

**"I find people who
are steeped in
plunging depression
rapturously
interesting"**

**The champ of English camp,
Steven Patrick MORRISSEY,
puts the boot into DJ Maggie
T, Ronald McDonald,
foreigners, travel, and
reckons 'the independent
sector is being strangled by
its own scarf'. . . JAMES
BROWN quaffs several litres
of carpet cleaner and
plunges into the underwear
drawer. Playboy bun by
LAWRENCE WATSON.**



THE PLAYBOY

INTERVIEW (pt 2)

There are five Ramones live bootlegs, two Fall LPs, even more Bowie, Raymonde, and Patti Smith tapes, and a multitude of Smiths albums. From James to the Buzzcocks, the cassettes in Morrissey's kitchen cabinet are stockpiled like an illegal collection of classic contemporary guitar rock recordings.

Stretching from the colourful androgynous pose of early '70s glam to the sexless but sensitive pop poetry of the Rough Trade and Young Manucian sounds of the mid '80s, it is an enviable but private collection kept behind a glass door. I only happen upon it whilst using the Moz-phone.

The collection is what Morrissey unspecifically refers to as "old stuff". It is a tight and yet exhaustive combination from which he must draw influence: poets and dealers and speeders and shouters and angst ridden mothers and punk ridden brothers. It's probably the closest most of us will ever get to his famous and meticulously classic rock 'n' roll collection.

Undeniably Morrissey is a singer who oozes passion for his craft, who lusts after talent, and who can articulate wildly about music without namedropping hideously or turning the bullship factor up to eleven. He may fib when it comes to history but as a fan of pop himself there is little he can't draw upon from his bizarre knowledge of fact and trivia. And while his inner self might be as weak as babies knees, then his self-belief that he is both a pop genius and an artist are hard to challenge.

Many people mistake passion for piousness in the man. What can't be missed is that he clearly knows how to present his own work as well as realising the qualities he likes to see and hear in others.

His blanket distaste for rap music prevents him from experiencing the apocalyptic political wordpower of Public Enemy or the honey-melting pop crossover of Sugar Bear, but equally it, and the escape from the tide of modernism that it represents, allows him even further indulgence into the loves of his life; of England and it's few virtues, and most of all it's actors, authors, fashions, and historic pop groups.

Strangely for a man who has made jam jars full of money out of just this, Morrissey is dead keen on welcoming in a new baby punk or rock band to tilt the musical axis towards the imaginative and the challenging.

"I am inspecting music solidly and the development of a Smiths replacement just isn't happening. I expected it last year but it didn't happen, that evolution, the natural course of events," he opines wishfully.

"I think the Independent sector is being strangled by it's own scarf, it you like. It's troubling, distressing. And although these seem like my watchwords over the last couple of yers the charts are still in immense decay. They're controlled even more dangerously than ever before. I said these things in 1984 and I say them again in 1989 with some degree of embarrassment, because I begin to sound like a broken record, but it's perfectly true."

Are you talking about the similar rise and relationship you had to The Fall and New Order?

"Not necessarily, because I don't think The Fall and New Order were particularly successful when The Smiths began. I don't really believe that they were. Things have changed a great

deal for The Fall and New Order but I don't really think that either groups relished the arrival of The Smiths. Because of The Smiths it was instant and to all observers seemed like the easiest thing in the world, it wasn't of course. So no I don't think New Order and The Fall welcomed The Smiths and I'm sure they even welcomed the demise of The Smiths."

So are there any contemporary acts you feel at one with?

"Not a living sausage."

Not just musically, but politically?

"Well Manchester is politically helpless, the rest of England is merely asleep."

Your lyrics are political; aren't there any songwriters you feel an affinity with?

"Well, can you name one? I can't. I wish I could, we really do need them in the structure of the Top 40, we really do need them on our TV screens. It's not enough to sit in Peterborough and make your own tapes and be stridently political and wonderfully clear. It's no good, you have to break through. I can't understand why it has not changed."

"I really did think that even on a smaller level with groups like The Smiths, The Housemartins, Echo And The Bunnymen, that certain things would change, even The Jesus And Mary Chain, but they have not. And all those groups have suffered, well The Housemartins and Echo And The Bunnymen are regrettably no longer. Which I think makes the dear world of music a lesser place."

What music do you sit and listen to here at home? I can't imagine you really sit down and listen to a Bradford single.

"I do occasionally. I get sent a lot of records and tapes which I spin aimlessly then into the bin they go. But mostly for pleasure I listen to, as you no doubt predicted, old stuff. I can't lie, let's just say I listen to old stuff."

Are you a jazz fan?

"Do I look like a jazz fan? (recoils horrified) Spot the trumpet! I don't really like jazz very much."

What do you like in your music?

"I can't forgive anybody a bad lyric really. I like to think a singer is singing with a sense of immediate death. The

either the soft 'Where do I go from here I can't take it anymore' song, which isn't too bad. It's some variation at least. David Hedge could desperately do with a new vocal melody, don't you think? Well, 'Why Are You Being So Miserable Now?' Mmmm . . . but they seem a jolly crew and they're having a nice time and I imagine they're enjoying the coach trips, Morrissey laughs snidely (chuckles)."

The lyrics still have a lot of beauty and celebration.

"Well, isn't it funny that we're still saying this in 1989. I would have thought that people's opinions would have changed and that perception would have died down a little bit but of course it hasn't. I'm still banging on the door when I want to, but don't particularly want to come in any more. That dreadful corporate typical observation that I am some kind of moronic depressed etc. remains."



"No, as a boy I would not have queued in McDonalds. I know vegetarian toddlers who are members of Green Scene"

Yes, but that superficial image of you as some depressed nutter walking around with flowers in his back pocket is perpetuated because even the most serious music journalists haven't delved behind the feelings in the songs.

"I think we have to assume that journalists do actually try. I mean a lot of them aren't massively equipped upstairs. I don't want to be rude but it's the case, it's a cast iron fact. Some journalists do astound me, they get the spade out and try to dig but can't quite manage it."

"As far as the depressed obsessive smothered in flowers, well that sounds superficial as you put it, but to me that, the archetypal caricature, I find mildly interesting. I find people who are steeped in plunging depression rapturously interesting and if I saw an individual smothered in flowers I'd have to run up to him."

"Happiness is still something to be attained. I don't think I know anyone who is truly happy, I suppose it's something worth waiting for. The suicide rate is enormously high and as time goes by more pressures occur. They are pressures I resent but not just for me but for most people. It's just not enough to be oneself. Everyone is obsessed with materialism."

Yes, but your role as a 'pop star' contributes to that materialism. The very business you've involved yourself in adds to the immense cheapening of life.

"I'm not really 'the popstar', think about it. I am as a figure more popular than ever but I'd gag before I'd use the word 'popstar'. I do very little, but now I make a promotional video for the record because I feel that if I didn't I'd disappear off the face of the earth. I work on my video's with Tim Broad and I wouldn't want to work with anyone else. They are quite simple, if I didn't work with Tim I'd be in turmoil. I couldn't make what the dilly-dally world calls a video."

If Morrissey's fear of falling from the globe has pushed him into a commercial compromise then his disgust with the Americanisation of the UK has hurled him into a championing role of all things English through and through. And, whilst he'll still gladly choose from America those heroes that are imperative to any would-be rock 'n' roll sex batallion, he has eagerly batted in defense of the sort of English wit and

away really. That generation is almost all but gone. We're almost at a stage when there won't be anyone living who can remember the Second World War."

The idea that we live in trashier times is a phallacy because there has always been immense poverty and hardship, particularly in Manchester.

"Yes, I know there was something that symbolised McDonalds in the Thirties, whatever it was. But I simply don't feel that the changes that occur are for the better. The Channel Tunnel completely mystifies me. Ripping through the countryside and all those gardens mystifies me. The levels of toxic waste in this country mystifies me."

"I can't believe the way the world revolves in this depressingly destructive state. Whenever I go past McDonalds I get very, very angry. No, as a boy I would not have queued in McDonalds, not at all. I know vegetarian toddlers who are members of Green Scene. So there's hope. And interestingly McDonalds have vowed to use biodegradable plastics in their funny little cartons. It proves that somewhere in MacDonaldis, in that morass of ineptitude, there's a working brain."

How do you view your relationship with your children? Those fans and bands who receive attention because of your patronage; The Primitives, Bradford, Shaun Duggan, Lucette from the 'Everyday Is Like Sunday' video?

"Well I think some of them suffer for it. Morrissey's children? Well it's about time I gave birth. Medical science is not that advanced yet. Yes I look at those shining smiling faces and think it has not been in vain. Ho ho! Othertimes I feel like, 'Get out of my life, brat'. No, I never feel like that. It's absolutely, totally paternal. This is why it's difficult to talk seriously about being a symbol of lust."

Are you flattered by the gifts you receive from your followers?

"Mostly not. The underwear's dropped off. I realise there's a lot of people without any taste, but occasionally something useful. The last useful and truly beautiful present I received was the 'There Is A Light That Never Goes Out' mat from America that we used in the video 'Suedehead'. But mainly it's just cuddly fluffy things that you're supposed to sit on after a hot bath."

Are you still attracted to fame?

"I'm amused more than attracted. I'm not feverish. I don't do anything I don't passionately want to do."

Have you ever done?

"Perhaps once or twice, once or twice I've been kicked, 'Get up and do it!' But I was young and impressionable."

Have you changed much since the demise of The Smiths?

"I think so, yes. As I say I'm incredibly old now."

You're entering The Tom Jones Syndrome?

"Well not literally."

You do have people crying and screaming at your feet.

"Yes, but I won't be singing 'Delilah'. I'll do my best to swivel until the rip."

The trousers yes, but what about the personality?

"No, I'm sure I'll go on and on as long as Gary Glitter. Which is at least another 36 years."

Don't you want to be anything more than Gary Glitter?

"Not at all. I aspire to his greatness."

There's nothing wrong with the odd sequin now and again. No, I'm not going to enter a glam phase, do I look as if I am? I'm more likely to wear satin here than on stage. No, I'm happy just being dumpy dumpy dumpy me. Dumpy, fat, and middle aged."

Just like Tom Jones. Would you like to play live again?

"Oh I would quite like to, yes."

And is it likely to happen?

"Well, you never know, but I think so."

Next week: another dose of the Mozzer - friends, Sky TV and The Camp Hall Of Fame . . .