



**TOUCH OUT**

# *Touch Out*

A collection of heartfelt anecdotes from  
Johnny Marr fans

*With much gratitude to all who contributed their heartfelt words to this book:*

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# Foreword

By Marc McGarraghy



Brudenell Social Club, March 2014  
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What is it that is so special about the relationship between Johnny Marr and his fans?

I've often tried to put my finger on it from my unique vantage point, sandwiched between Johnny and the crowd. The intensity of the relationship between the two, how one feeds off the other, how one lifts the other and how the shared euphoria that builds through the gig is something very special to behold.

Looking in on the relationship outside of the gig. In the rain waiting to see him beforehand, in the warmth of the greetings and shared phone shots afterwards and in the forums between, this bond is one created with music at its heart but so much more in its passion and longevity. It's one based on a love of the man himself. No matter where the backstreet bouncing sweat box venue or cavernous lighter-waving arena is, those who sing with, watch, meet and write to Johnny Marr feel they know him. He's so approachable, so engaging and above all, through all of the talent, fame and plaudits, he's their hero who remains humbly "one of us". He's still a fan himself.

I've watched him conduct conversations with thousands as if he were in the pub buying a round with them, and then go on to lead them through lyrics and riffs, touching each person as only a stand-out performer could. I've seen him spy the faces that follow him religiously in the crowd and make sure they know he knows they're appreciated... "I like my audience. It's interesting to me to know what some of them do and what they're about... I've always thought the fans were really important."<sup>1</sup>

Having seen so many familiar faces at the rail so many times I decided to ask them<sup>2</sup>. What makes you want to be at so many of his gigs? What makes Johnny's relationship with his fans so unique? Is it possible to capture the feelings in just a few words? The responses mixed an expected warmth for the man with some lovely nuances and anecdotes, and I've tried to capture the essence of the relationship from their perspective here.

The desire to keep returning to be part of a Johnny Marr gig was always going to include honouring his talent. The term "guitar wizardry" recurs, as does "energy and beautiful music he creates". "It's amazing to watch a master craftsman lose himself



in his craft...and still have no clue how he does it”. And I’m sure “he has inspired our son to not only play guitar but be the proud owner of a Johnny Marr amp” could be echoed many times over through his musical journey too.

But for many it’s about more than this. It’s the exhilaration his enthusiasm for playing live creates, his obvious joy at being there and his investment in regular gigging at venues large and small that is appreciated, “You could think of it as a church, a living thing, with call and response”.

There’s also a real sense of community “it’s become a social event”, friendships are made, old and young are celebrating a talent that crosses several generations of music fans together and of course if you get close enough “I got a handshake, which I returned by kissing his”.

Johnny’s humility is cited time and time again when fans are asked what is it that makes meeting him special - that, and how approachable he remains. “He treats every fan like an old friend...seems genuinely interested in listening to people and engaging in conversation”. “(He) remains a down to earth and generous musician who truly likes and respects his fans”.

That investment in time he spends with them, but most of all that it is clearly genuine, makes Johnny stand out. “It’s so nice when you meet your hero and he actually surpasses your expectations...(Johnny) is exceptionally humble, incredibly hilarious, charismatic and engages with his fans like no other famous person I have met”. “He makes you feel special...I’ve chatted to him in the rain and his time and questions were about me”.

I had to smile when Johnny’s relationship with the crowd inside, at a gig, was described as “very much a two way thing, his appreciation of that is apparent. I love Van Morrison’s music but I couldn’t bear to watch a grumpy sod deliver the music I love”. There’s an ongoing appreciation of his desire to be close to the crowd too - “his picks for music venues on recent tours have allowed him to be up close, personal and at times metaphorically naked. He puts it all on the line and performs with his soul”.

Understandably the hardest part of my brief ‘conversation’ with each fan was for them to encapsulate what it is that makes Johnny’s music special for them personally in just three words (try it!). But the overarching message when you take a look at their responses (below) is that it touches people in different ways, and that to coin the only repeated word is the “beauty” of it.

*Uplifting Intense Magical Beauty Energy Joy Unique  
Mancunian Innovative Charismatic Inspiring Correct Cool Melodic  
Wonderful A Musical Genius Beauty Beyond Strings Colours My Life*

So, in answer to my initial question: There’s something special in the chemistry between Johnny and his fans not just because he’s the “guitar wizard” with a musical talent and a “body of work” that sets him apart. Above and beyond this, those that return to his shows, his music and the moments or memories they cherish see a humility, an approachability and a mutual respect that truly sets him apart. As the man himself says...

“If you’ve got songs that mean a lot to people’s lives, you’re lucky, man. And if you’ve got an opportunity to make everybody in that hall feel really good, particularly when you’ve been kicking out some new stuff, then you should do it. It’s a great thing.”<sup>3</sup>

*“Success comes to those who dedicate everything to their passion in life. To be successful, it is also very important to be humble and never let fame or money travel to your head.”*  
—A.R. Rahman, Indian composer, singer-songwriter, music producer, musician and philanthropist.

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*Marc McGarraghy is a live music photographer at Yellow Mustang Photography and can often be seen in the pit or at the rail at Johnny’s gigs. Say hello next time you see him, he’d love to hear your experiences too.*

<sup>1</sup> ‘Every Word’s Hidden Meaning’, *Dynamic*, April 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Short questionnaire interview with eight of Johnny’s fans I’ve been lucky enough to see and meet at his gigs. With thanks to: Jackie Nutty, Laura Dean, Gemma Faulkner, Debbie Parlane, Denise Brodsky, Daniel Barry, Nick Tudor and Steve Ruane.

<sup>3</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2013.

Part I

*Reflections and Illuminations from the  
Johnny Marr fandom*

# Siobhan O'Driscoll

Music is like an aural photograph, a snapshot that transports you back to exactly where you were when you were listening to it. Sometimes it's a one off funny moment, other times it's a vivid memory of a time and place, complete with scenery, people and feelings. Over the years there are various pieces of Johnny Marr's music that have found their way into the virtual photo album inside my head.

I remember watching The Smiths on Top of the Pops with my teenage friends, the room heavy with hairspray and black eyeliner, conscious that this was something different, something that made you smile but played out with a degree of darkness, musically and lyrically challenging.

Some years later I have a clear recollection of driving around Scotland with 'Bigmouth Strikes Again' and 'There Is A Light That Never Goes Out' playing with the Highlands as a fairly dramatic backdrop.

Fast forward to *The Messenger* and more car journeys, this time along the Sussex coast on days where the sun went down too early and the sea looked a bit too menacing for comfort - 'The Crack Up' and 'Lockdown' fitting the mood perfectly.

And then *Playland*...slapping disaffection in the face with energy and candour. A tour full of anticipation, new places, new people, music and conversations. Possibly not the most meaningful of these but a favourite nonetheless as we walked down the road from Bath Pavilion and met two homeless guys:

'Who's been playing tonight?'

'Johnny Marr'

'Good show?'

'Great show.'

'Settle an argument for us, was he in The Smiths or The Stone Roses?'

'Ah, that'd be The Smiths.'

One nudges the other, smiles and says, 'See, I told you' and walks off doing a fine impression of 'How Soon Is Now' being played on a didgeridoo. One more memory, one more scene for the album.

# Linda Poulcott

When people take up an interest later in life, they often say it was a lifelong ambition that they'd never got around to doing before. I can say that this was never my case. No one was more surprised than me when I picked up the electric guitar for the first time at 45. Despite being an avid music lover, lifelong enthusiast of guitar music and Johnny Marr, I'd always considered learning to play as something beyond me. This mentality probably came from my upbringing in the working class Glasgow suburbs of the 1970's and 80's. In this environment learning an instrument wasn't high on the priority list. Especially for a girl.

It all changed just over three years ago whilst watching videos of Johnny on Youtube. I still can't explain why, but I suddenly started to really focus on his unique playing style, guitar tone, hand position etc. All the little nuances that I'd never really noticed up until that point. It was like suddenly seeing in colour for the first time. In what I can only describe as a "quasi spiritual" experience, I knew that I was going to play the guitar and do it well. I spent the remainder of the day searching for articles about Johnny and his guitars. Within a week I'd bought my first electric, a Gibson Les Paul Studio, and had started taking lessons.

Any musician will tell you that it's a tough road, and to become proficient you have to dedicate a huge part of your life to playing and practising. However, I never see it as a sacrifice as it's my passion. Results are coming quickly and now I can't imagine my life without my guitars. When I play I enter another level of existence. I can now express myself in a way that I couldn't before.

Obviously, I cause a few eyebrows to be raised. I now live in a rural village in Southern Italy where people have very traditional values. When locals see me with my gig bag strapped to my back they ask me if I'm going hunting. It seems more likely to see a middle-aged woman with a gun than an electric guitar!

So I want to thank Johnny from the bottom of my heart for giving me the "Godlike" inspiration to change my life. Hopefully I can pass that on to others. I've proven that it doesn't matter what age or gender you are, things can be achieved if you want them enough. Go for it.

# Ed Nash

There's a phrase 'You should never meet your heroes.' Well, technically speaking I haven't met Johnny Marr. I interviewed him over the phone earlier this year, a couple of days after the general election, which had us both at a loss as to what the people of the UK were thinking.

But let's go back to the beginning. My first sighting of him was one that has rightly entered musical folklore, in terms of shaping the sound and style of guitar players in indie groups ever since - just ask Noel Gallagher or Bernard Butler. When The Smiths played 'What Difference Does It Make?' on Top of the Pops, with the fey frontman, who made you think 'What on earth are you doing here?' and the stolid rhythm section, was the guitarist, sporting a Brian Jones haircut, a pair of loafers and, most importantly, a red, semi-acoustic Gibson 335.

After that I saved up some money and bought a red semi-acoustic guitar myself (not a Gibson, my paper-round earnings didn't quite stretch to that) and would try and play Smiths songs on it. Whilst I could do passable versions of some of them (working out the opening chords to 'Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now' was a highlight of my schooldays, but then I did go to an all-boys Catholic School...) others like 'You Just Haven't Earned It Yet Baby' and 'Ask' were impossible to master, despite sounding so simple.

Johnny was also responsible for my first bit of teenage rebellion. Despite being told by my Dad I couldn't go and see The Smiths at Brixton Academy on The Queen Is Dead tour, me and a bunch of schoolmates all fibbed to our parents about a sleepover and went anyway. (Sorry Dad...)

But that was thirty years ago. So to find myself in the position where I'm calling the man who inspired me to pick up a guitar and ignited my lifelong love of music, armed with a list of questions could have been daunting, but it wasn't. Johnny was the one of the most down to earth people I've ever interviewed and my list of questions quickly become irrelevant. It was a just a chat about the music we liked, the state of politics and more besides.

So, if your heroes are men of the people, then meet them, you won't be disappointed. Happy Birthday dude.

# Sarah Birch

Johnny's music has helped me through so many difficult times. I never felt alone when I had music to listen to. The more I explored his work, the more desperate the need was to see him live. For me, there is no better experience than a live gig. It's the best drug.

I heard about Johnny's solo project at a really difficult time in my life, I'd just lost a parent and several other tragedies had meant I had no one around to support me when I most needed it. But Johnny's music made me feel better. I got signed off work in the October of 2013 with depression. That week I dragged myself to see Johnny at the Roundhouse and I'm not over-exaggerating when I say it was the first time I smiled all year. After feeling so much better I began listening to *The Messenger* excessively and then started booking gig tickets to see him whenever I could afford to go. One of my favourite gigs was at The Brudenell Social Club in Leeds. I love the small gigs.

I enjoy everything that goes with being a fan as well. Traveling to different cities to see him, meeting new people and making friends. Frantically trying to swap my seated tickets for standing (successfully) and always making sure I'm at the front. The Smiths Disco I go to at the Star and Garter. I even slept in a tent outside Piccadilly Records this year on the eve of Record Store Day to get his release (favourite tune of the year for me).

There are only two men I openly swoon over at gigs: Paul Weller, and Johnny Marr. I've only met him twice, once in Portsmouth and once in Liverpool this year. Both times he's been an absolute pleasure to talk to, even complimenting my outfits! Each morning after a gig when my arms ache from being in the air all night and my voice has gone, I just want to do it all over again.

I wish I could put it into words a bit better, I don't associate his music with negative times, I associate it with feeling better. I love his music, and I'm so, so grateful for being able to experience it.

Thank you Johnny Marr, you wonderful man.



# Emma Palor

There is something almost contagious and radiant about Johnny Marr's attitude for life, his passions and enthusiasm. Johnny has a wide range of interests: architecture, literature, arts in its many forms, philosophy and psychogeography are only few of them - and he puts these ideas and loves of his into his own work of art; his music.

For me, it is both inspiring and refreshing to see someone who is so interested in things, even ones that don't have much to do with his own profession, as some would say (although I believe a song-writer can write about anything, and that there is a relation between the art forms - and music, clearly, is an art form).

Many people would think "what the hell does Johnny Marr have to do with architecture/philosophy/etc...?" - that's one of the things I think is so great about Johnny - he learns things merely for the sake of his interest in them, as opposed to most people I know and am surrounded by, who believe an intellectual is one who only studied a certain thing for the sake of a degree - which isn't bad, but the way I see it, it lacks the passion, which I believe is the most important thing to have.

One thing that I am personally afraid of is becoming one of those people who aren't driven by love, and only do what they do because they have to do it. What I've learned from Johnny is that it's important to keep yourself driven by the things you love, follow your dreams and to avoid too much cynicism.

I came to know Johnny at a time when I lost interest in things, most likely due to school's stress and the conventional education system's 'oppressive' ways.

Johnny's music and the 'lust for life' attitude radiating from it, on the other hand, have made me want to know more, explore more, read more, see more, and in a more philosophical way, perhaps - it has made me interested and excited about things, and for life itself. It gave me something for myself while I'm at school, facing some freaks and priests (well, teens and teachers) who are hunting me down with attitude, something hopeful - the knowledge that there are other doors, ones that really go somewhere.

I find that there is a guiding pattern in Johnny's own selection of heroes - such as Aldous Huxley and David Hockney: both very passionate about what they did (or do - long live Hockney!), both prolific - just like Johnny.

There is a quote by Aldous Huxley that says: "The secret of genius is to carry the spirit of the child into old age, which means never losing your enthusiasm" - It's so true, and describes the godlike genius Johnny Marr perfectly.

In an interview I read, Johnny said of Huxley: "He was more than just Brave New World and The Doors Of Perception. He got better as he got older" - And so do you, Johnny! Although The Smiths is my favourite band, and although some of The Smiths fans who are my age (which is 16) may be sad about not being alive when the band existed - I'm just super glad that I'm here for Johnny's current amazing solo work, and I find it's just as good as any of his previous works, and better! Plus, it's alive and happening now, so what could be more exciting and interesting than that?

David Hockney was quoted saying "when you stop doing something, it doesn't mean you are rejecting the previous work. That's the mistake; it's not rejecting it, it's saying, 'I have exploited it enough now and I wish to take a look at another corner.'" - That's a great attitude for an artist, one that fits Johnny's own attitude towards his art. I think that the other corners are mar(r)vellous - I am looking forward to be seeing more, and thank Johnny with all my heart for what he gave me and many other loving fans.

# Chris Beattie

I first became aware of Johnny Marr when I was in high school. The Smiths were in their prime and all the sixth formers were skulking about in baggy cardigans and quiffs. ‘This Charming Man’ was being played all over the radio. But, myself and my school mates were rockers - it was long hair and widdly guitar solos all the way and The Smiths didn’t really appear on our radar, let alone in our record collection. But that didn’t stop me listening to ‘This Charming Man’... That guitar sound was so refreshing.

Fast forward 20 years and I buy the Cribs album *Ignore The Ignorant* featuring none other than guitar hero Johnny! I wore the album out figuring out Johnny’s riffs and licks - you can easily hear his influence throughout. (I never got to see him play with the Cribs but I’ve seen him on his solo tours 6 times so far.) At a time when I was feeling despondent about the current music scene, (or lack of one) Johnny launches his solo career and stirs my curiosity about his back catalogue and collaborations, which I’m still discovering all the time. My faith in decent, honest guitar bands has been restored, thanks to Johnny!

As well as his music, I think Johnny is one of the snazziest dressers out there. He could give Paul Weller a run for his money any day! I’m hoping for the day he brings out his own label! But apart from killer looks and style, he is a fantastic role model too. His values and lifestyle choices are highly commendable and some of those lifestyle choices have rubbed off on me too. So not only does he look cool and sound great - he’s good for your well being too. Kids, pay attention!!

When Fender bought out the JM Jaguar, I just had to get one. Having not picked up a guitar for a couple of years, this reignited my love of playing and I’ve been teaching myself Johnny Marr licks since, working out his unique style. I think Johnny is comparable to a modern day Les Paul in what he has done with the redesign of the Fender Jaguar. And to quote Johnny himself, “I think it’s perfection”. Not only is he a one of a kind guitar player, he’s an innovator and the JM Jag is truly something special.

# Alison Moore

It’s a bit of an old cliché to say that you can get lost in music and allow it to get you through the toughest of times – but over the last 10 months I can safely say that it’s been my genuine experience.

In September 2014 I needed to have major surgery and what was the first question I asked my consultant when presented with the consent form to sign? “Will I be fit enough to see Johnny Marr in October?”. Fortunately he was also a fan and reassured me that as long as I was utterly compliant with the post-operative regime and got my standing tickets swapped and was able to be seated it’d be okay. I was utterly determined to be at the Apollo in Manchester – and with the assistance of hard-core pain relief and my very understanding husband, I took my seat on the second row of the balcony and allowed myself to be totally absorbed in the incredible atmosphere and utterly awesome set. The man on the stage had no idea whatsoever that the prospect of seeing him perform live had been the inspiration and focus of what were the initial very painful and debilitating post-operative weeks.

Fast forward to early March 2015 and enjoying full health again, I completed my first full day back at work with tickets to see Johnny at the Albert Hall and again at Hyde Park in June booked. As that day ended the worse news possible came through – my dear dad was reaching the end of his life, and he died hours later. As it happened, the fantastic gigs would happen to take place just days after I attended the funeral of my dear dad and then the burial of his ashes – the saddest and most sombre of days for my family.

I did go to both gigs (with the full approval of my 82 year old mum) and once again totally lost myself in Johnny’s awesome sets and came away feeling uplifted and genuinely positive.

I haven’t got a least favourite Johnny track, but I certainly have a most favourite - ‘New Town Velocity’ has been my comfort blanket song over the last ten months. It has never failed to raise my spirits and inspires me to keep moving forward.

I’m not sure whether I’ll ever have the privilege to meet Johnny and get the chance to tell him – but without even knowing it, he’s contributed to keeping me going and remembering that amidst the tricky stuff life chuckes at you there is much to make you realise how rich life can be: and for that I am very grateful.

# MJ Zander

## *Johnny Marr Adds Up*

I walked away from my algebra book in disgust. There was no way I was going to pass the final. My boyfriend put his hand on my shoulder.

“If you get a 98% on your final, I’ll buy that guitar for you.” He was, of course, talking about a Johnny Marr Jaguar. A guitar I covet with such passion, I would gladly trade said boyfriend for, almost.

Armed with indefatigable determination, I spent the next two weeks studying; sustaining myself on a diet of caffeine-laden drinks and antacid tablets. Johnny’s music as my sole companion helping to maintain my anxiety level down to just below panic, encouraging me to divide, multiply and calculate, calculate, calculate!

The day of reckoning arrived. Armed with calculator, pencils, and my secret weapon, a fully charged iPod with Johnny on shuffle, I was ready for battle. Well, almost. The only thing I didn’t have was confidence. With trepidation, I hit play and walked into the exam room.

I passed by two points, far short of the requisite 98%. I walked out feeling a collage of emotions, relief, disappointment and unexpected gratitude. I am indebted to Johnny for keeping me from splintering into emotional wreckage during one of the most stressful times of my life. His music was the elixir I needed to get through it. I have no doubt, without Johnny’s reassuring voice in my ears, the outcome would have been different.

I didn’t get the guitar. What I did get was far more valuable. With Johnny’s help, I got confidence and one-step closer to my degree.

Besides, my birthday is only a few months away.

# Mel Blake

Music has always been really important for me, but when I listen to your music there’s something special happening, the energy through those guitar chords flows in a different way and I can really feel it. Somehow it gives me hope and courage to get through hard times and at the same time it makes me happy to be able to listen and enjoy. When I drive while listening to *The Messenger* or *Playland* I feel more confident because of their energy, driving is one of my favourite activities and I am able to enjoy it even more thanks to your music.

I feel happy and honoured to be able to participate in this, moreover because I want to thank you for being in touch with your fans. I am pretty sure it is something really special for every one of us.

I love your sound, because it has something unique and shows the hard work but also the love you put into creating songs that stay in our hearts. For me it is something magical to enjoy melodies you have created, because you were born to do this and to share it with the entire world.

Besides music, I admire you as a human being because of all the effort you have put through your entire life to pursue your goals and become an excellent guitar player. I am proud of being your fan because you don’t stop and are always working on new plans and challenges, looking to go further and being involved in different projects but always creating beautiful music. You will always amaze me and I’m sure that if I ever have kids they will get to know your incredible art.

Thank you for everything, Johnny. I send you my best wishes and love from the Sonoran Desert in Mexico. You’re the coolest man on the planet and you will always be my hero.

# Aaron Symington

First of all I'd like to say how privileged I feel to be able to write a few short pieces on Johnny.

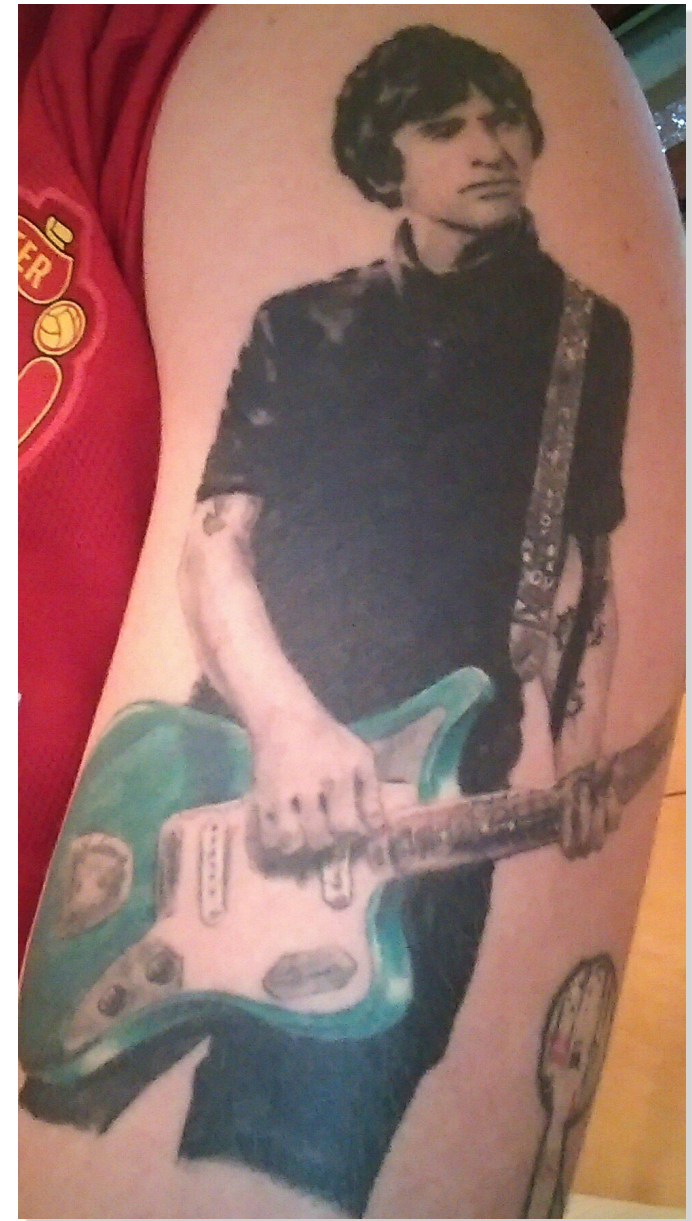
Johnny has been a huge influence on my life, especially in a musical/guitar sense. I had grown up listening to my brother play Smiths songs in the 80's but was too young to truly understand the quality of his playing, and as I got into my early teens and started playing guitar, Oasis were the band of the moment.

It was actually 2001 when Johnny played with Neil Finn on the *7 Worlds* project that he came to light again and when they played 'There is a Light...' all those memories started coming back. The outro which I'd never heard before being played by guitar instead of strings was just perpetual bliss. The tone, the jangle. The arrangement was just incredible. Listening to how he played on Finn's songs made me understand how different he made them become rather than just a guest guitarist on stage strumming an acoustic. This made me go back to all The Smiths songs, Electronic, The The, and only then did I realise the true majestic nature of this man.

Listening to interviews and videos of him explain how he creates such landscape type music has helped my guitar playing to extreme lengths. Using his ideas to create different textures and various mechanics to construct songs makes everything sound so much better.

Of course I followed him through all his other projects from The Healers to Modest Mouse and so on. When I heard that a solo album was coming out I just couldn't believe it. The possibility of hearing a full Marr album and see him in the flesh at a gig was just something I'd never ever have imagined, especially being from a small town in Northern Ireland.

Even the friends I've met through this page, and other artists I've met at studios and gigs worldwide who all share the same passion about Johnny, just goes to show what effect he has on people and the world of music as a whole. Johnny Fuckin Marr: Godlike Genius and Ultimate Inspiration.



*Aaron's Johnny Marr portrait tattoo*



# Chris Barry

Johnny Marr's guitar work has always fascinated me and always will, a tapestry of intricate melodies woven together, creating beautiful backdrops. They can be pretty and child-like, haunting, sad, moody, jazzy, funky, rocking, textural, jangly. They can recall 50's rockabilly, the earthiness of 60's folk, the spirit of 70's punk and new wave, the stomp of glam, the soulful chop of funk and disco, and so on...

One thing that seems to be consistent is that the compositions are always melodic and complimentary to the song, something I believe Johnny may have learned from Motown 45's when he was growing up. There is a whole lot of riches to be found in normally under three minutes. It's not always in your face, the song comes first - you have to dig to discover, but when you do you are pretty much exposed to the perfect musical accompaniment. Johnny Marr is able to create a song within a song with his use of counterpoint melodies, you can strip away everything and solely listen to just the guitar parts, a divine and moving experience in its own right.

Stylistic trademarks, reoccurring themes and motifs, familiar structures and movements that give his compositions identity. Clever use of studio overdubbing to create depth and texture, the ability to avoid clichés such as high energy guitar solos and overused blues based playing. There's always something new, fresh and different in his approach. I get the impression he is not willing to repeat himself and is always looking at other angles. He takes risks with alternate tunings, different uses of sound and sonic processing, chord voicings that you wouldn't think would work within the context of the music, but they do. The rhythms and dynamics are never predictable, syncopation, complex picking patterns combining open strings, altered/extended jazz chords, moving from one to the other with seeming ease. All of which are executed with precision, realisation, conviction and above all, feel.

When you strip this analysis away and just listen to his music on a purely enjoyable level the ingredients are all there, the emotion, the memorable hooks, the soul, the beauty, it's these elements which really come to the surface. This for me above everything else is what really makes this man's guitar work and approach to composition so masterful. It touches everybody who's prepared to listen, which is why so many people fall in love with what he does. Johnny, long may you continue and thank you for the wonderful music so far. We feel it and we treasure it.

# Jade Bailey

Johnny was the main reason that I picked up a guitar for the very first time and I'm incredibly thankful for that. Not only is guitar the best thing you could ever do, but without it I wouldn't have had the choice to finally do a Music course in the heart of Newcastle after finishing school (hooray!!). Two years ago I felt as if my teachers were going to pressurise me into doing A Levels that I wouldn't particularly want to take, purely because in their eyes I came under the 'Able, Gifted and Talented' criteria and would make my school look better than others. This made my guitar a method of escape (and procrastination...), and without it I wouldn't have believed that I could actually pursue a career in Music. Johnny's even had an influence on my parents, as they're both driving me forward (rather than backwards!) despite my shy/nervous nature that can make me give up way too early when the going gets tough. My audition at Newcastle College was literally the most nerve-wracking thing that I've ever done, but the fact that I got to talk about Johnny and my other musical influences really helped calm me down and get through it without making a complete fool of myself. Without Johnny's inspiration through his music and cheery character, I'd probably still be stuck in school for another two years - not cool!

This last year or so hasn't been the greatest for me, alongside all of the exams that I've had. Illness and death has been a reoccurring thing in my family in the past few months, so being able to escape from all of this through *Playland* has made coping with it that little bit easier. Johnny's gigs give me something to look forward to, and being able to see Johnny play in Hyde Park instead of some cliché school disco with the rest of my year just made leaving school feel all that more incredible. I mean, I'm not really one for sparkly, expensive dresses!! Songs like 'New Town Velocity' are just so special and have such a positive effect on me, that I never realise I'm smiling to myself until I walk past a mirror or I get caught out - now that's always a pretty awkward conversation...especially when it happens during an exam and you've got 'Easy Money' stuck in your head!



# Elisabetta

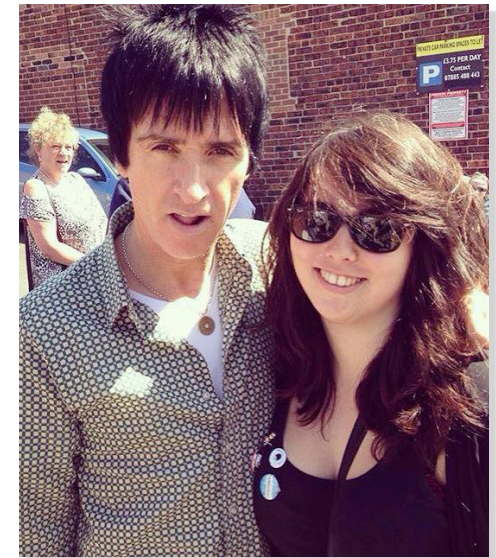
Since my teens, my life changes radically every ten years, more or less. Ended or new relationships, a new job, a new town... And every time a new lifestyle, new perspectives, the need to reinvent myself in a new environment. Each phase has its music. A soundtrack for every existential segment. The release of *The Messenger* coincided with the last of these life turning points. I had to make important decisions about my job, considering the idea to start something new and unusual. Something I never tried before in a professional way. Something that needs all my energies, at various levels. I can't imagine myself sailing this sea without *The Messenger* and *Playland*: they are the fuel of my days! It is not surprising that I listen to these records especially when I take my commuter train. Every day, early in the morning... I look out the window and slowly the country changes itself into the anonymous, sad, periphery of a big town. The music spreads the energy I need to switch into the right, urban mood.

And behind the music, there is a person. One thing is really astonishing for me, and in some way mysterious, considering my personal history: the fact that Johnny knew since the beginning what he wanted to be. I always find it incredible that some people have this clear vision since childhood. Consequently, these kind of people also have a strong determination and attitude to work hard. This is really inspiring for me: it is an example to follow, an encouragement to be focused on my targets.

Another interesting aspect of Johnny's personality is that this determination and work ethic aren't synonymous with a close-minded approach or a narrow curiosity related exclusively to musical matters. On the contrary, it is a pleasure to know how many passions and interests nourish his work and life. Some of them, like architecture or design or cinema, are also mine. So it as if, in some way, we can speak the same language and understand each other even without a personal acquaintanceship. I think this sensation helps a lot to create a connection with the fans. A healthy connection, built upon a positive and vital basis.



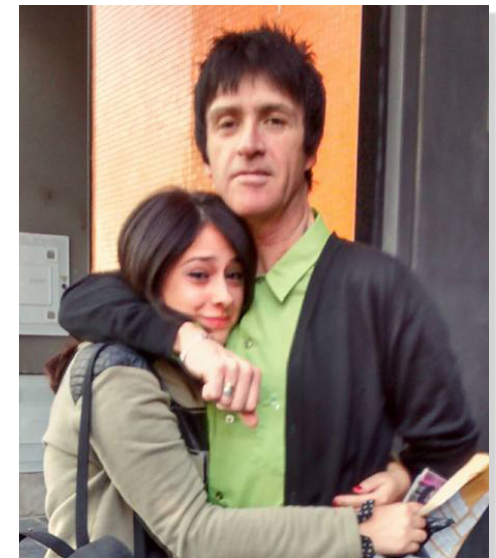
Johnny with Elisabetta  
Cluses, 2015



Johnny with Gemma  
Wakefield, 2015



Johnny with Marissa  
Chicago, 2013



Johnny with Lari  
Buenos Aires, 2015

# Gemma Faulkner

The guitar playing of Johnny Marr never ceases to amaze me. At first I discovered it through The Smiths and was blown away by how such complexity could seem so simple; he made it look effortless! I was astounded again when *The Messenger* was released – sonically it differed so much from three decades previously, but it was no less intricate and melodic than before; that pattern continued when *Playland* came out. Even when watching Johnny play live I still couldn't get my head around how he was doing it, no matter how closely I tried to look at his guitar. The more I saw him in concert, the more I wanted to again and again.

At the time of writing, I've been dealing with anxiety for the past two and a half months. Being a pretty positive and happy-go-lucky person before it started, it was kind of terrifying to suddenly be thinking dark thoughts with no way of stopping them. I was in a bad place for what felt like a very long time. But when my ticket arrived for the Hyde Park gig and the Wakefield, Nottingham and Manchester gigs were paid for, it gave me something to feel positive about, as Johnny Marr gigs are some of the times when I feel happiest. Hyde Park was fun, but the three July gigs were absolutely fantastic. Being with my friends Laura, Jackie and Danni made them all the better. The icing on the cake was definitely in Wakefield when we were waiting outside the venue early so we could get a chance to say hi to Johnny – and we did! It was the longest conversation any of us had ever held with him and definitely the most enjoyable (he ended up being the one asking us if we wanted a picture!). Wakefield and Nottingham were two of the most fun and sweaty gigs any of us had ever been to, and watching Johnny support Noel Gallagher in Manchester was a spectacular way to finish them all off. And I made my way home feeling thankful that I could forget about the bad feelings for a few days.

I hope that by the time Johnny reads this, I'll generally feel better than I am now. Truthfully, I don't know how long it will be before that happens. But I want him to know that being at those July gigs helped to remind me of better times, and better times are where I want to end back up in.

Thanks, Johnny.

# Marissa Rivera

I first saw Johnny Marr on television when I was a kid. The early days in the 80s, on MTV. During the good old days when MTV actually was all about music. For me it was quite a magical moment, musically. Till this day I'm still influenced by you, Johnny.

I've grown up listening to your music. It's helped me, motivated me throughout my childhood through now adulthood. I read a few years ago that you're an avid runner and completed the New York marathon. It motivated me to train and complete four triathlons (Wisconsin, Naperville, Illinois, and 2 Chicago, Illinois) and also the Chicago Marathon. As you know, when running a marathon; you reach a point, you feel like you're going to die (or at least I did) and can't go on. Your music helped me to continue to push on. Luckily, I didn't die on Michigan Avenue in spandex!

So thank you Johnny for your contribution to the art of music. I've been fortunate to meet you a few times on your recent tours. All I can say is you are a genuinely wonderful, talented and down to earth person. Wishing you best of luck on all your future endeavors, health, and perpetual bliss!

## Lari Picker

First of all, Johnny is a genius. Meeting him musically and personally was sensational, as we know, he is so fantastic.

Musically he does magic with the guitar, every note that he plays is pure harmony. I've seen him three times playing in Argentina and was an incredible experience. He inspires you in keeping with your dreams.

Personally, when I saw him for the first time I couldn't believe what I was living. He is so kind, so lovely, he takes time to talk with everyone and sign everything. The second time, on 17th June 2015, I saw him again. Was amazing. I could show him my tattoo in his honor.

Well, he means so much to me, he is an inspiration. I really love him and I will love him until the end of time. He is a godlike genius.

## Nathan Curry

For me, Johnny offers a different perspective of music and fame. His music, and especially his guitar parts, is creative and inspiring. As a guitarist myself I like to learn how to play my favourite songs and riffs. As for Johnny's music, I just like to listen. It is something that seems wrong to copy, cover or emulate.

I also find myself, a lot of the time, feeling like an outsider, not quite fitting in with ordinary people, a bit weird with a different view on things and different tastes. I find that Johnny's music, through his career in bands and solo days, offers encouragement, not only that I can continue to be myself rather than conform, but that it is something that should be celebrated.

As a celebrated artist you could expect, based on many others in a similar position, that you might become arrogant or tire of people approaching you. This doesn't apply to Mr Marr. Always friendly and welcoming to fans, he shows that you can deal with fame without becoming an asshole. I commend you, Johnny.

# Kari Da

Having first heard The Smiths when I was thirteen years old on the radio in my room in a rough part of London called Harlesden, my life changed forever. School for me was unbearable but The Smiths soothed my troubled soul. Songs to save your life? Without a doubt. Down the line when I was 17, my father became gravely ill with lung cancer and, hand on heart, if The Smiths were not in my life, I would have lost my sanity. It is testament to Johnny Marr's beautiful, shimmering guitar playing that I had some solace during those black days when my father's condition deteriorated.

When my father passed away, it was a shock, he was only 52 years old and he adored music, from Dylan to The Stones to Thin Lizzy, amongst others. Listening to songs such as 'Back To The Old House', 'The Queen Is Dead', 'Never Had No One Ever' and many more were life savers. After the funeral of my father, I listened to *The Queen Is Dead* album on repeat on my Walkman in 2006. I cannot emphasise enough how in those first couple of weeks after my dad's death, how much Johnny Marr and The Smiths were like a ray from light from a lighthouse whilst I was in the sea of torment, clinging to the plank of wood that was my grief.

There was some light relief to be had when I went to the Notting Hill Record Exchange and purchased Electronic's debut album in the summer of 2006. Listening to the first track, 'Idiot Country', Johnny's aggressive guitar licks on that have so much swagger, you can't help but walk down the road listening to it with a spring in your step.

Johnny Marr, I am indebted to you forever. I have, as bizarre as this may sound, been using your name in vain with phrases such as "What in the love of Johnny Marr?!" and "For the love of Johnny Marr", much to the amusement of my younger sister.

Johnny, keep on being you, and I just remembered that I saw Robyn Hitchcock play Village Underground on the same day you played at Rough Trade to promote *The Messenger* - serendipity, I should imagine. Robyn played 'Ordinary Millionaire' and had such sweet things to say about you. You are loved by many, Johnny. God bless you.

# Jackie Nutty

When I'm asked the question 'What does Johnny mean to you as a person?' and 'What impact has he had on your life?', it's hard to think where to start and what to include.

I remember being totally awestruck when one summer day in the mid-90's on a trip out to London, I was strolling down Oxford Street, and walking past me was none other than Marr. Unknown to me (after a slight detour to compose myself) we would end up going to the same place. There was a band on at the Virgin Megastore, and we'd decided to check them out. My boyfriend was encouraging me to go and say 'Hi', but I was too shy and nervous and remembering the old adage 'never meet your heroes', I reluctantly I let the opportunity pass.

Years later when I eventually plucked up the courage to speak to Mr Marr, it totally surpassed any expectation I had. Not like any other 'famous person' I've ever met. He was charming, engaging, hilariously funny, and what I couldn't really get over was the fact that he would swing the conversation round to you. "How had your day been?", "Those are cool shoes", and whilst mulling over the fact that the coolest man on the planet has just told you that something you're wearing is cool, you walk away feeling utterly uplifted and not quite believing that you've just had what on the face of it is an ordinary conversation of sorts with a most extraordinary man. I've met him at least a dozen times since and this feeling never passes. The person who said "Never meet your heroes" was a fool, and obviously had the wrong type of hero.

He surrounds himself with a wonderful team of people – from the members of his band to the management team, they are all a pleasure to meet, utterly polite and all seem to have the same ethic as Johnny about the fans.

What impact has he had? Well apart from the obvious musical influences, he's given me a rather active social life (especially in October time) and a huge group of similarly minded Marr-struck friends. We started off going to a few gigs together and it's sort of snowballed from there. We are currently planning as many dates as our finances will allow for the current tour. It's become a social event as well as going to see some great music played by a great guy.



# Hila Dagan

Someone: So what's your favorite band?

Me: Hmm, The Smiths.

Someone: Oh, Morrissey.

Me: Johnny!!! (Then an explanation about his importance to The Smiths and to my life).

That's me at the age of 18.

Now, 20 years after, I'm pretty much the same, even more protective.

How did it all happen? Since I remember myself I was a music lover and there were a few good things about listening to the radio 24/7 - 'Panic' and 'Bigmouth Strikes Again' were huge hits that I really loved. At 18, while trying to figure out my taste in music, I wanted to know more about The Smiths and in a short time I got all their albums and the result was that I completely fell in love. What drew me first was the music, it always has to be the music first, so then I can pay attention to the lyrics. The combination between the music and the lyrics was so overwhelming to me. The Smiths sounded like nothing I've never heard before. As I fell in love with them I knew immediately that my heart belongs to the man that creates this beautiful music, plays these beautiful riffs, makes magic with his guitar.

By coincidence, not too long after my Smiths crush, I got a CD by The The - *Dusk* (one of my favorite albums till this day) and I had no idea Johnny was part of it till I read the credits on the cover. From this point the music lover that I was became an explorer, a music explorer.

Of course, I got *Mind Bomb* (and all the other The The albums), and then came Electronic (sometimes I feel that 'Getting Away With It' is the best song ever), which was a cool (reverse) way also to discover New Order.

Along the 20 years that passed, I had to give warm hugs to The Pretenders, Talking Heads, Kirsty MacColl, The Healers, The Cribbs and Modest Mouse and so on.

I owe Johnny Marr a world of music, not only by following his career, but also for being inspired by the way he always explores different genres, does what he's passionate about and follows his heart. No wonder that with this tremendous impact, the release of his two fantastic solo albums in the past two years is actually his and ours happiest time. Thanks Johnny for this majestic ride! Cheers for the adventures to come!

# Brian O'Grady

And so at the age of 18 I started to learn guitar. It seemed obvious to me as it should to every living person on the planet that the key to life and eternal happiness is being able to play 'This Charming Man' flawlessly on a Rickenbacker 330. My housemates learned to hate that song in ways I will never fully appreciate. But I stuck with it – my children were serenaded to sleep in dark bedrooms to the sound of 'I Won't Share You' or 'There Is A Light' played on a cheap 12-string.

Over the years I've followed Johnny from afar, amazed at his ability to stay relevant. My favourite moment, a 4 minute YouTube clip from Amsterdam with Johnny playing 'Tiny Cities' with Modest Mouse. It's not even the full song; the camera just focuses on Johnny, adding grooves and layers on his cream Jazzmaster. He is so lost in the music, the guitar totally at his command, that he's almost dancing to the music he's creating. For me this is perfect Johnny Marr – a guitarist that can inspire and bring shivers to my spine in a moment 20 years after his so-called "peak".

The view from the audience takes me back to another concert almost 25 years ago. The live at the Point Dublin 1990 – I'm standing right in front of Johnny, having fought my way to a prime spot against the barrier. It's the first time I hear 'Jealous of Youth', and for days afterwards I keep whistling the chiming guitar riff since I don't know if or when I'll ever hear the song again.

It's a funny thing about your childhood heroes; they get older at the same rate as you. When I was 15 Johnny was only 21 and seemed a world away. Now I'm 45 and he's only 51! Now he's not only a musical inspiration but living proof that maybe just maybe, one can still be cool after 50.

Anyone know where Johnny gets his hair cut?



# Kira L. Garcia

I go through massive eras of musical obsession, and each recent one seems to revolve around a massive guitarist. First it was Hendrix, and when I first got really into disco and funk, Rodgers. Marr's music came into my life next, and at a very crucial time, I think. In reality, though, his music has been around me for most of my life. I know this because of rediscovered Electronic cassettes found in dusty boxes and vague memories of my father singing along to songs by The Smiths during car rides when I was very young.

My mentor at a local record shop wanted me to bring in my 'Dynamo' 7" so we could listen together, and the first thing he said as he held the sleeve was, "I really like his suit." To which I replied, "He's very stylish." Johnny's sense of fashion has most recently been very influential on me. Because of it, I just cleared out half of my closet and now I'm desperate to find some better clothes and change my dull haircut!

Sometime last winter, I called off a date with a boy, my reason being that Johnny Marr was coming to our home city that same night, and "When will I get another chance like this?!" Needless to say, he wasn't pleased. Unfortunately, the show was cancelled, but now I'm just avidly waiting for another chance like it. I find that situation very humorous now, but I'll admit that night would've been much better had I gone to a Johnny Marr show instead of seeing that boy...

I realize how maudlin it is to mention, but my late mother (of five years as of October 28th) and Johnny share the same star sign, and whether you believe in that sort of thing or want to call it rubbish, I find small similarities in the two of them such as their sharp personalities and desire to speak their minds. I don't even know if I believe in that sort of thing, but I do know it's embarrassingly heartwarming to find myself subconsciously discovering their likenesses. It's foolishly sentimental of me, but putting aside the music (for just a second), maybe that's part of the draw I have to Johnny as a person.

Very recently, I was walking along a mountain ridge after a day of exhausting hiking. There was melting snow on the ground all around me, and when I looked up and noticed the blood-orange sun setting amongst pink clouds, right over a vast, green moor, the only thing I could think of the whole time I stood there and watched were the opening chords to 'Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now', and it was really a beautiful moment.

Johnny's skills and sense of melody are immensely beautiful, frustrating, tear-jerking, and awe-inspiring. I know he'll be the one to trigger so many more young artist's inspirations, like mine. Despite everything previously written, the number one thing I wish to do is thank Johnny deeply for all of his music and wish him a fabulous birthday. Stay as remarkably venturesome and stylish as you've always been.

## L.M.

Our axeman wasn't always the cherub his loyal clique envisaged – “There have been plenty of times when I've been a total dick like everybody else, you know, I mean I wanted to be a little rock 'n' roller, and I was, and it was great”; a near miss with death in a crushing mid-'80s car crash; alcohol, crisps, chips and fags were on constant consumption – but even through the anti-angelic realms of his early guitar career, Johnny Marr embodied what it was like to be a teenager/twenty-something. His musical paradigm dictated his actions, whether it physical playing or indeed lifestyle. The Smiths-era was seen as Morrissey, the moaning misanthrope, and Marr, the kid at school everyone wanted to be. This isn't a total misconception but more of a superficial interpretation of what both men stood for – they both rode the same musical and life cadence; the moaning and groaning, the confusion, the idiocy, the puerility, adumbrated the social scene they were setting. I think as the soon-to-be twenty-four-year-old I can vouch for the mercurial nature of simply being.

Marr's guitar taught me that pop music is an art-form, a life-changer, not just, among a lot of other aspects, perpetual entertainment. Johnny is among the minute cadre of intellectual pop-ites to grasp inspiration from various musical forebears where I've picked up my fair share of musical knowledge thereof. Growing weary of the pap-crap of '80s existence was a natural source of inspiration for Johnny; veering towards the androgynous glam rock, the raucous rockabilly and the world-appropriated funk were the only real escape routes from Northern England industrial insularity. Here I've studied – away from the world of playing – musical concepts, ideologies, artists and cultures; picked up books and learned some mechanics of song along the way, which without an erudite and cultured guitar, I would never have obtained.

The altruistic ethos of his music and persona have given me a lot; an outlet, a literary and musical knowledge, and an individualistic desire to do my own thing, not to be sucked in by societal conventions and norms. It speaks wonders of the polymorphism of his instrument, matching the emotion of being that confused youth with the assured musical knowledge he's grasped over the years, both in their differing states as appealing, endearing and captivating as one another.

## Laura Dean

After Johnny's two night residency at the Brudenell Social Club in Leeds back in March 2014, one of Leeds' independent Record Stores 'Jumbo Records' wrote a tweet regarding a magazine they were publishing in aid of Record Store Day the next month. The store wanted to feature reviews of some of the recent top gigs in Leeds and were looking for somebody to write about one of Johnny's Brudenell shows; since I hadn't stopped talking about the gig and Johnny since the gig itself, I thought “why not?!” I hadn't reviewed anything before or written anything really since leaving university the year before, so I was really nervous, but once I started writing I really enjoyed myself. I loved writing about every aspect of the gig, including Johnny's set list, the atmosphere, his enthusiasm on stage and the live debut of some new songs! It was so exciting writing about him playing 'Candidate', 'Little King' and what instantly became my favourite *Playland* track around 7 months before its release, 'Boys Get Straight'. Once the review was published I was over the moon to have my name next to a picture of Johnny Marr in print and tweeted about it - a tweet which Johnny replied to saying how much of a good night it was and thanking me for being there. Shortly after this I began to write for an online music magazine, and now write for two on a regular basis. Of course Johnny meant a lot to me both musically and personally before I began writing, but he does even more so now; I absolutely love the fact that he's influenced my career goal. Johnny Marr is the reason that I write reviews and I really thank him for that.

# Mara Romanessi

I discovered The Smiths five years ago when I was fifteen. I've always been a huge fan of British music and when I decided to give The Smiths a try it was love at first play.

I was amazed by the beauty of their music, lyrics and style. As Russell Brand said once, and I quote, "they reach into the part of you where you feel the most weak, vulnerable and unacceptable and glorify it, make it heroic". I couldn't agree more.

The Smiths are perfect for someone as sensitive as me, but since the beginning the thing that I loved the most about them was the sound of the guitar. I decided Johnny Marr was my favourite member without even knowing who he was. When I got into him I realized he was actually the best and coolest guitarist alive. I feel the melody, riffs and arrangements of his guitar in my veins, no sound makes me feel more pleasure. *The Messenger* and *Playland* just confirmed that he is unbelievably talented and he needs nobody to shine. I saw him live two times and I can say I have never witnessed a talent on display like that before.

And as if that wasn't enough, I got the chance to meet him twice and I can assure he is the kindest and most down to earth artist I've ever met. Those moments made a huge impact on my life. They say "never meet your heroes", but Johnny didn't disappoint me at all, he was a delightful surprise. Johnny Marr is a not only an outstanding musician but also a remarkable person. He deserves all the recognition, love and respect he gets and more, and I'm so proud of having his music with me everyday on my playlist and my heart.

# Valentina Miranda

Since I met Johnny he always has meant to me an interesting musician and an interesting man for his collaborations with other bands and singers because he has explored many styles of music along his career. I think what defines an excellent musician is his devotion to the music, not only his years of career, he must dare to try new styles and rhythms. Form new bands with new people for him and the people, especially his fans, and record albums to play live. Given all these characteristics: Johnny is an excellent musician and I'm proud of him.

I admire Johnny with all my soul because he is a great example of a man that loves his job and he does it in an excellent way. Is a man that never chases the past, he grows musically and always overcomes himself in every album and live presentation.

When I listen Johnny's music with The Smiths, The Healers, his collaborations, or his solo career, I feel that my life is perfect because his music is everything for me and his songs supplement me. His visits to Chile always make me feel so happy.

Johnny's passion for the music and his job inspires me for life: devote the love and enthusiasm to the job without any cares.

I remember when he won the Godlike Genius award at the NME Awards, I felt very happy for him because he deserved it more than anybody in the world. In fact: I'm always happy when he wins a prize because in that moment I'm sure to be a fan of the right person.

Johnny is the person that I most admire in the world, especially in the music. I will always feel a great feeling of affection, love and respect for him. He will always have my support. Johnny is my hero.

# Craig Spence

## *Marr*

Through my life there  
has been an underlying theme  
Always searching for peace  
Harmony came in the form of the Smiths  
The background to my early years  
Saving me in my teenage tears  
Moving on to my twenties  
Dreams  
Of singing with my guitar  
Achieving my goal  
Then retreating  
To  
My thirties  
Lost in busy  
Work and family life  
The only noise in my head  
Then a crack of light  
A track heard on the radio  
I recognise tone  
of the fender jaguar  
Soon  
Marr's guitar dominates  
My harmony again

# Kirsty Smith

I've been a mad Johnny fan since I first heard The Smiths in 1983. My Mum and Dad allowed me to go and see them in concert at The Blackpool Opera House in 1984, when I was 15. I had the privilege of meeting the band in the afternoon and having a good chat about music with Johnny. My biggest regret to this day is that I had no camera, pen or paper on me!

I love the music to all the bands Johnny has played in - The Smiths, The The, Electronic, Johnny Marr and The Healers, Modest Mouse and The Cribs, amongst my treasured collection.

I've been to see Johnny in concert lots of times and again had the privilege of meeting him after the concerts and getting pictures with him.

At one of the concerts, there was a crowd of us, waiting to see him after the gig and even though he didn't leave the place until early hours in the morning, he spoke to every person in the crowd, having photographs taken with us all and signing his autograph - a true, gifted gentleman.

Thanks for your fantastic music, Johnny. Keep on rocking.

## Karen Black

I am delighted to have the opportunity to write a few words, though they won't come anywhere near to my expression of respect that I have for Johnny Marr.

Even before Johnny's profession, I consider Johnny as one of the finest human beings on the planet. Every interview I have either read or watched there is a true passion like no other, therefore reflected in his music. All of this combined, makes for pure quality recordings and memorable live shows.

Never have I come across an artist that is more proactive and genuine towards their fans, for which we are eternally grateful.

JM, you mean a lot to me and I strive daily to be the best human I can. I often think when I struggle through our daily lives... what would Johnny do? And then I consult any Johnny Marr albums or re-read an article and all is better with the world! You are an inspiration...

Thank you for including Australia on your itinerary year after year.

Until the next time we see you on the road... thank you.

## Mark Sharpley

Johnny Marr? I do wonder what I would be doing if I hadn't had listened to 'This Charming Man' all those years ago. And the fact I found Johnny Marr one of the coolest people ever to pick up a guitar was another bonus. If anyone's memory stretches so far as to remember The Smiths on Top Of The Pops performing 'Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now', will certainly remember a very cool looking Mr Marr eating the audience up. I was 8 years old at the time, and it was a time when the likes of Wham! and Duran Duran were giving off their pop musings with extra hairspray. But that night had opened my eyes even further as to what a guitar hero could be. And Johnny Marr fitted the bill without breaking a sweat. The ease of how to play the guitar, the fashion sense, the aura that one person could give off to a studio full of people, never mind the rest of the country.

And he still remains my absolute musical hero to this day. The excitement of seeing Johnny on tour or the release of a new album still brings a sense of youthful excitement to my otherwise 39 year old demeanour. Coming from Macclesfield, we still looked upon Joy Division and Ian Curtis with very fond memories, but when The Smiths came along they gave us that little bit extra. And it was from 1982 to the present day that Johnny Marr remains in my record collection, and in my gratitude that you can still believe in a hero every now and again. All hail the guitar god that is Johnny Marr.



# Snigdha Nag

Invited to speak at his children's school, Johnny Marr decided to speak about how it was good to become an expert in something. This sums up exactly why he is such a hero to me. He could have done a "do you know who I am?" Self-aggrandising speech, full tales of a life lived as a rock star. But no, modest as ever, he decided to inspire a generation of kids with his words, just as his guitar playing has done the same for so many musicians.

During childhood Johnny made it his business to become an expert, learning from the greats, playing along to records he loved, jamming with friends, hours upon hours of playing and practice. If you've seen Johnny play Rory Gallagher's riffs on THAT famously battered, stripped Strat, you will have seen those breakneck speed runs and scale based solos played with ease. (Legend has it that Hendrix considered Gallagher the greatest guitarist in the world).

In this X Factor world of manufactured music, people want to become famous above all else, stardom seemingly happening just by appearing at an audition. Why learn the craft of music? Why bother practicing or learning? Johnny is a beacon, showing us it is worthwhile and important.

Johnny has been the mentor to many current musicians and stars, lending them guitars, guesting on their records, producing their recordings. But he still cares about the "bedroom guitarist", playing at home, alone. Replying to guitar players' questions on Twitter, he wants to encourage us, regardless of age or expertise. He doesn't care if we are going to form a band, or whether we are just playing for the fun of it. His zeal for guitars and guitar culture is almost evangelical, once writing: "Playing the guitar means never being alone with nothing to do. It means strumming for fun, or going further and further into amazing territory and a lifetime of discovery and discipline, or just taking up a hobby that gives you a bit pleasure and a sense of achievement." Johnny learned how to play, then reinvented rock guitar as we know it. He followed the philosophy of jazz great Charlie Parker, who advised: "Master your instrument. Master the music. And then forget all that bullshit and just play." Why? Because it is good to become an expert in something.

Happy birthday Johnny, hero and inspiration.

# Lucija Naletilić

How do you write just a few words about that Mancunian wonder-boy, the guitar genius extraordinaire— Johnny Marr? That's a hard task but I'll try. Firstly, I want to point out that I'm neither a musical encyclopedia nor a guitar connoisseur, just a modest admirer of Johnny's work.

I discovered Johnny's music pretty late, about seven years ago. My sister was an admirer of the band he co-founded in the early 1980s – The Smiths. One day she brought me their compilation album *Louder Than Bombs*. Perhaps I was bored and had nothing better to do. Anyway, I decided to listen to it and see what's it all about. I was instantly entranced by Johnny's guitar chords. His impeccable technique and simple chords brought those songs to life. It was an amazing experience. Later I found the band's other albums and I fell madly in love with this music I discovered almost by chance. This music also helped me get through some rough times of my life. For me, that was a real gift from God.

Through the years, Johnny continued his musical growth as a member of bands like The Pretenders, The The, Electronic, The Healers, Modest Mouse and The Cribs. He also collaborated with Pet Shop Boys, Bryan Ferry, Billy Bragg, Talking Heads, Beck, Kirsty MacColl and many other notable musicians. He contributed to the score for the 2010 film *Inception* and composed (as a member of the supergroup The Magnificent Six) the soundtrack for *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*. In spite of his undeniable talent, Johnny Marr is unfairly still one of the most underrated rock guitarists and composers.

Regardless of all of Johnny's great collaborations and projects, many of his admirers (including me), wondered when he was finally going to make a solo record. The answer came in February 2013, when he released his first solo album called *The Messenger*. I was so thrilled that he hasn't lost any of his magic. Less than two years after, Johnny enraptured us with his second album, *Playland*, which confirmed his position as an indisputable King of Indie.

Johnny's tunes made generations of fans happy and inspired many of them to play the guitar and to fall in love with music for life. I hope he will keep creating new fantastic music and amaze the world with his brilliant playing.

# Mariana Polizzi

I think I've met Johnny Marr in different encounters, year after year. And why is that? Because even though I never had the pleasure of meeting him face to face, his very persona allowed me to penetrate in many labyrinths: his music, his creations, his tastes, his clever opinions, etc.

Music was the first connection I received from him and that's how I simply found Johnny. I was 15 years old when I listened to The Smiths for the first time in my life, and it was through the radio; the song was 'Girlfriend In A Coma'. I must say that, as a British music fan at heart, I never heard anything like that before. For several reasons: easy lyrics (sadly, English is not my first language), nice vocals and above all, a unique and melancholic guitar playing and melody. Knew at the time that I was in front of something really direct and spectacular at the same time. *Strangeways* came to my hands and it blew me away, even now! So the fever for Johnny's musical career began.

As I wrote before, you can think of Johnny Marr as one multiple creator, like a magician: From his music to his political opinions, without ignoring of course his taste when it comes to being a style icon. Music, politics, art, literature, philosophy, fashion, footy... Many, many labyrinths coming together as one in a fully sensitive individual.

Magical sounds from an axe, unique thoughts from an interesting mind; a man who will never stop creating beauty, inspiring others and enlightening people's lives. And that is HIS art.

# Jill Lichtenstadter

Dearest Johnny,

Wishing you the happiest of happy birthdays!!!

I'd like to thank you for all the joy and inspiration you bring to my world with your words and music. You are such a superb singer/songwriter/musician/human, and have curated such wonderfully talented, spectacular band, and I can't wait to see what comes next!

I was lucky enough to see you on the last two tours in NYC around my birthday in November. To hear both your tunes and Smiths tunes as I hit 50, knowing that some of those songs literally saved my life back in the 80's, well as you can imagine, it was quite emotional. I entered my 50's with no fear and a much greater sense of peace, thanks to you.

I love you and your band to bits!! Please keep on keepin' on and have a super fab birthday!

Cheers!

## Part II

*My Most Memorable  
Johnny Marr moment*

# Dave Medley

## *Lost in the Music*

At its best, music transports you to another place. At The Forum in Melbourne last night (July 22nd 2015) I was right at the front, a few feet away from the man himself. The gig was great, with Johnny in fine voice and playing thrilling guitar. About two-thirds of the way through an epic version of ‘Getting Away With It’, Johnny Marr’s eyes lost all focus for about fifteen seconds as he seemed to just immerse himself in the swirling melody.

Witnessing that drew it together in my mind with two other Marr experiences. A man at the Newcastle gig in October 2014 sang every word of ‘How Soon is Now’, eyes shut, hands raised towards the sky; it was like a religious experience. At The Forum another man, eyes shut, flamboyantly gesticulated, like an orchestra conductor, all the way through the same song. Johnny’s music does that to his fans; it was great, during that hypnotic section of ‘Getting Away With It’, to see the music clearly affect him so much too.

# Lily Moayeri

On Tuesday February 4, 2003 I joined Johnny and Alonza and Zak from The Healers for an in-store signing supporting their release, *Boomslang*, at the defunct Virgin Megastore on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles. Standing to one side with Alonza and Zak, I heard them calculating. They were estimating the number of people queued up for autographs, multiplying that by three, then dividing it by 60 to determine how long we would be at the store. They explained that Johnny spent at least three minutes having a conversation with every single person in the queue—not just signing their item and moving on, but a meaningful exchange. While I was digesting this, I noticed that even though the store had table and chairs set up for Johnny, he stood for the entire duration. He positioned himself at the start of the very long queue, and stayed there the whole time, not even leaning. If these people were on their feet for hours waiting for a scribble from him, then Johnny would be on his feet too. That is always the anecdote I revert to when I want to describe Johnny’s character to people.

# Andy Campbell

## *An unheard future, and an unknown melody*

Modest Mouse, December 29, 2006

The Palace, St. Kilda

Melbourne

It's a sticky 30 degrees even though the sun has set, and a change isn't expected tonight. Fans have been queuing on the Esplanade in this heat since mid-afternoon. Now, inside the Palace, I'm at the front, clinging to the barrier. Behind me is a swarming mass of bodies. The atmosphere is electric and the tension is mounting. The houselights fade to black and the earsplitting howl of a police siren bursts through the PA. Amidst a fog of dry ice, the members of Modest Mouse emerge from the wings to the screams of a fanatical crowd. The band members take their places on stage, and settle themselves unhurriedly. That is, with the exception of Johnny Marr, who from the moment he bounds onstage is busy; visibly psyched. He's already wearing his guitar: a black Fender Jaguar enigmatically decorated with stickers. Before the band starts he paces the distance between his amps and the stage front, pounds settings into effects pedals with his right foot, bounces up and down energetically. He's switched on and ready to go. His jet-black hair is modishly cut, his grey blazer is perfectly fitted, and an arrow pendant hangs from his neck over a festive red T-shirt on which I make out the word 'Christmas.' Then the first song begins, gloriously loud, and Johnny marches to the front of the stage, legs apart Johnny Ramone-style, head held high, eyes fixed to the back of the room, Jaguar resting at a right angle on his hip. He nods and shakes his head to the rhythm of the songs; gestures to the sound guy with a pointed finger, followed with a thumbs up; smiles in the direction of the corner of the room as though he's recognised a friend (causing me and a large contingent of the audience to turn and look that way) then cheekily pokes his tongue out at the crowd. His performance is calculated and intense, but fun and cool, and his presence is mesmerising. The spectacle of it is such a sweet and strange surprise.

On this night I was watching Johnny play for the first time. I only knew a couple of Modest Mouse songs, but I didn't mind: I'd come out specifically for Johnny. I was 20 years old, I'd been obsessed with The Smiths for a year, and I was simply a young guitar player who wanted to watch their favourite guitar player in the flesh.

A year earlier, The Smiths' music had changed me, inwardly: with their records I'd

found a kind of spiritual and psychological home and was happy to live in that world forever. But seeing Johnny play changed me again, this time outwardly. I fancy that when I emerged from my room to catch the tram to the Modest Mouse gig, it was a bit like I'd just been raised from the dead. I didn't go out much, but I was brought out to the gig by the music of Johnny's younger self. I was wearing faded black jeans and a khaki jacket. I remember feeling like a dog: I hadn't had a haircut for a few months, had just bought an Olympic White Strat but knew no other musicians despite having played guitar for years: my sense of self was shaky – I felt imageless. But now, a few feet in front me on the Palace stage was the man with whom I felt a deep affinity, and he couldn't have appeared – on stage at least – more opposite to the inward-looking person that I was. He looked like he wanted everyone there to take notice and have fun: he was confident, he was glam; his posture and his moves were pulled with the affectations and the deliberation of a dancer: conceived for the stage, and intended to look great. It was in dramatic contrast with the way rock musicians were then (and are now to a degree): seemingly ignorant of performance and theatre, and obsessed with 'authenticity' and 'indie-ness,' which usually took the form of an un-lifelike cutesiness and a child's play aesthetic. And here was Johnny, who came on stage and was 'being big.' Being a rockstar. At that time I thought that what I was seeing was perhaps the attitude of the 80s, or of Manchester, or maybe just of Johnny. But why did no one else play like this, or seem to give this much to their show? I learned then how great it was to watch your rockstars actually be rockstars: it's inspiring. Why would you want to watch a performer be completely ordinary?

There were other lessons I learned from Johnny that night too: be proud; be confident; be big; show people who you are and don't hold back. Keep learning, and keep moving. Good lessons for life.

Happy birthday J! x



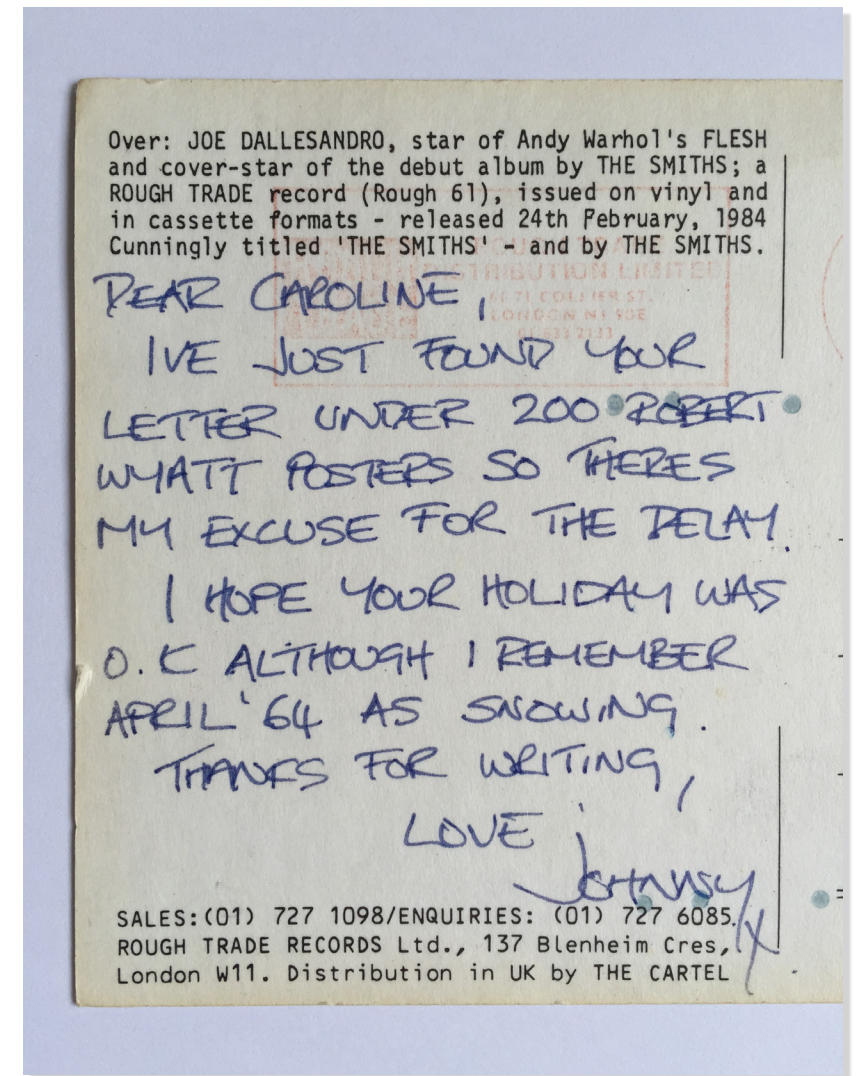
# Caroline Leggott

In 1984 Johnny sent me a postcard which remains one of my most treasured possessions.

During the Easter holidays of that year I wrote to The Smiths because I had the urge to tell them that they were my favourite band. I bought some purple paper and decorated it with stickers, alternating flowers with musical notes, posted the letter to Rough Trade Records then waited...

Four months had passed and I was feeling a bit stupid for expecting a reply. The night before I was due to collect my 'O' Level exam results I became ill. The doctor arrived in the morning and said it was nothing too serious but I couldn't see my friends and was very miserable. My dad brought me the expected brown envelope from school plus something else – a postcard of The Smiths' debut album cover hand-written by Johnny Marr! The timing couldn't have been more perfect and it instantly lifted my spirits.

A week later I was out of bed watching the band mime to 'William, It Was Really Nothing' on Top of the Pops, astonished that the guitarist on screen had taken the trouble to write to me. The postcard has faded now but the memory of Johnny's kindness is still very vivid.



*Caroline's postcard from Johnny*

# Ellen Leerburger

Last November, I went to see Johnny Marr play at the Gramercy Theater in NYC, during his US leg of the *Playland* tour. Of course it was spectacular, as expected and I wrote about it in-depth in one of the *Dynamic*'s issues. What I left out was what happened after the concert. Through great kindness, I finagled a VIP pass to the "after party" downstairs where "it was possible" that Johnny might make an appearance. Now, Johnny is known to regularly come out and hang with the crowd in his typically gracious and charming manner. So I was hanging out, just waiting around drinking my \$13 "Upstarts" drink and listening to the DJ's awesome choices when someone said, "Hey, you have a VIP pass - you need to go over there" pointing to some tiny room off to the side. I show my pass, walk in to a room the size of my (not big) kitchen and there are about 10 people including Johnny wearing his "uniform" of black and white striped shirt, tight fitted jacket, black skinny jeans and his vintage Lacoste sneakers. So cute. I stand patiently by while he chatted with a small group of people and then he turned to me.

I say, "Hi Johnny. I'm Ellen. We've written a few times online. And I'm a friend of Aly and Ory and I also wrote the article on Nile Rodgers for the first issue of *Dynamic*. HUGE hug. "Ellen. Of course. I know exactly who you are! I loved that article." And then a good 15 minutes of discussion began where he made me feel like I was his long-lost BFF (including, I think, 8 hugs) I won't go into all the details for fear of being TOO much of an obsessed fangirl (ya think?) but here's the outline of what we talked about:

1. Aly and Ory and how great they are and how amazing it was for them to be in the UK as his guests. These are two of the most wonderful, classy and special women, great fans, great friend and great shepherdesses of our fansite and magazine. Johnny and I love them so much.

2. The MMTR (Magic, Meditation, Therapy, Religion) mix that my friend, David, and I made last fall focusing on Johnny, his influences and those he influenced. He took my phone and scrolled through the playlist, commenting on both Grin's 'Moon Tears' - Johnny's a huge Nils Lofgren fan - and surprisingly, the Stone Roses' 'Waterfall' (such great guitar on that track). He gave me his email address so I can send him a copy. I'm surprised I didn't faint right then.

3. He asked me what I did, and when I told him that I am an interpretive exhibit designer, I also offered to take him to a museum if he had time while he was in NYC.

He said he unfortunately didn't, but asked me some questions about what museums I worked with and when I mentioned the Guggenheim, he told me how much he loved last year's Futurist show, so we chatted about that for a bit.

4. I somehow told him that we were the same age - not sure how that came up. (He's actually a year older.) He asked me when my birthday was and said he couldn't believe I was that old. When I told him that he also didn't look his age, he hugged me again (great hugger) and said, "We look fookin' great!" It was sometime during this exchange that he held both my hands and we talked about our matching silver nail polish.

5. Nile Rodgers, my article and how fantastic it would be for them to record together if they could get their schedules to match up.

6. The show and the current setlist which led me to tell him that I actually was given HIS playlist from the show. He responded, "well if you have that, you should probably also have this!" and he reached into his pocket and handed me his guitar pick, which, of course, says, "Johnny" on it. This time, I may have almost cried.

7. The Mimicking Birds and the Palma Violets - two bands recommended by Johnny in interviews, one of whom I've seen live, and how great it is to discover really good new music.

Then he signed my set list and my ticket (for a friend) and moved on to chat with someone else. A few minutes later, as he was leaving, he came over and said, "Goodnight, Ellen. I'll see you on Saturday, right?" (at the Williamsburg Music Hall Show.) Hell yeah, you will! I then collected all my things and managed somehow to get a cab and float home for the night. Sleeping, however, did not come easily. A night to remember for sure. How often is it that the reality of meeting one your heroes exceeds your expectations? This is really my religion and I was so entirely happily pious in the church of Marr. Johnny Fucking Marr, man. I am so lucky.



# Chad Williams

My most memorable time spent with Johnny was when he autographed my Sherwood Green J.M. signature Fender Jaguar. The lead up to this event actually began two days prior, when he played a charity event in Kansas City the day before Thanksgiving 2014. I met him briefly after the gig whilst standing by his tour bus. After having stowed his gear, he came back out for autographs, walked towards me and said “You look really familiar.” I was a bit flattered, as it had been a year since we last spoke and I was wearing a winter coat and hat, as it was freezing outside. We kept it short because of the cold. He agreed when I asked if he would sign my Jag if I brought it out to his next gig in Denver.

I arrived at the Denver venue shortly after the band unloaded their gear, and had parked alongside the tour bus (as it was in a parking lot). A few minutes later, the bus driver steps out and after making sure I wasn't too closely parked, I casually mentioned that I was just waiting for Johnny. Within fifteen minutes, Johnny steps out of the bus with the driver and heads over to my car! We strike up a conversation and I take out my Jaguar. Johnny goes to prime the paint pen (on the back of the guitar body, I dunno why), but because of the altitude change, paint starts pouring out of the pen and onto the guitar--ahhh! I'm trying to remain calm, and Johnny casually says that he's gonna pop back into the bus and get some finger nail polish remover to help take off the spilled paint. I meanwhile start wiping it off on my shirt. After cleaning the mess, he signs his autograph and poses for a picture, we chat for a bit more, and he's back off in the bus to continue working on what I imagine was the B-side to 'Dynamo' (as he explained he was working on a B-side to an upcoming single).

A very humble and personable man. Johnny, it was a pleasure meeting you again. I hope you'll remain so approachable and decent. A great many thanks again for signing my Jaguar too. Happy Birthday! Best wishes!



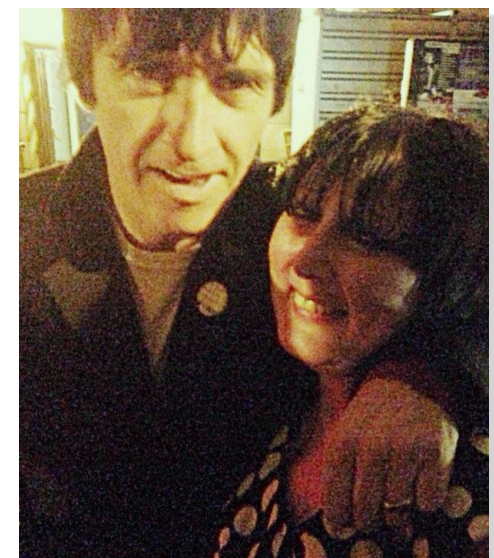
Johnny with Ellen  
New York City, 2014



Johnny with Chad  
Denver, 2014



Johnny with Mara  
Buenos Aires, 2015



Johnny with Melody  
Wolverhampton, 2014

## Mara Romanessi

I am lucky enough to say I met Johnny Marr twice. Both happened at Niceto Club, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Buenos Aires is five hours away from my town, but when it comes to seeing Johnny Marr live, I couldn't care less. The first time was on 4 April 2014. I saw him when he was arriving at the venue, and he stopped to sign and chat with all of us who were waiting for him. We had a cool chat where I told him he was my favourite guitarist and he told me Graham Coxon was one of his. My 2014 was improved not only because of that but also because a few months later I tweeted him a drawing I made for him and he replied to me AND uploaded it on his Facebook page.

On 17 June 2015 I met him again in the same situation and I was able to ask him what he thought of the drawing (he recalled that with a smile) and I also gave him a little Johnny figurine made of cold porcelain that he really liked, and he uploaded a photo of Jack with it on his Instagram 2 hours later (Jack also uploaded it on his Twitter). This made my year and I will always be thankful to him for being so amazing to me and to all his fans, that says a lot about him. A true hero.

## Melody Redhead

After seeing Johnny in Manchester March 2013 at the Ritz Manchester, I was so excited to be seeing him again in Wolverhampton at the Civic Hall 17th October 2014.

Lucky to be at the front on the barrier with an amazing view of all the band. The whole set was fantastic, with tracks from the 1st and 2nd albums, and a few beloved Smiths classics included.

After the gig was over, I was determined to meet Johnny for the 1st time, even though it was bucketing down with rain.

Rushing around to the back of the Hall I saw quite a few excited fans waiting, then our man appeared.

What a lovely, charming, friendly, and down to earth guy he is.

I suddenly went from a middle aged woman to a 16 year old within 10 seconds, bouncing up and down saying "Johnny Johnny Johnny", to the shock of my partner.

Speaking to Johnny, it was so nice to see his friendly smile. He kindly signed both my CDs and he said it was nice to see some glamour at his gig. Well that just made me glow, and made my night, week, month etc...

I asked him if he would kindly sign my arm under a tattoo of "There is a light that never goes out". His comment made me smile as he said "They're not my lyrics" to my reply, "I know but you were up on stage singing them", he grinned, and kindly signed my arm.

## Alex Harding

I'd just started studying in Cardiff and this was my first time seeing the legendary Johnny Marr. I was no longer a 21 year old, I'd turned into an excited child on Christmas Day.

I made sure I was in time to see the support act, Childhood were bloody brilliant. I was very close to the front barrier and then the Playland lights started flashing. Marr was on his way.

As Johnny came out I had that buzz, the buzz that only live music brings to me. The buzz that has got me through the hard times and enabled me to enjoy the good times. Everyone seemed to be feeling the buzz, Johnny had such amazing energy. Maybe he was 21 again.

Johnny played a great set, Smiths classics left right and centre and those iconic riffs being gold dust to my ears. He also added in new material, showing how he'd grown as a solo artist. 22 songs and I definitely got what I wanted after all the internal pleading. After the show I was in no rush, one of the roadies passed me a pick Johnny had used, which I will treasure forever. Then, in the foyer I met the guys from Childhood, and I even got a compliment on my Fred Perry shirt. I was living the Mod dream. Thank you for such a great night Johnny, I'll never forget it.

## Stephen Evans

My first time of seeing Johnny was at the Manchester Ritz in 2013, I had just split up with my wife and was embarking on my first ever Johnny show and my first ever show alone. Even though I had two tickets, it was at this show I realised I wasn't alone :I had Johnny Marr with me. 'There Is A Light That Never Goes Out' had me in tears at the end, I was so moved by the whole occasion, and I stopped off halfway home the following day and had 'There Is A Light That Never Goes Out' tattooed on my forearm.

Since that day I have seen Johnny perform in Newcastle twice, and Leeds twice, including an amazing and surreal night at the Brudenell Social Club which was one of the best nights of my life. Deershed 5 festival, Sheffield, Glasgow, Manchester Apollo, which again was awesome as the theatre is part of Johnny's own youth and inspiration. I sat in Ardwick Park and pondered life positively. I also visited Salford Lads Club, steeped in The Smiths history.

When Noel Gallagher announced Johnny onto the stage at Manchester Arena to perform 'Ballad Of The Mighty I' with him, it was an absolutely awesome sight and performance. Johnny has always put on an amazing performance which is just brilliant every time. I took my 13 year old son to Hyde Park, Wakefield and the Nottingham shows, and he now wants more Johnny shows - roll on Manchester Albert Hall, Rockaway beach festival and Newcastle University. Johnny will always be part of my life and I thank him for it.

# Belinda Hogan

Johnny Marr's music has been a part of my life since I was 12 years old, when I first heard 'This Charming Man' on Sydney radio. The sound of Johnny's guitar in that song was so unique and striking, I could not believe what I was hearing.

On 4 August 1989, I went to see The The at The Horden Pavilion. I was 17 years old. After the gig, my friend and I went for a drink in a small bar...and happened to walk in to the one the band was in. And that is where I met Johnny, and what a very down-to-earth person he is!

We talked for over an hour about music generally, Australian bands in particular and I told him to go and check out the records of cool Sydney bands at the time – I read afterwards he did go and buy some vinyl! He was so giving of his time just to chat and was totally focused on our conversation the whole time. Just a very lovely and genuine person!

Johnny also invited my mate and I to the second The The gig – to cut a long story short – my mum would not let me venture over to The Coogee Bay Hotel to see and hang out with a band...because I needed to be studying for my final school exams. Mum has never been forgiven!

Johnny wrote me an autograph on the back of a beer coaster that said: **“For Belinda, Love and Luck, Johnny Marr (89).”**

But, in 1991, I lost Johnny's autograph.

I was living on the second floor of a very old university student house in the country. Johnny's autograph was in what I now know as a dodgy frame that sat on a dodgy mantel piece. One day Johnny's autograph fell from the bottom of the frame, down the back of the mantel piece and into a crack in the old wooden floor boards. There were many attempts at retrieval but sadly it was never seen again.

Although I don't have the beer coaster evidence (although one day it would be wonderful to get a replacement), I still have my fabulous memory of having a long chat with Johnny – about music and life. Cheers Johnny!

# Lee Bellfield

Two memorable moments stick in my head. The first time was in March 2013. Manchester Ritz on a Friday night. The first night I'd ever seen him live. I'd seen him twice with The Cribs but never solo. The opening salvo of 'The Right Thing Right' kicked in and set the scene for an amazing gig. Needless to say the rest of the night was fantastic. Great crowd too.

The other memorable moment interestingly enough isn't musically. It was May last year and Johnny was on the pitch with another great Manchester music icon Noel Gallagher as Manchester City won their second premier league title. Does it get much better?



## Dillon Ryan

My favorite Johnny Marr moment was in November of last year. My girlfriend at the time and I flew out from New Brunswick to Toronto Canada just to see Johnny's concert at the Danforth Music Hall. We went there 2 hours early so I could be the first one in line. After the concert I had reached up and snagged the setlist and got outside as quick as possible. We waited across the road for Johnny to come out. It was one of the coldest days of the year and we waited for a good hour and a half. We then saw him coming out into the lobby and we got to meet him immediately. Honestly he was just a super sweet and easy person to make conversation with. He had signed my setlist, copy of *Playland* and vinyl of *Meat Is Murder*. Johnny and I had discussed guitar gear and pedals for a couple minutes and I got to give him and Jack a copy of my band's EP and he told me he'd listen to it tomorrow on the bus! To top all of it off, and what left me leaving with a grin, was before I left he's like "Do you know Bernard Butler? You remind me a lot of Bernard Butler when he was younger!" It was an amazing night getting to meet my biggest musical hero. The fact that Johnny Marr owns my first EP is something I'm a little lost for words with.

## Elisabetta

Since I started to follow Johnny's career more intensively, I've read tons of descriptions of meetings with him written by fans. I can't add anything new talking about my personal meeting with him. It happened in Cluses, France, before and after his show: he's really a very nice, warm person, talkative, interested in what you are and in what you have to say. But there are a couple of things that I've found particularly impressive: his charisma and the feeling of self-awareness he radiates through his incredible, bright expression and his confident posture. I've not so many musical heroes and I've met the most part of them. Moreover, I worked in the music business some years ago and it was common for me to be faced with musicians every day. Usually I'm not nervous or thrilled when I meet a musician/artist I like, but I must admit that when I gave Johnny my CDs to sign, my hands were embarrassingly shaking. Despite my "Parkinsonian moment", we had a very nice chat, talking about music, art, life... Unfortunately, there was no time for a long conversation, but those few minutes were really intense. So, at the end of that memorable day, I came back home with the same feeling of someone still hungry after a much too light meal...

# Matthew Soper

Surely one of my most memorable moments has to be meeting up with Johnny Marr in July 2010. I've been a great fan of his whilst he was with The Smiths, The The, and at the time, The Cribs.

I grow and exhibit nationally with my Carnivorous Plants and thought it would be great to name a new plant I had bred in his honour. The opportunity came via his manager Joe Moss, who came back to me to say Johnny would be pleased to accept, although at the time he was on tour with The Cribs in Spain. I have since met up with him and his wife Angie at both Tatton Park, where the plant was launched, and Chelsea Flower Show where it was nominated and made one of the top 5 in the Plant Of The Year category. Instead of feeling nervous, they put me completely at ease and were genuinely pleased to give up their time to being there. We had a walk around the show and had a long chat, about music and guitars mainly, I couldn't have been more pleased.

A bit later, his manager, Joe, asked for a few pics of the plant, and his most recent guitar the Jag KO was produced in the colour of his plant, Sarracenia cv Johnny Marr. Now that was a fantastic honour for me!!!



*Matthew presenting Johnny with his namesake plant*



*Matthew with Johnny and Angie*

## Aaron Symington

My most memorable Johnny moment has to be meeting him outside after the Manchester Academy gig in Oct 2013. I've met him a few times but that night for me was incredible. My mate and I had flown over from Belfast but our tickets only came the morning we flew out so we had to leave without them, hoping we would get some at the gig, but unfortunately it was sold out and couldn't get any. In total despair we thought all hope was lost, and as a last gasp attempt at some hope I sent Johnny a tweet to explain our predicament. Whether he read it or not I don't know, but an hour later another 150 tickets went on sale. With two tickets bought within minutes we had our buzz back on and went and watched in awe at an incredible gig, only to meet him after too, where we chatted for ages about guitars, music and even complimented each others' jackets. But such an absolute gentleman and easy going guy to talk to. That memory will stand by me forever.

## Sarah Birch

Hands down, the memory that makes me smile the most is from when I met Johnny the first time in Southsea, Portsmouth. I was thanking him for making such beautiful music, when he took my left arm in his hand, and turned it around to read my tattoo. It honestly felt like the whole world stopped for me in that moment. The wind blew behind me and slowly, our eyes met. I've never felt like that before but I will never forget it. I didn't explain to him why I had that tattoo, I didn't feel like I needed to really, but I chose to get it after I saw him on *The Messenger* tour. My Mum died just eight months before. I'm still getting over it now, but at the time I couldn't function at all. After seeing Johnny at the Roundhouse gig in London I suddenly felt better for the first time in months, I'd had a good time and I spend most of the next day crying with relief, wishing I could thank Johnny in person. Luckily for me, I lived with a tattoo artist at the time. She kindly spent four and a half hours carving "This Charming Man" into my left arm. I wear it with pride, not because I'm a crazy fan, (that was my first tattoo by the way) but because it marked a turning point in my life. I'm not claiming to have been touched by god, or healed of depression, but I smiled for the first time in a long time, which felt pretty close.

# Valentina Miranda

The second visit to Chile (July 19, 2015) was my first concert of Johnny's. His first concert in Chile (2014), I could not resist.

Johnny's concert is the best day of my life, and the best concert I ever attended.

From the morning of that day it was unforgettable: I met Jack Mitchell, James Doviak and Iwan Gronow outside Hotel Crowne Plaza. I didn't have time to meet Johnny, but I could see him in the concert, which was amazing. I enjoyed it with all my body and soul. Was an experience very exciting and unforgettable. Also this concert was my first in front row, so I could see and hear Johnny like never before and feel that I sang with him, and he wore a Chilean t-shirt, was amazing and I felt a unique feeling through all the concert. That night I remembered why I admire, support and follow Johnny Marr.

This man is unique in the universe and I will always be there for him.

# Kari Da

February 2006. A dark period in my life when my father was gravely ill and at death's door. During those first weeks of February, I would repeatedly listen to *Strangeways* and *The Queen Is Dead*. The most memorable experience for me happened a week before my father passed away. It was late at night, I was in my room, writing quite terrible poetry (Mr Shankly would seem like Wordsworth compared to what I wrote) and I was listening to *Meat Is Murder*. I was tapping my foot away to 'Rusholme Ruffians' and rocking out to 'I Want the One I Can't Have'. Once I reached 'That Joke Isn't Funny Anymore', I stopped writing and stopped moving. My body became frozen. I was hypnotised by Johnny's guitar playing on the track and it was odd as I had heard the song so many times already. For some reason it had frozen me in my tracks and made time stand still, there was no future or past. When the track was a minute in and that amalgamation of Morrissey murmuring, "Kick them when they fall down", Johnny's angelic, touching guitar, Andy's soulful bassline and Mike's delicate yet determined drum beat, I felt like my body was being put into a bathtub of ice-cold water, it felt so real that feeling, so visceral. It struck me then, the beauty and honesty and integrity of The Smiths, the love and heart in Johnny's music.

# Mark Sharpley

My favourite Marr memory? It would have to be the first time I saw God on tour. It was at the Norwich Waterfront, a nice quaint venue which was surprisingly spacious too. The stage adorned the huge Johnny Marr flag on the wall just behind the instruments, and the excitement was evident in every section of the building. Now everybody who is of a shorter stature will find that getting to see a gig clearly is a bit of a problem. As I did when an extremely tall chap decided he would be better off standing in front of me rather than the space next to me. So there was nothing for it, I had to stand on the railings where the mixing desk was. And it was in the middle of checking if everybody was having a good time that Johnny asked if, "the one standing on the railings was ok". And as I was the only one doing just that, I gave a big grin and the thumbs up. Of which JM did the same. It's not often that happens, but it did in the presence of Johnny Marr. And it has stuck with me since.

# Caroline Allen

Back in 1986 (an amazing year) I was an excitable 16 year old Smiths devotee. Imagine my utter glee when I discovered that Johnny lived just around the corner from my grandparents. Cue lots of visits to my amused grandparents, and finding any excuse to go and wander round the village.

One such freezing October day, my two friends and I were sat chatting on a wall, in the vicinity of The House when a car drove up. Out popped a pal of Johnny's -

"Hi girls, are you waiting for Johnny?" He said cheerily.

"Er... yes...?" We replied nervously.

"Ok, I'll go and get him!" He said.

"Omg" We squealed, trying and failing to appear cool.

And so ensued one of the best hours of my life - out came our hero, laden with signed goodies, even making us a cup of tea each to warm us up (and letting us keep the mugs) (never washed it).

To say we were on cloud nine would be a massive understatement.

He chatted away for ages, and was so lovely and down to earth. We walked home in an absolute daze. Our friends at school on the Monday were gobsmacked to say the least (and a tad jealous, as their heroes were nowhere near as amazing).

29 years later I still remember this day - I've been lucky enough to meet him a few times since, but I'm too scared to remind him of it...

Anyway, I'd like to take this opportunity to

a) apologise to Johnny for loitering around his house back then (in our defence we were only 16 and we were only visiting family, honest...)

b) thank Johnny for making my 16 year old self happier than you could ever imagine, for being the loveliest most patient person in the world, for not telling us to get lost, and for being my absolute hero.



## Nathan Curry

My most memorable Johnny Marr moment is very recent, at this year's British Summer Time festival. I walked in as Johnny came on stage with a friend I haven't seen in a while, the atmosphere was not one of euphoric excitement but rather one of appreciation of one of the finest musicians performing today. A fine summer's day, a pint of cider, Johnny Marr. Does it get much better?

## Keniz Begum

My most memorable moments for me are not just The Smiths, I think that is just stating the obvious and no doubt will be mentioned quite a lot. My best moments belong with him today and the few years he has spent fronting his own band, just because he is in his own zone artistically and creatively, which belong purely to him. He is now able to shine in his own way and no one can bask in his light, there are no hang ups! What he is now and to come are the moments I will remember and cherish the most!

## Matthew Clow

My first thought when I received a tweet from Johnny's manager Dave was "what have I done wrong?!" I thought I'd breached some sort of copyright or some unknown musicians' law. Totally the opposite. I'd sent Johnny another tweet as we all do, but this time it was a photo I took on my iPhone at the Nottingham Rescue Rooms gig. An action shot. He had loved it and wanted to use it to promote the next instalment of the *Playland* tour in October. I still can't believe it now. Every time I see it pop up on social media with another date or venue I can't smile enough. Such a huge moment for me for something that seems so simple. Just another memory from a great gig. This sort of thing just proves the respect and adoration Johnny has for his fans and his belief in fan power. Thanks Johnny. From all of us.

## Alejandro Kapacevich

On June 16th of 2015 Johnny Marr landed in Buenos Aires. Some friends knew in what hotel he was going to stay, so then we went there. First I spoke to Iwan - I saw him close to the hotel and was looking for a cash dispenser - and he said that Marr was resting and would come down from their room around 7pm. With my friend Jorge we saw Johnny, we saluted and asked to take some pictures with him. He also signed us several albums and was very kind. But the day did not end there.

Later, along with Jorge and two more friends (Maia and Romina) we went to eat at a vegan restaurant – which we've recommended to Dave Cronen. When we reached the place, we realized that Johnny Marr, Dave, Iwan, and two people from the crew were sitting inside. First we sat outside, and as it was very cold then we decided to enter. We chose a table nearby where they were (the restaurant is small) and simply did not want to disturb them. From time to time we looked at Johnny's table and he was really enjoying the food.

It was very bizarre and crazy to have the guitarist who saved our lives with his music, just meters away, totally relaxed, smiling and enjoying the moment, just like he was at home. I will never forget this beautiful moment, as well as the show he gave the next day at Niceto in front of a euphoric and intense audience.

## Sue McMullen

So here's the story...we went to see Johnny last October in Manchester and decided to arrive early in the hope of seeing him arrive for the sound check.

We turned into Apsley Grove and there he was!!!! Johnny Marr stood on the pavement looking cool as f@\*k, signing a fan's album.

Mark delights in telling everyone how I squealed and shouted "he's there, he's there!" before screeching the car to a halt in the middle of the road and leaping from the car to run back to Johnny, leaving the car door swinging wildly in the afternoon breeze as Mark sat in the passenger seat like a turnip, looking round frantically wondering what the hell was going on!!!

Of course what really happened was I parked carefully, checked my hair & makeup about 100 times in 30 seconds before walking over to him, shaking, a total bag of nerves, to be greeted by his blacker than black eyes, a smile and his words:

"Hi, I'm Johnny, who are you?"

"Sue" came out eventually and just about audible.

"Well Sue, pleased to meet you." A bit more chat while I was expertly steered into a pose for the pic (Mark had caught up by now to oblige!) and then the moment I'd waited 30 years for was over and off I went in a daze with a stupid fat grin all over my face!!!

What a gorgeous & quite literally charming man.

## Amelia Kubota

I've followed Johnny Marr's career since The Smiths and I always knew he was a brilliant guitarist, but I had no idea what kind of person he is. The first time I met him was at the Lollapalooza Festival in Brazil, 2014, after his amazing show. I was surprised how he is a wonderful person! The second time was in São Paulo, 2015. The show was fantastic, Johnny and his awesome band played wonderfully. The next day my sister and I went to the airport, to try to meet Johnny and his band. We waited for them for hours, almost giving up on the whole thing, tired and frustrated... then I saw the check in line. I did not believe it, Johnny was there! We called for him and he came, greeting us kindly. He made me feel so at ease, it was like meeting an old friend! We talked about his projects and impressions of the South American tour. He asked about me and when I told him I was a geography teacher for teenagers, he said, surprised "Wow, you are brave!". He gave to us two guitar picks and let us take some photos. Even though they were in a hurry, Iwan and Jack stopped to sign autographs for us. Unfortunately Doviak had already gone. They were lovely too and I complimented them on the concert the previous night. It was a very special day and now I admire Johnny also for the lovely person he is and I became an even greater fan than I was before.

# Fátima Kubota

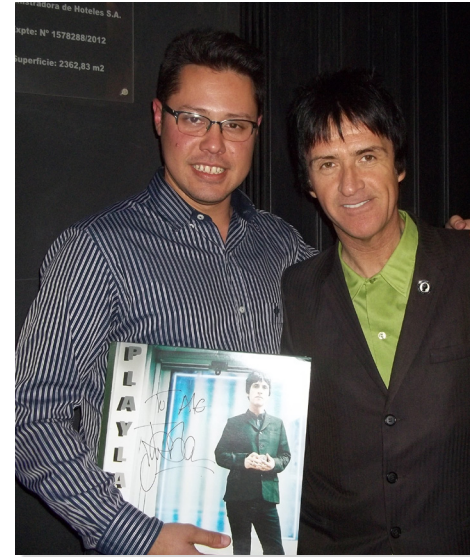
In 2014, I was very lucky to meet Johnny after his show in São Paulo, Brazil at Lollapalooza. He was really kind and it made me admire him much more.

A year later, he played again in São Paulo. Since we didn't manage to meet him after the show, my sister and I decided go to the airport the next day to try our luck. After waiting for hours we almost gave up. Then Iwan Gronow tweeted "Airport bound, bye bye South America". We decided to take a last look at the check-in. And there they were, at the check-in line!

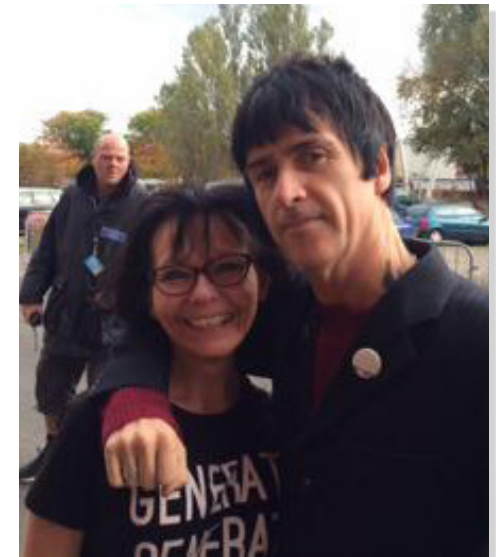
We took a deep breath and, controlling our emotions, we greeted Johnny. He was very approachable and instantly took out from his jacket two guitar picks for us. He talked to us, signed our CDs and took pictures with us. He was very lovely and considerate. I wanted to thank him for sharing his talent and his love for music with us, but I was so thrilled that I couldn't! I must confess I was trembling a little! There was no time to take pictures with the band, but Jack and Iwan very nicely signed autographs for us. Next time I want to tell Iwan how much I am enchanted by him!

This was definitely My Most Memorable Johnny Moment!

Congratulations Johnny! For your birthday, your talent, for the incredible person and influence you are. Believe me, you are at your best and we'll be waiting for you next year!



Johnny with Alejandro  
Buenos Aires, 2015



Johnny with Sue  
Manchester, 2014



Johnny with Fátima and Amelia  
São Paulo, 2015



Johnny with Ory and Aly  
Cardiff, 2014

# Ory Englander

December 29th, 2013 - left turn to the end of the world is where I met my idol and hero. A chance meeting, or destiny? After many years I'd ached to see Johnny live, and finally made the decision to pack up and fulfill a dream.

Turn the clock a swift 10 years before, and I'm completely (and unwillingly) geared up in my army uniforms. Sitting on the top of an asbestos shed, watching the Muqata towering over Ramallah and slow, lizard-esque tanks, beneath a steel sky. Feeling stifled by the stupid human-chessboard game governments seem to run – I chose to escape. Music: On. World, Politics and Unrequited Loves: Off. A seed had been planted and a long 25 hours (or decade, rather) race towards 2013 began.

Hobart. My best friend Aly and I were heading back from a trip to the MONA museum. All worked up and excited about our upcoming adventure to catch Johnny on his Australian *Messenger* tour. Wrapped up in far better attire this time (snug SMITHS jacket and a dark blue Johnny Marr tee shirt), we boarded a ferry back to the city. I sat down with my back to the ferry's gate, while Aly sorted us both with some (non-alcoholic, thank you) drinks from the bar.

Out of nowhere, a steady finger poked me in the back, and in a smooth dulcet tone a voice said: "Love your jacket."

I froze.

I recognized who that voice belonged to within a split second. With a dashing smile and snazzy shades, Johnny Marr appeared right in front of my eyes, taking in with delight all of my fangirly attire and shock.

An embarrassing, decade-and-a bit-old "IloveYOUman" tumbled out of my mouth as I offered an uncharacteristically wobbly handshake. Were my knees creaking as loudly as I thought? Immediately I was enveloped in a big warm hug. Such a charmer.

"Can I sit here?"

I was still lost for words and all I could do was just nod with a squeaky "Sure".

It all lasted a minute or two, then Aly came back and introduced herself in far better style than yours truly. We were joined by the lovely Angie Marr and had a fab

chat about life (and velvet jackets) on the way back. Despite my primary shock, the conversation carried on wonderfully playful ("Are you planning to become an Evil Genius?" and "So, you're like a computer nerd?" in reply to hearing about both Aly and mine's respective professional lives).

We made plans to meet up on the upcoming gigs, and both got big hugs and a kiss on the cheek. I (half-seriously) vowed later on to Aly, as I adjusted my breath, to never wash my left cheek again. Hobbling back to our hotel, we both couldn't stop smiling.

Thank you, Johnny. For always treating your fans with top class, love and care.



# Aly Stevenson

Though I'd argue that all Johnny Marr moments are memorable, there are a few in particular that stand out as extremely special. The final gig of the UK *Playland* tour in Leeds in October 2014 was one of them.

My best friend Ory and I were blessed to have a very unique view that night: from the side of the stage, where we could watch not only the magic unfolding onstage, but the reactions of the crowd as well.

Having always been in the audience myself every night up until then, I'd never had the chance before to see the expressions of pure exhilaration on fans' faces when Johnny burst onstage; the complete and utter delight of being in his presence. I found myself gazing out into the audience far more than I expected I would, simply because it was so incredibly touching to see how much everybody was enjoying themselves: how many others shared the same passion as I do for Johnny's music; how many others must therefore understand and experience the same euphoric rush I get during his gigs. Even though I was standing apart from the rest of the audience, I felt more connected to my friends and fellow fans than ever.

The most profoundly moving moment of the gig was, quite predictably, during 'There Is A Light That Never Goes Out'. There was something indescribably beautiful about the way everybody looked as they sang those alternating lines with Johnny - you could actually see, visually, the connection between artist and audience. As I willed myself to stay dry-eyed, my heart swelled with love for both Johnny and his fandom.

No matter how many more gigs I go to, that one will always stand apart, because it encapsulates everything that makes the Johnny Marr fandom - and Johnny himself - so special to me.

### Part III

## *Tales Of Discovery*

## Nicola Westwood

I live in a small, relatively quiet town, where not much happens. As an adult, I love it. I drive, have easy access to the bright lights of wherever I want, whenever I want, but as a teenager I despaired at the lack of anything to do, and probably spent most of my early teens complaining about this. In the early eighties, too young for the pub, Friday nights meant one thing...C4, 6.00pm, Jools & Paula, The Tube. A weekly whirlwind of Paula simpering at some pop star or other, what I thought were incredibly cool audience members and that bloke who used to be in Squeeze, The Tube showcased all that was ‘now’ and I watched it religiously.

I’d be a liar if I said I remembered the date I saw the now infamous video of ‘This Charming Man’, but Google suggests it was November 4th 1983. Whilst I don’t remember the date, I do remember the moment. White space. Flowers. And the most memorable guitar intro I’d ever heard, one that still makes the hairs stand up on the back of my neck, one that still warrants the radio being turned up, one that even my kids recognise... ‘This Charming Man’. I was stunned into silence. My dad, an Irish tattooed steel erector married to a crazy Italian, living with two teenage daughters and his mum in law to boot, who spent most of his time mocking everything I did, glanced up. Looked at the TV. Said...that bloke...the one with the desert boots. He can certainly play that guitar.

Wise words Dad. He certainly could. And still bloody can.

## Stephen Dorney

As I laid on a bed too small for my lank legs in Yankland, watching fastidiously and fascinatedly out my dusty and rotted window at a nine-hundred-and-sixteen-pound American leaving Dunkin’ Donuts for the eighth time that day, I sat with a new bit of laptop-kit laden upon my lap. Flicking through the visually and aurally illustrative world of YouTube, I clicked vehemently on a thumbnail of a soldier, intrigued by the meaning of such. A forty-five-second guitar intro hit me that made me forget my surrounds. The man complaining about headmasters and teachers touching and slapping him was glorious, only enhanced by the compatriot musicianship on show. The emotion was totally matched by the guitar, very rare – it sounded like it was running away from something, in a rush “to go home”.

‘Barbarism Begins At Home’ came swiftly after; I kind of felt like I had heard superior music before (probably not), but I don’t think I gave the slightest damn. There was something gloriously forlorn but dissident about the sounds I was hearing, a vulnerable epoch but with a purpose and drive to succeed; it was liberating, and still is. It made you hungry to do something – get up and walk, think, grow up, think, stay young, think, and think. I’m still thinking. Thanks, Johnny.

## Ash Custer

The first time I heard Johnny was also the first time I'd heard anything by The Smiths, though I know Johnny is probably sick of hearing about the aforementioned band, so I won't stay on the topic long. I heard 'This Charming Man' somewhere on YouTube and before I knew it, I'd downloaded the great and powerful Marr's entire solo discography. The fact that Johnny could sing on top of being a wicked guitar player blew me away and kept me listening to his albums on repeat for weeks. I also couldn't believe that someone my dad's age could still look awesome wearing tight black pants.

When presented with the opportunity to write this little blurb, I was ecstatic. I know I haven't been a fan of Johnny as long as some people have (considering I'll only be eighteen by the time he reads this), but he still holds a special place in my heart as a positive role model. I've wanted to thank him for that, and now I can! Sweet. I've also wanted to thank his younger eighties-self for making yellow turtleneck sweaters cool. If I ever end up in a yellow turtleneck sweater at any point in my life, I'll be thinking of you the whole time, Johnny.

Thank you for having the best hair of all time and for being generally amazing. Your entire fanbase loves you to death, including myself!

## Dave Jasper

Early 1985; a shy 16 year-old discovers Johnny Marr.

I'd heard of The Smiths and had friends who liked them. Although definitely interesting and different, I had not heard enough to really get into them. In those days of limited funds and really crap music dominating the charts I only invested my hard earned pocket money in Paul Weller (Jam/Style Council) records. Until, that is, I heard 'How Soon is Now?' for the first time, in the bath one night.

These were the days before the internet/mp3s and instant access to music, so I relied on radio to catch new bands and good tunes. I think it was on the Kid Jensen show. Like most people, I had never heard anything quite like it before and was mesmerised. I remember being annoyed because I used to tape good stuff off the radio but had no cassette in the recorder... and I wanted to listen to it again straight away!

Blank cassette in recorder, I kept listening for about 3 days until I heard it again and recorded it. I must have played it about 50 times over next few days until I managed to borrow a proper version of it. So, from that first play I was hooked and got hold of more Smiths music from friends and started buying records and never looked back. I've heard Johnny play it live several times since and it always makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end. Magical!

# Helen Angell

Can anyone ever really remember their first experiences? All I do know is that sometime in 1986 there was a turning point. I refused to leave the house without a Smiths' t-shirt on – substituted with a 'Meat is Murder' badge on my blazer for school days – and I renounced corned beef for a couple of years. For the remaining time at secondary school, I had to endure chips and beans every day as it was the only vegetarian option at school. I speak of days before jacket potatoes or salad could be found in the school canteen. Because, as a friend once told me, "They eat vegetarians in Rotherham." I think they still do.

I discreetly copied sections of The Smiths' lyrics onto the inside covers of all my exercise books and made a morose menace of myself by extolling the virtues of Johnny Marr: his fine style, guitar playing and general jiggling about. I played plenty of bad air guitar – particularly to the opening of 'How Soon is Now?' - and bought a pair of (cheap) shades.

Performances on Top Of The Pops further cemented my commitment to being the only Smiths' fan in school, a position I took very seriously. I postured around quite a bit, copying Johnny's swagger but without the bottle to balance a (lit) cigarette between my lips.

And so also began a confrontation, a musical stand-off with my mother. Only in her early thirties herself, we battled for sound. My stereo upstairs in my bedroom, hers in the living room. She remained adamant that The Smiths were the most depressing band she had ever heard, the uplift of Johnny's guitar lost in the suicidal subject matter of certain Morrissey lyrics. It was a claim I felt outraged by especially as her own choice of music, The Carpenters, was quite easily the most depressing music ever heard. And as for Wet Wet Wet, it was a cassette she played so ceaselessly that I actually hid it for fear of never being able to step into the living room again. My vinyl was much harder for her to dispose of. Sometimes we agreed a compromise. Given a choice, she always preferred *Strangeways Here We Come* to *Psychocandy*.

Incidentally, my mum thinks Johnny Marr is quite good-looking these days.

Certainly one of the first times I talked about Johnny was with a girl at dance class. I can't even recall her name but she was a couple of years older than me and therefore far cooler. She started crimping her hair and wearing black. She apparently had a couple of friends who were into The Smiths and kept insisting on them being played

at the Albion Road youth club. Can't imagine how that went down! Rotherham is a very towny town and not one that appreciates sensitivity or difference much.

The dance classes, ballroom and disco, were a guilty pleasure and, after hearing 'Death of A Disco Dancer', I put a stop to them. If only I knew then about Marr's love for Nile Rogers and Chic. I could have straddled both passions, disco dancing in brightly coloured lycra and a 'Sheila Take A Bow' t-shirt. But being a fan of The Smiths so young meant that I took all pronouncements as read and didn't feel I could balance all the contradictory aspects of myself.

After The Smiths split I felt a bit doubtful and insecure. I played all the albums endlessly, sobbing at the chord changes in 'Unhappy Birthday'. I felt a bit like a child whose parents had got divorced and I had to choose who to live with. I couldn't, of course, I loved Marr and Morrissey equally for a time. I was frantic to apportion blame and this fluctuated from one to the other.

In the end, the split was probably good for us all. It was an important lesson in things not lasting forever and letting things go. I had to learn to get along without them. I learnt that it was okay to wear something else and that I could still be me without having it emblazoned across my chest. In fact, I could show different aspects of me. Because, sometimes, being a committed fan can be stifling. By being loyal, you can put restrictions on yourself that prevent you from being you.

And so as Johnny branched out musically and in his fashion styles, so did I. My perspective on life widened and I encountered bands and musical genres that I would have dismissed purely because they were not The Smiths whether I liked them or not. I became accepting of keyboards and admitted I liked the Pet Shop Boys after Johnny's foray into Electronic. But I had to confess to still not getting The The. I began smiling a lot more. I even felt a bit freer.

I can't help feeling that half the problems we have today with teenagers would be solved if they had The Smiths or a modern version in their lives. Something they could identify with and cling to in the turbulence of adolescence. Being a fan was like being in an impenetrable blanket that kept out the stresses of teenage life.

In time you grow and my appreciation of Johnny co-exists with my life rather than being the life itself. Just get on with being you, whether Johnny would make or even like your decisions or not. That's what being a Johnny Marr fan has taught me.



# Tom Kay

I first heard Johnny Marr through having to perform a Smiths track on my guitar whilst studying at college. My tutor played 'Bigmouth Strikes Again' and from that day forward I was hooked, not only on The Smiths but on Johnny's unique sound. At the time I was into lots of guitarists mainly within the rock, metal and blues genres. I remember being stuck in my ways in terms of what I was playing and hearing Johnny was like a breath of fresh air. It was around this time I joined my band 'The Mighty and the Moon' and I was super inspired by his way of playing exactly what is needed and no more and his way of layering really melodic lines that all work together. His use of clean sounds, reverb and delay also really inspired me and made me part exchange a lot of guitars. I was playing these shred machines with high gain amps and ditched them all for a Fender Jazzmaster and a Fender Super amp. He just made me completely change my game and I feel through Johnny I have grown as a musician. To top things off, I moved to Manchester two years ago to study at BIMM for my BA Hons Degree in Music Performance and I was recording as part of an exam at Blueprint Studios. I looked down at the floor, mid take, and spotted a guitar pick on the floor. As soon as I finished the take I picked it up and read the name Johnny Marr. This was a very cool moment for me and it felt like everything had come full circle since first listening to The Smiths at college in Hull, to moving to Manchester to continue my career in Music and recording at the same studio as Johnny. I also really admire the way Johnny has worked with lots of different bands and projects and is constantly evolving as an artist rather than playing it safe like so many nowadays. And from a musician to a musician I'd like to say a thank you to Johnny for being an inspiration to myself and many others. I don't like bugging bands and artists that I love but I hope one day I can just shake the guy's hand and say 'nice one'.

# Lori DF

It all started in 1985.

I was a 16 year old student in Italy, my home country. A friend of mine came to pick up my friend from college in his new car and they offered me a lift home.

As we drove off, there was something I never heard before coming from my friend's tape deck: *Hatful of Hollow*.

I knew I had to find out more about this indie band from Manchester and all their music.

Unfortunately it was difficult to find those records in my home town so, on my first trip to London that summer, I bought whatever I could find in a mega store in Oxford Street. I tried memorising the lyrics, translating articles and reading as much as I could about THE SMITHS. My dictionary became very worn-out pretty soon.

Decades have passed since then and music is still a big part of my life: the soundtrack of events and growing up.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Johnny for the song that has been my all time favourite since the first time I heard it: ASLEEP.

Grazie for a masterpiece and for all the music you still write, play and share with all of us.

## Walter Frith

I originally heard The Smiths in 1984 when their debut album was added to our playlist at the college radio station I worked at as a student DJ and music director.

Johnny Marr's songwriting had a style and a diversity that was fresh and it was a welcome change from the synth pop and electronic style of music that was dominating the charts back then. It was also refreshing to see an artist writing songs from scratch that all sounded different and instantly recognizable instead of writing a variation of another song that a lot of commercial bands were doing at the time.

'Reel Around the Fountain', 'This Charming Man' and 'Hand in Glove' became instant classics from the first album and they still sound amazing and innovative to this day and became very influential for the bands that followed later.

## Adam Roberts

My first experience of Johnny Marr is probably the same as most people my age.

An 11 year old me was sat at home watching Top Of The Pops as everyone did in 1983, when all of a sudden this music started and this band which looked and sounded like nothing I had ever seen before were on my TV.

Unlike most of the kids the next day talking about it in school, it wasn't the singer swinging a bunch of flowers around his head that had caught my attention: it was this bloke with long hair dressed in black playing the guitar which transfixed me.

Now my knowledge of cool only stretched as far as the Fonz at this time, but without knowing anything about this man I somehow knew this was the coolest man on the planet and I wanted to be just like him. My Dad likened it to the first time he saw The Rolling Stones on TV and the overwhelming affect that had on him.

As I write this 32 years later I always remember that moment and can recall several times in my life when I have referenced it and even though I can't play a guitar, every time I see him, listen to his music, try to get my hair to look like his or buy shirts like his, I'm always thinking to myself that after all these years I'm still trying to be just like him, the coolest guy on the planet.

## Alison Moore

Little did I expect when I went see Neil Finn last year at the Lowry, with one of my closest friends, that the highlight of the evening for me wouldn't be the headliner (as lovely as he is) - instead it was the surprise guest artist that strutted onto the stage and totally and utterly transfixed me.

What struck me – well just about everything: the effortless mastery of the guitar, the stunningly good rendition of 'There Is A Light That Never Goes Out' (that I regularly indulge myself with on Youtube) and his natural engagement with the audience.

The impact was inexplicably overwhelming: this generally level headed woman was totally blown away by a bloke with a guitar who she hadn't even paid to see.

15 months on, 4 gigs later (with more tickets purchased) and 3½ hours queuing for THAT Vinyl on Record Store Day says it all!

## Mark Sharpley

1982 was the year that I came across The Smiths. I was 6 years old at the time, and was getting very interested in music. Thanks to my mum who played stuff like The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and, just to top it off, The Bee Gees. And living in the North West of England, you couldn't escape the buzz that a brand new band was doing the rounds. And that band was The Smiths. John Peel was a regular radio visitor in our household, and when his show came on, I dropped everything I was doing and listened. 'Hand In Glove' caught my attention straight away, but it was 'This Charming Man' that swept me away. I hadn't heard anything like it. How did four people make that song so effortless? It was then that my worshipping of the band and its members began, and it was then that my admiration for Johnny Marr got into gear too. Trying to get the school disco to play anything by my favourite band was a hard task, so the confines of my room it was. And it was all down to my mum for merely putting the radio on, and opening up a new world for me. Ask me today who my favourite musician is, and I will answer Johnny Marr. Ask me in 30 years time and the answer will be the same, the guitar king Johnny Marr.

# Bernadette Rumsen

Two momentous events occurred on the 28th of May, 1991. Firstly, Electronic's self-titled debut album was released, much to the excitement of my Smiths-and-New-Order-obsessed older sister. Secondly - well, I was born. She probably wasn't quite as excited about that.

You could say then that I was literally born to be an Electronic fan.

I don't recall a time in my life where I wasn't completely besotted with Electronic, and subsequently both Johnny's and Bernard's other musical projects. As a toddler I danced in front of the TV to a videotape of Electronic videos my sister recorded off the telly (thanks Sis), and the very first CD I ever owned, at the tender age of five, was *Raise The Pressure*. Said CD won't even play anymore, it's that worn out.

While I do dearly love Bernard as well, it was always Johnny that just inched ahead in the favourites stakes. Right from day one I thought, and still think now, that he was the coolest, most talented guy on earth (and of course, also incredibly good-looking). When I heard that Johnny was releasing a solo album in 2013, I felt excited about new music in a way I hadn't felt since Electronic's final album in 1999 - and I was still just a kid then. Luckily, *The Messenger* turned out to be everything I'd hoped for, and more.

I've never met Johnny in person, but everything I've heard and read about him, especially through the Johnny Marrvellous website and projects, has me convinced that he's well-deserving of my adoration. A smart, talented and handsome guy who radiates kindness and genuinely cares about his fans. What more could anybody ask for?

# Chris Barry

I distinctly remember the first time I heard Johnny's guitar work. It was 1983, Top of The Pops with The Smiths. As an 11 year old who'd not been long at secondary school, I didn't really know what to make of it. At the time I was learning robotics and New Order's 'Blue Monday' was the big tune doing the rounds. That said, the next day at school the performance was a talking point, we were all a little confused, but the same time affected.

Two years later in 1985 I truly discovered Johnny Marr the artist, through a TDK C90 cassette a friend had recorded for me with The Smiths - *Hatful Of Hollow*. I was only 13 or 14 and still discovering music. I didn't necessarily understand it, but I knew I liked it. The sound, the melodies and the feeling I got from it, it was addictive and with every listen I grew to know it more and love it more. I had to own it and so I began to seek out The Smiths records. Into the high street on a Saturday to visit the record shops and then into WH Smiths to read the music press, my knowledge and my collection began to expand.

Two years later in 1987 I asked for a guitar for my 15th birthday, a Stratocaster copy from The Argos catalogue. It was then that the true magic dawned on me as I was beginning to listen to music differently. The discovery of Johnny Marr as a guitarist was one of the main reasons why I wanted to learn. I knew a few people older than myself who could play and were fairly competent. Whenever I asked them about how to make it sound like the way he did, they couldn't tell me, they were lost. It was a different universe. He had created something unique, a different style, a different sound, with a blend of influences that were difficult to identify. In turn he had created an identity. The mark of a true artist.

# Ali Molina

## *Words (and music) can be like X-rays...*

Technically, the first time I heard Johnny was when I discovered The Smiths, but the biggest impression came when I first heard him as a solo artist. When I researched the story of The Smiths, I cried when I knew they weren't together anymore, but I was happy to know Moz and Johnny went solo. And it goes without saying I searched for his music.

The first song I ever heard of Johnny Marr as a solo artist was 'I Want The Heartbeat', and I loved it. Sounds very plain and dull when I say it like that, but I have no words to depict how enchanted I was. I needed some more and the same night I listened to *The Messenger* album and I felt somehow illuminated. His songs transmitted diverse feelings and it felt like a journey of emotions, landing on the perfect titled song 'New Town Velocity', which has been part of my writer life. When I listened to it, I felt somebody (not just somebody) was singing the story I imagined with such a strong voice that made me smile and cry at the same time. I was spellbound and I still am anytime I hear the song. *Playland* also inspired a short fictional story. (Cheers for Johnny and his ability for being inspiring!)

Every time I hear his songs, there is something that keeps inspiring me like the first time and for a non-professional writer like me, to find inspiration from small things is a big deal. As well, the passion for playing and the love which it is made of, can transmit strong emotions for you in specific moments, just like when you need someone telling you "hey, I understand what you're going through", despite that that person doesn't know you. Such great passion also can be very inspiring to make you do something wonderful, not perfect, but with a substance and maybe, a meaning.

I have no words really to depict Johnny's influence on me, but I do have to say muchas gracias, Mr. Marr. Thank you for being in my playlist and for singing and playing with a passion that simply inspires something so good. Je t'adore.

P.S: Happy Birthday for you and Angie.

P.S 2: Please keep writing inspiring music. It's always well received.

# Sarah Birch

When I first started discovering music, I generally looked up to frontmen (and some women) as idols. I wished I could do what they did, and it was them who influenced me the most. Everything down to the way I dressed, my interests and so on. The Smiths were the first band that broke this rule. The first CD I ever bought by them was *The Sound of The Smiths* and I just remember looking at the picture of them on the front of the CD and thinking "god can he get any cooler?" And it's safe to say I've been under Johnny's spell ever since.

I'd never heard anything that came close to that sound before. It was like nothing else in my collection at the time, and yet it still made me want to dance. The rest is history. I was hooked.

After I had exhausted every LP and read all I could about them I moved on to Johnny's other projects, falling in love with all his work in other bands. I remember first hearing a Smiths song on a night out, a drag DJ played 'Panic' at a night that my friend put on in London and about eight of us going mad for it in a circle. This year at the Arts Club, Liverpool was the first time I'd heard Johnny's cover of 'I Feel You. Live, that was the same feeling, it's better than the original in my opinion. He made it sexy. When that played it was like I could lose myself in it for a few precious minutes and connect with him. Like no one else was in the room. I love that feeling.



# Dillon Ryan

I still remember hearing Johnny's guitar playing for the first time. It would have been close to 10 years ago in high school while still learning to play. Everyone was far too competitive/condescending towards each other in the worst possible way. It just seemed to be all about who could learn this solo or who could learn how to do sweeps first. Which I did not relate to at all. All I cared about was making great music that was interesting.

I had heard The Smiths' 'What Difference Does it Make?' and instantly that sort of opened up a whole new door for me as a guitarist and a songwriter. The sound of it was catchy, melodic, heavy yet unconventional guitar playing for a Rock song. I realized pretty quick after this that I wanted to be engrained in Johnny's sort of world of music. He seemed to just have a better set of morals not only towards making music but also in lifestyle choices. Till this day, what Johnny does always informs my songwriting. Whether it's a tone on a particular album, how he places guitars in the mix or approach to certain chords. The entire time making my album, my engineer and I would sit there and constantly fawn over Johnny's playing. Somehow it always seemed like we would be comparing what we are doing to something Johnny was doing. Never copying, but drawing huge inspiration. There's a lot of "Let's try and place the acoustic guitars in the mix something like it is on Electronic's 'Tighten Up'" or "I would love to try and get a vibe close to The Smiths 'Nowhere Fast' with the guitar layering". *Playland* really came at the perfect time for me as an artist. We were about half way done writing/recording our album and it really gave me the inspiration I needed to finish it. It was a similar vibe to what we do and I thought it was a super very fresh/post-modern version of what Post-Punk/New Wave is. Every week there always seem to be a few of Johnny's guitar parts that I became completely enamored with and got inspired to write some new parts. Anything from the outro to 'Pretty Girls Make Graves', the chorus riff in 'Slow Emotion Replay' or some of the guitar playing he did on Electronic's 1996 and 1999 TV appearances.



Johnny with Sarah  
Liverpool, 2015



Johnny with Dillon  
Toronto, 2014



Johnny with Aaron  
Manchester, 2013



Johnny with Steve  
Toronto, 2014

## Aaron Symington

As I said earlier, I first got into Johnny from hearing ‘Girlfriend In A Coma’ and ‘How Soon Is Now’, which were Smiths singles my brother had when I was young. I had dabbled in some hard rock and other styles as a guitarist, but texturing my arrangements and arpeggios was always my strong point and to be able to learn new ideas from Johnny was such a great help and I’m sure it has in so many players. So many guitarists are happy to play the big riffs and shred out at a solo, but I’ll always remember Johnny saying “I wanted to sound like an entire record when I was finished” and that has always stood by me as a guitarist.

I look at bands like The Cribs and Modest Mouse, who are good bands in their own right, but the albums Johnny played on with them brought them to different levels. It just goes to show that anything he puts his masterful touch to becomes a masterpiece.

## Steve Bates

When I was younger, I would ask my parents the usual banter of a child, things like “I want to go outside” and “are we there yet?” When I’d get the reply “Soon” I’d always ask “but how soon is now?” like it was somehow genetically implanted, although I had never heard the song. My parents are not where I inherited this taste of music from. Johnny Marr first laid his musical stylings upon my eardrums when my great friend Brandon Mota introduced me to The Smiths in late 2011. Not fully able to comprehend due to the vocals, upon first listen to ‘Heaven Knows I’m Miserable Now’ the track was switched to - you guessed it - ‘How Soon Is Now?’. This hit me like a dodge-ball. Who was this playing guitar!? Ecstatic about this new sound I had been introduced to, I then realized I had a 30+ year career of his to look back on, and this was just as *The Messenger* was being released, so I had new material too. I thought “this man is godly”, and in 2013 the NME presented him with the “Godlike Genius” award. He is a god after all. The material keeps getting better, the more I listen to it, the more I like it. Now I have posters of God on my walls and his autograph throughout my record collection.

Thank you Johnny, you are inspirational; Happy Birthday.

## Fiona O'Neill

My first experience of Johnny was obviously with The Smiths. I absolutely loved Johnny's style from the very beginning and loved seeing him change and evolve over the years into the coolest human being ever!!!! I remember the first time going to see him live at Fat Sam's in Dundee on 10 October 2013. I was so excited, the anticipation of hearing songs from his first album *The Messenger*, coupled with Smiths songs which I never thought I would hear live, completely blew me away. He is going from strength to strength and I haven't been lucky enough to meet him, but he comes across as one of the nicest guys in the music industry. Go Johnny F\*\*\*\*\* Marr.

## Jade Bailey

My dad got me into The Smiths from a really young age, purely so I could back him up and annoy my Mum with his "terrible music taste" (totally not true, that). Really though, my love for The Smiths began when my sister took me to my first proper gig, to see The Smyths in Newcastle a few years ago. I was literally blown away by how many songs I didn't actually know (since I only had a 'Best Of' CD) and spent hours on Google trying to figure out who this incredible band were - so obviously I discovered *The Messenger* pretty quickly! I literally pegged it down the stairs begging my Mum to let me go and see this Johnny Marr in Newcastle; I'd probably only listened to one song at this point! Surprisingly, she agreed to get me and my sister a pair of tickets and boy, was that a mistake! I I'd never heard a band as good as Johnny's before, so I listened to *The Messenger* as often as I could - I was literally hooked. There was just something about that album that never failed to put me in a good mood, so when October came around I was pretty pumped. Seeing Johnny live for the first time was insane and left me completely speechless and I couldn't stop talking about the gig for months. Bring on the next one!

## Donka Petrova

I discovered Johnny's music at 16, in 1996. I first heard (well, read) his name in relation to a Pet Shop Boys album - I had been a fan of theirs - and remembered it. Then I found out he had been in The Smiths, which really surprised me. It seemed somewhat strange at first as I knew him through the PSB, but I suppose it was what sparked my curiosity and I decided to check out The Smiths – by then I had only heard about them. I was not sure if I would like the band at all, so my decision was to record a TV special on them with 6 or 7 songs from the French music channel MCM – I knew this was an acclaimed band and wanted to see why. So I did record the one hour special, I played it once, I played it twice and that was it for me – I was absolutely hooked and still am – and that was July 1996, exactly 19 years ago! Everything about these songs, it really captivated me. And they've helped me so much to get through my difficult teenage years when I was a really introverted individual with constant unexplained headaches and additional health problems in the family.

So, this was the beginning and from then on I was on a search for more things – more things by The Smiths, then other projects – Electronic, then The The. And so many more afterwards, but back then, in the 90s it was really hard, as living in a relatively small town in southern Bulgaria did not offer many chances to expand your musical library...for years I've only had some songs recorded from TV – the proud results of months of waiting by the TV. Only later I was able to get everything on CDs, which is so wonderful, but looking back, maybe these difficulties in finding more stuff back then made every discovery even more memorable.

## Kira L. Garcia

Although Johnny's music has been in the background for most, if not all, of my life, I never stopped and took the time to hear what him, his melodies, and his orchestral-like touch had to say until very recently. I did realize beforehand that almost every song is trying to tell you something (with or without lyrics), but his music was saying something different. It's very, very good that I began listening now, because any later may have been too late. The result of hearing these new sounds fully and cognitively, now that I'm older, are my father and stepmother becoming very annoyed with me and afraid that I'm going to become a recluse of some sort with the amount of time I'm in my room practicing on the guitar. They're practically begging me to make plans outside of my bedroom! In a way, I admit, I am a bit obsessed. There are so many things I have such a strong desire to learn now that I've seen how beautiful playing the guitar can be. Being sixteen at the moment, I've been playing for almost five years now. I believe it was Johnny's intriguing sounds which released a frightening amount of inspiration and desire to play as beautifully, creatively, and innovatively as I can.

## Rachel Nesbitt

In 2009 I felt a bit lost. I was watching the last series of Ashes to Ashes, after the programme you could press red and watch Top of the Pops with Gene Hunt commenting on the music. It was here when I first heard The Smiths. I remember hearing the intro to ‘This Charming Man’ and instantly falling in love with it, it made me feel like no other music had. It had an effect on me and from then on listened to more of their songs and fell more in love with the music. Johnny changed my life and I will be forever thankful for that!

## Nathan Curry

I first heard Johnny’s music as part of The Smiths back in 2010. As a 14 year old, growing up on The Libertines, Amy Winehouse and co, I had always been a bit less mainstream. I found The Smiths through suggested video trails on Youtube and was immediately hooked. Working my way through the hits to the lesser-known tracks, it was and remains one of the most unique sounds I’ve heard. It opened a gateway for me into exploring music from bands no longer around, introducing me to the likes of The Beatles, The Doors, Otis Redding and many, many others. This is something I will be forever grateful for.



# Karen Wheat

What can I say? Where do I start?

I was 13 when I discovered you - as a member of The Smiths you provided a generation with not only some life changing, inspirational riffs but also the belief that if you really want to - anything is possible!!

The The, Electronic, Modest Mouse, The Cribs...wow. I had them all!!

My only regret was that I had never seen you perform...

In 2013 my dreams came true when I saw you perform at Finsbury Park alongside The Stone Roses!!

Magical!!! Mesmerising!! My friends called me a geek...I knew all the words...I even knew which guitar you would play next!!!! To quote... “bet he plays the white one next...” And you did!!! You do however make it look far too easy!!!

A year later you were gracious enough to play Manchester Apollo - home turf!! It was my 40th birthday!! What a present!! Along with two of my oldest friends, we had an amazing night!! Magical!! We danced with people who’d I never met!! This is the power you hold!!!

As you say... “If you’ve got songs that mean a lot to people’s lives, you’re lucky, man. And if you’ve got an opportunity to make everybody in that hall feel really good, particularly when you’ve been kicking out some new stuff, then you should do it. It’s a great thing.”

— Sydney Morning Herald, 2013

Writing this, there are 16 days until we next meet!! Nottingham Rescue Rooms and I’m truly excited to be seeing you the day after at Castlefield Bowl in Manchester!! It’s bound to rain but hey... Can’t have everything!!

Johnny you truly are a ‘charming man’!!

‘Keep yourself passionate...’

# Valentina Miranda

I discovered Johnny’s music through his collaborations with the Pet Shop Boys. Songs like ‘Between Two Islands’, ‘I Get Along’, ‘Pandemonium’, etc. My dad is a Pet Shop Boys fan and I grew up with his music since I was born, so he talked to me about Neil, Chris and Johnny Marr. From then on Johnny is for me an interesting and excellent musician, especially when he won the Godlike Genius Award at the NME Awards.

I remember when he came to do a concert in Lollapalooza Chile, and also a sideshow in Sala Omnium. I remember that I didn’t know he released an album (sorry Johnny) and I was informed about his album *The Messenger*, so I downloaded it and listened it. Immediately I fell in love with the album, I thought that it was perfect. From then on I’m a big fan of Johnny, so *The Messenger* is an extra special album for me because with it I met Johnny’s music, which is wonderful, always a pleasure listen to it, especially at his concerts.

## Lee Bellfield

Obviously it was with The Smiths. Still in my opinion the greatest ever band to come out of my rainy home town of Manchester. Obviously Morrissey was a huge presence in that great band, but my first memory was hearing the opening riff of 'What Difference Does It Make'. I was only a young lad at the time, but I clearly remember when watching Top Of The Pops, that riff sticking in my head. It was game on from then.

## Elisabetta

I'm 49 years old so I was around when The Smiths emerged, hit the charts and then suddenly split. Even if *The Queen is Dead* is one of my "desert island records", I can't describe myself as a huge fan of the band at that time. So, after the end of The Smiths, I followed Morrissey and Johnny's solo careers, reading the music magazines or watching MTV or similar, Italian music television/shows. No records, no gigs, nothing else. But something happened on 17 February 2013, when I listened for the first time to 'The Messenger' (the single). A link to the song appeared in the Italian Depeche Mode forum community (by the way, Johnny: thank you for the cover of 'I Feel You'). A couple of days later, someone linked the full album and... BANG! The perfect record in the perfect moment. And it was easy and natural, after this epiphany, to become a massive fan of Johnny's solo work, discovering also an interesting person with a lot of interesting things to say.

# Laura Dean

I think I was around 14 when I heard ‘The Boy With The Thorn In His Side’ by The Smiths playing in the background of a television programme that my Mum was watching. Feeling not only like the lone wolf of a sports orientated family but also of friendship groups fixated on chart music, I used to love chatting with my Uncle, as he played guitar and would always recommend albums to me. The next time I saw him I told him about this amazing song that I’d heard, and how I’d never heard guitar like it before. My Uncle knew what I was talking about instantly and got me a copy of *The Queen Is Dead* for my birthday shortly after, and that was it. As they have for many people, The Smiths became the soundtrack of my teenage years. Around about when Johnny joined The Cribbs, I threw myself in to his back catalogue, and I’ve been Marr-struck ever since. Still to this day I can’t go to my Uncle’s house without him getting one of his guitars out and playing something written by Johnny!

# Afterword

*“Tell me with whom you consort and I will tell you who you are; if I know how you spend your time, then I know what might become of you.”*

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

In the mid-70s, a young Johnny Marr was venturing off to watch the late Rory Gallagher perform in nearby cities, in awe of not only Rory's talent, but the respect and kindness with which he treated his fans. When Rory stayed behind after a two-hour show to talk to every person waiting to meet him - including Johnny - Johnny vowed he would do the same if he was ever in that position.

A special dynamic exists between Johnny Marr and his audience. It's a relationship based on mutual respect, and appreciation for each of his fans as individuals. He's seen as an idol and a friend both at once, and the warmth, care and genuine love he shows his audience are reflected in the fandom itself.

Over the past few years, we've been privileged to meet hundreds of fellow fans on tour and never cease to be amazed by how warm, kind and sincere most people are. Johnny Marr fans are good people because *Johnny Marr is a good person*. The love and enthusiasm that Johnny sends out into the audience - into the world, in fact - is reciprocated by all those around him.

Though by no means comprehensive, we hope that this book serves as an accurate example of the manner and depth in which so many lives have been touched by both Johnny's music and person, and as a reflection of our gratitude.

Johnny, you are loved more than you could ever know. Happy birthday.

- Aly Stevenson & Ory Englander  
October 2015

*“[His music] touches everybody who’s prepared to listen, which is why so many people fall in love with what he does.”*

*“I am indebted to Johnny for keeping me from splintering into emotional wreckage during one of the most stressful times of my life. His music was the elixir I needed to get through it.”*

*“This is really my religion and I was so entirely happily pious in the church of Marr.”*

***Touch Out*** is an anthology of personal stories about what it means to be a Johnny Marr fan. Through anecdotes about memorable occasions, tales of discovery and reflections on Johnny’s influence and inspiration, a group of over 70 fans have come together to share their love for the iconic guitarist.

