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A TREE AND WHEN
WILL HE BE
FAMOUS?

mega
interview
inside

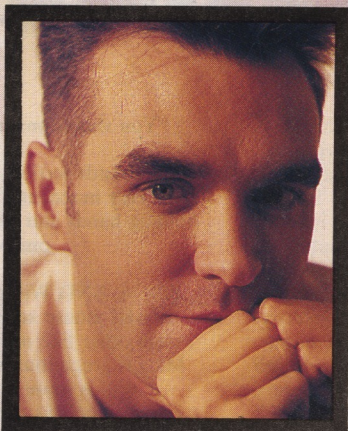
Morrissey

DOUBLES UP AND BECOMES AS GLAMOROUS AND NOTORIOUS AS THE KRAY TWINS!

+ NEWS GOSSIP + ALL THAT'S NEW ON THE INDEPENDENT AND CLUB SCENES

PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD

In his first *RM* interview for two years, *Morrissey* talks to Eleanor Levy about the Kray Twins, the Smiths and what it's like



living down the road from Bryan Robson.

Photos: Lawrence Watson

Hair by Stephen Powner

MORRISSEY puts his hand to his stomach, scrunches up his eyes in mock pain and — as genteely as such things can be — burps.

“Oh, excuse me,” he apologises.

A green bottle of Perrier water stands guiltily on the table between us, its former contents going down as well with the Morrissey digestive system as much of the great man's more inspired verbal moments have gone down with the musical establishment.

The Morrissey of 1989 is a very different figure from the one who first waved a bunch of gladioli around a Manchester concert hall. The pink and white striped shirt is crisp (and tucked in), the jeans are spotless, the shoes and hair gleam with newly accumulated prosperity. But as the designer trendy, carefully marketed but ultimately tasteless mineral water is put to one side and the Mozz pours a comforting cup of quickly ordered tea, it's

good to see that fine old traditions will always win out in the end.

The Smiths may be no more, Morrissey may well have, in his own words, “recently become extremely wealthy”, but the funny, infuriating, brilliant, arrogant yet self-deprecating, Morrissey we've always known refuses to go away.

With the release of his finest solo offering to date in ‘The Last Of The Famous International Playboys’, it's comforting to know that in the supermarket shopping list of pop, the brand name Morrissey is still as dependable as ever.

QUESTION TIME

Why does ‘The Last Of The Famous International Playboys’ mention the Kray Twins? It seems strange that you should feature such obviously southern ‘heroes’ in a song.

“Yes well, they are known in the north, you know. We do have television now,

“The Smiths don’t
exist anymore —
did you know that?
I suppose
in a roundabout
way that does
mean they’re dead”

Gluck

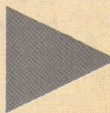
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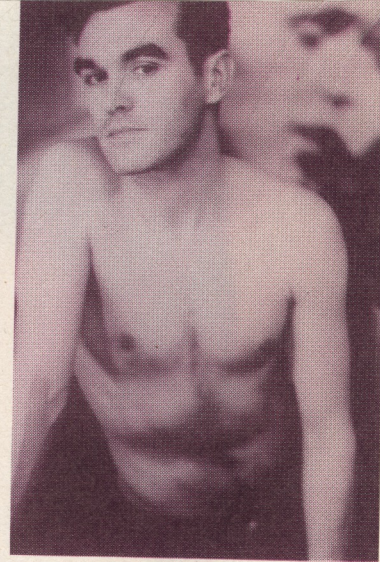
Gluck



Diana Soultani



PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD



FROM PAGE 25

although there's a slight shadow on the commercials."

What was it about them that fascinated you?

"The level of notoriety that surrounded them — the level of fame they gained from being unreachably notorious. When you reach that stage, you are admired."

And it doesn't matter what you've done?

"Well, no. The worse the merrier. There's a certain sense of glamour attached to being a notorious media figure ... as I obviously know from experience!"

"Some people have such an immense physical and clinical need for fame and attention they'll do almost anything. Of course, if the law was such that we paid no attention whatsoever to mass murderers or great train robbers these people would be less inclined to put themselves out. Unfortunately, do a dirty deed and, hey presto ... 'News At Ten'."

Do you find it rivetting?

Do I? No, I don't but the media seem to; they seem to quite enjoy it and they seem to enjoy it more if the attack's been upon women, particularly young women."

The sleeve of the single shows you at six years old — up a tree. Have you changed much since then?

"Well, I have a new sweater."

What were your hopes and expectations at that age?

"I didn't have any, I knew it was too late. That's why I was climbing the tree."

HISTORY TIME

Do you crave a number one single?

"Well, I'll survive without one. It's really the only thing left that I haven't achieved. But it isn't crucial. So many fools get to number one it's hard to consider the position to be totally holy. But it would be quite nice."

There's been a long running debate in rm's Letters page between fans of the Smiths and followers of ...

"Stock, Face-ache and Waterbed. Yes, I did see it."

It seems you are seen as one end of the musical spectrum and they at the other.

"Well, I tended to agree with the readers who didn't support Stock, Face-ache and Waterbed, who I obviously scratch my head at."

"It's comforting, though, for the Smiths to be considered as part of British pop history already."

Is it enough?

"Not entirely, not entirely enough."

What would be enough?

"That's a very loaded question. What is enough? I think — and this may sound odd — it will be on the day when I have powerful, serious contemporaries and it looks as though I'm finally being usurped, which some people think has already happened, although I don't. It's about time somebody else came along. Somebody should have replaced the Smiths; somebody should have replaced me."

People are desperately looking for someone.

"Yes, but can you replace Stan Laurel? Can you replace Judy Garland? Can you replace Shirley Bassey? Can you replace Mrs Mangel? The list goes on ..."

"I don't say I'd like to be replaced, but it's important for the evolution of pop music that there are constantly changing voices. But they're nowhere to be seen; they're not coming and they couldn't possibly be further away than they are today."

PLAY TIME

Is it true you're a closet Manchester United fan?

"It's a much guarded secret but yes, I do like football. To watch and follow, I don't spectate. I don't have the scarf, I don't have the hat ..."

"It's a very easy way to escape mentally — it's light entertainment. I can just put on the television, watch a game of football, get the cans out and drift."

Have you ever dreamt of scoring the winning goal at Wembley?

"Well, I suppose, in a sense I have. I can certainly get irate if somebody takes the wrong turning. Bryan Robson is impressive. And he lives quite near me. And there are sightings ..."

What do you think of Paul Gascoigne?

"Well, he could do with a hair cut."

At least he's not Chris Waddle.

"Well, there's only one Chris Waddle ..."

SHOW TIME

What was it like playing live again

"It's about time somebody else came along. Somebody should have replaced the Smiths; somebody should have replaced me"

when you appeared in Wolverhampton in December?

"It was nice. I did enjoy it. It was nice to be fondled."

Was it good to be back on stage?

"No, it was just nice to be fondled."

"I was a bit wobbly. I thought that as I was walking on stage I'd change direction, but I didn't. It was great to be back in the natural habitat."

How did it feel with Andy Rourke, Mike Joyce and Craig Gannon backing you?

"Very tearful. There was a radiant feeling on stage. You knew where everybody was and who they were, which was astonishingly good. It was a really comfortable feeling. No, comfortable sounds like an old cardigan ... but it was nice."

In an interview last year you said you hadn't heard from them since the Smiths split. You seemed bitter and hurt ...

"Well, I did feel a little upset but that has passed now."

How did you get back in touch?

"Quite craftily. I asked somebody else to phone Mike, Andy and Craig to see if they'd be interested. If I'd have done it and they'd said no it would have been like a hammer blow."

So are the Smiths dead?

"Well, they don't exist anymore. Did you know that? Well, the Smiths don't exist so, I suppose, in a round about way, that does mean they're dead. How can they be alive?"

You seem to be saying you'd still like to be the Smiths ...

"Well, I thought of the name and I thought it got better as time went by — the bigger the Smiths became, the funnier the name was."

"So yes, when Johnny left I wanted to continue with the name but contractually it would have to have been agreed by both of us, and he did not agree."

Have you had any contact with Johnny since the split?

"I haven't seen him since we were in the studio doing a song called 'I Keep Mine Hidden'. So that's 22 months ago."

Do you miss him?

"Um ..." (long pause) "look, you can see the Pennines from this window ..."

CARTOON TIME

Would you say your eyebrows are your most recognisable feature?

"Oh, they're almost Dennis Healey proportions, really."

They don't curl up at the ends,

though.

"They don't. They're very well-behaved. They do exactly what I tell them to."

When people draw cartoons of you, they pick up on two things — your eyebrows and your chin.

"Well, the chin ... The chin usually takes up half the page. And that Desperate Dan stubble! I mean, I might have five o'clock shadow but I never have stubble."

"But yes, my chin is definitely centre stage. It makes me very self-conscious of this great big piece of furniture stuck on the lower half of my mouth. I'm not Bruce Forsyth by any means, though."

Who would play you in a bio pic of your life?

"Who would play me? What a great question. Who could possibly do it? Who do you think?"

Perhaps Matt Dillon could look like you if he tried.

"But he's American! Do you think he could? Physically, I suppose ... with Sir John Gielgud's voice ... or Dandy Nichols' ... Is Clive Dunn still alive? That's the question."

TEA TIME

If you could give your name to an inanimate object that would forever bear the tag 'Morrissey', like Lord Sandwich did for two slices of bread or the Duke of Wellington for the boot, what would it be?

"It would have to be something tasteful. I've seen my picture in a great deal of hairdressers. It would be nice to be noted for a particularly identifiable style. No, that's too easy. Tea, perhaps. Yes, that would be nice. Morrissey tea."

Finally, if someone from the past was told that in the 1980s there'd be this bloke called Morrissey who went on the telly with a hearing aid, a bunch of flowers, an old man's card, flapping his arms about ... and would get in the top 10, they'd think a) you were mad and b) that it would be impossible — wouldn't they?

"Well, it is for anybody else. If you were to put on an old man's cardigan, as you call it, and a hearing aid, you probably wouldn't get in the top 10. It's a gigantic fluke of nature, that's all I can say ... and let's leave it at that!"