**TRACK BY TRACK**

**Pulp - More: Track-by-Track**

**Spike Island**

This was the first song we recorded. Musically, it came from a demo written by Jason Buckle (Relaxed Muscle). It was a synth-y kind of thing, and I always quite liked it. I did consider doing this song when I was in JARV IS… but nobody else liked it, so we just gave up on it. But it came alive when I got Emma and Richard to play the synth bit on the violins, and I played slide guitar, it sounded interesting then; an interesting combination of sounds. Lyrically it came from Jason as well. He went to Spike Island, the famous Stone Roses concert, and he told me that the main thing that he remembered from it was a DJ who kept going “Spike Island, come alive! Spike Island, come alive!” the whole length of the day and getting on everybody’s nerves. So that stuck in my mind. It’s the second song I’ve written about Spike Island without ever having been there.

**Tina**

This is quite a new song. I was messing around in my musical garage where I make noise, and I came up with some chords I liked, but it sounded a bit like some kind of 70s’ jazz thing, so I just sped it up and played the chords as quickly as I could and then it seemed to turn into something okay. The words are based on a woman, or a girl — she was young at the time, it was when I was also young, it was when I was living in Sheffield and I fancied her I suppose, you know. But I never really spoke to her. I was at a party once and she was there and I was trying to get the courage to speak to her but then she was talking to somebody else so I never did. But I would bump into her in strange places, and I think when you’re a bit of a shy person if you bump into somebody you will attach a lot of significance to it, like destiny or something. Which is really a kind of cowardice: because you’re scared of going to talk to somebody you wait for fate to sort it out for you. It’s about how you can project ideas onto people and sometimes you can carry that idea around with you for a long time and it can fuck you up.

One of the things I did with this record was when I had words I knew could be in a song but didn’t know which ones would make it, I put them into a teleprompter thing and we’d be rehearsing the song and I’d set it playing and I’d just look over and sing what was on the screen at that particular time. It really worked in Tina because there’s a bit in the last chorus where the words go “Screwing in a charity shops on top of black bin bags full of donations, the smell of digestive biscuits in the air” — it’s really squeezed in, and I never would have thought of doing that of my own volition, but I did because it was on the screen at the time and I’m really glad I did. It’s my favourite part of the song. Anyway, Tina also turns up again in the very next song.

**Grown Ups**

This song was musically demoed around the time of the This is Hardcore record — so nearly 30 years ago. We recorded it, and it was called Grown Ups, but I had no idea of any other words to write for it. Occasionally over the years, I would listen to it and wonder if I’d ever finish it. And then in the wake of us playing in 2011, I had another go and I wrote these words. I rang Steve [Mackey] up and said ‘Can I come and record something at your studio?’ And he just kind of looked at me afterwards in a really mystified way like ‘Why are you reviving a song that’s 15 years old?’ So I just left it. Then when we came to this record, I thought ‘Okay well if it’s ever going to get finished this will be the time.’ Perhaps I had to become a grown up before I could finish it.

 I’ve always had a bit of an obsession with age. I don’t know why, but I wrote a song called Help the Aged when I was 33. And I’ve always not really wanted to grow up. So to say that I am grown up now is a big achievement actually.

The thing I do remember when I was younger is wanting to be older because I thought I would be less awkward then. But then you forget what it’s like — you forget about the awkwardness of being young and not knowing how things work. And also young people think that old people have got it worked out but they really haven’t. So the the middle bit of the song, the talky bit, has this thing about a dream which I had about a rocket going to another planet, and.I was glad to get that bit in — it seemed like a good metaphor about ageing.

The line “It’s nearly sunset and we haven’t had lunch yet”, that’s something my son said to me once when we were out walking. And “Life’s too short to drink bad wine” is something that was on a cushion in my mother’s house.

It’s the longest song on the record and it’s got the most words.

I finally got there.

**Slow Jam**

This song had a long gestation. It took about eight years or so. It was very briefly a JARV IS… song, and it was really, really depressing. It was just so slow, and the words are pretty depressing, but I had this dream that I would find a beat that would make it a kind of sad banger. Then I played it to Chilly Gonzales, and he said ‘Have you tried the Jersey Beat?’ And I said ‘I’ve not heard of the Jersey Beat actually, what is Jersey Beat?’ And he played me some songs with it. It’s a kind of hip hop beat but it uses just the bass drum. So that was a breakthrough.

I wrote the second verse, about the Bible, when I was with my first wife. We had a massive row on Good Friday and I went and sat in the park in Paris in a really bad mood. So that’s where those words come from. I suppose it’s the kind of song I wouldn’t have been able to write when I was younger because it’s about the way that when you’re in a relationship for a long time it can become a slow death. But that’s only if you let it become that. So how about trying to turn it into a slow jam?

**Farmer’s Market**

There was a farmer’s market, it was in LA, I didn’t meet my wife there, but the song is about meeting her. This is another one of the “feeling”songs. It’s probably got a bit to do with me getting into meditation — which is my wife’s influence. When we first met she was talking about the past doesn’t exist and the future you can’t know, so you have to live in the moment. So I started to get interested in that idea, and telling my mind to shut up please because I’d like to experience something rather than just be thinking about it.

The music was written during lockdown. I would go into the garage sometimes and mess around on the electric piano until I’d got a shape for something. It was a 20 minute long thing, and I quite liked the trance-like nature of it. Since then I’d made it into more of a song so I was thinking how to combine the two ideas, so that’s where the structure comes from — it’s very structured for the first two minutes and then it goes into that long talky section. I like the atmosphere of this song because I tend to write songs in a very conventional manner so I was pleased I managed to get out of that.

**My Sex**

I had this as a title for a long time. I thought it was a good title for some reason, then I got the line “I haven’t got an agenda, I haven’t even got a gender” and I thought that was funny. But I didn’t want it just to be a joke song. Attraction and desire aren’t really gendered. I can’t say it’s definitely the same for a man or a woman but I do think it’s not something you think about, it’s one of those instinctual things.

That song really got transformed by Laura Moody who plays the cello in the Elysian Collective, but also does vocal arrangements. The arrangement she did for this song is really good — it does this “X Y X” thing, and then in the outro there’s a series of numbers that are apparently the DNA code! I like the outro of that song. I wanted it to sound a bit like some kind of modern classical music - but it’s also got me huffing and puffing in the background. It’s an interesting combination of sounds.

**Got To Have Love**

This is another old one. I think it’s from around the time of We Love Life. I had written some words to it, but I think because I was in a bit of a strange mental state at the time I couldn’t really sing a love song because I didn’t know where I was in my love life. I’d split up with somebody I’d been with for a long time and kind of knew that I’d fucked it up. And when you’re like that you may try to do lots of things to distract yourself from the fact that you know you fucked up. But unless you sort out that foundational part of your personality, nothing else is really going to work.

It’s a slightly hysterical kind of song. There is a recording from 1999 ,which I hope never ever sees the light of day, of me attempting to sing it. I got really really drunk and shrieked it, and it’s really, really bad. I wasn’t capable of doing it properly. The instrumental of the song turned up on YouTube and I thought “Oh the music isn’t bad” so I decided to have another go at it.

I did intend to change the lyrics in the first verse, because I don’t think it’s my best writing at all. But I tried to change it and it didn’t work, so I stuck with it. The middle section I wrote anew, so that allowed me to try and talk about love - & the song itself - as I see it now.

**Background Noise**

I was messing about in the garage and I was playing with this synthesiser that was a bit broken and it made an interesting sound and I wrote it very quickly. I’d had a bit of a row with my manager, Jeannette. Quite a serious one. And I thought that she might not want to work with me anymore, so I kind of finished the song off quickly and sent it to her. Hoping to persuade her not to sack me, I suppose. And it worked.

Well, she liked it, anyway.

**Partial Eclipse.**

Again, this almost became a JARV IS… song. We never played it, but I’d written it around that time. There was a partial eclipse in 2015, and as usual you couldn't see it in London because it was cloudy, but it did go a little bit dark and I wrote the words for this song on that day. It’s an attempt at a meditative kind of thing, it’s supposed to feel like you’re leaving the planet and floating off into space during the outro. The talking bit is me imagining a bad future - and hopefully avoiding it.

**The Hymn of the North**

This was written for the Simon Stephens’ play Light Falls, but I’ve also realised that if I write a song for somebody else,I always end up putting something of my own in it. So this song ended up being a lot about my son. I suppose he was about 16 at the time I wrote it, and I could foresee him leaving home and living his own life, and it frightened me to death.

I don’t know if he’s got an affinity for the North — I’ve often wondered about that because he was brought up in Paris, but he speaks English with a Northern accent because he learned English from me. I can’t get away from the North because I was formed there, so it’s always in there, but my North, the North that I remember, probably doesn’t exist anymore now.

Anyway we started to do this song at soundchecks in 2023 and then we eventually played it at Hammersmith Apollo, at the end of the tour, and that was an encouragement.

It was the start of this record.

**A Sunset**

Brian Eno has this EarthPercent initiative, and he asked me if I would do something for it, and eventually, after about a year of putting it off, I said I’d do a PowerPoint presentation. It’s called Biophobia, and the starting point for the presentation is that I think I was a biophobic at one point — as in, I wouldn’t really know what to do when I was in the countryside, because there’s nothing to tell you what to do, you’re just in a field. Which is strange, when you think about it: we are natural beings.

I remember when my first wife was pregnant. She had a book about giving birth and she had to glue some of the pages together because I was scared I was going to faint when I saw them. I was very worried about fainting at the birth because I’d done that when they showed the video of childbirth at school in the sex education class. But none of us would be here if we hadn’t been born. So to be scared or a bit queasy about birth doesn’t make sense. So that’s the starting point, and it ends with my being born again and feeling okay in nature.

At the end of the talk I sing this song. Richard Hawley wrote the music. And there’s a choir made up of members of the Eno family. So you know, I thought this would be a nice way to end the record.

Taking you back to the source.