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There is no other contemporary artist who is so famously difficult, so apparently enigmatic, and so passionately, religiously loved by his fans as Morrissey.

However, as Mark Simpson argues in his wickedly funny and deeply sacrilegious portrait, Morrissey isn't quite so enigmatic as he might at first appear. To understand this most private and sexually ambivalent of stars and his seemingly erratic behavior, one needs only to do one thing: Listen to him.

At once devil's advocate and -counsel for canonization, Mark Simpson offers the finest psychological profile to date of England's most intelligent, most misunderstood, most charming and most alarming pop star.

Saint Morrissey Details

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From Reader Review Saint Morrissey for online ebook

Laura Wallace says

if you love the music of Steven Patrick Morrissey and enjoy the purple, too-clever-by-half prose of late-20th-century pop music criticism, you will probably get a kick out of this book. Mark Simpson, known for his analysis of the "metrosexual" trend, goes light on facts, heavy on feelings, which is how any Smiths fan would have it. Simpson peppers his occasionally insightful ramblings with quotations from classic Moz interviews and the works of Moz's idols, especially the play/film *A Taste of Honey: A Play*, written by Salford's own Shelagh Delaney

Neil says

For Moz fans only! Well written full of fan worship but little information!

Vicki says

I love Morrissey. This book answered none of my questions, though.

Thomas Strömquist says

I had to read up a little bit on Mark Simpson and apparently he coined the phrase "Metrosexual" back in 1994 (*metropolitan + sexual, a young man with money to spend, living in or within easy reach of a metropolis - because that's where all the best shops, clubs, gyms and hairdressers are. He might be officially gay, straight or bisexual, but this is utterly immaterial because he has clearly taken himself as his own love object and pleasure as his sexual preference*). Some time later, he came up also with "retrosexual" (which is the "anti-metrosexual" according to his website). In more recent times, namely in 2014, he came up with "spornosexuals" (hardcore, sexed-up, body-centered, second generation, social-media metrosexuals). In between making up new words, he also found the time to write a biography on our common (may be the one common thing actually) favorite Steven Morrissey.

Simpson starts out from a very personal perspective, which I usually enjoy greatly, but in this case works less well, since he doesn't invoke very much interest and also goes on for far too long. In following his example though, I thought I'd share a Morrissey moment of my own (not presupposing it will be very much more interesting, of course).

Since I missed The Smiths active period (by the time I had recovered enough to run for the nearest record store after hearing 'Shoplifters of the World Unite' for the first time, Johnny Marr had just about finished closing up his guitar cases and was heading for the door) I did not get to experience Morrissey live until 2004. There, in front of the Green stage on Roskilde (just having been renamed 'Arena', since the green tent burned some years earlier and was replaced with a white, causing much confusion) just after midnight, I felt all the same force and awe that hit me when hearing 'Shoplifters' 17 years earlier. Standing holding my

happy, but almost sleeping wife (2004 was a legendary wet year, standing was always the preferred position), my eyes mostly closed and my mouth ridiculously fallen open, I was totally enchanted. Standing just in front and to the left of us was a big guy with long hair and wearing a jeans vest (incidentally, in my mind, he has become closely resembling Lemmy of Motorhead, only much bigger). He turned to his friend and said in a big guy growl: "If he plays 'Every Day is like Sunday', I'm gonna f-ing cry!" Very soon after, as one of the last songs, Moz did 'Sunday' and the guy made good on his word (accompanied by his friend, and me, joining in for good measure).

Onto the book (sorry, has to be done). My main gripes with this were two; first, I do believe Simpson is in the wrong in just about every deduction and interpretation he makes. The second is the fact that I've never ever seen someone working so hard to define another person with regards to his sexuality and gender identification. It surprises me a lot since - and this may be awfully prejudiced of me, but - I'm under the impression that homosexuals (along with everyone that has their sexuality or sexual identity or preferences questioned or even condemned) are more prone to advocate the beliefs that it's nobody's business but their own and that it should not matter. This is certainly my own view; if you are not immediately affected by my sexuality, I don't expect you to approve or disapprove, but to be indifferent to it. Therefore, it is a pain to read chapter after chapter of Simpson working a 'case' against Morrissey when his whole life he's asked the world not to do just that.

Frequently, these two all-shadowing mistakes collide; Simpson embarks on a far too long reasoning about the presence of "hands" in Morrissey's lyrics. Apparently, this implies that Moz has a tremendous urge to put his - hands that is - on other men's more private parts. My aforementioned first heard song is taken as one example - and that makes a lot of sense, I mean what else could "a heartless *hand* on [a shoplifters] shoulder" mean aside from masturbatory servicing?

Upon first encountering the 'clever' inclusions of lyric lines into the text I was a bit seduced (as I was with much of the first chapters - I subsequently put it down to nostalgia), but when I realized I disagreed with almost every instance, that fun was done for. And also, Morrissey's lyrics are mostly consisting of brilliant one-liners, so building on them is basically cheating in my book. The language is another seducing thing - eloquent and well-spoken, it's easy to think you agree with Simpson - until you realize what he's actually saying:

"There was only one other figure in the Eighties whose relationship to Englishness was as complex, powerful and important as Morrissey's, and that was his hated Margaret Thatcher. Maggie was his dodgy doppelganger, [...]" this leads to a weird reasoning about both of them using hairspray and being from the "north", among other compelling insights... A unique vision, granted, but stupid as hell anyway.

Another one - and this is more or less the book closer:

"His art, and what passes for his life [here I think we may reply to (Peter Watts, Time Out) blurb end note: "Smiths fans will love it, and even Morrissey himself might arch an eyebrow in appreciation." - the answers being "No" and "Would not think so", respectively], *bears testament to his greatest virtue and his greatest vice: He would always rather be unique than happy. But then, isn't that the nature of True Love?*" [of course it is... in crazy world!].

The reason for the second star is the many wonderful lyric lines and Morrissey quotes - I could not bring myself to one-star a book that had them, but to be honest, they alone would have made for much better reading.

Kiof says

Centers around the fame of Morrissey and why the people who are obsessed become obsessed with him, the author being one of those super-fans. It is almost a perfect study of Morrissey the cultural figure. But the problem I had with the book is that Moz-maina, or whatever the hell you're gonna call it, is one of the least interesting aspects of the Smiths to me. Sure Mozza is an original voice, a figure who seems like he always should have existed before he ever did, but I don't find the intricacies his media over-exposure any more interesting than Kate Hudson's fame. Actually, I think a book-length study of Marr would be 10 times more fascinating (even though I enjoyed this book quite a lot). Why has he just drifted along in the ether for so many years now? He couldn't even stick to being a Modest Mouse. I think it'd be great for Marr and Mozza to do a Kevin Shields and reunite to play a cash-in tour, even if they don't write any more songs together.

Tosh says

The amazing thing about Morrissey is not only that he's a pop star and a great songwriter - but also carries a tradition with him. When you listen or buy a Morrissey album or singe, you are also going into his world of aesthetics and a particular history of pop Gay culture. In a way it's almost like Morrissey has his own museum.

Mark Simpson pretty much captures and understands the nature of Morrissey's music and world. He understands the tradition that is behind this artist - and is aware of the literature, the dandyism, films, and other music that makes up the artist we know as Morrissey.

An artist should be able to capture his time and history, and Morrissey is one of the great pop stars who actually gives a lot to his culture. Which is gay, and a total understanding of how the world around him (of his making) is basically various eccentric and out there artists that inspired him via his life and work. Morrissey is unique because he has great taste. He's not one of those artists that jump on the band wagon, he actually understands and appreciates the pop culture. It is almost a coded world where few can enter.

I love Morrissey because I love his reference and sources. I feel very close to him in a sense because I feel we could share our common record collection. Knowing that, we would probably not like each other due to the closeness of our tastes. But nevertheless he's really unique and a great star. In fact I think he may be the last star (of the last of the International Playboys) of the pop world. This is a good book that talks about an artist beyond the music - and goes into fascinating aspects of 20th Century British culture.

The Honourable Husband says

An extraordinarily energetic book. Saint Morrissey treated lyrics as literature a decade before Bob Dylan's Nobel Prize. Not to mention the cultural anthropologist's look at several decades of British pop.

But the final chapters were what stay with me. My takeaway: misanthropy can be a highly moral act. If violence—cultural or physical—breeds more violence, a principled withdrawal from a world that provokes it can stop the cycle. At what cost to the misanthrope? Simpson gave me a sense that Morrissey knew what price he paid, and it was steep.

The author calls it a psychological biography, but it goes far beyond that. Cultural anthropology, literary criticism, and a political portrait of the time—Saint Morrissey rewards the reader on many levels.

Andrew says

In some ways if this book had been a straight forward biography it would have become superfluous due to not only the myriad of books already written about the Smiths and Morrissey but due to the man himself putting pen to paper with his own autobiography recently...however this book really is as much explaining a fans love of Morrissey as about the man itself.

It is peppered with lyrical references throughout though not in an all knowing way..often the nod to the Canon of work is wry and amusing..the book in many ways is unlikely to create new fans as you either love or loath Morrissey however it does help to reinforce to existing fans why Morrissey is still important despite controversy dogging his career an in fairness some lacklustre releases over the years.

All in all I enjoyed this book as it examines a fans experience of Morrissey plus dissects the man via his own words...prior to his autobiography this was may be the only clues we had to what made the man tick..the biographical content is minimal and in many ways the book is all the better for that..

Nikita says

I would give 5 stars to Morrissey and his quotes. Too bad the book was written by someone else.

Vivian says

For the history of pop music and culture alone, this book is worth reading. The scathing wit and critical analysis of Morrissey in regards to his times and influences as seen in his lyrics is impressive. I still think this book reads more like a gender studies thesis than a fandom biography, but perhaps as one outside of the charged rhetoric I'm missing a point. Needless, Simpson's use of quotes from various media sources provides an intriguing glimpse into the enigma that is Morrissey.

Before the end of this book, which I dragged out reading as long as I could to prolong the experience, I had trawled iTunes for music and searched for another Simpson book. What can I say, his style is *persuasive*.

Al Young says

I picked up my first book about the Mozzer in years. I picked up Mark Simpson's "St. Morrissey." I really don't need to buy anything on the Moz. There's not much about him I don't know, and with the internet, there's not much that isn't out there, as far as interviews or whatever.

"St. Morrissey" is a rather unnecessary, amateur psychologist's view of what make Moz tick. It's not that it isn't readable, it just leaves you wondering how this made it into print, when it probably just best belongs on

someone's blog. There are a bunch of Moz quotes in it, though, which do make it somewhat worthwhile.

Kirsten T says

The most alarming thing about Mark Simpson was his casual use of racial slurs. That's something I didn't expect to see in a book lauding someone for being an outsider's outsider. Of course the joke here is that as a white man Morrissey is actually an insider's outsider, no matter how queer or iconoclastic or depressed or working class he is or isn't. (And, need I add, *the joke isn't funny anymore*. There are many such italicized lyrical asides in this book, to make sure you get it.) I both loved and hated Autobiography because it was so ridiculous, but I'd recommend it over this any day. Saint Morrissey is pretty content-free. It's mostly a collection of interview quotes and lyrics tied together with speculation on "what it all means." What it all means is that Morrissey is an excellent and compelling fictional character who inspires a lot of meta and fanfiction. I'm sure he's delighted.

Arjun says

Well, you have to be a fan. Though the book is a good backgrounder on northern England in the 70s and 80s, English pop culture, and pop music, this is nothing more than a love letter to Morrissey. But a well-written, very analytic, and sharp love letter. Mark Simpson issues his mea culpa right at the start: he thinks Morrissey is the greatest English pop star ever. Once he says this, everything in the book is filtered through this simple truth. And then it really is quite a book about a very charming man, a man so adored, the sun literally shines out of his behind.

Annalisa says

Grazie, autore, per non aver frugato nei bidoni della spazzatura del mio idolo adolescenziale! Non avrei potuto sopportarlo.

Mariel says

My brother described this Morrissey book to me as "It's all about how Morrissey was in love with Johnny Marr." No, it really isn't about that (for once). Morrissey wants to know why no one ever says that Johnny Marr is in love with him. I'll do it right now. Johnny Marr was in love with Morrissey. (Not even a little bit?) I find those rehashes about Morrissey to be both annoying and hilarious (such as the infinite articles titled "Big mouth strikes again", and yes "This Charming Man", too). The problem is that try to pin him down to just one thing, one line he wrote or sang. Or suggesting that he's all his influences, or what he has influenced in kind.

Morrissey can be a self-obsessed dick (how he turned on David Bowie for trying to share a stage with him during their tour in the '90s, how every opening act he has sucks so as to never upstage him [ahem apart from two PJ Harvey shows the one time], his treatment of his band mates in The Smiths, the list goes on. He DOES hold more grudges than lowly high court judges), and generous too (listening to those songs I'd never think otherwise).

The key is to find those funny stories to make you smile and ignore all the agendas. Every Morrissey fan has their own feelings about him. Some of them are scary (just ask Chloe Sevigny) and bitchy (the rudest audiences I've ever shared a concert experience with were all at Mozfather shows). I know how I feel about him, I didn't really care all that much what he meant to the author. Not when the fawning borders a weird line between love-me-back and this-is-why-I-don't-want-to-love-him. That's my biggest problem with Moz stories and why this book is only a three stars. I'd love it if they can point out something I missed 'cause I'm not as clever or funny as Morrissey.
