

Jim Jones Revue



Jack White's a fan and it's not hard to see why. Taking up where the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion leave off, this London five-piece trade in rollicking garage rock. One of the best live bands on the UK circuit at present, fans of lurching riffs and sweaty rock'n'roll need look no further. Their latest album *Burning Your House Down* is a belter, too.

The Jim Jones Revue play the Thekla tonight (Thurs). Tickets are priced £11 adv and available by ringing 0845 413 4444.

Bowling For Soup



These pop punkers are offering fans the chance to jam with them at the soundcheck of each of their UK shows. For the less musicianly of you out there, you'll just have to make do with the gig itself.

The band's last album of new material came with 2009's *Sorry For Partyin'*. Before setting off on this current tour, the quartet have been topping up their studio tans and readying new material.

Bowling For Soup play the O2 Academy Bristol tonight (Thurs). Tickets are priced £18.50 adv and available by ringing 0844 477 2000.

Dan Mangan

You'll have to wait until November 22 to hear this talented Canadian's second album, *Nice Nice Very Nice*. But he'll no doubt be previewing many of the songs at this Louisiana date. The record cuts across genres including indie rock, alt-country and orchestral pop.

Dan Mangan plays the Louisiana tonight (Thurs). Tickets are priced £6 adv and available by ringing 0117 929 9008.

Night of the Hunter

Mott the Hoople's legendary frontman Ian Hunter walks STEVE HARNELL through 50 years of rock'n'roll dreams and a life-changing friendship with David Bowie

If ever you need an advertisement for the rock'n'roll lifestyle, look no further than Ian Hunter.

The trademark shades and shock of corkscrew-curly blond hair are still very much in evidence and, at 71, he remains every bit the quintessential iconic frontman as in his early-Seventies Mott the Hoople pomp.

And the last 12 months have been among the most remarkable of his musical adventure – a tale of ducking and diving which incredibly now stretches all the way back to 1958.

An impressive 19 albums into his solo career, he's released one of the best records of his life with the spirited *Man Overboard*.

There was also the small matter of tying up some unfinished business: Mott the Hoople reunited last October for some highly emotional shows at the Hammersmith Odeon. It was Hunter's first appearance with the band in 35 years.

"It was a question of age as much as anything with Mott," Ian tells me from his Connecticut home midway through rehearsals for his upcoming solo UK tour. "I was doing an acoustic show in England and our organ player Verden Allen approached me to do it. He was coming to play with me at a couple of my gigs. He said that 'if we don't reunite now, we'll never do it'. I'd never really looked at it that way and it wasn't on my mind at all. As so many years had gone by I just presumed we were never going to get back together."

"If it was going to happen then it had to be then. *Man Overboard* did get overshadowed by the reunion shows though. It's a powerful law that band, it really is."

"Our bass player Pete [Overend Watts] had never wanted to reunite, but Verden told me he'd changed his mind. In the end, it was easy. Mott's guitarist Mick Ralphs and I have toured almost continually since we left the band, but many of the rest of the guys haven't. The question was, could they play? Thankfully, they could. It was not just a blast from the past but a blast from the present, too. The politics of it was a whole other ball game but the playing part was fantastic."

"I didn't expect the band to be that good and had no idea what the crowd reaction would be. After all, an audience makes a gig – the band itself is only half of it. The fans wouldn't sit down and a lot of them are getting on a bit, too! That translates back to the band. The whole thing becomes an event rather than just a gig."

"About 40 per cent of the crowd had travelled over from the States.

There were Russians, Australians, all kinds of people there. It was a gathering of the clan."

Even without knowing if the old magic had returned, the band were committed to the reunion dates by the promoter come what may. A brown trousers moment then...

"Yes, not only for us but for the people who liked us, too. Normally you see the past through rose coloured spectacles and the reality doesn't match up. In this case, we were better than we used to be!"

Touring regularly but not excessively over the last three decades, Hunter's still got an appetite for life on the road. "I'm not a big fan of travelling but it's all worthwhile when you get on stage. You get aches and pains but the adrenaline keeps you going. You get home later though and collapse in a heap for a month!"

"I've never been a tour hog, one of those guys who do 150 shows a year. I like writing more than touring. I'm empty at the moment in terms of songwriting but I've had three albums out over the last decade. I've got some dates to play in California next February then I'm hoping I can just get on with a new record."

Hunter's story is one of determination and grit. After joining his first band The Apex Group in the late Fifties, it was to be 14 long years of hard graft before Mott the Hoople had their first hit. Lesser men would have hung up their microphone. Along the way Ian even tried his hand at journalism.

"That was the first thing I ever did when I left school. Births, deaths and marriages. Meeting vicars with their 32 cats and all that – holding your breath for half an hour while you were there. Reports on Shrewsbury Town Reserves etc."

"I only lasted three months then I got fired. You had to learn shorthand and typing. The latter wasn't a problem but shorthand was like Chinese to me. I'm not good at languages!"

"Once we started out in music, we couldn't really afford to think about quitting because the only real alternative was the factory," Hunter adds. "Mott weren't that good to begin with. We had that desperation or desire though – whichever is more appropriate – the two things that carry you further than those with talent who sit back and believe they'll get success handed to them on a plate. Desire has a hell of a lot to do with it and we had tons of it."

But it almost went awry. By 1972, Mott the Hoople were in disarray. Then came David Bowie on his white charger to save the day by offering them the song *All The Young Dudes*.

"We'd just played a show in a converted gas tank in Switzerland and had all had enough. We decided there and then to split up. On the way back home on the train we



liked each other more than we had done for a couple of years!"

"When we got back to the UK, Pete tried to get a job as one of the Spiders from Mars with Bowie because he was just forming a band. He heard that we'd split up and went on this kind of crusade. It was really nice of him."

"He not only gave us *All The Young Dudes* but came in to produce our album as well. He introduced us to all these wonderful people and 'did a David' on us for a while. You know what I mean? He's lovely when he wants to be. I just thought he was great for the nine months or so we hung out with him."

"Bowie also wanted his manager Tony Defries to work with us. Tony didn't really want to do it though and we got the leftovers."

"Defries would be in America and we'd be touring England – that kind of situation never works."

"We were never handled properly. A band like Roxy Music were handled well – they maintained a strong image and that's really important. Perception is a big thing and we were lumped in with the wrong people."

Those 'wrong people' were the less cerebral likes of Slade and The Sweet. "I think the whole package with us was under-rated to be honest," adds Ian. "Our producer and mentor Guy Stevens, who went

on to produce The Clash, people like our guitarist Mick Ronson, as well as the band itself."

"I don't think people got it at the time. I'm not talking about the fans who really followed us closely but the general media. A lot of people thought we were just a glam band and didn't take much notice of the lyrics. It's developed over the years though."

Hunter's latest tour aims to put tracks from *Man Overboard* in the shop window alongside Mott gems. However, the singer stresses he's no mobile jukebox churning out the old classics ad nauseam.

"I don't like doing the same set twice so it'll be a whole different list of songs from April and May when we last played in the UK, otherwise it gets kind of boring."

"Each tour is different. I've got a lot of records that the average punter doesn't really know so I usually pull a few songs out from those. I'm not that mad on bands that go out and do the old hits. You can make money that way but it's boring. Playing just the well-known stuff is like going out and selling shoes – old ones at that. You should never underestimate your audience. You've got to give them your best."

Ian Hunter plays the O2 Academy Bristol on Thursday, October 14. Tickets are priced £18.50 adv and available by ringing 0844 477 2000.