



April 18, 2016

## AN INTERVIEW WITH ANDY ROURKE, THE SMITHS

Last week, I caught up with D.A.R.K. A band consisting of The Cranberries singer Dolores O'Riordan, The Smiths bassist Andy Rourke and New York DJ and radio presenter Ole Koretsky. The trio have together been working on a debut album entitled 'Science Agrees'. Way Out Radio spoke to Andy and Ole about the new album, growing up and their musical influences. Ole Koretsky grew up in the Soviet Union in Brooklyn whilst Andy Rourke grew up in Manchester and moved to New York in recent years.

### What was it like growing up for both of you?

Ole: I was raised by my mother in the Soviet Union in Brooklyn, New York. It was rough. I didn't fit in very well. There are Russian neighbourhoods in Brooklyn but that's not where we moved so we were surrounded mostly by third generation Irish and Italian families. I took a lot of lumps. At that time in the 80's they weren't too keen on outsiders.

Andy: Manchester was a similar story really! It was a bit rough and that was just off the teachers. School was rough, you just had to watch your back all the time and the teachers just liked to beat on a daily basis. I stopped going in in the end when I was about 15. Luckily things have changed now.

### When did you first pick up an instrument?

Andy Rourke: Age 7 or 8 I picked up the guitar. I always used to get a musical instrument either for Christmas or on my Birthday so I went through plastic trumpets, saxophone, keyboard, I tried a bit of everything. I played a bit of cello later on but I made that up as I went along because it was needed on a Smith record so I just bought one, tuned it up like a bass and went from there. But back to the guitar, I picked it up age 7 or 8 and I got taught very basic lessons off my Dad's secretary's daughter. For 6 months she taught me the basics and I then went from there and started playing along to records and the radio and got really into it. I used to take it into school to play through lunch to pass the time and so I didn't have to speak to anybody. Coincidentally Johnny Marr was doing the same thing and that's how we got together. We eventually ended up in the same class together when we were both 12-13 and became firm friends.

Then we started bands together and used to rehearse in the school hall and it went from there. We were very close. The bass player we had Kevin Kennedy, he was in Coronation Street! He could only play a couple of Thin Lizzy numbers, which got tiresome after a while so he got put onto rhythm guitar and I got moved to bass. I was a little bit put out at first thinking I'd been demoted! I didn't like it at first but then it didn't take me long to get my teeth into it and start enjoying it and I stuck with it.

### You and Johnny Marr had a band called Freak Party, what did you sound like?

I don't think anything was ever released. There's probably a couple of recordings on cassette somewhere. That was with Simon Wolstencroft who used to drum with The Fall. We were just a three piece who could never find a singer. It wasn't till later when Johnny (Marr) joined a choir for a year and in that year was when he struck up with Morrissey. I just got this random phone call one day saying "I've got this new singer, do you want to play bass?" And that was that.

### What brought you to move from Manchester to New York?

Andy: I was going backwards and forwards for a while and it was always on my wish list if I ever did have the chance to relocate. LA didn't interest me and neither did anywhere else really.

### How did you first meet?

Ole: In 2003/2004 we first met and kept in touch. Those were the DJ years for Andy and he was coming back and forth like a yoyo. He said he was thinking about moving and was sick of the day time TV and the same faces and wanted to move to New York or LA. I said I knew nothing about LA but I could help him line up a flat in New York and we were upstairs downstairs neighbours for about a year.

Andy: I think that's how we got so much work done on the album!

### How did you begin putting the album together?

Ole: Yeah the meat and potatoes of the record was all done in the basement of that building in Brooklyn but all of Andy's instruments were in the UK and I had very little equipment but we just made do. We had a couple of good ideas and this knock off Stratocaster that a friend gave to me whilst I was saving for my own. I had sold all my instruments in the past because I had some problems but I was getting inspired again and Andy had a lot to do with that.

In the 90's I recorded on a 4 track with my first instrument was a borrowed Hofner violin bass.

Anyway we started recording with this fake Stratocaster guitar and my friend let me keep it but it wouldn't tune properly so it was always pretty off. He'd won it at a fair and brand new it was probably worth £100 dollars but it was left out on the salty beach for the fair so it had warped and rusted. But I think it gave the record a bit of character. It's a dirty record you know it really is. It's not done in a conventional way. It's very gritty and there is something very special about that, having to make do and putting the ideas ahead of equipment and the engineering process. Now you don't get a lot of that because everything is done digitally and you have the amateur producer sounding too pristine. For Andy it was a learning process working with me and for me it was a learning process making anything. It's a huge patchwork and we'd record the parts in many different ways using different microphones and come back to it months later and overdub it in a new way. On the track 'Curvy' on my vocal alone there's three different microphones. It's a messy patchwork that pays off in the end. I really wanted some professional input but Andy said "No it's good enough for rock and roll, this is the sound, go with it."

### What was it like when you first rehearsed together?

Andy: It was very liberating and satisfying because we weren't really sure if it was possible given the amount that was going on in the song and all the electronic elements. It was a breeze once we got in there. It went very smoothly and everything sounded great. We've got a drummer and guitarist now.

Ole: We'll piss off the purists I think because we've stripped elements back. We can't bring five keyboard players and a backing vocalist on tour - that's insane. It's a bab process, you know? We've got a drummer who programmes and works with a sampler. We've got a guitarist, Andy on bass, me and Dolores on vocals and I play a little bit of guitar and we've rigged up some synthesiser playback and that's it. It sounds great.

### You were originally called 'Jet Lag'. Can you tell me why you changed to D.A.R.K.?

Ole: No one wanted to come up with a name, even Jet Lag wasn't supposed to be a name, we wrote a couple DJ mixes under Jet Lag from 2009 when Andy and I had a DJ residency. We just called it that because of the routine with Andy's flights. DARK was simple and made up of our initials in the band.

### How much input do you each have in the writing process?

Andy: Ole and Dolores write the lyrics. Everybody throws in whatever ideas they have and things are always shifting and changing. There is no set writing pattern.

Ole: Some tracks have 9 guitar layers added gradually over two years. I don't know why we were just patching and patching. I took queues from Andy on where the verse or chorus was but Dolores knew what she wanted immediately and works very fast. She's the polar opposite of Andy and me and compressed a lot of the ideas into songs.

The album has a far more electronic feel than your previous work. Where does that influence come from?

Andy: I definitely feel Ole is far more into his electronic music. We first bonded over David Bowie's album 'Low' and Brian Eno's 'My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts'.

### Why have you not performed live as a three piece yet?

Andy and I have performed together as Jet Lag and it was really good but our first gig as DARK is in May in Limerick.

### How well did you know Dolores before DARK?

Ole: Not at all.

Andy: We kind of got together through my management. I got a message from Dolores saying she was interested in writing some new music and getting a project together. So we sent her the instrumental tracks from Jet Lag, which she really liked. We weren't sure if she just wanted to hear the music for a new solo record and I didn't expect to hear back.

### Were you aware of Andy's legacy in the UK when you started working together?

Ole: Absolutely. I still have star struck moments to this day after 13 years because outside of David Bowie my main staples in high school were The Cure, The Smiths and New Order. The Smiths have much a concise catalogue that you can really dig into those songs. They're few and precious.

### What was it like recording with D.A.R.K. compared to The Smiths?

Andy: We didn't really go into the studio with DARK. Most of it was done on rainy afternoons in Brooklyn. There was no pressure it was just a bit of fun and we had no idea what we were going to do with it. It was completely different because with The Smiths we had three weeks to cut an album and then there would be a tour and three singles and B sides to choose. It was pressure, pressure, pressure. I liked that but it was the opposite way of working.

### Do you feel any nerves about putting out a new record?

Andy: I'm more excited really. I'm glad to finally get it out there. It's been a long journey, I'm proud of it and I hope people receive it well. Or not! I don't really care.

The Smiths and Joy Division were famous for their fallouts but you ended up working in a band 'Freebass' with Peter Hook (Joy Division bassist) - did you two clash at all?

Andy: A little bit, yeah. We're friends now but there were three big personalities in one room. Me and Mani (The Stone Roses) took a back seat because Peter was so controlling. Not in a malicious way that's just how he works. It was Freebass then it became two bass then one bass then no bass! It imploded very quickly.

### What was your pinnacle moment in The Smiths? - The best part?

Andy: Good question. A lot of it was a whirlwind. To tell you the truth I don't remember a lot because I didn't get a second to take it all in. There's moments like when we played The Royal Albert Hall and had all our family in a special box! There's proud moments like that.

### How did you deal with the clashes in The Smiths?

Andy: There really weren't any. The clashes came afterwards! In the studio everyone was very professional and got the job done. I didn't see any clashes. Maybe I was too busy enjoying myself.

The Smiths music is still very prevalent today. How does it feel to be so influential 30 years on?

Andy: It feels great. It's very flattering that people still find the music relevant so many years on. We've obviously done something right! We didn't use huge production or any gimmicks so that's helped it age as it has. I think Morrissey's lyrics are very special and the songs in general - there's some kind of magic there that we had and that's helped us endure.

I want to lay to rest an urban myth now. Just before The Smiths recorded 'The Queen Is Dead' it is said that Morrissey left a note on your car basically kicking you out of the band. Morrissey has always denied this but did it happen?

Yes! It's not an urban myth nor is it an urban Smith! It's not the kind of thing that you invent. An ex girlfriend still has the note.

### Do you think anyone else could have written it?

Morrissey's handwriting is very unique and he did used to like writing things on blank postcards at the time so no.

### What is your favourite track on the new DARK album?

Ole: 'The Moon' for me. It just captures all three members in a great way and aside from that it's just a hip, groovy tune. The arrangement is very strange but the pay off with Dolores melody at the end is great.

Andy: I would have to say the same!

Catch the new album 'Science Agrees' out now (I recommend 'Loosen The Noose') and make the effort to see DARK on their upcoming tour!

By Paula Frost



About these ads



SHARE WAY OUT CONTENT:



2 bloggers like this.

SUMMER TWINS INTERVIEW

In "Interview"

An interview with Paul Smith, Maximo Park

In "guitar"

An Interview with Josh from The Skints: Part 1/4

In "anarchy"

Posted in Uncategorized

Tagged 80's indie, Andy Rourke, bassist, bassplayer, british music, D.A.R.K., Dolores O'Riordan, freebass, Hofner violin bass, interview, Johnny Marr, Joy Division, Morrissey, New York, Ole Koretsky, paula frost, peter hook, Science agrees, singer, Stratocaster, The Cranberries, The Cranberries Dolores O'Riordan, The Cure, the smiths, the stone roses, way out radio

Leave a comment

LEAVE A REPLY

Enter your comment here...

