

# ◀ MORRISSEY ▶

IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE CATALOGUE, FORMER WORDSMITH AND NOW, SIMPLY, WORDSMITH MORRISSEY REELS AROUND THE FOUNTAIN WITH RICHARD BOON, A QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION THAT DISCUSSES "RANK", RANK AND WHAT RANKLES.

**F**irst the obvious: why a live album now and why this particular performance?  
Could you repeat that question in Welsh, please?

**Fellyr cwestiwm amlwgyn paham'r albwm yma a paham y performiad yma'n arbennig?**

Ah, now I understand!

There is surprisingly little of The Smiths' performances captured on film or on tape. This was recorded by the BBC for the Auntie Pong Show and bits of it were broadcast... in... the late Sixties... or whenever it was. It is used because it is available and good... very good, although there were brighter moments. Wolverhampton Civic springs to mind, when my cardigan went up in flames. Were you there?

**Sadly, no. Mind you, live self-immolation could only have enhanced your career.**

Hmm... perhaps. Incidentally, when I say "Auntie Pong", I do so with a smile on my heart and a song in my lips.

**Do you see "Rank" as closing the book on The Smiths, or will more of their past be unfurled in future? Are there skeletons yet to come out of the closet?**

Everything The Smiths ever committed to tape has now been released. Re-released even! Apart from a hidden version of "Baby, It's Cold Outside".

As far as skeletons in closets are concerned, well, please don't ask me, I'm new here.

**Before its release on Rough Trade Records, you had considered releasing "Hand In Glove" on your own label. How did the Rough Trade release come about?**

As far as starting a label was concerned, well, as you know to your cost, Richard, Northerners are apt to take on such things.\* It was a fleeting idea and very much Johnny and Joe (Moss)'s notion. It seemed pointless when ultimately offered the Rough Trade machinery. The original "Hand In Glove" was financed by The Smiths... representative... Joe Moss, and took a day in - where else? - Strawberry Studios ...one day in Stockport to enliven history. I re-did the vocal a week later, if only to make a point of starting as stropfully as I intended to continue.

The next day we took the train to London, to Rough Trade at the old Blenheim Crescent place. We waited for hours to then be told that Geoff (Travis) couldn't see us, so Johnny said, "Who is Geoff Travis?" and someone pointed to a looming figure swarming down a corridor and Johnny raced after him and forced him to listen. Two hours later the record was cut.

**After that single brought The Smiths to the attention of**

**both the public and the industry, major labels were offering legendary sums for The Smiths, yet you signed to Rough Trade. Was it important for you to be on an independent label?**

I was never aware of these legendary sums. Rough Trade's offer was the only one I ever saw. EMI had put us into the studio and we recorded "What Difference Does It Make?", "Handsome Devil" and "Miserable Lie". We presented the tapes at Manchester Square to the head of A&R at EMI... I can't remember his name... Hugh Potty-head or something... and we were promptly rejected after one play. We were temporarily devastated, I had to sell three sheep and a cow in order to get to London, and we weren't even offered a digestive biscuit. Anyway, 18 months later one of those rejected songs made number 12 on Rough Trade, so it was a great victory and an interesting indication of how totally split the independent-major worlds were.

**Were you aware of the independent sector and did it interest you at the time? Does it still?**

Richard, would you please sit still.

As you know, I was not an unfamiliar face on the stairs of the New Hormones offices (Newton Street, Manchester), as a limbless teenager. It was then, very much, real independent art versus real major money and independent people were just much more my type. They watched BBC2, for instance. They knew Esma Cannon.\*

**Obviously, The Smiths' success both demonstrated the ability of the independent network to sell and chart product, and contributed to its increasing strength, certainly in the UK market. What changes did you observe and how would you assess the strengths and weaknesses of the independent structure?**

The Smiths' success proved that the network could provide for a large, loyal, waiting audience. But I wonder how independent companies could imagine breaking a group that doesn't have a fiercely loyal audience? Is it possible?

Independents tend to shelter groups who, themselves, go out and work, work, work. I wonder why independents haven't yet produced a studio-bound TOTP-created group?

**A**re your criticisms as equally applicable to the performance of major labels, in your experience?

Once again, because of having an earnestly devoted audience ready and willing, EMI have not needed to employ any desperate promotional methods in order to sell my records. I have no real criticisms of EMI thus far, but I can't imagine a young and powerlessly

unknown artist being given the key to the door, as it were.

**K**nowing that despite the chart success of independent artists, radio play seems still to be a problem. Would you still "hang the DJ"?

Radio stations are not public services and have no duty to the Top Forty... they do not necessarily play the records that the public elect into the chart and they never, never ever play records on independent labels. Once you know this, you can safely get on with The Archers.

**In the past, you refused to make promotional films. Since The Smiths' work with Derek Jarman, you've gone on to make videos for your solo recordings almost, it seems, as a matter of course. Is this a change of heart, or something you're now obliged to do? How do you feel about this - and how do you approach making them?**

The obligation is not to make a video, but to make a video of which your record company approves.

Pop video is a very stupid genre. No one really respects it. I once said that a drunken goat could produce a Duran Duran video, and I still believe that, only these days the goat need not necessarily be alive.

When Derek Jarman made three films for The Smiths, I don't think anyone expected them to be popular - how could they be? Jarman was far too talented.

I'd sooner fry an egg than make a video. Tim Broad, who directed "Girlfriend In A Coma", "I Started Something I Couldn't Finish", "Suedehead" and "Everyday Is Like Sunday" has made things very easy for me, because he is a true artist with interesting ideas. But this is also the reason why I don't think he'll make many more "pop videos".

I didn't say that.

**Presentation has always been important in your work. Do you still have the same degree of control over this aspect of your activity? How far are you prepared to**

**compromise with marketing and promotions demands and is there any pressure to do so?**

I still work on all manner of artwork with Jo Slee at Rough Trade, and Jo still works with Caryn Gough who of course toiled so brilliantly over all Smiths layout. If Jo and I no longer worked together I would possibly take very heavy drugs and she would prosper remarkably.

Most artwork is presented to EMI from Jo, including press ads, so at the moment I have no worries.

Also, EMI have, much to their credit, presented absolutely no promotion demands to me, which means that I can sit around all day drinking Evian water.

**E**veryone knows you're a fairly demanding character yourself. Have your expectations changed in moving from an independent to a major? Have they been met?

Richard, I believe Rough Trade Japan is a lift in a small building. Is this true?

Walk into any Japanese restaurant and you'll find whale penis on the menu. They call it Takeri.

And you wonder why The Smiths never went to Japan!

The last situation I expected to find myself in was... a solo artist on HMV!

Signing to EMI wasn't a financially dazzling move (are they ever?), but everyone has been very supportive so far, especially Murray Chalmers my press officer.

**And what can the public expect next from you?**

They can expect me to grow old rapidly and open an Animal Aid stall on Rochdale Market.

**Thank you.**

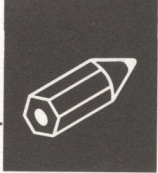
Goodnight and thank you.

\* Morrissey is referring to an independent label based in Manchester run by The Catalogue's editor in a previous incarnation.

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Pic: Steve Wright



# ◀ RANKING ▶

THE GALLUP SUMMARY OF THE SMITHS HITS AND THE ONES THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN

## SINGLES

		Week Of Entry	Position of Entry	Highest Position	Weeks on Chart
RT131	<i>Hand In Glove</i> .....	12/11/83	197	124	16
RT136	<i>This Charming Man</i> .....	29/10/83	110	25	48
RT146	<i>What Difference Does It Make ?</i> .....	21/1/84	26	12	28
RT156	<i>Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now</i> .....	26/5/84	19	10	11
RT166	<i>William, It Really Was Nothing</i> .....	25.8.84	23	17	21
RT176	<i>How Soon Is Now</i> .....	2/2/85	35	24	12
RT181	<i>Shakespeare's Sister</i> .....	23/3/85	29	26	10
RT186	<i>That Joke Isn't Funny Anymore</i> .....	6/7/85	49	49	7
RT191	<i>Boy With The Thorn In His Side</i> .....	28/9/85	26	23	5
RT192	<i>Bigmouth Strikes Again</i> .....	24/3/86	28	26	9
RT193	<i>Panic</i> .....	25/7/86	18	26	11
RT194	<i>Ask</i> .....	25/10/86	16	14	16
RT195	<i>Shoplifters of The World Unite</i> .....	31/1/87	12	12	7
RT196	<i>Sheila Take A Bow</i> .....	18/4/87	13	10	14
RT197	<i>Girlfriend In A Coma</i> .....	15/8/87	13	13	19
RT198	<i>I Started Something I Couldn't finish</i> .....	7/11/87	29	23	9
RT200	<i>Last Night I Dreamt Somebody Loved Me</i> .....	12/12/87	34	30	10

## ALBUMS

Rough 61	<i>The Smiths</i> .....	25/2/84	2	2	40
Rough 76	<i>Hatful Of Hollow</i> .....	17/11/84	7	7	137
Rough 81	<i>Meat Is Murder</i> .....	17/2/85	1	1	31
Rough 96	<i>The Queen Is Dead</i> .....	21/6/86	2	2	45
Rough 101	<i>The World Won't Listen</i> .....	28/2/87	2	2	42
Rough 106	<i>Strangeways, Here we Come</i> .....	3/10/87	2	2	25
Rough 255	<i>Louder Than Bombs</i> .....	23/5/87	38	38	12

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Pic: Eric Watson