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Twisting My Melon

SHAUN RYDER

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

About the Book

Shaun Ryder has lived a life of glorious highs and desolate lows. As lead singer of the Happy Mondays, he turned Manchester into Madchester, combining all the excesses of a true rock'n'roll star with music and lyrics that led impresario Tony Wilson to describe him as 'the greatest poet since Yeats'. The young scally who left school at fifteen without ever learning his alphabet had come a very long way indeed. Huge chart success and a Glastonbury headline slot followed, plus numerous arrests and world tours - then Shaun's drug addiction reached its height, Factory Records was brought to its knees and the Mondays split.

But was this the end for Shaun Ryder? Not by a long shot. Two years later he was back with new band Black Grape, and their groundbreaking debut album topped the charts in possibly the greatest comeback of all time. Even his continuing struggle with drugs did not stem the tide of critically acclaimed tracks and collaborations as he went on to prove his musical genius time and again.

And then there was the jungle...

Rock'n'roll legend, reality TV star, drug-dealer, poet, film star, heroin addict, son, brother, father, husband, foul-mouthed anthropologist and straight-talking survivor, Shaun Ryder has been a cultural icon and a 24-hour party person for a quarter of a century. Told in his own words, this is his story.

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TWISTING MY MELON

SHAUN RYDER

To my wife, Joanne

Acknowledgements

My thanks go to my wife, Joanne Ryder, and my children, for being there for me and being my backbone. I will always love you all.

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To my mam and dad and family

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Peter Diver

Leon

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Muzzer

Platty

Matt, Pat, Karen and Sam

Maria Carroll

Uncle Tom and Aunty Mary, RIP

Too Nice Tom Bruggen

My current band: Mikey, Johnny, Dan, Jake Ryder, Julie and Tonn

Bryan Fugler and David Berens

Nikki Stevens

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CHAPTER ONE

'I'm a simple city boy, with simple country tastes'

PEOPLE STILL COME up to me and say, 'Do you feel lucky that you're still alive?'

No, I don't.

'But you must have been near death ...'

Maybe I was, but I never saw it like that. I never thought I was close to death. I've been right down to rock bottom and I've been in some very dark places when I almost wished I was dead. I've been addicted to crack cocaine in Barbados and gone cold turkey in Burnley. But, if I do see myself as lucky, it's not because I'm still alive. It's because I'm lucky still to be in the game, and that I even managed to get in the game in the first place. I'm a kid from Salford who had severe learning difficulties and left school at fifteen with no qualifications and without even knowing the alphabet. I could have ended up in jail or dead, like a lot of kids from round our way. Compared to that, going on a celebrity TV show and jumping out of a helicopter, or eating a crocodile's dick, is nothing.

Not that jumping out of that fucking helicopter at the start of *I'm A Celebrity ... Get Me Out of Here!* felt like nothing at the time. Mainly because I couldn't breathe. I've never been able to breathe through my nose. Nothing to do with drugs, although I've put enough of them up there. It's

a hereditary condition. A lot of our family have sinus problems and my mam even had to have a bone taken out of her nose so she could breathe properly. Hanging out the side of a helicopter at twelve thousand feet, it's almost impossible to breathe through your mouth, so I was really struggling. Not only was I jumping into one of the oddest gigs of my career, I also thought I was going to pass out live on TV like a right goon. I've never been as relieved as the moment I got down on the ground and sparked up a fag.

A lot of people know me as Shaun Ryder, and a lot of people know me as Shaun William Ryder, but my full name is actually Shaun William George Ryder. George is my confirmation name. I always thought that was pretty funny, years later. Named after George the dragon-slayer, and then I ended up chasing the dragon for years.

I'm from Salford. People always assume I'm from Manchester, because Happy Mondays were so closely associated with the whole Madchester scene, but I'm not, I'm from Salford. Big difference. We're a different breed and even Mancunians are a bit wary of us. My family is a big, Irish, mostly Catholic family. All my mam's side come from Greengate, not far from where I live now.

Greengate is also the home of the Salford Sioux. At the end of the nineteenth century a gang of Native Americans came over as part of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Circus and they disappeared when they reached Salford. It turned out they were wanted by the US government to answer charges of war crimes after they beat General Custer, so they just vanished under the arches at Greengate and the locals hid them, because they saw them as great warriors, not war criminals. They ended up having loads of kids with the locals and a lot of them are buried at Pendleton Church. I often wonder if that might explain why people from Salford

are a slightly different breed, why they have no fear - if it's because they have a bit of Native American blood in them.

There's a huge Irish community in Salford and Manchester, going back generations. My mam's dad's dad - my greatgrandfather - was the first of her family to come over from Ireland. He was looking for work like most of those who arrived on the boat. My mam's family are the Carrolls - that's her maiden name - although their surname actually used to be O'Carroll. Her grandad decided to take the O' off when he arrived in England as he didn't want to be so obviously Irish. Anything with O' in it made you stand out immediately as a left-footer and at the time he was running about trying to find work, that could count against you. There were still signs saying 'No dogs, no blacks, no Irish', so you can understand the lingering paranoia.

On my dad's side, my nana, Emma, was also from Salford, and my grandad, Fred Ryder, was from Farnworth, up towards Bolton.

We moved about Salford quite a bit when I was a kid, but we mostly lived in Little Hulton. Over the years it's become fully submerged in Salford, but originally it was just this huge, sprawling overspill council estate. When they were first married my mam and dad lived at my nana's - my mam's mam, on Coniston Avenue, and I was born at home in the front room upstairs. My mam and dad decided to call me Shaun, but used the English spelling instead of 'Sean', because they too wanted to play down our Irish descent. I was their first kid. I don't remember that house, because when I was only a few months old my nana bought her first house and moved out of Coniston Avenue, and we moved to a flat over a pub on Darley Street in Farnworth.

We seemed to move a lot when we were little kids, or it seemed a lot to me anyway. Some people, like my missus, Joanne, live in one house for their entire childhood, until they leave home and get married, but we always seemed to be flitting about. It was partly because of my dad's jobs and

partly because we were skint at times. Derek, my old fella, was a fitter originally, working on aeroplanes. Then he worked on the papers, not as a journalist but on the printing presses, and then we had a chippy for a year, before he ended up as a postman. Much later, when the Happy Mondays took off, he came on the road with us. Not many people had what you would call a career round our way back in the late 60s; most people would just find work where they could, so it wasn't that unusual that my dad didn't stick to one trade. Wages weren't great, so people would change jobs if they could earn a bit more doing something else.

My mam, Linda, was a nursery nurse, a real Salford woman, and a good cook, in a traditional steak-and-veg way. We grew up on egg and bacon, pie and chips, stews, hashes, tripe and tongue, that sort of thing. I was even slightly podgy at times as a kid because my mam was such a good cook.

After the flat above the pub we moved to Canterbury Close in Atherton, which is where my little brother was born. There's only eighteen months' age difference between me and Our Paul. Although my mam and dad come from big extended families, where there could be nine or ten kids in a household, they were both only children and neither of them wanted a big family themselves, so they decided early doors they would just stick with the two of us. We stayed in Atherton for a couple of years, and I do have some memories from there. I remember pushing Our Paul on his trike in the street when he was only about eighteen months old, and he fell off and banged his head quite badly, so we had to take him to hospital. We had to take him back there again after we were playing 'army' one day and I threw a wooden brick which hit him on the head. Reading this back, it sounds like we must always have been hurting each other, but these incidents only stick out

because we were generally pretty happy and we played together a lot.

When I was three we moved in with my nana and grandad for a few months, in their bungalow in Swinton. That's where my memories really start. We ended up staying there quite a bit over the years, when we were in between houses. My nana, Annie Carroll, was a lovely, tough Salford woman. Her mam and dad had died when she was really young, so she had ended up raising her siblings. Her and my grandad, Big Billy, lived in their council house on Coniston Avenue, where quite a few of our family had homes, until they became some of the first people round our way to get a mortgage and bought a two-bedroom bungalow on Charlton Drive in Swinton. This was a big deal for them, coming from a family where no one had ever owned a house before. When we moved in with them, my nana and grandad had one bedroom, and my mam and dad, me and Our Paul had the other.

My grandad was a huge Irish fella with a big reputation and a deep, rough voice. There were loads of Carrolls in Salford, but everyone knew Bill, *everyone*, and everyone liked him. He was kind of cock of the estate. We didn't find him scary; to us he was just our grandad. Bill worked on the *Daily Express* printing presses on Great Ancoats Street in town, although he seemed to spend a lot of his time in the nearby Press Club, that had extended licensing hours for those who worked in the printing game. He'd go in there and get hammered and not get home until about five in the morning. It still exists, the Press Club. It's just off Deansgate now. You don't really have to be in the printing game to get in; it's also for people who work at the theatres and stuff like that, but you can just blag it in on the door. Or you used to be able to. We would go in there a bit ourselves later on, in the 90s, when there was fuck all else open at that time in the morning.

After a few months at my nana's, we moved to a house on Cemetery Road in Swinton. My dad was working at Coach Brothers' Inks then, another printer's, which was an okay job though it still didn't pay that great. But as my parents were both working full time, they managed to get a mortgage. Like my nana, that meant a lot to them, as they were the first of their generation to buy a house, but it left them skint. They had this saying when I was young: 'Some people have a nice car, and some people have a nice house', which they really believed. It didn't seem to occur to them, or to many people round our way, that you might be able to have both. Even as a kid it was obvious there wasn't much money to spare in our house, but I didn't think we were particularly hard up, especially compared to some of the people we knew. It's only when you're older and you look back that you can see how things really were.

My mam worked at the local primary school, so whenever the school had a jumble sale she would get first dibs and be able to have a root through all the clothes and pick out some of the best stuff before everyone else arrived. My mam is quite a proud woman, so she probably doesn't like the fact that we got some of our clothes from jumble sales, but because she got in there first we actually got some decent clobber.

With my mam being from a big Catholic family, we went to Catholic school and we went to church every week. My dad, on the other hand, came from a Protestant background and his dad, my grandad Fred, was the head of the local Orange Lodge, but there was never any friction in the family over religion. For our generation, it was just something that was there in the background; it didn't dictate life.

*

My mam worked at St Mark's Primary School, which was also my first school, so I was actually in her class when I was five. Well, there were two nursery nurses who took the class, my mam and another nurse. I remember that year really well, because that was the first time I ever got into trouble. In the teacher's desk there was a great big tin of sweets, nice sucky toffees and all sorts. I had this little trick going, where just before playtime I used to go in to the bog and push one of the windows up and leave it open. The classrooms would be locked at playtime, and I would go into the playground, go round the back when no one was watching, jump in through the window, and go and rob some toffees out of the teacher's tin. I was doing this almost every day for what seemed like ages. I would do it at dinnertime, playtime, whenever. Then one day they realized that toffees were going missing and asked the class, 'Who's been at the sweets?' Obviously no one owned up, so I left it a couple of days, then I was back at it again, but this time when I got in through the window and into the classroom, my mam and the other nursery nurse jumped out and caught me. They had been lying in wait. I was paraded in front of everyone as the guilty one. I knew I shouldn't have been doing it, and I felt bad for my mam because she'd had no idea it was me and I'm sure she was embarrassed and a bit ashamed, but I didn't think it was the end of the world - it was only a few toffees. I didn't do it in a bid to get attention or anything like that; I just wanted to get my hands on the sweets.

I had problems at school from early doors. At primary school, a lot of it stemmed from the fact that I was originally left-handed, which was considered a real no-no. Nowadays teachers wouldn't mind if a kid was left-handed, but back in the 60s it was still very much frowned upon. When we were learning to write, every time I picked up a pen with my left hand I got hit with a ruler across the back of the hand by the teacher. So I would start off writing with

my left hand, from left to right, which felt natural, then I would get hit, so I'd have to switch the pen to my right hand and then for some reason I would start writing from right to left, so I was writing in fucking circles.

Being hit with that ruler, and being told that what felt natural and right to me was so wrong, had a big effect on me. It somehow affected the wiring in my brain, and after that I found it really difficult to learn anything. Looking back, I probably needed some specialist teaching to help me overcome my learning difficulties, but back in the late 60s there was still a stigma attached to anything like that. A few other children at our school did get specialist teaching, and went off to dedicated classes, but my mam didn't want me being ostracized and, because she worked at the school, she was able to have a quiet word and make sure I didn't get any specialist treatment. I suppose she thought she was doing the right thing back then.

Because of the way I was taught, I now write right-handed, but I'm left-handed for most other things. If I'm playing pool I use my left hand, if I'm throwing something I use my left hand, if I'm shooting a gun I use my left hand, and if I'm playing football I use my left foot, but if I'm writing, I'm right-handed. I think that's what originally triggered my 'fuck-off' response to school. I'd been told what felt natural was wrong, and then found it really difficult to learn, so I became frustrated. St Mark's wasn't a bad school, and some kids came out of it okay and did well for themselves, but I do think the education system failed me.

At home, my mam and dad were quite strict. My dad could rule with an iron fist, and my mam didn't take any crap either. My old fella would give me a bit of a hiding if I deserved it, but that was pretty normal in Salford in the late 60s. If you stepped out of line, or you were caught up to no good, you knew you'd have it coming to you. I got

away with plenty of shit as well, though, as I learned quite quickly how to be a bit sneaky and avoid getting caught.

There was always music on in the house when we were growing up. My mam and dad loved all the 60s music – the Beatles, the Stones and the Kinks – but by the time the 60s really kicked off they were married with kids, so a lot of their record collection was the original rock 'n' roll gear, from Chuck Berry to Buddy Holly through to Fats Domino. They would play all that stuff at home, and so would we. Both me and Our Paul went through their record collection as kids, and the records got ruined thanks to us, but they let us play with them anyway because it kept us quiet. They had one of those box record players, the ones that you could stack about a dozen singles on and it would play them one by one. You could even stack LPs on it.

As well as his various jobs, in his spare time my dad was also trying to make it as a musician and a comedian. He used to play all the working men's clubs and pubs to earn a bit of extra dough on the side. I didn't go with him that much, but I did see him when he used to play some of the Irish pubs and the more folky gigs. About seven o'clock most nights he'd go off to various pubs or clubs to do his thing. He once entered a talent contest and came second to Lisa Stansfield, who is from Rochdale so must have been on the same circuit. Years later, when Happy Mondays were playing the Rock in Rio festival, Lisa was also on the bill. She was on the same plane as us back from Brazil, and my old fella was with us and she remembered him from that talent contest.

At the time I didn't really think it was cool that my dad was out playing music, but you don't when you're a kid, do you? Whatever your parents do can feel embarrassing. I mean, fucking hell, as a kid sometimes you don't even want to acknowledge that your mam and dad exist. You want them to be invisible – every kid does. But my dad worked the pubs and clubs, so people knew who he was, and my

mam worked in the nursery, so everyone knew who she was. Especially as she would sit on the top deck of the bus on the way there, smoking cigars. Not just the little thin ones, but big King Eddies, puffing away.

By the time we were six or seven years old, we were roaming about the neighbourhood quite a bit - that's what you did when you were kids; you weren't kept in the house all the time. I wouldn't let my kids out on their own now, but it was different back then. I'm not saying it was safer, because Salford could be rough as fuck, but that didn't stop people letting their kids play out.

There are a few incidents that stand out in my mind from this time. One day I was messing around with some mates and we went down to this park near us in Pendlebury, which had a great big slide in it. When we got there, we spotted that someone had stuck razor blades all the way down the slide, with chewing gum. Luckily we saw it before any of us got on the slide, so we told everyone who needed to be told and luckily no kids got injured. What sort of sick fucker does that, sticks razor blades on a kids' slide?

We would get into little scrapes and fights all the time, almost on a daily basis, but that just seemed normal. Looking back, I suppose it was quite rough, but all I had known was Salford, so I didn't have anything to compare it to. One day when I was in Junior One I was walking home from school, through that same park in Pendlebury with the big slide, when I was jumped by three kids. Two of them held me while the other one just kept constantly kicking me in the fucking bollocks. Little bastards. I hadn't even done anything to deserve it, which is why it sticks out in my memory. I probably did deserve a kicking sometimes, but even when I did I could usually sweet talk my way out of it, which is why this occasion stands out so vividly.

We became quite creative as kids. We had to make our own fun. We would do stuff like constructing our own

smoke bombs by getting a ping-pong ball, breaking it up into little pieces and then wrapping it inside tinfoil. We would then light a match and stick it inside the foil until it started burning, and put the smoke bomb in someone's desk or drop it through a letterbox.

Another of our favourite things was simply going out and getting a chase off someone. We'd do all sorts of stuff to wind people up and get a reaction. Ridiculous things. We'd try and smash a football through someone's front-room window, or drop our trousers at the greengrocer. There were certain people who you knew you could always get a chase out of, particularly some of the shopkeepers. We loved the buzz you would get off getting chased. Sometimes we would run back to Nana's and wait for the inevitable knock on the door, but my nana was great, as she'd cover for us and swear blind that we'd never left the house.

Throughout my whole childhood, I was always out and about doing something, and I developed an entrepreneurial spirit at a really young age, partly because there wasn't much money at home. I knew that if I wanted something then I was going to have to find a way to get it myself. The first real example I remember is when I was about seven years old. I borrowed some plastic bags from my mam and walked for what seemed like miles, to where I knew there was a field full of horses. I walked round the field collecting all the horse shit, then carried it back to our house and split it all up into these smaller plastic bags that my mam's balls of wool had come in. After I'd bagged it all up, I went round all the houses on the estate, selling the manure to the housewives to use on their roses as fertilizer. I made a few bob out of that - not bad for a seven-year-old.

I shared a room with Our Paul in our house at Cemetery Road, and my dad made us bunk beds, by hand, when I was seven and Our Paul was five. I was on the top bunk and he was on the bottom. The bunks were painted red, and underneath the mattress the bed-base was that green-

diamond metal fencing, the stuff that people have round their allotments or sometimes round school playing fields. Every time I moved in bed it made this loud, creaky metal noise, 'creak, creak'.

We never went abroad on holiday when we were kids, but no one on our estate did, really. The first time my dad ever left the country was when he came to New York when the Mondays first played there. When we were kids we went on holiday to places like Blackpool, Southport, Bournemouth or Cornwall. That was normal for working-class folk. My nana and grandad were some of the first to go abroad from round our way. They went to Spain in the late 60s, and then they used to go to Jersey quite a bit, which seemed quite flash at the time.

The first kids I remember knocking about with were my cousins the Carrolls, and then other kids round our way, like the Doyles, the Callahans, the Murphys, the Coxes, the Joneses, the Lenahans and the Healeys. There were actually two sets of Carrolls, because both my nana and her sister married blokes from Salford whose surname was Carroll. The two fellas weren't related - well, not until they married my nana and her sister; they were after that, obviously - but to us they were all part of one family. There was just this huge mass of Carrolls. So although Our Paul was my only sibling, we were very much part of this massive extended family and we had loads of cousins about our age, which meant there was always a big gang of us at birthdays and other occasions.

I would go round to my Aunty Mary's quite a lot. She had nine kids in a four-bedroom house. Our Matt and Pat were the ones that I would hang about with the most, because they were a similar age to me. I would often crash over at Aunty Mary's. If you were round there and it was getting late, you would just sleep in one of their beds. There were about three or four of them in a room anyway,

so one more didn't make a difference. It was like the Waltons, but in a small council house in Salford. I also spent a lot of time at my nana's, as she lived quite close to my school and I got on so well with her.

Round our estate everyone knew our set of Carrolls, especially because my grandad was well known and well liked. He used to take us to the rugby, to watch Salford Reds at the Willows or to Swinton Rugby Club, and later we would go on our own. Our Paul actually went on to play for Salford rugby youth team. When it came to football, all our family were Manchester United fans. Everyone from Salford supports United. If you see a City fan in Salford, they must be lost. I used to go to the match now and again, but I wasn't fanatical about it. I was one of those kids who was more likely to be found fannying around outside Old Trafford while the game was on, getting into mischief, or looking for something to rob, rather than inside watching the match. My cousin Matt and a few others in our family were mad on watching footy, but I could take it or leave it. I enjoyed playing it but I never really understood the amount of time that some people invested in it. Even at a young age, I'd rather be acting the Charlie big bollocks and going round trying to cop for girls.

We first discovered booze through Bill, as stashes of all sorts of stuff would turn up at their house all the time. Crates of Newcy Brown off the backs of wagons or whatever. That wasn't unusual in Salford. When there isn't much money about, people are less likely to ask questions about where something has come from. Bill always had loads of booze in his shed and our mission, when we got to nine or ten years old, was to try and nick it and drink it. This went on until we were about thirteen or fourteen. We were allowed a drink in my nana's house from about the age of ten and I remember being shown how to pour a glass of beer around then.

My mam and dad didn't really drink when we were growing up, although they do have a drink now. My dad was usually off playing the pubs and clubs, so he would always be driving, but Bill was a big drinker and most of the Carrolls liked a drink. There was one other uncle who had a bit of a drink problem and would sometimes sell furniture from the house so he could go to the pub. We were taught about alcohol from an early age and I've never been an alkie. I'm forty-nine years old now and I've hammered drugs and I've had periods when I've drunk a lot, but I've never had an alcohol dependency. Obviously, like everyone, I used to like to go for a few pints and get pissed, especially as a young lad, but I've never really been addicted to alcohol. I don't even drink at home nowadays, and if I did go to the pub for an interview or something I'd be half cut after four or five pints. I drink a lot of energy drinks like Red Bull or Relentless now, and could quite happily sit there all night in the pub with a Red Bull while everyone else is sinking the pints. Although, admittedly, I'll probably stick a bit of vodka in if everyone else is boozing.

Because I live back in Salford now, I bump into kids from school now and again, and those who look a bit fucked have inevitably been abusing the booze. The ones that are my age but look about three hundred years old - usually they appear that way because of alcohol, not drugs. You can't repair the damage that alcohol does to you. The weird thing about bumping into someone from school now is that I often haven't seen them since they were about fourteen, so they've obviously changed a lot, but because they've seen me on TV or in the press for the last twenty-five years, they don't think I've changed a bit.

Over the years, Salford and Manchester have had a big problem with smack. It was about 1980, when the smokable heroin hit, that it started to get bad, but I vividly remember being at primary school in Swinton in 1969 and the police coming in to school to talk to us about heroin.

They told us about the dangers of it, and about needles and all that. I was seven years old and I can actually remember thinking, 'I'm *never* going to get involved with that stuff, no way am I getting involved with that ... that sounds *terrible*.'

When I was nine, my grandad Fred Ryder died from bowel cancer, which was horrible, as you could almost see it eat away at him. That prompted another move, back up to Farnworth. My dad had a compassionate and overwhelming urge to move nearer to his mam, because she was now on her own, so he packed in his job on the newspapers and we took over a chippy on Harper Green Road. It was a real old-school chippy, which looked pretty similar to the one the Khan family run in the film *East Is East*, which I thought was a pretty realistic depiction of what it was like growing up in Salford in the 70s. Certainly more realistic than most I've seen on screen, although the reality was a bit rougher. There wasn't much racism though. I was about ten before I even realized that people at school were different races - it just wasn't an issue.

We used to have chips for tea almost every night while we were living here, which I didn't complain about, and I can still remember the smell of the freshly baked pies being delivered at six o'clock in the morning. It was actually a good chippy, and my mam and dad were a bit more forward-thinking than most, because they served curry sauce, which not many places did back then, not round our way. I didn't have to help out in the chippy, but I would sometimes rob them a bag of potatoes from round the back of the greengrocer's or somewhere. They didn't ask me to do it, I just did. They had the chippy for a year, which coincided with the power cuts of the early 70s, so often there would be a couple of times a week when they couldn't open because there was no electricity. They found it hard work, and towards the end my dad got a job at the post office, and did both jobs. Eventually they decided to sack

off the chippy, my dad went full time at the post office and we went back to Nana's for a few months, before moving to Avon Close on Madam's Wood Estate in Little Hulton, where we stayed for a few years.

Behind our house on Madam's Wood there was a sewage works, which was so close you could often smell it while you were eating your dinner. You could even taste it sometimes; it must have been in the air. You'd be trying to eat your Sunday roast and it would taste like it had grit in it. The only things that grew on the sewage works were tomato plants, because the human body can't digest tomato seeds, and that put me off tomatoes for years. We would mess around up there when we were bored, just doing stupid things like throwing bricks and other stuff into the sewage works, then later, when we got an air rifle, we would shoot the rats that were scuttling about.

There was also a train track behind our house and we would throw stones at the trains and put shopping trolleys, tree trunks and all sorts, even shit from the sewage works, on the lines. I honestly don't know how we never injured anyone or even killed anyone, considering all the daft stuff we did as kids. But we just didn't think. Then they would send out special trains with railway police on them, trying to get all us little urchins who were hanging round the train tracks and the sewage works, but we had loads of places to hide around there.

I also used to love what we called 'sneaking' - tiptoeing into shops and sneaking behind the counters, robbing stuff, without getting caught. It was only small stuff at first, and when I started I did it as much for the buzz of not getting caught as anything else.

Although my mam and dad were both still working, they weren't on great wages and were still stretching themselves to pay the mortgage. When I was fourteen, we moved to Kent Close, facing the sewage works and me and

Our Paul got our own bedrooms and my dad sawed the bunk beds that he'd made out of wire fencing in two to make single beds, but they still creaked. I could never have a wank as a kid, because the bed made such a fucking noise. Our Paul whinged and whinged about his, and eventually broke it on purpose, so my mam and dad bought him a new single bed, but they couldn't afford to get me one as well. I was now fourteen and I was still in this creaky bed that I'd been in since I was seven, and it was *impossible*. So when Granny Ryder got a new settee, I was given her old battered one to use as a bed. It was really knackered and had bloody springs sticking out of it.

That's all I had in my bedroom when I was fourteen - Granny Ryder's tired old settee for a bed, and a chest of drawers. Our Paul had cabinets with a fitted Binatone stereo system - a record player, a tuner, an amp and everything - which my mam and dad had bought him. Even though I was the eldest, he got everything, partly because he was the baby, and probably partly because I was a bit of a tearaway. It didn't really bother me at the time, because I knew they couldn't always afford to buy for two, and I just thought, 'He's my younger brother, fine, let him have it.' You don't necessarily think anything like that is unusual when you're a kid; whatever situation you're in seems normal. The way I saw it, there was only enough for one, so the kid brother gets it and the older brother is left to fend for himself a bit. That was probably one of the reasons I started robbing. I would just go out and get my own gear.

The other thing that I felt counted against me in other people's eyes was that I wasn't very good with my hands. I've never been the sort of person who's good with mechanical things. Even now, I'm useless at working out what's wrong with a car engine. I struggle to change a lightbulb. But I always had that entrepreneurial spirit and I could always find or make money, even then.

To some extent, I was seen as the stupid one. Our Paul was the bright one who was going to go to college. I was never going to amount to dick: 'Just leave Shaun, he's never going to do owt.' But that wasn't something that ate away at me, and it's really important to me that people understand that. I didn't hold anything against Our Paul. We were really close when we were young, and throughout most of our time in the Happy Mondays. I don't have a chip on my shoulder. Through rehab and cold turkey I've had to do so much self-analysing and reflecting that I'm pretty sure of who I am and how I got here. If anything is eating away at you inside, it's going to come out eventually, but I really don't have this massive hang-up that I wasn't appreciated or anything like that. I just thought, fine, I'll sort myself out. That was the real lasting effect it had on me. It made me independent.

This might seem like a slightly odd comparison, but a few years later I watched this film called *Quest for Fire*. It's about a group of Neanderthals who have one fire that they have to keep going at all times, because they don't know how to start another fire from scratch. They end up on this marsh after a battle with another tribe, and their fire dies, so they send three of the tribe off on a quest to find another. These Neanderthal geezers go off roaming the land, having all these adventures, and find fire and bring it back to the marsh. The other motherfuckers are still there grunting, 'Fire! Grunt grunt fire!' and they haven't built a house or shelter or anything. Weirdly, this reminds me a bit of my situation growing up. I sometimes felt like I was the geezer who was sent off to get fire while the rest of them were waiting back on the marsh.

By the early 70s I was beginning to get more into music. There was always music on in our house and when I was round at my Aunt Mary's I was exposed to all different music and influences because there were nine kids who

were all into slightly different scenes. Our Pete was the oldest and he had a huge collection of thousands of albums that were leaning against every wall in the front room, about a yard deep. He was into stuff like the Flying Burrito Brothers, the Byrds, Captain Beefheart and Link Wray. Our Joe was an early skinhead, and into soul stuff like James Brown, Billy Preston and a bit of ska. Our Mag was into soul and the Tams. She was a long-hair skin girl at one point, which is a girl skinhead who doesn't have a fully shaved head, and then she got into stuff like early Elton John, Gram Parsons and Townes Van Zandt. Our Gel was into her reggae, U-Roy, Bunny Wailer and Gregory Isaacs (who I got into a bit of trouble with, years later, when we played on the same bill and were misbehaving together backstage). Our Pat had a load of soul records that he used to buy on import from Robinsons Records in Salford or Yanks Records in town, as did Our Matt, and all of them were into Northern Soul. They were all a few years older than me, so I was exposed to all these great, diverse music styles and scenes at an early age.

My cousins were also the first ones of our family to go to university. Our Bernadette, Carmel and Joe all went, and Our Matt and Pat went to Salford Technical College to do art and ended up, years later, doing all the artwork for Happy Mondays and Black Grape.

Top of the Pops was a big thing back in the late 60s and early 70s. I can remember seeing the Small Faces on there when I was only six or seven, and thinking, 'Oh, they look smart, they look cool', and asking my mam if I could get my hair cut like Steve Marriott. My other strong memory of *Top of the Pops* was watching David Bowie as Ziggy Stardust in 1972, singing 'Star Man' with his electric-blue guitar. I can remember that really clearly, because Bowie looked cool as fuck.

Seeing David Essex in *That'll Be the Day*, when I was eleven in 1973, also had a massive influence on me, as did

Stardust when that came out the year after. Watching those films made me want to be a rock 'n' roll star. I had no fucking idea how I might go about it, and I couldn't play an instrument or read music, so it was a complete pipedream, but it was one of the few things I could see myself doing. It was the lifestyle, as much as the music. I thought, 'I fancy a bit of that.' I can't really remember wanting to be anything else. Although I'm sure I'm not unique in that. I'm sure every kid in the cinema was thinking the same as me. It was just like the tagline in *Stardust* says: 'Show me a boy who never wanted to be a rock star and I'll show you a liar.'

CHAPTER TWO

'How old are you? Are you old enough? Should you be in here watching that?'

WHEN I LEFT school I could read okay, but I couldn't spell properly and I didn't know the alphabet. I ended up teaching myself years later through rhyme, you know like kids do? 'A, B, C, D, E, F, G ...' I didn't actually get round to it until I was about twenty-seven years old and we started to make some serious money with Happy Mondays. I remember Nathan McGough, our manager, telling us one day that our company was going to be worth a million, and for some reason I thought to myself, 'Fucking hell! I better learn my alphabet then.'

My problems at school weren't simply down to me being a bit thick, despite the difficulties I did have with learning, because when I arrived at Ambrose High School at the age of eleven I was put in Set Two for English and maths. There were four sets, and Set One was for the brainiest kids, then Set Two was for kids who were pretty clever, but easily distracted. I clearly had some potential, but at the end of the first year when we had to do various tests on spelling and maths I didn't do as well as I could have and I suddenly dropped down to Set Four. This wasn't just because of the test results, it was also because I was a bit disruptive in class; it was a combination of the two.

When you're stuck in the bottom set and it's clear that half the people are there because they're not bright enough to be anywhere else and the other half are there because they're too much trouble for the teachers to handle, you very quickly get to the stage where you go to school in the morning not really expecting to learn anything. I wasn't stupid, I just didn't pay attention, and after I was put in the bottom set I just couldn't be arsed. So that was it. Once you're in those sets, nobody cares if you're there or not. Especially if they know you would only fuck about if you did turn up. By the end of the first year of high school I had given up on it almost entirely. There was always somewhere else to go and something better to do.

I was a bit of a joker at school. I thought I was cool, although I was probably a bit of a knob. But more than anything I was becoming a bit of a bad lad. I got caned almost every day. I would walk in some days and the first thing I would hear was, 'Ryder, go and get the cane.' I became so disillusioned with school that it got to the stage where it was a good day if I was told to go out to the playground and pick up litter. When I had to do that, a pal of mine who was also disruptive would have to spend all day painting the bogs. Being sent to pick up litter in the playground was great for me, as it meant I could smoke all day while I was doing it, and run off out the school gates and sneak down to the precinct when no one was looking. That was better than being in class.

By this point my main mission was making some money and buying nice clothes. I was far more interested in having cash in my pocket and looking good than learning anything. Because we went to a Catholic school, we had to wear a bloody blazer and a jumper, which I wasn't into, especially as you couldn't really customize them and make them your own. I'd always liked clothes and I can remember mithering my mam for a pair of bell-bottom trousers at the end of the

60s when I was only about seven. They had become really important to me by the time I reached high school. In the mid-70s it was all about Doc Martens, parallel trousers, two-tone trousers, patch pockets, platforms and Royal shoes which were popular with Northern Soul fans. Looking good was important, so any money I laid my hands on, I spent on either some new clobber or on booze.

Ever since I first nicked the toffees at primary school, going on the rob had seemed natural to me, but by the time I was at high school nicking stuff became almost my main mission. There wasn't much money at home and, as I'd become frustrated and disillusioned with school, there wasn't a great deal else to do. It became a bit addictive as well. I'd steal anything - toffees, money, booze, clothes, bikes. I wasn't unique in that. Most of my pals that I knocked about with were doing it as well. We would sell a lot of what we nicked, especially the booze, which we'd sell to ice-cream men, who would flog it from their vans. Back in 1973 we were lucky enough to have the Bulmers and Schweppes depots round our way, so we would rob both of them. The Bulmers depot had barbed wire and that black tar anti-climbing paint on the wall, but we would get over it quite easily. At Schweppes you used to have to get into the yard first, then kick a couple of doors in and then you'd be in the store where there were crates of booze - whisky, vodka, all sorts.

We also used to hit pubs and off-licences near us. One pub - which is actually not far from where I live now, so I'd better not name it - used to keep all its stock in a garage attached to the pub, so we'd break in there. We weren't professional, we were just kids, so we just used to kick doors in or smash windows, or go through skylights to get in where we needed to. I didn't have a particular partner in crime; there'd usually be a few of us, including some of my cousins. We might not have been professional, we were just