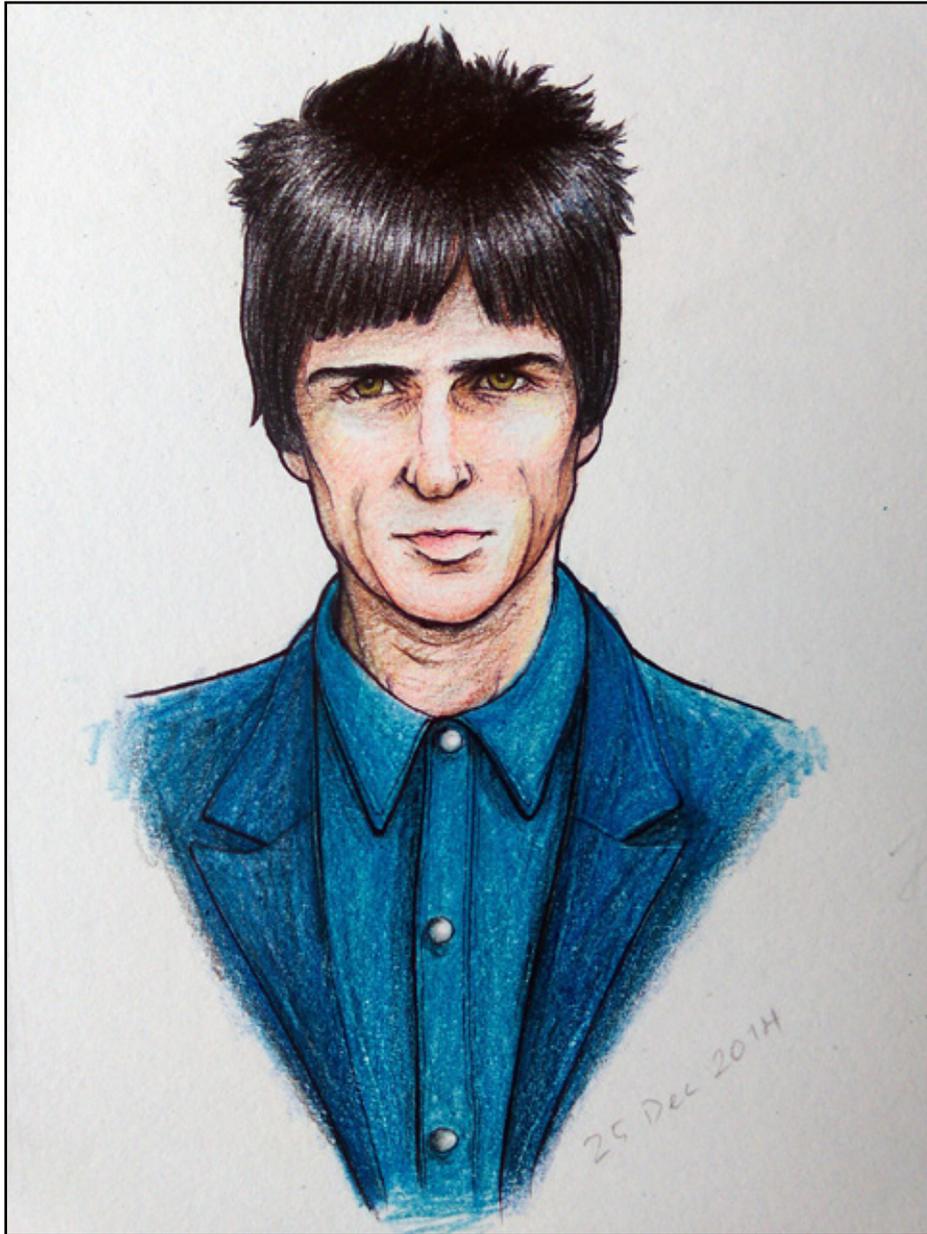
"Do you see any beards up here on this stage? I don't think so!"



What's a godlike genius to do when he runs out of David Sylvian's mysterious Chinese herbal throat syrup? Good old trusty "Throat Coat" tea.



Well, you can only drink so much Throat Coat before "helpful" (and cheeky) fans take it upon themselves to offer an alternative sore throat remedy...



Artwork by Puteri Nur'ainn

SPEAK OUT

Getting to know the boys in the band



PHOTO BY PIPER FERGUSON



THE DRUMS

 @jackthesticks

Heroes
My Dad.

Pet peeves
Selfish drivers, loud music playing on mobile phones in public and Manchester United fans!!

5 words you'd use to describe yourself
Friendly, kind, funny, thoughtful, Rhythmical.

What do you like to do on your days off?
Sleep!

What job would you have if you weren't a musician?
Rally driver.

What would you do if you could be invisible for a day?
Take the bankers' bonuses off them.

Tell us something about yourself that might surprise us
I have a stammer.

Name
Jack Edward Mitchell.

Birth place
Withington, Manchester.

Favourite record
Sex Pistols - 'Never Mind The Bollocks'.

Favourite book
'1984' by George Orwell.

Favourite food
Cookies.



3 things that would be present in your personal Utopia
MK4 Ford Escort XR3i, Drums and of course my girlfriend!

Where do you see yourself in 20 years from now?
Making great music and making people happy.

Best memory of working with Johnny
Been so many, but would have to be playing the Manchester Apollo on the UK tour in October 2014. That was a special day.

PHOTOS & STILLS COURTESY OF MAT BANCROFT



BASS GUITAR

 @IGronow

Heroes

Wilko Johnson.

Pet peeves

MPs, rude people and saxophones.

5 words you'd use to describe yourself

Ambitious, driven, curly, skinny, approachable.

What do you like to do on your days off?

Run, teach guitar, write music and read.

What job would you have if you weren't a musician?

Geologist.

What would you do if you could be invisible for a day?

Sneak into Old Trafford with a spade and dig the ground up.

Tell us something about yourself that might surprise us

I was a Cornish Judo champion.

Name

Iwan Gronow.

Birth place

Sidcup, Kent.

Favourite record

The Stooges - 'Fun House'.

Favourite book

'A million little pieces' by James Frey.

Favourite food

Traditional Sunday roast.



3 things that would be present in your personal Utopia

- Lock up all greedy MPs
- Rid the world of Chavs
- Abolish pay to play gigs for young musicians and bands

Where do you see yourself in 20 years from now?

On a beach in Cornwall.

Best memory of working with Johnny

Playing Manchester Apollo to a sell out crowd on the Playland tour.

PHOTOS & STILLS COURTESY OF MAT BANCROFT



GUITAR/ SYNTHESISER

 @thedoviak

Favourite food
Korean tacos.

Heroes
Tony Benn, Rupert Sheldrake,
Igor Stravinsky.

Pet peeves
Crowds at baggage carousels.

*5 words you'd use to
describe yourself*
Thoughtful, patient, lazy,
sociopathic, focused,
innumerate.

*What do you like to do on
your days off?*
Read Wikileaks.

*What job would you have
if you weren't a musician?*
Experimental filmmaker.

*What would you do if you
could be invisible for a
day?*
I'd sneak into Buckingham
Palace and look for
shapeshifting lizards.

Name
Doviak.

Birth place
"Unknown".

Favourite record
Wire - '154'.

Favourite book
'Blood Meridian' by Cormac
McCarthy.



*Tell us something about
yourself that might surprise
us*
I'm actually quite pleasant to
chat to.

*3 things that would be
present in your personal
Utopia*
Immortality, cheesecake,
handguns.

*Where do you see yourself
in 20 years from now?*
Building a state of the art
recording studio in North
Korea.

*Best memory of working
with Johnny*
Playing the Manchester
Apollo, 2014.

PHOTOS & STILLS COURTESY OF MAT BANCROFT



The Story of John Maher



Ardwick, an area of Manchester's inner-city and home to the renowned Manchester Apollo music venue, has long been the destination of Irish immigrants. The man who became known as Johnny Marr was born here one Halloween night in the early 1960's and was raised in a typically Irish immigrant environment, which he himself described as "intensely religious, intensely Irish, intensely musical, and intensely young". Born to young parents who hailed from Athy, Co. Kildare, he experienced the same fiercely working-class and family orientated upbringing as many second-generation Irish musicians, including a certain future band mate who was lurking westwards in Queen's Square, Hulme. While the Maher's left the inner-city for a place in the sprawling development of Wythenshawe, they took with them the Irish identity they still clung tightly to.



COUNTY OF
KILDARE

English Miles

Railways Roads Canals

Baronies thus CARBURY

Revised by P.W. JOYCE, LL.D. M.R.I.A.

The impact of his Irish background on Marr's music should never be underestimated; in fact the story of the Smiths' ballad 'Please Please Please Let Me Get What I Want' goes that it was written with deliberate sentiments of yearning melancholy and was originally titled 'The Irish Waltz'. Vinyl junkies will also note that the on the compilation album 'Hatful of Hollow' the word 'Eire' is inscribed into the groove, a nod to the Emerald Isle. At a glance of his discography, especially earlier work, it is clear that there are touches of both industrial Manchester and distant Ireland which can be seen through his music. Marr has spoken of how some of his playing was influenced by the traditional Irish music heard as a small child when his parents would host other Irish migrants, where a combination of musical instruments, alcohol and homesickness would lead to what he described as a situation where "as the night wore on the music invariably got sadder". It's not hard to see several instances in his

career throughout the years where guitar chords are used to express a sombre and gloomy tone, and the roots of it can be traced back to those early days in Ardwick.

However, there have been moments in Marr's career, particularly in lyrics from his recent career as a solo artist where he explores his childhood with a sense of deliberately trying to emancipate himself from these very influences that are littered through his music. In his 2013 single 'New Town Velocity' he expresses a desire to be free from the stifling environment he was brought up in (that of a typical second generation Irish immigrant?), and on the track '25 Hours' from his latest solo effort he talks of how he "ran from all the freaks and priests", trying to erode the ties that bind him to his upbringing. Marr has spoken in interviews of the relevance of this line to his Catholic school education, another aspect commonly seen among those with Gaelic roots who find themselves landed in Blighty. Could this sense of trying to reject that which he



PHOTO BY GENE SMIRNOV

was born into cause a certain discourse within him? He has alluded to this as much in interviews, explaining that “when I started to imagine the reality of being able to get away from my environment I did everything I could to do that”. Regardless, the rift was neither permanent nor severe, and Marr certainly didn’t abandon his Irishness and adopt jingoistic views of Rule Britannia; as he told the Irish Times in 2007 “I still look at the Union Jack flag and think: that’s nothing to do with me”.

So with this Irish breeding and the influence of the home country on his rearing, his first ever solo Irish gig in Dublin’s sweatbox music venue The Academy in March 2013 could be seen as something of a home coming. Racing through an eclectic mix of classics from his various projects, as well as the all but one of the tracks from his then-recently released ‘The Messenger’ LP, including the aforementioned ‘New Town Velocity’ which was dedicated to anyone from Athy, where his parents were born,

‘I still look at the Union Jack flag and think: that’s nothing to do with me.’

Marr had the crowd in the palm of his hand. From the front row I observed a masterclass in mixing classics from the past, including “an old Manchester folk song” in the form of ‘Stop Me If You Think You Heard This One Before’, as well as new songs that would sound fresh and promising from artists half his age. There was no doubt that Marr felt comfortable in this setting, in front of a crowd of compatriots singing every word back to him, climaxing in a rousing finale of ‘There Is a Light That Never Goes Out’. With nothing to prove and everything to gain, Johnny Marr, the pleasure and privilege was ours.

By Gavin Wynne

PHOTO BY MARC MCGARRAGHY /
YELLOW MUSTANG PHOTOGRAPHY



JOHNNY MARR + BERNARD SUMNER

Together in electronic dreams

Manchester, early 1990s. It was the age of acid house and synth-based dance music, and the traditional four-piece, guitar-based group was dead. Enter **ELECTRONIC**.

Having spent the remainder of the 1980s after The Smiths' demise working as a guitar-slinging genius-for-hire (it would be decades yet before "godlike" would officially precede that title), the news that Johnny Marr was not only working on his own new material again, but collaborating with New Order frontman Bernard Sumner, was greeted with excitement and curiosity in equal measures. Electronic had by no means promised to pick up where The Smiths had left off, nor had it promised to imitate "Johnny Marr joining New Order"

- in fact, the whole venture right from the start could be seen as almost anti-careerist, with Marr and Sumner originally planning to release their first single ('Getting away with it', backed with the aptly titled 'Lucky bag') anonymously on a white label 7". For artists of their calibre, such humility, despite its inevitable impossibility, was mind-boggling.

For both Marr and Sumner, Electronic was an escape, as well as a fresh start - but most importantly, the portal to a new world of creative opportunity.



For both Marr and Sumner, Electronic was an escape, as well as a fresh start - but most importantly, the portal to a new world of creative opportunity.

The intensity of their love for music is what cemented Johnny and Bernard's partnership. Both perfectionists in the studio and obsessively devoted to their work, Electronic was never a hobby: it was a project the pair dived into wholeheartedly, relishing their newfound freedom to create the music they wanted to. Their output, as had always been intended, was a fusion of the best their individual talents had to offer. "The logic was that it would have the synthesisers from New Order and the guitar from The Smiths", Bernard told Melody Maker in the early 1990s. This perfect union of such tremendous talent was of course one of the key elements to Electronic's success. The other was the strength of Johnny and Bernard's personal

relationship. The Smiths has dissolved due to dissent between group members, as would New Order (multiple times) over the following two decades. Unusually, Electronic technically never split up at all, and despite having moved on to other projects, Johnny and Bernard remain good friends to this day, even playing an Electronic song onstage together at Jodrell Bank in 2013.

The duo first met thirty years earlier, when Marr played guitar on a Quango Quango track that Sumner was producing. The repeated fateful crossing of paths during The Smiths' and New Order's respective touring schedules in the 1980s eventually led to what would become a close and fruitful friendship. Yet, despite the intensity of their attitudes towards music and studio work, their personal interactions, at least in the public eye, remained consistently playful and lighthearted, with much good-natured teasing - and just the occasional slip into the sentimental.

"I see Bernard more than anyone else outside my family... We're



definitely friends before anything else," Johnny told Blah Blah Blah magazine in 1996. By 1999, their closeness had deepened even further: "It's like a marriage between us now," Johnny told Loaded. "And it works because we prop each other up personally."

Perhaps crucial to Marr and Sumner's personal dynamic is the mutual understanding of the pressures of not only the legacies of their pasts, but the pressures of simply being part of a successful band. Both knew all too well by now the toll such pressure could take on a person, especially people with intense personalities such as

theirs, and were conscious of the need to look out for each other's mental well-being. With Marr and Sumner, friendship came before even their abiding love for making music, and it was this dedication to each other that enabled them to be equally dedicated to their creative endeavours - producing, as a result, some of the greatest pop and dance tunes of the 1990s.

Electronic may not have the same rabid fan following these days as either The Smiths or New Order/Joy Division, but for many fans of Johnny Marr in particular, it's a much-cherished part of the guitarist's rich musical



history. The ongoing inclusion of Electronic songs in Johnny's current solo sets (namely, 'Getting Away With It', and occasionally in 2013, 'Forbidden City'), is met with an overwhelmingly positive reception from the audience. For a project sometimes dismissed by critics, even now, as a mere hobby - or worse yet, a rockstar's indulgence - this appreciation for Marr and Sumner's work together stands testament to the enduring power of their combined creative output.

In the often tumultuous world of the music industry, Electronic stands apart as a band that was, despite all its brilliance and success, devoid of interpersonal conflict. No tantrums; no lawsuits; no disagreements over covering cheesy 1960s pop songs (cough). Just two good mates making the music they loved, and loving the person they were making it with.

By Martina G.

ELECTRONIC DISCOGRAPHY

LPs



Electronic
(1991, Factory)



Raise The Pressure
(1996, Parlophone)



Twisted Tenderness
(1999, Parlophone)

Singles



Getting Away With It
(1989, Factory)



Get The Message
(1991, Factory)



Feel Every Beat
(1991, Factory)



Disappointed
(1992, Parlophone)



Forbidden City
(1996, Parlophone)



For You
(1996, Parlophone)



Second Nature
(1996, Parlophone)



Vivid
(1999, Parlophone)



Late At Night
(1999, Parlophone)

CHILDHOOD:

THE BEST NEW BAND IN BRITAIN



PHOTO BY JOSHUA ATKINS

So, you're reading a Johnny Marr fanzine, you see the name of a band called Childhood in the contents page, and you're thinking "Why on earth is there an article about another band in here?" Well, here's why.

The first issue of *Dynamic* contained a wonderful article called "He started something", which talked about the benevolence Johnny Marr has with his fellow musicians, from lending guitars to the likes of Noel Gallagher and Radiohead to literally joining The Cribs. Now he's turned his eye to the brilliant Childhood, relentlessly name-checking them and giving them plum support slot on his recent UK tour.

Now the tour is over, that doesn't mean the patronage has stopped, if anything he seems to be ramping it up, recently citing Childhood as his musical highlight of the year in *The Guardian*. "(*Lacuna*) is a great record. I first heard their sound as it came to me on the breeze at Reading festival, when I was backstage. Even though someone was talking to me I was really taken with this beautiful sound. To be slightly reductive, it's what's known as "indie" with a slightly ethereal quality to it. If you were to ask me to give you an example of what indie actually is, and should be right now, that would be the record to play."



So why is Johnny Marr so smitten with the London four piece? Well for a start, there's their obvious shared love of guitars. But there's more to it than that: as much as Childhood are a guitar band at heart, their power and ultimate charm is the quality of the songwriting, mixing influences from a range of genres and understanding the importance of the rhythm section, which has seen them create a range of songs that speak a universal language, be that of love or alienation but ultimately realism.

In this sense both Childhood and Johnny Marr share a sense of modernity. When The Smiths emerged they sounded like nothing else that was happening at the time, mixing the likes of Rory Gallagher and Roger McGuinn with funk bass lines and a louche fop of a frontman. Childhood pull the same trick of throwing unlikely allies into their musical melting pot: to listen to *Lacuna* is to hear a band in their own bubble and one thing that can't be levelled



PHOTOS BY JOSHUA ATKINS

at them is the imprint of what their peers are doing. How many new bands have you heard and immediately thought they sound like Arctic Monkeys or The Libertines? Well not this one. And perhaps that's why Johnny Marr is throwing his ten bobs worth behind them. When The Smiths existed the avenues open to new bands to get themselves exposure were limited to the weekly music press, the John Peel Show, TV or hand produced fanzines. With the advent of the Internet that channel has now exploded to millions of fragments and Johnny Marr seems to be

on a one man mission to use his digital presence to help break Childhood into the mainstream.

There's also a shared tenderness to both of their ideologies. The Smiths were one of the most un-macho bands you could ever hear and this femininity also chimes in Childhood, in songs such as the miraculous "Blue Velvet", "As I am" and "Falls Away". Childhood's words and music are subtle, romantic, thrilling and above all timeless.

But most of all Johnny Marr loves Childhood because he loves great music, and *Lacuna* is a treasure trove of marvels. It's rare that a debut record doesn't contain a few duds, but every song on their debut is a peach. If you want a rip roaring anthem look no

further than "Solemn Skies", their set closer that could be their "I am the Resurrection", there's the pulverising guitars of "You could be different" and the spooky, spectral wonder that is "Tides", the space rock of "When you rise"... The list goes on...

So are Childhood the best kept secret in guitar music? For the moment, yes but not for much longer if JFM has anything to do with it. If you've not chanced upon their beautiful record or seen them play live yet, then it's time you started catching up, you won't be disappointed.

Childhood are the best new band in Britain. That's why Johnny Marr loves them.

By Ed Nash



Show of support:
Johnny sporting a Childhood
t-shirt onstage in Leeds

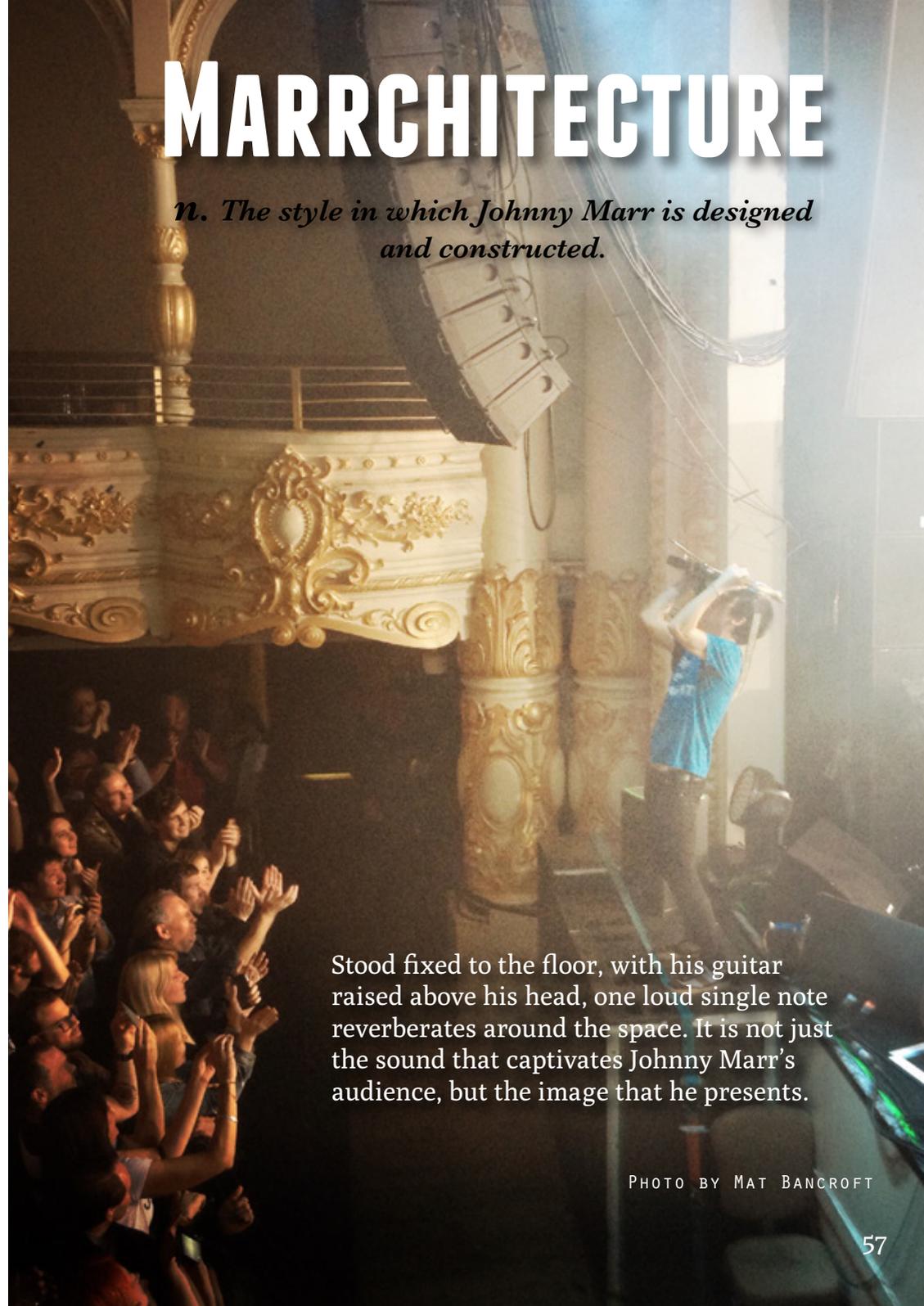
PHOTO BY DANNI CASEY



Artwork by Melissa Roden

MARRCHITECTURE

n. The style in which Johnny Marr is designed and constructed.



Stood fixed to the floor, with his guitar raised above his head, one loud single note reverberates around the space. It is not just the sound that captivates Johnny Marr's audience, but the image that he presents.

PHOTO BY MAT BANCROFT

The Right Fit Right

Style is very important when you're a famous musician and luckily for Johnny, working in Manchester clothes outlets as a teenager helped inspire him to keep that effortless chic ever since. During his time in The Smiths, Johnny took inspiration from Perry girls mods by wearing his yellow turtleneck sweater with another one swinging round at his hips.

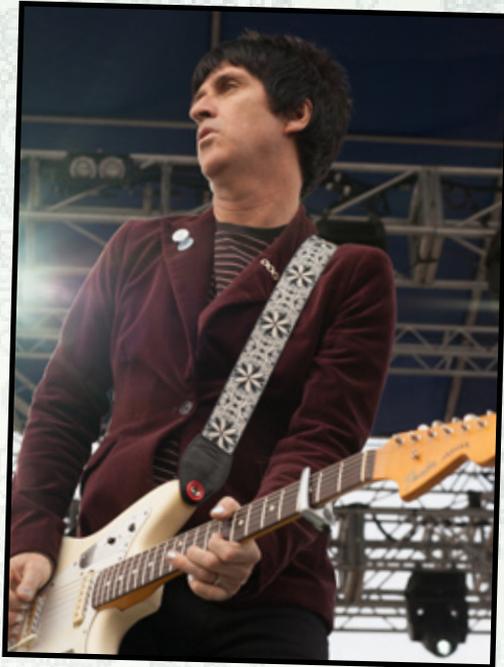


PHOTO BY ANNA HANKS

Jump forward 30 years, Johnny is looking sharper (but not too sensible either) in smart buttoned-up shirts and tailored thrift store jackets that still allow for plenty of activity on stage. "I like my stuff to look punky, but proper punky. So it's all from the Sixties and Seventies", he told *Esquire* magazine earlier this year. This attitude not only fits his musical style, but also compliments his strikingly youthful appearance, achieved by a vegan and teetotal lifestyle.

My Scene, Walk On

Johnny is always busy weaving his fingers over guitar frets...but that doesn't mean he never considers what he wears on his feet as well. Johnny's choice in footwear is usually whatever is most comfortable and complimentary to his trousers on stage, and fortunately, his treasured Clarks Weavers

and Wallabees shoes don't distract too much from his slim, drainpipe-clad legs. However, he has admitted that wearing them has its consequences when caught in bad weather: "I used to buy slippers from Clarks and when it rained I'd be falling all over the place, he told *Esquire* magazine. Still, since the Clarks brothers opened their Somerset business, 1825, they have grown very successful, even with a certain David Bowie in the 1970s. More recently, Johnny has taken to sporting his Lacoste Dots on stage for comfort and practicality.



PHOTO BY JOHNNY MARR

Vision in Sunglasses

Shades are any rock star's essential cool accessory, and Johnny is no exception. In the 1980s he could pull off any pair of round mirrored sunglasses or Ray Ban Wayfarers whilst simultaneously pulling off the most amazing guitar riffs.

Like the legendary musician, Ray Ban sunglasses have a fixed place in popular culture, and Johnny agrees on their importance in the music industry: "Entertainers who have style as part of their persona need to give a vibe that they have their eyes open all the time", he told *Telegraph* in 2011. In the same year, he designed his own Johnny Marr Signet sunglasses for the brand,



with blue tinted lenses and his signature inscribed on the arms. To align with this release, he worked with upcoming American bands including Mona and Best Coast for the 'Raw Sounds' live events in London, New York and Hong Kong.

Fast Badge Philosophy

If you look closely at Johnny's jacket lapels, you will find they are usually adorned with several badges, each an open door into his interests.



Aldous Huxley, the influential author of *Brave New World*, *The Perennial Philosophy* and many others, is one figure Johnny admires, particularly for his later intellectual essays and lectures.



The **Manchester Modernist Society**, who Johnny is now a patron of, describe themselves as "urban enthusiasts" who are passionate about the city and modern 20th century architecture. He used to wear their square shaped red enamel badge, but has since swapped it in favour of their new beautiful blue design. You can become a member of the society and subscribe to their magazine, *The Modernist*, at

manchestermodernistsociety.org



Similar to the **BRUTALIST** badge are Johnny's new **PLAYLAND** and **BREAKOUT** badges, worn in support of his *Playland* album. See how they aesthetically align, all sharing a rectangular shape, large stand out letters and a shiny enamel finish.



The **BRUTALIST** badge is another Manchester Modernist Society enamel design, designed for enthusiasts of Brutalist architecture. Its bold capital letters give a sophisticated edge, while maintaining a cool intellect.



Word Starts Attack is the final track on Johnny's first solo album, *The Messenger*. This badge is one of several designs in the Generate! badge set in the official online Johnny Marr merchandise store.



The English art punk group *Wire* is one of Johnny's favourite bands. This particular badge is based on the sleeve art for their 1978 *I Am The Fly* single.



The golden 'J' brooch represents the first letter of his name, of course! So simple, but wonderfully quirky too.



It's unclear what this infinity-like symbol means - a design chosen purely for its aesthetic appeal? The symbol of an ancient secret society? Only Johnny knows...



How to Draw a Bunny is the title of a British documentary film about the life and work of artist **Ray Johnson**. Interviews with several artists, including Chuck Close and James Rosenquist, give a powerful insight into his work and the mystery of his death.



The Tibetan Flag, worn in support of a free Tibet. Johnny has often spoken of his admiration for His Holiness the Dalai Lama XIV.



The golden swallow brooch, given as a gift from a friend. Derived from the history of sailors, a swallow symbolises protection and safe travels. They are also known to return to the same location every year. Fittingly, Johnny has a tattoo of a swallow on the lower left side of his neck.



As seen in the *Easy Money* video, Johnny's bagua badge is a reference to Taoist cosmology. The bagua is used in the practice of feng shui as well as the *I Ching*.

Other badges Johnny has been known to wear from time to time include a Spider-Man enamel pin, button badges of Bert Jansch, Blondie, Marc Bolan and Aldous Huxley quotes, and a small brooch of Picasso's dove.



Paint It Silver!

Metallic silver, and as shiny as his guitar riffs, Johnny's painted nails have recently become noticed by fans and the press alike. Talking to DJ Shaun Keaveny at a BBC 6 Maida Vale session this October, he revealed that singer Kate Nash used to paint them for a joke, but it has become a bit of a thing ever since. There might be a few disapproving people who frown at men with painted nails, but that won't stop Johnny reaching for the 'Barry M'.



Mod-ernist

Having a stand-out hairstyle is vital in the music business, but as with David Bowie, Siouxsie Sioux and Keith Richards, it has to be true to your image. Johnny told *Guitar World* in 2012, "I maintain it's my absolute prerogative to wear whatever hairstyle goes with my guitar at any point in my life". On stage he's a Mancunian mod messiah, with the lights on his radiant crest of raven black hair ruffled into a crown (If you really want to know, baby ravens deliver a special dew to him to keep it so shiny, if you believe his Twitter account!). His perfectly trimmed fringe that plays parallel to his eye line speaks volumes about his smart but cheeky personality. Johnny is privileged that people continue to appreciate his choice of haircut, and now at the age of 51, he has successfully made a name for himself by maintaining his own individual indie chic.

By Melissa Roden

Brixton O2 Academy 23/10/2014

'Panic On the Streets of London...' When Johnny Came to Brixton

Well, maybe panic wasn't on the streets, but using a line from a Smiths song was too tempting. I'll do better next time, promise!

That aside, this was a night to remember.

Waiting hours in advance in the queue was utterly worth it - yours truly was situated at the barrier, so close to the middle! It made the event that little bit more special. The very talented Childhood was supporting Johnny this tour, and I have to say that I like their music. Most of the time I don't think much of support bands, but these guys were worthy of playing before Johnny Marr. 'As I Am' is one of my favourite songs of theirs, and 'Lacuna' is a very good record. Bumped into them at the merch table afterwards and they are some of the nicest lads one could meet! It was an utter pleasure to talk to Ben and co.

After Childhood walked off, the stage was set for the main act, and all we could do was wait while DJ Mat Bancroft played some more tunes before it all kicked off.

And kick off, it did.

PHOTO BY
SARAH DOONE



PHOTO BY SARAH DOONE

The second the lights went down, the crowd started cheering and shouting. Lights spelling out 'PLAYLAND' flashed all across the back wall as the band walked on. Then Johnny bounded on and they immediately launched into the title track of the new album.

It had begun.

Johnny wasted no time in letting The Smiths make their way into his set, with 'Panic' being only the second number. The energy from the crowd shouting the 'Hang the DJ' refrain was quite remarkable for so early in the evening.

'Easy Money' was one of the newer songs that had people dancing the most, while the melodic swirl of 'New Town

Velocity' was the first moment to take a breather and let the music wash over the crowd in all its beauty.

Things really picked up again by the time Johnny began to play the classic 'Bigmouth Strikes Again', a true crowd pleaser. Johnny had hit his stride much earlier in the proceedings, but here he began to really

show his prowess at being an icon, striking poses here and there, yet not missing a single note or chord. Being at the barrier, I could hear everyone behind me scream the 'BIGMOUTH, LA DA DA, DA DAAAA' chorus for all they were worth. This was starting to turn into one of the craziest and most fun gigs I've ever attended.

A glitterball was lit up for 'Candidate' and 'Getting Away With It' (and who doesn't love a glitterball?!). 'Candidate' is one of my favourite songs off of Playland, yet 'Getting Away With It' was something else entirely. I was lucky enough to see this performed at Maida Vale a few weeks earlier, but in a less corporate environment and with no live cameras around, plus

that glitterball throwing dancing lights everywhere, this was one of those moments that just take your breath away, particularly during the guitar breakdown.

The main set ended with the now-customary 'There Is A Light That Never Goes Out', crowd singalong included. As the band walked off, the crowd resumed its chanting of 'JOHNNY, JOHNNY, JOHNNY FUCKIN' MARR', and it didn't stop until they returned for the encore.

'Still Ill' is a recent addition to Johnny's setlists, and the crowd was grateful for it, reaching out to the stage while singing 'Does the body rule the mind, or does

the mind rule the body? I don't know,' as much as their voices would let them. That's how you start an encore.

After playing 'Dynamo', Johnny stepped up to the microphone to introduce his special guest, and confirmed the rumours that had been doing the rounds for days: 'I'd like to introduce someone who has been a friend of mine for 20 years. One of the greatest songwriters from this country. He's a good man, I think he's got a big future ahead of him. Mr Noel Gallagher.'

The excitement levels in the building went off the scale.

PHOTO BY OLLIE MILLINGTON



Noel was handed his guitar, fiddled around a bit with his pedals, and off they went into a blistering cover of Iggy Pop's 'Lust for Life'.

Even better was the number that followed to finish the set - the legendary song that is 'How Soon Is Now'. Having an extra guitar beefed up the sound and had the crowd singing with arms raised into the air as a few more pints were thrown around. This was a very special moment that will almost certainly never happen again; it was electrifying. 'How Soon Is Now' ended and Johnny

JOHNNY MARR

Playland
Panic
Upstarts
Easy Money
25 Hours
New Town Velocity
The Headmaster Ritual
Stop Me If You Think
Back In The Box
Speak Out Reach Out
Generate! Generate!
Bigmouth Strikes Again
Boys Get Straight
Candidate
Getting Away With It
There Is A Light That Never Goes Out

Still III
Dynamo
Lust For Life
How Soon Is Now?



PHOTO BY SARAH DOONE

and Noel shared a hug onstage before walking off.

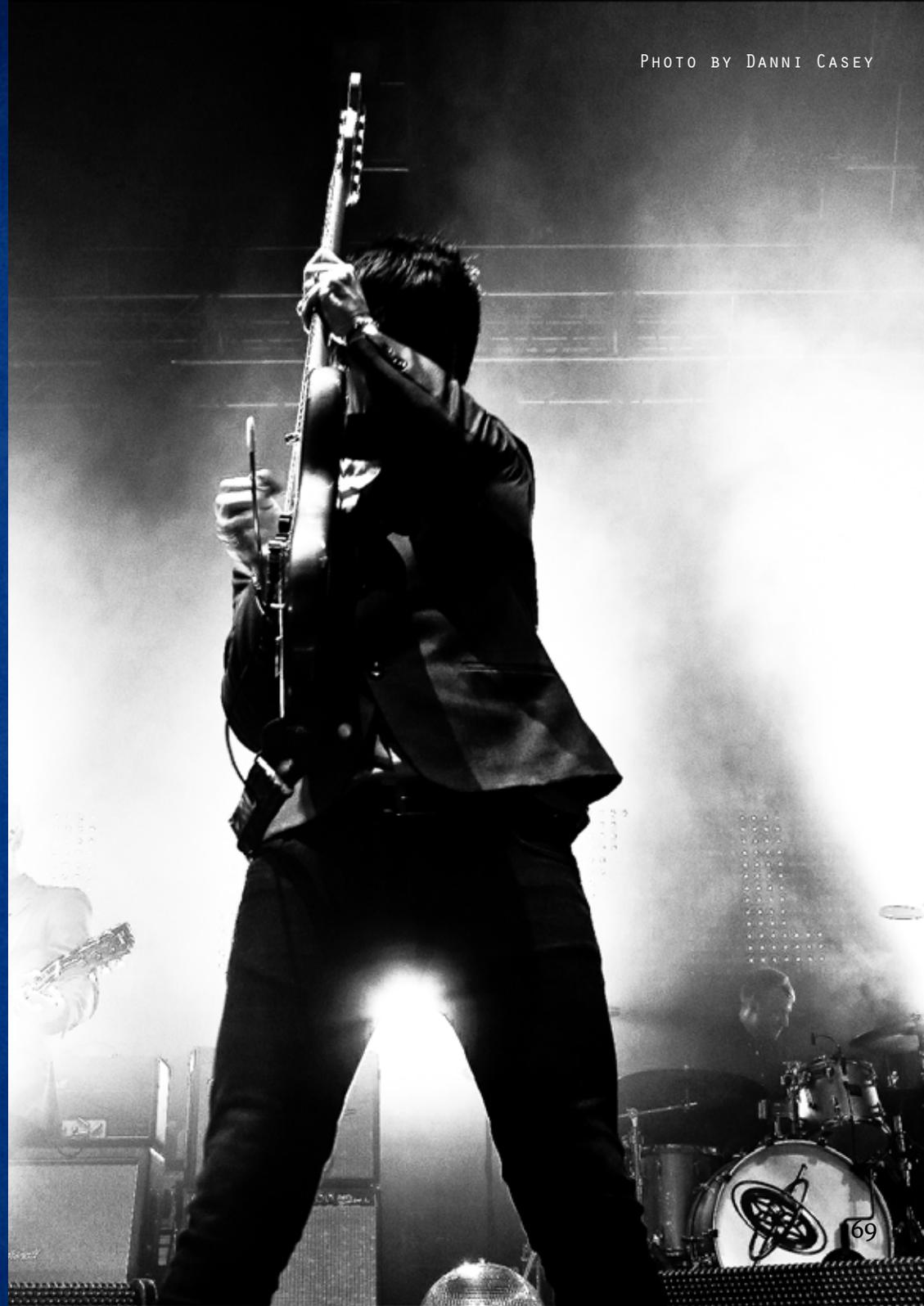
What. A. Night.

Being in the presence of two of my musical heroes in such a great venue was something I won't forget in a hurry - and it happened only a few feet in front of me as well!

Going to a Johnny Marr gig is always an utterly unforgettable experience. But that night in Brixton was out of this world.

I only hope it isn't too long before he plays another London gig!

By Gemma Faulkner



HOME IS WHERE THE (HE)ART IS

O2 Apollo, Manchester, 25/10/2014

Home. A word and concept that for most of us, brings to mind notions of belonging and identity.

For both Johnny and his fans, performing at the Manchester Apollo - just a stone's throw from Ardwick Green, where he grew up - feels like a remarkable career finally coming full circle.

A teleport ride 30-something years back in time will present a time traveller with a young Johnny Maher, charming his way (some things never change!) into the venue with the help of the ladies who kept vigil while the slinky Mancunian slithered his way inside through a narrow window in the girls' toilets. Très punk!

There, guided by the calloused but talented hand of Patti Smith - a modern oracle, if you wish - the young Wythenshawe wunderkind found an egress to an otherworldly life: Music.

And there, he decided to stay.

JOHNNY MARR

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Panic
Upstarts
Easy Money
25 Hours
New Town Velocity
The Headmaster Ritual
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There Is A Light That Never Goes Out

Still III
Dynamo
Lust For Life
How Soon Is Now?

PHOTO BY
ELSPETH MOORE

The imposing art deco building of the O2 Apollo Manchester, a vision in white glazed terracotta (epically befitting a Modernist such as Johnny), stands erect and prouder than ever on this momentous Saturday, as if welcoming a prodigal son back inside. Call me romantic, but the pale Mancunian sun rays seem to dance upon the gleamy, smiling façade of the Apollo, its long loved and loving dweller's name now etched on its proud frontage in block letters.

Tentative guitar notes emerge from within the heart of the Apollo in the late afternoon, soon to be replaced with the night's crisp, dreamy sounds - a taste of things to come for the devoted fans already huddling outside the venue. With a mixture of both excitement and frustration, they count down the minutes until Johnny will take the stage. Each one of them is bearing a tribute: one sporting an inspired tattoo, the other in a handmade tee shirt. Another holds a charcoal portrait, while some just happily daydream about a

jam session with their guitar hero - or even just the chance to shake his hand after the show.

Under the distinctive red ceiling of the Apollo, minute chases minute, while the crowd is treated to DJ Mat Bancroft's impeccably tasteful set, featuring Wire, Tubeway Army and Subway Sect, to name just a few. All feel like a rare glimpse inside Johnny's personal record collection and musical inspirations.

The energetic Childhood arrive shortly after to give the audience a



PHOTO BY ELSPETH MOORE

teasing taster of their well-praised debut album, *Lacuna*. The London based quintet radiates confidence, youthful cheekiness and lots of fun packed commotion - it's clear to see why Johnny likes them so much. A brilliant opener and mood-setter for the main act.

As the lights dim, the excitement in the crowd intensifies to almost frenzied proportions. Brilliant lighting flickering across gigantic futuristic LCD screens, accompanied by warped synths gives the feeling that the vast Apollo venue and its inhabitants are stepping into another dimension: Playland.

With a shy smile and a polite wave, 'Magic Jack' (Mitchell) approaches his sparkling new drum kit and begins with a vivacious rhythm. His drumskin is adorned with the image of a gyroscope, a recurring symbol within Playland's artwork. An object that both represents balance and seems to defy gravity merrily, it seems fitting that Johnny chose it for Playland's symbology.



PHOTO BY DANNI CASEY

Sharply dressed and welcomed by claps from the roaring crowd are the majestic Iwan Gronow on bass and the ever mysterious (James) Doviak, who takes charge of masterfully arranged keyboards.

Swift-footed as a gazelle in a field, Johnny himself finally takes the stage, armed with a dazzling dimpled smile and remarkably stylish trainers. There are no courteous introductions yet, but the crowd is being swept off its feet with the energy packed 'Playland', the title track that rightfully sets the exuberant tone of the evening. Over top of synth notes brilliantly weaved in with a powerful guitar, the singer urges those of us

who still breathe, to become an open door. Resistance, in this case, is futile.

The ever-cheeky 'Panic' sets the crowd on fire: they all chant along and cheer when Johnny playfully gives them his signature wink and a teasing close-up view of agile, silver varnish-adorned digits working the fretboard of a gorgeous Sherwood Green Fender Jaguar bearing his own design and name. This is a timeless Smiths classic, and Johnny certainly does it justice.

The chants roll on as Johnny, a Manchester City fan, playfully incites the masses with a jolly football anthem: 'Manchester la la la la. Manchester la la la la.' It's the perfect warm-up to 'Upstarts', a vigorous track off his debut album *The Messenger*, in praise of youthful chutzpah. As he mentioned in an interview to *Stereogum* back in 2012, 'Upstarts' is a kind of lighthearted description of leaving school and getting screwed and not knowing enough to engage in some productive political discourse but still being wise enough to throw up your middle finger and say "Fuck you." (Dec, 27th 2012). The sentiment isn't lost on the

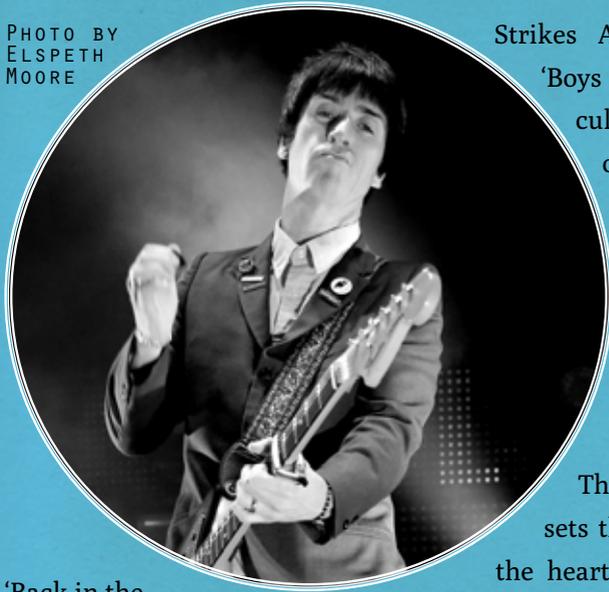
crowd, which has responded with a lively fist-pumping in time to the rhythm.

The pressure is raised with the well-received single 'Easy Money', a fab tune that gets the front rows bouncing about frantically. This track is masterfully layered by excellent backing vocals from Iwan, and an invigorating keyboard sequence from Doviak. The entire band sounds out of this world, and it's plain to see the great dynamic at work within the group.

The autobiographical '25 Hours' sounds fittingly like a head-spinning outcry of triumph over the cemented sprawls of the environment a young Johnny Marr was so desperate to escape. 'New Town Velocity' and 'The Headmaster Ritual' were up next, aptly expanding on the theme of the challenges of youth. Both sound painfully familiar and up-to-date for anyone pushing through the seething ordeals of any educational system, in any city around the world. Marr performs especially brilliantly on the latter, his haunting tone replacing Morrissey's original yodelling.



PHOTO BY
ELSPETH
MOORE



'Back in the box', the opening number from *Playland*, infects the crowd with its ecstatic lyrics. Their minds blown as the universe is exposed in front of them, taking the shape of a frenzied, bouncing Johnny Marr - an action quickly mirrored and embraced by the elated fans. Next up is 'Speak out reach out', a nocturnal London adventure told in a sexy, swaggering rhythm, revelling in the moment where you witness karma being experienced in its full, glorious splendour by well oiled 'city types'. We've all met them. And gloated.

The energetic crowd pleasers 'Generate! Generate!' and 'Bigmouth

Strikes Again' pave the way for 'Boys get straight': a fast paced, culture-jamming critique on both the consumerism and machoism infecting our society. The crowd embraces this new manifesto with giddy head banging. Reactivate! Reload!

The emotional 'Candidate' sets the tone (and gently lowers the heartbeat pace) for a beautiful version of The Smiths' classic 'Please, please, please let me get what I want' - "A Mancunian Folk Song", to quote the man himself. Eyes closed and enveloped in wispy blue light, Johnny's dulcet tones merge beautifully with the crowd's.

Another inclusion from Johnny's impressive back catalogue follows, but this time it's not a Smiths tune that has the audience captivated - and dancing. Electronic's 'Getting Away With It' sounds more invigorating than ever as Johnny treats the crowd to shimmering guitar breaks, both sound and sight completely mesmerising under the hypnotic disco ball hanging above.

"Will you please do me a favour?" Johnny asks gently afterwards. Does he even need to ask? Sure enough, he's answered back immediately with a thundering "Yes!".

"You'll be glad you said yes, seriously," He adds playfully, then recruits the crowd as a wedding band audience in a heartwarming sing-a-long tribute to newlyweds Joe and Sarah. Joe is no other than Joe Moss, of course: the man who inspired Johnny to form The Smiths, and most importantly, had faith in him right from the very start.

The venue is drowned in light and love

as the crowd joins in wholeheartedly singing along to 'There Is a Light That Never Go Out'. A beautiful finish to an already flawless night.

The enthusiastic singing continues well into the satisfying encore, with a lively version of 'Still Ill'. Clad in a blue 'Boys Get Straight' tee shirt and armed with the magnificent new single 'Dynamo' to follow, Marr remains just as youthfully energetic as he was at the start of the gig. Up next is a hit by his hero Iggy Pop, and it is of course the very apt 'Lust for Life', a song that seems to describe the guitarist's own attitude perfectly.



PHOTO BY DANNI CASEY

The night comes to its inevitable end with the howling, swampy sounds of 'How Soon is Now?', and Marr's low, husky vocals are a perfect match for its haunting melody. Like a God on a pedestal, he stands for an iconic moment with his signature Fender Jaguar held, in an impressive show of strength, above his head. This is not just a musician running perfunctorily through his repertoire, but a true, passionate lover of music playing for other passionate music lovers.

As I step out of the Apollo, arms linked with my awestruck gig companion and best friend, I realise I've left my heart (and broken umbrella) behind.

By Ory Englander

REVIEW

Glasgow 2 Academy

27 October 2014

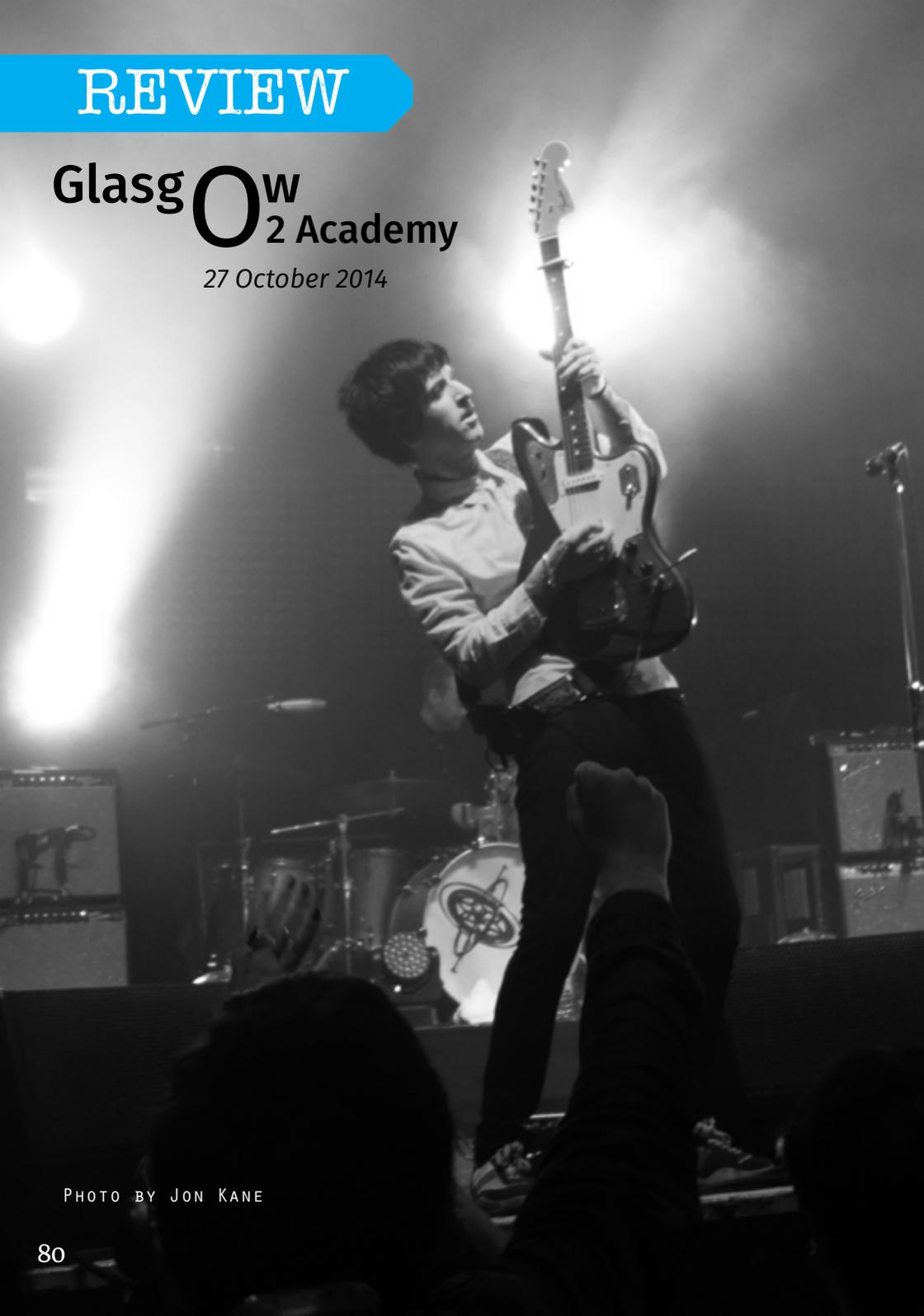


PHOTO BY JON KANE

Bright stage, brighter bulbs and the brightest of rockers took to the stage at the Academy in Glasgow for an evening that marked everything: Playland. Jack Mitchell, Iwan Gronow, Doviak and Johnny Marr entered and appropriately 'played' the title-track of their new LP, with the Scottish West coast crowd willing and keen, not for the first time, to enjoy themselves.

From there, a game of lyrical geography and the first of seven Smiths renditions, namely through 'Panic', not only a great single but perhaps the greatest song about deriding opposite musical tastes. 'Upstarts' sounded urgent in our theatrical setting, a rallying call for modern guitar music, yet made way swiftly for 'Easy Money', the welcome current focus and so much more than a trend. Perhaps this song, and the preceding three, stand as a "common commodity" for Johnny, one in a line of several enduring compositions, but for the rest of us mean something more valued than most.

Onwards, and '25 Hours' pays homage to a strong work ethic and, more tenuously, a nod towards the preceding day, with British summer time ending and

an additional sixty minutes for exploration. Next, 'New Town Velocity', where the band really adds a sense of occasion and purpose to proceedings, gives chance to some wondrous lyrics that fits in with the old theatre. Johnny next introduced 'The Headmaster Ritual', "This is for everyone who is still in school, or feels like they are still in school", and blasted through a critique of mistrust and restrictions within education, Iwan in particular standing out here on bass duties. Whilst "confusion controls" makes for an accurate, if discomfiting, thought about everyday life, 'Back in the Box' represents a joyous

JOHNNY MARR

Playland
Panic
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Please Please Please Let Me Get What I Want
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There Is A Light That Never Goes Out

Still Ill
Dynamo
Lust For Life
How Soon Is Now?



PHOTO BY JON KANE

a song has earned the right within the set. Furthermore, a plain phrase, “this is a good one”, marks ‘Bigmouth Strikes Again’, with Doviak earning his keep through masterful guitar playing to supplement the song. ‘Boys Get Straight’, one of the first songs completed for the new album, rounds off a convincing selection and emphasises all the strengths Johnny possesses as a solo artist.

For those not fully acquainted with Johnny, or even followers who never quite move on from the past, a song like ‘Candidate’ may seem perplexing. Johnny flips any generalisations by lyrically offering a positive, encouraging song. ‘The Messenger’ and ‘Playland’ LPs offer these things not only at certain moments, but in detail. An extended ‘Please, Please, Please Let Me Get What I Want’, a rendition as beautiful as any, gives way for ‘Getting Away with It’, the sole Electronic number of the night. The version that the band plays within a live setting simply sounds a dream, a greatly altered arrangement all in attendance found, simply, as “clear to see”. Any other ending would provoke an outcry, and Johnny obliges with ‘There is a

moment, like many written by Johnny, something to sing and think about and enjoy.

After a little background, featuring details behind the economic disparity throughout ‘Speak Out Reach Out’, Johnny and band ran proficiently through the song. The final of three compositions from ‘The Messenger’, rather surprising since the LP only found release in February 2013, ‘Generate! Generate!’ prompts a mid-set rush of joy, a fan favourite for all the right people. When you can convince a room full of people to chant a particularly clever hook of “cogito ergo dumb”, you know

Light That Never Goes Out’, a song that brings any love to life, and, in essence, gives us a life to love, repeated refrain and all.

Time for an encore, which Jack seems to emphasise all the more with some excellent drumming on ‘Still Ill’. The requisite ‘zine anthem and forthcoming single at the time of writing, ‘Dynamo’, casually enters the set at a late stage, one in a seemingly long line of bonuses. Johnny then whirls through a cover from his formative years, ‘Lust for Life’ by Iggy Pop, essentially to offer

something different from the solo and Smiths numbers for any undecided parties in attendance. Nothing “criminally vulgar” about the final song, as the band, on ‘How Soon is Now?’, ring true as ever. Johnny noted when leaving the stage, feedback still ringing throughout the Academy, and especially in those heads who care, “no wonder everybody loves playing here”. Glasgow, to conclude, stands for many things: excitement, adventure, art and yes, a ‘land to play’.

By Christopher MacLachlan



PHOTO BY JON KANE

A black and white photograph of Johnny Marr, the lead guitarist of The Smiths, performing on stage. He is shown from the chest up, looking upwards and to the left. He is wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored shirt and a dark tie. A guitar strap is visible across his chest, and the neck of a guitar is prominent in the foreground, extending from the bottom right towards the top right. The background is dark and out of focus.

REVIEW

Leeds *O2 Academy*

29/10/2014

29th October saw Johnny Marr end the UK tour for his new album 'Playland' at the Leeds O2 Academy. Johnny Marr's shows in Leeds always have somewhat of a special feeling to them, especially since he usually starts his tour over at Brudenell Social Club, where he premiered new tracks for 'Playland' at his two night residency back in March.

Johnny and his band took to the stage at 9pm with the title track from 'Playland'; a track that reminds us all just how much of a wizard he is on the guitar, before playing the crowd-pleasing Smiths track 'Panic', which had the entire venue chanting "hang the DJ". Let's be honest, though: with the line "the Leeds side streets that you slip down", combined with Johnny's signature point mid guitar play showing his acknowledgement of Leeds to the crowd, 'Panic' was always going to be a crowd pleaser.

PHOTO BY
SARAH DOONE

Playland
Panic
Upstarts
Easy Money
25 Hours
New Town Velocity
The Headmaster Ritual
Back In The Box
Speak Out Reach Out
Generate! Generate!
Bigmouth Strikes Again
Boys Get Straight
Candidate
Please Please Please
Getting Away With It
There Is A Light That Never Goes Out

Still Ill
Dynamo
Lust For Life
How Soon Is Now?

The set list consisted of 7 Smiths tracks, including 'Still Ill', 'The Headmaster Ritual', and 'Big Mouth Strikes Again', all with their killer opening riffs that show off Johnny's trademark characteristic guitar style. Johnny treated the crowd to a beautiful rendition of 'Please, Please, Please Let Me Get What I Want', though it was at this point in the show where, despite the majority of the crowd falling silent whilst watching Johnny in awe and taking in the beautiful moment, a couple of people continued to shout and heckle Johnny to play certain tracks and so on. Johnny handled the situation like the true gent that he is, pausing to explain

that it wasn't that he "wasn't doing it", "this was it", before continuing to play.

Johnny played the majority of his new album, including the instantly recognisable lead single that contains one of Johnny's catchiest guitar riffs, 'Easy Money'. 'Speak Out Reach Out' was another tremendous gig highlight, with its swaggered guitars and drum beat, as well as a witty story from Johnny about walking through London late at night and being given a hard time from some guys about the way he dressed, and his hair (they told him he looked like Noel Gallagher - from one legend to another!) Johnny stated that he didn't care because he got a song out of it, and it's a great one, so more fool them! The new album sounds fantastic live, including both Johnny's upcoming single 'Dynamo', and 'Back In The Box', which saw Johnny bounce up and down during an instrumental whilst not missing a single note. His energy is absolutely incredible - I'm 23 and if I did that, I'd require First Aid.

Nobody could have been disappointed with the set list, as it had everything, including a cover of Iggy Pop track 'Lust For Life'. It's great to see that Johnny's cool enough to honour other musicians, taking us back to his last tour which saw him cover The Crickets

track 'I Fought The Law'. 30 years ago this review would've been purely based on The Smiths, but Johnny Marr has come so far, and done so much, that although they are such a prominent part of his career, they only cover a small timespan of it.

My personal highlight of the gig, for example, regarded former band of Johnny's and Bernard Sumner from New Order's; 'Electronic'. It was the most beautiful moment that's ever happened in the Leeds O2 Academy, when Johnny played 'Electronic' track 'Getting Away With It'. If the song wasn't special enough, Johnny had a bit of a dance, a face of pure concentration with his eyes closed, and there was even a glitter ball - need I say more?!

I slightly missed some of the tracks from Johnny's first album 'The Messenger', though it is the 'Playland' tour, and one of my favourite things about Johnny is that he's always moving forward and working on something new. 'The Messenger'-wise, Johnny played the energetic 'Upstarts', massive crowd pleaser 'Generate! Generate!', and the wonderfully chilled 'New Town Velocity'.

Before leaving the stage Johnny played not only mine, but many fans' favourite Smiths track, 'There Is A Light That Never Goes Out', before leaving an empty stage, and an excitable crowd chanting his name. It wasn't long before he returned to the stage with a rose between his teeth (which he threw



PHOTO BY SARAH DOONE



in to the crowd), wearing a t-shirt from the merchandise stand of his support band, 'Childhood' - once again honouring other musicians. What a guy!

Lastly, Johnny played another popular Smiths track 'How Soon Is Now?'. With its tremolo and rippling sound resulting in one of the most distinctive introductions to this day, it was the perfect end to both the show, and the UK tour.

I feel lucky to have watched Johnny play live, as it really is something special. I continually think he can't get any better, and he continually proves me wrong. I genuinely think Johnny Marr is a wizard, and I look forward to whatever masterpiece he'll conjour up next!

By Laura Dean

PHOTO OPPOSITE BY
MARC MCGARRAGHY /
YELLOW MUSTANG
PHOTOGRAPHY

Playland Tour UK

Best of Instagram

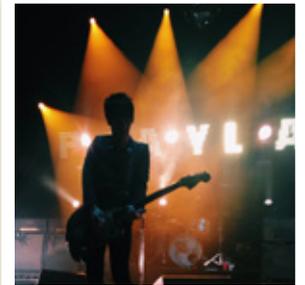
As chosen by the judge of our December competition.



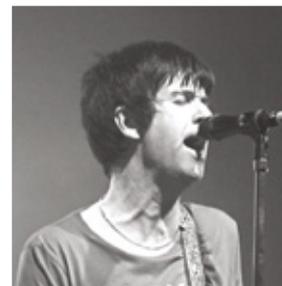
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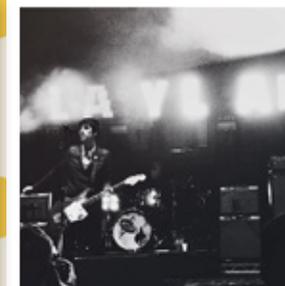
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@guitarmanrobbo



@retrospeccy



@pfladuke

Don't forget to follow us on Instagram at [@johnnymarrvellous](#), and of course Johnny's official account at [@johnnymarrgram](#)

From Paris with love

La Trabendo, Paris, 3 November 2014

There's something about being in a city like Paris that makes one feel terribly romantic. Having already treated myself to seeing Johnny's earth-shatteringly fabulous shows in both Leeds and Manchester the week before, I was still loved-up and high on the lasting adrenaline those gigs left me with when I arrived in Paris for an indulgent encore. Though my proficiency in the French language leaves much to be desired (I know a few swear words and the lyrics to 'Ca plane pour moi', but that's it), and La Trabendo itself is located within a maze-within-a-labyrinth, I made it to the venue just as doors opened, immediately

greeted by all the familiar sights that assured me I was amongst like minds. I was hundreds of miles away from home, but the vibe of excitement was just as intense as it had been back in dear old Blighty.

It was a pleasure to see the supremely talented Childhood open for Johnny again, treating their audience to a fine selection of tracks from their recent album, 'Lacuna'. Latest single 'As I am' was just as beautifully dreamy as ever, and in the cosy surrounds of an intimate venue like La Trabendo, songs like 'You could be different' and 'Blue velvet' sounded even better than ever. It's not difficult to see why



JOHNNY MARR

Playland
Stop Me If You Think
Right Thing Right
Upstarts
25 Hours
New Town Velocity
The Headmaster Ritual
Back In The Box
Speak Out Reach Out
Generate! Generate!
Bigmouth Strikes Again
Boys Get Straight
The Messenger
Easy Money
Getting Away With It
How Soon Is Now?

Still III
Dynamo
I Fought The Law
There Is A Light That Never Goes Out

Johnny is so enthusiastic about these boys from Brixton: aside from simply being a massive talent, they sound just as good live as they do on CD, and there's an energy to their live performances that parallels Johnny's own. After closing their set with a rendition of 'Solemn skies' that could only be described as 'fucking intense', singer Ben Romans-Hopcraft bid the audience farewell and then it was time for the main act.

The short space of time between the support act's finale and Johnny's arrival onstage is always one of agitated excitement. Internally, my mind was the equivalent of a child on a car trip asking 'are we there yet?' every five seconds. It felt like an eternity had passed by the time I heard the invigorating introductory drumbeats of the new album's title track.

And then, there he was.

Looking resplendent as always in a tailored dark green jacket, criminally tight jeans and some seriously cool-looking trainers, it's clear that Johnny Marr is no reluctant frontman. Though not at all overly showy or theatrical, he exudes a confidence that is positively magnetic, and you can't help but gaze in wonder as he plays and moves about onstage, clearly in his element.

Mind you, it's not just Johnny as a person that captures your attention with such irresistible force: the music itself is as

compelling as the man who makes it, and 'Playland' in particular seems both at once a siren song and rally cry. Even if it hadn't been an obvious choice of opener on account of being the album's title track, it would still have been the perfect song to kick-start the show.

A few numbers in, Johnny takes a small pause to greet the audience with 'Bonjour' and that trademark cheeky grin. I suspect that Johnny Marr doesn't speak much more French than I do, but it earns him cheers of appreciation from the crowd, and they in return are rewarded with another arrestingly charming smile. Personally, he could address the audience in Klingon and I'd probably still swoon a little...



PHOTO BY MAURO MELIS

On with the show and we're treated to a particularly gorgeous rendition of 'New Town Velocity' that has me swaying on the spot, eyes closed; Smiths classic 'The Headmaster Ritual', and 'Back in the box' in all its catchy, high-energy glory. It's one of the great mysteries of the universe how Johnny is able to jump



PHOTO BY MAURO MELIS

about onstage like the Energizer Bunny on MDMA without missing a single note, but I for one am content to just enjoy the scene without overanalysing it - 'don't think twice, it's alright', after all.

Smiths favourites 'Bigmouth strikes again' and final pre-encore song 'How soon is now?' both encourage a frenzy of excitement from the audience, and the set's sole Electronic number 'Getting away with it' is deservedly well-received before Johnny and the band leave the stage - though not for long.

The encore kicks off with 'Still ill' (and some very excellent drumming from Mr Jack Mitchell, it must be noted) and Johnny reappears having traded his lovely pink dress shirt for a blue fitted 'Boys get straight' t-shirt. Despite well over an hour of high-energy onstage action, he doesn't show even the slightest sign of fatigue as the encore continues into the sublime 'Dynamo' and a clap-along cover of 'I fought the law', then of course the classic mood-setting finale, 'There is a light that never goes out'.

The audience here is a little more reserved when it comes to singing along than in England, but the passion is evident instead in their expressions and outstretched arms. When Johnny lifts the guitar above his head during the song's final outro, a handful of lads in the front row actually manage to grab on to his t-shirt and start clawing at the revealed flesh, hands caressing his chest and stomach in a fit of quasi-religious fervour. Whether they're in the

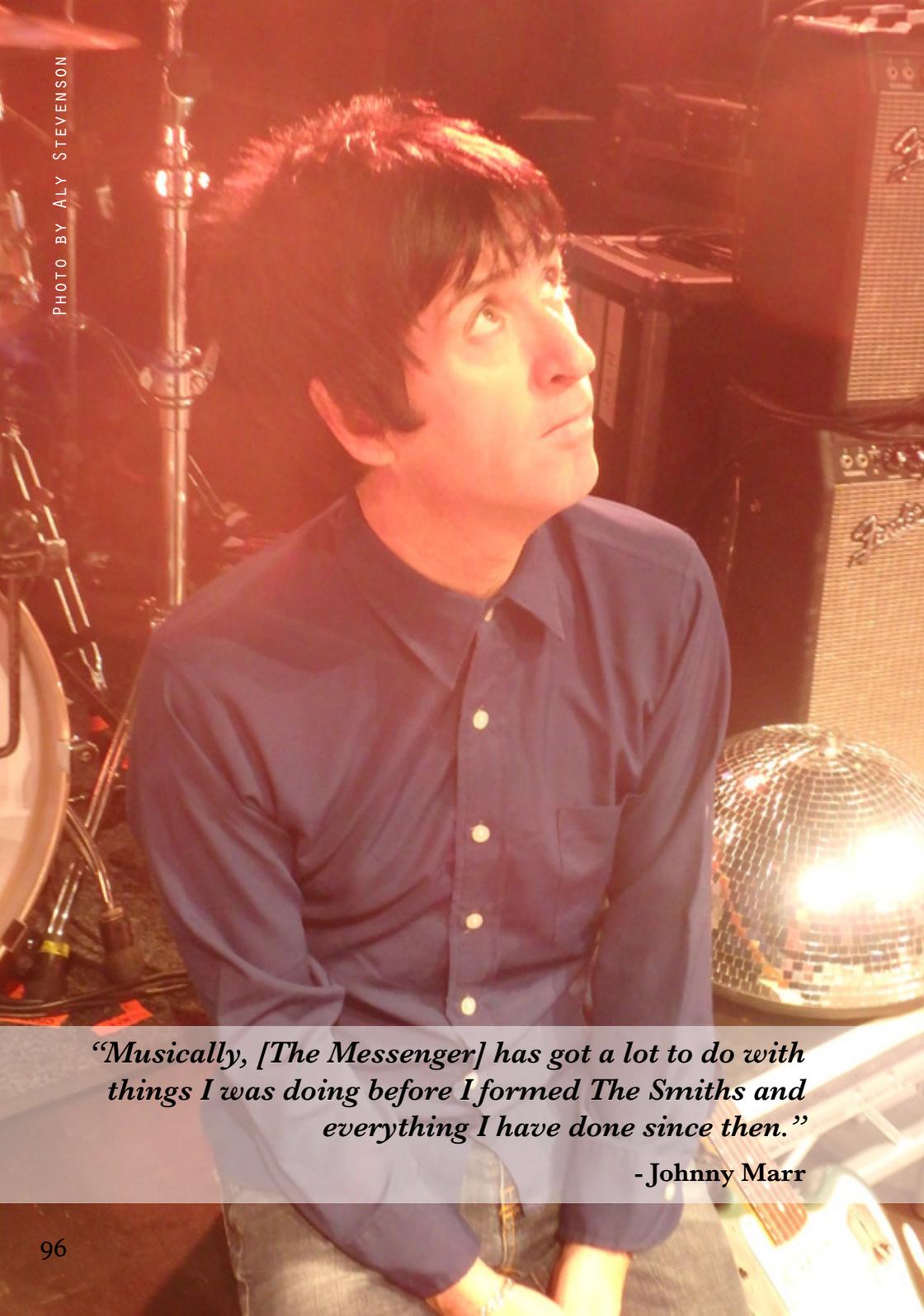
midst of a bonafide spiritual experience or just turned on is anybody's guess, but one thing is for sure: emotions are running high and it's in an awestruck haze that I stumble off towards the merch stand, in desperate need of another poster for my bedroom wall.

Merci, Monsieur Marr.
Je t'aime, je t'aime...

By Bernadette Rumsen

PHOTO BY MAURO MELIS





“Musically, [The Messenger] has got a lot to do with things I was doing before I formed The Smiths and everything I have done since then.”

- Johnny Marr

Shopping for music

PART 2

with the

Angel of Radness

on your shoulder

*A regular feature where Andy Campbell takes a look at pop and rock classics discovered through the tutelage of Professor Marr**

*(*unbeknownst to Johnny Marr)*

With *Playland* and *The Messenger*, Johnny has expertly relayed a sense of the brusqueness, intellect and conceptuality of guitar music 'pre-Smiths.' Specifically, the counter-cultural guitar music which emerged in the late '70s and early '80s, and which is now classified as punk, post-punk and new wave. Since *The Messenger's* release, Johnny has spoken warmly of Buzzcocks, Magazine, Blondie, Wire, The Undertones, The Angels, Siouxsie and the Banshees, and has even covered Theatre of Hate's 'The Hop' in his live set. Those of us on Instagram would recall photographer Pat Graham's 'takeover' of Johnny's account at Brixton Academy last month, which included video footage of Johnny's iPod displaying a playlist titled 'Dressing Room,' which featured Ultravox, Magazine, 999 and The Adverts. In another backstage video, ('Five minutes guys!') the band is warming up to 'Ask The Angels' by the Patti Smith Group. So in celebration of the great guitar music of this era, and its significance to Johnny's current outlook and creativity, this issue's column will focus on tracks from the era 1976-1980.



ABOVE PHOTO BY MAT BANCROFT

Wire, 'Fragile', *Pink Flag*

There are 21 songs on this LP, most of which run for less than two minutes. It pushes the economy of pop songwriting to such autistic extremes that it at first sounds as though the band is abusing the form, when in fact they are liberating it: this music forces you to learn to listen again. And once you become familiar with the new language, its brilliant. 'Fragile,' a love song as only Wire could do it – introspective and detached with a self-assured stride – knocks out three verses and two choruses in one minute and nineteen seconds. Most of the elements of rock'n'roll have been done away with: there remains only a couple of rhythm guitar parts, the simplest drumbeat ever recorded, and a vocal harmony on the two-note hook in the chorus. As intellectual as this reductive approach to music might appear, the effect is the opposite: it's a warm, human sound, and the minimalism allows the chord changes and vocal melodies to work their magic.



Magazine, 'Because You're Frightened', *The Correct Use of Soap*

Speaking of concepts, if there's one writer who knows the psychology of mind and body inside and out, it's Howard Devoto of Magazine. On this LP, he reveals himself as a true Dostoevsky acolyte. 'Because You're Frightened' is a blackly funny song about fear, how we use it on other people and how they use it on us. But in the chorus, cleverness and humour seemingly abandoned, comes this clincher: 'Look what fear has done to my body.' Musically, this is the energetic, up-tempo side of Magazine: the late, great John McGeoch flicks between a tense, muted guitar line and a wailing riff redolent of a police car siren, before the chorus fattens up with power chords and a Jerry Lee Lewis piano part from the endlessly versatile Dave Formula. You wouldn't think these elements could be stuck together, but the parts are a natural fit. No one else sounds like this. Magazine are true originals.



Patti Smith Group, 'Distant Fingers', *Radio Ethiopia*

What I always enjoy about Radio Ethiopia is the sound of the band playing together: the first lineup of the Patti Smith Group were incredibly in sync with each other. It takes all five of them to give 'Distant Fingers' its beautiful, nighttime atmosphere: Lenny Kaye's wah pedal guitar in the left speaker, and Richard Sohl's distorted keyboard with Ivan Kral's sustained guitar notes in the right. They are each selfless players, and the track is deeply effective for it. I should provide a warning: this song has one of those heartbreaking outros. And it fades out, thus magnifying the sense of heartbreak: it allows you a moment's pleasure of artful melancholy, and then whisks it away – leaving you with the perverse pleasure of self-denial.



By Andy Campbell



**THE
MODERNIST**
ISSUE 13 <http://www.manchestermmodernistsociety.org>

Just a Modern(ist) Guy

'The society and I are very much on the same page when it comes to getting away from the usual cliched, generic ideas of what Manchester is about', Johnny Marr recently told The Guardian - referring of course to the Manchester Modernist Society, a self-described group of "urban enthusiasts, amateurs and latter day dandies, and passionate observers of the city" that Johnny found himself drawn to last year, after reading their quarterly publication, 'The Modernist'.

To those aware of both the society's work and Johnny's own interests in architecture and modernism, Johnny's recent appointment as their official patron would seem like the only logical next step. We caught up with the society's co-founder, Jack Hale, to chat about Johnny's involvement with the organisation.

INTERVIEW BY ALY STEVENSON
'NEW TOWN VELOCITY' STILL BY
MAT BANCROFT

How did you - or the Manchester Modernist Society in general - first cross paths with Johnny?

We spotted that Johnny had used lots of twentieth century buildings around Manchester in his video for 'New Town Velocity'. This showed a side to Manchester that we like to promote and so we decided to give him a 'membership' of the Society 'for services to Manchester Modernism', and we sent him a badge. We didn't know whether he would really be bothered or not.

Later via Twitter we saw a conversation where someone asked Johnny 'what was that red badge you were wearing on the Tonight Show last night?' That must be our badge, I thought. I looked it up on Youtube and there it was. Later Johnny got in touch and asked if he could pop into our office to pick up a few magazines. He told me that he'd been sent one of our magazines by a fan and that the articles that we include are really interesting to him. We chatted about cities and design and Manchester, and seemed to have a lot of ideas in common.

Johnny was nice enough to mention the Modernist Society and the Magazine on Twitter and suggested he might be able to support us in other ways, like selling the mag at his Manchester gig. He also supported our recent campaign to crowd-fund a redesign of the magazine and we asked him to become our Patron.

What is it about Johnny that makes him such an ideal patron for your organisation?

Having spoken to Johnny, I realised that he had a very genuine and strong interest and knowledge about Modernism, cities, urban design and lots of the things that the Society and the magazine get involved in. As one of Manchester's most famous and most



admired sons; and as someone who was very happy to get involved with us, he seemed an ideal person to ask to be our Patron. It's his genuine interest in the subject that makes him ideal. I don't think he's the kind of person to do a 'celebrity endorsement' for something he doesn't really believe in.

What does his patronage actually involve?

That's a funny one, really. I don't think there is an actual job description anywhere. It really means that someone with some influence - such as a well known person - agrees to support the work of a charitable organisation in whatever way they can. As far as Johnny is concerned, this has been through him generally promoting us and our work. For example he recently listed us as one of his 'cultural highlights' in a piece in The Guardian newspaper, and this resulted in a big spike in sales of things from our web-shop and in people joining our mailing list.

Johnny has been wearing Manchester Modernist Society badges on stage for a while, but were you surprised to see him

wearing one in the official video for 'Easy Money' as well?

Yes, it was a surprise to see the badge in the video. I can't pretend it doesn't give me a little thrill to see something that I have been involved in, on the telly. And again, I think it shows how happy Johnny is to support us. I thought the picture of Johnny wearing the badge next to the picture of Prime Minister David Cameron was particularly funny... I don't think either of us like Mr Cameron very much.

We're aware that the Modernist magazine was sold as merchandise at some of Johnny's recent UK shows, and Johnny often promotes MMS activities via his Twitter account as well. What other plans do you have for working alongside Johnny in the future?

Johnny is on tour at the moment, but he did mention getting together when he comes back, to talk about what else we might do together. Who knows what that could bring... watch this space!

Jack Hale is the co-founder of the Manchester Modernist Society and co-editor and publisher of The Modernist magazine.

11 FANS IN PLAYLAND

Track by Track Review



BACK IN THE BOX

My favourite song from Playland, it is certainly the perfect opening track that sets the tone for the entire album. The atmosphere is dark - the sound of keyboards reminiscing of the best post-punk / new wave songs of the early 80s, invoking the same sense of urban alienation - and at the same time is full of energy, spreading from the sound of the drums and the unmistakable Johnny's riffs. The singing is effective, light and almost whispered, but insistent and perfectly reflecting the text and the atmosphere of the song. "Back In the Box" is the perfect soundtrack for a crazy ride in the dark through the empty streets of a big city, still wet with rain. Despite its title, the song makes you want to run, jump, dance, fight and ultimately laugh hard in the face of these heavy times: it certainly gets you out of your box.

TRACK #1

- Elena Vignolini

EASY MONEY

First single from the new Playland album and it's a belter of a pop song. The opening bars introduce us to an instantly addictive guitar riff with a distinct funk element and big drum sound, which sets the pace for the next four minutes and three seconds. Johnny uses the catchiest riff on the album to good effect to communicate the message - that money is something everyone craves but does it give us what we want or need? 'I used to want it all...and that's money, money', makes the autobiographical point, whilst a later verse laments the introduction of tuition fees, 'Cash for a degree...!' Backing vocals by Meredith Sheldon, neatly complemented by Nile and Sonny Marr work well, particularly on the later chorus before that riff tees up the closing lines.

TRACK #2

Serious point made then, delivered in an earworm tune that will stay with you long after next payday. You know it's a good pop song when you hear others singing it around you. That's Easy Money.

- Kenny Muir

DYNAMO

Divine illusion calls in the form of the gorgeously seductive 'Dynamo', a soaring gem of a track dedicated to Johnny's abiding love for architecture. Johnny's voice has never sounded better, or more melodic, than it does here, gliding gracefully over the bridge (bad pun semi-intended) before ascending into a euphoric chorus. The lyrics are poetic and hint ever-so-subtly at intellectual references as diverse as Goethe, Le Corbusier and the Situationist International, but ultimately it's some of the simpler lines that prove the most touching: the loving welcome of "Whisper to me, come inside"; the reassurance of "Come outside, it's alright"; and the humanising "My Dynamo" that alludes to real affection, regardless of target, in just a single two-letter word.

TRACK #3

'Dynamo' is a love song open to endless interpretation: an uplifting piece of power-pop perfection that touches hearts as well as minds. Who knew architecture could be so romantic?

- *Aly Stevenson*

CANDIDATE

It begins with that unmistakable Johnny Marr shimmery, jangly guitar sound and moves with exquisite tension into an exploding chorus, filled with dark, longing lyrics enmeshed in gorgeous melody. "Candidate" is reminiscent of some of the thickly guitar-textured, atmospheric songs of the late 80's like Echo and the Bunnymen or later Cure on say, Disintegration (is it a coincidence that two of the tracks on the album, this one and "25 Hours" are also Joy Division songs?). However, with the driving baseline and swirling, hypnotic guitar, it can be none other than another Marr masterpiece.

TRACK #4

- *Ellen Leerburger*

25 HOURS

"Door really goes somewhere". By his own admission the most directly autobiographical song on Playland, Johnny sings about escape (see also New Town Velocity on The Messenger) from the environment of his youth. The possibility of getting away from trouble and crime and exploring other worlds and ideas. The 25th hour is that extra hour where you can, at least in your mind, go somewhere else.

TRACK #5

Starting with just a vocal and then Jack's military drum beat, what really dragged me in on first listen was the dead strum guitar and Iwan's thundering bass in the middle and end sections. That, and the slightly discordant bass melody, kind of reminded me of a Public Image Ltd or Siouxsie & the Banshees new wave sound. Similarly the swirling guitar lines put me in mind of an early eighties guitar style; perhaps Johnny was channelling the late great John McGeoch, as he has mentioned that he is a fan. Also, I love the subtle sweeps of 80's synths throughout this track and the album as a whole. Like most of the album, the song is short, punchy and direct. But it packs a lot of epic in to just 3:34 and it epitomises the energy and lack of waste on Playland, an approach that means the songs work really well live too. Best played loud!

- *John Padina*

THE TRAP

A dreamy tune and a breath of cool, fresh air. The guitar work on this track is classic Marr: upbeat, uplifting and optimistic. Having posted a demo of 'The Trap' on his Facebook page way back in 2012, before even 'The Messenger' was released, it feels very satisfying to finally hear the completed masterpiece. The well-trained (and educated) ear might even hear a hint of Wire's 'Outdoor Miner' in the notes of 'The Trap' - a loving homage perhaps?

TRACK #6

- *C. Johnson*

PLAYLAND

Playland is a rumbling, explosive juggernaut of a track. The drums, bass, guitars and synths are so joyously loud and simple, and arranged with such precision and clarity that to me, it's nothing less than the zenith of super sm(art) punk. The sound and words embody the feelings of escapism and transcendence, and align with the central notion of Johan Huizinga's book Homo Ludens: that play is essential to the generation of our culture... and we need more of it! On a physical level, I can't get enough volume from my car stereo when this track is on: I literally need more Playland. To be enveloped in its throb and to be filled with its noise is transcendence.

TRACK #7

- Andy Campbell

SPEAK OUT REACH OUT

A glorious synth-strewn gem, carved by cheeky guitar and a symbiotic drum/bass beat that sets yours truly in a cocky strut. Marr's sensual vocals and meticulous lyrical craftsmanship are on top form on this thumping track. A scathing -yet not preachy or overbearing- critique of society's obliviousness of those less fortunate. A celebration of altruism and karma, if you'd like, fused superbly into an invigoratingly catchy 4:05 minutes. Being a personal favourite of mine from Playland, I believe this satisfyingly rich track showcases Marr as both a confident lyricist and an ever self-renovating musician.

TRACK #8

- Ory Englander

BOYS GET STRAIGHT

'Boys Get Straight' was one of the tracks premiered by Johnny at his two-night residency at the Brudenell Social Club in Leeds back in March; it's a fast paced track with a catchy chorus and jagged edges that stuck with me until the release of 'Playland'. One of the most energetic tracks of the album that one minute has you appreciating the heavy guitar, and the next minute has you shouting 'Reactive' and 'Reload' along with Johnny.

TRACK #9

- Laura Dean

THIS TENSION

'This Tension' stands as a favourite on Playland for several reasons. Musically, Johnny and band combine a variety of styles and approaches to the track, from a false start through an emphatic jangle and spoken word finale, all in four minutes. Lyrically, Johnny provides some thoughtful lines, from the cryptic "existensual healing" to the closing mantra, "gotta get on, to the future". Johnny hits all the right notes here, both when singing, speaking and the composition as a whole. All manner of wonder, as ever.

TRACK #10

- Christopher MacLachlan

LITTLE KING

Johnny Marr is "taking names and kicking ass" in Little King, a calling out of Capitalist exploitation. Johnny's voice is forceful and without relents as he chastises the entrepreneurs whose callous and reckless destruction of history and culture is omnipresent. Johnny powerfully laments, "Breaking the souls and the ghosts of our country. Burning the spirits in the space of the city." This reflection condemns the magnitude of superficial capitalist invasions, that neglect the intangible impact of those left in their wake, including the cultural and historical debt left to future generations.

TRACK #11

Johnny does not hold back on this song and that is a very good thing. His anger overshadows his sorrow as he condemns, "Taking down all of my loving and breaking up all of my living." Beautiful buildings razed for McMansions and parking structures. Parks and fields become shopping centers and fast food restaurants. Johnny reminds us that we should take little for granted within our little corner of the Earth and maybe do a bit of calling out on our own.

- Jeanne Alicht

BOYS GET QUEER

Cluing in & coming out with Johnny Marr

Like many fans of my generation - that is, the now-middle-aged who were the original Smiths devotees back in the 1980s - I recall my discovery of Johnny Marr and his music with the sort of affectionate sentimentality usually reserved for one's first love. In my case, they are one and the same.

It was the music I fell in love with first. It was 1984, I was fifteen, and a friend had made me a copy of The Smiths' debut album. I'd never heard anything like the spellbinding opening riffs of "What Difference Does It Make?"

or "This Charming Man" before. I spent a whole weekend listening to that cassette on repeat, and by the time I finally ventured out of my bedroom the next Monday morning I was determined to find out who was responsible for the music that I'd so quickly become enraptured with.

I didn't have to wait long. That very week, the now-defunct music magazine "ZigZag" ran an interview with Johnny Marr (a rarity at the time, considering it was Morrissey who usually handled The Smiths' interviews) and my life was changed forever.

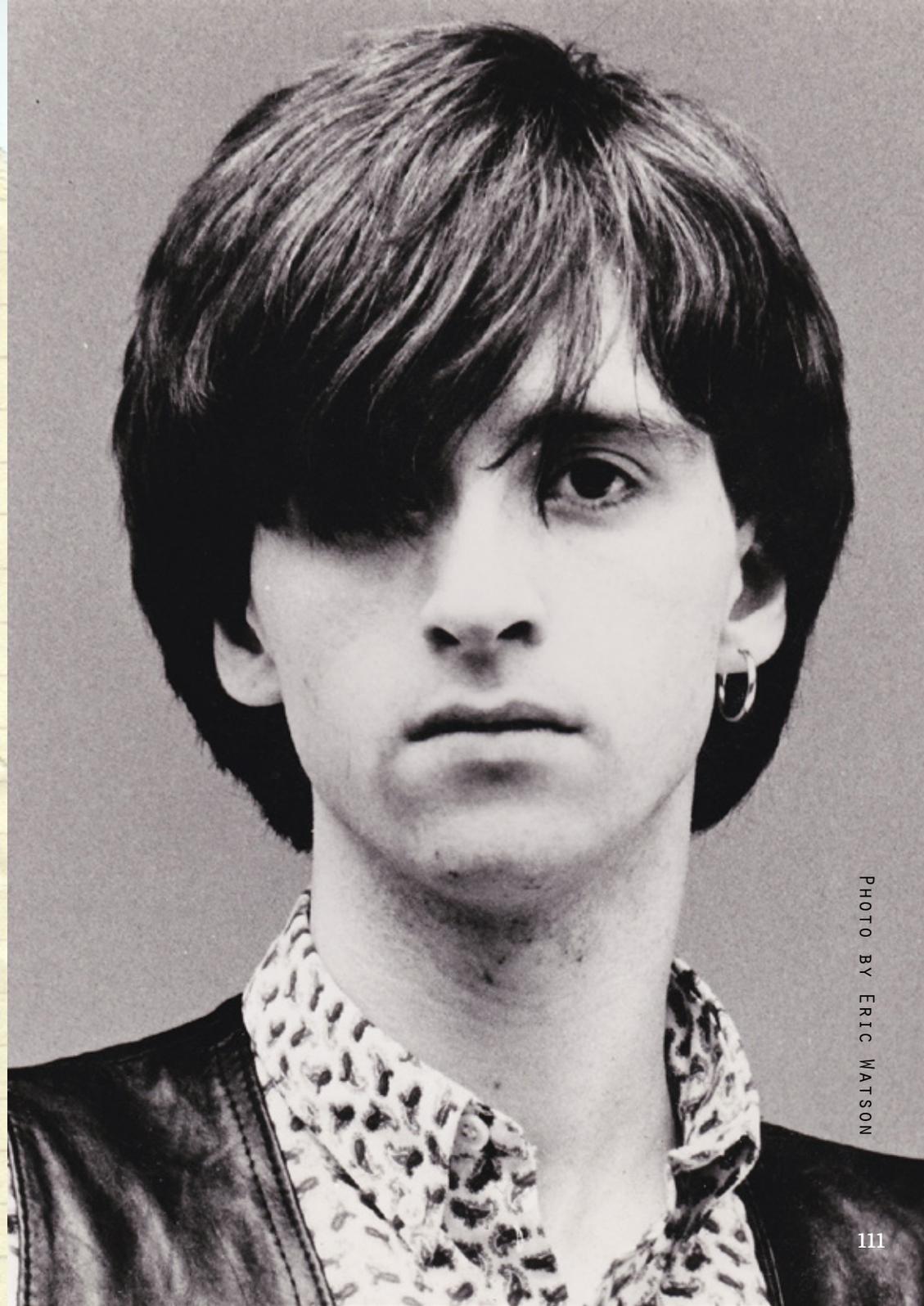


PHOTO BY ERIC WATSON

Thirty years later, I admit I can't really remember what Johnny talked about in that interview; only that he came across as smart, sincere, and incredibly clued-in for a twenty year old pop star. But the photograph printed on the article's first page would stay emblazoned on my memory for decades to come.

You see, it was the first time I'd ever found another man attractive. And in this case, not just merely 'attractive', but shockingly, achingly, stops-you-dead-in-your-tracks beautiful. I was smitten at first glance.

Where sexually confused teenagers are concerned, there is often a blurred line between wanting to be somebody and wanting to be with them. I grew my hair out so that I could style it like Johnny's, pierced my ear at home with a sewing needle, and cruised charity shops on weekends in search of the sort of clothes Johnny might wear. Ironically, my new look seemed to make me at least moderately popular with my female classmates for the very first time, but instead of capitalising on the situation, I

became increasingly disinterested, preferring to spend my time now teaching myself to play guitar alone in my bedroom - all the while staring dreamily at that photo from the "ZigZag" interview, now taped above my bed.

It would be years before I could acknowledge, even privately, that I was gay. Time passed, I got older, and my adolescent swooning over charismatic, raven-haired guitarists made way for a series of far more painful crushes on real-world acquaintances who invariably and regrettably all turned out to be straight. I stayed in the closet for the entire duration of the 1990s, and although I distantly followed Johnny's post-Smiths career with The The and Electronic, I couldn't bring myself to attend any of the shows he played at, or even listen to the music too closely. Childish as it sounds, I was sulking with him for his unwitting role in awakening a side of me that made me feel frustrated and ashamed.

But then in 2003, along came "Boomslang", and my interest was piqued to the point where I could no

In interviews Johnny spoke frequently about progression, pushing boundaries, and how stepping up as a frontman had forced him out of his comfort zone. Motivated by his attitude, I decided it was finally time to step out of mine too.

longer cast aside my curiosity. I hadn't even known Johnny Marr could sing.

Though now a grown man in my mid-thirties, I started to feel fifteen all over again. I bought a copy of "Boomslang" and played it obsessively, and I read every interview with Johnny I could find in the press. He was just as brilliant, witty (and yes, beautiful) as he had been back in 1984. The more I read from and about him, the more inspired I became. In interviews Johnny spoke frequently about

progression, pushing boundaries, and how stepping up as a frontman had forced him out of his comfort zone. Motivated by his attitude, I decided it was finally time to step out of mine too.

Despite the distance from where I lived and the awkwardness of knowing I'd be going alone, I bought a ticket to see Johnny Marr + The Healers perform in Manchester that April. I'd never gotten to see Johnny perform with The Smiths, so that night was the first time I'd ever seen him live. Most of the details of the show itself have blurred into one big euphoric haze now, but I do distinctly recall making eye contact with Johnny himself from the front row, and the fellow beside me - a slim brunette with piercing blue eyes and a haircut much like Johnny's own - nearly knocking me over in a fit of excitement when Johnny first appeared on stage. That was the moment I first met my partner of eleven years.

Jack and I bonded over not only our love for Johnny's music, but the role he'd unknowingly played in helping us both acknowledge our sexual

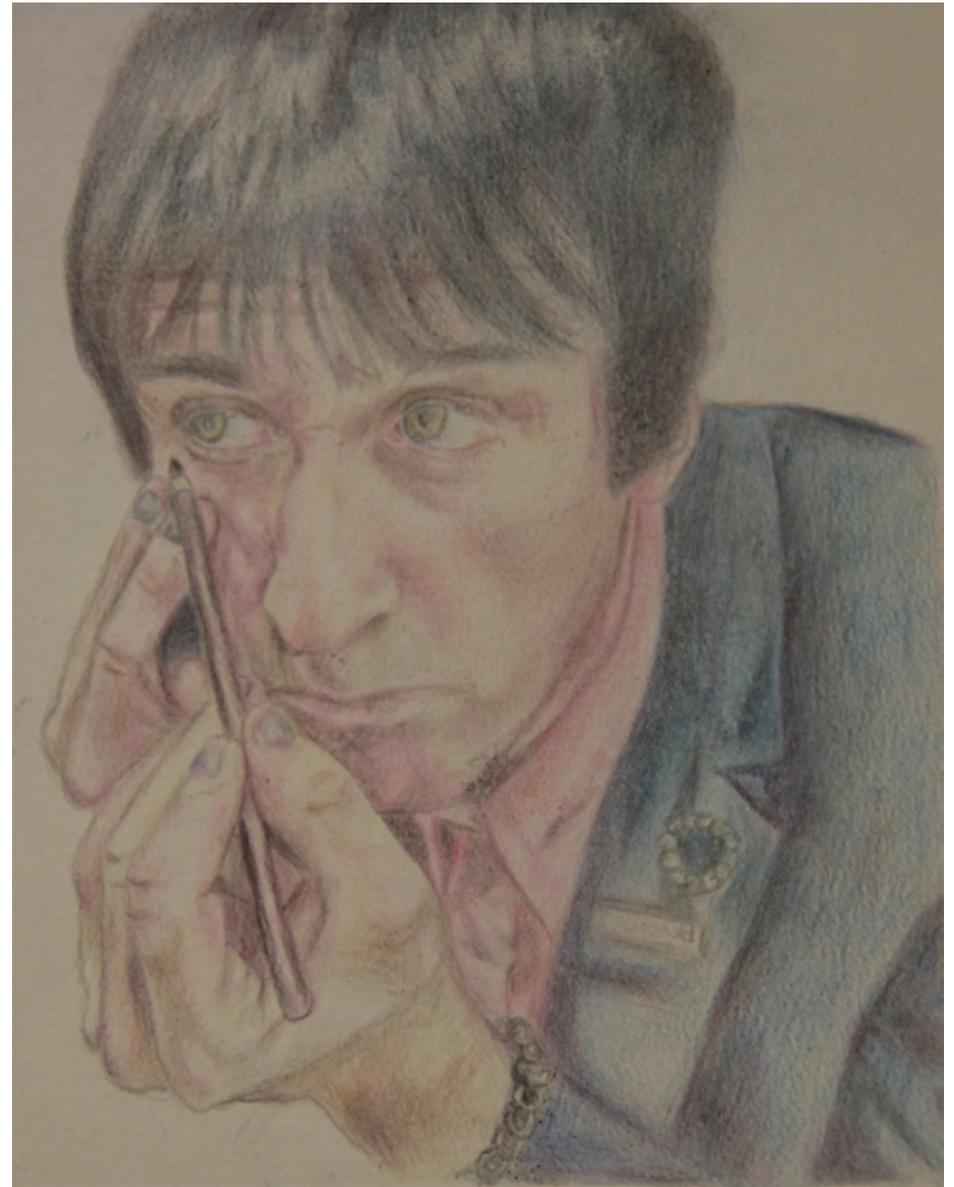
orientation. The similarities between our teenage situations was uncanny: we even both remembered that photo from “ZigZag”, and now have it framed alongside a signed “The Messenger” LP and one of Johnny’s guitar picks, on our study wall. We’ve followed Johnny’s career religiously from The Healers right up to last month’s “Playland” tour, and were even fortunate enough to meet him once last year - although regrettably I was far too starstruck (and maybe a little lovestruck, too) to be able to utter much more than

a shy “thank you” when he signed my LP.

Seeing Johnny onstage in Bexhill last month wearing a “Boys get straight” t-shirt for the encore, I couldn’t help but feel amused by the irony of those words taken out of context. With a knowing smile, I turned to Jack beside me and squeezed his hand. Thanks to Johnny, getting straight is the last thing I feel I need to do now.

By Benjamin Laird

PHOTO BY JACKIE NUTTY



Artwork by Ellie Home



JOHNNY MARR

& the Jaguar

The Fender Johnny Marr Signature Jaguar has in my mind revitalized the ethos of the “artist signature” instrument. The times of plastering on a decal of a musician’s name on the headstock without much improvement on its “standard” models is overrated and, quite frankly, disrespectful. While the idea of having in your hands an instrument that is similar to that of the artist is still desirable, it leaves the passionate musician wanting more.

In 2012 Fender unveiled the Johnny Marr Signature Jaguar. A prestigious honor for all musicians alike to receive their own signature instrument, and it was the first for Johnny. To put things into perspective, there are many well-known musicians with signature instruments: Kurt Cobain, Eric Clapton and Joe Bonamassa to name a few. While Johnny is without a doubt a legend in the industry and a hero to people worldwide, I think it’s fair to

say that the names of those aforementioned musicians are slightly more recognizable than Johnny Marr. So right off the bat, it would be interesting to see how many people would shell out the money for a Johnny Marr Signature Jaguar.

If the signature Jaguar only had Johnny’s name on the headstock and no other special features besides exclusive-super-limited-rare colors, the venture would have been a disaster. But Johnny and his team put in countless hours of work to not only improve upon the standard Jaguar, but to encompass the true meaning of a “signature guitar”. For starters, it soothed the anxiety of those loyal Jaguar lovers by maintaining the authentic sound of the Jaguar. The familiar 3 pickup switches on the Jaguar was replaced by a 4-way Telecaster-like switch. This was something I personally missed when playing a Jaguar - the ability to effortlessly switch between each pickup with the pull or push of a lever.

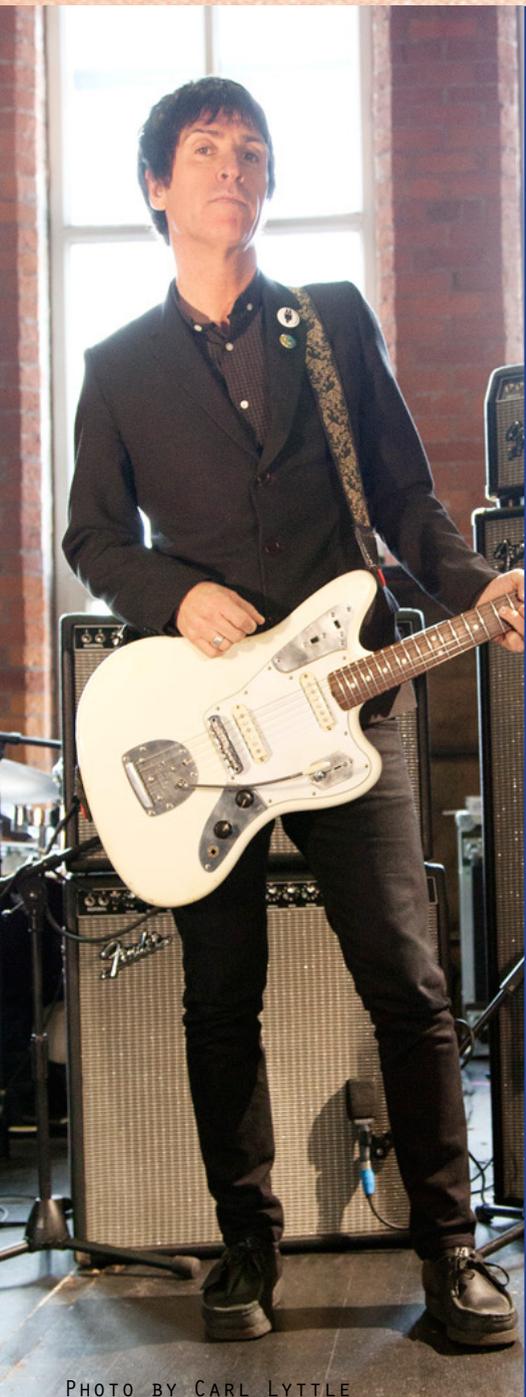


PHOTO BY CARL LYTTLE

Sometimes it would be easy to forget which switch was flicked up or down on the old Jaguar, with the bright switch on the far right side also hanging out there. In a move of sheer brilliance, Johnny and his team chose to move that bright switch up to where the rhythm engaging switch was located (that most, if not all, modern day Jaguar players despised). Another addition to the area where the old rhythm switch used to be is another bright switch that is only engaged when the pickup selector is on the 4th position, which is the neck pick up and bridge pickup in series, producing a mellow, but not a dark humbucker, sound. The body contour of Johnny's signature Jaguar is also different, due to it being modeled on one of Johnny's vintage Stratocasters, and the neck is modeled on that of his 1965 Jaguar - giving the players who wanted a fuller neck what they'd wanted for a long time in a non-vintage model.

The most important part of any reflection on the Johnny Marr Signature Jaguar is the sound. Johnny has always been seen on stage in one gig with multiple guitars. The Les Pauls, Rickenbackers, 355s, Gretschs, etc. So for a guitarist who is synonymous with having an unmistakable tone, playing just ONE guitar for the

entire show must surely be more than a promotional approach. There's a plethora of sounds that can be produced from just his signature Jaguar alone, with the addition of boutique Bare Knuckle pickups and the bright switches. On the bridge pickup playing recognizable riffs such as "This Charming Man" or "Still Ill", one can trick even a trained ear into thinking that is a Telecaster or a Rickenbacker. On the 4th position, which is the humbucker sound, playing that first chord to "Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now" can fool anyone into thinking it could have been a Gibson 355 or a Les Paul. All that being said, it's no wonder that Johnny exclusively plays just his signature Jaguar on stage. Even with the tunes from The Messenger and Playland, as usual, many different guitars were used in the studio. But come show time you see only one guitar for the entire set list (albeit, the Metallic KO Johnny Marr Jaguar is brought out on stage for the song The Messenger, because it's in a Nashville tuning). If you don't agree with my assessment so far

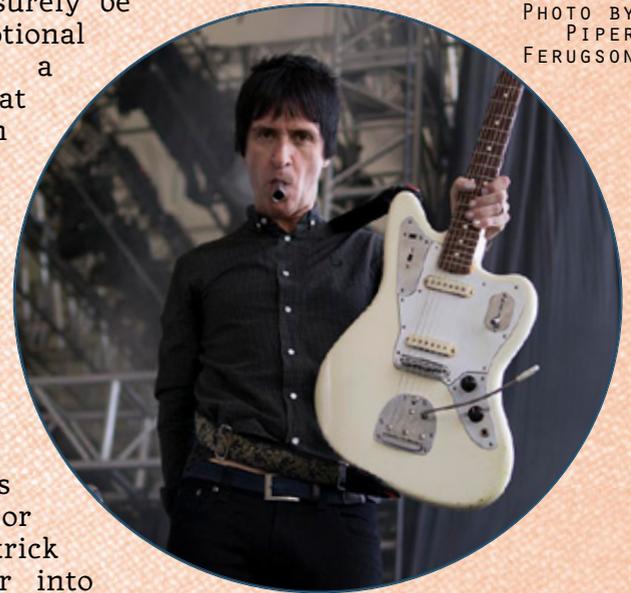


PHOTO BY
PIPER
FERUGSON

though, that's okay. Because even before the guitar sees any time on stage, the signature Jaguar must pass through the most important tone test of all: Johnny's ears.

I was on eBay, Craigslist and many other websites that sold guitars, always looking for that one guitar I could never put down. In my 2 years of playing the guitar, I went through a total of seven guitars before I saved enough money to buy the Fender Johnny Marr Signature Jaguar. Since then, nothing has made me want to put down the Jaguar and pursue something else. Because this IS that something else.

By Edward Kim

ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS

That fateful first gig, in the words of the newly initiated.



PHOTO BY SARAH DOONE

I've been a big fan of Johnny's ever since he joined The Cribs, but it was only at his hometown show in Manchester, October 2014, that I first saw Johnny perform as a solo artiste. I wasn't sure what to expect. I was first and foremost a fan of The Cribs. Even though I loved The Messenger and Playland, I was uneasy wondering if Johnny's Jarman-less live sets could match the frenzied excitement I was used to from Cribs shows.

In a word: YES.

Johnny Marr is a phenomenal live performer, and a brilliant frontman. In addition to his formidable chops on the guitar, he's engaging and charismatic and had the audience -myself included- hanging on his every spellbinding note.

Will I be going to see Johnny Marr, the solo artiste, again?
In a word: YES.

- Alex Walker



PHOTO BY SARAH DOONE

My first Johnny Marr gig was the best gig of my life. I knew he was going to be good, but not THAT good! I got a spot right at the front of the barrier, and at least a dozen times Johnny was playing right in front of me. I was completely hypnotised watching his beautiful hands as he played, mere inches from my face, and not to mention, in awe of his energy. Is this man really 51?! He can't possibly be. All I can say is that Johnny Fuckin Marr is a timeless legend, and hopefully it won't be too long before I see him again!

- Martina G.

I saw Johnny for the first time at Cambridge this tour. I don't ever remember spending an entire gig grinning before! I actually had no idea he played Smiths songs live - obviously his new material would have been more than sufficient. :) But who knew I would ever get to see Smiths songs live, all the better for Johnny's humility and talent getting the spotlight. It was such a treat and then came 'Getting away with it' too, one of the best pieces of pop ever! And what a great band he has.

But mainly I just remember a few moments of utter musical gorgeousness that I didn't want to end.

I'm getting to old for gigs on Tuesday nights but I could have happily repeated the whole evening on a loop for a few weeks!

- Maria Wylie



Well, what can I say? It was THE best gig ever! Seriously, it couldn't have been more insane! Even waiting outside for an hour was ace. This was at the O2 Academy in Leeds, which, as you may know, was the last date on the tour, so I was expecting a pretty sick tour-ending show and that's exactly what I got. The support band, Childhood, were great too. The bit that got me most was when the "Playland" logo was flashing at the back of the stage, the band came out and then out struts Johnny, and I've never felt so starstruck in my life. I did literally gawp for 90% of the show thinking... "That's The Smiths Man!" (Please note that I'm not one of those Smiths only Johnny Marr fans... I'm not a hipster kid). The other ten percent of the show, I spent going crazy! Truth be told, I enjoyed The Smiths songs more-so due to the fact that I've grown up with them, tried to play them for so long, and he comes along and plays and sings them perfectly! Also covering Electronic material and even a certain «Lust For Life» by another idol of mine... To sum it up in one word though, I'd have to say... JohnnyFuckinMarrIndeed.

- Dan Jennings

I recently went to the Brixton Academy Gig and the Manchester Apollo Gig. These 2 gigs were not only my first Johnny Marr gigs, but also my first gigs altogether! I'm 18 and although that may seem late to have your first gig, it's because I've just moved up to Manchester from a city called Peterborough, which is about an hour north from Cambridge, where music is literally dead. Originally I had planned to only see him in Manchester, but then when I heard that Noel Gallagher was rumoured to be playing with him I spent a large sum of my student loan, which has left with very little money up until December now, on both the train tickets, gig tickets and also general costs while travelling. Both these gigs were brilliant - in my opinion Johnny was even better in Manchester, perhaps due to it being a home town gig. A personal highlight for me was surprisingly not the appearance of Noel Gallagher but rather waiting for Johnny 2 hours after the Manchester gig, shivering like mad from the cold, for him to come out, sign everything, take endless photos with people, and have lots of conversations. He was a true gentleman and with figures in the music industry often being very arrogant, it was amazing to see someone who's as much of a legend as Johnny being so genuine and properly rooted, really showing his prowess as a godlike genius, both music wise and personality wise. To top the whole experience of the 2 days off, I messaged Johnny on Facebook thanking him for giving me the best few days of my life, to which he sent me a lovely reply thanking me in return for my kind words and that his music could do that. I will never be able to explain what those few days meant to me, but Johnny certainly has left me lifelong memories and I'd love to share it with the 1000s of other Johnny Marr fans who read this story.

- Simon Gibson



PHOTO BY SARAH DOONE



Aside from two memorable Smiths gigs plus an uneasy evening with the Cribbs, this was the first time I had seen Johnny Marr live as a solo artist. Up to that point I was following the latest stage of my favourite guitarist's career from a distance. Shows came and went and many venues were within reach but I kept thinking up excuses, the main one being the fear of getting squashed.

When the Playland tour was announced my need to hear the new songs was growing so I decided to get a grip and bought a ticket for Leeds, the last date of the UK leg.

Armed with earplugs and an umbrella, I arrived at the Academy and positioned myself about four rows back.

Support band Childhood set the scene beautifully and I later bought their album, which was an unexpected bonus.

Then flashing lights, crashing drums, the sound of that guitar and suddenly the man I've admired for over 30 years was centre stage. It was as if he'd always been a frontman, his voice was strong and he bounced around with an amazing energy.

I also fell slightly in love with Johnny's band: three talented, un-showy musicians creating the perfect frame for the not-so-old master.

The set was a seamless mix of old and new. Easy Money got me dancing, New Town Velocity was just gorgeous and, although this wasn't a nostalgia trip, my insides flipped to the opening chords of The Headmaster Ritual. A mind-blowing version of How Soon is Now? rounded off one of the best shows I'd seen in ages.

I didn't get squashed and the only bruises I had were from kicking myself for not doing this sooner.

Until next time...

- Caroline Leggott

PHOTO BY MAURO MELIS



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