

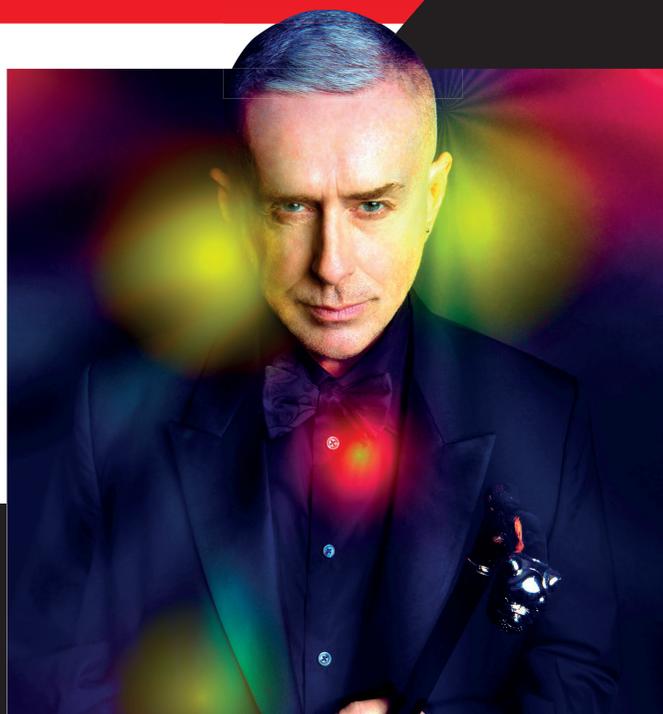
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Welcome to our bonus content written exclusively for *Classic Pop* subscribers. Here's the eighth in a series of Q&As with our editorial staff and team of contributors who make

each and every issue of the magazine happen...

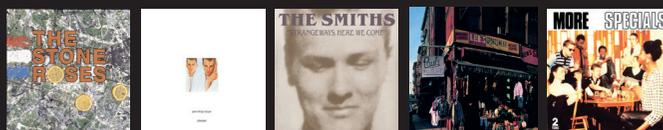
Steve



Steve would love to interview Holly Johnson and includes the first Stone Roses album, Pet Shop Boys' *Please*, The Smiths' *Strangeways, Here We Come*, Beastie Boys' *Paul's Boutique* and The Specials' *More Specials* among his favourite LPs

Meet the team

STEVE O'BRIEN WRITER/REVIEWER



STEVE O'BRIEN HAS INTERVIEWED SUCH ARTISTS AS SHAUN RYDER, JASON DONOVAN, THOMAS DOLBY AND BELINDA CARLISLE FOR *CLASSIC POP*. A JOURNALIST FOR NEARLY 30 YEARS, HIS WORK HAS APPEARED IN *SFX*, *RADIO TIMES*, *THE GUARDIAN* AND *VINTAGE ROCK*.

How did you first start writing about music?

I was a film and TV journalist for 20 years but had always been a frustrated music writer. Though I'd had a few scrapes, such as interviewing the late Adam Yauch about his favourite sci-fi movies, I didn't move into music journalism properly until 2018. The 80s were when I came of age musically, so *Classic Pop* couldn't be a better fit.

Who is your favourite interviewee?

Betty Boo was a standout. Obviously she'd been a crush in my early twenties, and luckily, it transpired that we didn't live too far from each other, so we were able to meet up face to face (sadly, too many interviews now are conducted via Zoom). She couldn't have been sweeter.

Is there an element of music journalism that would surprise readers?

That there are fewer pricks out there than you'd think. You get the impression, through gossip

websites like Popbitch, that pop stars are all raging egomaniacs. Maybe that's the case with some of your mega-personalities, but most musicians are passionate people who are proud of their work and want to talk about it.

What's the secret to a great interview?

Research. There's this fallacy that you have to flatter an interviewee to gain their trust, but in my experience, it's simply knowing their work that is the thing that allows them to relax. Not bothering to do even the most superficial level of research is alarmingly common. I recently interviewed the singer and songwriter Al Stewart and he told me – presumably because of his 1976 hit *Year Of The Cat* – that he's had journalists mix him up with Cat Stevens, even going so far as to ask him why he became a Muslim. That was shocking.

What are your all-time Top 5 favourite classic pop LPs?

I've probably listened to The Stone Roses' first album more

times than is sane. Most of us never cherish records quite as much as the ones we fell for in our teens and twenties, and I'm definitely guilty of that, so coming in at numbers two to five are: *Please* by Pet Shop Boys, The Smiths' *Strangeways, Here We Come*, Beastie Boys' *Paul's Boutique* and The Specials' *More Specials*.

And your favourite artists?

The Roses were a transformative band for me, and I'm one of the few who think *Second Coming* is an under-loved classic. Also The Smiths, Blur, Kate Bush and Mark Hollis.

Who would be your dream *Classic Pop* interviewee?

I'd love to chat to Holly Johnson. Frankie Goes To Hollywood were the first band I was truly obsessed with and the teenage me thought Holly was the coolest frontman ever. Also Johnny Marr, who seems lovely and articulate, and Public Enemy frontman Chuck D, who's always relentlessly quotable. ■