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The Wonder Stuff

By [Victoria Holdsworth](#)

'Twas a blustery wet night on Sunday 12th March 2006 when I forced my way into a packed out Cockpit in Leeds, to interview not only a legend, to all self respecting indie lovers, but also a rather splendid chap! In the immortal words of Take That would The Wonder Stuff be back for good?



I must admit I had been nervous about interviewing Mr. Miles Hunt from **The Wonder Stuff**. I had heard so many mixed reports that depending on what mood he was in dictated how the interview was going to go short and monosyllabic with a bitter taste being firmly left in your mouth or you wouldn't be able to shut him up.

Luckily for me he was feeling the latter and after a short wait (Christ that boy can talk on his mobile for England!) he came and

made himself comfortable so we could begin.

What initially strikes me about this old timer of the scene is just how damn good he looks! The years have been very kind, gone now however are the wild red locks and chequered suits and the shenanigans dare I say it the boy has grown up into a gentleman.

How does he feel the tour has been going so far?

It's been brilliant, loved it, loved absolutely ever minute of it, fantastic! I don't think we've ever played better, I don't think our audiences have ever been better. We sort of got lost somewhere in the early to mid 90's by doing these stupid huge venues that have absolutely no atmosphere for the audience or the band, and it's great doing stuff of this size, I fucking love it.

'Arrogant, Jaunty, Angry and Fraggles' are four words that have been used by journalists in the past to describe you Can you give me four words that represent the real Miles Hunt?

I'll go with angry, arrogant, jaunty but NOT fraggles, hmmm I can't really say stylish and well dressed 'cause of the idiot things I've worn in the past. I'll go with the first three and let's cancel out the last. *[he laughs]*.

In a recent interview with the lead singer of the support band this evening (Ian Prowse from Amsterdam) said, and I quote: "God bless Miles Hunt from The Wonder Stuff, he told me we revamped his view on music." I asked Miles what was it that affected him so much?

It was more of a reminder, it was stuff that I felt I've always known, you know? And just meeting them and touring with them last year and when they were out doing their own tour last winter, me and Ian just agree on so much, and also we both found this artist called Damien Dempsey, a singer from Dublin, and he reminds me of another side of what I used to know and somehow lost along the way. What I love about what Amsterdam do, it's just the energy but it's at full throttle all the time, and it always seems to be shooting for the chorus, and I'm a chorus NUTTER! So between Amsterdam and Damien Dempsey it's reminded me to only write lyrics that mean something, and even if it's only to me, and not just to put lazy rhymes in there, so between the two of them they've done me the power of good, but it wasn't like they taught me anything new, I just needed to be reminded.

So what are their main influences as a band at the moment?

There isn't any really, even though we've had pretty severe line up changes in the last three years, I think we've hit upon exactly the same situation again that we don't really agree, it's

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horizon of all kinds of different music styles. Erica, our new violinist, she is very much into, she'll hate me using these phrases but they are the simple ones so it's easily understood, like hard modern sort of new metal and gothic type things, although she doesn't see it as goth, but I'm older than her and I've seen it all before, and IT'S GOTH! (he says loudly enough for her to hear maybe in the next room) and she's classically trained, unlike Martin Bell who is an amazing fiddle player, our first fiddle player, but he was from a folk and blue grass background, so it's a really interesting approach to those violin parts, because she's from a classical bent, Birmingham Conservatory of music no less! Andres Karu, he's a producer in his own right, he can pretty much play any instrument you put in front of him [*not all at once surely! That I would pay £15 to see*] I've just got constant assistance on everything from Andres, and then Mark McCarthy's background, our bass player, he's old punk and old Rock 'n' Roll, very organic music I suppose, his i-Pod is just full of 50's Rock 'n' Roll and sort of late 70's Dub Reggae, all things that I've loved. Music with spirit!

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It was only December 2001 that The Wonder Stuff played to 17,000 people in just three nights, did that response from fans surprise Mr. Hunt after such a long absence?

Without sounding arrogant, no it didn't surprise me because we're good! We'd been away for quite a while and I think a lot of people have missed a band like us that put on the same sort of thing that Amsterdam do. You don't come to our gigs to be cool, I don't think anybody did that! And you don't come to our gigs to scratch your chin and ponder (ooh is that a Reeves & Mortimer product?) the meaning of it all, it's a piss up, it's sing along and I suppose that because we took the six years off, to a lot of people the songs don't belong to us any more, they actually belong to the audience because the songs have provided a soundtrack to hopefully the good as well as sometimes getting them through the bad times in their lives. After taking six years off from performing and recording it doesn't surprise me that people wanted it back. I think while we've not been around, there have been bands that have covered those sorts of areas fantastically and you look at the way people go to see Oasis and sing every single word or love the sort of excitement that say, Damon Albarn with Blur does, but I think the whole thing is, if you're into Oasis it's very cute, there is an element of you're trying to be cool, and I think people find us quite a relief, that you don't have to try and be cool.

There does seem to be a retrospective revival going on at the moment with bands such as Terrorvision and the likes of The Wonder Stuff Why do you think that bands like you have been given back that gap in the market? Is the British music scene stagnant?

Not really, I wouldn't say stagnant, but for me I've heard it all before really and I've got the originals from 20, 25 and 30 years ago. People like Kaiser Chiefs and all that type of stuff, they're just ripping off my record collection, but forgetting to write any meaning to the lyrics. It shocks me that it's so blatantly ripping off XTC; Franz Ferdinand and all that other stuff, it's just the same. I'm glad it's guitars again and I'm glad it's upbeat stuff that younger people are buying, but why not put some meaning into the music and lyrics? It's all down to marketing, they're not bands ... they're marketing exercises.

With that I ask Mr. Hunt what does he think is the most poignant lyric he's ever written?

That's not for me to say. [*Fair enough mate!*]

The latest album: 'Escape from Rubbish Island' has been received with many mixed reviews.

(Miles interrupts chuckling away to himself "That was a good 'un, I did enjoy that lyric")

Do you think that people from the music press didn't expect you to grow up musically?

Don't care! Don't think about it! Don't read about it! I 'aint bothered about it! I could write rings around any of the so called journalists that write for any of the inkyies, and I'm completely unaffected by them. Always was!

Is it true you got the title for 'Size of A Cow' from the Arabian Nights cartoon featured on the Banana Splits show?

Yes! You remember it then? The size of a mouse! If you wanted to get under a door. Or the size of an elephant! If you wanted to push something. My problems were I reckon about the size of a cow at that time, which were roughly four times bigger than me.

It's good to see that you haven't lost your antagonistic edge over the years, is there anything at the moment you feel like getting off your chest relating to the music

I was hoping to grow out of it and fucking relax by now but it hasn't worked out that way. [*he laughs heartily grinning from ear to ear*] I don't really give a toss about any scenes. We are our own little music scene to each other. It's funny really because that's why we formed a band, as kids me and Mal [Treece] were never the kind of kids that wanted to go to the likes of the NEC or any kind of arena shows, and the bands that we loved has sort of gone into that area and we didn't want to go to those venues to see them, so what we got into was local bands, just doing clubs around the West Midlands, and we couldn't find anything that we liked there either, so we thought we'd better form our own band then! Again, I've always been dissatisfied and disinterested in what's in the main stream, so I'm in my own band that satisfies me and does interest me.

Do the performances still remain the same, personally and as a band, even when you are playing smaller venues and smaller crowds?

Oh God yeah! and better because the song that we open with is not about my daughter, but it's to my daughter, called 'Tricks of The Trade' and I well up with emotion from the first 30 seconds that I'm on stage, 'cause I'm just thinking about my daughter and I would have never have done that when I was younger and didn't have a daughter because I was just too self obsessed to think about anyone other than myself.

Has fatherhood calmed you down then?

No, not at all. I want her to be a little fighter and a gob-shite and not keep her mouth shut and not be walked over and not to be used and abused, the way I was brought up, and that's what she will learn from me and I just can't wait, she's four and a half now going on fifteen! The motivation changed over the years, but the feelings that I get from it, and I know I speak the same for Mal it's exactly the same.

So, is there any final pearls of wisdom you can leave our Leeds Music Scene readers with? Such as your quality quote of 'It clashes like the colours on a Benetton jumper'

Just to go back to what I was saying earlier really about modern bands. I'm glad it's guitars again, I'm glad it's all up beat and I'm glad that they are using the influences from a great period of music going back to MC5, Iggy and the Stooges and New York Dolls and early seventies. Stuff that changed punk into new rock wave in this country, when wonderful teenagers like John Lydon, Paul Weller, Joe Strummer and Tom Robinson. These were people that just wrote from the heart. Beautiful and amazing lyrics! To think that Paul Weller was only 17 years old when he wrote 'In The City' and 'Bricks and Mortar' ... show me a fucking 17 year old that could do that now? [*Any readers up for the challenge?*] Take your fucking nose out of your quick fix life and your fucking Sony PlayStation and all the other bullshit, and actually comment on life!

Power will always be with the youth because they've got too much fucking energy! They all seem to be completely *anaesthetised*, please stop watching Big Brother, please stop destroying yourselves! The world has never, ever been as unsafe as it is now and most of our youths are oblivious to this and it's a potential fucking disaster area, we should be having a revolution, we should have Blair and Bush in The Hague, that's what we should be doing. In the sixties and early seventies, kids used to speak out, and it's not for a forty year old bloke like me to do it now, 'cause I've got no fresh ideas on it and it pisses me off that these bands are just self serving little marketing exercises that come around.

My analogy is that when we're all kids, and you're 16 or 17 years of age, maybe younger, and the peer group on the estate where you live, or a village where you live or whatever, someone's parents will go away on holiday and you'll all pressure that person to have a party at their house and you all turn up with a bottle of sherry or a bottle of vodka from your mum and dad's cabinet, or at least some half decent strong cider, and you put it all on the kitchen table and there's probably 20 or 30 of you are partying, then around about midnight four rag arses turn up that nobody really knows who they are, but they're loosely associated with you, and they come in and they put the cheapest, nastiest Dutch import lager on the same kitchen table and they pick up the vodka and they pick up the sherry and they walk around with that. Well that's all the new bands around these days, they're putting nothing good on the table and they're nicking all the good stuff that goes with it.

The only thing that I remain hopeful about is, that the next wave of kids that start a bunch of bands, that are influenced by your Kaiser Chiefs or by your Franz Ferdinand and all that, that they actually go, 'Hang on! Where did this come from?' and they go and find out because they've been given enough rope to go find 'Power In The Darkness' or 'Never Mind The Bollocks' and realise that it's not just an image on a coffee cup or a T Shirt, and that people like John Lydon are real people, with real issues and not just another theme on a poster, and I hope that the next wave of guitar bands figure it out and fucking SAY something and DO something!!

With that I thanked Miles for his time and hospitality, and came away from that interview thinking, how glad I was that people like Miles Hunt still exist in the world while he slid away to a sell out crowd.

'Suspended By Stars' is available now from all music outlets.



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