

LIAM

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Story by ADINA ILIE

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Liam Gallagher is a presence to be reckoned with. Clad in his iconic khaki parka, he struts confidently into the room: “Are we doing this or not?”

We walk towards an isolated corner of his preferred meeting place: a brasserie in Highgate. Some musicians might be wary of conducting an interview in such a public spot, but the staff know Liam, and he’s comfortable here. When he starts to talk, it’s with the timbre and confidence of a man who’s consistently rated among the greatest frontmen of all time. “I’m not one to sit in a corner but, if we are, we might as well be loud about it.”

Sitting face to face with the man who graced, on average, 3.5 NME covers per year between ‘94 and ‘04, it’s easy enough to remember what an iconic figure he was during Oasis’ heyday. Britpop was the new Beatles, George Best, and James Bond rolled into one. Everyone wanted to look like Liam, to sing like him, to bottle up his swagger and try it out on with the girls.

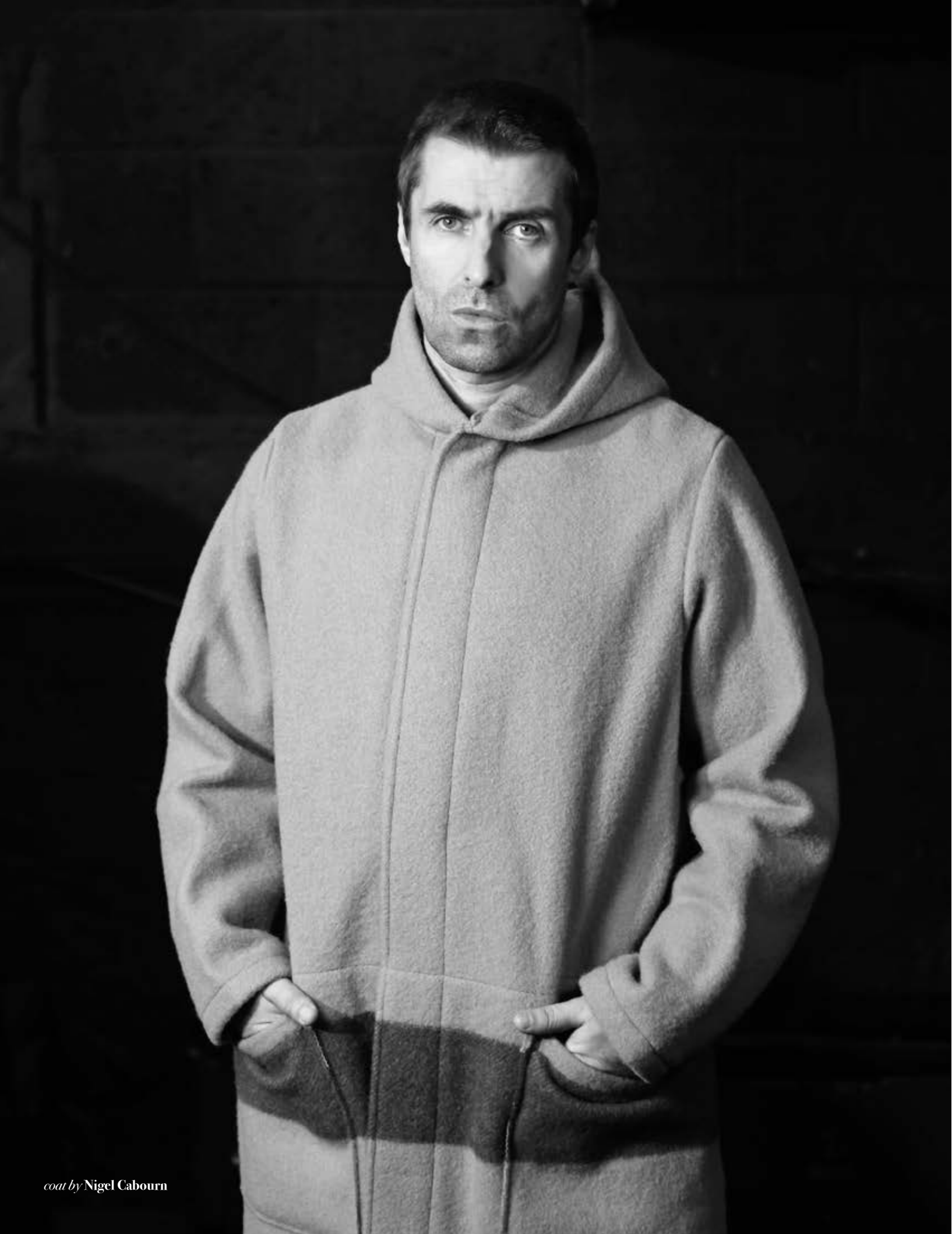
Etched deeply into the face that launched a thousand magazine covers, however, is another story. Talk to anyone who grew up around the so-called ‘Madchester’ scene and a similar tale emerges. It’s one of working class kids who loved their music. Sure, the booze, the clubs, and the attention were great too, but that all faded over time. The music was always the most important thing. Which is why,

sitting here in a leafy North London suburb in 2017, there’s a tinge of pathos that comes with the allure of meeting international rock and roll star Liam Gallagher. The collapse of Oasis and subsequent antipathy towards his follow-up project, Beady Eye, was nothing less than a spectacular fall from grace. With brutal speed, the intense public scrutiny to which he’d been subjected for so many years – something that, in itself, has broken lesser men time and again – turned to pity, ambivalence, and even contempt.

After Beady called it a day, Liam spent the next four years of his life debating whether or not to throw in the towel. In 2015, the gutter press lifted the lid on a court settlement between Liam and New York music journalist Liza Ghorbani over their infant, Gemma (with some of Liza’s regular clients among the first to break the story). Twenty years after the release of *(What’s the Story) Morning Glory*, the legions of Oasis fans who had traded in their guitars for Macbooks began tutting into their yuppie gruel. They had outgrown their rock and roll phase: why hadn’t Liam?

“Rock’n’roll saved me once when I was 18 – and I knew it was going to save me again,” Liam muses. His poison of choice in Highgate – a still water with no ice or lime – might have suggested otherwise, but the 2017 vintage of Liam Gallagher is definitively *As You Were*. Without the drinks, drugs or other debacles, Liam’s free to focus on the music. And for him, at least, that’s what it’s always been about.





28TH AUGUST 2009, PARIS

Following a fight backstage, Noel abruptly quits the band minutes before Oasis are due to perform.

Do you recall the first 24 hours after Noel quit the band? What was going through your mind at that point?

Oh fuck. That very moment I just went like – right, there have been certain powers at play. It wasn't too much of a big argument; we've had worse arguments. What went down was something that was pre-planned.

What was the lead up to that point that makes you so sure that it was pre-planned?

Lots of things. A lot of sneaky little meetings. People might say that it's paranoia. But you can never be too paranoid in life. I kind of knew he was going to map it at some point. It was going to happen at V or it was going to happen at Reading. It only got postponed until Paris. I knew he was going to jump ship at some point. And that's what made me feel that my paranoia was right. Or maybe I'm clairvoyant; I've got 6 senses.

What happened with Beady Eye? Something didn't click.

I think that the music was good. For one – it could have been the name. We also didn't have a break – went straight from Oasis to Beady Eye. Around the world, people knew Oasis or they knew The Gallaghers. So everybody went like 'Who the fuck are Beady? Oh, it's that guy from Oasis'. It's like when a breakfast show changes its jingle – you know it's the same fucking people, on the same sofa, talking about the same old shit. And later on it clicks – but at the time it just didn't really click. I had to do

Beady Eye because what about the lads in the band? What are they going to do? Noel didn't want them in the band and what are they supposed to do? They've got kids and bills to pay. You don't quit because someone jumps ship.

How did you move on from that point onwards?

Beady Eye clearly wasn't going anywhere. If they didn't buy the first record, they certainly wouldn't buy the second and third. I thought that I needed some time off, some time away to re-evaluate. I had 4 years of doing nothing and being very bored. Doing some soul searching. Then, one day, I took out my guitar, picked it up and that was it. Now here we are – with a number one album.

Those 4 years of your life were a punch in the face. Lawyers, court cases, and no band to fall back on.

I've been through a lot of shit, but it was shit that I caused. When you cause shit – you man up and fucking deal with it. Sometimes you have to fucking man up to your shit.

Were you disappointed that your former bandmates did not reach out to you in times of crisis? Are you resentful in any way?

My older brother has always been there. I thought I'd at least get a call from Noel, but there was no call. I thought I'd get a call from my other manager, but nothing from them fucking cunts. But then I met Debbie

[Gwyther, his manager and partner] and she's been there all the way. A lot of my mates are gone; I don't really have anyone in London and that is fine. They weren't really mates, so good riddance to them. And certainly, I wouldn't sit here getting upset because fucking Crazy Dave hasn't called me. You can have too many people in your life sometimes. The universe is my mate.

Did you ever feel that you were done? That you hit your peak in '96 in Knebworth and then it was all downhill from there?

I never feel like I'm done. Never ever. We might have peaked, but you're never done. You're always going to peak, but it's all about maintaining it. You can't keep going up forever. It's just impossible. The Rolling Stones have peaked a million years ago and they're still going, they're still maintaining it. U2 peaked with fucking *Joshua Tree* and they haven't done fuck all since then. Oasis peaked with *Morning Glory*, but it's all about maintaining it. I still believed that you could put out good work. I feel like I've maintained it without turning into the traps of the business. I'm still outspoken, I'm still wearing my heart on my sleeve and if people like it that's fine. If you don't then you don't. I'm not a 'yes man'.

How do you reckon you've managed to maintain it?

By not giving a fuck. I literally do not care. You thank me for my album I thank you back for buying it. That's it.





coat by Pretty Green; jeans by Edwin

19TH OCTOBER 2017, LONDON

Liam's debut solo album *As You Were* tops the UK Official Albums Chart, outselling the rest of the Top 10 combined and setting the record for biggest one-week vinyl sales.

Once we start talking about *As You Were*, his sell-out tour and his overwhelmingly successful start to his solo career, the expectation was that Liam would be a whirling dervish of vindication. Instead, he seems utterly unfazed. Looking practically identical to the man who (allegedly) used to wind up his brother by throwing plums at him backstage, he addresses his recent successes with equanimity.

"How does it feel, you ask? Fucking amazing," he says, matter-of-factly. His old hubris may have disappeared with some of his dodgier haircuts, but there's certainly no false modesty here. "I've got a lot of fans out there...I always have." There's a definitive lack of sub-text to Liam's interviews nowadays. In his own words, he tries to "sell it like it is" – and that makes for a great, honest conversation.

Despite being so forthcoming, however, it's clear that the youngest Gallagher brother gives short shrift to members of the media. And, after his experiences, who could blame him? Once he begins to realise that our time together is coming to an end, the earlier lack of eye contact starts to turn

into regular flicks towards the door. He's got a non-stop media and tour schedule at the moment, and you get the sense that any moments that he can spare with his family are precious to him. While you'd never have pegged the Oasis-era Liam as a career-driven family man, that's exactly how he comes across these days.

That realisation is probably as close as it's possible to get to understanding Liam Gallagher. He's a man whose story has been told a million different ways by a million different people, often varying according to how he or his older brother felt on any given day. The important facets of his personality, however, don't need any spin or interpretation. Liam's a deeply passionate man, with a lust for life but an immense love of his family. His career is important to him, but he revels in being able to earn a living from something he really enjoys. He's a straightforward soul but one who values his private life – perhaps after having to learn that lesson the hard way.

With that in mind, and, perhaps, with a bit of reciprocity in tow, the second part of the interview came together fluidly...

Did you ever see yourself hitting the top once more by yourself?

The night Oasis split I felt absolutely disappointed and then I felt exactly the opposite when my album went number 1. In this day and age, rock'n'roll has got cobwebs on it. I never actually saw myself hitting the top once more. In the 4 years that I was bored, I wouldn't even listen to music, I was just trying to get my head together. The point when I wasn't even listening to music, I thought that I wouldn't even do a solo record. I didn't want to do that without a band. But if you truly believe, things will happen. I've been good to rock'n'roll and I reckon rock'n'roll will be good to me. It saved me twice.

Did you feel Noel's absence while writing the record?

Yeah – because I don't want to be solo. I don't want to do it on my own. I'm not a guitar player or a prolific songwriter. I can write a few songs every now and again but I miss being in a band. I miss my brother the way he was back then. I miss singing those great songs that we all made great. It's not just Noel's songwriting that I miss.

There's a sense of redemption in the album. You've managed to get the media to see you in a bright light once more, after nearly two decades of being portrayed as the 'black sheep'. Is this something intentional?

Redemption? Good fucking word. I'm back and I'll be loud and I'll be singing fucking loud. And proud. And the media? Fuck them, what do they know? I'm a good person. I might give it all out because that's how I feel about my music, but when the hard stuff comes I would drop anything for anyone. People might turn around to when I did the One Love thing. I don't do that for a pat on the back and I certainly don't do it to fucking sell a record. People might see me in a good light because of that One Love thing – and if it is, then so be it. But I would do that anyway. I don't think I'm doing anything differently. I think I've had a breather and people might have come to realise what they've been missing.

How do you feel about the current industry climate? Was it ever a moment when you looked around and went like

– 'I want nothing to do with whatever is going on right now'?

I don't get involved with the industry and the business side of it. I let my manager do that. That's the problem with music today – it's got no fucking soul. I get being business minded, but it can overpower. You forget about the fucking music.

Hollywood is ablaze with accusations of sexual assault against Harvey Weinstein. Have you seen similar occurrences in the music industry?

Not really. But you know it's there. The shady little fuckers at the top. It's not even with just men and women, it's men and men too. All these pop bands – you hear about it with Take That but I've never witnessed any of it. Nobody would come near us. We were caught up in our own bubble. We weren't hanging about with the record company. We'd go to the awards show and they'd be there, but we'd just get off and do our own thing. And I certainly didn't see any weird shit.

What changes do you reckon we should

make to keep things safe for both men and women alike?

That's a big tough question. Obviously get rid of all the shit bags. Obviously, if everyone took care of their shit – everything would be cool. We all live together under one sky at the end of the day. Everyone just needs to cool the fuck out.

Do you think Liam Gallagher has the power to get people to go back to the roots of rock'n'roll?

I've got a lot of fans out there and I always have. My oldest kid is 18 and my friends have kids about the same age – so they're going to bring them to the shows. That's a good thing. All you can do is make good music and do good gigs. Do good interviews and try to sell it how it is. Stay honest to what you are and don't get carried away with all the show business shit. That's all that I can do. I'm definitely not the savior of fucking music, I'm the savior of fucking me.

What's your FAULT?

I haven't got any.



coat by Paul Smith; tshirt by
Sunspe; jeans by Edwin; shoes
by MoonStar