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Morrissey stands alone

Insightful lyricist goes solo after The Smiths' breakup

By Andrew Gardner

Of The Battalion Staff

Morrissey
"Viva Hate"
Sire Records

Oh so alone.
Steven Patrick Morrissey, lead singer for the now-defunct Smiths, stands alone.

He has gone solo since the breakup of The Smiths, but more significantly, he stands alone in spirit and in the skillful way he expresses this stance in his music.

Since launching his solo career, Morrissey has released an album and two maxi singles. He is now recording a second album, which has no set release date.

With its melancholic outlook, Morrissey's music continues in the tradition of The Smiths, and yet it is thoroughly original.

From the wailing electric guitar in "Alsatian Cousin" to the string interludes in "Angel, Angel, Down We Go Together" to the classical guitar in "Margaret on the Guillotine," the most striking aspect of "Viva Hate" is a musical variation that was not achieved by The Smiths, a four-piece band.

Although the melodies on "Viva Hate" are not as upbeat as those of The Smiths, the essential contrast between despairing lyrics and pleasant tunes still remains: the songs' deeper truths undermine an outward show of "normalcy."

The music, somewhat simpler than Johnny Marr's brilliant tunes for The Smiths, serves mainly as a tool to carry and set the mood for Morrissey's wonderfully insightful messages.

On "Viva Hate," Morrissey continues to decry what he perceives as the sad spiritual state of the world.

MORRISSEY



The significance of his words is refreshing next to most of the pop music that gets airplay, music that Morrissey abhors. In "Panic," a Smiths tune, he says, "Hang the DJ... / because the music they constantly play / says nothing to me about my life."

In "Bengali in Platforms," the fourth of the generous thirteen tracks, Morrissey advises, "Bengali / oh shelve your Western plans / and understand / that life is hard enough when you belong here."

But Morrissey himself belongs only in a superficial sense. He writes music for those like him — those who are alone and yet do not want to be part of the empty world they resent.

"The Ordinary Boys" chronicles the salient state of modern society and Morrissey's rejection of it. "Ordinary boys," he says, are "knowing nothing / happy being no one / soothes those who stand alone: 'you were ferent / you had to say no / when those fools / tried to change you, and claim you...'"

Oh so alone.

For the existentialists, this aloneness is a common bond that allows humans to reach out to another. For Morrissey, however, it is strictly isolating factor, a chasm between the limited sight of an ordinary boy and his own perception.

Morrissey cut three tracks for each of his singles, *The Last of the Famous Internationals*, *Playboys* and *Interesting Drug*.

The music sounds like a move back toward the sound of The Smiths and away from the emotive, varied tunes on "Viva Hate". Morrissey imitated The Smiths' sound, and without his natural genius, trying to recapture that sound is a dangerous move.

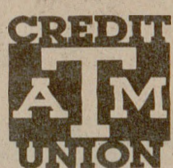
Still, Morrissey continues to express the view he has espoused since the beginning of his singing career.

His message is just as strong in these works as it was with The Smiths, and as undoubtedly will be in his next album.

Morrissey sparks an uncharacteristic glimmer of hope, however, in "Margaret on the Guillotine," the last track of "Viva Hate".

Although "kind people" who "have a full dream... / make me feel so tired," he seesches them in the last lines of the song, change the world, to "make the dream real."

Until they do, Morrissey will remain alone in spirit and in the quality of his artistic expression.



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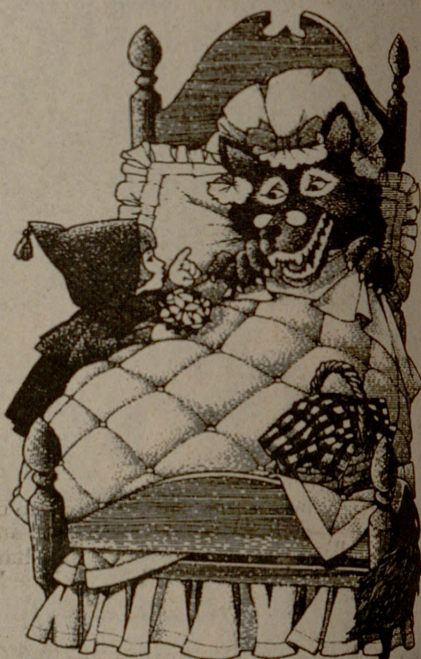
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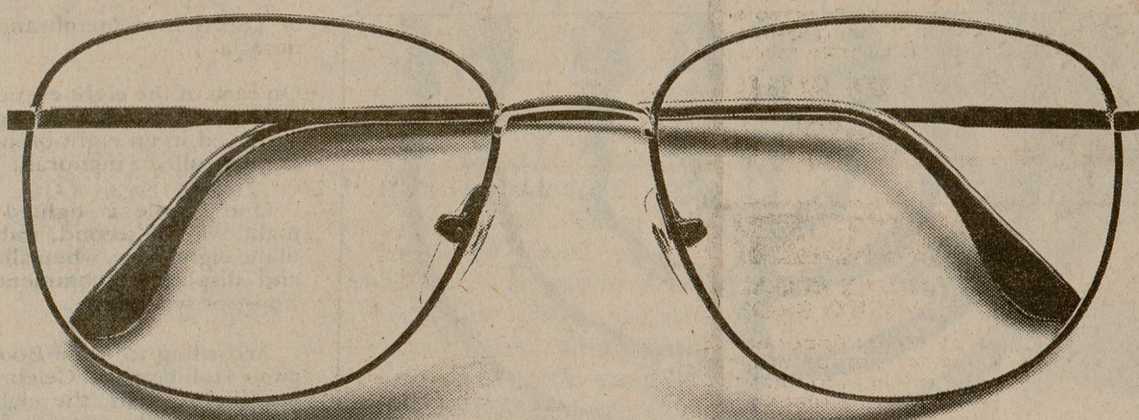
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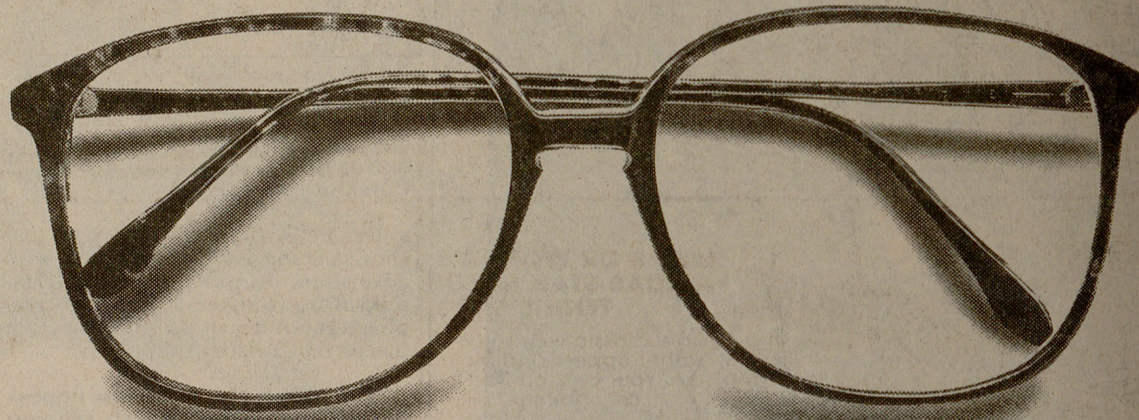
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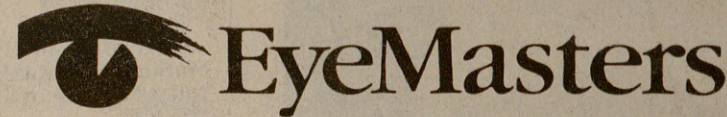
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