

DYNAMIC

A JOHNNY MARR FANZINE

Issue 3 | April 2015

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HIGH TIMES & HAPPENINGS

News & Other Tidbits from The World of Marr

April 2015

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Hello Darlings,

It's been a busy couple of months for Johnny and his fans. The Teenage Cancer Trust show and warm-up gigs; *Dynamo 7* release; Record Store Day single on the way...and now issue #3 of *Dynamic*.



We cannot say enough how happy we are to have been able to see *Dynamic* grow from its modest ambition of a one-off project to celebrate the release of *Playland*, into an ongoing project. We've been privileged to work with some amazing people in the process of producing this zine, and even Johnny himself, who so kindly took the time to speak with us for an exclusive interview (p.18) and work with us on photoshoots. We are also especially grateful to our "unofficial crew" - the talented writers and photographers who have contributed to *Dynamic* on a regular basis. Your enthusiasm inspires us.

Until next issue...

- The Dynamic Duo (aka Aly & Ory)

HIDDEN JOYLAND GEM

Sadly overshadowed on account of being released at the same time as his collaboration with Noel Gallagher, Johnny's contribution to Chris Spedding's new album *Joyland* is a beauty.

The track, titled 'Heisenberg' (a nod to German physicist Werner Heisenberg, perhaps?) is a stunning acoustic instrumental that conjures up mental images of the "old west". One could even imagine such a composition standing alongside those of Ennio Morricone in a 1960s spaghetti western. A hidden gem if there ever was one, but well worth seeking out.



RECORD STORE DAY



Have you got your alarms set nice and early for Saturday 18th April? Remember Johnny's 'I Feel You 7" single (featuring a live version of 'Please Please Please Let Me Get What I Want' on the B-side) is limited to only 1000 numbered copies - don't miss out on picking one up! We'll be getting out all the info we can about stock and locations on the day, so keep an eye on our Twitter account (@JMarrvellous) for updates.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, JACK!

Many happy returns in advance for Johnny's ace drummer Jack Mitchell, who celebrates his birthday on 28th April.

Remember, you can tweet your birthday wishes to Jack directly at [@jackthesticks](https://twitter.com/jackthesticks) on Twitter. Hope you have a good one, Mr Sticks!

SALES RECORD SMASHED IN STOKE

As anybody who was there can attest, Johnny's recent warm-up show at the Sugarmill in Stoke-on-Trent was phenomenal - but did you know it broke the venue's record for ticket sales, selling out completely in just 15 minutes? In fact, Johnny & co. beat the previous record - held jointly by Ian Brown, Foals and Maximo Park - by nearly a whole hour. Well done, boys!

MARRCHESTER, LA LA LA LA...

Proud fans of both Johnny and Man City might be interested to know that fulltimeclassics.com has recently started producing some fabulous "Marrchester City" badges and stickers, available to purchase on their website.

Even Johnny has shown his appreciation for their work...



Full Time Classics also produces football-themed badges and stickers for fans of The Libertines/Pete Doherty, Paul Weller, John Lennon, Morrissey, Arctic Monkeys and Paul Heaton.

Check them out on Twitter and Instagram as well:

 [@ftclassics](https://twitter.com/ftclassics)

 [@FullTimeClassics](https://www.instagram.com/FullTimeClassics)

FOR ALL THE CRIBS FANS



Wakefield's greatest export since Barbara Hepworth are back with an excellent new album, *For All*

My Sisters, which was released late last month. Entering the UK charts at #9, this is The Cribs' third top ten album in row - well done, lads!

Johnny has also spoken highly of *For All My Sisters*, but don't mistake his enthusiasm for biased affection towards Ryan, Gary and Ross - the album really is *good*.

CALLING ALL MODERNISTS

The Manchester Modernist Society, of which Johnny is a patron, has just released the 14th issue of their quarterly publication *The Modernist*, and it is well worth checking out if you share Johnny's interest in modernism and architecture.

Issue #14, 'Engineer', is available through The Modernist's webshop (themodernist.bigcartel.com), along with selected back issues, badges (such as the 'Brutalist' one Johnny frequently wears), society memberships and more. Check them out!



REVIEW

Royal Albert Hall, 27 March 2015 **TEENAGE CANCER TRUST**



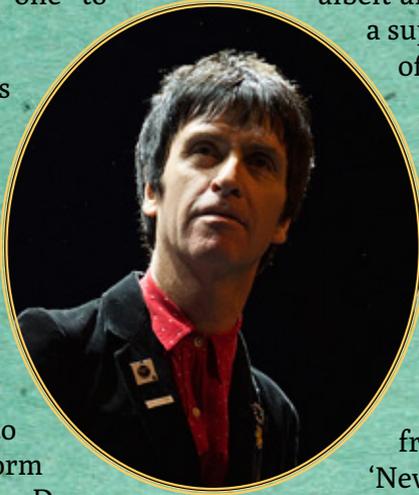
PHOTO BY MARC MCGARRAGHY/YELLOW MUSTANG PHOTOGRAPHY



A chance to see Johnny Marr (first box ticked) with another of my musical heroes, Paul Weller (second box ticked) in a setting as auspicious as the Royal Albert Hall (yet another tick) and the proceeds from the ticket sales are going to a wonderful charity like the Teenage Cancer Trust (big tick) ...I think it's what's known in the business as a 'no-brainer'.

Then Mr Marr adds 4 'warm up' dates in Stoke, Sheffield, Liverpool and Holmfirth, all in cozy intimate venues. You know that you're in for a fabulous time, as Johnny is not one to disappoint.

The warm up gigs are - as expected - a raucous rollercoaster of riffs, adoration, and testosterone fuelled crowds and incredible uplifting music.



It's also a chance to see Johnny perform his Record Store Day release single - a cover version of Depeche Mode's 'I Feel You' ...and believe me, after hearing it live, there's not enough boxes invented that that doesn't tick....

Definitely worth missing 'The Real Housewives of Cheshire' for, believe me.

Onwards to the opulence of the Royal Albert Hall, a far cry from the sticky floored venues that I'm used to. The hall is shaken into life by Johnny thundering on to 'The Right Thing Right', an uptempo start which show the capital city just how it's going to be right from the start and when

he bounds straight into 'Stop Me if You Think That You've Heard This One Before' ...there's a muttering of Weller fans voicing their approval that the support act - albeit an Indie Rock God of a support act - is pulling off an unbelievable performance and we are only two songs in.

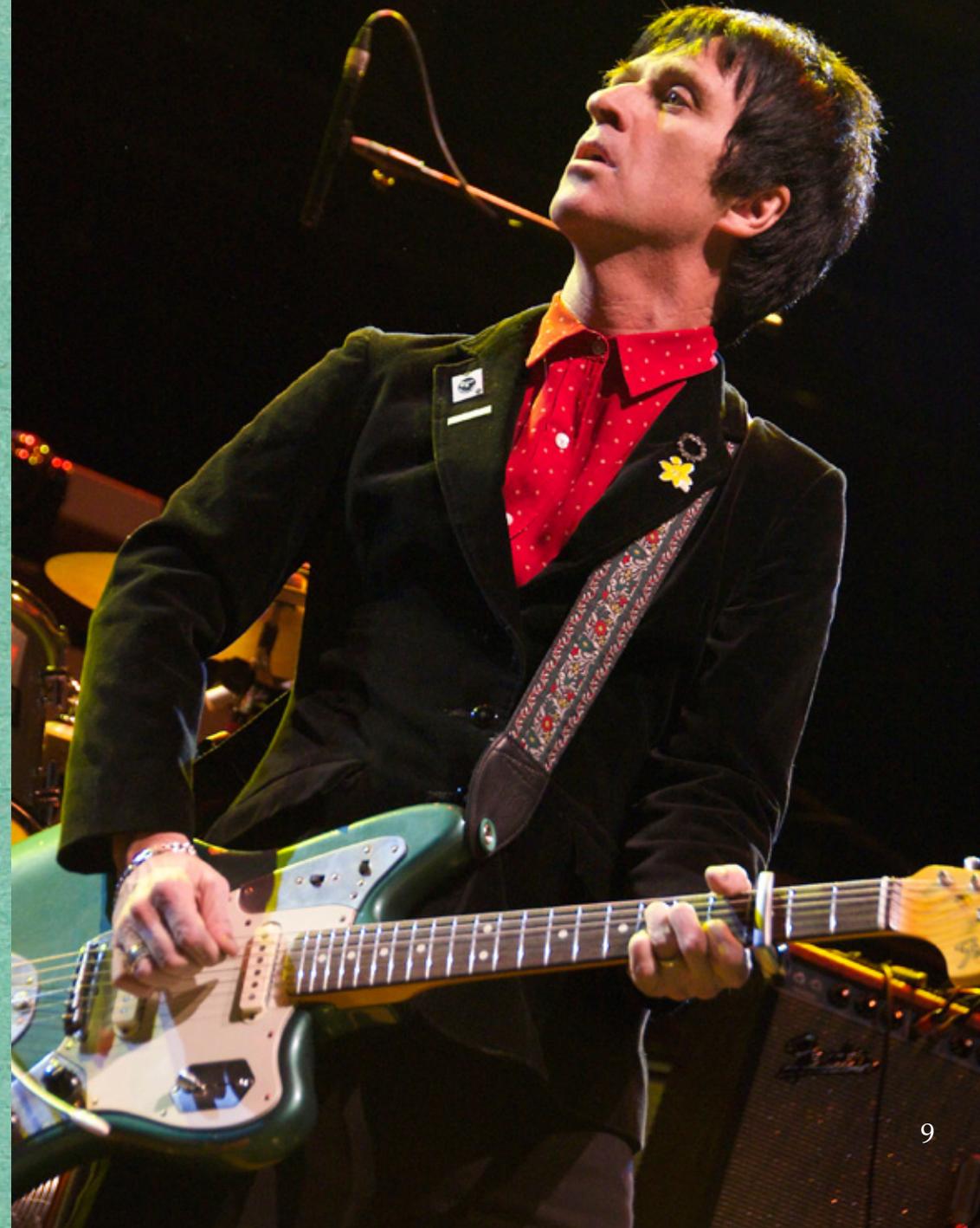
Popular single 'Easy Money' gets the crowd bouncing and edgy '25 Hours' is treated like an old friend.

'New Town Velocity' a personal favourite slows the pace for a while, the lyrics give me goosebumps, I'd certainly "leave school for poetry" like this.

Energy levels ramped back up for 'Generate, Generate' and 'I Fought The Law' and all levels of the Royal Albert Hall are rockin'. Even the people in the posh seats are shaking their jewellery.

'There is a Light' receives it's almost obligatory outpouring of love and respect and as Johnny cups his ear as the crowds singing resonates around the Albert Hall, smiling as he does so.

He's not finished yet. "Getting



Away With It' with its dancey vibe pulsates the crowds feet into action and when the opening strains of 'How Soon Is Now' start up the euphoric mood continues . Suddenly there's a problem with the electrics on the guitar. Johnny laughs it off while the guitar tech comes to his aid "This doesn't happen in Manchester - I'm having a word with Boris Johnson about this" and leaves the stage to the warning about 'dodgy electric'.

This has been a triumphant 'support' slot for Johnny, many of the crows wondering how on earth Weller will be able to follow his performance. In fact, Weller must have thought same as Johnny is invited back during his set the perform '(I'm a) Roadrunner' and when introducing him Weller said " this will either be fucking great, or a disaster'and it's obvious, with Johnny involved, which one it turned out to be.

By Jackie Nutty

PHOTO BY MARC MCGARRAGHY /
YELLOW MUSTANG PHOTOGRAPHY



Artwork by Siobhan O'Driscoll

PLACES:

WHERE THE HEARTS ARE?

Many musicians have concepts that recur in their songs and many albums are renowned for their themes. The Beatles often sang about love; Johnny Cash often sang about religion. Coldplay's recent "Ghost Stories" is a break-up album, like many before it, such as Dylan's "Blood on the Tracks" or Springsteen's "Tunnel of Love."

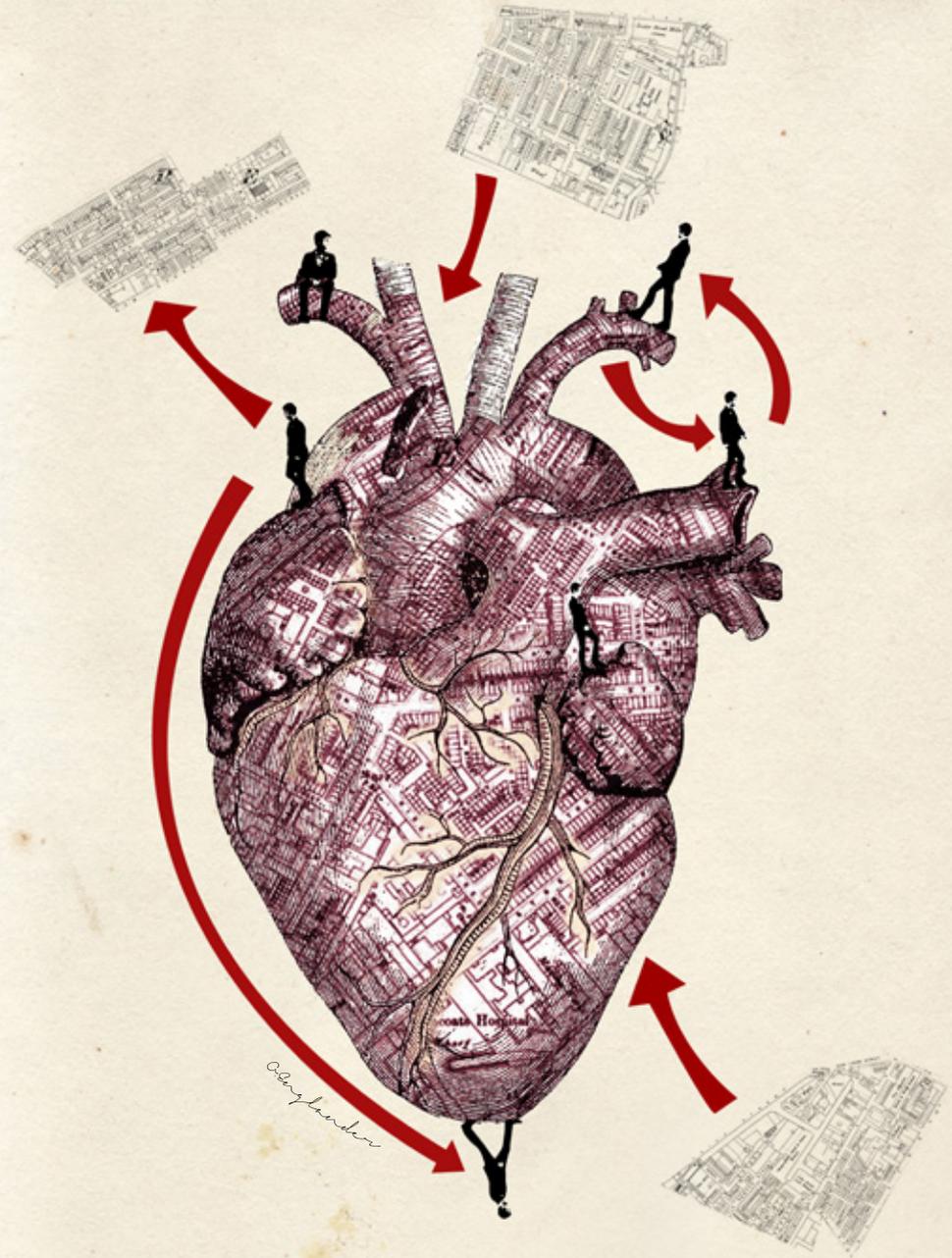
Fans' interpretation of lyrics may, of course, veer widely from what songwriters intend, but it occurs to me that I associate much of Johnny Marr's music with places, travel and time.

I grew up on the outskirts of Manchester, and The Smiths exploded on the music scene when I was leaving secondary school and starting at sixth form college in Rusholme. I'll admit to the sacrilege of not being impressed by the band at first - largely taking the view that the lead singer was a melancholic, yodelling weirdo. However, two years later, at my northern university, I was converted, relished their releases, then was distressed when they split up.

Looking back, as well as the infectious guitar lines and singalong choruses, it was an empathy with the locations in The Smiths' songs that played a part in my affection. Suddenly thrust into life among students from places such as

Bournemouth, Leicester and Essex, I listened to songs that depicted my home territory: "Oh Manchester, so much to answer for." There were lines saying "belligerent ghouls run Manchester schools." There were songs about The Moors Murderers, and about stealing lead from The Holy Name Church on Oxford Road. These were places I knew, and even if they were unflattering descriptions, you can feel a weird, inverted pride about criticism of somewhere if you've actually lived there!

Those Smiths' songs, rather like "Dirty Old Town", evoke mental images of grey, brown-red buildings and rooftops, like the old mill with "The Hotspur Press, Percy Brothers" sign that I still see every time the train approaches



Piccadilly. The references to “cemetery gates,” “the rain falls hard on a humdrum town” or a “darkened underpass” are indisputably Mancunian images for me. An interesting link: “Dirty Old Town” by Ewan MacColl, is about Salford, yet many associate it (via The Dubliners and The Pogues) with Dublin. John Maher is of Irish stock, with his family coming from County Kildare, though everyone knows him as Mancunian Johnny Marr.

I’ve grown older and moved on, now living even further north. Johnny Marr has grown older and taken his guitars to many different places, with his own songwriting taking shape. I still feel that place is important to him, though not necessarily in exactly the same way.

On the “Boomslang” album, Johnny wrote “new squares across the skyline” in “Something to Shout About”, making me think of changing urban landscapes. In “Long Gone” he mused: “where does all the time go, looking out the window”, perhaps implying an increased awareness of seeing different places

or seeing change (over time) in a familiar place. That he was in a new place, physically or metaphorically, is emphasised by lyrics about getting on trains and that “you can walk right back where you started,” although of course not everything would be the same there.

“The Messenger” continued in a similar vein several years later. Lots of that album’s lyrics seem to focus on returning home after being away. Manchester isn’t my physical home any more, but I feel uplifted and nostalgic whenever I get back there. Touring musicians like Johnny must feel relief at getting home following long periods on the road.

In “New Town Velocity” he wrote “left home a mystery.” In “Lockdown” he reflected “home is a city”. In “European Me” there is the question “have we still got a place to go?” All these lyrics suggest to me that he is all-too-aware of the transitory nature of the on-the-road nature of his profession, and maybe is

increasingly aware (like all of us) of his own mortality.

Intriguingly, that “melancholic, yodelling weirdo” I mentioned earlier wrote a song about having Irish blood but an English heart. In “The Right Thing Right” Johnny (who has reason to share exactly those Anglo-Irish sentiments) reflected on another geographical shift: “my head’s in the south now; my heart’s in the north now.” Is it inevitable for someone with immigrant parents to muse over division? Or are coming to terms with internal differences, and the need for compromise, typical experiences for all of us as we mature?

“Playland” is Johnny Marr’s most recent album. During its publicity push, he was interviewed in Manchester’s Central Library, a stone’s throw from Albert Square - home of a pub I frequented in my youth. His “we get the past back” line from “European Me” seemed even more apposite.

Urban descriptions and travel references abound in “Playland.” He mentions “the space in the cities” and being “at home in a hole in the ground.” When writing about people, he still does it via links to places: “marching into towns and communities, tearing up all of this land.”

In October 2014, at his excellent Newcastle gig, on the front row I sang along: “you know all my past is blurred” during “Dynamo.” Yet I don’t think it’s really the case. There’s another line in the same song that, to me, encapsulates how Marr (and any good songwriter, for that matter) presents pictures of places and times to listeners: “you made a place for me in you.”

It’ll be great to see which places we find in him when we hear the next album.

By Dave Medley



IT'S IN OUR EYES

“HE IS BOTH WITHIN AND WITHOUT; CREATING TUNES FOR US TO DANCE TO AND EXUDING A YOUTHFUL STAGE PRESENCE WHILST ALSO MAINTAINING AN AURA OF WISDOM AND OFFERING NUGGETS OF ADVICE...”



PHOTO BY PAT GRAHAM

From the opening chords of “Upstarts” it was clear that Johnny Marr’s solo material was going to ooze youthful vibrancy. The pulsing tempo makes the track almost impossible not to move to, but it is not simply a dance track. The lyrics are empowering. The track is a call to arms for creative young people to stir things up and make themselves heard. When, today, it would be far too easy for artists to primarily channel nostalgia, Marr has absolute faith in now. You’d never see him behaving like the smattering of middle aged men at his concerts who drink pints from plastic cups and shout, “Play The Smiths!” (You know the ones.) Of course the past is necessary and important, but clinging to it and yearning for it, whether it be for the ‘80s or the ‘60s, is ultimately pointless.

Marr highlights the fact that fresh talent is paramount for artistic survival. It is an absolute integral need for keeping the cool scenes alive and breathing. Surely, no one understands this better than Marr himself as The Smiths have inspired innumerable bands over the decades, becoming one of the most influential bands of all time. So, Marr gets it. He understands the necessity for originality and how it is that spark of newness that has the infinite power to inspire. This can be seen in his support for bands such as Palma Violets and Childhood. Young artists- young people- have

power. Marr helps to remind us of this, and it really is empowering.

The Smiths epitomise the time in adolescence where you feel everything so strongly; from falling in love for the first time to crushing disillusionment and disappointment. Marr’s solo work takes that and weaves more positivity into it, offering inspiration and confidence to spill hope onto situations that, in youth, can seem like the end of the world. He’s like the cool godfather/uncle/really chill dad of the girl you sit with in English at school, who is relatable without ever being condescending, but also really supportive and always on-hand to offer life-affirming advice. Marr literally will offer advice if you ask him on Twitter, and he always acknowledges when exam season is around and wishes people luck. He is both within and without; creating tunes for us to dance to and exuding a youthful stage presence whilst also maintaining an aura of wisdom and offering nuggets of advice or useful anecdotes, such as in the opening line of “Easy Money”, “I used to want it all, and that’s money money.” The timeless and ageless inspiration that Marr offers means that he will always be relevant to creative young people and just young people in general.

How do we know? It’s in our eyes.

BY SOPHIE WILSON



Every Word's

HIDDEN MEANING

Johnny Marr is a man of many talents. Though renowned first and foremost as a staggeringly gifted guitarist and composer, he's also a highly competent lyricist; prose writer; style icon...and a naturally gifted conversationalist.

There's never a need to worry about awkward silences when talking to Johnny. He can articulately converse for hours on topics as wide-ranging as music, philosophy, politics ('with a small p'), art and literature, and is never, ever boring. Not only does he like to talk, but he's bloody good at it. 'I don't think anyone's as good at anything as I am at talking,' Johnny says playfully, a cheeky grin lighting up his handsome features. And he could very well be right.

Despite having spent more than thirty years in the spotlight now, and given countless interviews, Johnny exhibits very little hostility towards the press. 'I think I get a fair enough shake,' he concedes. 'But most people I talk to are alright and the solo records have been very well received, so I don't have a problem. Some journalists can come with an agenda and think they're going to get under my skin by asking about The Smiths and therefore get some kind of scoop or something, but that would be flattering themselves. It doesn't happen too much.'

Both *Playland* and its precursor *The Messenger* have been met with overwhelmingly positive reactions from the press, and the past few years since launching his solo career have seen journalists the world over clamouring for a chat with the iconic Mancunian guitarist. For Johnny though, the opinions that matter most are that of his own fan base.

'I want my audience to like what I put out,' he says. 'That sounds very obvious, but it doesn't have to be an automatic consideration for a band or artist. You could have a different agenda.'

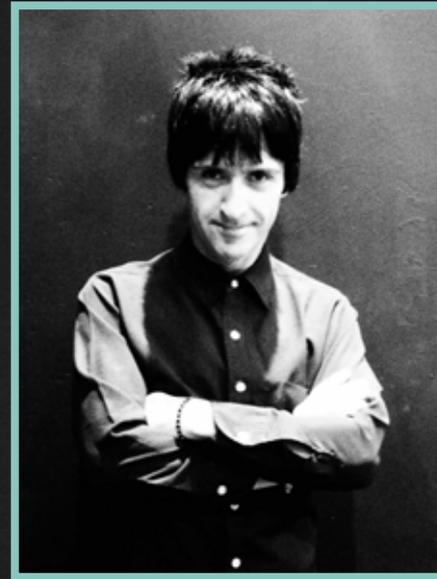
'I like my audience,' Johnny continues. 'It's interesting to me to know what some of them do and what they're about sometimes. Social Media is somewhat of a mixed bag - it's not all good news, but I've had some nice experiences and that's been cool. Also, what's the alternative to being nice to fans...being nasty? That doesn't sit right with me. Never has. I've always thought the fans were really important.'

"I like my audience. It's interesting to me to know what some of them do and what they're about . . . I've always thought the fans were really important."

'There are things that happen that are very touching. I've had people make marriage proposals during the show, and there's a young guy with autism who comes to hang out with us sometimes. He gets on Jack's kit at soundchecks and the pleasure he gets from that is really nice to see. Having someone name their child after you is a real honour, of course.

There are a lot of people with "There Is A Light That Never Goes Out" on their bodies, and I'm amazed when people get a picture of me tattooed on themselves. Some people travel from all over the world. Mostly, I like to see people losing themselves in the show. That's the best thing.'

Johnny's audience is an interesting mix. Some are veteran Smiths fans who have followed his career right from the start; others have been introduced to Johnny's music through more recent former bands such as Modest Mouse and The Cribs. Another even newer category of fans are young people who have been initiated into the World Of Marr through his recent solo records: those who know him first and foremost as "Johnny Marr", not "Johnny Marr of The Smiths", although many go on to discover much of his back catalogue as well.



'It's really touching and gratifying to see very young people at the shows,' Johnny says. 'They're usually there totally because they love the music, all of it. It doesn't matter how they got into it, and there's all kinds of reasons, but it's definitely not because of some hype. It's always a personal connection of some sort to the music or to me, so that's quite special.'

Inevitably, Johnny has attracted his fair share of youthful admirers. It's an everyday occurrence to see young (often - but not always - female) fans expressing declarations of romantic attraction towards the 51-year-old guitarist via social media, and quite frequently even in messages directed at Johnny himself. Though other artists in his position might feel somewhat uncomfortable with being seen as an object of desire in the eyes of people even younger than his own children, Johnny is refreshingly

unperturbed. 'I just put it down as an aspect of fame, people projecting things, for whatever reason,' he explains. 'I've never analysed that. It's beyond analysis, really.'

Beyond analysis such things may be, but being able to relate to his audience, regardless of their age, gender or lifestyle, seems of paramount importance to Johnny.

'I like to think that my audience have some of the same sensibilities. I realise that from a young age I've lived a very different life to most people, but people's values can be alike, even if it's just musically. I think the audience know my ideology,' Johnny says, although he also makes a point to explain: 'I don't mind if people just like me for my guitar playing though. That's fine. I'm happy that the fans like what I do for whatever reason they like.'

'I will say this though,' he adds. 'I don't think the lyrics are obscure. Far from it. I just don't go around advertising the concepts.'



As a solo artist, Johnny has proven himself to be more than just a gifted guitarist and composer: he's also a talented lyricist, whose words are profound and poetic without resorting to the sort of clichéd, self-indulgent omphaloskepsis that seems to be *in vogue* with the current indie crowd. Johnny's lyrics tend to be inspired by observation rather than introspection, and as a result his sources for inspiration are practically infinite. Heightened imagination, he says, is the



One particular recurring concept in Johnny's lyrics is that of escapism. Escapism through music; through technology; through sex. Even beyond Johnny's lyrics, it's a theme so strong and so prevalent that it can't help but make one question: what is it that so many people are trying to escape from? And where are they hoping to escape to?

'Chasing after escapism through entertainment, consumerism and physical sensation, amongst other things, seems to be the social norm,' Johnny explains. 'Entertainment through the big night out, consumerism through rinsing the credit card and physical sensation through alcohol culture or sexual preoccupation is always there. I'm a product of the culture myself and I'm involved the same as everyone,' he acknowledges, 'So I'm not judging. But I'm wondering if it's because we've stopped knowing how to be with ourselves? Maybe people aren't okay with themselves. Even if you're self-aware you can still suffer a certain malaise, which is what "This Tension" is about. I did think it was important to celebrate escapism though, in songs like "Back In The Box" and "Playland", to express the other side of it. Those songs are tributes to transcendence, mostly through music and sex.'

Hearing him speak so articulately about his ideas and inspirations, it comes as no surprise when Johnny admits he's been writing lyrics almost all his life.

'I started writing lyrics when I was about fourteen or fifteen,' he tells me. 'The first lyrics I wrote when I was ten or eleven, but I think they might have been a bit immature. I never didn't write entirely.

primary benefit of choosing to write about external situations rather than his own emotions.

'There's more for me to imagine than if I'm expressing my own feelings. Ultimately whatever you write is a reflection of yourself and how you perceive things. I'm not particularly interested in expressing my opinions as such at this point, and everyone seems to be doing that. I'd rather observe external things. Someone has to do it.'

'I like to make the lyrics more observational than introspective,' he continues. 'I'm usually on alert for inspiration and sometimes something might jump out at me from a conversation between people, or an article somewhere about something. It's enjoyable when I'm not looking and a phrase or word or concept surprises me. Inspiration doesn't strike so much if you're trying too hard. It's what artists need to live.'

"Inspiration doesn't strike so much if you're trying too hard. It's what artists need to live."

Even in The Smiths I wrote bits of prose sometimes, just for myself.'

Intrigued, I ask what was the first song Johnny ever wrote a full set of lyrics to.

'That would've been when I was eleven, for my first band. I don't remember the title but it was about not liking school and getting the hell out. Some things don't change, thank god.'

Interestingly, it was those schooldays that inspired Johnny's most autobiographical song to date. "25 Hours", with lyrics such as '*And the heat and the bricks / Were falling on me like doom*', paints an understandably bleak picture of not only education in Manchester in the 1970s, but the brutality of the Catholic church.

'The Catholic religion hasn't exactly made itself very credible over the last twenty five years or so, has it?' Johnny muses. 'Anyone who was brought up around priests and nuns will tell you it was sadistic, and worse.'

His feelings about Catholicism quite clear, I'm admittedly curious to know: Does Johnny Marr believe in God?

'*Bloody hell,*' is his initial response to such a question, before continuing: 'I don't believe in any monotheistic human-like super-being orchestrating humanity and creation in moral judgement that determines outcome. I do believe in an organising force that governs nature

and all things that can and will be explained scientifically. Metaphysics and spatiality support each other, as far as I'm concerned. I guess I have a different concept of the word spiritual.'

Spirituality, and mysticism in particular, are certainly not foreign concepts to Johnny. In the early 2000s, while recording *Boomslang* as Johnny Marr + The Healers, he was becoming increasingly interested in esoteric philosophies, immersing himself in books by the likes of George Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky and Helena Blavatsky.

'I was doing a lot of research at that time, studying metaphysics as much as I could. Richard Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness* was interesting. The evolution of the human mind... It's a big subject.'

A big subject indeed - but certainly not one beyond the capabilities of Johnny's intellect. This is, after all, a man currently reading Proust, who can quote Kant and Descartes with ease, and who has a comprehensive knowledge of art movements many people wouldn't have even heard of. Johnny Marr is *clever* - but his is a sort of humble, unpretentious intelligence that exists to benefit his art and his self without the need for attention to be drawn to it for the sake of his ego. There's an element of subtlety to many of his more academic pursuits, particularly when it comes to philosophy.



'I don't think many people know that I have any interests in that area,' he says. 'Perhaps they don't need to.'



Confident yet devoid of egotism, Johnny Marr as an artist is all about progressiveness. He refuses to simply rest on his laurels and stick to a safe, proven formula for success, yet at the same time he's never been outlandishly experimental in his projects just for the sake of it. Although he *has* changed over the past thirty years (and who hasn't?), it's in a subtle way that suggests a natural shift in personality and interests over time. Evolution, not revolution.

'I don't believe in morphing for the sake of it because that's just contrived,' Johnny states. 'I also hate it when an artist or band who's been around a long time says "I want to be relevant" - it just seems like trying to win over hipsters, and a bit desperate. You have to do what you believe in, no matter what.'

Right now, what Johnny believes in is *Playland*.

'When I was making *The Messenger* I realised that I wanted to make another album without waiting too long, so I followed that idea. The success of *The Messenger* made me even more enthusiastic about doing the follow up, but I'd already started thinking about *Playland*. I thought it was a good thing to pursue from a creative point of view.'

Asked what he personally perceives to be the fundamental differences between the

"I don't believe in morphing for the sake of it because that's just contrived. You have to do what you believe in, no matter what."

two albums, Johnny continues: 'I didn't want to change too much. I didn't think I needed to, but it differs in that it's more of a unified sound and lyrical concept whereas *The Messenger* was more a collection of songs that came together.'

Although generally considered to be his first solo album, *The Messenger* was not actually Johnny's first foray into being a frontman. Back in 2003, Johnny Marr + The Healers (featuring Johnny as not only lead guitarist, but also lead vocalist and lyricist) released their first and only album, *Boomslang* - but Johnny insists that The Healers were quite different to his current band with Jack Mitchell (drums), Iwan Gronow (bass) and Doviak (guitar and synths).

'Even though I wrote the songs, there was more of a shared aesthetic that I was representing. The first version of The Healers was a six-piece with synths and percussion and was inspired by very different things to where I'm at now, just because of the passing of time.'

As fate would have it though, it was through The Healers that Johnny first met his closest collaborator, co-producer, friend and band-mate, James Doviak.

'Doviak was running a weird online radio station called Radio Laos, from

somewhere outside San Francisco,' Johnny tells me. 'I met him when I was out there promoting *Boomslang*. He appears to be unapproachable and sinister even, but he's quite nice and he reminds me a bit of Ralf Hütter from Kraftwerk in that regard. He's unusual and a very good musician and he takes care of a lot of technical stuff in the studio, which enables me to concentrate on the guitars and words and concepts. I think it's the longest I've collaborated with anyone.'



As far as words and concepts go, one of the most prevalent themes in *Playland* is that of architecture: a field Johnny is quite passionately enthusiastic about.

'Buildings do crop up on the album,' he says. 'I like the Modernism movement and how it symbolises the aspirations of the immediate post war period in Europe, before what actually happened from the late seventies onwards - when post-modernism was supposed to be in it's prime, but crappy new towns and bland inner city buildings flew up.'

'The Modernist aesthetic took a massive blow when the agenda of the right-wing administration meant that two bit entrepreneurs with the right contacts threw up cheap faux retro buildings all over the UK,' he adds. 'This kind of character inspired the song "Little King".'

Another song from *Playland* heavily inspired by architecture is of course second single "Dynamo", which is, by

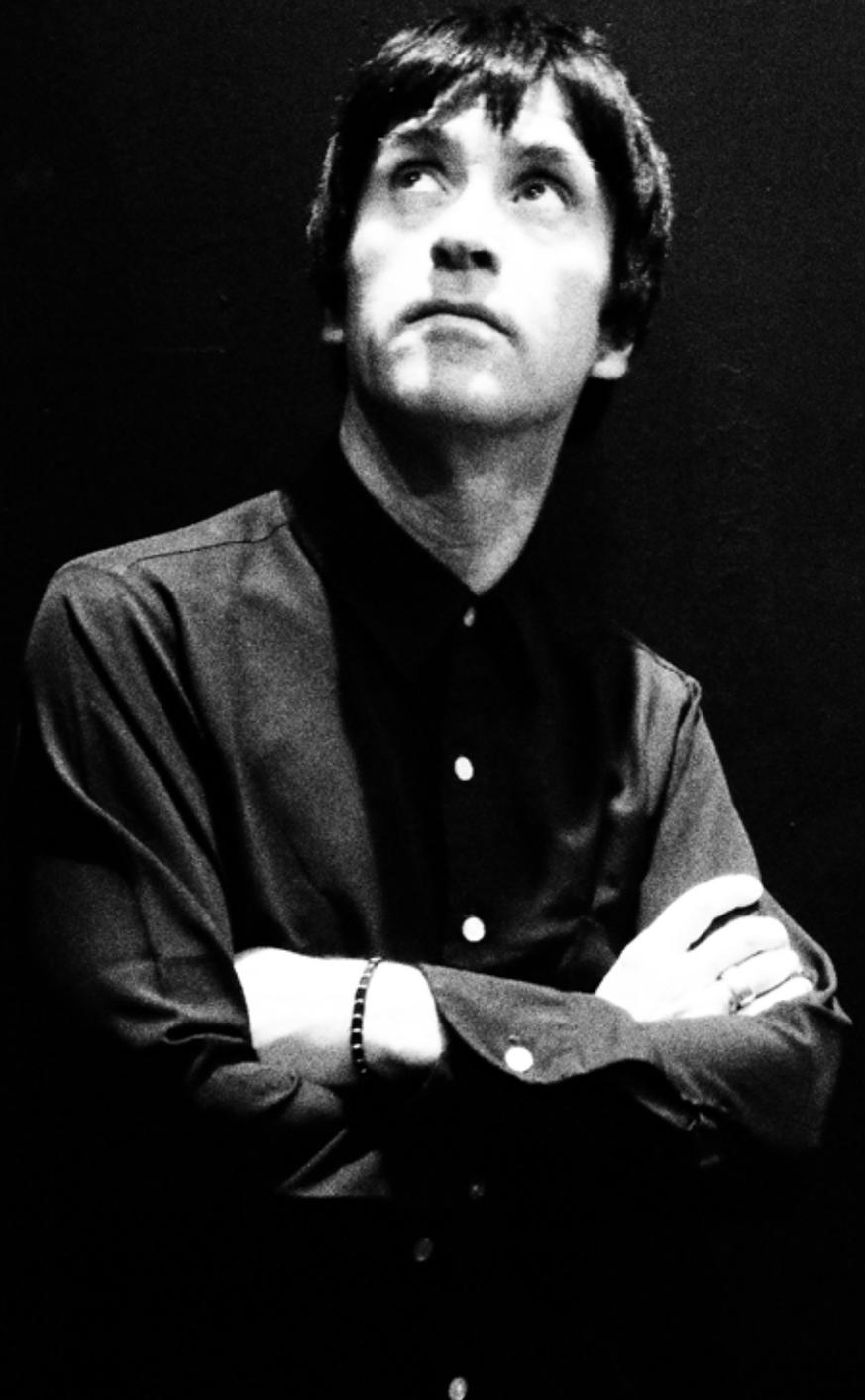
Johnny's own admission, a love song to a building.

'It was inspired by standing beneath a building in Harlem in New York,' Johnny says. 'I was also thinking about the building known as The Gherkin in London, St Mary Axe. I thought it would be good to write a love song and put a different slant on it, so I chose to write a love song to a building. I hoped that people could hear it as a love song to a person and for it to work in that context too.'

Since we're anthropomorphising buildings then, I decide to take a plunge with one of my odder questions: if *Playland* were a building, what type of structure does Johnny think it would be?

'I like the idea of *Playland* as a building,' he agrees, 'Or perhaps a few different types. It's a bit "Trellick Tower" in places. I spent a lot of time at the South Bank area of the river Thames in London when I was making the album, so if *Playland* was a building, maybe it would be something along the lines of the Hayward Gallery,' Johnny continues before reaching his final decision: 'I think the Co-Op building at One Angel Square in Manchester would be the one. That would be nice.'

Buildings; places; social situations: these are some of the key inspirations for Johnny's work of late, and so it makes sense that The Situationist International - a group of social revolutionaries in the late 1950s to early 1970s that championed psychogeography as one of their key practices - would also be one of Johnny's influences. 'Like a lot of people,



I first became aware of the Situationists from Malcom McLaren's exploits in the Punk days,' Johnny says. 'It was above my head as a schoolboy but I understood their function entirely. Then later I had a few conversations with Tony Wilson about it all, and Guy Debord seemed like someone I should investigate.'

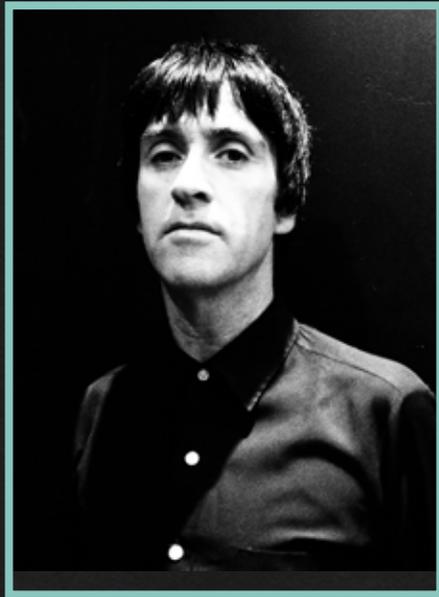
A voracious reader, and particularly well-read in Situationist literature, Johnny even has a book recommendation to share: 'Raoul Vaneigem's *Revolution Of Everyday Life* is a masterpiece,' he declares. 'It inspired a few things on *The Messenger*. "The Right Thing Right"...quantity street, etc.'

This is not the first time Johnny has spoken of his interest in and admiration of The Situationists. He readily admits he would love to have been a member of the group himself, had he been old enough back in the 1960s - but concedes that it's unlikely that a similar organisation could still exist and have power in our current times.

'I'd like it think it would be possible to have an organisation like the Situationists, but I doubt it right now,' Johnny states.

'The media have got society so under control that it's hard enough to get attention even when half a million people demonstrate in the streets. Even if it does get attention, that attention gets diverted and diluted so quickly. Trying to subvert in public places seems impossible when you're not even allowed to skateboard in the town centre.'

'Having the Internet could be an advantage of the modern era in subverting the straight world,' he



continues, 'But again, the media have gotten very good at convincing people about things. Russell Brand gets so much criticism from people just spouting reactionary rhetoric they've been fed by the media. Some of the people spouting this stuff are young people and therefore should know better. So even if you're saying the obvious on a public forum, you can have it turned on you.'

Another organisation that Johnny is inspired by are the Provos, a group of non-violent anarchists that were active in the Netherlands in the 1960s. 'They had some great ideas,' he enthuses.



While Johnny is too young to have been directly inspired by the Provos and the Situationist International at the height of their powers, other movements have

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influenced his work by more intimate, firsthand experiences. One such example is Glam (aka glam rock, aka glitter rock); Johnny's first musical love that even now (often subconsciously) manifests itself in his own music. 'Quite a few people said that Easy Money reminded them of Glam,' Johnny says. 'I figured they can't all be wrong and I saw what they meant. It wasn't intentional at all so therefore it's definitely an influence on me no matter what.'

'There have been times when I've consciously taken Glam as an inspiration,' he continues, 'As was the case with "Sheila Take A Bow" or "I Started Something I Couldn't Finish" by The Smiths. Glam was my first musical love. I learned from T.Rex and Sparks and all of it.'

Glam, with all its flamboyancy and camp androgyny, would appear almost the aesthetic inverse of the neat, tailored styles of 1960s mod culture, yet the latter tends to be associated even more closely with Johnny's style - at least by the press.

'It is a bit obvious when I see the "with his mod haircut and jacket" business in press articles,' Johnny concedes before pointing out: 'It's also not accurate.'

'I do of course have a connection with the ideals and style from that period,

and I love a lot of the music and Pop Art culture too. There are places where things converge, be it modernist architecture, the French New Wave...all sorts, and I like all of it. Maybe that convergence is in my head. I like to mix it all up.'

Johnny, whose current fashion inspirations are Coco Chanel, The Pistols, the Bloomsbury Set, Christopher Isherwood and Ray Davies circa 1966, is, to quote one of the latter's songs, a dedicated follower of fashion. Onstage he's the epitome of style in fitted blazers, smart button-down shirts and tailored jeans, and his offstage look is no less polished. Though attuned to his own aesthetic and the styles he feels comfortable with, Johnny also acknowledges that there's an increasing quality of aimlessness in the modern fashion world. 'It's possible to have so much choice and variety that there ceases to be direction. I think fashion is in danger of that happening now, if it hasn't happened already.'

'Except beards though,' he adds playfully, 'Which as everyone knows are compulsory.'

Like his music and personality, Johnny's fashion sense has also changed and evolved over the years, but one particular recurring theme is his comfort and



willingness to challenge gender norms with his use of accessories. The diamond chandelier necklace of 1984 may now be retired, but he still wears eyeliner - and looks damn good in it. Most recently, it's Johnny's silver nail varnish that has garnered attention from the press and fans alike.

'The nail varnish came about when I was seeing a lot of Kate Nash,' Johnny explains. 'She started putting it on my nails before shows and I kept it. If you can get away with twisting the "guy situation" then do it, even if it spins a few people out - especially if it does, actually,' he adds. 'But not if it looks rubbish.'

'I think choice is an aesthetic decision,' Johnny continues, 'Or can be if you view it that way, and also political in terms of "personal politics", or "politics with a small p". You can buy a pair of jeans for £60 that are okay, or look for a different pair for £60 that you think are more than okay. Why not?'

For Johnny, whose interest in aesthetics extends to the study of it as a branch of philosophy, it's not just about fashion or an image one presents - aestheticism can be a lifestyle.

'I take tea with me into Starbucks and get the water but not the crappy tea,' he explains as an example. 'That's a decision, and a cheaper one usually. It struck me as being aesthetic. This can go on in different areas and to all sorts of degrees. Why not? I was up to a lot of this and then I read Friedrich Schiller's *On The Aesthetic Education Of Man*. Bingo.'

On the influence of aesthetics in his

own art, Johnny says, 'I try to employ it as much as I can. The sleeves are a very obvious example, or my studio space. It's not a requirement, but why not think about the aesthetic if you can?'

This focus on aesthetics also manifests itself in *Playland's* striking iconography: that of the gyroscope, which is featured not only being held in Johnny's hands on the album cover, but also on one of the album's promotional postcards, and on Jack's drum kit during live shows.

'I had the Gyroscope as something nice to toy around with in the studio. I always liked them when I was younger and I like that it's about conquering or harnessing centrifugal force. That appeals to me,' Johnny explains. 'Then I got very attached to it whilst I was making the album. I found myself messing with it a lot out of habit when I was listening to performances and so on. It was in my pocket when we went out to shoot the cover, so it seemed fitting that I was holding it on the cover.'

'Someone pointed out to me that both album covers have the aspect of being unbalanced on them. That was unintentional, but it's interesting.'





While many of his current and upcoming projects are still musical - a Depeche Mode cover on limited edition 7" vinyl for Record Store Day; an upcoming live LP, and of course continued touring - Johnny isn't ruling out other non-musical pursuits in addition to the autobiography that's scheduled for release next year. Acting ('I would do a film if it was the right part') and creative writing ('I have a book or two in me if I get around to it') are future possibilities, although an LP consisting entirely of tracks recorded on the theremin will have to remain one of this interviewer's unrealised dreams ('I was just being silly', Johnny admits). Although very content with what he's doing now, Johnny has the courage and confidence to not hold back from projects just because it's not what other people expect of him.

'If I was excited about doing something with a completely different direction and totally believed it was right, I would do it without hesitation,' he affirms.

One gets the impression that Johnny Marr is a man who enjoys keeping busy, and more importantly, being productive. Would too much "downtime" therefore leave such an active and energetic man frustrated and restless?

'I can't imagine having nothing to do,' Johnny says. 'There's always something going on. Would I get restless?' he muses. 'Maybe I would. Something would happen.'

One last question then, before leaving our ever-obliging hero to get on with his day's tasks: If it turned out tomorrow that there was absolutely no work to do, and Johnny were expected to devote it entirely to leisure pursuits, what would he spend the day doing?

'Is watching the entire history of cinema a leisure pursuit?' he asks. 'Either that or become the greatest ever Englishman of the Trampoline...'

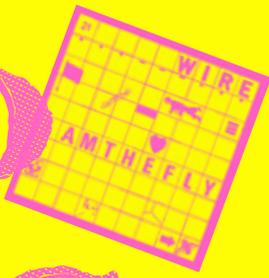
Interview & Photos by Aly Stevenson

*Artwork by
Ory Englander*





NO



ROCKISM

JOHNNY MARR'S **PUNK** INFLUENCES
MERGED WITH HIS NO "ROCKISM" **ATTITUDE.**

the stooges

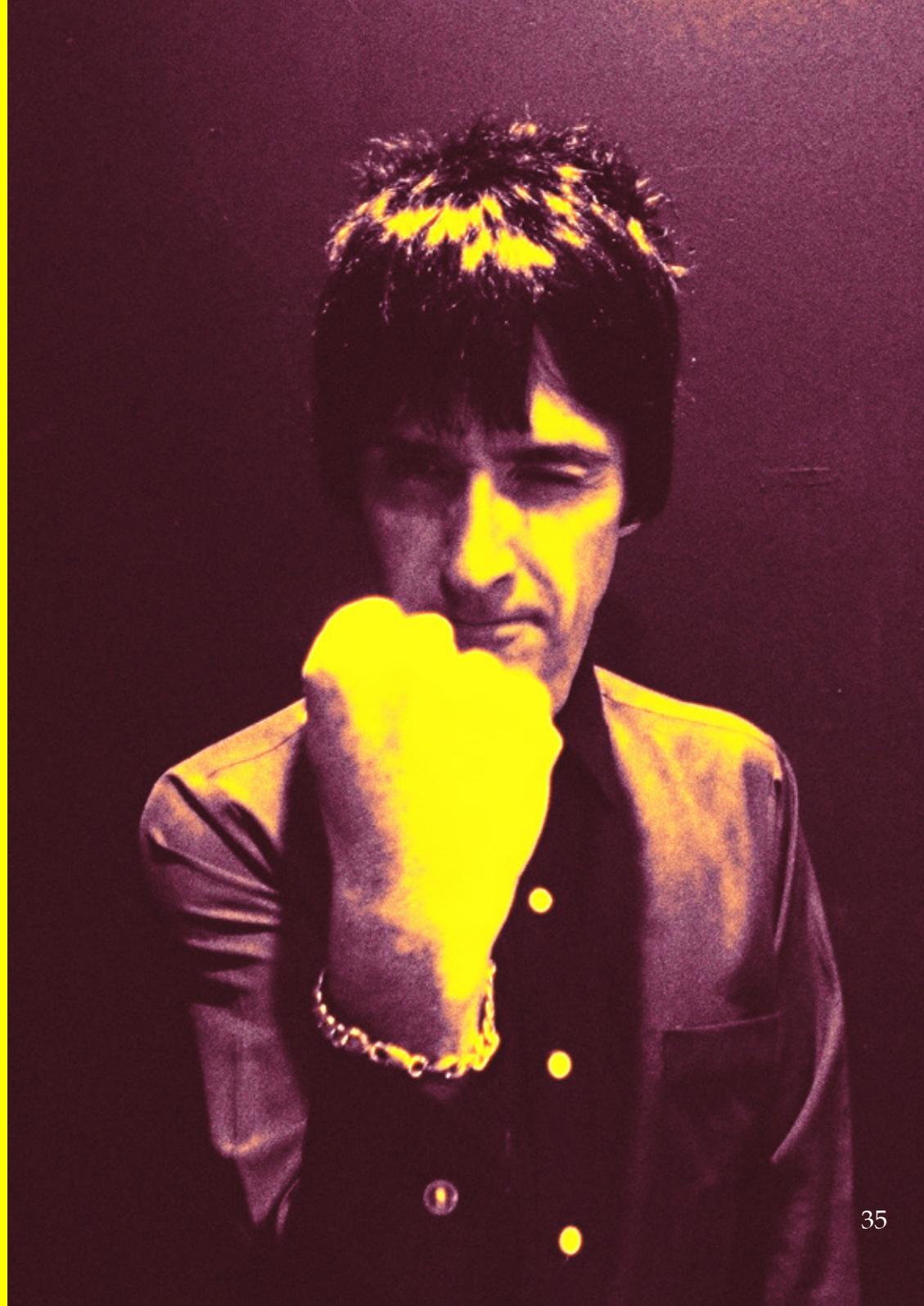
"NO ROCK, NO ROCKISM, NO ROCKISM AT ALL...

**NO ROCKISM IN YOUR GUITAR PLAYING, NO ROCKISM IN YOUR CLOTHES, NO ROCKISM IN YOUR
BEHAVIOUR OR YOUR LYRICS
OR YOUR POLITICS.**

IT WAS A REALLY GOOD THING."

- JOHNNY MARR

Johnny's above quote from a Noisey interview with John Doran a couple of years ago speaks of his influences during the post-punk wave a little before his ascent into the social conscience. To the non-fan, the philistine who views Johnny as the figure who only brought the melodic and emotional "Rickenbacker jangle" to alternative rock is sadly mistaken. The Ardwick axe-man was and still is heavily inspired by proto-punk, punk and the New York/new wave sounds of the late '70s and early '80s.



Johnny as an aspiring youth looked to the likes of anti-everythings The Velvet Underground as he began his quest into musical greatness playing in Velvets-inspired Manchester band Sister Ray in his mid-teens for a one-off gig. Years later Johnny would state that certain songs from The Smiths were Velvet Underground-influenced, including "The Queen Is Dead", where certain screechy intervals in the track were influenced by the song "I Can't Stand It".

Johnny also constantly proclaims his admiration for Iggy and the Stooges' guitarist James Williamson in Raw Power - "It kind of struck me that he had the attitude of Keith Richards but the technicality of Jimmy Page, and Raw Power to me has never been bettered in terms of rock guitar." This isn't melodic, "jangly" music; it's thick, dense rock which Marr was exposing himself to.

"JOHNNY'S FORTY-FIVE SECOND INTRO WAS HARD ROCK BUT WITH A POP SENSIBILITY AND WAS WHAT JONI MITCHELL "WOULD HAVE DONE HAD SHE BEEN AN MC5 FAN OR A PUNK ROCKER."

I remember vividly the first time I laid my virgin ears on The Smiths, in a flat in the US miles away from my Irish home where, on the Internet, I randomly (and luckily) clicked on the "The Headmaster Ritual", having been drawn in by the Meat Is Murder album artwork. It was like nothing I'd ever heard before: I was hooked. Johnny's forty-five second intro was hard rock but



with a pop sensibility and was what Joni Mitchell "would have done had she been an MC5 fan or a punk rocker." Johnny once again showcasing his pre-punk influences mixed with his love of softer folk sounds. The track had that rock base, but with a punk purpose elevated by Morrissey's anti-corporal punishment lyrics.

Though all of this talk of punk is intriguing, you may ask yourself why has Johnny never been involved in or produced a "pure punk" song? Just before The Smiths began, Marr loathed what the rock

world was producing: hairspray, spandex, macho-guitarism. Van Halen, Bon Jovi and Aerosmith were among the glam metalists that viewed the guitar as a symbol of manhood and showboating. Smiths photographer Kevin Cummins said that "Music was going in a very different direction and The Smiths brought it back to a very basic level, and it was a level that everyone could understand." This was mostly down to Johnny's guitar and the wave of music that allowed him to do this - post-punk and no "rockism". Showboating solos, distortion and even rock fashion were out the

the mercurial Mancunian could perform ear-catching, arpeggio rock tracks but with a stripped-back attitude, abstaining from undermining his listeners while still educating: rock, but anti-rock. Johnny obtained solace through the likes of Magazine and Television. The latter's vocalists/guitarists Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd had a huge bearing on Johnny's sound, and are bands he was extremely fond of in his teens and still to this day. Even now he still cites post-punk and new wave as very important to his ideologies and his playing; case in point being his official debut solo record *The Messenger*, which he says is a "12 track record that I think sounds like Blondie."

Away from music, our axe-man approaches his lifestyle with the hardcore punk philosophy of "straight edge" - veganism, teetotalism and abstinence from tobacco and drugs are the orders of the day. He's been with the same girl, Angie, since before The Smiths formed and has two kids; son Nile (named after his hero Nile Rodgers) and daughter Sonny. This is not your typical rock star. "Ultimately,

one of the things about my lifestyle is that I live like in a way that is whatever is going to be best for me to be super, super, super creative." The term "straight edge", coined by forerunners in hardcore punk Minor Threat, was clearly an influence on Johnny. Vocalist/guitarist in other influential rock bands including Fugazi, Ian MacKaye is one of Marr's favourite guitarists.

It always irritates me when people say The Smiths were just a sappy, bleak outfit. Sometimes they were (in a positive way) but most of the songs carried punk ideals and some even a punk sound - the aforementioned "The Queen Is Dead", "London", "Sweet and Tender Hooligan" and the unreleased "Heavy Track" instrumental demo spring to mind right off. Meat Is Murder and The Queen Is Dead are, in terms of making a statement, as punk as music has ever gotten, revolving around anti-corporal punishment, vegetarianism, anti-corporate music, religion and politics. "Panic" is a glam rock beat derived from T. Rex's "Metal Guru", another major

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influence on the formation and origin of punk as well as Johnny's sound. "Panic" chastised the music industry and DJs for not playing The Smiths' music on the radio.

Even after The Smiths' demise Johnny continued with his new wave and post-punk roots when playing with the likes of the Pretenders and Talking Heads. Even to this day, with his latest solo effort

Playland, there is a distinct synth and new wave sound throughout the album, particularly with the opener "Back in the Box",

"Speak Out Reach Out" and "This Tension". The man has a great knack for taking music he knows from his youth, modernising it and making it his own. You know a Marr sound when you hear it. The first time I laid eyes on Johnny in the flesh was at Leopardstown Racecourse, Dublin in August of last year and in amongst the live set was a punk classic - "I Fought the Law", originally a rock and roll number by The Crickets, but brought to the masses by punk legends The Clash. The frontman blasted into the rip-roaring crowd-pleaser which sounded like it belonged on a punk album from the 1970s - a statement I'm sure the late Jøe Strummer would have no qualms in agreeing with. Punk is everywhere with Johnny. It's punk the Marr way.

BY NL

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT **The North**



When we talk about the North (capital 'N') of England and working class culture it's really easy to conflate the two. In my mythical North, olive oil is something exotic from the chemist bought to loosen ear wax and there aren't any posh people... There are. And now we've got Waitrose.

In the 1970s and 1980s the North of England was grimy. It was coming to the end of its Industrialist heyday and it did seem like life was in black and white. But being the poor relation to the South had, and still has, its benefits. What can you get away with when no one's looking or no one really cares?



PHOTO BY MAT BANCROFT

On that day when Johnny Marr and Angie stood to 'face that July dawn/In uniform', they had the freedom to make the decision never to go back to school. Today you'd have the Truancy Officer knocking at your door and the threat of a hefty fine for non-attendance. In an effort to provide better opportunities for working class kids, the current education system pens them in to academic courses until they are 16. Soon they will be obliged to be in full time education until they are 17 and then 18. What Johnny Marr took advantage of was an opportunity to exist under the radar, to live on his own terms. He was a teenager at a time when we didn't believe in infantilising young people or keeping them under restrictive control.

Johnny Marr had the relentless drive and work ethic to create his own musical apprenticeship. Plenty of time to make mistakes and learn, learn, learn. And lest we forget his other fine working class quality, a supreme ability to hustle: free train rides to London, great clothes from the shop he worked in and, you can bet, any number of useful contacts. The lad's got charm.

The influence of the North on Johnny Marr's music is inevitable. We are all affected

WHAT JOHNNY MARR TOOK
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by where we come from. But just as northern accents are different, so is the music. The music of Liverpool is different from that of Manchester and the music of Sheffield is different again. Being fiercely of the north doesn't mean being insular. The north can be cold, grey and dreary. And we all need to look out and dream of other places. Marr's music isn't all George Formby but it is The Buzzcocks and Magazine. And it is Nile Rodgers and Television.

Now, superficially at least, the North looks quite like the South. The soot and pollution has been sandblasted off to reveal the glorious technicolour. It might not be all prams and pasties. But tuberculosis is making a comeback.

By Helen Angell



PHOTO BY MAT BANCROFT

The Body as a Canvas:

THE ART & SYMBOLISM OF JOHNNY MARR'S TATTOOS



For most of us, our tattoos say a lot about who we are as people, and represent our interests and values. The permanent nature of body art means implies a great deal of personal significance is attached to those images. Through both independent research and details this zine's editors have kindly shared from their own conversations with Johnny (with his permission), this article will attempt to analyse the symbolism behind a selection of the great guitarist's tattoos.

It's worth noting that Johnny didn't actually get his first tattoo until the age of 45 - an age where more people are regretting the tattoos they got decades earlier than deciding to get their first one. This alone implies how seriously Johnny takes the permanence of body art, and how

seriously he would have thought about his choices before getting inked.

NORTH & SOUTH

The North and South symbols are Johnny's most visible tattoos on account of their positions on his lower forearms - but what do they mean?

There's a clear element of duality in the symbolism of North and South combined. They're opposite forces that complement each other, like the yin-yang, or two sides of a coin. Many ancient philosophies attribute specific meanings and characteristics to the symbols of north and south. In Chinese philosophy, and especially in the *I Ching*, north and south are both represented by the trigrams Chi'en and K'un in a Fu Xi (or "Earlier Heaven") Ba Gua arrangement. Fitting



with Johnny's personality, Chi'en and K'un also represent energy, both expansive and receptive.

In Native American philosophy, north and south represent the adult and child spirit respectively, which again is in tune with Johnny's combined traits of adult wisdom and youthful enthusiasm, while some other divination practices believe that north and south represent period of time: south representing the present, and north representing the timelessness of infinity. (West and East, in turn, represent the past and future respectively.)

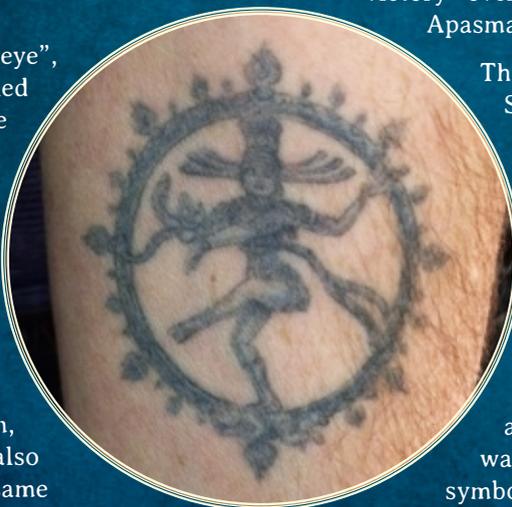
All these symbols of duality can be seen to represent the sense of balance Johnny possesses as a person.

On a more personal level, North and South, through the initials 'N' and 'S', also represent his children, Nile and Sonny.

SHIVA

"It was that or Popeye", Johnny once joked about the image of Shiva on his left forearm, but this particular tattoo - his very first - is deeply symbolic.

Shiva, the Hindu god of creation and destruction, on one level also represents the same



duality of the north and south tattoos discussed earlier. In addition to his dual roles as creator and destroyer, Shiva is represented in Hindu art and literature in both fearsome and benevolent forms, as both a fighter and a householder.

The particular visualisation of Shiva that Johnny chose for his tattoo is the *Nataraja* ("Lord of the dance"), which shows Shiva performing a divine dance called *Tandava*, through which the universe is created, maintained and destroyed in a cyclical fashion. The *Nataraja* is depicted within a circle of fire in which the entire universe is said to be contained, tranquil of expression, with four arms and two legs. In the upper right hand he holds a small drum called a *damaru*, which symbolises creation, and in the upper left hand, by contrast, a fiery flame that symbolises destruction. Under his right foot, the dwarf-like demon *Apasmara* (also known as *Muyalaka*) is being trampled, indicating Shiva's victory over the ignorance *Apasmara* represents.

The image of Shiva is likely also of special significance due to its connection to English writer Aldous Huxley, a hero of Johnny's. Shiva as the *Nataraja* was a recurring symbol in Huxley's

work, spoken of extensively in his final novel *Island* as well as in essays on religion and transcendence. Huxley describes the *Nataraja* as the ultimate symbol: "The whole thing is there...the world of space and time and matter and energy; the world of creation and destruction." (*Speaking Personally*, recorded 1961)

Johnny's Shiva tattoo also has an extra, special personalisation: instead of the *damaru*, Johnny's Shiva holds a guitar pick, symbolising the tool and source of Johnny's own creations.

SWALLOW

One of Johnny's most recent tattoos is the image of a swallow on the left side of his neck. Traditionally swallow tattoos, particularly on the neck, hands and chest, were used by sailors to indicate sailing experience (one swallow marked the milestone of 5,000 nautical miles; two swallows marked 10,000), or as an omen of protection and safety at sea. A tattoo of a swallow can also symbolise loyalty and devotion to loved ones, since swallows return home every year.

It's unclear exactly what Johnny's swallow tattoo means to him on a more personal level, but as somebody who travels frequently to tour (and is often away from his loved ones as a result), both safety while travelling and loyalty to loved ones seem fitting. Johnny has also mentioned in



conversation that the swallow is a symbol of swiftness - a trait valued by Johnny on both mental and physical levels.

ATOMIC EXPLOSION

Johnny's other most recent tattoo is one rarely seen (as it's on his upper left arm and usually hidden by shirts, even short-sleeved ones), but full of important symbolism. Contained within the visualisation of an atomic explosion are an array of small symbols with specific meanings, some of which he's explained in conversation with *Dynamic's* editors.

example, represents both the 8th sign of the zodiac (Johnny is a Scorpio), and “infinity” (as turned on its side, the number 8 is in fact an infinity sign) - infiniteness being an important concept to Johnny. Some symbols’ meanings are fairly straightforward: the plus-sign represents positivity, while the small ‘M’ stands for the first initial of Johnny’s surname. The equation “ $1 - v$ ” represents physics, and kinetics (the study of motion) in particular. (In physics equations, the letter “v” represents velocity.)

In a more sentimental turn, “Jy” is a reference to Johnny’s father: the capital letter J representing their shared first name, and the lowercase y symbolising Johnny’s individuality, as it is the latter two letters that differentiates his name from his father, John’s.

One other meaningful symbol within Johnny’s atomic explosion is the series of three short, straight horizontal lines towards the top. In the *I Ching*, this is the trigram known as Ch’ien (also mentioned earlier in relation to Johnny’s north and south tattoos), and is a symbol of creative energy - another important concept to Johnny.

Although Johnny now has a total of eight tattoos, including the above, he’s mentioned he still intends to get more - proving perhaps how addictive body art can be. What his future tattoos will depict are anybody’s guess right now, but I can only assume they’ll be as interesting and meaningful as the ones he has already.



By Elsa Sherman

TOP TEN

Johnny Marr Collaborations



When it comes to collaborations, Johnny’s CV is jam-packed; I for one only found out recently that he’d graced a couple of Girls Aloud tracks with his presence! I chose my top ten tracks that Johnny has collaborated on and wow was it difficult...

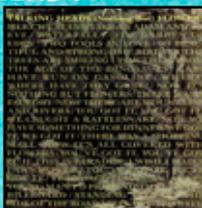
1 'DON'T STOP NOW' - CROWDED HOUSE

Released in 2007 as the first single from Crowded House's fifth studio album 'Time on Earth', 'Don't Stop Now' features guitar work from Johnny. It's an all round great song and I love Johnny's guitar in the chorus. Johnny co-wrote 'Even A Child' with Neil Finn for the same album, as well as playing guitar on the track, which also features Johnny's daughter Sonny on backing vocals. 'Even A Child' has more of a Marr sound to it, he's instantly recognisable from the beginning of the track, and his beautiful riffs are incredibly prominent.



2 '(NOTHING BUT) FLOWERS' - TALKING HEADS

1988 saw Johnny team up with Talking Heads to feature on several tracks for their last album 'Naked', also featuring Kirsty MacColl on backing vocals. '(Nothing But) Flowers' has one of my favourite track openings because I love the little build up before Johnny's guitar hits you. It's almost tropical. In a 2009 interview with 'Guitarist Magazine', Johnny talked about how after facing difficulty with the track, he decided to start it like one of his own, and I love that, because if you took Johnny's guitar out of the track, it could easily fit in to a Smiths track, but it works so well.



3 'ENOUGH OF ME' - JOHN FRUSCIANTE

John Frusciante released his album 'The Empyrean' in 2009, which features tracks 'Enough Of Me' and 'Central' which both feature Johnny, who visited his studio in LA whilst in town for the Modest Mouse tour. They're both intense beautiful tracks regarding vocals, backing instruments, and Johnny's guitar, but 'Enough Of Me' has a lengthy killer guitar solo which makes it my favourite by far!



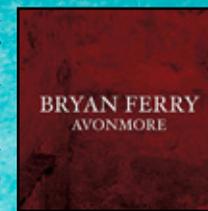
4 'THE HOUSE I GREW UP IN' - TWEAKER

American alternative rock collaboration Tweaker have collaborated with many amazing musicians including Johnny on their 2004 album '2 a.m. Wakeup Call', with him playing guitar on 'The House I Grew Up In'; a track that's been in my playlist for ages because Johnny's guitar can only be described as hypnotizing. It's an instrumental track that just screams talent, it's so chilled, and so experimental, that it almost sounds like a bedroom project.



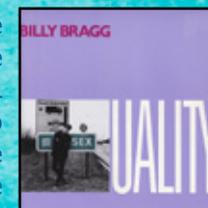
5 'SOLDIER OF FORTUNE' - BRYAN FERRY

Johnny has a large history of playing with Bryan Ferry, most recently co-writing and playing guitar on the track 'Soldier Of Fortune' for Ferry's latest album 'Avonmore'. When talking about working with Johnny, Ferry described the tracks guitar to be tender, and built up from a riff that Johnny was playing in the studio, which compliments Ferry's tremulous vocals, as well as the sad and regretful underlying theme that seems apparent in the lyrics.



6 'SEXUALITY' - BILLY BRAGG

Johnny provided some angelic guitar lines in the Billy Bragg track 'Sexuality', which he co-wrote in the early 90's for Bragg's album 'Don't Try This at Home'. The track sends out an anti-homophobia message and also features Kirsty MacColl on backing vocals. The lyrics are brilliant, my ultimate favourite being "I look like Robert De Niro, I drive a Mitsubishi Zero". 'Sexuality' is an all round jolly song with a positive message, what's not to like?!



7 'BALLAD OF THE MIGHTY I' - NOEL GALLAGHER'S HIGH FLYING BIRDS

It's a well known fact that Noel Gallagher is a huge fan of Johnny's work, yet though they've played together in the past, most recently on Johnny's 'Playland' tour and Noel's 'Chasing Yesterday' tour, up until now they'd only collaborated together on the 2002 Oasis album 'Heathen Chemistry', on which Johnny plays guitar on '(Probably) All In The Mind' and 'Born On A Different Cloud', as well as providing both guitar and vocals on 'Better Man'. Noel hit the jackpot when Johnny agreed to join him on the single 'Ballad of the Mighty I' from his new album 'Chasing Yesterday', praising Johnny who didn't hear the track beforehand, turning up on the day with 2 guitars and a bag of effects pedals. The long awaited collaboration was well worth the wait in the extremely catchy and upbeat track that features both guitarists doing what they do best. There's an absolutely brilliant guitar solo about 2 1/2 minutes in, it's a fantastic track; there's no way I couldn't feature the recent gem on this list!



8

'MILK & HONEY' – BECK

Whilst in LA in 1999, Johnny was invited to add guitar to the track 'Milk & Honey' from Beck's seventh studio album 'Midnight Vultures'. The track perfectly combines Johnny's quirky wandering electric guitar, Beck's understated raps and various sound effects you'd expect to here over a video game. The rest of the album has somewhat of a freak-funk theme to it, but this track seems to take an unexpected turn, a turn where rock and funk meet. Towards the end of the track things turn rather melancholic, almost roadside folk, as we're treated to some beautiful guitar playing. One of Beck's best anthems in my opinion!



9

'TOO BLUE' – 7 WORLDS COLLIDE

In 2001 Neil Finn of Crowded House put together a musical project for charity called '7 Worlds Collide', featuring Johnny and other artists playing various shows and releasing a live album. 'Too Blue' is a track featuring Johnny on vocals and guitar from 'The Sun Came Out', a 2009 follow up to the 2001 live album in which the proceeds went to Oxfam. The track not only features Johnny collaborating with Jeff Tweedy, but it also features Johnny's son Nile on acoustic guitar. The opening chimes are all it takes to remind me how much i love the track, its catchiness, and how happy it sounds despite the sad title! The album was recorded in a studio in Auckland over a few weeks, featuring many of the artists previously involved and families were invited along too, which gives 'Too Blue' and the other tracks a real homely family reunion feel to them!



10

'THIS MUST BE THE PLACE I WAITED YEARS TO LEAVE' – THE PET SHOP BOYS

Johnny has been a guest on many Pet Shop Boys recordings from over the years, my favourite being the electro ballad 'This Must Be The Place I Waited Years To Leave' from their 1990 album 'Behaviour'. The synthetics, the drum beat, and Johnny's riffs are great, it's a beautifully elegant track – the intro gives me chills!



Artwork by Candice Marshall

BY LAURA DEAN

Dynamite & Deadly:

THE MAGIC OF JOHNNY MARR + THE HEALERS

For years after the split of the Smiths, Johnny Marr spent his talent and energy working on other musicians' projects. Towards the end of recording Electronic's last album, Twisted Tenderness, which was released in 2009, seeds of what would turn out to be his first solo effort, the Healers, were being sown. At this point, Johnny was moving back to writing rock format songs. In fact, "Vivid," which ended up on Twisted Tenderness, had both music and lyrics written by Johnny. It was adjusted by Bernard Sumner for Electronic but it was originally recorded by Johnny with Zak Starkey, son of the Beatles' Ringo Starr, and first member of the Healers.

The two met in an elevator in New York when Zak introduced himself to Johnny—who didn't have a clue who he was, just that he was English. They hit it off between floors, went for a cup of tea, and found they had a lot in common. They ran around New York, newly minted friends, and promised to play music together upon returning to the UK. Says Johnny of playing with Zak for the first time, "I got this feeling I know from being 14, 15, which is: You got a new friend, he plays a different instrument to you, he's as obsessed about what he does as you are about what you do, and you make good noise together."

That was enough for Johnny to consider putting a group together. He took his time, however, producing Haven, working with Beth Orton, touring with Neil Finn, all the while keeping an eye out for

vocalists and auditioning bass players. Alonza Bevan, one time member of Kula Shaker, was suggested for the bassist position. He, much like Zak, clicked with Johnny on a personal level, which is what Johnny looks for with anyone with whom he works.

"If you're kind of okay as a musician but you've got a hell of a lot in common with me and I like you as a person, I'll send you to boot camp until you're good enough to play," he says. "The reverse is never true. I don't care if a musician has lasers coming out of their fingers when they play and has a CV even longer than mine. If you're some kind of cornyhead, take cocaine, drink too much alcohol with a nightmare boyfriend or girlfriend, money issues, and all that kind of crap that happens in bands, I'm not interested."



PHOTO BY JON SUPER

Many voices were heard and faces were gazed upon for the vocalist spot. There were a couple of guys with “appropriate hairstyles,” according to Johnny, who were also nice, that almost made the cut. Johnny’s intent was to find someone unknown out of respect to Sumner and The The’s Matt Johnson because he didn’t want them to feel like they were part of a list of famous people singing with him. Johnny thought a vocalist he had chosen was a done deal when the Healers held an intervention of sorts and told him they felt he should be singing the lyrics that he had written. He had sung on the demos, which the others had gotten used to and liked, and that was that. Johnny’s first time singing front and center.

The Healers remained a streamlined trio, although for a while there were six members total. A modern version of Jefferson Airplane was what the Healers was starting to look like for a while with a girl congo player, Liz, and Lee Spencer on synthesizer plus a fellow called Chink on rhythm guitar. Johnny took so long to get the Healers stuff together, those three “got bored and drifted off,” says Johnny, “I didn’t realize they were so into doing things other than rock music. They brought a good element to the band that stopped it from becoming too muso and supergroup.”

By the time the Healers’ album, Boomslang, was released, it was 2003. Produced by Johnny and with lyrics penned by him, Boomslang came at a time when he was self-reflecting, assuming most people of his generation were doing the same thing. This is a thread for Johnny no matter what he is working on: he writes music for people whom he feels are like him. The timing for Boomslang was one of its essential factors. Johnny wasn’t hearing or feeling

what he was looking for in music. Getting tired of waiting for someone else to do it, he did it himself, “philosophical rock ‘n’ roll with a groove.”

Johnny quotes the Pet Shop Boys’ Neil Tennant, also an Electronic featured guest, on what his intention with writing is: “When a rock musician tries to write a song, [he] is automatically trying to write something timeless and classic. A pop musician is trying something of the time that is okay to date.” What Johnny is trying to write is, “Something of the moment that still sounds good a few years down the line. Something my mates will like, and my fans, whom I don’t think of as fans so much as people I can relate to.”

To quote what a friend of Johnny’s said to him about Boomslang: “For someone who has stopped smoking pot, you’ve made an album that’s very good when you’re high.” Far away from anything Johnny did with the Smiths, despite his distinctive guitar work, which is always going to sound like him, Boomslang fits into its time and carved a niche for itself among the debris of Britpop. Some of the stand-outs on Boomslang are the swirly, psychedelic “Caught Up,” the croon-y, borderline ballad “Down On The Corner,” and the blues-inflected closer, “Bangin’ On” where Johnny’s guitar slips and slides seductively.

It took ten years post-the Healers for Johnny to officially steps into his own limelight under the banner of his name with The Messenger and its speedy follow-up, Playland. Boomslang sits as a nice companion piece to those two albums.

By Lily Moayeri



PHOTO BY JON SUPER

OUR OWN PRODUCTION

Imagining A Dream Johnny Marr set list



PHOTO BY MARC MCGARRAGHY/YELLOW MUSTANG PHOTOGRAPHY

IL BUONO, IL CATTIVO, IL BRUTTO (ENNIO MORRICONE)
THE QUEEN IS DEAD (THE SMITHS)
UPSTARTS
PANIC (THE SMITHS)
PLAYLAND
THE TRAP
(NOTHING BUT) FLOWERS (TALKING HEADS)
I WANT THE ONE I CAN'T HAVE (THE SMITHS)
LOCKDOWN
THIS TENSION
RUBBER RING (THE SMITHS)
STEAM ENGENIUS (MODEST MOUSE)
BACK IN THE BOX
EASY MONEY
THE IT-SWITCH
EUROPEAN ME
CITY OF BUGS (THE CRIBS)
I WANT THE HEARTBEAT
GETTING AWAY WITH IT (ELECTRONIC)
THERE IS A LIGHT THAT NEVER GOES OUT (THE SMITHS)

PHOTO BY
KEN GRAND-PIERRE



I think about setlists all the time. In particular, I think about why an artist or band chooses to play a certain song at a gig: namely the motivation, prerequisites and sequencing involved for a rendition. Given that you currently read *Dynamic*, I suspect these thoughts have come up at some point too! Johnny Marr, whether in the Smiths, the Cribs or solo, and everything in between, has always tried to vary his repertoire on any given night. On one basic level, he challenges the notion of a lazy musician sticking to what they know best. Above all else, though, Johnny has done so to keep both audience and himself interested.

Therefore, I decided to construct a setlist by way of personal aspiration. Implicit within this includes a desire to keep some order, namely through the contours of the recent *Playland* tour:

approximately eighteen to twenty songs, at eighty minutes or so, with an emphasis on solo material, along side signposts towards the past. No ridiculous requests, then, to hear all of *Strangeways*, *Here We Come* or *Raise the Pressure* twice over. In essence, then, this setlist stays on a pretty even keel, with the only significant

difference a look at some of the other avenues Johnny has ventured as a collaborator extraordinaire.

To begin, a cover of the title song from the Ennio Morricone score for *Il Buono, Il Cattivo, Il Brutto*, or *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* to us mere mortals, something that acts as a fitting overture for all the twists and turns at a Johnny Marr gig. *'The Queen is Dead'* really has no other choice but to enter in a dramatic manner at the earliest of stages. Scene set with no room for stragglers, *'Upstarts'* brings us right up-to-date, maintaining the fury of the former. Simply put, a righteous duo that reflects the personal politics of our man Johnny. Oh, and some pretty good guitar playing too.

'Panic', a great song about songs, takes a place third on the bill, a 7" single worth hearing, day or night. A follow-up of the title-track

from his second solo LP, *'Playland'* captures the energy, inventiveness and joy felt at any great gig performed by Mr. Marr, stage lighting, backdrop and all! *'The Trap'*, in reverse album sequence after the title song from *Playland*, conjures all manner of feeling whenever aired, on wax, on the move or on a night. Perhaps a thematic continuation from the first solo LP, I find this one of the best songs Johnny has written, not only in a current capacity, but overall too.

Now, a bit of a left turn with something that sounds so right. The latter day Talking Heads song, *'(Nothing but) Flowers'*, features Johnny on a guest slot, nonetheless a vital one, showing some wondrous playing and a good deal of humour as well. Not a narrative some commentators would want attributed to Johnny, but wit and fun does have a welcome place in his music. In this instance, ecological depravity never sounded so thrilling. Next up, *'I Want the One I Can't Have'*, a song that stands as, well, maybe, possibly, conceivably, the best song the Smiths did not release as a single. The twenty-first century man himself would move on to the personal favourite solo composition of this author, notably *'Lockdown'*, requisite attention deserved at any gig, whether past, present or future.

Attentive readers of this 'zine shall notice *'This Tension'* as a true favourite from *Playland*, another musical jewel for Johnny in a strictly republican crown. The ability for not only him, but Iwan, Jack and Doviak, to create an intriguing sonic landscape deserves plaudits beyond the scope of this article. So, a debut live outing in the future would go down well! *'Rubber Ring'*, one of two b-sides, in old money at least, could sound rather formidable through the voice of J. Marr, a song that means more with each passing day and every listen on the turntable. *'Steam Engenius'*, the Modest Mouse number that Johnny not-so-secretly steals the show, has the potential to sound great in the hands of this marvellous band.

Reset, and *'Back in the Box'* offers a musical excursion along *Playland* way. While there, take up the chance of some *'Easy Money'*,



PHOTO BY KEN GRAND-PIERRE

whereby John Martin Maher provides a contender for the most infectious composition he has written in a half-century innings. I suppose those two stand as misnomers, as no box could hold Johnny back, and no monetary value, easy or not, can compare as currency instead of music. Contemplating an oft overlooked song, 'The It-Switch' demands attention, inspiring at a glance and more so after repeated listens. Pressing that button would unveil all sorts of happiness in a bustling room.

Internationalism may have turned into globalism, but the principle, namely welcoming immigration on a human level, remains true. Unashamedly a continental, 'European Me' features some great lyrics, albeit ones of torment that close-minded people seem to disregard. Closing the main set, the most accomplished song Johnny put to tape with the Cribs, one that defines the term emphatic, specifically 'City of Bugs'. In and out of control, something that means everything when nothing else works, lyrically fraught and musically intense. Despair never sounded so great, but especially when the main set of a gig reaches a conclusion!

The most modern sounding number in the canon, 'I Want the Heartbeat' would bring matters up to speed after a slight interval. Machines and technology provide the most apparent futuristic

references, but the sounds present on record really make the leap. As a penultimate song, how about the Electronic number 'Getting Away with It', perhaps the most remarkable in a live setting. And as a closer, what else but 'There is a Light That Never Goes Out', the enduring composition that Johnny sings as beautifully as the imperious studio version. The curtain, the applause, and the appreciation reciprocated. No status other than complete: thank you.

So yes, a dream setlist, but one not too far from the realms of possibility. As for a location, somewhere intimate, namely the Brudenell Social Club in Leeds, West Yorkshire, where I, and other readers, have seen Johnny before, or the Barrowland Ballroom in Glasgow, Scotland, a venue he has played in with the Smiths and on numerous occasions along side the Jarman brothers. I would love to read what other Dynamic readers perceive as an ideal setlist situation: put those thinking caps on and let Aly and Ory know soon!

By Christopher Maclachlan

Send your fantasy set lists to us at
admin@johnnymarvellous.com,
 or go to
[http://johnnymarvellous.com/
 fantasyset](http://johnnymarvellous.com/fantasyset)





JOHNNY MARR:

Guitar Hero, Regular Guy, Or Both?



When one thinks of the guitar heroes who defined a generation, certain attributes and qualifications come to mind: their innovative style, their onstage charisma and their songwriting craft. When analyzing the amazing body of work that The Who's Pete Townshend, Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page or the late Jimi Hendrix have amassed throughout their careers, it's easy to recognize the greatness of each and the legendary status they've each so deservedly attained.

In an era before cell phones, the internet and hordes of other distractions, music fans took solace and joy in unwrapping the cellphone from a new album, sliding that slab of round black wax from the album sleeve and onto a turntable and preparing themselves to be lost in music. Imagine the first reaction that was elicited the first time fans heard The Who's "Tommy" through a pair of headphones...or Zeppelin's "Physical Graffiti" through a pair of loud, powerful speakers. There are no words that can truly describe that rush..that excitement...that sense of amazement.

From a personal standpoint, it's always been a pipedream of mine to have the opportunity to sit and chat with one of these guitar gods to let them know, in

my own way, how much their music influenced me, moved me and inspired me. Beyond the clichéd "You changed my life..." diatribe, it would be nice to let Page know where I was and how I felt when I first heard "Stairway to Heaven" and how Led Zep's music lifted me to a higher plane like nothing else I'd ever heard before had.

But, reality would soon set in and the likelihood of casually running into Page somewhere or finagling my way backstage to speak personally to him soon seemed like a distant and faraway fantasy. How on earth would an average kid get to approach someone with the star power, the wealth and the worldwide recognition of Jimmy Page?

With the emergence of punk rock in the late 1970's those barriers started to come down. Most bands were proud to identify as being from the streets and hailing from the same economic situations as most of their listeners. No band more perfectly exemplified this than The Clash. Lead singer Joe Strummer and guitarist Mick Jones, the songwriting duo and architects of the band's sound and message, were known to be more than accessible to the fans who attended Clash concerts. Fans were never turned away from entering the band's backstage area and both

made themselves more than available to chat with fans after shows.

Being another great guitar hero of mine, I've luckily had the chance to let Mick Jones know how the Clash impacted my life and radically changed the musical and mental course I was on in a profound way. It's not often that these types of opportunities come about but, after years of listening to all four sides of "London Calling" repeatedly and having all those great songs never lose their power or appeal, I was ready to unleash a perfectly rehearsed onslaught of words to Mr. Jones and he, ever so graciously, obliged me and thanked me.

But what would transpire if I ever had the chance to meet another guitar hero of mine who ranked highly on my list of musical geniuses? What would I say to Johnny Marr if I ever scored the far-off chance to meet him face to face?

From the early days of drawing hope and inspiration from Smiths records, getting tangled in the web of chaos and confusion of all those great The The records and then taking a step back to revel in the pure, unabashed rock power of his solo album "The Messenger", Marr has been a constant presence on my stereo for decades. As an artist who, regrettably, never seemed to make his way around the touring circuit in the States as often as his U.S. fans would



like, not only did the chance to ever see the man create his guitar magic live and onstage seem unlikely, but the chance to meet him in person seemed almost impossible.

Having never seen The Smiths live, seeing The The at a time when Marr wasn't part of their lineup and only seeing a brief Modest Mouse set as part of a festival lineup bill on which they appeared, the prospect of having the chance to shake Marr's hand seemed almost impossible. And, honestly, knowing nothing about the man's demeanor, his proclivity for these types of fan meeting opportunities or his persona, I wouldn't even know how to approach him if the chance ever arose.

Oh sure, I'd gladly wax poetically about my love of the solid rockabilly groove he hashed out on "Vicar in a Tutu" or the brilliant stab of guitar work he infused into all those fine Electronic records...but, would he care? Or would this type of fanatical admiration have long since run its course with him? Would a seemingly serious, deadpan Mancunian musician have a rash of venom to spew and lash out to foolish admirers if given the chance?

Fast forward to an atypically chilly Orlando, Florida Monday night in November 2013 during Marr's trek across the state promoting "The Messenger". After finally getting a full taste of the man's onstage magnetism and hearing him play and sing up

close and personally, my longtime fascination and awe of he and his work rose dramatically that night.

Walking away wowed and amazed from the fantastic performance, I was already on a high that only rock and roll (and no other stimulant or substance) brings me.

"This..." I remember thinking "is what the power or rock music can instill". It had been a while since I'd been as floored by a rock show as I was with this spectacular Johnny Marr theater concert.

Talking and socializing with the friends whom I'd attended the show with, we almost accidentally found our way around the back of the venue and, within no time, Johnny was outside socializing as well. Taking time to ask fans what they thought of the show they'd just witnessed, I felt and literally saw the walls of separation between "fan" and "rock star" collapsing.

Here was, for all intents and purposes, a legend who'd helped to shape and mold the soundtrack of most kids who grew up in the 1980's (and beyond) standing amongst his followers without a shred of snobbery or a sense of elitism.

As I somewhat sheepishly approached the man whom I'd held in such high regard for decades, he instantly extended his hand to shake mine, asked me my name and where I was from and, in an instant, dissolved any sense of difference that might have existed between us. Near his own age, my group and I were closer to the upward scale of the array of ages that were represented in the parking lot area where our hero made himself more than accessible to us...and I don't think anyone present,

I FELT AND LITERALLY SAW THE WALLS OF SEPARATION BETWEEN "FAN" AND "ROCK STAR" COLLAPSING.

regardless of their age or background, was really fully grasping the magnitude of what was happening.

With the simplest and most down to earth attitude, Marr instantly characterized the sense of unity and camaraderie that was supposed to be the ethic and microcosm punk rock was intended to create so many years before his musical journey began.

Without a shred of attitude or grandeur, Johnny Marr did more to bolster his hero status that night for me and for everyone who was lucky enough to exchange words with him. The truth is that he'd already done that with the solid, unpretentious set he'd poured his heart into from the stage earlier in the evening...but knowing that he wields no shield of pompousness or that he's not engulfed in a major ego trip just helps to endear him to so many of his devout followers.

It's rare that a person who is revered as a guitar hero and a musical genius should rightfully have the words "regular guy" thrown in the mix when describing their many sides; but as we all know, Johnny Marr is indeed a rare talent who more than rightfully merits those words of praise and so many more.

By Gabe Echazabal

Gramercy Theatre

NEW YORK CITY, NY, USA
12 NOVEMBER 2014

I had, obviously, been looking forward to hearing Johnny on the Playland tour for months and months. I started the day with a new haircut (to go with my new JM-inspired silver nails) and then headed into Manhattan in the late afternoon. I had a drink at the fancy Rose Bar at the Gramercy Park Hotel and got on line at about 7:15 (doors at 8.) Chatted with two big Johnny/Smiths fans as the excitement grew and people walking up and down the line were turned away disappointed. It was completely sold out.

The Gramercy Theater is kind of a weird place. It's not too big and it has mostly been used for theater so it has rows of stadium-type seating in the rear and on one side and then a smallish floor area in front of the stage. I was able to get right up front, a little (surprisingly) right of center. Meredith Sheldon opened (as she did last year on his "Messenger" tour.) Good, sweet, quick.

At exactly 10, Johnny comes out with a flourish and immediately commands the stage. To watch him up close is to really understand why he is routinely named as one of the guitarists of our time. It is a privilege to be in his presence and to see, not only his immense skill, but also just his utter joy in playing and in performing for an audience. He is charming and delightful, smiling and flirting with the crowd, flashing his gorgeous smile and clearly chuffed to be there. That guitar sound is just like no one else and he totally owns it. But never in a cocky way. He's just an incomparable talent coupled with being even a better human being. Since last year's "The Messenger" tour, he clearly has gained confidence as a front man and as a lead singer - his voice sounded incredible. It was 90 minutes of pure guitar magic and I was mesmerized from start to finish. He has spoken about his love of second albums - The Talking

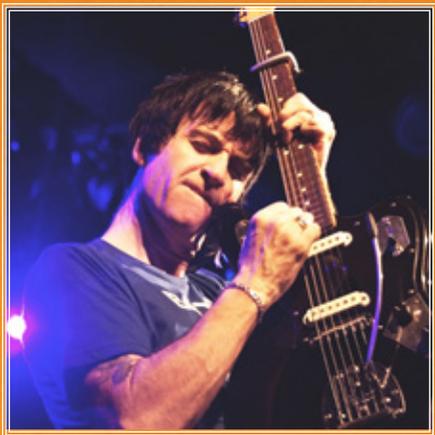


PHOTO BY KEN GRAND-PIERRE

non-verbal communication going on between them all. Clearly they have a fantastic relationship on and off the stage.

He keeps the energy up for 90 solid minutes playing 19 songs (shortened from 21 he tells me later because it's just too exhausting.) He sounds totally awesome and the band is so tight on the Smiths' "Headmaster Ritual", "Still Ill" and of course, the classic and anthemic "How Soon is Now," that, once again, illustrates his creative style and serious guitar and songwriting chops. Additional highlights included an amazing singalong "There is a Light," a stunning "New Town Velocity," some excellent tunes from the new album including "Candidate" (for which I wrote a review for issue 2 of the Fanzine "Dynamic") "Boys Get Straight," which really brought the house down, the single, "Dynamo" which shows his gift for melody and soaring guitar riffs and the totally

Heads', Wire's the Buzzcocks' - because they have a certain energy that's distinct from the first time around. That is for sure. He started with "Playland," the title song from HIS second solo album. Playland was "written around a common theme of songs that "move at the speed of life." and reflect Johnny's feeling that "it's important to sound like your environment and on this record that's London and Manchester. The feeling of the cities and the people make it into the music." And then it's time for "Panic." Naturally - the crowd goes wild - singing, jumping around. He's all over the stage - comes right down in front, so close we could practically touch him. Of course, Johnny looks fabulous with his silver nail polish and his jacket, pink shirt, and vintage red and white Lacoste sneakers all fitting perfectly. The band (Doviak on guitars, Jack Mitchell on drums and Iwan Gronow on bass) are so tight and so in sync with Johnny - lots of



PHOTO BY KEN GRAND-PIERRE



PHOTO BY KEN GRAND-PIERRE

rockin' dance hit, Electronic's "Getting Away with it." He ended the evening with a cover of Iggy Pop's "Lust for Life" which rocked the roof off the place and left the crowd hungry for more.

Standing in front, I was able to see him really playing his guitar (note to self - stand LEFT of center on Saturday for better guitar playing viewing) - mostly his signature green Fender Jag and on a few songs, that impossibly gorgeous-sounding black Rickenbacker 330. It's like watching an athlete in peak physical condition. Beautiful and awe inspiring. Fantastic show all around. Great energy, upbeat and friendly crowd, incredible music. One of those shows where people just don't want to leave. They

hang around just hoping, by some miracle, that he'll come out and play just a few more songs.

I was also fortunate enough to have been given a VIP pass and had a chance to meet and talk with Johnny, but that will have to be a story for another day. Suffice it to say, we had much to discuss, he was gracious and funny and charming. I floated home thinking about how rare it is to have your reality exceed your expectations.

Johnny Marr - brilliant musician, even better role model and human being. How fortunate we are to have him among us.

BY ELLEN LEERBURGER

REVIEW

Vic Theater

Chicago, IL, USA

25 November 2014

It's the 25th of November and the forecast called for -10 Celsius before wind chills came into factor. A grim night for the ones heading out early to wait in front of the Vic Theatre. A mental narcissistic list had been on my mind the entire week in anticipation for the night. In order of importance: gig tickets for me and my mates, hair, Manchester Modernist badge on lapel of pea coat, pair of Sand Suede Wallabees and a large cup of piping hot Earl Grey...

Though this review is about Johnny it's only apropos to give a shout out to the opening act, Meredith Sheldon. Brilliant singer/songwriter who can make the Baritone Jaguar sound like an entire band. I'm even closer this time to Johnny and the band than the last time he was in Chicago at the Metro. Johnny comes out with a pep in his step as usual and wastes no time and the first song commences. Jack on the drums makes it obvious that the first track of the night will be the title track, Playland. I could not believe how immense the sound was for the song. The barred chord unison with Johnny on his signature Fender Jaguar in Sherwood Green and Doviak on his Goldtop Les Paul was a physical awakening. After the Johnny played 'Playland' as the opening track of the night, there were countless talks from everywhere around me asking what that song was. An impression was surely made with a crowd partially foreign with the newer material and it made me smile.

Johnny doesn't even take a second after the song was over to grab his slide and go into a roaring version of Panic. An all too familiar sound of Johnny's work made all of us go into a frenzy. As the riff for Easy Money started, an excited bunch in front of me was losing their minds. A track that uses simple guitar riffs in a traditional sense that can't be disliked by anyone. A lot

of tracks off the debut record the Messenger pops in and out during the night and it brings me back to the first gig from 2013. As the night went by the energy in the crowd seemed bottomless as the set list was masterfully laid out. I promised myself that I wouldn't pull out of my phone to take pictures during the gig as I wanted to examine the entire band an arm's reach away. But I couldn't contain myself when Johnny introduced the next track as "an old English club song". Iwan thumps away at the bass line to Getting Away With It and I can feel my entire being shake. It felt like I was transported to the set of Top of The Pops in 1989 about to lose it on the dance floor.

How Soon Is Now? Transcends all of us in the crowd into a place of eternal bliss and unmatched, iconic guitar riffs. The slide portion of the song with Doviak on the right side of the stage felt like a train coming towards the left side of my face at 100 miles per hour. Johnny and the band run backstage after brief thank yous and 'well done's' and reappears moments later out of his proper Mod attire, and in a blue Boys Get Straight tee that has everyone reaching for their wallet in anticipation of buying it after the show.

Without speaking the band goes into Still Ill and it's almost as if I'm listening to for the time in my



life. I would have never thought I'd be this close to seeing the man who wrote all the Smiths songs in person. We were honored with three more encores (Dynamo, Lust For Life, There Is A Light That Never Goes Out). A brilliant choice for the Playland tour to have Lust For Life as one of the non-Marr tracks to play (with last year's choice being I Fought The Law).

With the entire theatre not given even a minute to come back down to Earth, the D minor chord is struck and there was no coming back to reality after that. Johnny gets full support in chanting the chorus until he goes off into a parting arpeggio of the chorus. No one in the crowd knows what to do

or say except to bring their hands together and shed some tears of happiness. There were many different camps at the show that night; the faithful Smiths fans, the faithful Johnny Marr fans, the faithful music fans and the casual show seeker. These said camps went in either expecting all aspects of the show or not expecting much. But there was an indescribable moment of sheer unity that I believe cannot be matched by anything else.

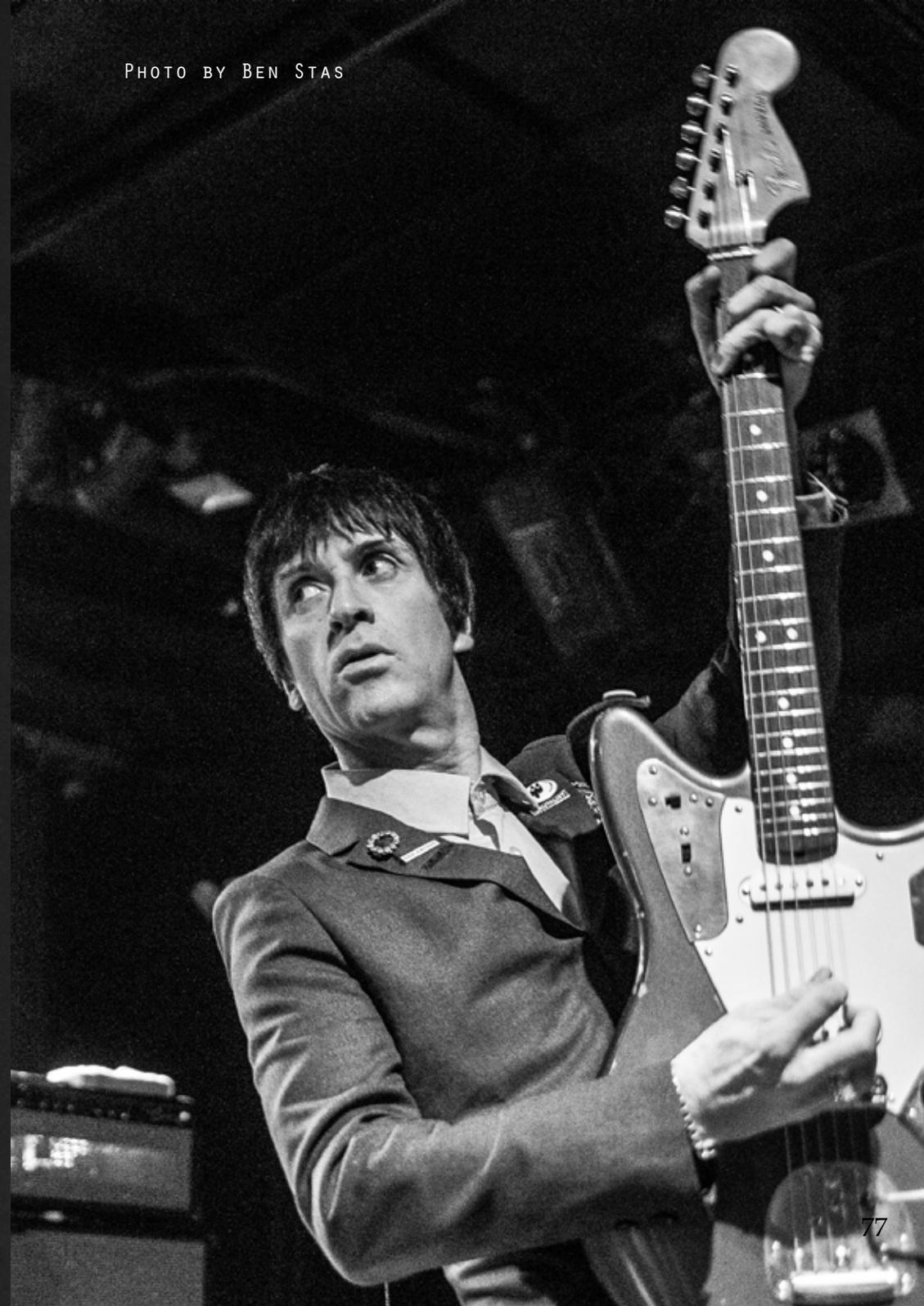
This Is the Sound.

By Edward Kim



PHOTO BY AMY DONOVAN

PHOTO BY BEN STAS



The Starlite Room

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

3/12/2014

It has taken me three months to write this article. I am a music journalist and in all my years working in this industry, it has never taken me this long to write an event review for any Recording Artist that I have had the privilege to see in a live performance. Usually I am home writing and editing my articles and outputting them immediately. As those of us in the Media Industry are aware, news needs to be covered quickly or it gets old. Well, I can honestly say that I don't think that Johnny Marr will ever get old and I have realized my delay in writing this comes from trying to formulate the words for a performance so great, that it is the best I have seen to date in my whole writing career.

I am sure that all of Johnny's fans would agree, he is a personable presence on stage in all of his performances. I had been following (still am!) his fan base on all of his social media platforms and can see that this is a man who keeps it that way. Even his clever sense of humor and interaction with the audience during his performance in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada was electric, intimate, and engaging. He had the whole venue packed with fans dancing, singing along, and shouting praise as



one song lead into the next. What had me at hello during this performance was his epic cover of Depeche Mode's 'I Feel You', sending a flurry of social media frenzy that reached as far as the England within mere hours of Johnny performing it. By the way, it was brilliant! I feel very lucky to have witnessed that in my lifetime.

But let's look beyond the performance to understand what I have observed of Johnny leading up to this epic performance. He is all about connection: with fellow musicians in the industry as well as his fan base. He takes the time to respond (most humorously at times) to tweets and comments on his social media platforms, making him even more well respected and loved.

Beyond all of this, my own personal experience hearing Johnny Marr's music for the first time began with Playland. I know, it might seem ignorant of me to arrive so late in the game considering



his extensive back catalogue, but I consider it a blessing to be introduced to Johnny as a Solo Artist, truly setting him front and center. In an era where true music fans want to connect with sounds of the past, Johnny has revived this concept with a modern twist (yes, I have now listened to all music from The Smiths as well as well as his work independently).

Playland is not just a brilliantly written album; it is a delicious treat to the ears and seeing Johnny perform it live was the cherry on top of this already beautifully decorated cake. It was impeccably true to the album recording and it's not often that an artist can pull that off. Most music recorded these days has been auto-tuned to the point that when an artist

has to perform it live, it is almost unrecognizable. Not Johnny. He is legit on all fronts, remaining true to his recordings. He remains to be a very talented Artist both past and present. I am certain that everyone who has seen him on the Playland tour to date can attest to this opinion.

Here's what I know: when I hear the first few riffs of Johnny's guitar from any song he has ever recorded, I immediately identify it with a night so memorable that it's going to take something absolutely spectacular to ever top it. Hats off to this truly great man!

*Words and photos by
Candice Marshall*

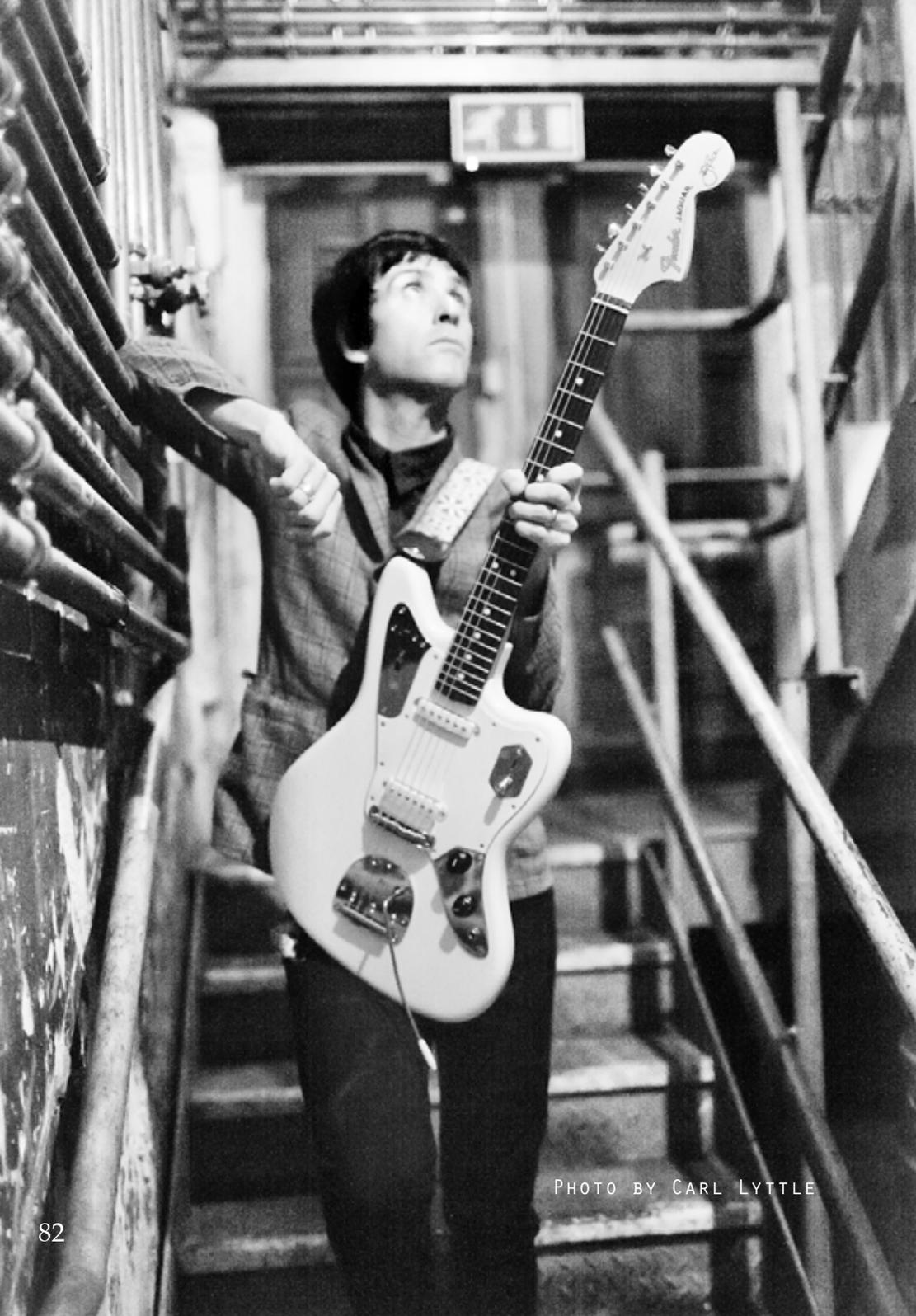


PHOTO BY CARL LYTTLE

Shopping for music

PART 3

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)*

1 Del Shannon, 'Don't Gild The Lily, Lily' *Runaway With Del Shannon/Hats Off To Del Shannon*

It was inevitable that Del Shannon would show up in this column. His recording of Bacharach's 'The Answer To Everything' (1962) was, famously, a musical inspiration for 'Please, Please, Please, Let Me Get What I Want.' Johnny has said that in his childhood, Del Shannon 45s were often on his folks' record player, obsessed as the family was with pop music and American culture. To me, Del Shannon's music is lucent with the idea of American teenage life in the late 50s and early 60s – the era we associate with 'the teenager.' His lyrics are loaded with teenage idiom. His songs are about dead girlfriends, cheating partners, break-ups, obsessive love, revenge and crying lonely teardrops in the rain. On top of all this (perhaps because of this...) he's the perennial outsider. His music has, in Johnny's words, a gothic intensity. 'The Answer To Everything' was a B-side, but it also appears on the LP *Hats Off To Del Shannon* (1963), a compilation of non-album A and B-sides. In 'Don't Gild The Lily, Lily,' Del serves up some once-bitten love advice to a head-over-heels girl, which sadly, flatters neither men nor women:



*'Don't gild the lily, Lily
Don't let him know he's your only thrill ...
If you act a little chilly
He'll be hanging round warmin' up to you.'*

2 Sleater-Kinney, 'A New Wave' *No Cities To Love*

Now, I didn't initially hear about Sleater-Kinney via Johnny. But during their decade-long hiatus, they managed to remain eminently visible: I discovered Portlandia through Johnny, and then read that the co-creator Carrie Brownstein had been in Sleater-Kinney. Later via twitter, a fan asked Johnny to name some female guitarists he rated: his answer was Carrie Brownstein and Corin Tucker. The final push for me came one month ago when I was half-watching The Late Show with David Letterman. The reinvigorated Sleater-Kinney closed the show with 'A New Wave.' The knotted, fuzzy guitar lines in this track are switchblade-tough, and Carrie's singing is completely vicious. When the chorus kicks in, all the tension is relieved with a glorious combination of groove and harmony which is satisfyingly Beatle-esque.



3 Lou Reed, 'Men Of Good Fortune,' *Berlin*

I discovered The Velvet Underground after reading how highly Johnny rates I Can't Stand It from VU. When I wanted to hear more from Lou Reed, I started exploring his solo albums. Buying Berlin was a bit of a blind test: I found it in JB HiFi for seven dollars. Theoretically, you can't go wrong for seven dollars (UK readers – that's about £3.60 at the moment.) As it turns out, it's one of the best albums I've discovered this year. 'Men Of Good Fortune' is an epic track with lots of dramatic shifts in tempo and volume, and its grandiosity is a world away from the noise and economy of later Velvets. Teasingly, a full chorus with vocals doesn't occur until 3.40, after which the song fades out. It's a great journey though, and the lyric and its delivery are sublime – a set of simple and dramatic comparisons between rich and poor; or as Lou puts it, 'Men of good fortune, men of poor beginnings.'



By Andy Campbell

Ballad Of The Mighty They: A union of Godlike Geniuses



PHOTO BY NIKKI COURTENAGE

The dynamic duet between Johnny Marr and the former Oasis frontman is a much-anticipated union, showcasing the creative talent of both artists.

Many of our childhood dreams may seem far away from our reach, but, when they knock upon your door, great things can happen. Such was the case for Noel Gallagher, meeting his childhood hero Johnny Marr, who he admired for his work with The Smiths and The The. And it all started after he bought a copy of The The's 1993 LP, *Dusk*.

Of that time, Gallagher said:

'I bump into this guy I recognise from the Hacienda. He asked me what [album] I bought and he said, "Oh, our kid plays on that." I said, "Who's your kid?" And he said, "Johnny Marr". I was like, "Wow". I told him I was in a band and he said, "Give us a cassette and I'll give it to our kid"' Within an hour, Johnny had called me. And I was a nobody – nobody was into our band, bar the five people in it and a few hangers-on. That was it. But he was on the phone saying, "Ah, I think this is great."

Both from Manchester and with similar styles as songwriters and guitarists, Johnny has been a big influence on Noel, as well as big help during the very early Oasis days. Marr had gone to one of the band's gigs and recognised instantly that they were talented, but that they were being hindered by technical issues. In an astounding act of charity, Johnny loaned Noel his 1960 Gibson guitar, which he had bought from Pete Townshend of The Who. Surprisingly (or maybe not too surprisingly, knowing Noel), it got broken a while later. Johnny got a "panicked morning call" from Gallagher, who explained that the loss of his guitar had occurred after a riot during a gig. Johnny then donated another of his guitars to his protégé, which he had used on *The Queen Is Dead*, so that Oasis could continue touring. The whereabouts of that original Gibson are still unknown to Johnny.

Recently, we have seen the two Mancunian legends playing together in live shows, in memorable performances of Iggy Pop's "Lust for Life" and the Smiths' anthem "How Soon Is Now?" during Johnny's show at the Brixton Academy during the UK Playland tour last year, and then again in March 2015, when Johnny joined Noel onstage for their first joint live performance of "Ballad of The Mighty I". For a long time, fans of both artists had been hoping to see a proper studio collaboration though: a dream that has finally been realised through the second single from

Gallagher's newly-released second album, *Chasing Yesterday*.

Gallagher had already wanted to work with Johnny on his first solo record, *AKA... What A Life!*, hoping he could add some needed "funk" to one of its tracks, but unfortunately the collaboration never came to fruition at the time. With Gallagher's return to the studio last year, he composed a song that was suited perfectly to Johnny's characteristic sound - and though Johnny decided not to hear the first rough draft, he nonetheless agreed to join Noel in the studio come recording day.

'He contacted me and said he had a song that he'd be happy for me to play on,' Marr said. 'I accepted, gladly, and it was really good to spend a day playing guitar in a little studio near Chelsea Bridge.'

'He just arrived with two guitars and a bag of effects pedals. And I have to say, he's unbelievable. He's way up there, on another level to the rest of us. The result is a burst of energy that helped make "Mighty I" one of the best songs I've ever written,' declared a very excited Noel. And we couldn't agree more.

"Ballad of the Mighty I" offers the listener a song with a smooth beginning, changing the strength of its interpretation between verses, to the chorus of "Yes, I'll find you / If I gotta be the man that walks the earth alone." Johnny's influence can be heard throughout the whole track,

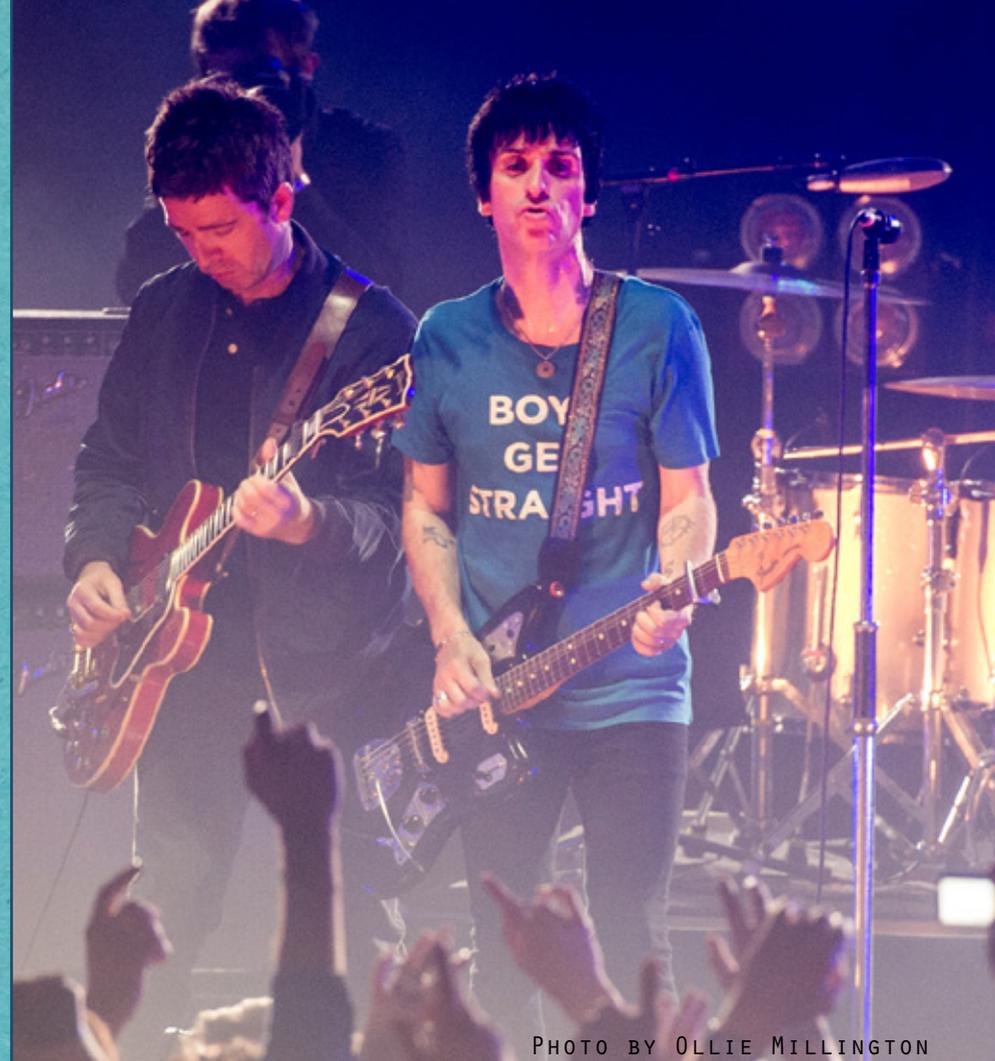


PHOTO BY OLLIE MILLINGTON

adding delicate details that highlight the atmosphere of the song and leads the listener to a finale that reunites Noel's vocals with Marr's rhythmical outro, for a perfect closure to both the song and the album.

Unfortunately Johnny didn't make a cameo in the video for the single, which offers a very sarcastic take on the making of a pop video, but let's hope we can see them playing together onstage again soon. Having proven once again why both deserve the title of "Godlike Genius", their combined talents will surely make for more brilliant collaborations in the future.

By Ali Molina

THE BOY GOT STRAIGHT



In addition to being a very influential and much-appreciated musician, Johnny Marr is definitely a reference point for his fans when it comes to making choices that led him to build a healthy, energetic and vital lifestyle over the last twenty years.

Johnny had been close to the world of vegetarianism since adolescence, thanks to girlfriend Angie, and became a vegetarian himself at the time of the release of *Meat is Murder* – thinking that it wouldn't have been right for him to play that song and still consume meat.

Nevertheless, Johnny hadn't always led a healthy life. In the often stressful days of The Smiths' era, when Johnny was composing the music, playing guitar, producing records and also taking care of the logistics during the tour – all at the same time – he found a refuge in alcohol. Moreover, despite being a vegetarian, he did not pay much attention to his diet, pulling ahead with a scant diet based primarily on toast, eggs and coffee.

But after the dissolution of The Smiths, Johnny crossed into the '90s experimenting with new musical – and chemical – horizons with The The and Electronic. He started drawing inspiration from the lifestyles of fellow musicians with whom he was collaborating, absorbing a variety of environmental influences and personalising them in order to build a healthier lifestyle that could enable him to maintain the high level of energy required for the intense pace of his work.

From another point of view, Johnny also began to think that it was important not to stick to the usual clichés normally connected to a rock guitarist's way of life. In his view, our times are different from the past, and so require different lifestyle habits. This is the path that first led him to give up drugs, not for moral reasons, but simply because he didn't want to use substances that were going to slow him down mentally.

In 2005, while living in Portland, Johnny made the transition from vegetarianism to veganism, and

PHOTO BY MAT BANCROFT

He started drawing inspiration from the lifestyles of fellow musicians with whom he was collaborating, absorbing a variety of environmental influences and personalising them in order to build a healthier lifestyle.

shortly after gave up alcohol as well, becoming fully teetotal. These days, as far as beverages are concerned, his passion is a special type of Chinese white tea, which he consumes in large amounts throughout the day and that he carries with him on tour – even despite the inevitable misunderstandings at airport customs regarding the nature of the substance contained in his plastic envelopes!

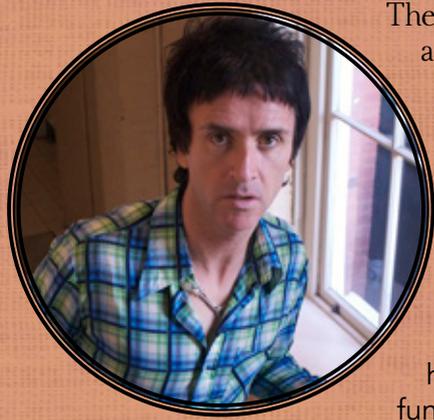
In the early 2000s Johnny also resumed the habit of running, which he had started in 1996 but then temporarily abandoned: He considers running the best way to break out from the tour routine, and one that also allows him to see parts of the cities he's touring that he otherwise would never get a chance to see. Again, the image of a rock'n'roll guitarist who wakes up

early every morning, drinks a cup of tea and then goes out running for over 10 miles a day, is really something very different from what many of us we had been used to seeing.

Another positive aspect of Johnny's attitude, regarding his journey towards a healthier lifestyle, is his complete lack of intolerance and criticism of those who make different choices. He doesn't try to convince his friends to make the same choices he does, and he still goes out with friends who love to spend the night drinking or using other kinds of entertaining substances. He also speaks with affection and sympathy of his past, when he was acting "like a rockstar" – wearing shades indoors, drinking a lot, eating little and badly – explaining that this is a part of the fascination of the lifestyle that inspires young boys to become guitarists, and that it's not a bad thing in itself to experiment also the "old style rock'n'roll" musician's way of living, at least when you're young. But he also knows that it is important to show the younger generations of musicians that other types of lifestyles exist: ones that are healthier, yet don't take anything away from the spirit of the unconventional work of being a musician. Indeed, from a certain point of view, the combination of the two things makes a person even more unconventional and impossible to reduce to a cliché.

PHOTO BY PIPER FERGUSON





These are the most important and inspiring aspects of Johnny's new lifestyle that we can take as an inspiration, even if we aren't – and don't even want to be – a rock'n'roll musician:

1 Begin to think of your life as something you simply can't throw away, or live at half speed, simply because you think is fun to indulge in eating unhealthy food, drinking too much or using drugs. Life has been given to each of us for a purpose, and while you search for it - and even more if you feel you've already found it - it is much better for you if you discover the kind of food, fitness regime and overall lifestyle that enables you to reach your goals.

2 Do not judge your past: it's already gone, and it is part of who you are now, and the choices you're trying to make today. Smile at it, remember it with love, and then look ahead.

3 Do not judge other people who don't adhere to your same lifestyle choices. Don't lose friends you love just because they don't share your idea of healthy living, and find ways to enjoy their company anyway.

4 Even if you think you have found your way, and the job you love to do, don't force yourself into the stereotyped attitude that other people generally connect to that kind of job (it may be a guitarist, but it could also be a lawyer, a teacher, an accountant...). Assuming a "proper" lifestyle for your line of work may be useful as a mask or uniform if you're feeling insecure, but in the long run it doesn't allow your true nature to stand out and let others appreciate your unique style.

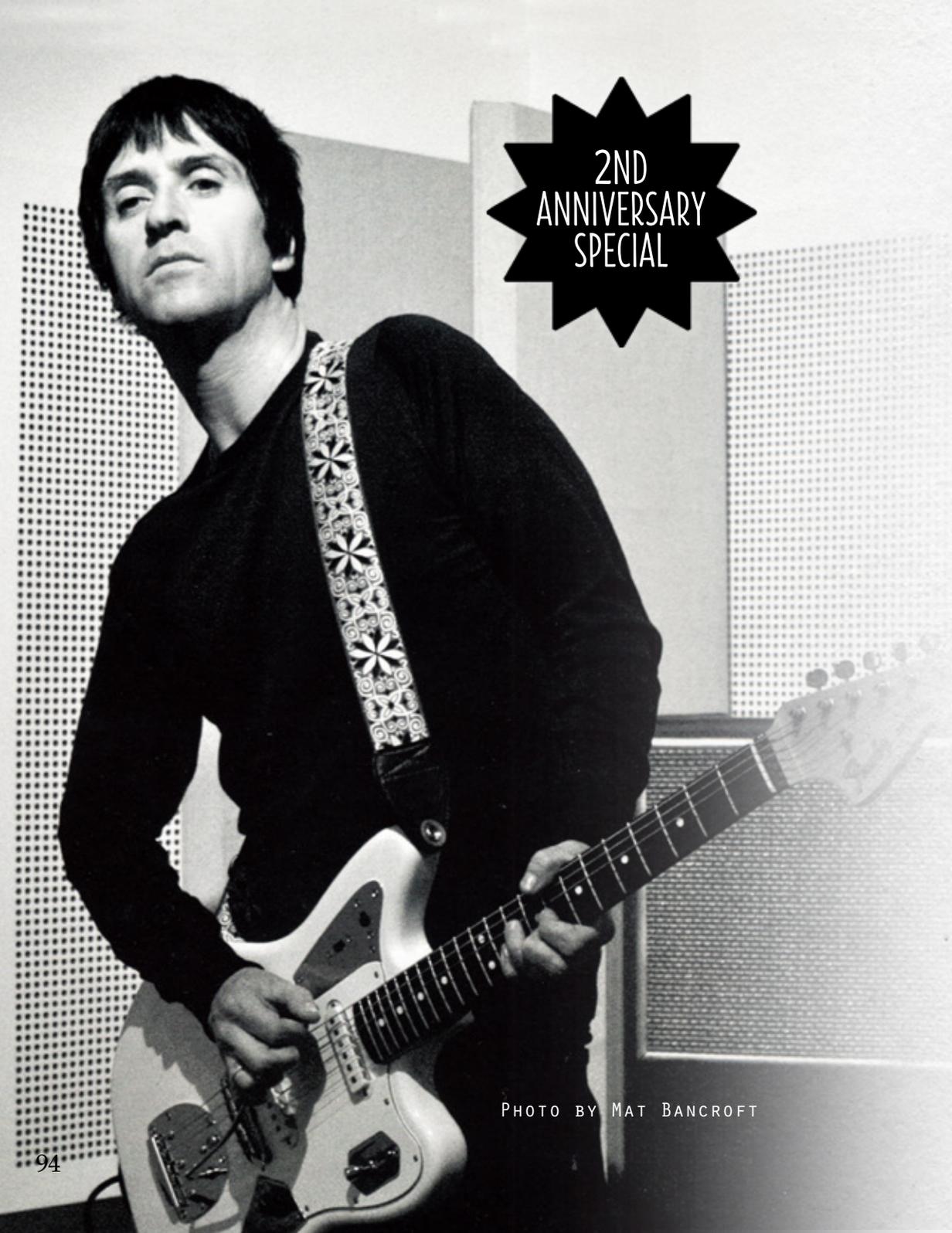
ABOVE PHOTO BY PAT GRAHAM

Ultimately, the attitude of Johnny's that I personally find most constructive and inspiring for those who, like me, are constantly torn between healthy lifestyle choices and the fear of having to give up some habits, and that definitely helped me reflect and start a journey that I hope will lead me to a healthier lifestyle, is that Johnny sees all the changes in his lifestyle as a journey: a step-by-step path towards the discovery of an healthier and more energetic way of life. As Johnny himself told *Vegan* magazine in 2011: *"The interesting thing for me was that giving up dairy meant giving up desserts etc and therefore sugar, and then you're into something else. Giving up things doesn't mean sacrifice or misery to me, I see it as the opposite, it's interesting. I "took on" being Vegetarian, I didn't "give up" something, If you see what I mean. I like doing that. All of these things have made me more focused and energized"*.

The idea of starting something new, different and better, rather than giving up something else; the need to build a lifestyle that is appropriate for each of us; the relaxed attitude towards those who make choices different from our own without feeling superior or judgmental; the basic idea of life as a journey full of things to discover and experience, in order to build a personal lifestyle that allows us to maximise our potential

and fill our days with meaning, with the activities that we love to do, staying awake, alert, full of energy and enthusiasm and excitement; the joy of finding out what foods, beverages and physical activities allow us to achieve this result. This is the most important lesson that Johnny teaches us through his own attitude of curiosity and welcoming of constant change, combined with a rare strength of will and perseverance when it comes to pursuing the goal of living a life as healthy, vital and full of meaning as possible. And for this, as well as for the beautiful music he creates, we can only be grateful to him.

By Elena Vignolini



2ND
ANNIVERSARY
SPECIAL

PHOTO BY MAT BANCROFT

Introducing... JOHNNY MARR, SOLO ARTIST



I still listen to *The Messenger* at least once a week. It finds its way on to my turntable just as often as *The Queen Is Dead*, or *Dusk*, or Electronic's debut album - and rightly so.

Although his pose on the cover might ironically indicate otherwise, Johnny's solo career was by no means off to a wobbly start with the release of *The Messenger*. Fans and critics alike had been curious to discover what a solo Johnny Marr record would sound like, and in particular how his vocals and lyrics would measure up to those of the great singers and lyricists he'd worked with in the past. Those of us who remembered *Boomslang* also wondered how closely this new material would resemble that released by The Healers a decade earlier.

Of course, what nobody doubted was that the guitars would be brilliant - and of course Johnny delivered the goods in spades. *The Messenger* is jam-packed with timeless, high-adrenaline post-postpunk tunes that draw on the musical influences of Johnny's youth while still being distinctively Marr-esque, paired with intelligent, poetic lyrics. And, for those who had been wondering, it transpired that Mr Marr possessed an impressive singing voice as well as those magical fingers. Lucky bastard.

Two years on, *The Messenger* has lost none of its initial power and appeal. It's one of those albums that can soundtrack your daily life: gently bopping your head along to "New Town Velocity" on the way to school; loudly singing along to "Upstarts" in the kitchen (much to your housemates' chagrin); unwinding to "Say Demesne" late at night in a dark room, with or without a lover. It's an album easily enjoyed by ordinary people throughout ordinary life, even though the man who made it is anything but.

By Georgi Bouctdom

CELEBRATING *The Messenger*



Fans tell us about their favourite track from the album...

My favourite track from 'The Messenger' is definitely 'Say Demesne' - its dark brooding and seductive tones - all quite apt considering the songs lyrical content - are both intoxicating and mysterious. Johnny's vocals are at their resonant best on its song and draw me in on every listen.

- *Jackie Nutty*

Without doubt, my favourite track off The Messenger is New Town Velocity. While I totally understand, appreciate, and respect Johnny's diversion from his signature sound he foraged during his tenure with The Smiths, it was THAT sound which instantly attracted me to his musical style. The music he made with the Smiths is the only reason why I initially wanted to start playing the guitar. (For me), New Town Velocity captures essences of those Smiths' riffs and rekindles that joy and awe I found in his music with the Smiths.

- *Chad Williams*

"Lockdown" caught me in that web of "Wow!" the first time I heard it and I've been stuck there ever since. Initially I was mesmerized by that gorgeous Marr guitar combined with a solid backbeat. After a few listens, though, I was equally taken in by the wistful lyrics describing a beloved, but forlorn city and I knew that this song could belong to none other than Johnny.

- *Ellen Leerburger*

This song reminds me of my school days. Going to an all girls Catholic school run by nuns, myself and a couple of girl friends tried to rebel a little. Bringing in our stereos to school to blast out in the playground at lunch. Taking off our blazers and ties and Talking to the older sixth form boys. I remember a teacher calling us a pair of upstarts. We got it confiscated a number of times. The beat makes me smile and takes me right back.

- *Danni Casey*

For me, The Messenger is my absolute favourite track. It reignited my love for Johnny's music, which had lapsed somewhat, as life got in the way of important things like gigs and great tunes....! I've been known to play the track on a continuous loop much to the amusement of friends and family....the opening chords - genius.

- *Nicola Westwood*

My favourite Johnny Marr song is "New Town Velocity", not merely because of its beautiful tune, but also because of its meaning.

The lyrics provide a peek into the mind of 15 year old Marr, on the day he decided to leave school and pursue his dream of becoming a musician.

As a 16 year old who will in the future face some "career choices", the song (and Johnny himself) represents the triumph of passion and love for art over what people like to call "successful career choices" - because even if on that fatal day, Marr knew he is good, he couldn't have known how massively successful he would become.

"New Town Velocity" reminds me something I mustn't ever forget: IT IS possible to love what you do, and do what you love - despite other people constantly claiming differently. And when in doubt, I can charge myself with optimism and hope by listening to "New Town Velocity".

- *Michal Palor*

I love the adrenaline rush I get from listening to "I Want The Heartbeat". The energy of this song is so infectious and addictive, and always makes me want to jump up and start bouncing around, a la Marr. Not to mention there's those rather kinky lyrics, that sound like the song-form equivalent of something J.G. Ballard might write if he tried his hand at a bit of unconventional erotica. I'll take that over "50 Shades" any day, ta.

- *Bernadette Rumsen*

I like 'Say Demesne' as it reminds me of the first time I saw Johnny live; it was such an intense live performance and i just remember being absolutely blown away by it. I love how dark and mysterious it sounds too, plus there's some phenomenal guitar work in there!

- *Laura Dean*

The first time I listened to 'New Town Velocity', it instantly became my favourite song from The Messenger. It's such a simply structured tune with a blissful feel and perhaps the most intricate guitar lines Johnny has ever created. Hearing it live at one of his concerts takes it to another level!

- *Gemma Faulkner*

As I use the album to psych me up for my long, hard commute into the chaos of Naples, I'm going to pick "The Right Thing Right". As soon as I hear the guitar opening and Jack's beat it's like getting an instant energy rush. Cheaper and healthier than drugs but has the same effect!

- *Linda Poulcott*

Since the first time I heard The Messenger, immediately one track off the record made me replay it before continuing on with the rest of the songs. Generate! Generate! is a great example of what I love about music. Catchy riff that harmonizes with a catchy phrase (... calculate-calculate-calculate, generate-generate-generate...). And this all builds up to one of the most emotional guitar breakdown/solo I've heard in a very long time. A brilliant track that stands out to me still over two years later.

- *Edward Kim*



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