

'NEW ORDER' FROM PAGE 18

difficult to understand why we've been so popular and why people buy our records. When we started we had the attitude that we didn't want to get involved in advertising or any of the peripheral nonsense that's associated with the packaging and selling of an artist.

"We'd just rather sit around and write tunes than be on the cover of glossy magazines. The music is the main thing and so people that buy our records buy them for the music, not because they like the cut of our jib. We're just normal people really, that happen to be in a group."

Is that why the band is still with Factory?

"Yeah, plus there's no reason for us to go anywhere else. We're happy with the relationship we've got with Factory and we like what they do. We've been made other offers but we don't bother really. Every so often you get a tide of people ringing you up offering to sign you for bags of money, but it's not worth it."

Transition

A year elapsed between Joy Division and New Order, a year when the band's resolve was put to the test. Did they feel like giving up?

"No, never, because we enjoy doing it. We just wrote songs like we always did, hanging around in the rehearsal room."

The name change to New Order always struck me as being too self-important, as if the band wanted to continue the crusade of Joy Division in a self-conscious sense. But Morris's dry Manxunian earthbound wit and natural humility finally demolish that fantasy. So what about the name?

"We're not that good at names are we? We wanted to carry on, but not as Joy Division because we're not Joy Division any more. So we hummed and haahed as long as long as we possibly and Rob (manager) came in and said 'you've got a gig on Friday, what are you going to be called.' And we went down to the pub and decided on New Order. When it for the first time written down it appeared a bit alien, but after a bit it became familiar. It's only a name."

And there were personnel and musical changes — Gillian Gilbert came in on keyboards:

"We've known her since we were in Joy Division. She used to be in a band that practised two doors down from us and we just asked her if she wanted to join. We didn't know what we wanted but we knew what we didn't want and that was a new singer and we didn't want someone who was a mega-musician. Gillian was just right because she was just like us and she didn't have any great musical pretentions. She's developed as part of us."

If the Joy Division sound was to be identified as two ingredients, then Peter Hook's bass lines and Ian Curtis's vocals would have to take priority. Guitarist Barney Albrecht became New Ord-

er's singer.

"Everybody in the band had a go at singing, but it just seemed logical and right for Barney to be the singer. I think he found it a bit difficult at first."

Albrecht's frail vocals contrast with the band's aggression. Is that deliberate?

"No, none of it's deliberate, it just happens, it's just how it turns out at the end of the day. We don't sit and plan what we're going to do because if you do that too much you just get lost. It's very easy to disappear up your own arsehole by thinking too much."

New Order's first single, 'Ceremony', was a Joy Division song not only in period, but in style and approach. *Movement* was listless, it took the animated funk of 'Blue Monday' to truly break with the past:

"We've always liked that sort of music. We'd been using a sequencer and a drum machine for a while, it was a really old-fashioned thing, something Barney had made out of a kit, and it was always breaking down. So we went out and bought some new hi-tech stuff, but we didn't know how to work it, so we wrote 'Blue Monday' as a way to find out how all this stuff worked. Fortunately a lot of dance records at the time used the same equipment and it sounded like them."

"We listened to a lot of funk records and I like black music, especially soul, as there's too much funk these days with just a drum machine riff going over and over again."

And funk is Arthur Baker's cure; the New York producer who did 'Confusion'. Funk was Baker's forte.

"We liked what he did and a friend of ours in New York knew him and played him some tapes from *Power, Corruption and Lies* and he liked what we were doing. So we went into the studio and the result was 'Confusion'. It was a change to work with a producer again, but 'Confusion' was all we wrote with him, although he half-wrote 'Thieves Like Us' as he came up with a 12-bar riff, but we didn't finish the song until we were back in England."

These aforementioned songs only mark time, they hardly take pride of place in the New Order repertoire.

"That's a matter of opinion really (mock offence). Everybody didn't know what to expect working with Arthur, because there was a bit of culture shock as he worked in a different way to us. We went into one studio and did loads of demo things and he didn't like them and then we went into another studio and did the same."

"Everybody was getting fed up with it because it was the middle of winter in New York and it was freezing cold and we were stuck in the studio for days on end. Although we didn't enjoy it at the time, looking back we can see that we learned a lot from it, more than is actually visible on record or whatever. An example is the way we do



Stephen Morris, Mainstreet.

'Confusion' live, as opposed to the record, as there's a lot of difference between the two.

"I still quite like 'Confusion' and 'Thieves Like Us'. It's really weird, because there's people who think 'Confusion' is great but everything else we've put out is utter rubbish. And then there's people like yourself."

New Testament

So what has made Joy Division and New Order so revered? Well, there's a pile of great singles and two great albums (*Unknown Pleasures* and *Power Corruption and Lies*) that occupy the hallowed ground between hard-wrought credibility and deserved commercial recognition. Despite, or because, of the their no-compromise vision of integrity, New Order, like the Fall, have seldom failed to disappoint a loyal, hard-headed public wary of the old sellout record business pressures.

And then there's the Joy Division/New Order sense of pathos and mystery, qualities enhanced by some very effective record sleeve designs, sleeves, though, that are irritatingly uninformative. How come?

"I'm glad you asked me that question, because wait until you see the new album, it's got photographs on it. And in a few years people will ask us why we put photographs on it."

Why have you put photographs on it?

"Well, the people who designed it said it would

be dead simple and really quick if we put photos on the sleeve, but it seems to have taken us as long as the last one."

But why the reluctance to have band photos and info on past sleeves?

"We're not trying to sell ourselves, we're trying to present the music for people to listen to and we try to present it in something that looks simple and pretty, not in something that's glamorous or over-the-top. The music is what people are buying, so we don't want to detract from it, but at the same time we want our records to look nice."

And so to the new album:

"It's nearly six months old, but it's the old sleeve problem, it should be out at the beginning of May. It's called *Low Life* and a single, 'The Perfect Kiss', should be out at the same time. Both of these things have been recorded since January, but we've been waiting for this beautiful sleeve. Every time we do an album it seems to take longer and longer to get the cover done."

So what's the album like?

"It's varied. There's a film music type instrumental on it, there's some guitary songs, rocky songs, synthesiser songs, a fair cross-section. It has as many different things that you can fit on an album and still make sense. I know you're gonna ask me (I wasn't) what the difference is between this album and the last one. I'd say that *Low Life* sounds slightly more polished as we're more experienced at production. But it's not overblown, or I hope it's not."

As a finale, let's get irreverent. What about a Stephen Morris Joy Division/New Order choice of greatest songs?

"That's a hard one. I always liked 'These Days', 'Age Of Consent' and 'The Village'. 'Dead Souls' is good, I heard that the other day. It's difficult because I don't play our records at home, I only hear them when I go out. And it's weird because when I head 'Dead Souls' I thought it was somebody else as I didn't recognise it at first."

What about the obvious ones like 'Transmission' and 'Atmosphere'?

"You tend to go off them because you hear them so much. I do like 'Transmission' and 'Disorder' was a good one."

You haven't mentioned *Closer*.

"No I haven't, have I? 'Heart and Soul' and 'Isolation' if I have to."

How do you regard that album now?

"It's very sad really. As I said, I don't play our records, certainly not Joy Division records, and you don't hear *Closer* much. It's too depressing."

And 'Blue Monday'?

"No, the other side, 'The Beach' and 'Dreams Never End' from *Movement*. It's very difficult to pick these because it's not the sort of thing I've had to do before. It's very embarrassing."

George Kay

PHOTO BY CAROL TIPPETT



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