

UPPER ROIR

/005
AUG
2012

MC RAGE
MANCHESTER ART
CENTRAL STATION &
THE HAPPY MONDAYS
JACK ROYLE
IAN TILTON &
THE STONE ROSES
TOM HINGLEY

karima
francis

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TEAM

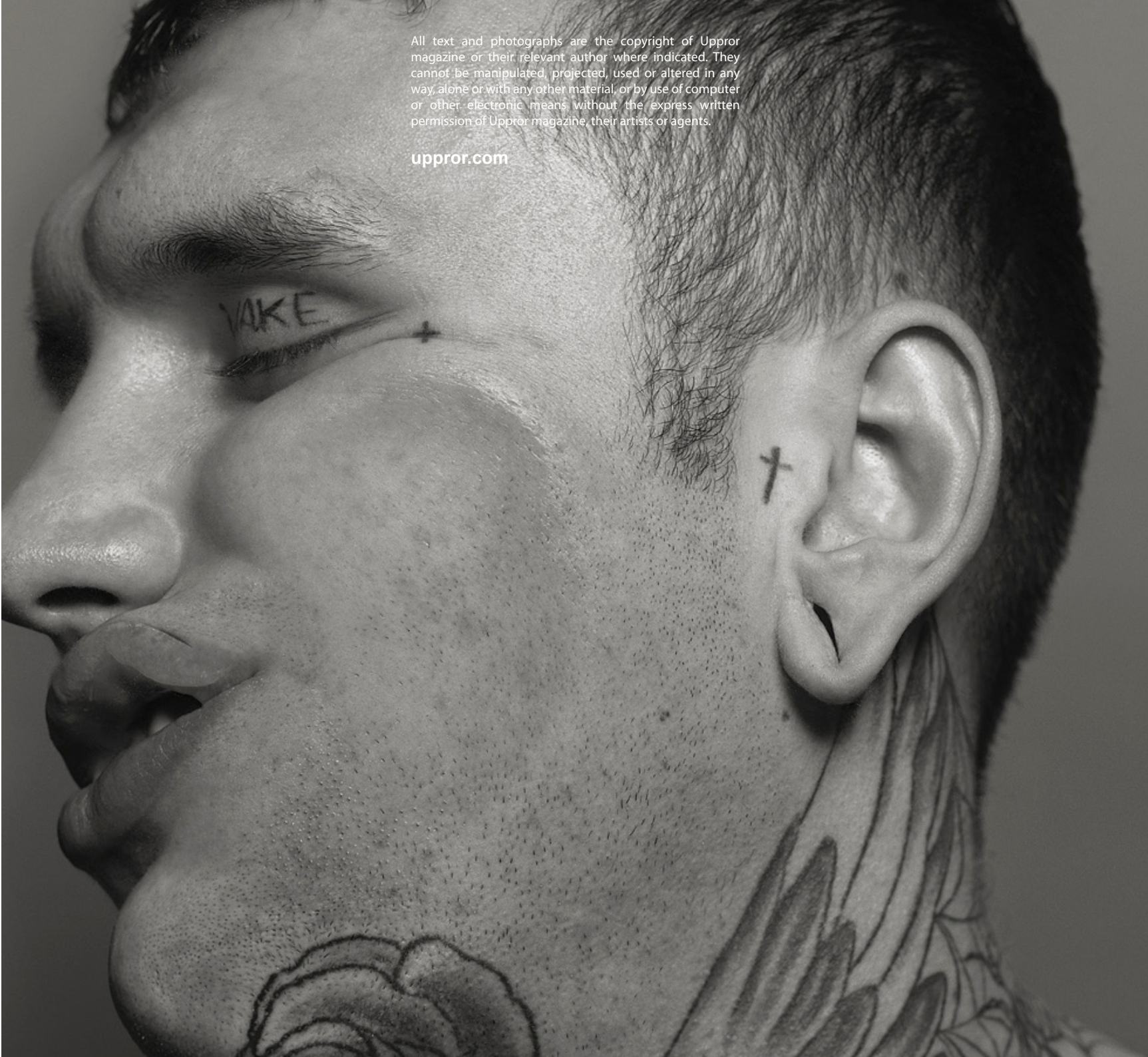
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NORTHERN SOULS

When we find close to perfection in a new artist there is little to doubt that Uppror will make some noise. For our fifth issue of Uppror we have a rare gem of an artist fronting our cover – Karima Francis. We first noticed her Dylanesque frame and sensibility when we saw her play a local gig in an east London coffee house. She has the most soulful voice we have come across in a female singer for a long time and when she came to the studio and performed her new single Glory Days live we were in shock from the beautiful sound coming from this incredibly unassuming artist.

Another young artist that you'll hear more about is actor and model Jack Royle. He shares his ambitions and some of his rough diamond side and the story behind his impressive tattoos.

We also caught up with MC Rage, band member of Chase and Status, to tell us what he's up to this summer.

With the reformation of The Stone Roses and Happy Mondays back with the original lineup – and both bands playing at this year V Festival - we decided to feature the great creative people in photography and design from Manchester that gave a big helping hand to these artists and made them so special and were also part of the 'Madchester' era in late 80's and 90's.

First photographer Ian Tilton talks about his northern roots, his influences and his long relationship with The Stone Roses. He has been with them at every step of their early career, fame and demise.

Then we discuss the importance of art sleeves design with Matt Carroll, one of the trio of Central Station Design team; their partnership with Factory Records and how they catapulted some artists like the Happy Mondays to stardom status because of their unique and iconic album cover artwork and posters.

We're lucky to have the brilliant Tom Hingley, former lead singer of Inspiral Carpets, to write for Uppror and give us his views of the so complicated life and tribulations of the signed and unsigned musicians. And is being a musician 'a real job'?

Thomas James has also sent us his own thoughts about music from New York and the good it can do when mixed with fashion and art. A whole new perspective.

And finally, having changed a few things at Uppror recently, namely a new art team, there was always going to be the invariable discussions about new and strong ideas – as well as building our new website which will offer our audience more in the way of choice – soon to arrive will be the posters and then the live events. Sign up to our networks to find out more.

Till the next issue,

Fouzia

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Chatting to her, once we've solved the mystery of how to drape ourselves on the sofa, I'm struck by the fact that Karima's speaking voice is a real contrast to that powerful, soulful sound on record. Confident but quietly spoken, her accent is pure Blackpool, as redolent of the northern seaside town as the sticks of sugary rock she sold as souvenirs on her last tour. "It had my name through it – Karima Francis rock," she says proudly. "We sold that for a pound a stick, so that was our merchandise."

I ask her what it was like growing up there. The 'Las Vegas' of the North West is a pretty idiosyncratic place; once grand, now, in the public mind at least, more associated with old-fashioned arcades and cheesy 'end of the pier' cabaret. Have its faded charms rubbed off on her?

"It's kind of surreal and I think that's the effect it's had on me, because now to step outside of Blackpool everything seems so normal. In Blackpool, because it's seasonal, it's quite depressing for most of the year and then the season will come in and bring just a little bit of culture with it and a little bit of newness, and then it goes back to being in the 70's you know. It's a sad and lonely little place." She says this fondly rather than derisively.

"Did it feel like being stuck in a time warp growing up there?"

"Yes it's still stuck like that now. They're actually making an effort – they've got a Pizza Express and stuff now."

We laugh at the idea that a Pizza Express is the cultural benchmark a town should be judged by. I know what she means though. I remember once giving a friend from Dorset grief because he'd never heard of Nando's. These are the ways we define civilisation now. We are the sum of our loyalty cards.

Growing up in Blackpool, Karima would have been exposed to the annual dose of Cannon and Ball, The Chuckle Brothers, Michael Barrymore or whoever happened to be playing the summer season end of the pier shows each year, but I wonder if the town was a musically inspiring place. Growing up did she feel exposed to music around her?

She shakes her head. "That's another thing, I was kind of without. The closest I got to music in school was when a big band came in and played 'Shake, Rattle and Roll'. The local radio there, the same playlist is being played all the time. They do the 'Top Ten at Ten'; do you remember that? They pick a year, like 1987, and it's the top ten hits in the charts of 1987."

"And were you just locked in to 1987 every time?"

"Well that was the year I was born. I just feel like I've been listening to Annie Lennox and Whitney Houston from day one really."

Interesting that she mentions those two women, both possessed of mighty, mighty voices. Karima's vocals also stop you in your tracks. Later, right here on the enormous partially-savaged sofa, she will whip out her guitar and sing her single Glory Days to me for an Uppror exclusive. It's a catchy, almost anthemic tune that crosses over into being something quite special because of that voice. It surprises; looking at her, even talking to her, it's quite hard to fathom where it comes from.

Some people with musical ambitions like Karima's, that extended beyond the same old local radio playlist, might have found Blackpool claustrophobic, but she says there was never any sense of wanting to break away from the place or leave it behind. She knew she would have to travel to carve out her career, but her home town is clearly still very close to her heart, or perhaps that should be her neck.

If she ever needs a reminder of her roots whilst she's away on tour, she just has to look in the mirror at the 'Made In Blackpool' tattoo scrawled in the space between her jaw and her collarbone. It's a message you'd half expect to find written through the centre of one of her sticks of rock.

"I was very drunk one night and made the decision to get it printed," she says, seeing me looking at it. "I was in hospital and I got told off because – you're going to really find this funny – I was seeing this girl and I made her come into the hospital unit and they heard this buzzing. I'd got her to bring a tattoo gun and I was getting tattooed in hospital. She brought a bottle of vodka too. I got a bit told off for that."

The hospital. This is the first time she has mentioned it. Why Karima was there is a long story and really, in a way, the whole reason we are sitting here talking today. The illness that sent her to hospital and nearly killed her, and everything that happened to her on the road to recovery, are also what gave her the inspiration for this new album. I look at her, wondering if she's ready to talk about the painful story behind why she disappeared midway through promoting her first album, her obvious star potential unfulfilled.

"I got really sick," she says when I ask her about that time. Her voice changes tone, dropping a level. "I got really sick with an eating disorder the first time round... and it's a life-ruining experience that I never thought I would come back from, and it's really, really peculiar getting to do all this again." She's talking quietly, struggling to find the right words. "It's quite hard because I'm living in a new skin, and there are things I have to wake up with every day and I go, 'Well, you've got your music now'... it's kind of about accepting who I am, which is really difficult." She pauses for a moment, taking in the weight of that last statement. "But that's what it was. I wrote The Remedy when I was really, really sick and... I don't know..."



She trails off, very obviously overcome by the memory of that time, and then she plucks up the courage to continue. "I'm not trying to put the stamp on it like 'look at me and feel sorry for me'. It's not like that. I've been through it and it's still a fight for me every day but the music has saved my life so that's why it's really important. I'm not saying that this [album] has to be a success but the fact that people are giving it the attention it's got – that's saving my life every day."

There's a line in Glory Days, "They are weak but strong, who fail but carry on." It encapsulates the Karima of the last few moments. Weakness and strength vying underneath the surface as she talks. To describe what's happened to her over the past few years as 'failing' would be harsh, but there's a definite sense that in carrying on, she is attempting to prove not only that all her early promise was real, but also, to herself, that she is strong enough to do this.

Before I interviewed her I watched her Jools Holland appearance again on Youtube and despite the turmoil that was going on in her life then, it's still an impressive performance. Her androgynous, too thin form, almost against the odds, produces this amazing, powerful, sometimes pain-filled voice that receives clearly genuine heartfelt applause from the crowd at the end. That show though was to be both the beginning and premature end of Karima's career. She has said of it, "doing Jools Holland, was my absolute dream and he had Carole King on too, who's one of my idols – but I just wasn't there, if you know what I mean."

She reflects on it now. "I didn't realise how unwell I was. That last tour around the Jools Holland time was probably the most horrific thing I've ever experienced in my whole life, and I've seen a load of shit, growing up with it [the eating disorder], but there was a point where we played Stoke-on-Trent where I couldn't even hold myself up."

I didn't see any of those gigs first time around, but people I know who did, speak of having witness a raw emotion coming off her onstage and an almost palpable sense of tension.

"I don't know how I was getting on stage; the music and the adrenaline were the thing that kept me going, but the raw emotion was probably just me being really, really sick." She's clearly shocked by the memory of just how ill she got. "It was killing me, you know, because I was travelling and I wasn't eating. I'd not eaten for a long time." She laughs mirthlessly, but she's fighting back tears. "I'm laughing about it now because I can't believe I'm actually here. Sorry. I thought it would have taken my life. I got to the point where it was nearly doing that."

The wake-up call to get help came in the form of a phone call from her management.

"I was meant to be on the front cover of the Times Culture Mag – and I got a phone call saying they're not putting the picture on because you don't look great and I just remember everything just slowly crumbling. But when you're affected by an inner demon that's so vocally loud in your head you can't hear anything and feel anything..." She falters. "I didn't realise it was all slipping away from me and..." She breaks down, the tears coming

now and I'm reminded, despite the sharp threads, the tattoos and northern wit, just how fragile she is. In that moment, all of the terrible sadness that took her to the brink and threatened to end not only her music career but her life, seems almost overwhelming. She tries to collect herself. "I'm sorry."

She was in hospital for almost a year. By her own admission no one was sure if she would make it through, but she did. In the space of twelve months though, she'd gone from aspiring pop star to jobless recovering outpatient.

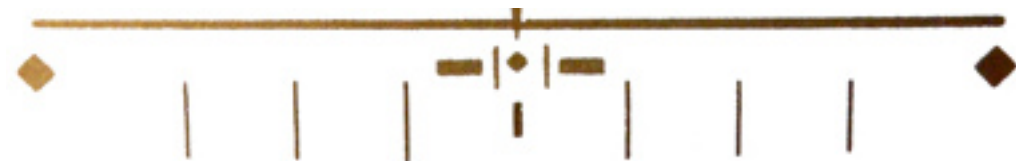
"I had to move back to Blackpool and started getting low on funds but my managers came in and kept me going, with a bit of money coming in. I was paying my mum board – 50 quid a week – I was back to that." She shakes her head ruefully. "It's crazy that I'm here now in London and I get to stay in a hotel then I go back to living at home with my mum, but it took me that long to get back."

Series after series of X Factor has made us all familiar to the point of being jaded with tales of hardship with the redemptive ending of musical stardom, but talking to Karima you realise it's abundantly

clear that this is not some tale of hard knocks polished up and exaggerated by a PR agency eager for interview talking-points. She went through real hell to get where she is today and you get the feeling she'd rather not talk about it but can't escape doing so, as the story is so much a part of who she is and where the new album has come from. It seems odd to describe a 24 year old artist's second album as a 'comeback record', but that's what The Remedy is in a very literal sense. The title wasn't chosen lightly; she started composing songs for the record the night before she went into hospital for treatment.

She's said that music saved her life; strong words. Was writing the songs for The Remedy a vital part of her recovery process?

"Probably. I didn't really realise I was making this record until I was there at the end of it and we were mixing for the last few days and I was thinking in my head 'where's this come from?' cos it happened so naturally. And I guess that's why it's so real because I didn't realise what I was creating in that studio, so it wasn't like I'd gone in to go 'I'm going to make this amazing record'. It wasn't like that. The pressure wasn't on or anything."



The record was produced by Flood, a man whose Grammy Award-winning CV makes for impressive reading, including the likes of U2, Nine Inch Nails, PJ Harvey and Nick Cave. When I mention him to Karima, I can't suppress a smile.

Karima looks nervous. "Why are you smiling?"

"I'm smiling," I say, "because of the story I read about how you two first met. I'm lead to believe neither of you remember this encounter very well?"

Karima relaxes, and smiles too. "No, not at all. I supported the Editors one night and we went to – what's it called? The Groucho – that really posh place. And Keith the head of my old label, Kitchenware Records, put his card on the bar and me and Flood ran off and started getting absinthes on the bill. I didn't even know who Flood was. But the person who I was with that night, a friend, we got her so drunk that she ended up getting taken home in an ambulance because she'd passed out in the hotel." She laughs, even though she knows she shouldn't. "It was really bad. I woke up with a CCTV camera, a pepper mill and a wet bed."

It sounds like a scene from an indie remake of The Hangover. "That's like one of those things where you have to work it back," I say. "I've got a CCTV camera, a pepper mill and a wet bed? What did I do?"

"I did!" shouts Karima excitedly. "It was one of them – recreating my steps."

"Did you ever work out what you did do?" I ask, intrigued.

She looks disappointed. "No."

"Something peppery though?"

Karima and Flood reconvened after she had been released from hospital. Sober this time, and without the distractions of stolen CCTV cameras, pilfered pepper mills or soggy beds, they set to work on The Remedy. Karima says Flood's approach to the creation of the album was a 'less is more' strategy, creating a low-key relaxed environment where she could be herself and do her own thing.

"I think the key to a great producer is to make it comfortable for the artist to be themselves. It was great; he knew when I wasn't in the right frame of mind to create a great vocal take. He kept it always flowing but he knew when to get the best out of me and that's what makes him a great producer. What he did as well, which you wouldn't imagine someone with the name Flood doing – though actually, it suits Manchester quite well, 'Flood', because it rains all the time – he came on a train over to Manchester, he came over to my guitarist Simon's flat and just sat there and we ran the songs and got the structures right and arranged it. He was just – I don't know – it was amazing."

There's a delight that flickers in Karima's eyes every time she talks about The Remedy; a stark contrast to the pain that's visible when she talks about the period around her first album. How does she feel comparing these two works now?

"I think the first time, I can hardly remember it. I knew what I wanted, I just didn't get with the right producer, it just wasn't the right time. I still produced the record I wanted to make, it just didn't sound as good as I wanted it to sound. That's no offence to the producers." I think she's being overly hard on herself. Listening back to it, The Author still stands up well and Jools (or his people) clearly saw enough potential in it to have her on the show. The Remedy though, she hopes will see her really make her mark. "This one is kind of on another level for me because people are really listening to what I'm trying to say. It's just... mmm... I don't know... I love it."

She really does love it. She's even described it as her masterpiece, a word artists are normally reticent to use themselves for fear of tempting critical fate, but Karima doesn't hold back, she just says what she thinks.

"That's not me being big headed by saying that by the way. It's just at this moment in time, 24 years of age, I've created my masterpiece for this year. Hopefully from now on I'll do one every year."





A masterpiece every year?

"It's made me realise what a record is and it's a document in time, that's what it is. So it'll be like looking back through photo albums for me in the future when I've got records and records of times and experiences."

The songs on The Remedy are at times painfully raw, as you'd expect if it is a 'photo album' of the last couple of years. Does she ever worry about sharing too much?

"No. I think it's just something I'm probably put on the planet for, cos I believe that I can maybe help some people with this record. If other people are struggling as well, I really feel like I could really help some people." She pauses and then says, "I do wear my heart on my sleeve a bit too much, I don't know why I'm like that."

She's back out on tour too; something, again, that she probably thought at one time she'd never be able to do. Thankfully, the new stronger Karima is enjoying her second chance on the road. The gigs she did at the end of 2011 were the first proper ones she done since her illness.



"It was just really overwhelming, cos people came out to the shows and some of them were amazing. We went over to Scotland and did a Highlands tour. Wow, they were so great up there. We had to bloody get on this ferry to Stornoway, and oh my God! It was horrible!" she laughs. "I didn't think I'd feel sick on a ferry at all but I did and I went and slept in the kids area on some puffy things and these kids came in and started throwing balls, jumping all over me."

I ask her if she thinks her current audiences contain a lot of people who remember her from first time around and were perhaps waiting for the moment when she got better and came out to play again.

"I think so, yeah, yeah... The reaction to the songs was so great and that's what made me feel confident because I wasn't playing my old songs, I was playing a full set of new music."

And of course she's had that Blackpool rock made to sell at the merch stand. After road-testing it before Christmas, she now has a new improved version. "The first one was butterscotch flavour and

this one which I've chosen now is 'farm butter caramel' so it's like a Werther's Original. We needed a taste that kids will like and the elders will like."

She's really thought this through. "And will we see Blackpool style Kiss Me Quick hats with Karima Francis on?" I ask.

Her eyes light up. "That's a really good idea."

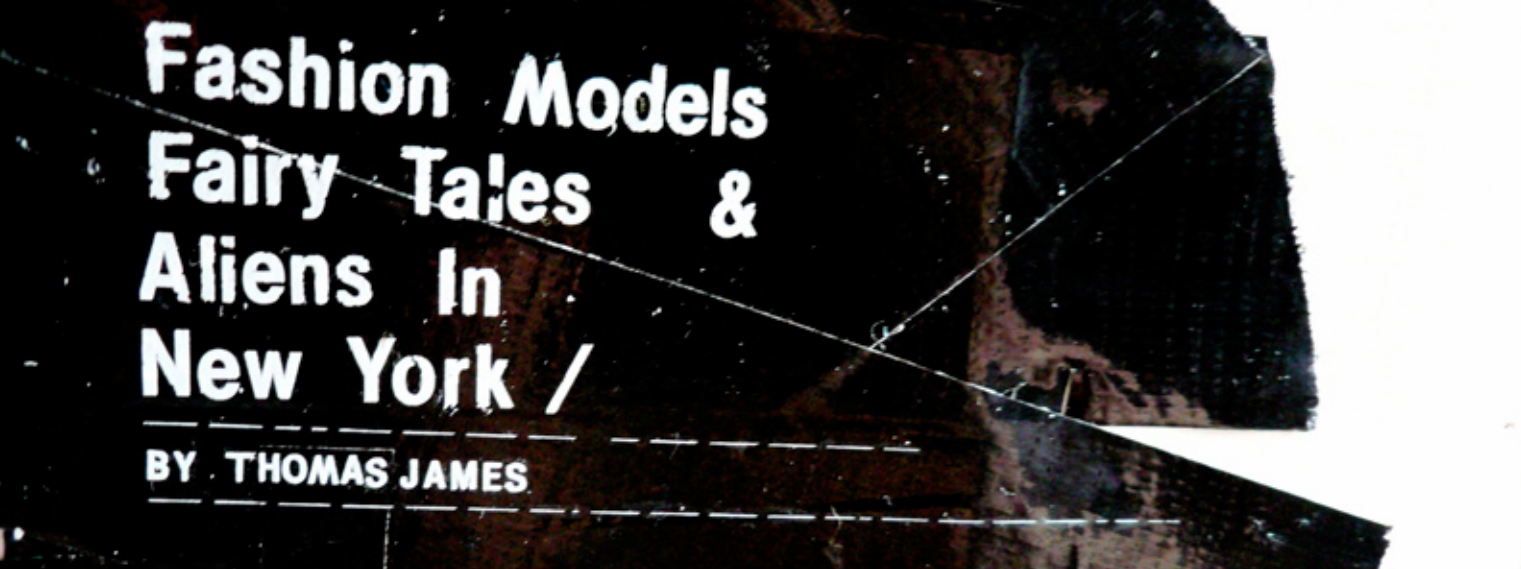
Sensing a cut of any profits, I get excited. "Do it. Do it. 'Karima me quick'?"

We laugh at my terrible suggestion. Though secretly I like to think Karima is storing that idea up and I'll see it in action soon at a merch stand near me. With all these Blackpool-themed merchandise suggestions, is there a possibility of a triumphant hometown gig in the near future?

"I'm doing an exclusive at Radio Wave; you know the radio station that I got brought up on."

"The one you were slagging off before?"

"I weren't slagging it off!" she laughs, her Blackpool twang now as strong as ever. Then she gets more thoughtful. "I hope one day, my song's coming out of the radio and there's someone else like me growing up listening to that playlist and I'm on it."



Still an endless fascination for the rest of the world New York is a giant goldfish bowl where life is enlarged by thick glass and blurred from reality through the scratched out windows of a subway train. This is the eye of the hurricane; the place where they light the fuse and the rest of the world takes cover. Here it feels strangely safe, just as if we are standing behind the cannons when battle finally comes.



In the midst of it all, the romance of life is alive and well and new history is being made every day. Downtown, Tower One is almost complete, each floor stoic and grand, a testament to liberty and achievement. Or is it just a shiny rocket shaped skyscraper built as a big fat one fingered salute to anyone else who wants to try it again?

Talking of big and fat, Mayor Mike is passing a law banning the sale of high sugar sodas in order to help combat obesity, a first apparently in America. Strange as most people here are so thin due to stress, lack of sleep, prescription drugs or just the sheer terror of being the token fatty, stuck on an “ L ” train full of

fashion models coming home from the Meatpacking district.

Fashion models are everywhere in New York – just like pigeons and London – you really can’t imagine one without the other.

I recently found myself playing music on the fashion circuit again - LIM College’s 2012 extravaganza at Roseland Ballroom was a highlight for sure. Young New York fashion students produced and conceived the event packing the masses into this decadent rock venue for their 68th annual Fashion Show entitled Temporis. Blending concert and catwalk, this show was delivered with the kind of grit, glamour and determination only to be found in

a city that’s never afraid to shine through unforgiving times.

As a result of the other meltdown in Europe, there is a now a plethora of British Legal Aliens working here in New York. Mostly financially trained people: young, stylish, professional and intent on getting hammered straight after work at the likes of Aspen Social Club. They’ve come out of the massive new Barclays Bank building, right in the middle of Times Square. Its huge blue sign and swirling logo that I remember from my father’s checkbook looks oddly out of place on Broadway above the street artists and peddlers.

It’s my Wednesday night DJ residency at ASC and of course just like fish and chips in Benidorm, the Brits need their own music in NYC. Tonight they’re in luck; yours truly happens to mix a healthy dose of Punk Rock, Northern Soul, Dub and 70’s pop, all washed down with a splash of 60’s R&B as sharp as a Paul Smith button down.

Meanwhile over in Chelsea, Thursday night is gallery night. There are art openings in every doorway and the cool, weird and socially bereft shuffle through the exhibitions and installations in the evening rain.

Spaced out on free wine and trail mix there’s always raw talent to discover if you know where to look. A 10th floor elevator takes you to Nocturnal, an urban fantasy group exhibition which feels more nightclub than gallery and the work of featured artist Monica Rose Song greets you at the entrance. Set against a backdrop of thorns, blood and radishes and painted in luscious oils adorned with glitter and gold, her fairy tale characters are tempting, vividly macabre and deeply symbolic. Musicians, artists, and club kids mingle with old West Villagers as they share their tales of the 70’s and

Max’s Kansas City between the videos and performance art.

The celebration tonight has just begun and a new story is about to be written. This is mine for now, summer’s here, and the evenings are getting long...

“As only New Yorkers know, if you can get through the twilight, you’ll live through the night.” (Dorothy Parker NYC 1944)

So true – signing out from the city that never weeps.

Thomas James Summer Playlist 2012

- 1) Sometime
DIV
- 2) Rumble
Link Wray & His Wray Men
- 3) Gold On The Ceiling
The Black Keys
- 4) Gospel/Grace
Frankie Rose
- 5) Dark Paradise
Lana Del Rey
- 6) If That’s The Way You Wanna Play
Dionne Broomfield
- 7) Hard Swing Travellin’ Man
Brenda Boykin
- 8) The Beat Is Rhythm
Club Des Belugas
- 9) Strange Things
Freaks of Desire
- 10) Way Down In the Hole
Tom Waits

thomasjames77@facebook.com



**INTERVIEW
BY
FOUZIA MADANI**

PATRICK WILLIAMS - AKA MC RAGE - IS ONE OF THE LIVE BAND MEMBERS OF THE URBAN MUSIC PHENOMENON THAT IS CHASE AND STATUS, FOUNDED BY SAUL MILTON AND WILL KENNARD. HE IS A MAN WITH MANY TALENTS FROM DJ, PRODUCER, RADIO HOST TO BAND LEADER AND BUSINESSMAN - RUNNING HIS OWN MUSIC PRODUCTION ROCKNROAD - AND EVEN APPEARING IN A NEW GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR UMBRO - AND NOW I HEAR HIS HEART IS SET ON ACTING?

You wrote on your Facebook that you will be bringing for this summer festivals “a brand new set, brand new tunes and also something very, very special.” Can you tell us more about it?

We have a few surprises and of course some classics other than that I can't really say anything else more. You just have to come along and mosh out for yourself.

Chase and Status headlined the Download Festival which is recognised as a rock/metal festival ahead of Machine Head. I hear there was outcry from the Download goers. Weren't you a bit scared playing there and the reaction you will get from the crowd?

Not scared at all ... we believe your only as good as your last show and Download even with its amazing history is also another show that we want to smash along with the rest of them this summer. Also playing at Download gives us

the chance to perform to other audience that maybe have not heard of us. Like it or not we are going in for the kill.

Has Chase and Status gone all heavy metal sounding? And can we expect some real carnage between you and Machine Head? They're pretty scary you just have to watch their latest hit video Locust.

No we haven't gone all metal, we can only do us. Chase and Status are influenced by a lot of music from rock to house / reggae to blues and everything else in between; these guys are real fans of real music and you can hear that from their early stuff to now. I wouldn't be surprised if you hear a big upm smashed of that on their next album.

Maybe an album featuring the metal band?

Not sure, you would have to ask the boys about that.



“WE DON'T FOLLOW NO ONE”

What is MC Rage up to when he's not touring with Chase and Status?

When I'm not touring I'm either getting ready for another one or it's C&S dj/MC gigs which we do a lot. I think last year summer we did like 40 live festival shows and about 35 dj/mc gigs... and probably more MUDting.

Do you find that as you become more successful your music becomes more commercial or do you have to adapt your music on what's happening around you for you to get even bigger audience and keep up with the 'trend'?

No, as you get bigger you do what you feel right to your sound; we don't follow no one. Your sound would probably be more epic but just as gully.

There is a trend recently in collaborating with the artist of the moment – just to draw a bigger crowd – even if their music is so totally not compatible. It can result to a weird and very uncomfortable listening. You just have to look at Elton John and Eminem performing “Stan” or Wyclef Jean teaming up with Kenny Rogers – “The Gambler (Remix)”. What do you think?

That’s up to them; it can create hype and generate money but usually a load of bollocks unless it’s for a good cause.

What is your acting role in Plan B’s film Ill Manors?

I had a very short part in Plan B’s movie Ill Manors - that came from living with Ben (Plan B) and him offering me that part which I loved and we will see.

Do you think these days you have to look for more avenues to get noticed and promote yourself than when you started?

Depends what your music is saying or if you have other desires to be creative in different ways whether it’s acting or fashion; I think that is great. Don’t get me wrong not everybody can do it all.

What event or moment in your life that has shaped your music career?

When my mum gave me her old record player with built-in speakers and some old reggae records, between that and pirate radio stations I never had to leave my room again.

www.chaseandstatus.co.uk

“WE ARE GOING IN FOR THE KILL”



CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME



BY TOM HINGLEY

THREE THINGS THAT
WOULD IMPROVE THE
LOT OF THE MUSICIAN:

1ST

The first thing that would improve the lot of the general musician would be for less of the general public, publicans, organisations and asking them to perform charity events for no expenses. I am not a misanthrope, and have regularly performed concerts free for a variety of good causes such as Christies, Shelter and an HIV charity in Malawi. However, barely a day goes past when I am not asked to work for charities. A lot of the charity work that musicians are asked to do is very poorly thought through or regulated, and I feel it would be perfectly above board to raise the following questions to any person requiring you to perform for them, free of charge, at a charity event:

1 is the money raised by the event, and therefore donated, going to be calculated on the gross (total turnover) or net (profit)?

2 is money generated by the sale of comestibles (food and drink) going to be given to the charity?

3 are other ancillary workers, such as security/bar staff, PA and lighting personnel, going to be working for free, as you are?

4 are you going to be given evidence and costings of the gross and net amounts arising from the event, and then given the chance to enter your details in line with the charitable giving scheme, where the chosen charity can reclaim the income tax on the money donated by setting out your name and home address for the HMRC?

In many, many cases good people all over the UK are donating their venue's time and promotion for a variety of good causes, raising much needed money towards Cancer research, animal welfare, injured soldiers and their bereaved families, and mental health, but in a sizable number of cases I suspect musicians are being asked to play for free when none, or little of the money is going to any good cause at all.

The whole area is woefully unregulated, and the General Secretary of the Musicians' Union, John Smith, issued a very worthy statement about this very subject last year, stating that "it is extremely unfair to put professional musicians into a situation where they are emotionally blackmailed into working for no fee", so I am not quite a lone voice on the subject. I suspect that many believe the same as me, and are too afraid to commit the opinion to speech or writing for fear of being branded miserably negative.

2ND

The second thing that would improve the lot of musicians can be linked to this misuse of charitable events is professionalism. One reason that folk push charity work on to musicians is that Musicianship in particular, and the Creative arts in general, are massively undervalued in British society.

"THERE IS AN INFERENCE IN THE UK THAT
PLAYING MUSIC IN SOME STRANGE WAY, ISN'T 'A
PROPER JOB',"

There is an inference in the UK that playing music in some strange way, isn't 'a proper job', you know like being a traffic warden, or running an online casino, or being a brickie (not that there is anything wrong with doing any of these jobs). The implication from society seems to me to be that the public and organs of the State (media, government, education etc...) don't regard playing music as being a 'real job', which is strange, because if you have had spent thirty-five years learning your art, and drive over twenty thousand miles a year to shows, you do not consider yourself to not be doing a 'real job'. I don't feel like tugging my forelock and expressing my eternal gratitude that I am a performing musician, it's hard work and I love doing it, but it is a job, just like being a brickie, and I am unashamed to say that. Perhaps it is time for the traffic wardens, air traffic controllers, bailiffs and lollipop people of Great Britain to give up their labour for free for a good cause, and time to give hard working musicians at all levels a bit of respect and money for their entertaining and escapist qualities.

I know one thing: the HMRC treat musicianship as a 'real job' when they tax me in exactly the same way and at the same rate as they would a traffic warden or lollipop person, and yes, I do declare what I earn, because paying tax is a moral and a civil duty, something that musicians are supposed not to care about. Apparently.

"IT'S HARD WORK AND I LOVE DOING IT, BUT IT
IS A JOB, JUST LIKE BEING A BRICKIE,"

So, the musician is not going to be treated professionally unless they fight their corner and behave professionally. This means being proficient at your instrument, not playing pissed, being pleasant to your promoter, and fair to your audience. It means declaring your income, helping others, and not under-cutting competitors. It also means being a member of the Musicians Union, so that, amongst other things, you get public liability insurance and instrument insurance. It means new bands making an effort to market, promote and advertise themselves (that's three, distinct different things - if you don't know, find out what they mean) at concerts, and not rolling in with no one coming to see them, and then conveniently blaming the promoter.

%

3RD

The third thing that would benefit the lot of the musician is the most difficult to bring about, it is to attempt to separate the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the chaff, so to speak. In many parts of life there are those who play professionally, in the world of football there are a few total professionals, such as Rooney, but set against that relative few there are the many thousands who play Sunday League football all over the nation. Perhaps in the small, drunken hours of a Saturday night they dream that they might be good enough to play for Manchester United, but a few hours sleep, a cup of coffee and a run around an amateur pitch the next day kicks that illusion into touch. Still, amateur status confers fun, exercise, bonding with other players.

“THE UNSIGNED ‘INDUSTRY’ GREW OUT OF THE ‘FIFTEEN MINUTES OF FAME’ OF ANDY WARHOL,”

In another vista a fleet of company directors, shop stewards and dentists play golf to de-stress themselves from a busy world, few seriously think they will be beating Tiger Woods or Colin Montgomery at some world championship. But if that’s commonly understood in the world of sport and amateur drama, cooking and sewing, why isn’t that demarcation between fun, amateur and jobbing or person attempting to become a professional musician recognised?

What I am arguing for is for musical amateurs to accept that that is what they are, and to revel in the status. For hobby musicians to organise nights where that fun, non commercial aspect is recognised and supported by society, and for an end to the mixing of professional and of those trying to be professional together. It wouldn’t happen in the worlds of sport, modeling and architecture.

Removing the rank amateur from the gigging world would improve the lot of the professional or commercial musician a great deal, because the place where these two very different creatures meet is in the mess that is the section of music that is erroneously called ‘unsigned’.

There are very few artists who are actually ‘signed’ in the 2012 music universe. The charts are clogged up with reality television nonsense; rubbish, all of it. Yes, really all of it - total garbage! Producer-led stuff (Rihanna, Lady Ga Ga), a small number of Rock and Dance acts who have deals, while the venues are full of ‘legacy’ acts who first debuted in previous decades, such as Duran Duran from the 80’s and the Stone Roses from the 90’s.

So, if very few are ‘signed’, then what does it mean to be ‘unsigned’? It’s almost like describing yourself as ‘un-immortal’ - no one is immortal, so how can you be un-immortal?

The unsigned ‘Industry’ grew out of the ‘fifteen minutes of fame’ of Andy Warhol, and the New Deal for Musicians that Alan McGee and Tony Blair concocted during the Cool Britannia phase of Politics and social policy; it grew out of the explosion of FE colleges offering music business provision, and from the thousands of kids trying to sound like their idols: Oasis, The Smiths, Guns N’ Roses etc. What it didn’t give us was any decent bands!

People who want to play their own Amateur Karaoke should be encouraged to do so, but not in venues on ticket deals, and merely having a Facebook, SoundCloud, or Reverbnation page doesn’t make you a band/artist, just as having a golf club doesn’t make you Jack Nicklaus. I don’t want to come across as negative or elitist, but the future health of the music industry in Britain depends on happy amateurs giving up the pretence that they are ever going to even scrape a living in the music industry, and they should revel in making music to contribute to well-being, their friendships, health and self esteem, but let’s give up the vanity that any of them are ever going to make any money out of the activity.

Acting on these three issues would be a start: regulating charity concerts, respecting music as a profession equal to any other that pays tax and wages and lastly destroying the terrible lie that is the unsigned industry. That would be the start, and don’t get me started on X-Factor....

Tom Hingley’s book

Carpet Burns

About his time with the Inspiral Carpets will be out in September 2012.

Online Link:

<http://carpetburns.wordpress.com/>



JEAN



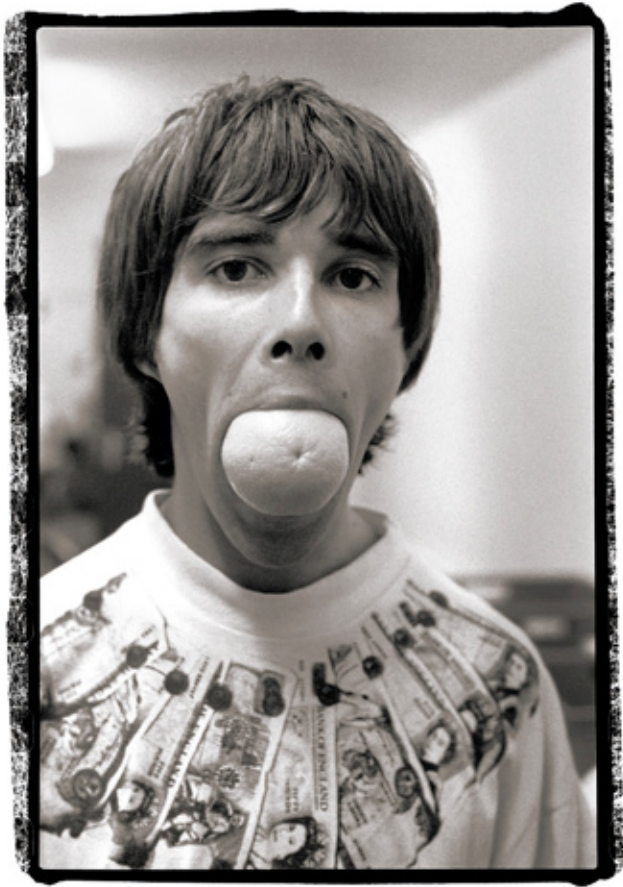
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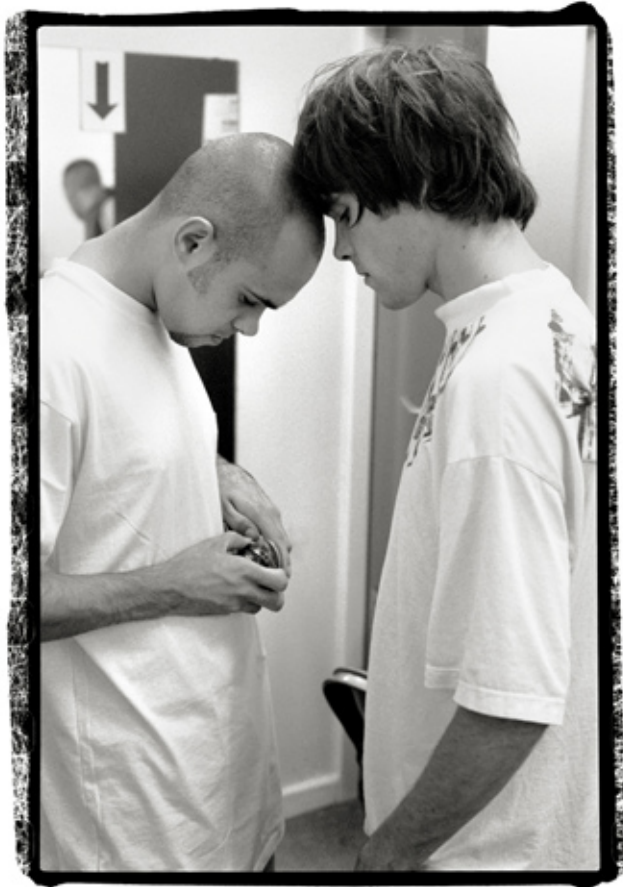
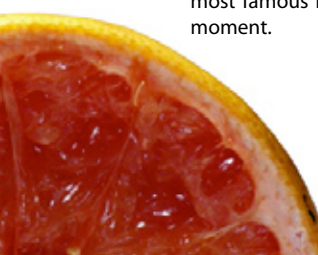
PHOTOGRAPHING
THE STONE ROSES





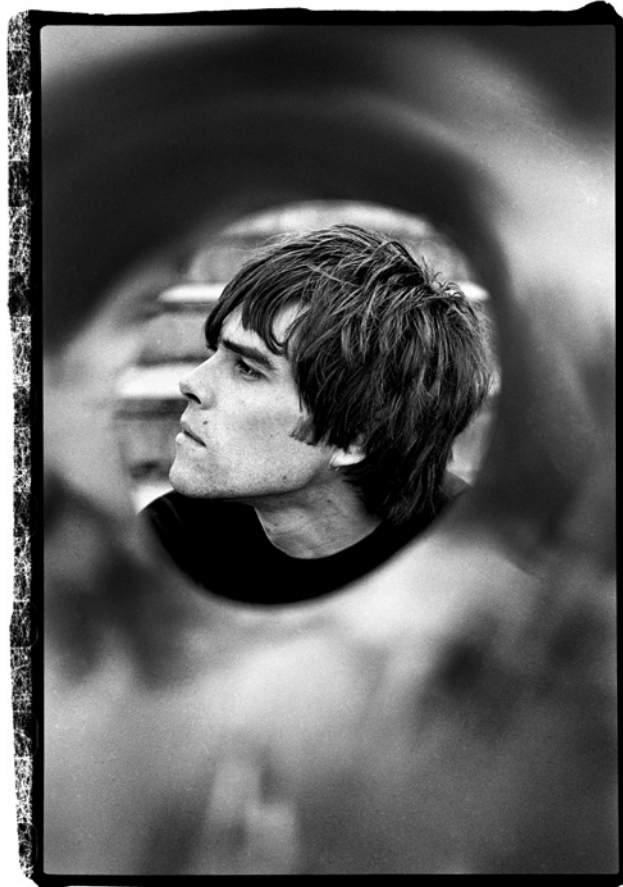
12th August 1989. Backstage at the Empress Ballroom, Blackpool.

So Ian taps me on the shoulder from behind and says, "Here, have a look at this!" He spontaneously shoves a whole jaffa orange in his mouth, so I quickly just grabbed the shot. Just one shot and that was it. And that orange in the mouth became one of his most famous images, despite being such an extremely fleeting moment.



12th August 1989. Ian and Cressa. Backstage at the Empress Ballroom, Blackpool. Repairing the yoyo that Ian walked onstage with at the beginning of their set.

One thing that really struck me about the day was the close relationship between Ian Brown and Steve Cressa. Cressa was more than just a fifth member of the band. Everyone describes him as being the Bez of the Roses, but to me his character was completely different.



April 1989. Outside Victoria Railway Station, Manchester.

Previously unseen/unpublished photo of Ian Brown. After doing an awkward interview with Dave Belcher of CUT magazine the band had their photos taken by me outside Victoria Railway Station. There were only three of them present - Reni hadn't turned up and no-one knew where he was.

INTERVIEW BY ★ IAN DAVIES ★

I am back on my home turf – Manchester. It's early May and it's raining and I am here to interview one of my friends who I last spoke to some 20 years ago but who greets you like a long lost friend - the photographer and 'Maverick of Manchester' Ian Tilton.

His photographs of The Smiths, Nirvana and Guns N' Roses are legendary but with this summer's reformation of The Stone Roses, his work is more popular than ever. He captured the greatest moments of the rise of the Manchester music scene and The Stone Roses in particular in the late 80's early 90's. He was the main man in town at this point and all the bands were vying for his documenting skills.

Ian Tilton was born and raised in Blackpool's North Shore, in an area called Anchorholme and nicknamed the 'Baked Bean Belt' because the hard working class parents, who had saved all their money to buy a house in the area, were left with just enough to afford to eat baked beans. His parents' semi-detached house had its own garage which acted as a rehearsal space for Ian's brother, Mark's band The Membranes. An unaware young Tilts was learning early the path to rock'n'roll.

Growing up near the seaside Ian's first love was for marine life; he had decided he wanted to be a Marine Biologist and this was where he first focused his attention but that wasn't to be. At the age of 14 after developing an ear infection that had been misdiagnosed and through a medical procedure that went wrong, Ian would endure numerous visits to hospitals to treat it.

The years that followed his recovery were filled with music - by placing a tape cassette speaker to his head so he could feel the vibrations and beats of the songs which became one of his main means of communicating with music.

Only at 17 when planning to go to University to study science was Ian told the full impact of his ear infection and how it was to change his future – for the rest of his life he would be deaf in his left ear. No longer was he able to swim or go under water due to the complications he could face with the water seeping in to his ear and causing further damage. This for a young lad who had dreamed of working within marine biology was a shock and forced a change in his life that would take his career into a completely different direction – photography.

After completing a photographic degree course at the famed Blackpool and Fylde College, Ian moved to Manchester to pursue a career in photography. With his life long friend and music journalist, Jon Robb, Ian developed a working partnership which included regular commissions for iconic music magazine Sounds, documenting the music scene of Manchester at the very point when the revolution of the 'Manchester' music scene was emerging.



Your style of photography is very social documentary and about catching the personality and the moment. How did you develop this style?

In the early days I was influenced a lot by the photography of Anton Corbijn and Kevin Cummins from their rock photography for the NME; Jim Marshall and Peter Anderson were also great and although I didn't like her work initially I later grew to love

the work of Lynda McCartney.

I always had ideas of how my photography should look and always prepared for things to come to life - sometimes encouraging the artists by developing the banter, but I always wanted to show my subject's humanity. It was important that I had a good technical knowledge of the equipment as I did not want to stop the flow by arranging lights or fiddling around with apertures.

I was very worried that at one point I did not have my own style, it was a gradual process that developed over time and which was created with a sense of keeping the subject loose and shooting spontaneously, but once I found this feel to my photography I felt pretty much freed up and it felt like I was being true to myself. I loved this aspect of the work of Pennie Smith who shot all the famous Clash photographs.



Your photography documents an important period of the Manchester music, culture and heritage and in particular with The Stone Roses. How did you get to meet The Stone Roses?

From a shoot I had done on the Hacienda club in the summer of 1985, I had met Howard 'Ginger' Jones who was the first manager of the Hacienda and coincidentally Howard was also the manager of

The Stone Roses and after getting to know and chat to him a bit more about their music he showed me some photographs of the band which he had signed to his own label Thin Line Records. He played me some of their music and initially I didn't like it - it was a bit old hat, a bit punky and the photographs which I think he had taken himself and processed at Boots showing members of the band wearing red bandanas were a bit shite. So initially I did not connect

with them and let it go. But for the next two years I was seeing walls all over Manchester graffitied with their name 'The Stone Roses' and it got so much and so widespread that I think even the council were chasing after them. So that got them a decent rebellious name and people started talking about them and then in September 1987 I was commissioned by Sounds magazine to photograph them.

I did the first main music magazine shoot with them in my studio at 191 Oswald Road in Chorlton which was just a room in my house which actually was also my bedroom; it had a permanent colorama set up against the wall and had good daylight, but this was also the room where I slept on a futon which I would roll up and turn the bedroom into a studio. When they arrived they looked nothing like the band I had seen in the early shots.

Which band member at the time had more an impact on you more than the others?

I knew each of them in different ways; Ian (Brown) was probably the most chatty, the most amenable and a really clever man. He would know something about everything. In fact he seemed to know a lot about a lot of things - they were grammar school lads. A mate of mine and an old school friend of his said that at school they nicknamed him Ibex, which was an old computer company, as he was so brainy. Ian was always bringing something new, bringing his inspiration and always full of surprises. He used to live near to my brother in West Didsbury and knew loads of people and this is where I got to meet all his old gangster mates.

How often did you shoot with The Stone Roses?

From 1987 I was shooting them on and off for a number of different fanzines and press. I shot around 14 sessions with the band - some of which I can't remember who for, but it was a combination of being asked by the band and from magazine commissions.

Did you or they realise how big The Stone Roses would become?

I never thought we would be still talking about The Stone Roses some 20 - 25 years later. I didn't know they were going to be as good as they really were. I knew they had a great live act when I saw them, but how they touched a nerve of the world's youth, I still cannot quite fathom.

What made them different from other bands?

Their sense of style, the experimentation and how they constantly evolved. I like it when there are things that are odd about bands that don't fit because when the package is too correct, then it's too obvious.

What changes in them did you notice when they made it big?

They were always consistent, even when I didn't know them and now that I know a lot more of the history of them, they were always chopping and changing, their interest in clothes, in style - the look was very important, the gang mentality, the Perry boys look and the scooter clubs that they were associated with. It was all a bit laddish culture and verging on the violence as well, I am not sure how much I should say on that as I never witnessed any violence just heard the rumours, but every time I photographed them they were experimenting with their clothing, their haircuts and they got confident with doing that.

Do you miss that unity?

I do miss the unity. The culture was very much kick started by people taking ecstasy, and people connecting up which loosened something up in our minds. We did feel the love between people and it wasn't false, it was the genuine thing. It opened our minds in a similar way to maybe the 60's psychedelia period with LSD did for that generation.

You took so many shots of them, what's your favourite?

Ian Brown pulling a monkey face is my favourite shot. This was a cover shoot for Sounds magazine and the first shoot where Ian was wearing the money shirt and also wearing hipsters which were well below his belly button and showing his pubes off, which for a guy was weird as hipsters up to this point had normally been associated with women from the 60's.



27th May 1990. Spike Island, Cheshire.

I captured what I consider to be the definitive Spike Island gig shot of Brown holding the inflatable world. If you look closely at the photograph, he is actually licking the ball! I got the right angle; I was in the right place at the right time.





27th May 1990. Spike Island, Cheshire.

“WHEN THE PACKAGE
IS TOO CORRECT
THEN IT’S TOO OBVIOUS”

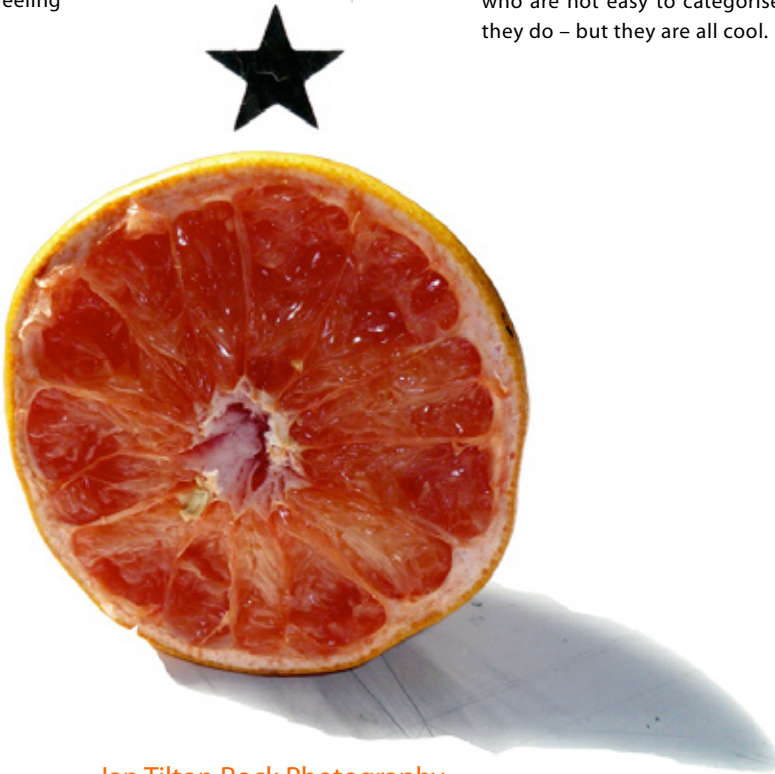
Do you think in today's world that photographing bands like you did, a band like The Stone Roses with that kind of access, would be possible?

No, it's all changed. It changed about 15 years ago. At gigs I was getting first three songs only (opportunity to photograph bands for the start of the live gig) and I was going, 'What do you mean the first three songs only? Give me the last three!' because the first 3 songs were usually shit. The band were not really into it and had not come to life - they are just waking up, they're not sweating and they're no feeling

the soul. But the security man would say, 'Sorry mate can't do that' because he's a security man, just doing his job and he doesn't understand. Whereas we used to hang out for the whole time and get access all over the place, so we got great photographs which made the band look brilliant and now you don't get that. So it's shit now. This is why today I loathe to shoot live music because there's always some asshole just going, 'Go away!' and even when you explain you have been given authorisation comes the reply, 'I don't care you're not doing it!' and by the time you have sorted it out the band have finished.

Upprör is very focused on new artists. Are there any that you feel we may still be looking at in 20 years from now?

Yeah, the Janice Graham Band are just fantastic and Deadbeat Echoes are great with their energy and honesty. The fact that people can just let go during a performance and just experience the moment and the music that's always the part for me, a certain honesty. There's also Karima Francis who at first I thought had a melancholic sound to her music but discovered later that there was a great joy in the songwriting and really moving and a band called Frazer King who are not easy to categorise what they do – but they are all cool.



Ian Tilton Rock Photography
www.iantilton.net

JACK ROYLE

INTERVIEW BY EMILY McDONALD

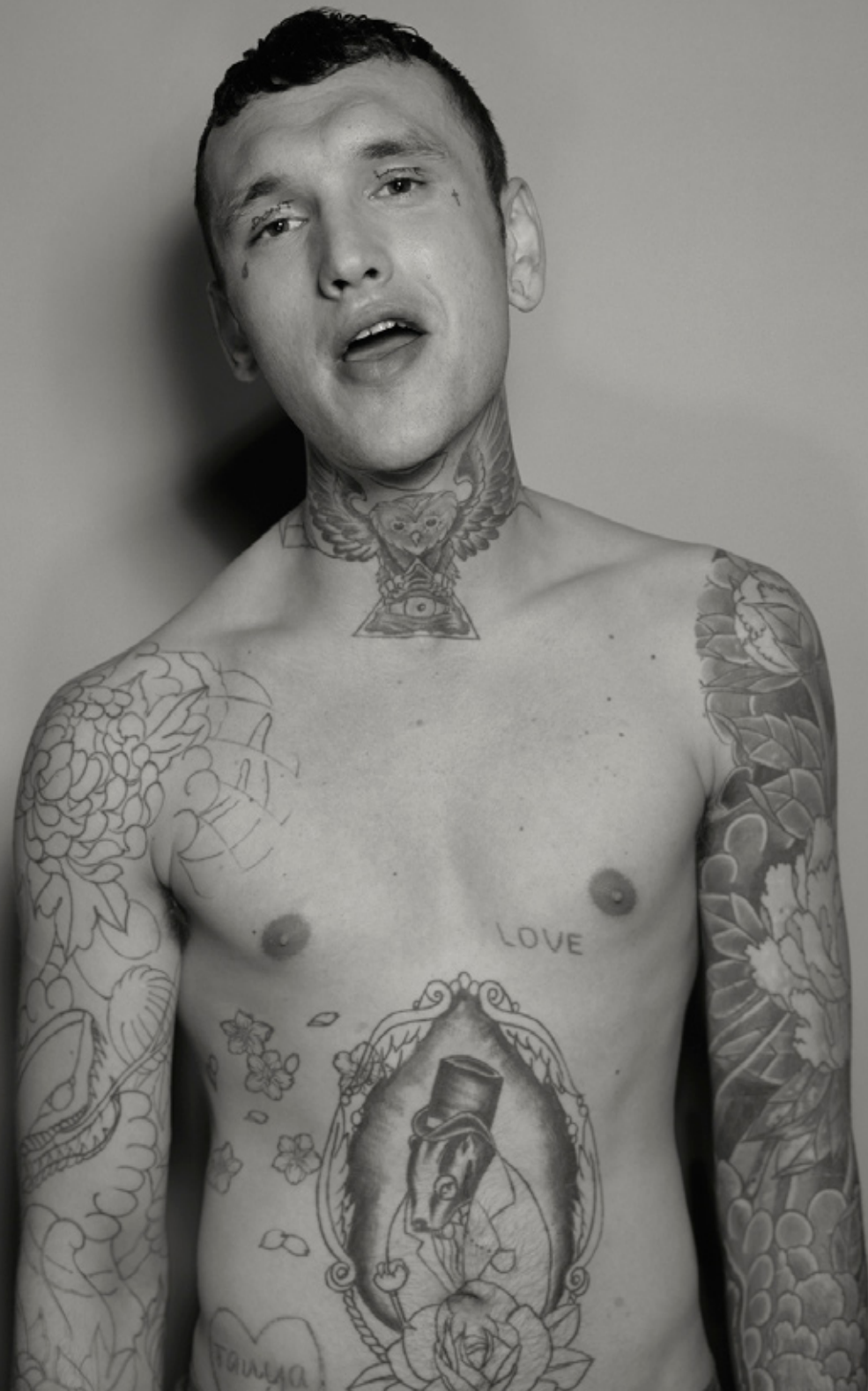
My flat buzzer has just gone off and on the other end of the telecom I hear an “Alright babes? It’s me!” in a mock Scottish accent. I don’t have to ask who it is so I hit the buzzer and let him in. The stomping of his Dr Martens hitting the stairs confirms that it’s Jack and within a matter of seconds he has burst through my front door and thrown his arms around me planting a slobbery kiss on my cheeks. He talks enthusiastically about his plans for the rest of the weekend until I manage to cut in long enough to get him to sit down.

The first time I saw Jack he was sweeping up hair in a salon I was in. At the end of my haircut I asked, “Who is the boy with a walk reminiscent of Vinnie Jones in Lock Stock?” “His name is Jack Royle,” she said. “He’s heading back to

Manchester in a week. I think London may have got the better of him, which is a shame because he is a pretty nice boy.”

Now 4 years on Jack and I have become friends. We met one night and got talking over our mutual interest in tattoos. During some late night/early morning drunken conversations Jack told me how much he enjoyed acting and as I’m an aspiring filmmaker we decided to try and make something together.

Chicken Town is about not judging people on their appearance because people always make assumptions about Jack based on the way he looks. In the film Jack does a reading of the John Cooper Clarke poem “Evidently Chickentown”.



Can you tell me a little bit about growing up?

I was born in Plymouth, but I grew up in Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds then I moved to London when I was 16. I did college for a couple months but I got thrown out for not attending. Shit! Maybe we shouldn't put that in?

After that I was quite lost for a few years, doing this and that really. Mostly odd jobs like hairdressing, bar work, stuff that you just fall into. After a while I left London and went back home. I was there not doing anything. I was alive but I wasn't really living. I'm really glad I did because since I got back everything has just fallen into place. It feels almost like a reward for taking time out.

Do you mean the modeling?

Yes exactly. One day some girl in Topshop saw me and said that her mate was a photographer. Couple of days later I was being dressed up like a chav for a magazine and from there it just sort of dominoed.

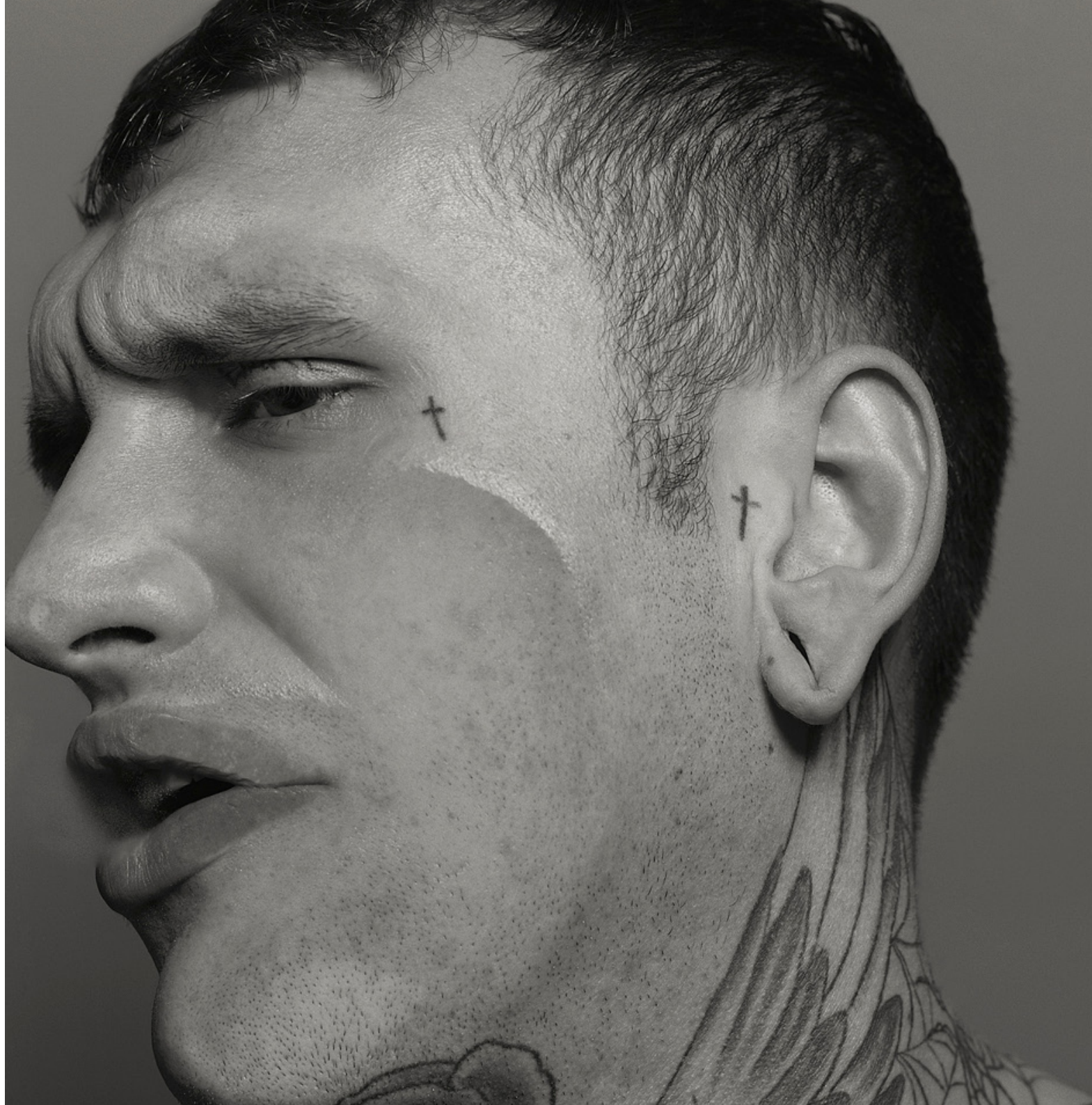
What is the best thing about modeling?

Getting paid! If people want to pay me for standing around looking pissed off I'm more than happy to take their money. It's a good way of making links; work hard on a shoot and more people will ask to work with you. The more work you do the higher your chance of succeeding.

Do you have a specific shoot that you have enjoyed most?

Dr Martens. I got to work with the best people; the guys that work there are not your typical fashion people. Billie Turnbull the model I worked with is really talented, and Gavin Watson was the photographer. He is one of the reasons I have started acting. Always that voice in my ear telling me to do my best, he is one of the most real people I have ever met.

“I WAS ALIVE BUT I WASN'T REALLY LIVING. I'M REALLY GLAD I DID BECAUSE SINCE I GOT BACK EVERYTHING HAS JUST FALLEN INTO PLACE. IT FEELS ALMOST LIKE A REWARD FOR TAKING TIME OUT.”





Do you think you get typecast on shoots?

Definitely. When I'm on photoshoots or at castings and I'm speaking to people I try to come across a bit softer. Everyone judges, it's a human thing to do. If I saw me walking down the street I'd cross the road too. The best thing I can do about being typecast is to thrive off it.

Obviously you have a shit load of tattoos, what was the first one that you got?

I was 16. I did a home-made cross on my wedding finger at a mate's house. I had decided to try and track my real dad down, and to help my mum sent me a photo of him – in the photo he had that tattoo. He is quite an inspiration to me. I think it was about becoming an adult, you know you get to 16 and you're sort of in-between. You're almost an adult but still a child. So it was like almost about figuring out where I was from and trying to make some sort of link between my dad and me.

Do you regret any of them?

Nope not once. I don't think you should spend your time regretting things.

Each and every tattoo has some sort of meaning behind it. It's like my life painted on me. Even if it's something that reminds me of bad times, it's a constant reminder to never go back there again.

They all tell a story?

Yes, the owl on my throat symbolises leaving home; flying the coop sort of thing. The rat symbolises my time on London streets and is a reminder to do my best to further myself and never to let that happen again. Ex-girlfriend's name on my hand - she got me into acting and was a very important person in my life.

The owl is easily my favourite, is it yours?

Yes, it's the best done. Though I like the badger on my stomach, he is pretty cool.

What kind of reactions do you get from people in the street passing you?

People come up and ask if they can take photos; sometimes I get given cards for modeling etc... I get more positive than negative responses. Obviously you get a few dickheads shouting stuff but I just think each to their own. I judge as well - I would be lying if I said I didn't walk down the street and thought some guy dressed in Boy London and pink leggings with a bowl cut wasn't a dickhead because I would. But that's just my opinion. Everyone's entitled to their own which means people can think what they choose to about me.

I agree babes. So the reason I got asked to do this interview was because we recently made a short film together. Do you prefer acting or modeling?

Acting!

How come?

I get to express myself more. People say a picture is worth a thousand words but my opinion is that a few words are worth a million pictures. With modeling I get told to look angry, sad or tough. I can only convey a certain amount of emotions. But with acting I can convey any emotion that the script asks me to because I can use words.

“PEOPLE SAY A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS BUT MY OPINION IS THAT A FEW WORDS ARE WORTH A MILLION PICTURES.”

Do you remember the first thing you ever acted in?

I was the third sheep in the school nativity play.

Is that your highlight so far?

Maybe (laughing). No I think the first proper thing I did was a music video. I had to learn some fucking rap song in French and rap into the camera. It was pretty shit, the song was shit and I can't speak French - so that was shit too. But I got paid and there was a hot girl in it. So it was all right.

Has there been anything that you have acted in and not liked?

No, I wouldn't do something that I didn't completely believe in.

Do you think you will ever get to play a character nothing like yourself?

What like Mr Darcy or some shit?

Maybe the next Hugh Grant?

Fuck Hugh Grant!

What's been the film you have been most proud of?

Chicken Town, the film we made together.

Really? (Fishing for compliments)

I'm not just saying that, it was just so on spot. We met to start shooting and within minutes it had started pissing it down, we had an hour to get everything we needed, did a couple takes of each shot and then you put it together really well. When I saw it for the first time I got quite emotional.

Did you cry?

Fuck no! I didn't cry! But it did touch my heart a little bit. I think it's just really great. I would love to do some more work like that, and with you! Maybe putting my own poetry into it?

You just mentioned that you have started writing, tell me what you write about?

I have always had a good imagination, when I was a kid I used to write stories about mice with swords that lived in huge castles. Obviously I don't write about that stuff anymore. I've got a script that I have started and I like writing poetry. Angry poetry. I blame it on the film I did with you. I really liked the poem from it by John Cooper Clarke so I decided to do my own little take on it about London. Since that I have written a few more about love, shoplifting that sort of thing. Oh and bunking the train! Sometimes I wake up and it will just be there, I'm just like, 'get me

a pen, I need a fucking pen right now'. Then sometimes I'm bored so I decided to do some but I can't think of anything. It's either there or it's not.

What would be the best thing you could see happening to you in the next 6 months?

Getting a lead role in something. I know it's a real long shot but if you don't put your dreams and aspirations out there you've got less chance of achieving them.

What would you want to say to any film directors out there?

It's basically about taking a risk. Take a risk on this tattooed guy who looks like he would rob your nan. It's a tough call. If I rolled back the clocks to 18 months ago I was in my parents' attic not doing anything, sad, lonely, no direction. This is something that I've got a fire for. There's a fire in my belly, and all I want to do is fuel it more. If someone gives me something, gives me an opportunity I'm going to fucking grab it with both hands and gobble the whole thing up before anyone else can have any. I will bust my fucking balls to make this a reality.

“I’M GOING TO FUCKING GRAB IT WITH BOTH HANDS AND GOBBLE THE WHOLE THING UP BEFORE ANYONE ELSE CAN HAVE ANY. I WILL BUST MY FUCKING BALLS TO MAKE THIS A REALITY.”





MATT

CARROLL

INTERVIEW BY Fouzia Madani

Matt Carroll, Pat Carroll and Karen Jackson are the geniuses behind Central Station Design. With the help of Factory Records, they dominated the 'Madchester' era with their impressive, bold and no boundaries forward thinking designs. Artworks for bands like the Happy Mondays, then Black Grape, James and Northside captured and inspired a whole new generation of artists, designers and working class kids nationally and globally. Their designs were humorous, fun, filled with vivid colours and psychedelia. It was in a way 'a big fuck off to all the shit' out there at the time and it fitted perfectly with the type of people they are and the bands they collaborated with: genuine and unpretentious. Who can forget Shaun Ryder fronting the album cover of Bummed in a Freudian-like painted portrait or the montage of popular children's sweet wrappers on the original sleeve cover of Pills 'n' Thrills and Bellyaches.

Simply iconic.

Are they in the same league as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein or Peter Blake?
Damn sure they are.



When was the last time you saw a great art work – that wasn't yours - on a record sleeve that made a big impact on you?

To be honest I can't even think of one. I think it has become an increasingly lost art form in many ways; one because of the size and format it has taken. It was first lost with the CD, the advent of the MP3 in the 2000s, and now with download - people just download the track or album for free on pirate sites and don't really have the love and care that they once had for the album cover - a great loss of soul, as the cover played so much a part of the whole experience.

I thought it was great about 6 years ago when bands and artists seemed to take control again on MySpace, with some great and interesting work, but that again has become lost. All my mates still download the cover art to iTunes, even though they nick the music, which I hate - thinking about all the hours and hard work that has been spent in producing this work. It's time for change.

Maybe cut out the middle man, where the money goes straight to the artist and the people involved in producing this. It's great that vinyl has made a resurgence over the last few years but I don't think you can stop progress and technology.

But having said all that about formats, our approach was always that if it didn't work the size of a postage stamp then it did not work and looking at so many of our covers now used on YouTube and iPhones I think we accomplished that.

The painting of Shaun Ryder on the Bummed LP sleeve (1988) is still so original, so collectible and so timeless. Are you proud of it when you look at it now?

Yeah, it still works, and like I have just been saying works on all formats at whatever size - on iTunes, YouTube, Google, iPhones, and still on T-shirts. In fact the number of people that still use that image as their profile image on Facebook is incredible - not forgetting in its original format as silkscreen print.

Shaun Ryder must have been very pleased with it. Do you still see each other?

He still bobs his head in to see us. Shaun is our cousin, so yeah we still see a lot of him; he is family so that's only to be expected. There has always been a great respect for each other whoever they are within our family.

Looking back now – did the artwork help Happy Mondays, and even later on with Black Grape, reach a greater audience and success than if it was a simple photograph stuck on the cover?

Definitely it had great impact, visually, and the way that people perceived the band, that's why so many fans became artists or designers. They are still iconic images to this day; people all over the world recognise this. I think the problem with a photograph of a band is that it dates so quickly, and so often doesn't stand the test of time.



How did you come up with the idea?

At the time with Bummed we had been working on a set of paintings for an exhibition to be held at the Manchester Art Gallery, called Hello Playmates - Bummed was worked in the same style. With Black Grape's Its Great When You're Straight...Yeah this idea had been subconsciously in our minds for years.

Do you wish you had more colourful character musicians and artists to work with now? Is Manchester full of them?

Manchester seems to have a knack of producing colourful characters, from the scuttlers to the likes of Anthony Burgess of Clockwork Orange fame and so on. Over the last few years I think Manchester has had or given birth to a lot of imported bands and musicians who originally-maybe came to go to university and then stayed, but we still have our own breed of musical characters and character.

Do you look sometimes at some artist's work, sleeve cover or poster and think 'they got it totally wrong' or 'if only they came to us'?

Yeah I have seen a few lost opportunities, but most of the time I don't like the band or music anyway, so feel maybe pleased that they didn't come to us.

Do you have a band, artist or actor you really want to work with?

A few bands that I have seen live recently like TOY and Beth Jeans Houghton and I have loved Herman Dune for about 5 years... but my mind changes from week to week. I think we would also like to work with Shane Meadows, just because we have loved all his films.

You nearly did the artwork on one of the albums of the Rolling Stones? What happened? If you had the chance what would you have done?

Yeah, after we had done the Black Grape art work, the Stones asked us if we could go down to their offices in London to show our work for a possible new album that they were working on, but as history has it Keith, the ex-art student, wanted to do it himself and that became the cover. If I remember rightly it became one of their collections of increasingly bad covers. Our idea was to take them back to their glory days of great cover art.

I see so many extremely bad album covers and posters splattered around London and know straight away not one single thought have been put into it. Creative projects are non-existent. Have records companies lost their way and are more interested in the quick fix: stick a poor image of an artist on the cover and hope for the best? Does it really cost to commission the right artwork? Or are they just clueless? Artwork sleeves do matter, don't they?

I think clueless and quick fix are probably the right words. But there are still some great record labels like Heavenly Records run by Jeff Barrett, and Offworld Sounds run by my brother Pete, that do still genuinely care about the music and the art work they put out, along with the likes of Alan McGee when he was running Creation Records and then Poptones Records, and also a lot of small independent labels too numerous to mention. But in the main I think that the major record labels are now and have been for some time run by accountants with no real love of music or art - just interested in the quick fix and quick bucks.

Do you think that this type of business is becoming saturated with mediocre work and they [records companies] cannot distinguish the bad from the crap?

I think the main problem now is that everything is done in marketing terms and anyone with a Mac can be a so called artist or - I hate the word - graphic designer. But having said that, real soul and meaning will always shine.



How special was Central Station relationship with Factory Records?

This is a big one! One of the first things that Factory gave to us was complete freedom to express ourselves with no consideration of cost or how this could be achieved. It was always about the art and the artist - with no real consideration for profit - which is why all the artists owned their own copyright on all work produced.

They gave people like us from working class backgrounds and council estates a chance to express ourselves and some kind of freedom, which looking back was a whole new way of thinking and philosophy. If only the government had the trust and foresight to see the potential in young people today, maybe we wouldn't be in the state we are in now. Everybody given the right opportunity and backing has talent; the government don't see this and just throw people on the scrap heap. That's what was so great about Factory, Tony (Wilson), Alan (Erasmus) and Rob (Gretton). They didn't do that.

I have met designers who cannot design and have no clue about the fundamentals and importance of typography and even what it can bring to the whole visual. Do you think it is an overlooked art skill and that it is not taught properly anymore?

I think this is one of the problems with the Mac designers - they don't understand the fundamentals and the background of typography like letterpress, and the huge trays of type which we learned how to hand-set, doing all the leading and kerning. Learning how to hand-set could be a great first step before entering Mac world. I have a great respect for the early Russian typographers, Swiss typography and Bauhaus but this was something we rejected because we wanted to create something new in our own style.





Do you get pissed off when people compare your work to Warhol or George and Gilbert? Anyway is it remotely similar to theirs?

I don't think it's such a bad thing to be compared to one of the 20th century's greatest artists. To be honest the first time I read an article about us, that mentioned Gilbert and George I didn't even know who they were, and I can remember asking our Pat, 'Gilbert and George? Who are they?'

Is Manchester the best place to be a designer? Have you tried to move to London or New York to get more work 'opportunities' or shall I say more creative projects? Or when you're that good and talented the work comes to you anyway?

Our first jobs were in London. Me and Pat first worked in a design studio in London, but would end up getting the train home, every other weekend, to see our mates and go out in Manchester - that's when we decided to move back to Manchester and set up our own thing Central Station. London was dead.

Your brother Pat, Karen and yourself work as a collective – how do you share the responsibility or roles for each project? Or is it something you never talk about?

We have always kept the door locked and will continue to do so.

What is like working with your brother for such a long time?

We grew up together and were into the same things, music, football, boxing and art, or drawing as we called it then. We have had our fall outs from time to time but realize that life's too short for all that bullshit - so we just get on with it.

Fac Off



I read somewhere that your first introduction to art was thanks to your dad and your eldest brother. Is this true?

Yes that is true. Our dad was a great man; in fact we lost our dad this time in May last year. He served 4 years in the army during the second world war in India, came home a year after the war was won in Europe due to the fact that the war continued in South-East Asia, so missed out on the VE Day celebrations! When he did arrive back in Salford he married and had nine kids which he then struggled with my mum to bring up. He was a great thinker and reader, and opened our mind to new ways of thinking - he introduced us to magazines and books that we would never have looked at. It opened up a world that had a massive effect on us. Some of the visual images we discovered at that time like when we read about the air disaster with the rugby team in the Andes - that fascinated us; reading about things like the Baader-Meinhof gang stuff like that had a big impact on us and influenced our work eventually. He even bought a book in a sale about Feliks Topolski. I will also always remember the day that he bought a large print of Peel Park, Salford by LS Lowry, and Ronnie the Hoover man was round to fix the Hoover - he was a great man, a real old Salford character - who said that he had known Lowry... well this as a very young kid just fascinated me. How could he have known the man from what seemed to me like an ancient history from a bygone time; I went on to find out more about Lowry and to this day love his work.

www.centralstationdesign.com

Also our Pete had a massive influence on me and our Pat as kids growing up. He had a massive record collection of 1000's of albums which would be leaning against every wall in the front room a yard deep - these would be our first real introduction to art. I loved the cover art, and when I got the chance to get into that room, I would change the covers around at the front of each box to have a look; it was like having your own personal exhibition of some great art.

Central Station influenced the Manchester music scene – even the culture at that time in a big way. Was it intentional?

I don't think you can have any real concept of influencing a culture at the time when you are doing it. Then again we did see half the population walking around in T-shirts with our art work on it - so we must have had some idea!

What was or were your most memorable(s) event from that period?

The recording of Pills 'N' Thrills at Capital Records, CBGB's, acid in Cleveland, Ohio, It's Great When You're Straight... Yeah getting to number 1.

What does the Hacienda and the 'Madchester' era mean to you now?

Friendship and relationships. I think the positive thinking and optimism created at that time change the face of Manchester and you can still see the effects today.

This interview is dedicated to Tom and Mary Carroll.

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