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COMEBACK KING

ROCK'N'ROLL'S MOST CHARISMATIC SINGER RETURNS TO ACTIVE SERVICE.

LIAM GALLAGHER AS YOU WERE

WARNERS, OUT 6 OCTOBER

It's coming up to a quarter of a century since 21-year-old Liam Gallagher breathed new life into rock'n'roll on Oasis's debut single Supersonic, declaring: "I need to be myself/I can't be no one else."

It's been a long, strange journey since, from Burnage guttersnipe to rock superstar to unlikely elder statesman, but his musical compass has never wavered. "Jumpin' Jack Flash and Lennon gear – that's my thing," he told Q in 2013, and these core values make him, at 44, rock's equivalent of a conviction politician, a veteran campaigner who generates respect among faithful followers and new converts alike.

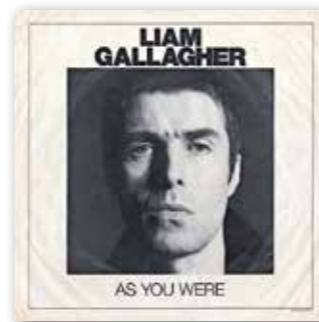
His performance at Glastonbury this year sparked rabid scenes and his solo return has created the sort of buzz you can't manufacture. The three tracks previewed prior to As You Were's release have been streamed 22 million times. One question remains, however. In Auto-tuned, Ed Sheeran-dominated 2017, can rock's analogue anti-hero still cut it where it counts – in the studio?

Recorded between Los Angeles and London, his solo debut comes with a heavy weight of expectation. A crack team of co-writers have been employed to prevent any recurrence of Beady Eye-tis, among them hit-maker extraordinaire Greg Kurstin, responsible for Adele's Hello. However, As You Were feels more like a reclamation of old territory than a chart land-grab.

Gallagher's howitzer of a voice is placed front and centre, backed by a succession of punchy Britpop melodies designed to evoke everything from Oasis's mega-ballad tunefulness (For What It's Worth) to their zeitgeist-straddling spirit (Come Back To Me).

So far, so predictable you might think. But having spent the last few years fighting legal battles against both ex-wife Nicole Appleton and Rolling Stone journalist Liza Ghorbani (the latter over child maintenance), it comes with a visceral edge so sharp it could draw blood.

Opener Wall Of Glass sets the tone. A viciously funky takedown of an unnamed third party packed with squalling harmonica and gospel backing vocals, it could be an out-take from John Lennon's Lost Weekend



solo album, 1974's Walls And Bridges. Greedy Soul is even nastier. Over a sledgehammer backbeat and razor-wire guitars, he delivers a full-on character assassination, snarling: "You got your kiss and tell/I hope you go to hell," before a drawled, "Don't give a fuck, alright?"

Gallagher has always used anger as an energy, but this score-settling menace gives As You Were a thrilling sense of purpose. His biggest achievement, however, is in reconnecting with his old audience. Oasis's Everyman appeal was built on their ability to tap into their followers' hive-mind, and on As You Were it feels like Liam is addressing them directly. When he sings, "Slow down/ All things must pass/Take your time/ Know the score" in La's-style closer I've All I Need, it feels like sage advice to a fanbase tiring of the drug comedowns and brutal hangovers.

If it all sounds like the sort of music that would bring the Oasis-phobic out in hives, then that's probably the point. Liam Gallagher was born to divide opinion, and for an army of fans As You Were stands as proof that rock's most charismatic general is back on active service and spoiling for trouble. How we've missed him. ★★★★★

PAUL MOODY

Listen To: Wall Of Glass | For What It's Worth | Greedy Soul | I Get By | I've All I Need

LIAM'S ALWAYS USED ANGER AS AN ENERGY, BUT THE ALBUM'S SCORE-SETTLING MENACE GIVES IT A THRILLING SENSE OF PURPOSE.

BACK IN THE GAME Three more solo albums that reinvigorated their creators.



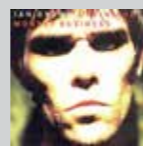
Paul Weller
Paul Weller
(1992)
As his mid-30s approached, the Modfather's

reinvention as a roots-rock troubadour banished memories of The Style Council's messy dissolution. ★★★★★



Johnny Cash
American Recordings
(1994)
The Man In Black's

foreboding delivery entranced a whole new audience thanks to Rick Rubin's less-is-more production. ★★★★★



Ian Brown
Unfinished Monkey Business
(1998)
After The Stone Roses' studio

excesses, this funky, lo-fi response – recorded with old friends at Brown's home in Manchester – was the perfect tonic. ★★★★★

ANDREW WHITTON

Liam Gallagher's debut solo album "comes with a visceral edge so sharp it could draw blood."

