

MUSIC

Encore presentation

Concert discs put queer fans in the front row

Morrissey didn't deign to make a single Pacific Northwest stop on last year's extensive international tour in support of his superlative comeback album, *You Are the Quarry*. This year, he consoles those of us who missed out with two separate and rather different simultaneous live releases: the London-recorded album *Live at Earls Court* and a DVD, *Who Put the 'M' in Manchester?*, documenting his triumphant homecoming concert at the sold-out Manchester Evening News Arena that took place May 22, 2004 (which, perhaps not entirely coincidentally, was the singer's 45th birthday).

Earls Court is much less essential than Morrissey's last live album, 1993's wonderful *Beethoven Was Deaf*. Its charm is of the rough-hewn, warts-and-all variety; Moz's voice sounds wobbly and strained until a few songs in, and the overall effect is less impassioned than one would hope. The banter is cute (he says of his chosen profession, "I really can't help it, it's either this or prison"), and there are treats to be found—especially the revivals of gems by Morrissey's former band The Smiths, including anthemic renditions of "Shoplifters of the World Unite" and, as the finale, "Last Night I Dreamt That Somebody Loved Me." But the most beautiful music-making is reserved for well-chosen cover versions of Patti Smith's "Redondo Beach" and The New York Dolls' "Subway Train."

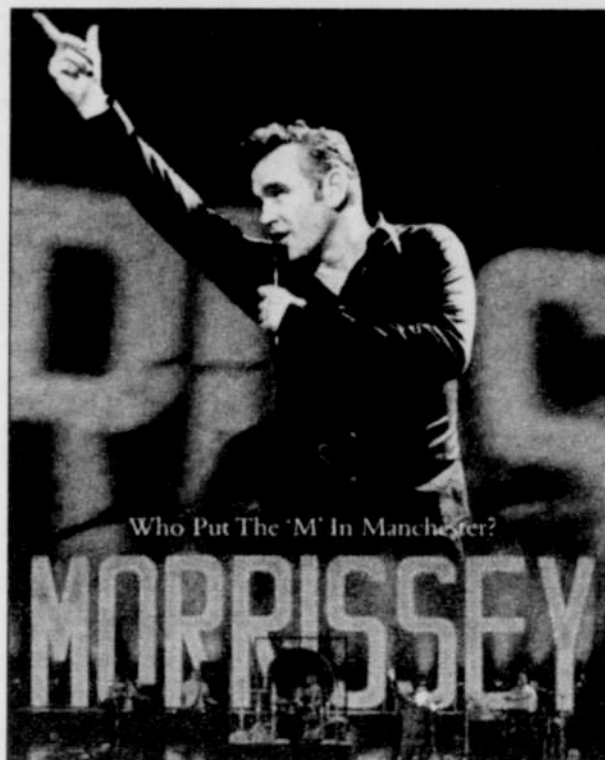
If *Earls Court* is a souvenir of Morrissey's belated return to prominence, *Manchester* is a towering monument. The band rocks its way through the set list; the singing is brazenly emotional, strong and unhindered; the big M responds with an endearingly campy "Who, me?" when the audience breaks into "Happy Birthday"; and he does his eccentric, inimitable stage moves (which prove that "tentatively flamboyant" needn't be an oxymoron) in front

of a brightly lit, bigger-than-life, Elvis-style "M-O-R-R-I-S-S-E-Y" backdrop.

The handsomely filmed concert is preceded by breathtaking golden-hour footage of Manchester's skyline and followed with post-show interviews of attendees discussing their hero, most memorably an elegantly attired, eloquent and erudite middle-aged transvestite who compares him to Mozart and Johnny Rotten. Morrissey is often misperceived as a joyless, depressing misanthrope, but the unmistakable happiness, enthusiasm and diversity—of ages, genders, skin colors and apparent sexual identities—seen here makes his singular world seem a life-affirming, utopian place indeed.

—Christopher McQuain

When it comes to divas, you either go by one name (Cher, Madonna, Janet) or you eventually achieve one-name status by default (Judy, Liza, Bette). Tina falls into the latter category.



Adams ("It's Only Love"), David Bowie ("Tonight") and Mick Jagger ("State of Shock").

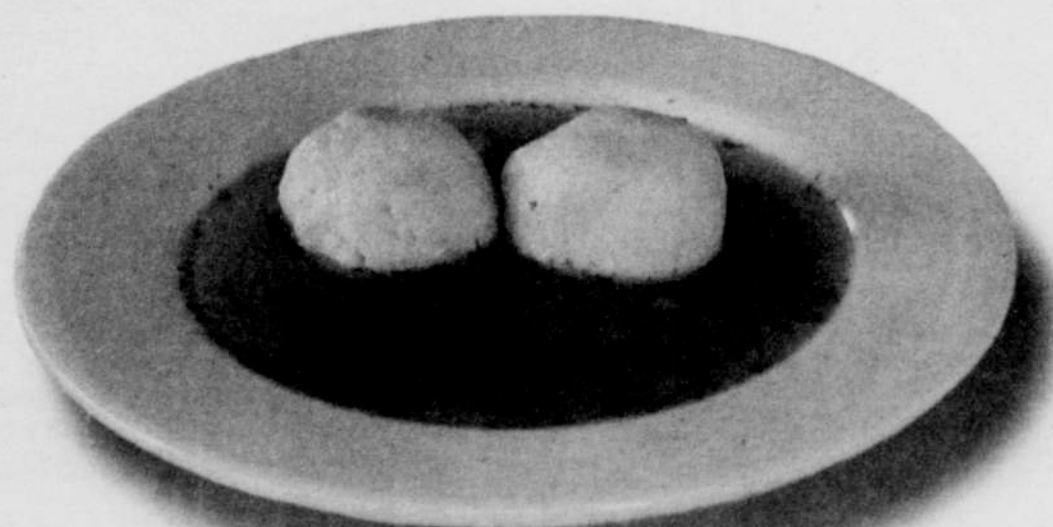
Tina stopped touring five years ago, so *All the Best: The Live Collection* provides one last look back at her career, or at least her second coming. The DVD concentrates on world tours between 1985 and 2000, reminding us of her explosive stage presence, frizzy wigs and trademark legs.

Highlights include a gaudy Wembley Stadium performance of "We Don't Need Another Hero," the theme to *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*, in which Tina chewed the scenery as Auntie Entity; "Goldeneye," the title song to Pierce Brosnan's first James Bond film, written by U2's Bono and The Edge; and "I Don't Wanna Fight," from her inspiring biopic. Her duets with Adams and Bowie are also included here, but if you want to see her sizzling set with Jagger at Live Aid (20 years ago this summer!), you'll have to buy that concert's four-disc set.

Unfortunately, *All the Best* omits worthy hits like "Typical Male" and "What You Get Is What You See," and some of the live arrangements veer toward Vegas cheese, with obnoxious guitar solos needlessly interrupting her gritty vocals. Plus, the "bonus" interview is filmed more like an infomercial, with Tina making vague and vapid comments about her own music. But hey, what's insight got to do with it?

—Jim Radosta

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