

Gig of My Life



# **RUNNING ORDER**

---

**Happy Mondays**

**Tom Waits**

**The Sundays**

**Suede**

**David Devant** and his Spirit Wife

**The Mekano Set**

**Kingmaker**

**Nina Simone**

**Smashing Pumpkins**

**The Popinjays**

**Spears of Destiny**

**Foo Fighters**

**Saxa**

**Zane Lowe**

**Brand New**

**A-Ha**

**Jeff Buckley**

**Michelle Branch**

**David Bowie**

**Explosions in the Sky**

**Henry Rollins**


**Elf Kid**

**Halfords**, sometime in the early '90s. I stood in an oversized boiler suit at my till. I could barely hear what the customers were saying for the ringing in my ears only I couldn't have cared less. As it turns out The Verve were right: it is all in the mind. And the night before my mind had been well and truly blown. I was euphoric. Little did they know the night before I had found the answer and the answer was music.

I have no recollection of how I got to the gig and couldn't tell you the set list. In fact I can remember very little except for the feeling as I stood beneath Richard Ashcroft's bare feet as he stalked the stage, at times standing still features lit like a musical messiah. No crown of thorns but invisible ribbons of psychedelic sound woven about his head by Nick McCabe, Simon Jones and Pete Salisbury. I felt the edges of my body and mind dissolve as I was filled with waves of emotion, the hair standing up on the back of my neck. It was incredible. I felt alive, excited. It felt as if anything was possible.

I was brought quickly back to my physical reality as The Smashing Pumpkins crashed in with a wall of sound so loud and intense it seemed to tear right through my chest. At once my interior and exterior reality felt united; this was what things felt like. It bore little relation to the quiet torpor of school. It was utterly brilliant. Painful and beautiful at the same time, it made perfect sense. Just as I thought there was nowhere left to go they dug deeper and found more. It was epic and cathartic.

At the time it felt entirely reasonable that there were some lasting effects during the week after. Thankfully my hearing returned but I was different. There was something else. Wherever I was it was there. Shortly after I made one of many visits to Mike Lloyd's record shop and bought *All in the Mind* on 7" and set about wearing it out.



Don't get me wrong I loved music before. I'd played it and listened to it pretty obsessively since my first proper gig when I was fifteen but it was the physicality of that gig: the power which seemed to etch music into my soul. I think it says a lot that I still listen to *A Storm in Heaven* and *Siamese Dream* today. Maybe not as much as I did but I know they're always there; they're in me. They and the friendships which were cemented through so many gigs carried me through adolescence until I reached the point where I found that possibility and excitement for myself.

and devote  
your life to  
fighting it."

HENRY ROLLINS

life, progress, a sense of purpose, and the Rollins staple of striving to be the best person you can be while living the best life you can.

That's what many, especially those with hatred-filled lives, can't understand: that we often subvert aggressive language to advocate ideas standing *against* violence, *against* fascism, *against* oppression.

Against terrorism.

Music is unique in its capacity to bring people together, from all generations and all walks of life. Rollins knows that, but he's too old to throw himself around a punk rock stage any more, so he uses his skill as a speaker to deliver the same message. Ariana Grande is young enough to still whirl around in the spotlight and deliver that message in a more traditional way, and whether consciously or instinctively, everyone at Grande's concert in Manchester understood it.

Music can change your life. But so can a person so consumed by hatred that they want other people to not exist. And it's up to each of us to decide what form that change takes.

The enemy is not a race, or a religion, or a political party. The enemy is intolerance; the enemy is hatred; the enemy is fear.

We've found our enemy. Now let's fight it, with every ounce of love we possess.

