

Did you have any music posters on your wall when you were a kid?

I had a picture of Michael Jackson on the back of my door. It was about halfway through his facial change. I went to this really bonkers Catholic school and our headmaster was insane and would tell us that the Virgin Mary would appear to some child in the world every five minutes. So I remember I had to take my Michael Jackson poster down because I'd wake up and think that he was the Virgin Mary.

So you were a fan. Did you ever see him play live?

He came to Liverpool for a gig, but we never had any money growing up. But we did hear the gig from our garden... That's my claim to fame with Michael Jackson.

Who was the first popstar or pop group you were properly obsessive about?

I was really into Adam And The Ants. But the first record I ever bought and loved was David Bowie's *Fashion*.



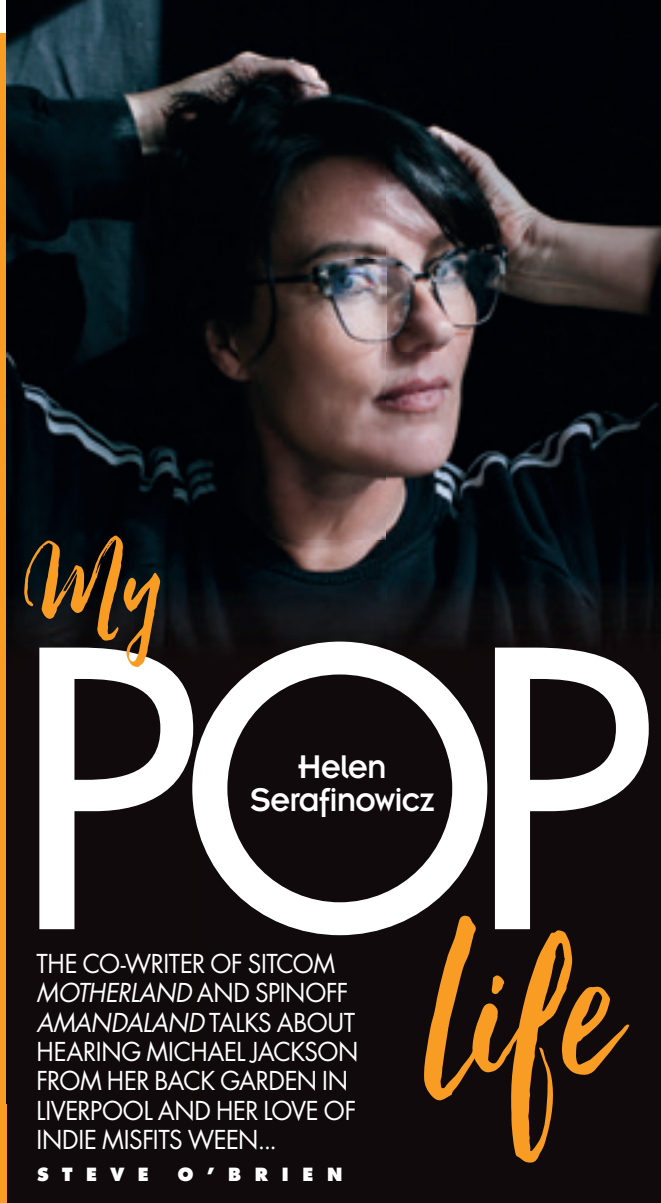
Prince Charming: Helen's early pop obsession, Adam Ant

Okay, that's a cool first single. What about your first ever gig?

It was 12 and my mum allowed me and my cousin to go into town on our own to see Europe at the Liverpool Empire. My mum used to teach knitting, and she made us Europe scarves, 'cos we didn't know about merch. So we got to the Empire with our scarves that had pom-poms on the end – it was really embarrassing. And the gig was shit.

What about your teenage years as a music fan? What were you into?

I went down a bad heavy metal hole. I could have been cool and gone down that Hacienda rave thing, which is what a lot of my age group were into, but no,



THE CO-WRITER OF SITCOM *MOTHERLAND* AND SPINOFF *AMANDALAND* TALKS ABOUT HEARING MICHAEL JACKSON FROM HER BACK GARDEN IN LIVERPOOL AND HER LOVE OF INDIE MISFITS WEEN...

STEVE O'BRIEN



I was distracted by all the hair.

Do you have an all-time favourite band?

My all-time favourite band, and I'm so proud that my kids are really into them, are Ween. One of their big songs was *Push Th' Little Daisies* [from 1992]. It was from that time when, if you sped up the voice, you'd have a massive hit. I have seen them several times – they're such a



Family favourite: US alt-rockers Ween



funny band. A lot of their early music sounds as if they've just been messing about in their bedroom, just smoking some marijuana. That's the kind of music I really like.

And your kids are into them, too?

Yeah. For his birthday, my son's friends bought him this big Ween banner for his bedroom. It was like the proudest moment.

Do you go to gigs with your kids?

My daughter is really into PJ Harvey, so we went to see her in Manchester last year. That was such a brilliant gig. But you know, I think I'd find it hard if my kids didn't have the same kind of music taste as me. They both love Ween, and they both know all the songs really well, so that's cool. Just to go to gigs with them, I love it.

Is there any song that's guaranteed to get you up and dancing?

Loads. I love that Calvin Harris song, *Merrymaking At My Place*, and anything by De La Soul. But if we are talking about favourite songs, there's this track by [indie synth-pop duo] Smoosh and it's called *Rad*. I found it on an old compilation tape left in a car I bought and it's so sweet and lovely. It's just these two girls and, again, it sounds like they recorded it in their bedroom.

Have you discovered if any of your musical heroes watch *Motherland*?

Not musical heroes, but I know Charlotte Church is a fan, and Liam Gallagher, apparently. We had ideas for a fourth series [of *Motherland*], and when we heard that they were big fans, we were thinking, how could we write them in, because they'd probably be into being in it for like five seconds. I dunno, maybe we'll do it with *Amandaland*...

● ***Motherland* and *Amandaland* are both available to watch on BBC iPlayer**