

DRAFT INTERVIEW FOR GO MAGAZINE

Hi miqui

thanks for the questions and I'm pleased you took the time to write them.
I hope I can answer to your satisfaction and I hope to send some new band photo's soon that maybe you could use for the magazine
All the best ... Simon

1.- My first question is easy. I've read a very suggestive quote: "Greatest songs are usually written in times of the most stress"? Well, your album is amazing. what can you tell me about your stress? How are you feeling lately?

A = was that quote from a bitter spring? Could be true I'm not sure though. I know of a lot of great songs and don't know how they came about. I would reckon a good deal come about by accident. Speaking for myself though, my songs are written in a hundred different circumstances. I have just finished one (it's all happening here) which must have taken about 3 years to complete and on the other hand a song like it's business say from our 1st lp (parish of arthritis) seemed to take a matter of minutes . I certainly get stressed when I struggle with a song or if I'm struck with inspiration and I'm in the middle of nowhere without a pen (that's an idea for song in itself) but one thing I have learned is you cannot force a song into being you need to give them time ultimately they reveal themselves it all shows in the end result.
My stress lately has been high because running the label (Harvey) has meant dealing first hand with reviews editors for news papers and magazines in England and if I had allowed myself a promotion budget I would have spent a large proportion of it on hit men to deal with any publications that didn't run reviews of the new album. How will people know it's out there if no one writes about it? But I have been very calm and polite. And now the LP is coming out I'm ready to record the next one and go through it all again

2. - Your name, Bitter springs, gives a lot of information about your approach to song writing. Do you think the best songs have comedy and tragedy in equal doses?

A = Bitter springs; it was the title of an old Ealing studios film starring Tommy Trinder and Gordon Jackson. I've never thought about it conveying anything about a songwriting approach. We chose the name because it sounded so English .Bitter being a word we English use to describe cold mornings and springs meaning the season like a bitter spring which is often the case in England. We soon found out that it's a place in Australia which is where the film is set. I have not seen the film.
I think the best songs must have an element of realism in them which would obviously include comedy and tragedy I try hard not too make things up and life is so ridiculous I don't really need to. But I have just finished one song where a man has sex with his dog and the puppies are a cross between him and the dog/bitch that just happens incidentally to be called beyonce. Some of my songs are totally autobiographical but the listener doesn't need to know which ones. As long as I'm believable I don't care what else is thought of me. Comedy and tragedy sometimes it's hard to tell which is which.

3.- I think you're very into irony. I think irony is very important in good lyrics (I'm thinking about Magnetic Fields, Microdisney.), but a lot of people just think of pop music as a question of naïveté and that rock is all about viscerality. Do you think irony is underestimated in pop music?

A = microdisney they were a great group, I saw them at Kingston college a few years back. Cathal Coughlan was a great singer and front man. when I'm writing I feel more like I'm making a documentary sometimes or maybe a reporter exposing the life and times in which he lives I try my best to say what you won't hear in any other songs I don't consider if I'm being ironic or not but each song is different . In one I'll be the most spiteful sarcastic bastard on the planet and the next I'll be oozing with sentimental slush.

Until you ask me these questions I don't really consider these things I don't know myself that well. But I follow my instincts. As for irony I think maybe there is too much irony in music. But of course there is room for all varieties in music as in life. As a live band Bitter Springs are more of a visceral affair

4.- I think you share a vision of pop and rock music very similar to Postcard bands or Vic Godard... Do you think pop music can be intelligent without being pedantic? Are the bands that follow this idea your favourites?

A = I have been lucky enough to have met and worked with Vic Godard and Edwin Collins. We have never had a producer for any of our LPs other than ourselves but if we did I would've liked Edwin for the job. I don't know Edwin that well but Vic tells me he is recovering slowly but steadily from his recent illness. And this is great news. I don't know if we have a shared vision of pop and rock but what I do know is that Vic is very clever on the rhythmic side of things and lyrically very very good and I was a huge fan before we met and even after working together that is still the case, although I must say he is infuriating a lot of the time and possibly the worst time keeper in the universe.

There is room for pedantry in music but not too much room, it doesn't have longevity. That's why someone like John Peel was so important for music he had no rule book and also understood that sometimes it is not even so important for you to like what you are hearing.

Likewise I don't always like or agree with what I am saying in some songs but I feel it has to be said. So I'll say it. I don't think music should be about popularity contests And I don't think music is all about being clever quite often it's just the opposite. The struggle for expression is all important.

I like to hear songs and not make out what the singer is singing as it is often disappointing to find out what they are really saying. I usually make up my own words anyway that's how I began writing when I was six or seven year's old hearing songs on the radio with my sister and then making up our own words to the tunes.

However ... having said that

There is a lyric sheet of all the songs with this LP although I don't think that it is important to have every word known and explained so don't read it ... ha ha

5.- By the way, how's your relationship with Godard? Like you, he's coming

to play to BCN soon. I think you have a lot in common with his "What's the matter, boy?" album. Would you agree with it?

A = when I was 16 just before going camping in the south of France I bought 3 lps Vic Godard's What's the matter boy , Kate and Anna mcgarrigle's self titled first album and a triple lp Edith piaf box set . I made a compilation tape with my favourite tracks from each what a wonderful mix it was. We caught the train at Paddington station and realised we had left the tent behind. But we didn't let a minor detail like that spoil the holiday besides we also had Heaven 17s penthouse and pavement LP on cassette which all 3 of us (Daniel from the springs plus friend Martin and me) were well into at that time. So yes to get back to your question (what's the matter boy) it was a big influence on me but so were Piaf and the Mcgarrigles. They still are.

6.- I've read you work in a post office. How does it help to your lyrics? And to your vision of human beings? There's a Spanish songwriter that used to work in a gas station and he always says that he needs to work there to keep writing.

A= yes I am a postman and the wizard (keyboards) is too. He drives the vans and I deliver the mail .It's a good job and you get a lovely red bike to ride in the sun and the wind and the rain. I enjoy being a vital cog in the community in which I grew up. Actually I must admit I think a lot of writers in music could do with getting a regular job Get down off of the pedestals and into real life, that's a constant source of inspiration to me. When I think I've not been writing that much I'll look around me and find another batch of songs have almost appeared from nowhere. I don't think I would like to work in a petrol station though

7.- Do you feel close to the C86 spirit, the mix of shamble feel and jangle guitars?

A = not really no but I do like the do it yourself attitude I feel with Bitter Springs we are outside of the outsiders. We don't appear to have many allies within the music world

8.- It's very funny the way Nicks wears a rock star t-shirt on the picture on your CD sleeve notes. He looks like the perfect anti-rock star.

A = do you think so. Nick is the new boy in the band he has a lot of t shirts that say things. He has just told us that he is to be married. He had better be an anti rock star or else he doesn't belong in Bitter Springs

9.- Tell me about the title "That sentimental slush". What does it mean for you?

A = that sentimental slush is a line from gathering dust well, almost. The line is in fact the sentimental slush but hey let's not be pedantic here (ho ho). I am a sentimental person myself in the sense where I am affected by emotions. I usually channel that into my songs I've had periods where my only emotional communication is through the songs and that's not a very healthy thing. You can over sentimentalise though and gathering dust is about that thing where everything reminds you of someone you love so you just cling onto it and are buried under a mound of clutter

I've been known to get a bit sentimental sometimes. Particularly When I've had a glass of wine or three, that's the slush kicking in. There's nothing wrong with a bit of sentimentality though it's what keeps the world alive otherwise what are we?

Thanks ..Simon J Rivers