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Spend some time with The Hours

The tale of how most bands form these days is a common one: Become inspired by Oasis, get a guitar for Christmas, await record deal.

But this isn't quite how it happened for The Hours.

Instead, the story of Martin Slattery and Antony Genn is one that includes ex-Clash man Joe Strummer, sharing a flat with Robbie Williams, losing teeth and streaking. Although not necessarily in that order.

Forming The Hours, admits singer and guitarist Genn: "Just took us a bit longer than maybe it takes other people.

"In the pop industry, you're expected to do all this great work when you're young. I don't think there's any other industry in the world that compares to that, apart from maybe sport.

"Anthony Hopkins didn't become famous until he was nearly 40. I think sometimes you have to go and live a bit of life before you can write about life." And live a bit of life is certainly what Genn has spent much of the last decade doing.

Lucky streak

Before he became a founding member of Joe Strummer's Mescaleros, he played bass guitar in an early line-up of Pulp. He's also worked with Ian Brown (formerly of The Stone Roses), who he calls "one of the loveliest geezers you're ever likely to meet on this planet".

He shared a flat with Robbie Williams in 1996. "He's got the same sense of humour as me so we had a right laugh," says Genn of the espresso-loving singer.

"We spent a summer running round town. We wrote a few songs together too. There's one on his first album and one on his latest album, called Summertime. Someone called me wanting to know if I still had the string parts for it."

And Genn spent much of the 90s in a state of extreme refreshment.

This explains one of his most "celebrated" episodes, in which he pogo'd across the main stage at Glastonbury in 1995 during Elastica's set, wearing only a beard. He later joined the band as a keyboard player.

All of which, says Genn, was a part of "just working out who you are".

Yorkshire pudding

Despite his impressive musical CV, the 35-year-old admits: "I definitely got sick of working on other people's records and just giving away all my ideas.

"I was always working with Martin in other people's bands and, every time I'd bring Martin into a session, everyone would go on about what an amazing musician he was.

"It's like a couple of chefs working in a restaurant and then one day going, 'You know what? Let's start our own restaurant, mate. I want to say whether we put onions in the Yorkshire pudding or not'.

"So we decided that the only way to do that was to do it yourself and start a band."

The end result, onions and all, is The Hours' debut album Narcissus Road, the recording of which was paid for by Genn's old friend Damien Hirst. It's a confident collection of piano-driven mini epics. Think Coldplay with an edge.

"I think after we wrote [debut single] Ali in the Jungle it became clear that we were on to something," explains Genn. "And that happened reasonably early on. I never felt under that much pressure."

Lyricaly, the album's themes are "honesty and hope", he says. "Because I've had to deal with a lot of demons. And the way I've dealt with them is by facing up to them."

The Hours are currently touring the UK. Narcissus Road is out now.

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