

**Biog 2025**

Four years ago, or perhaps maybe five, Jarvis Cocker found himself in the unexpected position of writing about feelings. For many years he had written gladly about thoughts and ideas and concepts; now it was all hunches, inklings, instincts.

It was a strange time. Cocker’s long-term relationship was on hiatus, and he was in the midst of “a year of wondering what I was doing.” Writing, he came to realise, was very much like life itself, in that when it was devoid of feeling it seemed to suffer. “Otherwise it’s just a dry thing,” he says. “It has no life to it.” With this realisation there came a reckoning, a slow facing down of a long-avoided truth. “I suppose,” he says, “it was the beginning of me trying to come to terms with…feelings.”

The songs on More, Pulp’s first album in 24 years, are run through with such a sensation — the thrum of desire and the drift of relationships, the anxieties of parenthood, the sense of belonging to places and people. They are infused with the buzzing of refrigerators and the scent of digestive biscuits, with bare feet on moss and afternoon sunlight falling on hair. Perhaps more than anything, they are an invitation to come alive; the feeling of grabbing life by the lapels.

In 2023, Pulp reformed for the second time, playing a series of rapturously-received shows across the UK, Europe and North America. During their first reunion in 2011, the band had simply revisited old songs, but this time they began to try out a new number, The Hymn of the North, which had been written for Simon Stephens’ 2019 play, Light Falls. It was enjoyable to play, especially with the addition of new band members and a string section, but there still wasn’t a plan to make an album.  
“I’m trying to think why we decided that it was a good idea to do a record,” Cocker says now. “Part of it was probably to do with Steve passing away.” Pulp’s bassist, Steve Mackey, died in the Spring of 2023. Although he had elected not to be part of the second reunion tour, his influence on the band and their music remained undimmed. “My mother also died at the beginning of last year. & When people close to you pass away it does make you realise that you are still alive. & that you still have an opportunity to create”.

Before the North American leg of the tour, Cocker gathered together the band’s original members, Mark Webber, Nick Banks and Candida Doyle, to try out some new ideas. Later, they invited along newer members Andrew McKinney, Emma Smith, Adam Betts and Jason Buckle, plus string arranger Richard Jones. Together, they worked on a series of songs: some unfinished, abandoned or written for elsewhere, others completely brand new.

The band then approached James Ford (Arctic Monkeys, The Last Dinner Party, Fontaines DC) to produce — his ability to “work with a lot of different types of bands but bring the best out of them” reminding Cocker of Chris Thomas, with whom they had worked on 1995’s Different Class and 1998’s This Is Hardcore.

Recording was swift — three weeks, pretty much, and a relief for the band, particularly Cocker. “I was really worried about going into the studio because This is Hardcore just went on forever,” he says. “That’s why I kind of gave up on Pulp really, because it was taking so long to finish things. And a lot of that was my fault. So I thought let’s just stop doing this because it’s a torture for everybody waiting for me to get my act together.”

Historically, Cocker would write the words right at the end of the process — a stressful approach for them all. This time he began differently. “I thought you know, I’m in my 60s now, I should at least try to write the words in advance for once. So I looked through all my notebooks and also the notes on my telephone, as I always do when it comes to doing a record. I’ll look at what I’ve been writing and see if there’s anything that makes sense or is any good, and whether there’s any kind of a theme to it.”   
The lyrics stand among the finest of Cocker’s career, and it seemed to him that they shared a certain attitude. “If I was a life coach I’d say part of the secret of life is to find a way of not getting bored of things that are good,” he says. “Because you get used to them being there, and you just ignore them, and it’s only when they disappear that you do notice them. & then it’s too late: you’ve screwed up.”   
One could, he concedes, extend this to the band itself. While Pulp last released a single in 2013, Cocker has continued to record solo, in addition to collaborations with Chilly Gonzales and with his project JARV IS…. He has also presented a hugely popular show on 6 Music, and published a sort-of memoir, Good Pop, Bad Pop. Returning to the band has been a lesson in adaptation and accommodation - & not getting bored. “You have to listen to each other, and know that somehow the combination of these people is what makes Pulp what Pulp is.”

In many ways, More is an album about the passage of time and growing up and understanding your place in it all. “I suppose part of being grown up is actually learning to control yourself,” Cocker says. “Controlling yourself but not stifling yourself. And if you’re a creative person that’s not always that easy, you can stay immature for quite a long time. But if you’re going to remain creative, you’ll have to make time to grow up.”

There have been other revelations in recent years. In lockdown, Cocker moved out to his house in rural Derbyshire, finding a new perspective away from urban life. “It’s an interesting feeling because you’re surrounded by a landscape which doesn’t change. And you know that you’ll die, and the landscape will still look exactly the same, pretty much. So it kind of puts you in your place: humans get really uptight and self important, but on a larger scale you don’t mean anything at all.”  
It was a therapist who told Cocker that the way he spoke about how he had been writing songs was similar to the way somebody would talk about a perversion. “Something that they are excited by but is a secret, and not shared with anybody,” he says. “That was a little ….disturbing to say the least” He attributed it to his shyness, to a desire to avoid confrontation, but he also realised it was a way of living life at a remove. “I was putting things into songs rather than actually talking to the people involved about them.”

Last year, Cocker got married, and he sees it as some small sign of maturity that he actually played the new record to his wife before anyone else. “She has heard all the songs, and generally likes them. Phew!” he says. Perhaps the track she likes best is Farmer’s Market, a song loosely inspired by their relationship. “I had nothing to base this love upon,” it runs. “Nothing but a feeling/ Way down at the base of my spine/ That’s got nothing to do with my mind.” It is a love song, a song of later life, a song that recognises we don’t have forever, and we should hold on to what’s good. “Ain’t it time we started living?” it asks at its close. “Ain’t it time we started feeling?”