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The Wonder Stuff (Miles Hunt) - 4th October 2004 Interview

Wednesday 13th October 2004

We caught up with The Wonder Stuff's frontman Miles Hunt for a down to earth and honest little talk...

What do you say to critics who have claimed you have only reformed and released 'Escape from Rubbish Island' for commercial reasons?

Miles: Yes that absolutely plays a part in it, why does anybody release a record? If I did it for the love of music I'd just sit on my bed singing to myself and never release a record. I imagine that's pretty obvious by sticking something out with a bar code on it, it's obvious that there are commercial reasons to it.

I think with what has gone off with the other members behaving in such an undignified way, it probably deserves more of a detailed answer, but the problem is I know exactly what happened, and they have started saying that that's not what happened. I have no reason to lie to be in my band. I imagine they feel rather foolish now. I think that is sad, it's got to the point where me and Malc feel as if we are being publicly insulted for no reason. Those bridges are burnt forever now and that's sad. We had the same with Bob Jones, around the time he died none of us were talking to him, and that was horrible. It is a shame that they have gone down the undignified route, where the truth of the matter is we had a disagreement after the gig we did last Christmas, I was trying to call them, they wouldn't return any of my calls, they wouldn't return any of my emails. Eventually one of them phoned Malc and told him that he couldn't work with me anymore. I was told to get my equipment out of the storage space by a certain date, and that my last cheque would arrive on a certain date. None of which I could give a fuck about, because me and Malc have been working together before The Wonder Stuff.

I just laughed that the drummer left the band and thought he was going to stop me and malc from doing something we have been doing for 23 years. That is pathetically arrogant. I don't think it's rotten that he went that route, I think it's rotten that he decided to ignore my calls and emails, that was totally his decision.

Do you prefer playing to big open-air crowds or intimate crowds like here at Rock City?

Miles: God, I wouldn't call this intimate, I'd call this a big gig. I like all gigs, I'm blessed in the fact I get to do all sorts of different things, because of the history of The Wonder Stuff we get to do the occasional festival which is great to do, and being around other bands at festivals is great. The last time I played in Nottingham, I did the Rescue Rooms and played a one man acoustic show. I enjoy all of the gigs. I regard this to be a big gig to be honest.

Do you feel disgruntled that you are a talented group and not given too much hype yet talentless bands are given huge amounts of hype?

Miles: No, I'm not a fool, to get that much press coverage costs a lot of money, and I'd rather spend money on making sure my daughter goes to a good school rather than spend it on pluggers and prs to beat out some interest out of a rug. One of the strengths of our band has always been that we are great live. When it did get to ridiculous commercial success there was one year between Melody Maker and NME we had 11 front covers - it was absurd. Obviously our egos enjoyed it. But it did nothing for our songwriting capabilities. It didn't assist anything, it was all pretty hollow praise. We were fully aware of the fact we were that year's thing and the year after it would be something else, that's not why you do it, me and Malc work together because we like making music. It's that simple.

The quality of writing in the British mainstream media about music is laughable, I like writing myself, I will blow my own trumpet I am a fucking good writer. Me and Malc used to say just because the record can sell hundred thousand copies it doesn't make the song any better. Unfortunately it isn't good songwriting that sells records.

My ego doesn't need to be told that I'm a great songwriter, I like the songs I write with my friends, I don't need to be told that they are great - I know they are for my taste.

I couldn't give a fuck about the media, I couldn't give a fuck about it when we first started, yes it was mildly amusing when we found ourselves in the NME for the first time, it was like 'oh I've brought his my whole life and there I am' that was amusing, I think the commercial side of it and especially moving into top of the pops that ruined it for me and that's why I left the band in 1994, it just become something I never wanted. So to answer your question I'm not disgruntled.

Do you not become bored of doing all these interviews and being stuck in dressing rooms?

Miles: No not at all, because it's not what I do all the time. I am blessed that I can pick and choose what I do, I don't spend all of my time talking to people about what I do, when I do it's because I've decided that's what I want to do for that month. I love what I do. There are days when I'd much rather be sitting on the beach with my daughter.

Do you get sick of the song 'Dizzy' being mentioned?

Miles: We don't play it live anymore, I made two great friends from it, I guess at some point in my life I will place importance on the fact that I was on a number one single. Jim will get on stage with us again at some point!

The opening track 'Escape From Rubbish Island' has a very political theme with the line 'I must have missed the vote to go to war'. Would you like to expand on your view?

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Continental

Miles: I was in California when all that was about to happen, so I was watching it from an American news show perspective, which is quite different to how its presented over here. I had no idea for a period that our country was going to be as full on as it was in the so called war. I found myself feeling ashamed and I had enough of being in California, I really wasn't looking forward to coming home. I felt ashamed that we were being led by people that were doing it in the name of god. I haven't met a soul that was pro going to war - it was disgraceful to ignore a United Nations resolution - that to me was a dictatorship.

The rest of the album seems to be from a very introspective perspective - do you find it difficult to write those personal lyrics?

Miles: That was actually a good friend of mine - a female friend of mine - was going through a rotten break up and I went through a rotten break up a few years ago and she helped me through that and so now it was my turn to be a shoulder to cry on and she said that to me word for word - in the middle of a load of tears and we were necking some red wine - and in the middle of all this horrible upset she just looked at me and said 'was I meant to be sorry that I didn't look good enough, when this is the only face that fucking god gave me'. She said that as one line and I just laughed, she asked what I was laughing and I said you know me so well, you know what im gonna say, she asked what, and I asked if I could have it for a lyric because it was fucking brilliant. It broke the moment and she pissed herself laughing and said 'thank god, I'm not your girlfriend'. It's a very powerful line. Me being me I had to write it down immediately and it just got us out of the doldrums.

How would you describe 'Escape From Rubbish Island'?

Miles: Not all traditional monogamous male/female relationships that I'm talking about - a lot of it to do with friendships that I've had for years that have soured. There is some hateful stuff on there that I wanted to get out of my system, what I thought after I wrote the lyrics, I thought that there is a sense of me wanting to clear the decks and move on to something new and something good and to stop wasting my time putting effort into things that don't pay off emotionally. Some of that was physical about me trying to move to Dublin but those plans got scupperd when I met my daughter - but then I got a life change which I really needed. Now I have this amazing relationship with this little person and it feels true, and feels as if it can't be broken. I felt like a clearing of the decks arriving somewhere new and good or leaving somewhere bad - an old feeling - kept trying to get away from something that is just too familiar and doesn't feel like its going anywhere good. When I read the lyrics back to back that was the theme going through the record, it reminded me of a conversation I had with Paul Weller - when he was doing Stanley Road, he was on his third solo album in three years - I asked him where he was getting the inspiration from for the lyrics and he said 'it's all the same song mate' in my mind I thought that's not what I wanted Paul Weller say but the more and more I thought about when I went away that's brilliant he's singing what's on Paul Weller's mind - none of us are blessed/cursed with lives that change constantly, it doesn't matter who you are, your shit still sinks in the morning and you have still got emotional problems and you have still got practical problems paying bills and all that, after initially thinking I wish he had come up with a better answer - that was the best answer he could come up with, cos he was being true and writing what is on his mind and that's the job of an artist. I think I slapped myself on the back after writing the whole album as it is pretty much the same song all the way through.

Many thanks to Miles Hunt for allowing us to speak to him during his hectic schedule.

interview by Luke Seagrave

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