THE INSATIABLE ONES

Issue 5, October 2020

WHITE BOY ON A STAGE

WE USE WORDS AS WEAPONS!
HE SPEAKS OF LOVE AND POWER AND
ALL THOSE PRETTY THINGS
YOU KNOW THE VOICE THAT FLATTERS YOU IS
NOT THE ~~KNIFE~~ VOICE THAT SINGS

OH WHITE BOY ON A STAGE AND ~~HE~~ YOU
CAN'T CONTROL IT

OH WHITE BOY ON A STAGE, AND ME
CAN'T CONTROL IT

HE'S SOMEONE ELSE'S CLONE
WHO CARES WHERE HE IS FROM?
SHUT UP AND HIT THAT PEDAL
WE KNOW WHERE WE BELONG

OH WHITE BOY ON A STAGE AND
YOU CAN'T CONTROL IT

OH WHITE BOY ON A STAGE AND
HE CAN'T CONTROL HIMSELF

B~~R~~ M

X 1.2.20

THE INSATIABLE ONES

Issue 5, October 2020

'We have to inhabit Suedeworld.'
- Brett Anderson, *NME*.

Mat and The Insatiable Ones at his book event in Brighton. Photo by Angela Johnson.

Editor:
Samantha Hand

Co-Editor:
Amanda Blazier

Copy Editor:
Inge Klinkers

Layout & Design:
Rachel Apps

Photo Editor:
Wendy Baeten

Insatiable Ones Logo Design:
Marie-Eve Racine

Front Cover Design:
Rachel Apps

Back Cover Artwork:
Printed with permission from Suede

Never have truer words been spoken, especially over the last few months. Finding comfort, solace and hope in the musical journey through the darker side of the countryside, as we wander through the swaying nettles into the lightless forests. Finding beauty in the depths of the bleak landscape. We may not have realised it at first, but it's a place where we belong.

As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of Suede's comeback, nobody could have foreseen the year that was to be 2020.

We send our love to those of you who have lost loved ones or suffered physical illness or mental health illness and we hope you have the support you need and please know you can always reach out in our group.

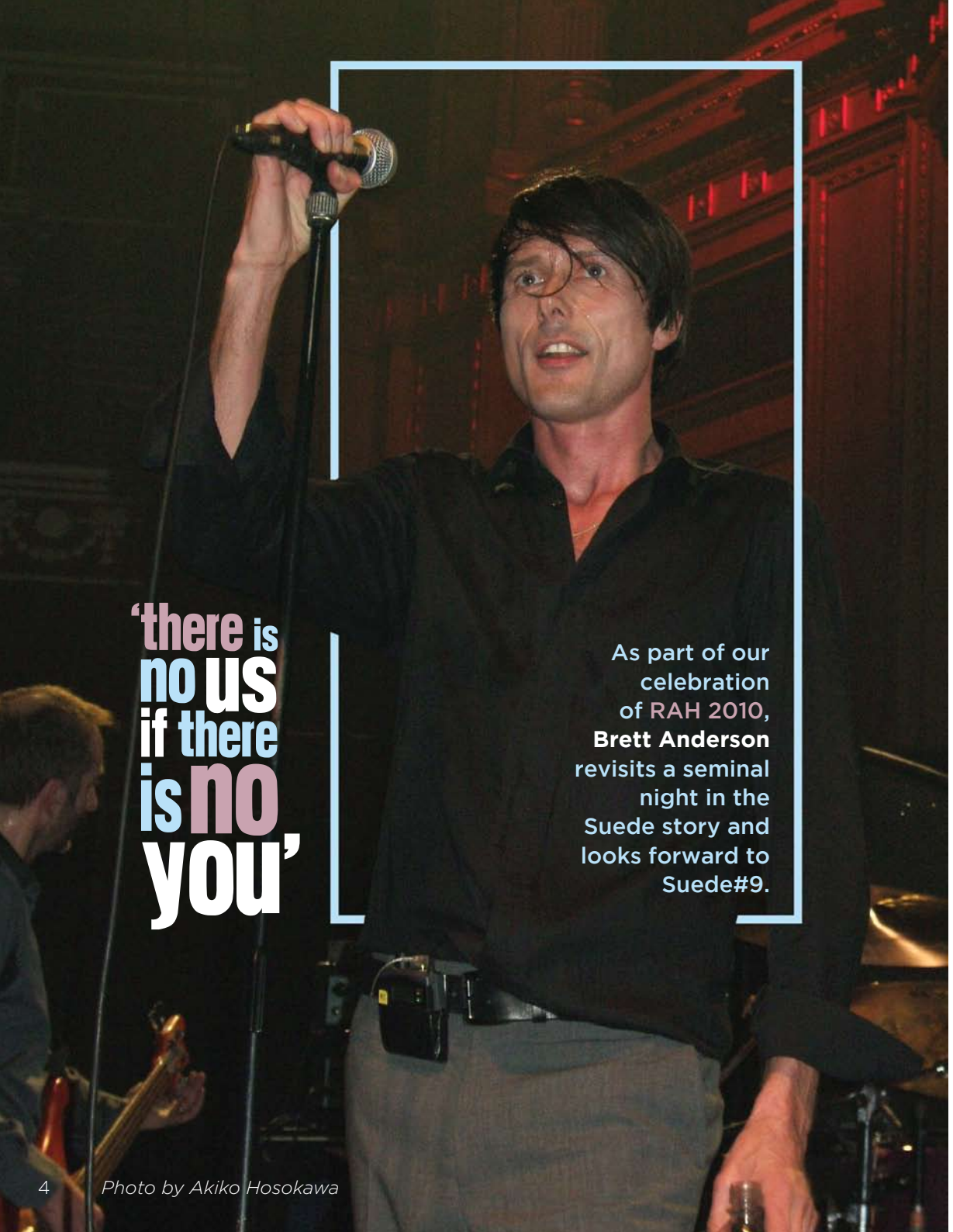
A year unlike any other, the year that we, The Insatiable Ones fan community, pulled together and decided to strive forward and take on 2020 in a positive way, with the aim of making a difference. It started with an inspired suggestion from Alistair Pyke of us doing a Suede T-shirt day to lift spirits. This led to our #StayAtHomeWednesdays, which as restrictions lessened became #StaySafeWednesdays: Suede-related activities every Wednesday to celebrate Suede and their music whilst bringing us all together. Having witnessed many small but significant acts of kindness by Insatiable Ones towards each other is proof of our continued faith and hope for better things.

In all honesty, without Suede and The Insatiable Ones personally I'm not sure how I'd have coped. Thanks to each and every one of you, as together we made and will continue to make a difference during these challenging times. Thank you Suede for your music, for being you and for being our constant inspiration.

We'd all love to wish Brett, Richard and Mat a very happy birthday and wish you every happiness.

Stay Insatiable and stay safe
Samantha Hand

The greatest possible care was taken in designing and compiling *The Insatiable Ones fanzine*. All rights reserved. No part of these pages, either text or image, may be used for any purpose other than personal use. In no event will the editorial team be liable for the consequences arising out of or in connection with the information and images in this fanzine.



‘there is no us if there is no you’

As part of our celebration of RAH 2010, Brett Anderson revisits a seminal night in the Suede story and looks forward to Suede#9.

Photo by Akiko Hosokawa

Back at the Astoria in 2003, you said ‘There will be another Suede record, but not yet.’ How much belief did you have in this statement?

Suede has always been something that’s bigger than any of us. It has a life and a personality of its own, it’s bloody-minded and damned difficult to kill off. ‘It doesn’t matter how many times they stamp us into the ground …’, etc., etc.

When were you first approached about the Royal Albert Hall gig 2010 and what was your initial reaction?

I’d just been to see The Horrors on their *Primary Colours* tour and I remember sitting with Jodie waiting for them to come on, looking at the roadies setting up the guitars and listening to the hubbub of the crowd and smelling the dry ice and feeling that shiver of anticipation, that yearning for noise and clatter and disorder. I was surprised by how much I had missed something that I hadn’t even thought about for such a long time. Somehow it just felt like the moment was ripe.

> *‘I was surprised by how much I had missed something that I hadn’t even thought about for such a long time’*

How did your first rehearsal back together as Suede go and what was the first song you played?

Anyone who has ever got back together with old school friends after being apart for many years will know the feeling. We all walked in thinking we were older and wiser and completely different people and we all walked out making exactly the same jokes we had in 1996. I think the first song we played was ‘Filmstar’.

What do you remember of the few moments before you stepped on the stage for the first time after almost seven years at the 100 Club? And what about before the RAH gig?

Wondering whether anyone still liked us.

When was the last time you watched the Royal Albert Hall DVD concert and what did you think of it in retrospect?

When Lucian was a toddler he used to demand watching it by saying ‘Want see daddy sing songs!’ Now it’s much more about Teen Titans so I haven’t seen it for a good while. Before you ask, Raven is my favourite Teen Titan and Lucian’s is Beast Boy.

Would RAH have been the end for Suede without what happened after ‘Metal Mickey’?

It’s possible I suppose. That truly was a life-affirming moment and one that I have said before that I would happily take to my grave. The last ten years especially have made me realise just how important you guys are in all this and that was a defining point in that epiphany. There is no us if there is no you.

(Continued from page 5)

What do you think you'd have done in the last decade if Suede had disbanded after the gig?

Well, I would have carried on making music under some name because that's what I do and the moment I stop writing songs will be the moment I stop existing. Most likely I would have carried on churning out solo records. I loved that artistic journey and am truly proud of some of that work, the last two records especially, but sadly, making solo albums in this day and age is a money-losing vanity project and I have a family to support.

When was the point that you started writing new material for Suede?

It was after we'd been touring the 'best of' for a while. I remember thinking we can't do this much longer unless we could find something new to say. I didn't want to be one of those bands you see trudging around the nostalgia circuit in ever-decreasing circles living off the scraps of their past.

What is your favourite band moment since RAH? Has anything equalled or topped it?

Oh god. So, so many, but the 'Life Is Golden' moment at Cambridge was really hard to beat. It was especially lovely because it felt spontaneous—I just floated it to the others when we were standing sweating at the side of the stage waiting for the crew to set up for the encore. There was something very symbolic about it and it was a humbling, touching thing that rivalled the 'Metal Mickey' standing ovation, so thank you.

How would you describe the last ten years in a few words?

Wondrous, unexpected, terrifying.

How does it feel right now to be in Suede?

As exciting as it ever was. The thrill is in not knowing quite where it's going but knowing you're going to enjoy getting there.

What do you envisage for Suede in the next decade?

I can never see further ahead than the next record so I'll just talk about that a bit. Each album is in some way a reaction to the last and having mined an expansive, narrative sort of seam for the last two I think everyone in the camp wants to make something a little more oblique and unruly; 'nasty, brutish and short' as Thomas Hobbes once said. Having said that, there is a nagging, murmuring voice in my ear reminding me that it can't just be a 'back-to-basics' record, that it still needs to surprise people, that the hard-fought reputation the band have acquired over the last few years of making challenging, intelligent music mustn't just be blithely thrown away. Squaring that circle and resolving that cognitive dissonance will definitely be a challenge but nothing worth doing is easy. Exactly where these ideas will lead us is not yet completely clear but that's where the adventure lies and as the next few months unfold, I know it's going to be an exciting journey. I hope you'll enjoy coming along on it with us.

'The thrill is in not knowing quite where it's going'

Noelia

My little Insatiable One left us but he will be living inside other children's bodies, making other families' lives golden and full of joy.

A fatal accident changed our fate.

GAEL
5 July 2017 – 21 March 2020

See you in the next life my little star.

Sending all our love and support to our friend and fellow Insatiable One xx

Photo by Noelia

Remembering Matt Day

On Thursday evening 23 July 2020 I received a phone call letting me know that my best friend Matt Day had suddenly passed away. We had been friends since we were three or four years old at primary school. He was a huge Suede fan, and a Huge Bowie fan, too.

Matt was a familiar face at numerous Suede gigs over the years. We used to go to a lot of them together. The last one we attended together was the Suede Westonbirt Arboretum gig.

Matt and his family followed Suede everywhere ... We always managed to get after show passes, back in the early years, 1993-97; so they were always a familiar sight backstage.

Matt has left a huge hole in all our lives.

Thank you very much for all your messages of support.

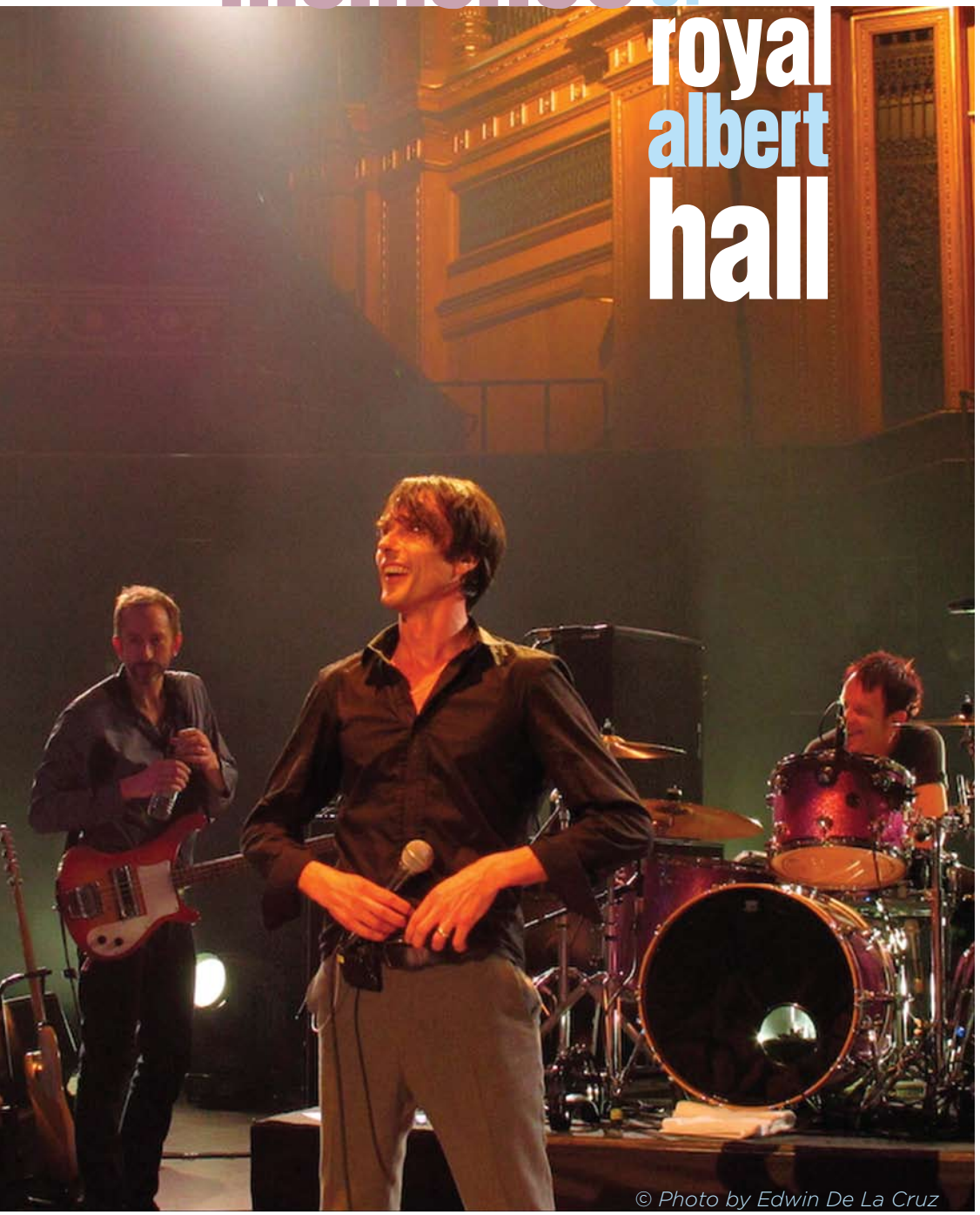
Also, Matt was an IO member since 2014.

R.I.P. Matt Day 1976 – 2020

- Andrew Edwards

Photos courtesy of Andrew Edwards

memories of royal albert hall



© Photo by Edwin De La Cruz

Rosie Jude Gilbey (on the barrier):

An emotionally charged, electric and ecstatic performance, this was one of those rare occasions in which you know a historical event is taking place. Viewed from my 16-year-old eyes, wide with amazement and disbelief and the knowing that, in that moment, things were perfect just as they were.

This comeback, an explosion back onto the scene with all the energy of a band who are still so relevant and have so much more to say. The performance was a cathartic release not only for Suede but for the audience too; we were catapulted through dizzying heights and dramatic lows, with perfect measures of raw punk energy and devastating beauty; the epitome of Suede's ethos. The importance of this gig is undisputed; magic happened, and we were left adequately nourished, but predictably insatiable.

Axel Ramos (to Europe from America to see the band):

When the one-off show at the Royal Albert Hall was announced our hearts were filled with pure joy. My partner had been unable to make the trip in 2003. I promised her that if Suede ever got back together, we would be there. I was finally going to be able to make her dream come true! It took me three hours to secure the tickets but was finally able to get them. We were on our way!

The show at RAH, as we all know, was AMAZINGLY AMAZING!!! The never-ending standing ovation. The smiles from the band gleaming back at us. We knew we had just witnessed something truly special. The venue was magical and with so much history. But more important was the history that was being created that night. The second coming of Suede!!! It couldn't get more epic than that.

I will be forever grateful that I was able to keep my promise to my wife and to have been so lucky to have the band continue to give us more epic trips filled with new music and new friends! Thank you, Suede, for bringing so much joy and epicness into our lives.

Helena E. Hansen (fan):

Ended up arriving much later than planned to the venue due to buying a hair brush (prioritising is obviously not my strong side) so didn't get to stand at the barriers. Was kinda upset about this until a couple of days later, when I started getting morning sickness on the plane home and later realised I was pregnant with my first child. Might be a good thing I didn't make the front! And my son can always say that Suede was his first gig! To this date one of the musical highlights of my life!

Samantha Hand (fanzine editor):

It was Suede's final farewell to fans. The Suede story would finally have a fitting positive end. The twist in the tale was that in fact this was the dawn of a new beginning with new chapters to be written.

That night will remain etched in my heart forever. It was a rollercoaster of emotions and I'll never forget the defining moment—the ovation for 'Metal Mickey'. Magic happened that night.

Luke Anderson (no relation):

As a die-hard fan from the halcyon Butler days, I was overwhelmed at the energy and talent the band had that special night. I was so proud of the boys and felt such a kinship between all of the fans. I had goosebumps when the crowd would refuse to stop applauding them. To see the realisation in Brett's face was so special … at that moment I think/hope they knew we still, and always will, love them. It was such a magical night.

Jodie Anderson (relation):

That was my first Suede gig! Also my first time at the Albert Hall and in a box! With my mum, John, Alan, Fred, Sally and Jesse's mum Anthea. Jesse was the only one missing, just gone. It was so exciting, grand, raw and primal, then heartbreaking then jaw-on-the-floor exhilarating! My mum loved it! We all did. The 'Metal Mickey' moment was thrilling! Jesse would have loved it.

Simon Gilbert (if you have to ask …):

I remember the Albert Hall gig but only because of the numerous videos of it I've seen … I do however remember the applause after 'Metal Mickey' … we really didn't expect anything like that … a wonderful Suede moment.

she's show-showing it off

***Carrie Pennock** appears on screen so often in the film of the **2010 Royal Albert Hall Teenage Cancer Trust concert** there's even a drinking game based on her appearances! She revisits a momentous day for all concerned.*

© Photo by Edwin De La Cruz

The day was finally here. Today I was going to see Suede! Seven years had passed since I had last seen my band walk off stage at the Astoria. A long seven-year hiatus. On reaching the Royal Albert Hall I was soon joined by a few familiar faces from Brett's solo gigs. Mat, Brett and Neil arrived shortly after, people gathering for autographs. I hung back, not wanting to intrude. I was terribly shy and polite in those days.

When doors opened, people rushed forward. Being me, I didn't run but walked as requested and lost sight of where I was supposed to go. As a result I emerged at the back of the RAH, and could see that the barrier was almost full. Despite myself, I decided to run, and just managed to squeeze myself in—finally at the front for a Suede gig! I was beyond excited. Videos were displayed on the big screens, portraying the children who would benefit from this fundraiser gig. Memorabilia T-shirts were on sale and I put one on over my clothes. Looking back, the fact I had SUEDE in big white letters emblazoned across my chest was probably why I appear so much in the film.

I was nervous about how the band would be received and wondering if the crowd would still be that throng I longed to be a part of. There were huge cheers as the lights dimmed and Suede came on stage. Simon appeared first, followed by Richard, Mat, Neil and finally Brett.

The opening chords of 'She' entered our ears, smiles all around and Suede were back! Before long, Brett was swinging the mic stand around, whilst

Carrie (centre) and friends at the barrier. Photo courtesy of Carrie Pennock.

(Continued from page 11)

Mat was swinging his snaky hips, Simon singing along, Richard owning his space. Neil looked a bit bemused as he sang backing vocals. It was all so natural, like they had been doing it throughout the last seven years. Straight into 'Trash', with Brett jumping around the stage. Oh how I had missed this! 'Filmstar' came next. Brett jumped off stage to be greeted by eager arms. Jumping back on he wandered over in front of us. As he leant towards us singing 'what to believe in', I shouted back: SUEDE!! We believe in Suede!

A short pause, and some polite cheering. I expected everyone to be as eager and excited as I was, but it didn't feel like the crowd were at that point. I remember thinking it was all quite surreal and then 'Animal Nitrate' tore from the speakers. The floor immediately erupted with people jumping and arms flailing. Simon had a huge smile on his face watching us all as Brett came forward, shouting 'he's just a fucking animal'. Next up, 'Heroine'. Richard looking increasingly relaxed. As Brett finished the song on his knees centre stage, it reminded me of his solo performance of 'Song For My Father'. I desperately reached out … like I had six-foot arms to reach him. Then they continued with a lovely performance of 'Pantomime Horse', Brett again on his knees, belting out the lyrics with such emotion and strength.

Photo by Akiko Hosokawa

Soon we were singing along to 'The Drowners', with everyone joining in and Brett jumping down in front of the barrier. Hands clamoured for him as he moved along and then suddenly he was within touching distance, hauling himself up onto the barrier steps. The crowd around me surged forward and Brett turned in front of me, leaning back. My face was planted against his sweaty back as hands reached over my head from those around, feverish to touch their idol. I was stuck between mixed emotions … sheer gleeful disbelief at getting my first christening of Brett Sweat, panic that I might accidentally touch somewhere I shouldn't and the voice in my head telling me to savour and cherish this moment. It may sound weird, but that one act of being squashed by Brett—against a person I admired a huge amount, made me feel like I finally belonged. All those years looking down from the balcony, longing to be in that sweaty mass of fans, and now here I was. I felt I was a validated Suede fan. I smiled like an idiot for the rest of the gig and whenever I watch the DVD I smile as I think to myself 'I'm under that!'

'Flashboy' was next—one of my favourites. Pumped up with adrenaline I was in a blissful haze and soon we were shaking our stuff to 'Can't Get Enough', bouncing on the barrier. Brett was all smiley at the end, clearly loving being on stage. It felt as if he had accepted all our love for the band. During 'Everything Will Flow' Brett was soon off stage again and in front of me once more. It wasn't as feverish this time and I could enjoy the close proximity and hearing Brett's voice singing off mic. Back on stage, Brett introduced 'He's Gone' for his friend Jesse who had recently passed away. This announcement instantly subdued the crowd and I felt such sorrow for Brett as he sung the lyrics, shaking with his eyes closed. There were teary eyes on the barrier, the occasional wiping away of shared tears in silence as we witnessed this moment of grief.

© Photo by Edwin De La Cruz

The song flowed into the opening of 'The Next Life' and you could have heard a pin drop. Brett was on his knees in front of us as Neil played the piano. It was a beautiful, emotional moment—Brett's voice against the clarity of Neil's keys in the silent echo of this huge grand hall. To this day it makes my hairs stand on end.

Then 'The Asphalt World'. My favourite Suede song ever. I remember thinking I would never again hear this song in such a fitting venue, so perfect for

(Continued from page 13)

© Photo by Edwin De La Cruz

its hauntingly beautiful lyrics. Mat pounding his bass, drums crashing down, adding to its majesty. The sheer power of the song bouncing off the walls. I hoped for the full version, but it soon morphed into 'So Young'. I felt momentarily disappointed—a one-off final Suede gig and they cut short my favourite song that I'd never hear live again. But, who doesn't love 'So Young'? The crowd erupted and bounced along, with people pushing forward. 'Metal Mickey' launched straight after—all around me people were jumping, arms aloft. My hips were ground into the cheese grater holes of the barrier from the force of the mosh pit. I was grateful to have the barrier to brace against—although lowering my arms proved a struggle!—but felt concern for those behind me, hoping they had room to breathe. Again, I remembered my yearning from years before and thought how lucky I was to be here amongst these people, seeing my favourite band one last time, and I tried to savour every moment.

The end of 'Metal Mickey' was **the defining moment**. The crowd cheering this charged performance, ecstatic to be seeing their band on stage after all those years, the applause never ending. Mat looked back at us all with a huge grin. Simon was smiling behind his sparkly pink drums as Brett walked across the stage, a growing smile and a look that seemed to say 'is this really happening?' Neil, bless him, looked confused until the continued applause brought a sheepish smile to his face. It seemed to go on forever and the band lapped it up, looking around the hall and absorbing the outpouring of love.

Finally, the applause began to wane and Neil played the opening to 'The Wild Ones' on acoustic guitar. The last time I had heard this at a Suede gig was at the end of the Astoria in 2003. A4 sheets had been passed around the crowd with the lyrics and a note to sing and show appreciation. And as the band walked off for the last time, the Astoria crowd sang it to an emptying stage. Now, seven years later, those lyrics were being played back to us. I reached as far as I could for 'Oh if you stay' in an almost pleading gesture to the band, daring to think that they might play another gig at some point.

Next up was 'New Generation'—Mat was by now as sweaty as Brett, twirling about the stage. Brett had his arms spread wide, enticing the crowd and shouting 'you want more?' I screamed YES as loud as I could. 'Beautiful Ones' entered my ears. Again, the crowd started jumping in unison, with Brett pogoing on stage before jumping down to the barrier and making his way over to the circular seats overlooking the standing area to touch and shake

© Photo by Edwin De La Cruz

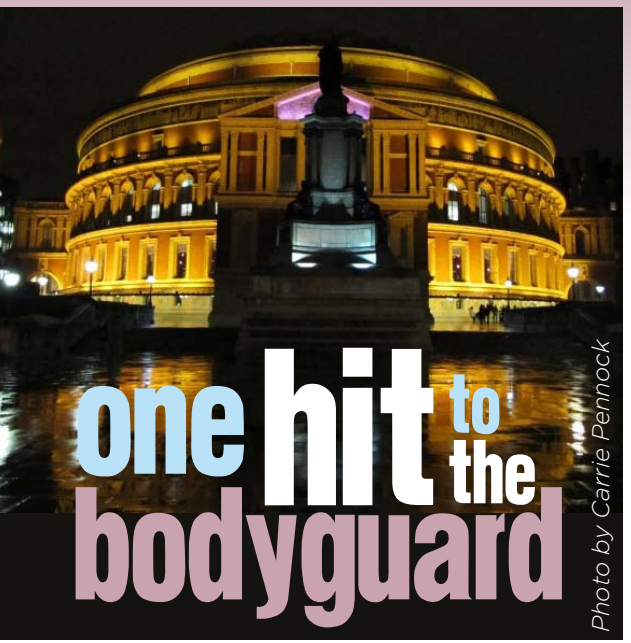
hands. I love how Brett tries to connect with as many people as possible—and during subsequent gigs watching Neil's reactions as he feigns disapproval with his rolling eyes as Brett disappears into the swarm of the crowd. But, today, security merely looked puzzled and concerned, probably not used to wandering band members. I jumped and cheered towards Neil, Mat, Simon and Richard, watching their enjoyment until the song ended and they left the stage.

I knew there would be an encore … isn't there always? Brett, with an acoustic guitar. A beautiful rendition of 'The Living Dead'. The crowd silently absorbed the moment and I felt goosebumps as Brett drew longer pauses between the lyrics. His triumphant smile at the end echoed the applause and at the opening piano of 'The 2 Of Us' I soaked it up, smiling at my content feeling of seeing my band on stage before me, the crescendo of the song building, but with a tinge of sadness knowing it would soon be over.

Brett stood in front of me, head bowed as the embers of the song drifted away. My heart was bursting with pride for my band but breaking for the inevitable comedown of the gig's end. Upon hearing Brett say 'let's do it again in another seven years' time' my heart skipped a beat. A growing glimmer of hope that there may yet be another Suede gig at some point provided welcome relief for my growing sadness.

As they launched into the final song, 'Saturday Night', I clapped and cheered as much and as loud as I could, determined that I would do my best to show our boys how much they were loved. I welcomed the lyrics 'it'll be okay like everyone says, it'll be alright and ever so nice'—how true this transpired to be. Leaving the venue and heading into a rainy London, I had hope that it would be okay.

We did do it again. In fact we did it many more times over the following years. I spent numerous more days queueing for doors to open. I heard those songs many a time from the barrier. I was covered in more Brett Sweat, chatted to the band on more than one occasion, and I've made some very close friends in the Insatiable Ones family along the way. But there's always something special about this gig. The mix of emotions and excitement to see your band again, when it felt all was lost. The growing anticipation that this could turn into something more. The grand atmosphere of the Royal Albert Hall filled with people jumping about in unison. Brett said in 2003 he needed to find his demon. In 2010 I found my tribe.



one hit to the bodyguard

Photo by Carrie Pennock

Simon & Dean.
Photo courtesy of Dean Plumley.

Photo by Akiko Hosokawa

Photo by Akiko Hosokawa

Neil and Teenage Cancer Trust event producer Des Murphy.
Photo by Akiko Hosokawa.

by Dean Plumley

To be asked to pick your favourite/most important Suede gig is really like trying to choose your favourite pet, nigh on impossible. There was the debut of *Night Thoughts* at the Roundhouse, the *Dog Man Star* night at Brixton, the Suede farewell gig—the list is endless. But, if, IF I had a gun held to my head, it would have to be the gig that was so important to every member of the Suede gang and when for a night I became Richard Oakes' bodyguard ...

When it was officially announced that Suede would play the Royal Albert Hall for the Teenage Cancer Trust, it was the news we had all been waiting for, there was a feeling of Fuck Yeah, Suede are back, for a one-off gig, doesn't matter, Suede are BACK and this was going to be a celebration of the greatest British band of the last two decades.

The excitement was tangible, you could almost taste it in the air. I remember we all knew that this was not going to be a greatest-hits party, this was a band with a point to prove, wanting to right the wrongs and remind people that being Suede mattered. Those few minutes before the gig began the atmosphere was electric, I managed to get to the third row and then it happened—the best live performance, Brett strutting around the stage like a man possessed, diving into the front row as the mosh pit went at him like a horde of crazed zombies, and he was loving it. Every member of Suede was on it, I remember looking at Mat and he had the biggest grin on his face, this wasn't going to be a send-off, Suede were back indeed.

THE moment of the gig was the standing ovation after 'Metal Mickey'—a moment that has become legendary. To see that look on the face of every Suede member and especially Brett's, was a you-had-to-be-there moment. The standing ovation felt like it went on forever, only ending with Brett declaring 'we haven't finished yet.' After the gig I made my way back to Victoria Station when my phone buzzed, my mate shouting 'where are you, backstage, Royal Albert Hall, get here now.' Cut to me doing my best Hugh Grant in *Four Weddings* impression tearing through the station, swearing loudly and shouting for a taxi.

True to his word, my friend had managed to get me to the after show and in the next instance I was standing shoulder to shoulder with Roger Daltrey with a look on my face like I had just won the lottery. Later I met Simon, a real gent, and had a photo taken with him, and then I saw Brett, I can't recall what I said but I am pretty sure it was just a lot of mumbling.

My mate said that they were off to the dressing room and of course I followed, still grinning like a mad man. In the dressing room beers were offered—two of which I still have in my fridge, a memento of the night—when I got asked the strangest question from, I believe, Suede's manager: 'Dean, do you mind looking after Richard?' Say what? 'Richard, he has a lot of fans outside and he needs someone to look after him to get him to the hotel around the corner, you look the part.' That was it, my mission: protect Richard Oakes at all costs.

The stage doors opened to be greeted by quite a few fans and I was on it—sorry, no, coming through, yes pictures allowed, but, sorry, Richard needs to come through. Then I followed him all the way to the hotel thinking that was it. But no, in I went to the bar and downstairs to the party in the basement, my favourite part of the evening was sitting there chatting to Neil in a state of shock/awe/disbelief.

This truly was my favourite gig, one of those nights that will stick with you for the rest of your life. Ten years removed it's a night that even now I cannot believe happened. I felt like a Hunter S. Thompson character on a night out, a real mind trip and one that I am truly grateful for.

he's the face on the radio

***Gary Crowley** has been a fixture of the UK music scene since 1980; becoming, at 19, the youngest DJ on British radio. He was the first person to put Suede on the airwaves, with their early track 'Wonderful Sometimes'. Samantha Hand talked to Gary about his long career and championing Suede from the start.*

© Photo courtesy of Punk Noir Magazine

It's funny, whenever I see Bernard and Brett, not so often now, they always remember the phone number that they all used to ring when 'Wonderful Sometimes' won the Demo Clash. I did have a really lovely afternoon actually with Bernard last year, when I went on his radio programme for a couple of hours, talking about a box set I put together. They remember, Brett remembers the number, 224 2000, they always shout it out before we even start talking.

How and when did you get started as a DJ?

I was working for a lovely fellow who's still a really good friend of mine, Clive Banks, a very successful radio and TV promotions man, what they call a plugger. This is back in '79-80, so I would have been about 17. He was doing the promotion for a whole array of bands: The Who, Elvis Costello, Bananarama, The Jam. So basically, through working as his sort of assistant in radio and TV, I started getting offers to do things, to present. It was quite unheard of in a way, somebody not only so young, but also with a strong regional accent. At that time it was still quite unusual. That was my in really, through working for Clive, for Radio 1 and Capital. I was very lucky in getting these opportunities thrown my way, which I grabbed with both hands. I was certainly the youngest DJ. Friends of mine still take the mickey out of me about that. Back in 1980, when I got my first show on Capital Radio, I was 19. Most DJs at that time on Capital were all in their late twenties or early thirties.

You were the first DJ to champion Suede, do you remember the day you received their demo?

No, I don't remember the specific day. But I can tell you a bit about the feature, which was the platform where I first became aware of them. There is somebody who should be mentioned in this, he very sadly passed away five years ago. I know Brett and Bernard will remember him very fondly as well. We used to do this feature—this would have been back in the late '80s and all the way through the '90s—called the Demo Clash. I had a Sunday afternoon radio show on GLR as it was then, there was no money, there was no real platform to play new, unsigned bands.

One of my early producers, a lovely fellow called Tony Smith, said: look, we can't get bands in and actually record a session, so why don't we get bands to send in their demo tapes, because every band makes a demo tape in order to get the word out about themselves with record companies or journalists. I thought what an absolutely inspired idea and said, listen, that's an absolutely fantastic idea, we will get the cassettes and transfer them over to a quarter-inch tape. That wasn't expensive. And then we would play two of them up against each other. And after we had done that for a couple of years, we made it three bands against each other. Basically, it was the band who got the most votes that would carry on and come back the following week. The winners could only win for five weeks and then they would have to retire gracefully.

'He played it to me and we said yes, that sounds absolutely fantastic, let's play it'

Boy William was the first one. He heard the Suede tape and he played it to me. We would each take turns in taking them home and honestly, one time we were getting these massive Royal Mail postbags of demo tapes. So I'd take a couple of bags home and William would. Tony was still involved with the programme at the beginning as well, but he went off to work as an A&R man at a record company.

(Continued from page 19)

It was Boy William who first heard the Suede cassette. He played it to me and we said yes, that sounds absolutely fantastic, let's play it. It was like a group committee thing as to what we were going to play the following week.

'You couldn't compare them to anyone really. They were finding their own scene, what I've always liked about them.'

My memory of hearing it the first time was: this is good, it sounds different. If you go back to the late '80s, the whole grunge thing was almost like a sort of tsunami really, what we would get from America and a lot of bands in the UK had been influenced by it. Suede sounded different. They sounded almost kind of out there on their own in a way. Thinking back to the time, you couldn't compare them to anyone really. They were finding their own scene, what I've always liked about them. They were good songs, a good sense of melody—I've always been a fan of melody and they definitely had that. They also had an attitude, a swagger and a little bit of punk energy in there, and maybe a little bit of Bowie as well if you want to dissect it. It sounded good and in its own way—I'm not saying they were reinventing the wheel back in the late '80s, but they certainly sounded different from a lot of what else we were getting.

Hindsight is a great thing. I wish I had kept it, the tape, because the great thing was at that time, you'd get these envelopes, and you'd get a letter with it. I don't know whether William would have kept it or not. But the band would have written the accompanying letter with it. It went on to win for five weeks and obviously, as I mentioned earlier on, it sounds like the boys were very, very fast on the phone, very fast with their fingers ringing in. Literally, the phone lines would be ringing up again and again. That wasn't my job, it would have been William's job to say who are you voting for? Suede or Bananarama or something ... William would be writing down the ticks to the calls.

Because apparently Brett's Dad used to call in numerous times on the same day ...

Bernard has sort of said in the past that families and friends would have been rallied really and were told to. It's funny talking about it now, it seems so innocent in a way. They were quite different but they sounded quite antiquated in a way. Suede won it, and who else—a lot of them obviously disappeared into the mist of time but some got on to doing really good things and subsequently got signed, whether it was Suede, or Dodgy, or Salad. We played them. I'm not saying we got them their record deals, but a lot of record A&R men used to listen to the radio show. Sunday afternoon was a really, really good slot. The late '80s were an exciting time for new music, whether it was coming from the UK or from America. Not too many shows were reflecting that. Obviously there was Radio 1, obviously John Peel would have been with us in the evening. The Evening Session programme, who was presenting it in the late '80s—it wasn't Steve or Jo at the time, it would have been Mark Goodier I guess.

'They were quite different but they sounded quite antiquated in a way. Suede won it.'

I think also—I'm going to blow our trumpet—that our show was a bit cooler and hipper than their ones, because we had a good team. William was good, he had his ear to the ground. I was out all the time,

© Photo courtesy of prettygreen.com

Tony Smith was good, he had a lot of contacts. We had a lot of journalists who were coming in. We almost had a rotating system, with Steve Lamacq and Chris Roberts from *Melody Maker*, Laura Lee Davies and Pete Paphides from *Time Out*. These guys would come in once a week on the Sunday afternoon with a favourite new record and to talk about what was in the music papers, the music stories of the day. So even though it was a lowly little local radio show, we were kind of pretty hip really.

***And it did lead to Suede's first actual release as well, as they were on the compilation tape* What The World Is Waiting For ...**

Yes, and then Saul signed them not long after at Nude. I'm a bit random with my memories here, forgive me, but I remember going to see them, or trying to go and see them, at some type of Uni gig. It wasn't ULU, but somewhere in the centre of town, I got there too late and the band had already played. I remember a lot of record companies were there that time, I remember Tracy Bennett from London Records was there and London were a core major label at the time, and a couple of guys from Island Records, you just knew then there was a buzz about them. Saul would have been there as well.

'You just knew then there was a buzz about them'

Was there a gig to go with the compilation tape?

Not that I remember. I missed out on seeing them that time, somewhere in the centre of town. So, I didn't see them then, I think I saw them just before they signed with Nude or maybe after the first single came out. They played the Feet First night, Jonathan and Eko's Feet First night at the Camden Palace, which was the big Indie night on a Tuesday. I remember going along with a friend of mine, called Kevin Patrick. Kevin absolutely adored them and he was working at Island Records at the time. Then he left Island and became their A&R man as far as America was concerned. I think their records initially, when they were The London Suede, were released on Columbia records. Kevin was a big pal of mine, still is.

We went to see them at Camden Palace that night, it was ab-so-lu-te-ly packed. We went right down the front. I had been looking forward to seeing them. It had taken me a while for various reasons. I just thought, wow.

(Continued from page 21)

They really lived up to, they exceeded expectations. Brett was a very charismatic frontman, couldn't stop looking at him, and Bernard as well. It was very, very exciting. A great show, all the great songs that made up the first album.

This year is the 30th anniversary since their first gig.

I've also got a memory of seeing the band at The White Horse in Hampstead.

© Photo courtesy of Gama Clothing

Yes, they've played there a couple of times.

I saw them there as well, I can't remember if it was before they got signed or after, at a party.

Maybe that was their first gig?

It all seemed to be happening very, very quickly.

You also worked with the* NME *and presented* The Beat*, didn't you?

I did. The *NME* was a million years ago but when we started doing *The Beat* it would have been in 1993-94. We had the band on not long after Bernard had left, so that was halfway through *Dog Man Star* I think, wasn't it? Yes. And that interview, which I do have on VHS somewhere, I can remember we interviewed them on the back of the stairs. They came out of the offices of the production company and Richard of course was with them, and I don't know how old he was then, 14, 15, you know 17, 18 …

Yes, 17.

He was very, very young and I can remember interviewing them. It was a bit of a double-edged sword. It was very exciting for them but Bernard's shadow was very big—the shadow he cast over the band. It was a slightly nerve-wracking time for them as well, I sort of remember that.

Do you have any other memories of Suede over the years?

My favourite Suede album is *Coming Up*. For me that's their most complete album. I love the first album though, that comes as a very close second. I love the energy, the vitality of the first one but *Coming Up* was the band for me at the top of their game. It's such a complete album. And as I said—I've got a few years on you, I grew up to the radio in the '70s and '80s—I like a tune, I like a melody, and that is a great pop album I think, it really, really is and I look forward to seeing them performing it. As they're doing that in its entirety, aren't they?

'My favourite Suede album is* Coming Up*. For me that's their most complete album.'

Yes, are you going to go?

Yes, hopefully Kevin is coming over as well, so hopefully we're going to that together. He's very good pals with Mat and Mat's wife. I love that album, I have a memory of interviewing them around that time, they were doing the Phoenix Festival. I didn't know they were headlining one of the days, I remember interviewing them in the tent and it was really hot and everyone was very, very excited, all clambering around to see them … I have a memory of us waiting for them. Mat and Simon, I think, did the interview actually. And they walked in and both looked very cool and super skinny and what always stood me in good stead interviewing them over the years was having that history with them. You fell into it with them, as if I had seen them last week or a month ago and there hadn't been a year's break or what have you, they were always very easy to interview. It was always incredibly easy, that was a good memory. Like I said, *Coming Up* is my album, my favourite, closely followed by the debut and that excitement coming through, again that vitality.

'That outpouring from the audience really makes it, really gives it an edge, really elevates it'

You know I always listen to what they're up to, to what they're doing. There's always something that I can play on the radio show, there's always something interesting, they're always pushing themselves.

Yes definitely, have you heard their new stuff since they reformed?

Oh yes, of course, I've always played a single, or I'll listen to the album and earmark a couple of album tracks that I think would sound good on the radio, most definitely. I went to see them, it feels like last year but it would have been a couple of years ago when they played The Forum. It was a Friday I think, me and Kevin went, and that was very, very exciting. The great thing about going to see them—like with a lot of the best bands—is the audience, that outpouring from the audience really makes it, really gives it an edge, really elevates it.

That was a very good gig, very sweaty, very pushy, very brilliant. The* Coming Up *show is at Ally Pally.

Oh, I haven't been up there for a long time, that will be good.

A lot of people were complaining about the acoustics but I saw them there in 2013 and I thought it was brilliant.

I've seen a few shows there over the years, not for a few years, it's a great venue, with a great history. Suede, they hold a special place, because as I was saying right at the very beginning, when they were kind of coming through, the scene was really dominated by a lot of American bands, a lot of the grunge bands. And they were important because it was American domination at the time. And they were young, so young—what was Bernard at the time, 18, 19 or something, and the rest of the band were in their early 20s. A real band if you like. It's funny, I've got an affection for the first half of the '80s but in the late '80s a lot of the music, the more popular stuff, got self-important and bloated, then we had The Stone Roses, the Madchester thing, the Indie dance thing if you like, and then came Suede. As I said, they weren't either of those things. They certainly weren't Madchester, there wasn't a dance element to them in a way, they were a band, and that's what made them unique, special. And they were so charismatic, all of them, I used to enjoy reading the interviews. They were bright, they had great taste, they were everything you wanted a great band to be. Most definitely.

You can listen to Gary (@CrowleyOnAir) on BBC Radio London, every Saturday from 6-8 pm. It's the music we've grown up with, with our favourite new music as well.

quietly killed for them

Luke Turner of* The Quietus *reflects on how Suede shaped him and remembers reviewing a very special concert in 2010.

As a journalist and writer, an intriguing aspect to Brett Anderson's second memoir *Afternoons With The Blinds Drawn* was his thoughts on the old music media landscape, its fickle power and, at times, cruelty. I'm sure you'll all know how Suede were darlings of the *NME* and *Melody Maker* when they first appeared in the 1990s, seen as a breath of fresh air after the dreary patchouli misery of grunge and scruffy UK indie. Writers on those newspapers, and magazines like *Select*, certainly swiftly catapulted Suede to dizzy heights. Yet that also simultaneously provided detractors of the group with ammunition—that they'd had it easy, that this was a band of hot air and hype, and so on.

The ongoing saga with Bernard Butler provided further ammo and by the time I got into Suede in the mid-'90s, they were far from the press darlings they had been. That was the tight leather jackets, 20 Bennies, feelings-for-the-Codling-creature, vicious handclaps to the 'She' era of Suede, and I was smitten. 'Trash' was my first purchase, followed by *Dog Man Star* at Falmouth Woolworths on a family holiday, then *Coming Up*, *Sci-Fi Lullabies* and membership to the fanclub.

Discovering Suede was a life-changing moment for me. They made me realise that growing up in some god-awful conservative commuter town was something that you could transcend, that sexuality could be complicated and fluid and strange, that the narrow idea of masculinity I saw everywhere didn't have to be a prison. Without Suede I don't think I'd ever have started writing. The confidence they supplied

Suede at the 100 Club, 20 March 2010. Photos (left) by Claire Vanderhoven, (middle) by Chris Delamare, and (bottom) by Rajan Lakhani.

was a spark in me that I think led to everything that I've done since. I say this not just because I wonder if some of these truths apply to you too, but because it meant that Suede's comeback show at the Royal Albert Hall had another resonance.

By then, I'd been writing for *NME* myself for a year or so, and was over the moon when they asked me to write the main live feature of the two Suede comeback gigs, at the 100 Club and then the Royal Albert Hall the following week. I was made up … but, as a critic, you always have a concern when you're asked to review your favourite artists. I'm not afraid of attacking my own sacred cows (for evidence, I gave a bad album by the mighty Fall an absolute booting). I'd not been into *A New Morning* and my interest in seeing Suede live had waned massively in the early 2000s. As I headed to the 100 Club there was that niggling worry—what if they were shit?

Thankfully, from the very first crunch of 'Filmstar' at the 100 Club to that astonishing applause and cheering that just wouldn't end after 'Metal Mickey' at the Albert Hall, that never happened. Writing the review was quite a task. The *NME* always wanted the words by 8 am the next day and I can confess—now that I don't work for them any longer—that there was indeed wine in my blood and a dove in my head. Still, I filed on time, writing all night in a state of somewhat dizzy joy. To be able to write about the band that changed my life at a gig when they were so emphatically back was a total honour, and certainly one of the highlights of my years spent doing this weird job.

Of course, the Royal Albert Hall was only the beginning. Albums that got better with each release have followed, along with gigs that are up there with anything back in the day. It's been beautiful to witness and write about, most recently for my website *The Quietus* after a wonderful gig on a Sunday night in Cambridge on *The Blue Hour* tour. The same words applied that night as I wrote for the *NME* back in 2010: 'Suede were and are romantic, preposterous, glamorous, decadent, political, arrogant, and brash; everything a band should be, and so, so few are.' Long may it continue.

Luke's memoir Out Of The Woods *is out now.*

the O2 of us

Alyssa Morrell looks back at another milestone gig in Suede's history

The truth is, whenever I think back to the night that Suede played the O2 Arena in London, it seems like one big, beautiful, sweaty blur. Nevertheless, that glorious night has been indelibly imprinted on me and I will always treasure it because it was my first Suede gig. The most vivid details come back to me in a succession of emotions: the way my heart leapt when I found out that Suede had reunited; the excitement of securing tickets for London, the anxiety of not receiving those tickets until two hours before my plane left for England, the sheer amazement of randomly running into the band in my hotel lobby, the cruel, unrelenting anticipation while waiting for the venue to fill up and for the lights to go down; my complete and utter awe when Suede finally took the stage, the way time seemed to stand still when Brett closed his hand around mine during 'By The Sea'; and the bitter sting of reality as I rushed to Heathrow a few hours after the show to fly home.

8 June 2010. After watching some videos of the Royal Albert Hall gig, I made a conscious decision to no longer watch everything that I wanted to experience in my life on YouTube. I bought tickets to London the next day and wrote in my journal, 'no more regrets, my heart aches for this. I'd go anywhere for Suede.'

7 December 2010. I arrived at my hotel to find a rather long queue at the front desk. I noticed a tall, dark-haired man wearing a black coat in front of me. As I looked at him, I mused, 'Wow, he's really attractive … and kinda looks like Brett Anderson.' I laughed it off. It wasn't until I spotted Neil Codling (who inexplicably still looked 25 years old) and Richard Oakes in the lobby that the penny dropped: Suede were staying at my hotel.

So what does one say to Brett Anderson? That I've loved him my whole life, that his voice and his lyrics mean everything to me, that I didn't know who I'd be without Suede? Nope. Brett, looking slightly exasperated, was spirited away to one of the couches in the lobby by people who were clearly 'with' the band. I didn't dare disturb him. Richard, on the other hand, was perched on the arm of the opposite sofa just keeping to himself. I very sheepishly approached him, wanting to say something clever or meaningful, but instead blurted out, 'Excuse me, Richard, I'm sorry to bother you, but I've come from New York to see you tonight.' Richard glanced up at me, unmoved, and replied, 'Right then, now you've seen us you can go back.' Cheeky. Perhaps I should have rolled the dice with Brett? Richard was actually very cordial; he answered all of my silly questions and chatted with me for a bit.

The gig itself was amazing. I knew that it would be, but Suede still absolutely blew me away. They were so present, so vibrant, so fucking brilliant! Brett's vocal performance was perfect, his movements downright mesmerising. The tumultuous sea of people around me moved and twisted with every note played, every syllable uttered. 10,000 fans sang along so loudly I often couldn't hear Brett. During one of his forays into the crowd I reached out and Brett clasped my hand. I can still remember how his hand felt; I had assumed it would be hot and sweaty, but it was actually smooth and quite cool. A surreal moment that felt like forever (it couldn't have been longer than a second). Brett didn't say much, save for 'thank you' in between songs. At the end of the night he expressed a few lovely sentiments and then hinted, 'Hopefully we'll see you again.' Thank the gods for that. I never thought I'd get the chance to see Suede live, to feel that intoxicating energy. I'm so grateful that I got to experience that.

It's apropos that I shall see them again a full decade later for the *Coming Up* Tour 2020*. I've booked four gigs and I'm ready to run around Europe with Suede. As ever, my heart still aches for this, and I am prepared to go anywhere for Suede.

**This piece was written before the COVID-19 outbreak.*

Photo by Alyssa Morrell

Photos by Alyssa Morrell

30th anniversary

Fanzine editor Sam asked Brett about his memories of that first gig.

Suede in 1990: Frischmann, Osman, Anderson and Butler. Photo by Mick Mercer.

Sam: Wow. I can't believe it is 30 years since your first gig at The White Horse. What do you remember from that night?

Brett: Well I suppose the abiding memory of that gig was one of being in a kind of murky soup of panic, fear and breathless excitement. The kid who stepped on stage that night was very different from the person I am now but sometimes it's nice to think about him shuffling around London, wild-eyed and penniless.

flat on his back in the '80s

Me in 1980 as roadie for a band called the Cravats, me and my friend bunked off school to go on tour. They'd just reformed. My introduction into the music business.

I made the zip trousers myself, sewing the red zips onto a pair of jeans. I left them at my friend's house one night and his Mum threw them out ... I made him buy me a pair of Seditionaries (Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood) trousers to make up for it. - **Simon Gilbert**

Photo courtesy of Simon Gilbert

Coming Up

Here's what's lined up for Suede as we go to press.

April 2021
Coming Up revised tour dates
13th Cirque Royal, Brussels, Belgium
14th Tempodrom, Berlin, Germany
16th TivoliVredenburg Ronda, Utrecht, Netherlands
17th La Salle Pleyel, Paris, France
19th Usher Hall, Edinburgh, United Kingdom
20th O2 Academy, Leeds, United Kingdom
21st O2 Academy, Birmingham, United Kingdom
23rd O2 Victoria Warehouse, Manchester, United Kingdom
24th Alexandra Palace, London, United Kingdom
26th Falkoner Salen, Copenhagen, Denmark
27th Annexet, Stockholm, Sweden

2021 Festivals
May 27th-29th Tomavistas, Madrid, Spain
www.tomavistasfestival.com

August 26th Vilar de Mouros, Portugal
www.edpvilardemouros.pt/festival

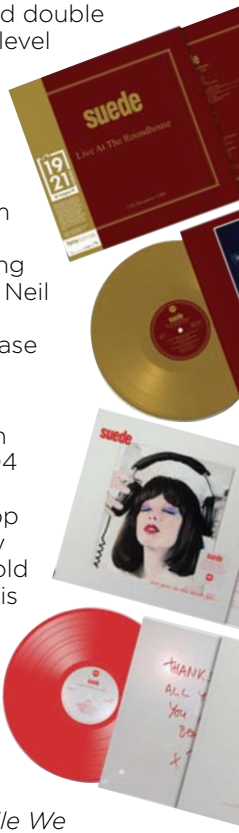
Suede#9
Like much else in 2020, progress on the next Suede record was disrupted by the pandemic. Songs 'Blinded' and 'White Boy On A Stage' were premiered in 2019, and song title 'There Is No Us If There Is No You' appeared in a photo Neil tweeted. Ed Buller is back in the producer's chair. Mat confirmed on Chilean podcast *Magical Mystery Rock* they have been rehearsing over the summer.

Artmagic
Sean hosted a Facebook live in September, where he played excerpts of new tracks and revealed several of the titles of the songs in progress. They were: 'Happiness', 'How We Live Now', 'Savage Love', 'Everything Happens At Once' and 'Stateless'.

Record Releases
Beautiful Ones: The Best Of Suede 1992-2018
Now available on several different formats: 180g white vinyl 6LP, 2LP white, 2LP black, 4CD, and double CD. Something for every level of fandom, and for that person in your life who needs converting.

Live At The Roundhouse
HMV exclusive UK only vinyl featuring songs from the fabled Roundhouse residency in 1996, including a guest appearance from Neil Tennant. Limited to 1000 copies; it sold out on release day in September.

See You In The Next Life
The impossible to find fan club rarities CD from 2004 was released on vinyl for the Record Store Day drop in August and has quickly become as hard to get hold of as the original. Both this and the Roundhouse LP are available digitally.



Book photos courtesy of Cassell and Little, Brown

Books
Afternoons With The Blinds Drawn comes out in paperback on November 5th.

Brett was interviewed for *While We Were Getting High: Britpop And The '90s* by the legendary photographer Kevin Cummins; it is available now.

Record photos courtesy of Demon Records

Originally printed in the fanzine 'Quietly Kill For You' Issue 4, Autumn 1996. Reprinted with permission.

5 tips to catch Neil

1. Smartly ironed clothes
2. A spare set of keys to somewhere
3. Strong ideas
4. Weak heart
5. A "Calvin and Hobbes" or "Snoopy" book.

Here I am! Rock you like a hurricane!

Thanks Kitten! We owe you one! (wink, wink!)

Photos by Silke Rademacher

pick of the litter on the breeze

He's cracked up, stacked up, 22
Psycho for sex and glue
Staining his name again:
Neil John Codling
Birthdate: 5th December 1973
Star Sign: I'm a fiery Sagittarian
Favorite Animal: Cats
Favorite Color:
I'm with Henry Ford
Favorite Suede Songs:
The Wild Ones, Filmstar, Money
What have you been told about American ("The London") Suede fans?
Plenty; But I'm not sure any of it would be suitable for publication; Most of it wouldn't make it past the obscene publication act! Judging by "Q.K.F.Y." you're a bunch of smashers, and I'm looking forward to meeting you.
What is the biggest myth about being in Suede?
Biggest truth?
The biggest myth is that we're locked in a studio somewhere coming up with an "experimental" album to baffle the world after "Dog Man Star." We're not biding our time, we just want the record to be right. As for all the other myths, they're all true.
The biggest truth is
(a) All the other myths
(b) Some other things you'll doubtless be hearing about later.
They're also true. Maybe.
How do you feel about the nickname "Kitten?"
For whom?
For little old me?
My, aren't you lovely, generous people?
If we told you that you have a great body, would you hold it against us?
That depends.
Do you come here often?

how to write a novel when you're too busy to write a novel

by Inge Klinkers

Having loved Mat Osman's debut *The Ruins* I'm thrilled at the prospect of hearing Mat share his top writing tips—even a bit nervous to see him do this live and direct from inside the walls of my own home. OK … through a computer screen, but still!

The webinar 'How to write a novel when you're busy' takes place on Zoom, on Sunday 23 August and is hosted by Writers Blok founder Paul Shirley—an L.A. based social network for writers looking for structure, support and community. Paul introduces tonight's speaker as 'a man who knows how to get shit done,' and Mat appears—no big entrance by rising up from underneath his desk shrouded in dry ice, but sat at ease at his desk in his home studio, his creative space where he wrote *The Ruins* and where he spends a lot of time rehearsing and writing (currently on his second novel!).

Tonight we learn a lot about how Mat maintains his motivation for writing and his routines—'if you're going to eat a live frog you should do it first thing in the morning'—and he tells us how it all started by writing short stories, at first thinking that, if put together, they'd make a novel. They didn't. 'But it was the first step in the right direction.'

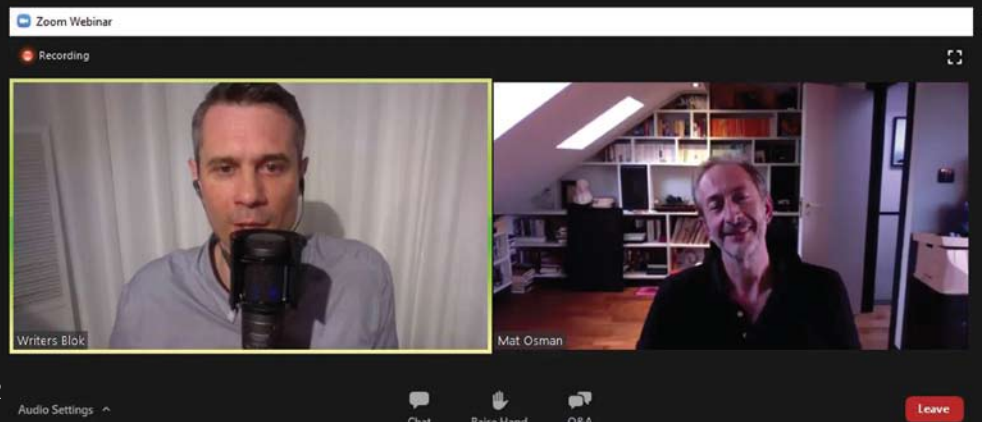
Since it's likely to take years to become the writer you were born to be, Mat's main advice is to say to yourself 'I am a writer now.' If you identify as a writer, that attitude can carry you a long way. 'Thinking of yourself as a writer means writing every day, also when not struck with inspiration. If you do that something is going to happen,' assures Mat. That's also why he loves the idea of a community of writers: 'There's a vision of authors being alone, tearing their hair out, but it doesn't have to be that way. The most important thing is sharing your failures with other people and finding they're common.' Mat stresses the importance of making sure the people around you understand your need to write and that you gain their support for taking the—'sacrosanct'—time out to pursue this.

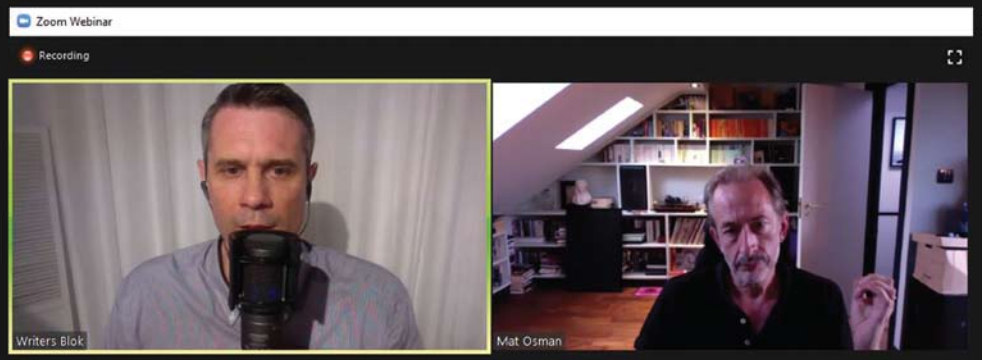
So many daily activities make writing a book seem impossible, let alone when you're in a band. Mat got really busy with Suede as he was finishing *The Ruins*. He built the structure to get it done by going to the British Library on an old laptop with no WiFi and turning his phone off: a writing environment free of distractions, no quick social media pleasures but the deeper state of flow, a feeling, Paul says, that is reputedly a lot more addictive than an orgasm—Mat laughs at this: 'I don't think my writing has ever been that good, I've never needed a cigarette afterwards.'

The Ruins came out on the cusp of the pandemic which made Mat, as a first-time novelist, understand how hard it is to promote a book, stick your head above the parapet, while he also realised the advantage he has of being known. In answer to some questions put forward by the digital audience more strategies are shared, such as the importance of setting a clear goal, an endpoint on a daily basis – his own target being 2000 words a day. As an aid he likes using the Ghostwriter app, which will lock your computer until the task is done (wereturtle.github.io/ghostwriter). What also helps, is telling other people you're going to do it, as then you're more likely to do so.

Much too quickly the Q&A ends. I do however leave with a renewed feeling of purpose and determination at accomplishing my own writing goals—in particular, the value of adding structure and creating a no-distractions environment to avoid that endless feeling of never doing enough.

Did you miss the Q&A due to your busy schedule (haha)? You can now tune into the podcast. Also, on Thursdays at 8 pm UK time Mat hosts writing sessions with @WritersBlokLA to get you working and connected to other writers.





Screen captures by Inge Klinkers. Printed with permission from Writers Blok.

pop star wars: suede, straight from planet glam

Suede's long-standing producer Ed Buller needs little introduction for most of us. His father-figure role guided Suede through the making of the band's crucial first three records, along with the astonishing 2013 return *Bloodsports* and the sublime sonic architecture of 2016's *Night Thoughts.* Currently, he is deep into work on the raucous and intriguingly 'stripped-down' ninth instalment of the story.

Andy Price was thrilled to spend some time with Ed in early March to talk about his remarkable career working with Suede.

© Photo by Neil Fellows

Thanks for taking the time to talk to us today Ed. Can you take us back right to the beginning of your story, how did your interest in music lead to a career as a producer?

Well, my interest in music began early. My Dad was a composer, so from being really tiny, I was sort of pre-programmed to love music. A bit later on, when I was a teenager, I started getting into bands and particularly T. Rex, who were a big influence. I was ten when 'Ride A White Swan' came out. I was always trying to hang out with my brother too. He's six years older than me and he's a very good guitar player.

In terms of production though, I always wanted to be in a band and be a pop star, I suppose. But it was during my time working with The Psychedelic Furs *{Ed joined as keyboard player in 1982}* when I realised the sort of personality that was required to be a frontman wasn't me and not somebody that I wanted to become. We made a record with Keith Forsey, and I learned a great deal from him. It was the first time that I'd met somebody who walked into the studio and just took charge straight away. He'd give notes like 'that bit's too slow,' 'that chorus isn't right,' etc. I just thought, 'Wow, this guy really knows his shit.' That's when I realised that the life of a producer is probably a much safer career and that you could get the opportunity to work on so many different records. It also made me realise that the main thing I loved about my favourite records was actually the sound of them, and how they'd been put together.

How much preparation do you generally need to do before embarking on producing a record, and how has that thought process changed when working with Suede over the years?

There's a lot of preparation now. One of the key things is having conviction in your ideas. It's like an energy, like a force. The younger you are, the more bright and powerful that force feels. When I first met Suede, I noticed that between Brett and Bernard—who were chalk and cheese in many ways. But they both had the same amount of energy between them and complete, utter belief in their music.

The stuff they were writing was so good and so different from what everybody else at the time was writing. I was a child of the '60s, so when I first heard 'The Drowners' I was blown away. It wasn't retro—but it somehow created that same excitement I'd felt as a young pop fan.

'When I first heard "The Drowners" I was blown away'

When I met them, I realised that they weren't in any way, shape or form calculating about it. They all wore fucking bell-bottoms! I was like 'Where the hell did you guys come from?' They seemed to have come straight from Planet Glam: they just got it.

So that made it kind of easy to start with. We formed a pretty good relationship straight off the bat, and there was nothing at all about what they did that I wanted to change. Later on, when I heard Bernard and Brett perform the early version of 'The Next Life', well that was another massive surprise. I thought, 'Wow, you can write stuff like this as well?'

Bernard was very good at odd chords and has an adventurous sense of harmony. I sometimes felt like he was trying to trip Brett up, like on the chorus of 'Sleeping Pills'. But most of the time Brett would find a way around it. Making that first album was a lot of fun, and it's such a great record. They had a lot of fun doing it.

(Continued from page 35)

In the early days, Brett and Bernard's mutual respect hadn't been damaged. What really went wrong was that in Bernard's eyes, Brett lost his lustre. But that wasn't the case at all with Brett; Brett always thought that Bernard was amazing. I never heard Brett slag off Bernard's abilities, ever. Whereas the reverse happened as *Dog Man Star* progressed. Bernard became more and more dismissive.

Both were quite young but they weren't immature. The thing about Brett is that he's got a very old head on his shoulders, though he can be self-destructive. But I always got the sense that he was the sort of person who would just manage to avoid falling into the abyss. I guess in some respects I was right, he pulled himself back. Brett is a smart guy.

I think that Bernard got into a bad way of thinking, that's the only way I can describe it. They were both very stubborn people, and Brett can be incredibly stubborn, but he didn't attach the same amount of animosity to his problems as Bernard started to do. Even when that awful article came out in *Vox*, Brett's attitude was still one of 'how do I fix this?'

So compared to that, I imagine making* Coming Up *was a much more pleasurable experience?

Oh honestly, making *Coming Up* was like six months at Butlin's! My little girl had just been born, so my wife would bring her to the studio quite a lot. I was in a really happy place, and so were the band. Brett would come into the studio excited and happy, rather than terrified.

It was an easy, enjoyable record to make. But we worked hard over those six months. We decided beforehand that we were going to go down the pop single route. In fact, the band actually tried to make the record with somebody else, and they kept trying to use different people. They met with Chris Kimsey *{who produced The Psychedelic Furs'* Midnight To Midnight *album}* and Chris asked them, 'Look, why the fuck aren't you making it with Ed?'

As a result of that, Suede came back and had a chat with me and we ended up doing the record. It's an album I have nothing but happy memories of. It was a weird situation at first of course, because Bernard was missing, but Richard soon proved himself to be a very capable guitar player. He's such a lovely guy to work with. Also, Neil slowly became more and more important as the record went on. It was the first album where we had a big mixer and Dave Bascombe came in to mix it. It just felt like we'd finally made it. The two albums before were more constricted by budget, but with *Coming Up* the directive was basically: 'Go to any studio you want, take as long as you need.' No really scary moments spring to mind, just a lot of fun.

I recall going out with Saul Galpern when we were finishing the mixing of *Coming Up*. I just remember it dawning on us that night, that we were going to make some money off this record—it was going to be a hit. So yeah, very fond memories. Six months later I was in my new BMW and 'Trash' came on the radio. It just felt amazing. *Coming Up* was my favourite Suede record to work on.

How surprised were you when the band returned in 2010, and how did you find the experience of working with the band again after such a long time?

Not very surprised at all really, I know Brett—Brett loves the limelight. He's a very balanced person and of course he now has a family and he looks after his kids, but at the same time he really likes being a pop star. He's very good at it. He takes it seriously and enjoys it and puts his heart and soul into it. He eats like a rabbit and is totally focused on what he's doing, he puts 150% into performing. So I knew he wouldn't be happy sitting at home for too long.

But turning to *Bloodsports*, now that was a really hard record to make—only eclipsed a couple of years later by *Night Thoughts*. Both albums were unbearably difficult, but both were well received and we were all really proud of the results. They were that good because we had put in the effort. I think back on *A New Morning,* they'd really lost direction, and you have to have a clear sense of direction to make a solid record I think, which we had on *Night Thoughts*.

'You can think of *Bloodsports* as kind of the Suede equivalent of *The Force Awakens*'

Night Thoughts basically followed on from what we'd learned through making *Bloodsports*. I think a good analogy is actually *Star Wars*, and you can think of *Bloodsports* as kind of the Suede equivalent of *The Force Awakens*: they'd been away for nearly ten years, you need to tick all the boxes. You need robots and you need a desert planet, but you also need to have a new story.

Ed working in the studio (opposite page) and Ed as a child, practising his craft. Photos courtesy of Ed Buller and Andy Price.

(Continued from page 37)

There was a part of the process of making *Bloodsports* where we were sort of slaves to the idea of what Suede was, and that was a struggle. We all found it a bit tough. Brett, very smartly, was really concerned about it going into self-parody mode and kept repeating 'No self-parody' throughout the process. I think we managed to avoid that—just. There are a few tracks where, in hindsight, I think maybe it creeps in, but for the bulk of it, it stands up. I think hearing 'For The Strangers' for the first time was the moment when I thought 'OK, well that's just classic Suede.'

'Hearing "For The Strangers" for the first time was the moment when I thought "OK, well that's just classic Suede"'

So, we made the comeback record, ticked all the boxes, and my first meeting about *Night Thoughts* was actually only about a month after *Bloodsports* came out. We went round to Brett's and had a meal in a local cafe. I said, 'Look, if you're going to make another record, here's what you should do: let Richard and Neil start the process off, because they've earned their spurs now.' I thought that they should all make the record that they had all earned the space and time to do.

Richard is a fantastic guitar player and is much more disciplined than Bernard in lots of ways. He tends to approach things in a much more specific manner, whereas Bernard was quite chaotic, and you'd never get the same take out of him twice. Working with Richard is like dealing with a classical musician. Every take gets better and better.

Neil is just musically very smart and very savvy and he's very good at constructing things. So I wanted them to make something that emphasised these abilities, and not to worry about singles—to be more symphonic. I thought it should be a big, long record where there's a storyline and themes that come back. I kept referencing Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here*. The three of them loved that idea and thought it was great. They wrote a lot of stuff round my house, that started around two weeks later. *Night Thoughts* grew very quickly.

The problems came when Brett was struggling to come up with things that would fit with what Neil and Richard had written. We'd be very glib and sort of say, 'OK, well that bit can be instrumental,' but Brett didn't particularly like that idea. There was a bit of tension there. There was a point though when—under pressure—great songs started to materialise. The record then pivoted to being two types of record. But as we assembled it, bits moved around, a story emerged, and the end result was completely amazing. I love that record, I think it's fantastic.

With *The Blue Hour*, the guys actually came round again to discuss it, but unfortunately I'd already signed up to work on *Dunkirk* with Hans Zimmer so couldn't helm the production. They were very keen to do *Night Thoughts* Pt 2 and my feeling actually was that they shouldn't, and instead they should do a punk album, something more like *Never Mind The Bollocks* (which is what they're doing now!).

Suede now seem to have a forward-facing creative trajectory, and work has already started on Suede#9. Do you think this is refreshing in the current musical landscape, and how are the sessions for the new album coming on?

Well, the worst thing that could happen would have been if they'd turned into a kind of Britpop version of Status Quo. They're not like that. They're all very smart people and want to grow

'This album is going to be a lot tougher and have a real punk energy to it'

as artists. On the new record that we're currently making especially. Certain Suede tropes have been banned from it (no handclaps, no la-la-las!). They want to push themselves somewhere new.

'White Boy On A Stage' is the track that everybody's heard, and that's a great song. This album is going to be a lot tougher and have a real punk energy to it. It's a lot more dynamic and a lot more stripped down. We're trying to get rid of all those layers. Suede are one of those bands that when you get involved with them, it's all-consuming. I get phone calls from Brett at 9 o'clock at night. He is high maintenance but with good reason, it's what's so great about working with them in a way. The whole band want the end result to be good and I like working with artists who care.

Neil is a pleasure to work with, he's very respectful of people's space and I have my own way of producing things, but if Neil has demoed the song then I'll always ask him if he's got a sound in mind for it, though generally he lets me get on with it.

As a producer, do you think it is part of your responsibility to dive in and contribute to the song-writing process?

It depends on the band. I was very influenced by Keith Forsey, but it's more than just asserting dominance, it's about saying: 'Look you've hired me, I know what I'm doing, and I'm telling you that you don't have a chorus.' It's like when you go to a lawyer for legal advice. You have to be straightforward.

Today in the studio *{this interview was conducted prior to lockdown}* we had a song where the verse just wasn't good enough, but the chorus is FANTASTIC, and probably one of the best things Suede have ever written. But they needed a better verse. Not a fun conversation to have. But I had to have it. Richard and Neil are very pragmatic people whereas Brett has more emotional involvement. I honestly think that there's something more spiritual for him going on, something magical happens, and if something magical

Ed and Brett discuss Night Thoughts. *Photo courtesy of Ed Buller.*

(Continued from page 39)

happens for him when he's writing, then as far as he's concerned—that's it, the song works. He puts in 110% to song-writing and then it sometimes feels like you're saying 'no', which can be tough. Brett is a lovely guy and you don't want to reject the ideas that he thinks work, but sometimes for the good of the song you have to go back to the drawing board.

Do you think the perception of Suede's place in the pantheon of rock and pop has altered since their comeback, and what do you think about the new fans who've discovered the band via the new records?

That's always one of the most interesting things about music, when you get a band with a fanbase that's—for want of a better word—manic! But I love the connectivity, you don't really know exactly why it happens, but it's completely magic.

With Suede's legacy, I think it's a bit like a film. At the time people didn't realise just how good a film it was (think something like *Blade Runner*). But now Suede are more seriously understood, and Suede's role was really important and they're a really good band. I'm not a fan of Blur, and I'm not a fan of Oasis, and they stole the thunder to some degree.

'The great thing about Brett is that he's telling a story all the time'

Brett would never ever refer to what he did as 'British music'. There's not a nationalist bone in his body. At the same time, there's still this total London feel to what he writes. He's just a kid of that age and can see the glamour in it. That to me is something totally different to the laddish nonsense of those Britpop bands. Suede have always run rings around those bands as far as I'm concerned. The great thing about Brett is that he tells it. He's telling a story all the time.

Finally Ed, I know you can't reveal too much, but is there one word you can use to describe Suede#9?

Bagpipes. I didn't think they'd work, but you know what, it's going to sound good!

Ed, the ever-diligent producer. Photo courtesy of Ed Buller.

Painting by Bożena Wojtas

saturday night thoughts

by Francesca Gilli

It's the 1st of February 2020, I am 40 years old, seven months pregnant and my husband and son are dropping me off at the gates of Maya Festival in Pattaya, Thailand. I have not seen Suede in four years, the last gig I went to was at Ancienne Belgique in Brussels, in February 2016, when they played *Night Thoughts* in full.

The festival site is in the middle of nowhere and recent news of the coronavirus spreading in Asia seems to have affected attendance figures. There are not as many people as I expected and the festival area feels slightly eerie. I get closer to the stage and as soon as I see the Suede logo on the big screen, adrenaline rises and I feel like I'm 15 again. I crave to meet the band off stage. I try to find a nice spot by the barrier, but I am conscious of having to stand sideways to protect my belly.

In the meantime, I try to spot the band. After a while I see a van getting closer to the stage. Five familiar silhouettes get off and I, at least, get Mat to respond to my frantic waving. The concert starts and the setlist is a good mix of older hits and more recent tracks. When 'We Are The Pigs' comes on its lyrics feel like a prophetic vision of the pandemic that will soon hit us.

Brett is inciting the audience and we shake our bits to the hits. I sing along loudly and attempt a few jumps here and there. The huge background visuals are amazing and remind me once again of how Suede artworks deserve a catalogue of their own. I get quite emotional during the '2 Of Us' and the other slow songs (ah, if only they had played 'The Wild Ones' too). With 'Life Is Golden' Brett takes a ride on the camera trolley and ends up spending the rest of the concert there. The Idler award was well deserved after all!

After 'Beautiful Ones' the band seems to wave the last goodbye, yet we're further pampered with an encore. I'd love to jump up and down to 'New Generation' but as it's a Saturday night we get treated to that classic instead, and rightly so.

Following the concert, I get to meet some Insatiable Ones waiting by the barriers near the changing rooms. We wave at Mat for a few minutes until we realise it's in fact Kodaline! Unfortunately, we don't get to meet the band, although we can see them in the distance getting into their van and going back to the hotel.

It's great to meet other IOs and realise we have had similar experiences, even though we are coming from different parts of the planet—learning English through Suede's lyrics and interviews, spending hours queueing for gigs, purchasing all the available merchandise, etc., etc.

The following days I keep watching the video of the concert and I am happy it was streamed live so that other IOs around the globe got to enjoy the gig too. I eagerly anticipate another show and there is always the hope I will get to meet the band next time!

Photo by Jayee Piyada

you're taking maya ovah

by Jayee Piyada

Hello, Sawaddee all lovely Insatiable Ones,

A big thank you to Simon who was the first to post about Maya Music Festival. It gave me such a thrill knowing that I would get to see the band in Thailand, my home country. I've travelled to see Suede far and wide, and this time was going to be so special because I would go with University friends (who are also royal fans of Suede) and my brother—whose *Coming Up* cassette I stole back in the day and that tape changed my life!

I remember asking Brett after one of the UK gigs about a show in Thailand and after the Copenhagen gig in 2018 mentioning to Simon that Thai fans were waiting for them. The wait was finally over when I saw them at BKK Airport (to make sure they arrived safe and sound after their 12hr flight) one day before the show. I got the chance to say hello to Richard and to congratulate Mat on his upcoming book; I had a lovely chat with Neil who remembered the last time Suede were in Bangkok, for 'Sonic Attack—90s The Best', which was seven years ago. That was a life-changing gig for me and I swore to myself that I would go and see them everywhere and as often as I possibly could—and here they are, three new albums and a hundred shows later.

Suede were on the live stage and scheduled to play at 8.30 pm. I really enjoyed the stage set up and backdrops—all of Suede's single artworks are so stylish and of course they guarantee to be the most solid live band ever. The songs that made the night for me were 'As One', 'Outsiders', 'She' (I kind of miss this as an opener), 'Metal Mickey', '2 Of Us' (I was so surprised they played it), 'The Drowners', 'Can't Get Enough' ... I could go on.

It is unusual for the audience to wear a mask during a gig. I could tell that Brett tried to get closer to the crowd but, unfortunately, COVID-19 was on its way then, so better safe than sorry. I hope they can return to play their own show and fingers crossed we won't have to wait another seven years.

Thank you SUEDE, Be My Gods!

Photo by Jayee Piyada

mat osman in space

by Charlotte Roden

A month prior to the release of Mat Osman's enticing debut novel *The Ruins* we spent the evening in the cosy basement of Brighton's Latest Music Bar for an event called The Space.

Beginning where Suede all started, Mat gave an eloquent narrative of the early days when, aged just 16, Brett joined his band initially as a guitarist. 'We were at that age where you wanted to seem deeper than you are.' Mat joked about his relationship with Ricky Gervais, saying that he was the most sarcastic man he'd ever met. They went on to discuss the importance of the music press at that time, Mat noting, 'There's something fabulous about the idea that Britain had three national weekly newspapers about music.'

'We had quite a rabid fanbase—and still have.' Mat spoke about how the devotion of the fans helped to propel Suede to where they are now. A more sombre part of the interview saw Mat talk transparently about the split in 2003. 'We'd never done anything else.' After recording and re-recording *A New Morning*, Mat spoke about how the band had lost all passion and all belief. Relieved, broke and then terrified was how he had felt when the band finalised the split.

After dabbling with journalism, delivery driving and office work during the break, Mat joked about how he missed Tour Managers the most. A decade on from the glorious reformation, Mat told us how the band come together each six months to make sure that they are all still wanting to do this.

When asked about his new novel, Mat was careful not to be too revealing of the plot. He spoke about how the book had developed and the key ideas that run throughout, most notably the male compulsion to create and control little worlds.

This being his first solo work, Mat remarked how he's usually comfortable shielding under the rest of the band—'When people say they don't like Suede, I think they're slagging off Brett.'

The interview closed with a Q&A. It was clear that Mat had enjoyed the evening and was bubbling with the energy to storm into the launch of his brand-new novel.

Photo by Wendy Baeten

matchester

Amanda Blazier* attended The Ruins *book event at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation

Photo by Hannah Gibson

Someone's left their bag and coat on an available chair. 'Oh that's Mat's,' I am told, 'he's coming back for it.' *The Ruins* promo tour has a decidedly relaxed vibe here in Manchester.
Mat returns and he and the evening's host Stuart Maconie—he of the infamous Britpop 'Yanks go home!' Suede *Select* magazine cover—take their seats onstage.

As any reader of Suede interviews will know, Mat is routinely erudite and amusing, and so it is as he opens up about the process of writing his first novel. Initially written as short stories, *The Ruins* developed into novel form in the forbidding Map Room of the British Library and latterly on tour with Suede. He describes being in a band as having an 'artificial family,' for good and for ill, and that it is 'kind of terrifying' to be out alone without the shield of his bandmates.

Stuart reads a section of the book aloud, highlighting Mat's minute observation and descriptive prowess. Some ideas lend themselves to book form, such as the model city state that features in the novel, and Mat explores a situation where a character has the opportunity to live a completely different life. Drawing on the day job, parts of *The Ruins* are set in and around the music industry, but about 'the joy of making music' rather than the lifestyle.

We complete the evening with a book-signing session. Mat said earlier, in contrast to brother (UK TV star) Richard, he worried about being cool at 50. In literature as in music, he's still got it covered. Effortlessly.

Mat received The Ruins *cakes from fans. Photo by Wendy Baeten.*

the closest thing to magic

Mat Osman interviewed by John Mitchinson at Foyles Bookshop London, 13 February 2020

by Rachel Apps

'I wanted a sense of a world that absolutely nothing makes sense, where suddenly all the old certainties were disappearing. That's when you can hunker down into your creative worlds.'

Mat was speaking about why he set his debut novel, *The Ruins*, in the year 2010. He was inspired by the period just after the Icelandic volcanoes erupted, when working on a strange project, a live-action game on the streets of London with a motley crew of all kinds of people: 'They all started writing. All of these people who were due to fly back to L.A. and go make a TV show, they were stuck there. So they started writing more stuff and it was always really interesting to me that they were forced into being creative by being stuck. It always felt like an interesting time to set a book.' Little did we know …

My favourite part of the interview was when Mat and John Mitchinson talked about the way Mat wrote about music. 'When people write about bands and musicians, they always write about it as a lifestyle, it's never about what it's like to make music, what it's like to perform on stage. What it's like to fail at making music and how it feels. It's about the rewards of it, I suppose. I wanted to write about it because it's an incredible feeling. Music isn't about the expression of feeling, it's about the generation of feeling. It's what some people have INSTEAD of emotions, it IS emotion … It's as close to magic that the modern world is ever going to get. Every time I hear a record in a cafe I think of the unlikeliness of how that beamed to me across the world, across time, and it can still put a lump in my throat through a crappy transistor radio. It's the closest thing to magic as I could ever imagine.'

It was such a stimulating conversation that evening, the pace, detail and unexpected directions in which it went were an absolute delight, much like the book itself. If you have yet to read Mat's debut, please do yourself a favour and do so. '*The Ruins* by Mat Osman' is also a playlist available on Spotify containing songs that make up a brilliant soundtrack to the book.

by Graeme Hamlett

A slightly windswept Mat breezes through the front door of the quirky Toppings Bookshop in Bath. The literary man of the moment is here to discuss his heralded debut novel, *The Ruins*.

Photo by Andrew Edwards

Osmania

Sipping from a beer bottle, perched on a stool, it's a clearly proud Mat who addresses his audience. Comfy, cosy and relaxed, citing various cultural influences such as *1984* and *Performance*, Mat tells us how he whittled the creative writing process down from six contrasting ideas to a firm novel. He is engaging, witty and warm. The inherent difficulties of writing a novel and expressing his talent in written lines, rather than basslines, are laid bare. 'We can write a two- or three-minute song that can make people weep and feel such a range of emotions; to do that across 500 pages is bloody tough!'

When it comes to audience participation, I put it to Mat that it's perhaps no accident he has become a novelist during this remarkable period where, individually and collectively, Suede's renaissance is such life-affirming magic. But how have they done it? 'All of us here probably know just how finite so much in life is. A job. A relationship. Friends. Parents. Homes. Careers. How easy it is to lose it, or for it to be taken away,' Mat says, looking around the room, speaking to people individually and emphasising his words. 'We had it all. And lost it all. We thought we could do anything. We couldn't. We didn't know if we'd ever get it back. That it has is, wow, yes, amazing. We are so grateful to get this chance again. And while it's giving us so much, while we can, we are going to carry on giving the band and Suede our absolute everything. It's in our core, our being. So you've got a lot to look forward to over the next few years.'

As Mat concludes to fulsome applause and appreciation, he begins signing dedications, chatting, posing for pictures. I tell him my favourite Suede bassline is his from 'This Hollywood Life'. Primal pounding. 'All I did is follow Bernard,' he replies modestly.

There can be no doubting the affection with which this unassuming, softly-spoken man is held among Suede fans. Thank you sincerely Mat, and all who attended to make it a wonderful occasion.

Photos by Alyssa Morrell

the alchemy between us

Alyssa Morrell attended Mat Osman in conversation with Rachel Felder at Rough Trade NYC on 3 March 2020

I arrived in Brooklyn a few hours early to meet up with some fellow Insatiable Ones at a nearby pub. The subject of our effusive chatter must have been obvious to the bartender, as he suddenly put on a Suede song for us. When we arrived at Rough Trade about 20 people were already there, chatting animatedly, including Mat and his wife. For the talk itself I sat right up front, mesmerised by Mat's candour, intelligence, and wry sense of humour.

During his discussion with Rachel, Mat explained the origin of his ideas, writing style, and intended audience for *The Ruins*, as well as how he would sequester himself in the British Library with a laptop but no Wi-Fi. My favourite part was hearing him speak so passionately about his love and fascination for creating, both as a musician and as a writer. Mat described the process as a form of alchemy; 'the idea that you start out with nothing and then end up with something beautiful'—it was a feeling he wished to convey in *The Ruins*.

The best reaction of the night came when Mat casually referenced mortality as an influence, joking, '... there's not long left; we're kind of 20 years from death,' and grinning widely at the sound of our plaintive groans and objections. Audience questions ranged from Mat's literary interests and possible career as a hotelier, to what Suede song would be best for hand washing.

After the talk, Mat signed every item (book, CD, vinyl) that was offered while conversing and taking photos with us. I wasn't even nervous because he was so warm, gracious and engaging to talk to. We all walked down the street to a pub called The Bedford, where at one point I returned to our table to find Mat sitting in my chair. I didn't mind at all, but he immediately stood up and brought another one over. Oh, what a world, where Mat Osman is fetching me a chair and, incidentally, ends up being one of the last people I interacted with before a pandemic shut down everything.

mat's holly wood life

by Jeff Partain

Photo by Jeff Partain

The last time Suede played Southern California, Mat Osman did not make the trip. Due to an unforeseen problem with his visa the band played the 2011 Coachella Festival as a four piece. Almost nine years later, on an unseasonably warm March night, Osman made a Los Angeles appearance at Stories Books & Cafe without his fellow bandmates, to promote his first novel, *The Ruins*.

Fans gathered early, many wearing Suede shirts; photos were passed around and stories were shared of the first time they saw Suede (or The London Suede as they are contractually called in the USA). With around forty people gathered on the covered back patio, Mat appeared with Matthew Specktor, co-founder of the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. The two sat on a small stage where Specktor interviewed Osman about *The Ruins*, after which he took questions from the audience, and graciously signed books and posed for photos.

Specktor started things by rhetorically asking if Osman even needed an introduction. But while the audience clearly knew Mat from his duties playing bass for Suede, most had not yet read *The Ruins*, the idea for which was initially born after Suede called it quits. 'When the band broke up, I worked in offices. I started temping at forty years old. It wasn't fun,' Mat added, 'but I had the gift of finding out what would have happened if I'd lived a different life.' Osman shared that the novel was informed by feelings of disappointment and failure. 'Very few people ever feel like they hit their potential—like they got everything they wanted,' Mat shared, 'so it's about the life not lived.'

Mat said the question *The Ruins* attempted to answer was, 'if you made a completely different decision in life—would you be the same person?' He recalled the weird time when the plot of *The Ruins* began, a couple of weeks in 2010 when volcanoes in Iceland halted all UK air traffic and slowed the breakneck pace of life. 'People had to stop and create stuff. It was a moment when the world stopped making sense—a time when it felt like the end of things.'

Osman probably had no idea how prophetic those words would be just a few days after his Los Angeles promotional stop.

Creating is something that Mat has been doing most of his life, only this time using a pen instead of a bass guitar. 'I hate books about the music lifestyle,' he sighed, 'it's never about the boredom, the actual creation of the music, or the rush of being on stage. Making music is important to me. Listening to music is important to me.' Speaking of Brandon, one of the characters in *The Ruins*, Osman said, 'Brandon's a dick, but he's consumed by the idea of making music. For some people having one person love them 100% is a life well-lived. For some people having thousands of people love them a little bit is a life well-lived.'

Specktor pointed out that while *The Ruins* starts off in London, it moves to California where it accurately captures the feel of Los Angeles. Mat confessed that California is special to him for many reasons. 'I love California. I was married in Rancho Palos Verdes. I've always been fascinated by Los Angeles. In many ways, L.A. is London's evil twin—or perhaps London is L.A.'s evil twin,' Osman laughed. 'I love that it's a city about art and screens and creation. Is there any other city on earth that is built on making art?'

During the Q&A, the inevitable question was asked if Suede will ever play Los Angeles again. Mat said the band would love to, 'if someone invites us and pays us, we will come. I love this place and Brett loves California too.' He even has California roots in his writing, 'I attended a writing workshop in Culver City and became inspired—there were people there doing it just for the joy of doing it—in wonder with what you learn by writing things down. People were writing, not for publication, but to get something down—to understand themselves.'

party like it's 1990

by Adam Redmayne

On 10 March 1990 Margaret Thatcher is still Prime Minister, 'Dub Be Good To Me' by Beats International featuring Lindy Layton is No. 1 in the UK charts and an embryonic Suede are playing their first-ever gig at The White Horse in Hampstead.

Thirty years and four days later the back room of the Dublin Castle, Camden is transformed into a Suede shrine. DJ The Boy is tickling our palettes with a hand-picked selection of our favourite bangers. There is also a feast of rare live video footage edited together, and sometimes originally shot by, Caroline Richards. The goodie bags are lined up lovingly under the video screen. And taking to the stage to mark the 30th anniversary are tribute act Animal Nitwits.

As the baggy beats and bouncing bassline of 'Natural Born Servant' plunge us back in time, it becomes apparent that biographer-in-chief David Barnett is playing the role of Brett, having first ransacked The Gap museum to find a suitably sickly stripy top. Steve Horry is a rather expensively dressed Bernard. Rob Britton whips off the beanie to give his Mat, and, also manages to sing Justine's vocal parts. Daisy Edwards had rehearsed for this role but was unable to attend on the night due to health concerns.

Ciaran McNamee gamely multitasks: first as the drum machine, then as Justin Welch, and finally steps out as Simon Gilbert.

It sounds great and very much of its era, as does the Smiths-esque 'Justice'. Together these pieces give us a tantalising glimpse of the direction things might have gone in. Next up is 'Wonderful Sometimes'. There are so many words in this song and, if you close your eyes, it could be Lloyd Cole fronting The Stone Roses.

'Be My God' sees them divert from that very first setlist because in Barnett's words, 'the songs weren't that great, and we couldn't figure out how to play them anyway.' 'Diesel' is the first real curveball of the evening. David is now wielding a megaphone and the performance has truly moved on from a replication of that first gig into a potted history of the first two years of the band. They then hit us with 'Stars On 45'—'another one that Suede couldn't be bothered to finish.'

'Going Blond' sounds like it might have been a prototype 'Moving' and kicks some skinny butt before a very familiar riff starts to snake around the room … Oh my word! They are only playing 'The Drowners' aren't they? We surge to the front. We sing along to every word. We point in the air and at the band and at each other. I am rather hoping that they will just bang through all the singles in order but … it's all over. We scream for more, but we all know it is futile because 'Suede' just didn't do encores in those days.

It's not all over! The Nitwits have us where they want us, and they are not going to resist coming back. Yes! It's 'He's Dead'! David has picked up the megaphone again, and now he's in the crowd, some people are even touching him and we would be quite happy to stay right there and let the Nitwits play to us all night.

Photos by Jonny Wright (www.facebook.com/TheBoyofficial)

This heady evening was made possible by our leader Samantha Hand who brought The Insatiable Ones together to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the first Suede gig and to raise funds for John Brandham. Sam was, as always, utterly selfless in her generosity toward the band, the fans and to John, to whom we all send our love and best wishes.

Sadly, due to the advance of COVID-19, many fans were not able/willing to attend, and amongst those who did, there was very much a feeling in the air that this would be the last night out for some time.

Animal Nitwits waived their expenses for the evening as did Caroline Richards, and many others who helped out. Most of the fans who bought tickets and could not be there also generously donated their refund money to John Brandham's fund. **Thanks to everyone**

track by track

Suede—*Bloodsports*

Andy Price **continues his in-depth look at Suede's albums with the first post-reunion offering, 2013's *Bloodsports*.**

Seven years ago, something happened that many had long since thought impossible: Suede released their sixth studio album, the astonishing *Bloodsports*. It's a record that satisfied both fans and critics, proving that the band's focus was on writing a new chapter of their story, and that they were not at all interested in joining the endless nostalgia circuit of countless other reformed bands. *Bloodsports* marked a creative return to form, with meticulously sculpted arrangements, powerful song-writing and a central compelling theme that explored the pain, power play and passion of love, which all contributed to its enduring status. Let's delve into it …

'Barriers'

In the ten years since *A New Morning* faded to grey we Suede-ites didn't starve: we had The Tears, the increasing development of Brett's solo career and, of course, that astounding return of the band at the Royal Albert Hall in 2010: a show that re-energised the group we all adore.

But 'Barriers' marked the first bona fide new Suede studio material in a decade, and for this reason alone the song stands as an important one. On its own terms, it's a big, expansive production that demands attention. Simon and Mat's pulsing, hurtling rhythm section, Richard's confident, textured guitar work (that riff is particularly infectious) and, of course, Brett's ambidextrous vocals, make 'Barriers' an invigorating and punchy opener from a sonic perspective.

'Barriers' also plunges the listener headfirst into the album's central theme of the 'endless, carnal game of love' with a lyric that alludes to a once-pivotal relationship that has somehow gone sour. The image of jumping over barriers is a nice one too and brings to mind the 'Saturday Night' video. It's a gripping, effective opener.

© Photo by Blommers/Schumm

'Snowblind'

'Blimey this new Suede album doesn't fuck about,' was a notable tweet I remember seeing on the day of *Bloodsports*' release—this song in particular is a shining example of that sentiment.

Throughout *Bloodsports*, and in particular on tracks like 'Snowblind', it really seems like a concerted effort was made to emphasise that Suede were—and are—a band that can muster some pretty intense power. This was evident at the live shows back on the *Bloodsports* tour as well. The intensity with which Brett and the band performed both new and old material was astonishing to witness.

'Snowblind' accurately captures that intensity on record, with a circular razor blade of a riff that whirlwinds through the song, occasionally giving way to one of Richard's most mesmerising, snakey guitar lines.

'A circular razor blade of a riff that whirlwinds through the song, occasionally giving way to one of Richard's most mesmerising, snakey guitar lines'

Brett delivers a forceful performance, with his incredible rendition of 'The blood has lived iiiiiiiinnnnn her' highlighting a new level of soaring confidence and a new degree of control over his vocal capabilities.

Thematically we're on similar ground to 'Barriers' (we even get a second mention of 'aniseed'). Lyrically, this song seems to explore the intense power of physical love—and its aftereffects, with the references to blood/love being interchanged. This intimacy is regarded as a 'snowblind moment' with the rest of the world being still, drab and disappointing in comparison—'all the statues on the tube can't hold a candle to you'. Regardless of your reading, 'Snowblind' is undeniably a very strong song, and an early album highlight.

'It Starts And Ends With You'

The album's third track (and first single) isn't just an earworm—it's a full-blown infestation!

Lyrically we're getting deeper into the manic, all-consuming, lovestruck head of an individual lost in his obsession with another person. Nothing can be done to shake it. This is painted by lyrics such as 'pinch myself but I don't wake up' and 'crawl up but my knees are water', etc. It's perhaps suggesting that this level of love and devotion can be a pretty bad thing for the psyche, or maybe the 'sweet disaster' is ultimately worth clinging on 'by my nails' for. The world of the lyrical protagonist 'starts and ends' with the other person.

(Continued from page 55)

Thematic content aside, the real strength of 'It Starts And Ends With You' is the wonderful assemblage of hooks (which, as the band admitted, the song was written around). The opening riff, the verse, the pre-chorus and the chorus are all equally catchy and become deeply embedded in your head—the hooks are relentless.

'The opening riff, the verse, the pre-chorus and the chorus are all equally catchy and become deeply embedded in your head—the hooks are relentless'

'It Starts And Ends ...' is a masterclass in top-line writing and arguably the most 'commercial' sounding thing on the record. No wonder then, that it remains firmly locked in Suede's modern setlists—perhaps it is the most enduring song of the comeback era.

'Sabotage'

A different sonic palette now, and possibly a different relationship explored in the lyric than the ones we've previously been charting. 'Sabotage's synthy atmospherics, tribalistic drum pattern and imperious, dominating bassline build a cold, paranoid world into which Richard's scintillating guitar cuts through like sharp cracks of lightning.

Neil's ominous synth creates the sonic equivalent of a stark wilderness and sets a glacial tone for the track before switching gears and evolving into something that sounds semi-angelic at the track's euphoric conclusion.

Like the previous song, Brett emphasises the all-consuming devotion of the character here, and there's a definite religious undercurrent. With references to the 'cross I'm holding', the repeated mantra of 'her will is done' and the allusions to self-sacrifice—what we get is the contrast of a relationship between male and female with that of a worshipper and a god.

'Sabotage' is another musically and thematically rich song, concluding with something akin to religious euphoria as Brett soaringly sings 'her will is done ... and thy will be done', counterpointed with some customarily exceptional, high-register guitar from Richard. Though perhaps this jubilant outro isn't entirely a positive one from a lyrical point of view, as the song's narrator is completely subsumed, losing any sense of individuality and self-respect they might once have had.

'"For The Strangers" simultaneously stands in isolation as a new universal clarion call for the dispossessed'

'For The Strangers'

'For The Strangers' simultaneously stands in isolation as a new universal clarion call for the dispossessed (something which Suede have always been very adept at ...) and as a perfect midpoint for the *Bloodsports* journey. In that latter context we now hear the refreshing change of an empowered (and embittered) party at the end of a relationship. In contrast to the previous tracks' weight of personal torment, obsession and unwavering devotion, we now have a healthy dose of spite and resentment in the face of infidelity.

The presence of acoustic guitar and the stable, warm pulse of the bass rekindle a traditional Suede feel that evokes some wonderful compositions of yesteryear, while Richard's looping, journeying arpeggio keeps the song propelling forward. But it's that huge outro that makes the song transcend the record's themes and stand alone on its own terms as a resonant piece of 'call-to-arms' song-writing and become a modern Suede classic.

On a record concerned with the darker aspects of relationships, amidst the power dynamics and psychological strain that so dominate the album's main theme, it's ironic that one of *Bloodsports*' crowning moments is a song that does a perfect job of capturing the euphoria and connectedness of the relationship between a band and their audience. Wonderful.

'Hit Me'

Jostling for position with 'It Starts And Ends With You' for the title of most radio-friendly song on the record, 'Hit Me' is a powerful little track that sonically foregrounds once again both Brett's now-behemoth vocals and Richard's nimble yet dominating riffery. We have a slight lyric that explores the effects of physical contact and contrasts it with the emotional weight of love. There are many references to 'touching', 'feeling' and of course, in the explosive chorus, the provocative 'come on and hit me'. The 'hit' of the title obviously has a very heavy drug connotation but is used here to signify the hit of the other person's 'majesty', which is something the lyrical protagonist has become dependent on. It's a relationship that impacts on the character depicted in the lyric with a punchy, overwhelming force.

'It's a relationship that impacts on the character depicted in the lyric with a punchy, overwhelming force'

As a piece of music, 'Hit Me' is one of the most fun things on the record and has an unmistakably commercial Suede sound. Arrangement-wise, it seems to exist in a parallel universe somewhere between *Dog Man Star* and *Coming Up*. 'Hit Me' would fit extremely well on this last record, sounding like the missing link between the edgy, up-tempo gloom of 'New Generation' and the bright, decadent glammery of 'Beautiful Ones'.

'Arrangement-wise, it seems to exist in a parallel universe somewhere between Dog Man Star and Coming Up'

'Sometimes I Feel I'll Float Away'

Right from the off, we know we're in uncharted sonic territory here as Richard weaves a musical tapestry that lulls the listener into a state of dreamy psychedelia. Lyrically we're back in similar obsessive-adoration land to 'It Starts And Ends ...' and 'Sabotage', as Brett's echoey vocals tell a tale of a figure who is anchored to the world by their partner.

The opiated lull of the verse crashes into a big, crunchy chorus with Brett's exasperation rising in drama, as he almost euphorically reveals that he feels he'll float away, without 'you to hold me'. Again, we have a song that highlights the dependency of Brett's lyrical protagonist on his partner—here we go to a whole new level. After the visceral ('clinging on') desperation of 'It Starts And Ends ...' and the impassioned worship ('thy will be done') of 'Sabotage', with '... Float Away' we have the pacified, almost serene image of a figure letting go and floating dreamlike into the sky like a dandelion seed, untethered by the grip of the relationship. It's a gorgeous image.

(Continued from page 57)

It's a wonderfully arranged song too, surprisingly jerking from the weightless serenity of the verse into some of *Bloodsports*' biggest and chunkiest riffs. Neil's effective organ part is a noteworthy addition to the second verse, and adds to the passive and proggy feel, while the song's guitar-dominated powerhouse outro is a relentless, impossible-not-to-move-your-head-to feat of Oakesian magic.

'What Are You Not Telling Me?'

This stately and serene track evokes memories of the gloomy closing suite of songs of *Dog Man Star* while also looking ahead to the layered arrangements of succeeding record *Night Thoughts*. Lyrically, we're in a much more internalised world of introspection, resignation and loss.

That's perhaps due to the narrative that's implied by the lyric, as Brett sings of an impending relationship breakdown. Much like the previous track, there's a feeling of surrender, and an acceptance of the inevitability of their break-up ('the mysteries of love are not for us, it's the little things that are tearing us up'), the references to a telephone ringing perhaps hint at infidelity, as does the questioning chorus—and song title—'what are you not telling me?'

'The effect is a real album highlight, and a subtle triumph'

The empty, instrumentation-free first chorus allows Brett's question to take on an urgency, perhaps representing a final stab of passion as the relationship crumbles. The rising strings in the second chorus drive towards an expressive and pained solo from Richard that swirls and slides around the chords without any real discernible melody, but the effect is a real album highlight, and a subtle triumph.

'Always'

The album's central relationship theme reaches its darkest place with the overtly threatening lyric of 'Always'. Here the spurned lover who has been 'pushed away' by the object of their desire vows to 'ALWAYS be near'. The aggressive spite rises and the flip side of the obsession coin is revealed.

As the song builds to its conclusion, Brett compares the narrator's relentless stalking to that of a 'sniper in the wings'—this darkness is compounded by deathly allusions to 'shadows on your lung', 'the rope' and 'the knife'. 'Always' is a song that documents the utterly self-destructive, violent ends that highly intense relationships can often result in.

'"It's relentless—it needed to sound dramatic and twisted," said Brett at the time. "It's about when obsession turns into something quite stalker-ish."'

'It's relentless—it needed to sound dramatic and twisted,' said Brett at the time. 'It's about when obsession turns into something quite stalker-ish.' It's a track that serves a vital thematic purpose on the record and, having been through the journey of the album, feels in many ways like the unrestrained, explosive finale of *Bloodsports*, and the final death throes of a twisted relationship that just needs to be put out of its misery.

'Faultlines'

We fall into the final song with a huge tremoloed guitar chord, but this finale is markedly different to the vast majority of *Bloodsports*' songs, with lyrics that are imbued with a sense of optimism and positivity. 'I like the sentiment of the song,' Brett revealed on the DVD's track-by-track interview. 'It's a song about rebirth and waking up the next day after the traumas that you've faced. Looking at the day as a new day.'

'Brett revealed on the DVD's track-by-track interview, "It's a song about rebirth and waking up the next day after the traumas that you've faced. Looking at the day as a new day."'

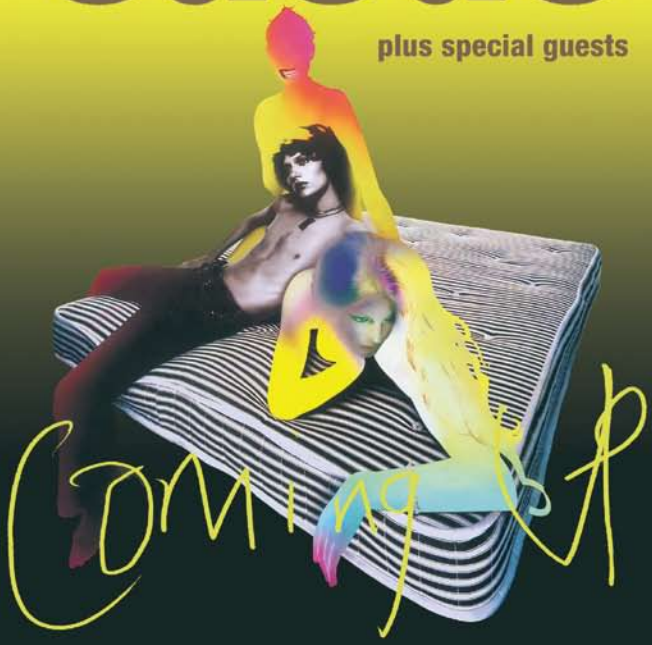
'Faultlines' appears to be written from a post-break-up perspective, with 'the wreckage' and the 'faultlines' of the title being more emotional-state descriptions than anything literal. The reference to greeting the 'golden dawn' also feels like a metaphor for facing the future unshackled from the turbulence encountered throughout the record. However, the song can still be read as being in the context of a relationship if you want it to be (but clearly one that is a bit more stable!) Brett does refer to 'us' and 'Adam and Eve' as opposed to the singular, angst-ridden character that has been adopted elsewhere on the record.

'Faultlines' is a song that espouses self-worth, fearlessness and being aware of 'the moment' (something Brett has constantly referred to throughout his career as a lyricist). It's a big, rich production with Richard's aforementioned chord-washes being a distinctive element, as are his twinkly, assured lead lines that build to some sizeable and confident riffing over Simon's rumbling toms. It's a fitting closer to a comeback album that marked a real return to form for Suede. Little did we know that this record would just be the first product of another creative renaissance for the band, and the start of a wholly new golden era.

© Photos by Blommers/Schumm. Cover art by Jonathan Baron & Matthew Holroyd at Studio-Baron, Brett Anderson & Mat Osman.

suede

plus special guests



PERFORMING THE CLASSIC ALBUM IN FULL

2021 European Dates

NEW SHOW ADDED!

Tue 13 Apr BELGIUM Brussels Cirque Royal

RESCHEDULED DATES - ORIGINAL TICKETS REMAIN VAILD

Wed 14 Apr GERMANY Berlin Tempodrom
Fri 16 Apr NETHERLANDS Utrecht TivoliVredenburg Ronda*
Sat 17 Apr FRANCE Paris La Salle Pleyel
Mon 19 Apr UNITED KINGDOM Edinburgh Usher Hall

NEW SHOWS ADDED!

Tue 20 Apr UNITED KINGDOM Leeds O_2 Academy
Wed 21 Apr UNITED KINGDOM Birmingham O_2 Academy

Fri 23 Apr UNITED KINGDOM Manchester O_2 Victoria Warehouse
Sat 24 Apr UNITED KINGDOM London Alexandra Palace
Mon 26 Apr DENMARK Copenhagen Falkoner Salen
Tue 27 Apr SWEDEN Stockholm Annexet

suede.co.uk

*RESCHEDULED DATE & VENUE – AMSTERDAM SHOW TICKETS REMAIN VALID