

Rev-owl-ution!

**MARTIN McCONACHIE
SPEAKS TO LEAD SINGER
OF REVEREND AND THE
MAKERS AND SHEFFIELD
WEDS FAN JON McCLURE**

You know, there is a clear link to be seen between musicians and footballers. The build-up to a gig/match; the performance on the stage/pitch and the adoration and interaction from the audience/crowd is much the same. Musicians will tell you that the success of a concert can be largely down to the audience being passionate and noisy and with Reverend and the Makers frontman Jon McClure, there aren't many Owls around with more passion.

So having seen Jon's love for Sheffield Wednesday as a guest on *Soccer AM* recently, the question of why he's an Owl and not a Blade was asked hesitantly. "I was born a mile from the ground and grew up in Grenoside, a district on a hill behind Hillsborough. My dad used to go and my mum's family were all Wednesday-ites but my first game was actually at Bramall Lane against (Sheffield) United. I remember that we were playing in green and white hoops, not unlike your kit that day. It was love at first sight though."

It was also love at first sight for Jon and his music. After going to university in Sheffield and getting a first class honours degree in history and politics, he became friends with Arctic Monkeys lead singer Alex Turner and both were in Jon's first band, Judan Suki. Employment was something that happened alongside his music though and a clear career path wasn't for Jon; "I always knew I wanted to do music so I just did quite a few jobs rather

than sticking to one and making a career from it."

After a short sojourn forming a second band, 1984, Jon and his pals set up Reverend and the Makers as we know it today in 2005. They supported the Arctic Monkeys on their sold out UK tour the following year and also played two tours themselves. Their debut single 'Heavyweight Champion Of The World' peaked at number 8 in the UK chart in May 2007 and preceded their first album 'The State Of Things'. The rise was impressive and by the summer, they had played the Glastonbury Festival, Carling Weekend, T in the Park and T4 on the Beach.

It was just as well Jon's music career was going well because the football certainly wasn't as he recalls clearly. "One of the worst seasons was the relegation from the Premier League in 2000. There was a sense of impending doom that year and it was a real struggle." The malaise continued and the Owls suffered a real yo-yo decade, dropping into League One then back up to the Championship before repeating the feat, returning to the second tier again in 2011-12.

Through the good times and bad, Jon continued to support the club and has some great memories of his near-quarter century of following the Owls. None more so, of course, than a day that stands out for everyone connected with Wednesday. It was April 3, 1993 and the FA Cup semi final at Wembley

between the two Steel City sides. "That's the best football day of my life," he purrs. "Chris Waddle with a 30-yard free kick into the top corner. Great day, that was."

Despite the down times and an occupation that sees him away from home for months at a time, his attendance record at Wednesday matches is remarkable. "We're season ticket holders and go to a lot of away matches too, sitting in with the fans. If I'm not gigging, I'll get to the match somehow."

And what has he made of the recent Wednesday renaissance? "Stuart Gray has done a fantastic job, he's more or less ensured safety. He had a brief gig at Southampton and he's otherwise unproven but the players love him. He's also building a team around the likes of Kieran Lee, Chris Maguire and Liam Palmer and I'm really positive about the future."

That future hints at a change of ownership with the club linked to a Qatari consortium takeover. Would he welcome it? "As much as I'm against that sort of financial stuff, I watched Manchester City the other day and thought 'I want that!'. A club of our size deserves to enjoy some success so I'm thinking 'Sod it! Let's have it at our club.'"

So with blue skies on the horizon for the Owls, how is it going for RATM? Pretty good as it happens with the new album '32' having been promoted by the band playing gigs in the houses of *twitter* competition winners. "We are currently touring the country at the moment and the gigs are going from strength to strength. We've played Liverpool and Manchester this week and the Northern cities love us, they've been really spiritual nights. Each album's got higher up the charts than the last one and the tour is selling out!" ■

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