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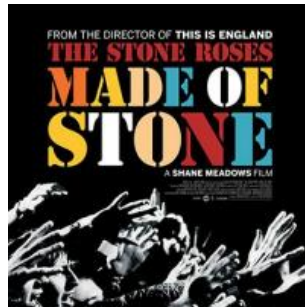
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Yep, the Stone Roses Sure Are the Resurrection

By [John Garratt](#) 8 November 2013
PopMatters Associate Music Editor

It was an unlikely set of circumstances. Like many realistically-minded people, I never thought a reunion of the Stone Roses was ever possible. Anyone who read NME regularly knew that Ian Brown and John Squire, the two songwriters for one of Manchester's most beloved Britpop bands, would never get around to burying the hatchet. But then came the 2011 press conference announcing their reunion, which left me a little slack jawed. The eventual appearance of a documentary seemed inevitable, since this was truly one of those hell-freezes-over moments ripe for posterity. The film premiering in American theaters was a gamble that would pay off in big cities. But had you told me in 1996 that I would be watching a film documenting the band's reunion in a theater a few miles north of my mom's house in Midwestern America, I would have called you nuts. Up to moment I stepped into the theater to take in *The Stone Roses: Made of Stone*, it was a little surreal. But when I realized I was going to share this entire theater with six other people, reality returned. I didn't mind though. That just meant that no one had to put up with my incessant foot-tapping to "Fool's Gold".



The Stone Roses: Made of Stone

Director: [Shane Meadows](#)
Cast: Ian Brown, John Squire, Gary Mounfield, Alan Wren
(Film4 Productions/Warp Filmes; US theatrical: 6 Nov 2013; UK theatrical: 5 Jun 2013; 2013)

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That's always been a dilemma for bands like the Stone Roses. They wield a hell of a lot of power in their homeland but are close to anonymous in the States. I'd be lucky to find one person on my street who knows at least one of their songs. But when I played the opening two minutes of "I Wanna Be Adored" for my college friends in smalltown Indiana, I could always stop them in their tracks. That sound, that power is what took them to the top of the English music scene in the late '80s and early '90s. And the higher you fly, the further you fall. The petals began to drop in the mid-'90s. Tensions mounted, half the band eventually quit and a disastrous gig at the Reading festival embarrassed the band into retirement. Director Shane Meadows spends most of *The Stone Roses: Made of Stone* focusing on the band's present existence. The film does turn to the past on a few occasions, but it's a gloss job. There's definitely another movie to be had in that alone.

Shane Meadows instead gives attention to all of the things that come with a reunion of this magnitude: the announcement, the rehearsals, the warm-up shows, the big homecoming gig and the fan mania that comes with each of these events. The band hits the ground running, hiding in an off-road farmhouse to sharpen all of their old songs. Meadows, already a big fanboy, stares in amazement at the list of potential songs the band are considering for their gigs (and the list is quite large). "They're going to play new songs," he says to his assistant in a tone not unlike someone seeing intelligent life from another galaxy for the first time (SPOILER: you never hear them). The black and white footage of the band going through "Waterfall" and "Where Angels Play" is lighthearted and fun, even if the songs weren't at their most polished. It's at moments like this when you see the cheekiness of their press conference spill into their everyday lives. The first taste of hysteria comes when the band announces a free show at Warrington's Parr Hall, a modestly-sized club that was just asking for a mad rush of fans. If you wanted a wristband, you had to have some band merch on hand. The line grew as people skipped out on work and stood in line, talking to family members on their phones, asking them to bring a CD inlay or a T-shirt. When the band goes on their wrist, they are overjoyed. "Shoot You Down" is playing in the background as you see the line become longer and longer. Shane Meadows missed a great opportunity by not playing that song while you watch people get rejected at the door.

The Parr Hall gig is a success. People pour out into the streets happy, almost transformed. It's easy to see why. Even though "I Wanna Be Adored" is the only song of the show that you hear from start to finish, the adrenaline rush translates to celluloid. Bassist Gary Mounfield aka Mani is beside himself with giddiness. He actually compares the situation to being a child on Christmas morning. Liam Gallagher of Oasis shows up and tells the camera that the Stone Roses were the best band to come out of Manchester. Many people would agree with that, but it's strange to see him not reserve that hyperbole for himself. The number of backstage hugs before and after the show are bewildering. One might think that this was the gig that the movie was building towards. So much time and emotion is invested in this small gig, more so than is given to the Heaton Park show.

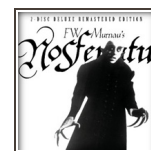
While the massive stage is being assembled in Manchester's Heaton Park, the Stone Roses hit the roads in Europe. This is when you see that the fan enthusiasm is not only for the English. This is also when operations hit a snag. One night at a gig in Amsterdam, drummer Alan Wren aka Reni keeps encountering sound problems. After repeatedly yelling at the sound man and ripping out his ear monitor, he's had enough. When the final song of the set wraps up, he leaves the venue. The crowd, expecting an encore, becomes angry when Ian Brown walks out on stage to tell everyone "this is no joke, the drummer's gone home!" Boos abound. Brown tells everyone to get

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their “bad vibes out, I can take it!” He mutters, “the drummer’s a cunt, sorry about that.” And walks off. The following day Shane Meadows sits in front of the camera in his hotel room, confessional style, and admits that things have become “tricky”. Just when I thought everything was going smoothly, I’m transported back to that painful moment in loudQUIETloud: a film about The Pixies where Frank Black is barking at David Lovering while onstage at the Metro. The remainder of the European tour was cancelled, but I assume the drama was somehow resolved since Reni was pounding the skins by the film’s end and has continued to do so with the band throughout 2013.


The Stone Roses: Made of Stone concludes with aerial shots of Heaton Park and footage of the band playing just one song from those gigs. But this one song is a doozy. It’s “Fool’s Gold”, already a lengthy jam from their eponymous, but on steroids. When Reni sat in the pocket with Mani, this was the moment that had my leg working. Ian Brown’s voice is surprisingly good considering his reputation of inconsistent performances. He eschews showboating in favor of shacking his tambourine sticks and letting the rest of the band do their thing. John Squire’s solo grows from its original incarnation to something heavier, as if it had blossomed from the notorious Second Coming sessions. After the heavy Hendrix licks, he turns to his affects box to wrench his guitar sound further as Brown walks in front of the stage to exchange pleasantries with the audience. The camera shots from above Reni’s kit, featuring heavily-concentrated beams of yellow light, are the stuff of magic. The film also gives you magic of the cheap variety courtesy of audience members going crazy—in slow motion. Alas, this performance of “Fool’s Gold” is beyond terrific, one guaranteed to move the hardest of rock band reunion cynics. At the film’s premiere, Meadows says this version of “Fool’s Gold” is “of the like you’ve never seen”. He’s right.


Between the sequence of reunion events, Shane Meadows gives a quick and dirty history of the band thanks to old photographs and video footage provided by the band members. The only narration is provided by the band members themselves, often in very mumbly voices. This is the chance, albeit briefly, to see Ian Brown sporting a crew cut and zipping around Manchester on his scooter. There is live footage from when they were a quintet, but these shots last for mere seconds. Their managerial troubles don’t get much attention which is strange since many fans consider that the chief cause of their downfall. Gareth Evans and the 1996 Reading Festival, two significant nails in the band’s original coffin, are never mentioned. But there is some rare silent footage of the band trying to work on their sophomore album Second Coming, a series of sessions that were a total mess due to a lack of any kind of business model. As Squire’s opening squalls of “Breaking Into Heaven” play in the background, you hear the guitarist admit that it just “wasn’t the same”. Even more awkward yet somehow more optimistic was an interview Brown and Squire did with a music journalist just prior to the release of their first album. They are both glasse-eyed, take too long to form their answers, speak softly, and spend too much time reaching down to the floor while the journalist patiently waits for them to speak. The whole interview can be viewed on youtube, but just a few minutes is all Meadows needed for his purposes. These guys were high as kites and full of purpose, the perfect elements for a famous downfall.


So don’t go to The Stone Roses: Made of Stone expecting the full picture. Don’t expect a comprehensive history of the band. Don’t expect any detailed innerworkings of what makes the band tick creatively. And don’t expect uninterrupted concert footage. Instead, expect the feelings that endure after the movie’s over. Pop music might not be able change the world anymore, but it can cause quite a stir of happiness. It might even bring about small, personal revelations. The Stone Roses: Made of Stone had me at the very beginning. I’ll set the scene; Ian Brown is walking


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to the stage with his bouncers. He passes the fans in the front row in slow motion. The opening swells of "I Wanna Be Adored" slowly boil up in the mix as you hear Alfred Hitchcock define happiness in an interview. "...only things that are creative and not destructive...hatred is wasted energy." Brown takes someone's smartphone, points it to the stage, and gives it back to the fan. It's an anything-is-possible moment. Not just for an unlikely reunion story, but for any creative endeavor.

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