

ALREADY WIDELY RECOGNISED AS ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL BASSISTS OF HIS GENERATION, PETER HOOK HAS RECENTLY ADDED AUTHORIAL STRINGS TO HIS BOW WITH THE PUBLICATION OF A TRIO OF BOOKS DETAILING THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF LIFE AT THE HACIENDA AND IN JOY DIVISION AND NEW ORDER. LTW'S DICK PORTER SCUTTLES ALONG IN HIS WAKE TO FIND OUT THE LATEST...

IT'S Tuesday, and Peter Hook is heading south. Currently, the bass behemoth is engaged in a series of UK dates that see his band, The Light, performing the 'Substance' compilations to sold out houses. "I've just set off, just had my hair cut with my mate," he explains. "So I'm all spruced up ready for Brighton. It's been great actually, I've not been allowed to play these songs for years and years. New Order really just settled into a little niche where they were just playing the same songs over and over again. I always was so frustrated by it, so really I have got to indulge myself and I must admit that it's been absolutely fantastic. When I come to leave one album and move onto the next, I'm absolutely devastated."

This tranche of shows are the latest in a lengthening sequence of gigs whereby Hooky and his band revisit classic Joy Division and New Order albums. "We've just got a new keyboard player. Our keyboard player [David Potts], who was from Monaco, who I'd worked with for years and years, he's just gone and got a proper job. We have been working a lot and I just think that maybe it was the going away that got to him."

The Light also includes Hook's son Jack on bass, giving the impression that four-string mastery runs in the blood. "It started with me, because my dad wasn't," observes Peter. "To my knowledge, neither my mother nor father were musical at all. Jack grew up in the heyday, he was born in '87, so he was at the Hacienda all the time, he was at the festivals, he was at the gigs - he was a rock 'n' roll baby. He likes much heavier music than me; he's more like Queens Of The Stone Age, Metallica and all that lot. So when he started to learn to play bass when he was about twelve, he was emulating those groups. He only played with me when Potts and I did a couple of charity gigs as Monaco. We didn't have a group, so we needed a put together group and he came in and played bass and he was really good. I was really, really impressed. The thing is that when we came to play as The Light, I wasn't supposed to be singing. I had a few singers lined up, and basically the keyboard terrorists

and the expectations, and the negative connotation to what you were doing scared off the singers. It really did, I thought 'What a bunch of bloody wimps'. But that's life, isn't it? It was Roweta that said to me, 'Listen, if you're going to do this, you're going to have to sing.' And I thought, 'Ohh shit..!' While I'd sung in Monaco, I'd never really envisaged singing Joy Division or New Order. I always thought that I'd be the bass player, that was what I wanted to do. So as we went on, the only way out of it for finding a bass player was right under my nose, which of course was Jack. He picked it up really quickly and now he's an absolute super fan of Joy Division and New Order."

For Hooky, the move from bass to lead vocal represented the latest in a series of challenges: "Over the years I've become used to being taken out of my comfort zone, I'm used to doing everything, and while it terrifies you, there's a wonderful feeling when you pull it off. We're not pretending to be Joy Division, and I was

very careful about doing the LPs for that reason. If we'd have done a greatest hits set, it wouldn't have felt right to me because that would have been like pretending to be Joy Division. My real problem with them as New Order is that they're pretending to be New Order when they're not - that's my opinion. They get away with it; the fans go along and see them and appreciate them for what they are, but the fans come along and see me and appreciate The Light for what they do. Now the fans have got both; us with the old material and them lot playing the same stuff over and over again."

In addition to The Light's live shows, Westworld Recordings are set to issue a series of four live albums capturing their standout performances of 'Unknown Pleasures', 'Closer', 'Movement' and 'Power, Corruption And Lies'. "It's interesting doing 'Substance' because it's all the singles. Because the singles were left off >>

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JOY DIVISION

all the albums, we'd been missing these as we'd been coming through. It's been nice to get them all together. One of the great things about Westworld Recordings was when I got talking to them about putting the records out, the guy – Steve Beatty – had been a fan, he'd been to our gigs. I first met him five years ago in the Zap Club in Brighton when I was doing 'Unknown Pleasures'.

It's quite serendipitous; he's been to all the gigs because he's a fan, and he said, 'We should work together to put them out', which he's done. It's always an odd position to be in, but our gig is to celebrate the LPs, so I think that we are doing something different

to what Joy Division ever did and also something different than New Order ever did. The weird thing is that I never expected in a million years to get the antagonism from the others that I've had, just because I'm playing the music. I'm doing the same thing that they're doing, and yet because they've – in my opinion – stolen the name 'New Order', it's deemed to be different – we are just playing our music. We wrote it, we're playing it. And really, it doesn't matter who you play it with, that's your choice isn't it? Anybody can play music; from busking in Market Street in Manchester to playing at the Royal Albert Hall, you cannot stop anybody playing the music. But to hear them be so antagonistic, it's a bit weird, I must admit.

"With Barney it was always a bit weird; it was always 'Don't do as I do, do as I say', which was one of his wonderful contradictions that was really infuriating, and really this just comes down to that again. We've had such great reviews from doing it, that I feel absolutely justified. If we'd had been slagged off for doing it, I'd have been the first one to knock it on the head."

Although the tour is set to finish at the end of March, The Light are set to stay on the road for the foreseeable future, courtesy of a string of US dates and European shows, alongside some UK festival appearances. "It's interesting, generally we have bigger audiences abroad than we do in England," observes Hook. "That's mainly because New Order were so popular around the world that in

many ways we never let England catch up. It's weird, what I've noticed at gigs is that ten times more people wear Joy Division shirts than wear New Order. It's odd, I thought that when we got into New Order, that New Order would be the most popular, but it seems to me that it's very equal between New Order and Joy Division, and the interesting thing

is that you've actually got a very young audience for both. Last week we did Holmfirth in Yorkshire, we sold it out – beautiful venue, and the audience was really young."

To an extent, The Light's live explorations of Joy Division and New Order's back catalogues can be viewed as companion pieces to

Hooky's biographical accounts of his time with the two bands and life at the Hacienda. "The Hacienda one, which was the first, was really hard work. I'd never done that sort of thing before, I struggled to find a formula, but by the end of it, it worked," he declares. "I wrote the first edition with an American friend of mine, when the book came back, it was in American. He's a lovely guy, Claude Flowers – it was his idea to do the book actually. So then we had to translate it from American back to

English, which was quite weird, so it took a long time, but it was enjoyable. I think that the one thing that Northerners are good at is laughing at themselves and taking the piss out of themselves. And that self-deprecation helps – especially with a story like the Hacienda. As an author, which I can say I am now after three books, the Hacienda was a gift of a story, Joy Division – another gift, although maybe the gift that you didn't want, and the trouble with them is that none of them have a happy ending. I'd love to write a book with a happy ending, I really would.

"It's been great, but I must admit that out of all the books, the one I was most worried about was the New Order book. I think that if they hadn't reformed without me, then I probably wouldn't have written it. It was a bit too close to home, really. I was sort of helped along by Bernard's book, with its startling lack of detail, terrible representation of me – I knew Bernard was many things, but I never had him down as being like that. It's my truth if you like, and I think that with them reforming in 2011, there was a lot of mis-truths and a lot of spin on them getting back together again. I think that needed putting right and the story needed telling so that the people knew the truth. It did help doing it, when I did it – because of the legal thing, which has been going on for six years, the whole time I was doing the book – I just thought everything about New Order was >>>



“NEW ORDER AND JOY DIVISION SOUNDED VERY YOUNG. WE DON'T SOUND YOUNG ANYMORE.”

shit. I had a really jaundiced eye on New Order. Doing the book made me realise how fucking good we were and how much we achieved. When Andy Rourke said to me that that Smiths case was the worst thing that he'd ever been through in his life, I thought he was being a bleedin' drama queen. I saw him in New York about three weeks ago, and I said to him, 'You know Andy, that was an understatement.' It's fucking awful, I'm delighted that I got through life to the ripe old age of 55 before I had to do it."

The Light's performances serve to freshly illuminate a corpus of landmark material that spans the genesis of punk rock, the subsequent post punk era, and the further fusions with dance music that played out across the 1980s. "Punk was very naive, and I don't think that any of us knew what to do with it once we'd got it," Hooky reflects. "Steve Jones sums it up really well in his book, 'Lonely Boy'. None of us knew what we were doing and we were given a great opportunity to change the world, but it was too much for all of us. New Order took a long time to settle to the major record label, the easy way out type of thing, but really you were on a hiding to nothing, because that anarchy and chaos that you developed and fed off when you were a punk was actually quite unsustainable in real life.

"We always thought that we would be punks, with our attitude – we wanted to be independent, we turned down every deal that offered us money because we wanted our freedom. We didn't want anyone telling us what to do with the music. The only reason we went with Factory Records was that Tony [Wilson] swore to us that he would not get involved with them music. It was so important to us to keep that standard flying – punk had shown us and we lived and breathed it. It was easy for us

because we wrote great music, it was easy for us because of the music. It was the same with New Order, even though New Order started a little awkwardly, we were actually making great music. When you're writing great tunes everything is much, much easier.

"Barney actually commented when we got back together in 2000, he said 'I don't know if you noticed, but the weird thing about Joy Division and New Order was that we never talked about music. We just did it.' The weird thing is, is that when I was with Pottsy in Monaco, we would talk about music all the time, and when Barney was with Johnny Marr, he'd talk about music all the time. And yet when we got back together again, we didn't do that again. It's the very chemistry that makes a great group and makes a great songwriting partnership. It's the very same chemistry that will tear you apart in the end."



PETER HOOK IN THE
FACTORY BOARDROOM - STEVEN BAKER

The manner in which both the current incarnation of New Order and The Light are playing variant versions of the same material echoes the divergence between Joy Division live, and frozen on vinyl in the uniquely imaginative contexts framed by production legend Martin Hannett. "It was very spiky, actually," recalls the bassist. "Joy Division's live sound was very empty for the simple reason that when Barney played guitar there was no keyboards, and when Barney played keyboards, there was no guitar. So it made it very edgy. What both of us have done in our incantations, we've got extra musicians, we've augmented the line-up to make it sound fuller. In a funny way, I think it's lost the awkwardness that New Order had at the start and the very angular tetchiness that Joy Division had. They sounded very young; we don't sound young anymore.

"It's a fascinating thing with New

Order, that our reputation for playing live was terrible – we had a really bad reputation; some gigs would be awful and then there'd be some in the middle. With Joy Division, you never had that. Ian, god rest his soul, certainly took a hell of a lot out of us when he went. It took us years and years to recover and in many ways, I'm not too sure if you ever recover. I was just talking to my barber, in the way that barbers always like to talk to you about life, and he said, 'Do you think that the reason that you and Barney are at each other's throats all the time is because of Ian's death?' It's quite interesting. To lose somebody like that, through suicide, does scar you for life, without a shadow of a doubt. I was the bass player, Barney was the guitarist, we struggled to be the vocalist at the start, now we're both the vocalist, I'm singing the same songs he's singing, so I suppose really, you're going to get that friction without a doubt.

"And he was such a natural. Oh man, to find somebody like that who was so comfortable with his role is amazing. They're very, very few and far between. He was a talent, though – Such a fantastic vocal, the vocal lines and melodies that he came up with, the lyrics were amazing. He really was the full package. I suppose if you're going to look at it from a rock 'n' roll point of view, it's a case of someone who burns that brightly. Very sad."

Although Hooky's trilogy of tales lack happy endings, the process of revisiting them literally and sonically has proven rewarding. "It's made me remember the good times, which is quite nice because since New Order split up, we've had nothing but bad times. The legal battle is still ongoing and has been now for six years. It's awful, it really is the worst thing that I've ever been through, but you have to fight for what you believe in, don't you. It's been very nice that it's reminded me that at one point we were all very good friends and we did make great music, despite it all."

'Unknown Pleasures', 'Closer', 'Movement' and 'Power, Corruption And Lies' are out May 5th on Westworld Recordings

