

Biochemistry degree. I did History and French with a bit of Economics at Bradford University. I'm very inquisitive about everything. That might have confused journalists. They like the idea of the noble savage.

Were you the most musically proficient punks?

Not playing well was never our criteria. The Police were very good musicians. They just hated each others' guts. They still do, apparently. We played Hyde Park the same day they did [in 2008] and it was awful. It's not very conducive to an appreciation of someone's output, when you know they're just there to top up their pension fund.

Where would you fit in a record store? Neo-classical punk'n'roll? Baroque-abilly?

Ha. In more general terms we're a rock band. We're lucky we've been able to explore different areas and remain to some extent a commercial enterprise.

What would have been the optimum moment to check you out?

Well, the early '80s were dark for us. Talk about Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. We were experimenting on ourselves. "Let's try heroin for a year and then we'll record an album."

Which of you got most deeply involved with the drug?

Myself and Hugh. The other two were more sensible and quit after a few goes. With a bit of help from Dave I managed to get over it relatively quickly. I don't know about Hugh.

How are relations between you and Hugh these days?

Hugh has become a very bitter bloke. I suspect he thought – as I did – that when he left [in 1990] The Stranglers would implode. But we're playing bigger venues, and he's playing pubs. If I were in his shoes I'd be pissed off.

Any regrets?

We didn't go back to America even though we'd started playing to 5,000 people in what they call "the sheds". But it was starting to do my fucking head in. The bands who did really well there lost their creativity. Suddenly they're wearing cowboy boots and hating each other... I'll probably have to wait 'til I've died 'til anyone has nice things to say about me!

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before.

I had sex with Steve Strange. It was in 1975. The Stranglers had just played a gig in south Wales, he turned up with these two punky type girls and asked me if I'd go back to his house with them. Suddenly the girls disappeared and I was left in bed with this very young guy. One thing led to another, and there you go. It was a one-off and it didn't "turn" me, but it was quite enjoyable from what I remember.

LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

JARED LETO

The Thirty Seconds To Mars thesp hails *The Point!* by Nilsson.

"My family were hippies, we lived everywhere and nowhere, a peripatetic, vagabond lifestyle, which my brother and I loved, because there was always something interesting happening among a wild assortment of people. But it meant we never owned anything – we didn't have the money – so we had to share stuff, including music. I would have been turned on to *The Point!* by some travelling freak. I was only four or five at the time. *The Point!* became not just my Yellow Submarine, but my television and my radio.

I didn't have heroes in the sense of celebrities or sports players or pop culture icons, so *The Point!* was an escape, a teacher and a friend. You can imagine its effect when there's not much other content available – it was a pretty immersive experience, and it came with a detailed and beautifully illustrated book, so you could follow the story. It spoke to the outsider, the outcast, about this kid named Oblio who's born with a round head in a land of cone-shaped, pointy-headed people, and where

The acceptance world: Jared Leto (below) "*The Point!* was my television and my radio."



"IT'S THE KIND OF FABLE THAT ALL CHILDREN SHOULD HEAR, LIKE DR SEUSS AND WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE."

everything is pointed. His partner-in-crime is a dog, and the story's about Oblio's journey through this bizarre world where he is cast out, but he learns to accept himself, and is ultimately accepted by everyone. It makes Yellow Submarine look like classic literature, it's so out there.

The nature of acceptance and identity are big things to a kid, so stuff like a giant pointed man saying, 'If you point everywhere, it's the same as pointing nowhere' – it's saying, 'Have a point of view' which is a philosophy young kids can understand. Individual songs? [Me And My] Arrow is particularly great but the album's meant to be listened to as a whole. You don't fast-forward Apocalypse Now to your favourite scene.

From the beginning, [Thirty Seconds To Mars] has always treated music as one element of the process, the visual component and having some metaphorical concept or narrative is equally important to us. That's why I became obsessed as a teenager with Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, it catapulted you to a more imaginative place, and talked about alienation and authority. But all that started with *The Point!* It's the kind of fable that all children should hear, like Dr Seuss and Where The Wild Things Are. It's a really important, surreal, metaphorical, cinematic, completely amazing story."

Martin Aston

