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[Iggy Pop Looks Back on 'Corrupt, Sham' Grammys and Grabbing Rock by the Balls](#)

- Posted on Sep 30th 2011 3:30PM by [Chris Epting](#)
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STEPHANE DANNA,

AFP/Getty Images

Though he recently had to postpone a handful US tour dates due to a foot injury, famed [Stooges](#) frontman [Iggy Pop](#) still had time to take Spinner on a walk back through some of his career's most notable moments, from 'Raw Power' all the way up through 'American Idol' and his induction into the [Rock and Roll Hall of Fame](#).

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Engaged, thoughtful and chuckling throughout the discussion, Pop remains one of rock's most interesting conversationalists. Check out our exclusive Q&A below.

Has all of the attention that's been focused on the "Raw Power" album given you a sense of redemption?

I know what you're saying. I always thought when I was doing it, that, quote unquote, "Kids would understand if only ..." Probably what I didn't realize was that it was just going to be another generation of kid! I was compelled to do it, so I didn't think about it too much. I certainly wasn't sitting around thinking "This is going to be better than [Peter and Gordon](#). Look out [Herman's Hermits](#) or Young Rascals, [Mamas and the Papas](#)!" No, I never thought that.

So many artists from [Henry Rollins](#) to [Kurt Cobain](#) were profoundly affected by that album.

It's an interesting feeling because I had people that I listen to in a certain way that I was just in total magical awe of, like [Bo Diddley](#). He was the big one for me, so usually when I hear compliments I think of him and think "Wow, I'm kind of like Bo now," [laughs]. It doesn't have anything to do with money or popularity, it's just something different. You feel like, "OK, I've done a reasonable amount to earn the respect it deserves."

Iggy Pop's 'Real Wild Child (Wild One)'



What do you recall about the mix that [David Bowie](#) did on 'Raw Power' back in 1973?

I was real familiar with every detail of the record that I wanted to get out. And with a band that plays with as much force as the Stooges, you've got to give up a little in terms of clarity. And I think David made a good mix. The big problem was in the next step, in the mastering. By the time that record went to be mastered and released it was just a through-the-motions action. There was no management, no production company, no relationship with the group or anything. But the record company had to put out something. And to be honest, I didn't know what a mastering session was at that time!

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Those first three Stooges albums were all written and rehearsed through repetition. We had never used a tape recorder around the house and we never demoed anything, ever. We just worked the songs up bit by bit then took them into recording studios. We didn't understand much about the manufacturing of music. So whoever mastered it didn't do anything for it. The big problem with it, on the bonehead level, is that, "Hey, it's not loud! [Laughs] You've got to turn it up to 11!" It's very [Spinal Tap](#). If you did crank your stereo up to 10, our records would not distort, which was kind of nice.

As far as the mix, I also like what I did in the '90s when I went back in and worked on it. I just wanted to hit a home run for all those junior high school dropouts high on glue driving around in a Trans Am. I didn't want them listening to [Limp Bizkit](#) or [Guns N' Roses](#). I wanted them listening to us! So I just grabbed that f---ing thing by the balls and squeezed hard, you know? I turned off the intellect and used the monkey man in me.

Your relationship with David Bowie played a big part in your career. What do you recall about going on the road with him in 1976 for the 'Station to Station' tour?

That was the beginning of learning a lot of hard lessons I had to learn about living in the real world. Except that in my case, I mean the real music industry. It was sort of like taking some very bad medicine. Watching someone else do it was easy. Watching how a large machine like that was put together and run and who did what and what the relationships were was easy. But when I started doing it myself I would alternately go along with the program and then at various times I'd have to go home and heave for awhile. I'm just not that kind of guy. But 'Station to Station' was a beautiful tour and that's a great album. And it affected me. Like on my 'Blah Blah Blah' tour I was doing very controlled work with very serious session musicians.

Are you and Bowie still in touch?

No, I'm not in touch with him, but I'm not out of touch with him either. I think I've got his phone number somewhere, buried in a saddlebag. I haven't spoken to David in a while but there's absolutely nothing to be read into that.

In the mid 1960s you were very affected after seeing the [Doors](#) perform live.

Absolutely. [Jim Morrison](#) was trying to be the same person that the musicians in the juke joints were, but they were that much more natural without much prompting. But for a white boy whose dad was an admiral or whatever he was, in 1960s America, you really needed some sort of psychic rocket fuel to propel you out of the straightjacket of the existence that was gonna be planned for you.

So he was like a lurching, throbbing, hallucinating, heavily packaged parody of a blues rogue [laughs]. I'm reading a wonderful book right now, 'The World Don't Owe Me Nothing' by [Honeyboy Edwards](#). I recommend it to anyone who is interested in the roots of popular music, and it reminds me of what we're talking about now. Jim Morrison was playing with something in a certain exaggerated way that connected to me. It was also a question of, "Holy s---, if he can get away with that and the Doors could get away with how bad they were the first night I saw them play, I have no more excuse to not do something!" The bar for professionalism has just been drastically lowered in America. I want to hasten to say that they'd just made polished record. If you listen to the first Doors record you realize there was a lot of cutting and pasting on it to smooth over parts that didn't really work. By the second time I saw them, there were a powerful, polished machine. And that was nice, but it was not as great as seeing them really f---ed up. Which is, I suppose, the problem with me, too [laughs].

Do you still feel like the same uninhibited performer that shocked so many people starting with

your legendary shows back in the late '60s?

It's exactly the same. There's nothing different except there's a different set of tools I work with now. There are some things I do better, some things I'm probably like, 10 percent less pretty for example. Some people might say 90 percent less pretty [laughs]. I just try to get up there and sing the song hard, remember what's it's about and then just let myself flow with the feeling of the music. I used to do it more in spurts; I try to extend it out more. The same problem with me is still holding myself back. It's impossible for me to do a recital. I can't stand there, idle. I just don't feel like many other singers feel.

How did it feel to finally make it into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame?

It's like Charlie Brown with the football. They keep nominating you; nobody asked me if I wanted to be nominated and then you get a bunch of calls the day after saying, "So how do you feel that you lost?" [Laughs]

This happens over and over and over through years of your life! A couple of years after I think, the sixth nomination, I said, "All right, I'm going to put my foot down to say, 'What can we do to get this sucker?'" And I started showing up at a couple of [Grammy](#)-related events, we did [Madonna](#)'s tribute thinking maybe some of the voters would be there and know who we really were. Why not? Those honorifics have an increasing power because of what the music industry has become.

I remember the first time I was nominated for a Grammy. I sat there in the 1980s, right behind [Cher](#)'s head. And I felt so ashamed to be there because I felt the whole thing was just so corrupt and such a sham. They've improved it some. What really impressed me was the attitude of guys like [Kanye West](#): "This is an important f---ing award and it should be for the best -- and I'm the best!" I thought, "That guy's got a point!" The industry I was born into, I got the s--- kicked out of me for so long. I thought, "Everything that is said to be good, sucks. Everything that is honored is a lie. Everything that sells is crap. And the rock stars don't rock." I still believe a lot of that. I still feel very much that way. But what are you going to do? [Laughs]

You even performed on 'American Idol.' Who could ever have predicted that?

I got there because my agent begged and pleaded and threatened and said, "I've never asked you for anything in 25 years!" [Laughs]

But I can't respect myself unless I'm willing to get up on the same stage in the belly of the beast and throw it down and say, "Here's how I do it." That's how I felt at the Hall of Fame and 'American Idol' -- get out there and create so there can be something for the record. And I had a good time!

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