

Bittles' Magazin | Music Review

Mr Steven Patrick Morrissey has made quite the name for himself over a long, fruitful and distinguished musical life. If someone were to say though, that at the ripe old age of 55 he was going to release one of the defining moments of his career then you would probably think that person was a little bit mad. Yet, that is exactly what has happened with his tenth album *World Peace Is None Of Your Business*. It really is very good, with songs like the title track, *Earth Is The Loneliest Place* and *Mountjoy* already sounding like timeless classics to my, admittedly biased, ears. By JOHN BITTLES



It seems the five year absence has invigorated **Morrissey** and led him to release what will rightly stand out as a career high. The tracks are properly produced, and are given room to breath. Whereas previous albums like *Swords*, *Ringleader of the Tormentors* and *Years Of Refusal* had a slight whiff of 'well, this will do', *World Peace* is like a beautiful gust of fresh air on a hot humid day. Each listen reveals a musical nuance or lyrical couplet you had not noticed before to help give the record a lush sense of aural depth sure to delight even the most vehement **Morrissey** hater.

In the 1980s **Morrissey's** name was widely associated with a type of 'fey-indie' which saw people adopting a quiet, introspective form of masculinity that quoted **Foucault** in the face of the overly macho culture that had come before. They disassociated themselves from the overt masculine posturing of punk and post-punk to accept that wearing glasses and reading poetry really was ok.

Morrissey's band **The Smiths** were the leading light of this scene and enjoyed huge success with songs like *Panic*, *There Is A Light That Never Goes Out* and *How Soon Is Now* reflecting the hopes and fears of an entire generation. That most of the band's canon still stands out as bona fide anthems for disaffected youths and middle-aged men everywhere is down to the timeless nature of many of the songs. **The Smiths** were also something of a social movement with legions of young fans adopting **Morrissey's** style and mannerisms while eagerly dissecting each and every word with a type of devotion no amount of media-marketing could hope to buy.

When **The Smiths** imploded in 1987, rather than sit around in a darkened room crying, which is what a lot of his fans did, **Morrissey** began a long and eventful solo career. Albums such as *Viva Hate*, *Your Arsenal* and *We Are The Quarry* followed, as did heated spats with *NME*, a best selling autobiography, and a willingness to speak his mind that made him the tabloids' wet dream of choice. Seen as a somewhat eccentric figure, it is fair to say that **Morrissey** has been someone the British nation has equally loathed and loved.

But back to the rather snappily titled *World Peace Is None Of Your Business*, which is probably the most

sonically adventurous **Morrissey** solo album to date. We get Spanish guitars, gorgeous riffs, harpsichords, and even hints of heady electronica; all of which serve to give the record a richness of depth and tone that make it stand out as an album to both cherish and enjoy. The witty and acerbic lyrics with which he has made his name are still present and correct with *I'm Not A Man* and *Kick The Bride Down The Aisle* revelling in the usual **Morrisseyisms** we have come to love and respect.

The album opens with the quintessential **Morrissey** title track which delights in the juxtaposition of its scathing attacks on the media, government and big business with a mournful sense of yearning that perfectly captures why so many **Smith's** fans first fell in love with his voice. Beginning with booming didgeridoos the songs opening lines of *World peace is none of your business. You must not tamper with arrangements. Work hard and simply pay your taxes. Never asking what for.* are an insightful comment on today's social problems.

Next up we have **Neal Cassidy Drops Dead** which contains crashing guitars, booming drums and a sense of drama that shows **Morrissey** in tough, muscular form. A musical call to arms, the track allows him to flex his creative sinews while rubbing his political-slogan smeared cock in your overly smug face. It's not subtle, but it is very, very good. Sounding not unlike **Muse** before they discovered that what they really wanted was to be a **Queen** tribute band, the song sees a sonically adventurous **Morrissey** strive to take his music forward. A good thing of course!

Something that becomes evident almost straight away with *World Peace* is that, for once, **Morrissey** has concentrated just as much on the music as he has on the lyrics. That it makes it one of the most exciting and stimulating solo albums he has ever released shows just how lazy he had been on some of his previous LPs.

Third track *I'm Not A Man* opens with some ominous distortion and strange electronic squiggles of the type that would make most *Warp* fans drool, before morphing into a gorgeous piano-led ballad. *Don Juan, picaresque, wife beater vest. Cold hand, ice man, warring cave man. Well, if this is what it takes to describe, I'm not a man* run the lyrics before describing the many ways that he, perhaps, fails as a man. Truthful and insightful it is a song that anyone can identify with. *I'm not a man. I'm something much bigger and better than* he implores with the type of passion that simply makes the hair on the back of your neck stand up. The crashing finale which closes its seven minute duration is like an angry, dramatic confrontation that will sound simply amazing live.

Istanbul sounds like the coolest thing he has ever done, its music clashing beautifully with the lyrics about a father as he searches for and identifies his son's corpse. *Earth is the Loneliest Planet* meanwhile has some lush Spanish-style guitars which help transform a track which could have been a miserablist dirge into something soft and golden. *But you're in the wrong place, and you've got the wrong face, and humans are not really very humane* **Morrissey** intones in a song that sounds like an attack on the entire human race.

Staircase At The University deals with pressure put on teens to succeed with its line *If you don't get three A's, her daddy said, you're no child of mine, and as far as I'm concerned you're dead.* Crass, yet effective! Yet the sombre subject matter is accompanied by a chorus so catchy you'll be humming it for weeks. I'm already imagining the looks on my fellow passengers' faces on the train as I sing along to the words *She threw herself down and her head split three ways.*

The handclaps, and sultry air of *Kiss Me A Lot* evoke a playful, sexy feel that we haven't seen enough in **Morrissey's** songs. Lyrics like *Kiss me a lot. Kiss my all over my face. Kiss me a lot. Kiss me all over the place,* give the song a looseness that prevents the whole album from becoming an overemotional drag. In contrast,

tracks like *The Bullfighter Dies* and *Kick The Bride Down The Aisle* see our hero once again adopt the Mr Grumpyguts persona that he utilizes so well. That these songs are the dullest on an otherwise sparkling album shows that it can be good to lighten up every once in a while.

The album comes to a close with the sombre and introspective duo *Mountjoy* and *Oboe Concerto*. *Mountjoy* might just be the best thing **Morrissey** has ever done! It brims with a quiet longing, with its acoustic guitar and string backing helping the track to well-up with emotion, while the lyrics lament the failings of humanity. *There is no-one on this earth who I'd feel sad to leave* he sings in a song that is a moment of understated beauty and will easily be one of the tracks of the year.

These two songs prove to be a sad, reflective ending to an album which is bulging with wit, invention and depth. Overall the record is a stunning return to form with **Morrissey** sounding more alive and vital than most fans would have dared to dream. Musically diverse and with lyrics that see our hero on tip-top form, *World Peace* is a bold statement of intent from an artist most of us had given up on as no longer having anything relevant to say.

| [JOHN BITTLES](#)