

# THE WONDER STUFF

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GIVE GIVE GIVE ME MORE MORE F\*\*\*"G MORE'?

If you're a fan of the Stuffies then now's a perfect excuse to crack open a bottle of Cava and smoke a cigar or two. The Wonder Stuff are back!!! Or so they claim.

However if your one of the minority for one reason or another that are finding themselves saying The Wonder-who? Don't feel ashamed... I will enlighten you.

September 2004 saw the release of there first studio album in eleven years. Three and a half years since reforming to play live shows only, the two remaining founders of the Stourbridge four better known as The Wonder Stuff, got their collective arses into gear to reform with a new drummer and bassist to record some new tunes. The result is cutely titled "Escape from Rubbish Island". For the fans who remain loyal to their brothers you would be hard pushed to find a tune on this LP that comes anything close to their epic 'Eight Legged Groove Machine' and 'Hup' era... but several listens later it confirmed my suspicions, those being; you need patience and lots of it.... oh yeah and maybe a prayer or two for a hit.

Miles Hunt (vocals and guitar) and Malc Treece (guitar and vocals) are still front and centre and still performing their job as one of the UK's best duos... well not since Morrissey and Marr, Jim Bob and Fruitbat and Renee and Renate have two musicians stood the test of time so well. Indeed it was only last December that they played to 17,000 people in just three nights.

But it's not just the live performances that keep the fans ever loyal... 22 singles, 17 of them Top 20 including a number one, four UK Top 20 albums, a five night run at Brixton Academy (they didn't want to steal The Clash's record, out of respect), a further five night run at Kentish Town's Forum and headline slots at both Reading and Phoenix Festivals... these are just some of the things that The Wonder Stuff's fans can brag about. Incidentally, it was the Phoenix festival that actually saw The Wonder Stuff appear on stage with freshly shaven heads claiming "this is the last gig we are ever going to do so God bless the fucking lot of yer!" There were a lot of tears that day some maybe of sheer happiness that they would not be gracing us with there presence again, but for the majority perhaps just inconsolable grieving.

So here they are - a tour to combine with their newly released album. I asked Miles why: "The reasons for a new album were a necessity," he explained. "The support we have been shown by our fans over the years is phenomenal, particularly these last three years. I've felt humbled and grateful and blessed with loyal audiences and I think if we'd have carried on wheeling ourselves out every Christmas like the Gary Glitter Gang Show with no new releases then we'd been taking the piss. This record is as much a thank you to those people as it is a necessity for us to write, record and play".

Since the other old band members had departed, was it a hard task to pick up the pieces and start again?

"When I was living with Clint from Pop Will Eat Itself last year in California I asked him for advice on what the vibe on this album should be. As well as speaking with Malc and confirming that I wouldn't let him down with the re-birth of The Wonder Stuff, I decided basically that we should go back to what we were all about in the beginning... gags, humour and basically a whinge with a smile on our faces".

"I knew Mark McCarthy from way back and he hadn't done anything for three years so after jamming with him I could see the vibe that he was giving out was like "this is what it's fucking all about" and as for Luke Johnson the drummer, I've known him from my time of living in L.A. and at the time we were getting this together he was whiling away the hours in his L.A recording studio and he was like "Of course I'll be in your band, do you think I wanna be stuck here recording God-awful metal bands for the rest of my life?!" So after asking Matt Terry to do the additional

backing vocals on the studio album I found the three disciples, Mark, Matt and Luke. We rehearsed well over thirty songs and got gig-tight in six weeks! Also I think that it's the personalities of this band that also make this work.

The title of the album sounds like a typical Miles rant. Has the state of the British government got anything to do with this?

"Absolutely. I spent five months with Clint in L.A. and being out of the UK and looking at things from an American perspective I felt disgraced and ashamed. It was around the time the Iraq war kicked off and the ass-licking of Blair with Bush. I felt anti-home and was not looking forward to going back to England. It was actually the drummer Luke who coined the phrase "escape from rubbish island" but it was when I met some guys I played with when I went to Ireland before heading home that I picked up some optimism. Also discovering that I had a three year old daughter in Devon made me want to base myself in England and that in turn made me a more responsible person. It's changed my life but I'm not allowed to sing to her... I get told off!"

Is cracking the top 40 still an importance to you?

"In a word, NO! I have no interest in Top of the Pops and never did before. Way back when the likes of 'Size of a Cow' and 'Cheap Seats' hit the charts we spent years just getting drunk and picking outfits out of a box and wearing them not realising that this was the image that kids would portray of us. I think we've all grown up now. Besides John Peel was more our era cause that's what we grew up with".

And the tartan?

"That was my homage to Noddy and The Clash"

With the state of the UK charts at the moment filled with Pop Idol wannabe's and Robbie, have you ever felt the urge to write another version of 'Astley in the Noose'?

"YES ...what Williams in the noose? Hmmm, very tempting. He's like a younger version of Tommy Steel but worse! No, I think I'm older and more aware of getting wound up and I would rather put my energy into the things I love".

What would you say to anyone who hasn't seen a Wonder Stuff gig yet?

"Well I'm not a good salesman but basically it's a good fucking show! The band was born out of the late 80's when I was into The Waterboys and gobshite front men and Malc was into The Jesus and Mary Chain and bouncy headbanging guitar heroes, so basically were just trying to be our favourite band and working hard at it".

Personally, have you fulfilled your dreams and ambitions to date? There must be room for a book - Charles Bukowski style?

"Post Office is a fantastic book and it has been known for me to steal a title or two from his short stories. I love song writing and get lost in it. I think I am extremely lucky indeed to be doing what I love the most. I usually write on a laptop but purposely left it at home on this tour so I could give myself a break but I found I was scribbling on bits of paper and getting them lost so I've had to go out and buy another one! I love getting sentences word perfect and can spend ages writing until it sounds just right. I love the acoustic shows I do cause it's more intimate and the Rescue room gig I did in Nottingham last year was great cause I didn't play a thing for the first hour through verbal diarrhoea but still got paid stupid amounts to perform. I have also just started writing in a Nottingham monthly called Left Lion so yeah things are busy at the moment."

So finally, what does the future hold in store for The Wonder Stuff?

"More writing, more gigging, and more tours, we've actually pencilled in a tour of America next year".

So would I be right in saying The Wonder Stuff are back for good this time?

"Oh yeah most definitely... and when you see the gig later you'll see little illuminated babies on stage to signify the re-birth of the band"

Thoughts at this stage were of sheer horror. Who's babies were wired up on stage and isn't this starting to sound like a Spinal Tap gig? And so with my guess pass to the gig that night at Rock City in hand and an invite from Miles to go on the lash with him and the band later, I head toward the exit of his dressing room where I had just spent the last hour talking to one of only two of my all time heroes - the other being Frank W Spencer.

By the way the gig that night was brilliant and no I didn't go on the piss with them... I spent the money on a Some Mothers Do Have Them rental just to round the evening off nicely! However they never disappoint live with their

back catalogue of favourites like 'Red Berry Joy Town', 'Don't Let Me Down', 'Ten Trenches Deep' and so on and so forth .... The new stuff? Well it sits in there nicely and it obviously sounds more energetic and raw live so if you want some advice for free then it's simply this - don't write the album off until you see them live cause you might just change your mind.

Paul Noble

TASTY FANZINE, November 2004

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