

Porl Thompson:

"I don't have any plans to go anywhere else"

Iván Valls, *Scarface y b.*, for *hispaCure* (official *The Cure* fan club, Spain, www.hispacure.com).

Once upon a time, there was a guy who worked as a waiter in Gatwick airport, but actually liked a lot more playing his guitar. He met his sister's boyfriend and his school mates who had a band, so one day he decides to join in. Hence, we are indebted to Carol Thompson, who was then going out with Lol Tolhurst, for being the force that attracted his brother Porl to become part of **The Cure**.

Porl Thompson is the man with big eyes and elegant hands that looks at us from the corners of Cure promo pictures. Few Cure newbies actually know that Porl was there from the very beginning, when the band was merely the after-school hobby of a bunch of teenagers, and that he left way before they recorded their first album, to be devoted for the next 6 years to his second passion: art. He never went away from the *Cure* world though, being in charge of most of the artwork for Cure recordings and ads, together with Andy Vella, the other half of the **Parched Art** project. Porl shyly returned in 1984, bringing twisted sax performances to *The Top* album, then becoming THE GUITARIST of **The Cure** for 10 glorious years. Hugely missed and demanded by fans after he quit in 1995, he decides to return in 2005 to bring us back the gift of his exquisite guitar playing in the festival tour of summer 2005 (now enjoyable in the *Festival 2005* DVD) and the charity gig for the British *Teenage Cancer Trust* at the Royal Albert Hall.

Porl Thompson made a space for us in his busy agenda, and while he's deeply involved in the recording of the next Cure album (which is scheduled to be in the shops some time later this year), he kindly answered to the questions sent by **hispaCure**, in his first interview since he became again part of **The Cure**. He confirmed he's back to stay, and revealed some details about the rumored forthcoming Southamerican gigs and the "keyboards in the new album yes or not" question.

The first question is an obvious one: ¿How is Porl Thompson living his days back again in The Cure?

Happy and enjoying being back with my mates and loving the freedom of a small line-up.

Many comments and gossip aroused when you left the band in 1995. Twelve years later... Could you give us any extra details about your departure?

I needed to start a family so I didn't think I could mix the two at the time as I wanted to devote my time to my children's upbringing. In a band like **The Cure** you need to be a real part of it not just a member.

12 years out of the band is quite a long time. Have you been involved with The Cure in any way, during the time you were not officially a member of the band? When and how the desire of coming back to the band was born in you, and what was the motivation?

I have done a little playing here and there on a few tracks and some art work, but the main reason for coming back was that I really missed it.

Is it true that you played some guitar parts in songs that were left out of the album *The Cure* in 2004 (i.e. *A Boy I Never Knew*)? If true, was this collaboration one of the reasons that prompted you to return to the band?

Yes this is true although at the time I didn't know what was happening within the band and none of the songs had proper titles.

You left **The Cure when the band was going through their more successful moment, right after the *Wish* album and tour were worldwide acclaimed. What differences do you find between that era and the new one you are living with the band right now? Do you agree that the line up of the band in 1992 was the best one **The Cure** has ever had, regarding the level of the music composed and the quality of the performances?**

I love the band as it is now...there is a lovely fresh raw energy and it suits how I want to play plus I love the way Robert is singing now more than then. I think any line up is an on going evolution and I don't tend to look back at things too much.

We know that art has always been very important for you, and that you were devoted to painting after leaving **The Cure in 1995. Your artworks for **The Cure** recordings are also well known by the fans. Could you explain us in some detail the process you use to create the artworks? i.e., if there is a relationship between the**

designs and the meanings or symbolism of the music in those albums/singles. Are you going to be in charge of the artwork of the future recordings as well?

I always get lots of imagery when we listen back to stuff in the studio so I make notes and draw from them and if Robert has an idea then we work it through and try to come up with a solution... then Andy and I go away have fun and come back with something hoping that the band will like it.

Jackson Pollock is cool... so is alcohol.... If both are merged, do we get anything that art critics may evaluate positively?

I don't know ... I am not big on critics ... let the work speak for itself !!

Do you like Spanish painters?

Yes I do like Spanish painters a lot!! Antonie Tapies is one of my fave favourites.

Besides being dedicated to painting while you were away from **The Cure, you had the chance to play in collaboration with two great rock musicians, Plant and Page. What was this experience like? Did it influence you as a musician, providing you with some different or unexpected elements for guitar playing?**

It was a truly great time and an un-dreamt dream come true! I learnt a lot from Jimmy and Robert, Jimmy who is one of the guitar heroes ...was very generous with the parts he would let me play. It was a great journey.

In the same context, who are your favourite guitar players and how did they influence you?

There are lots... and for different reasons

Jimmy Hendrix, for his sheer love of the guitar and great songs. Jimmy page of course.

Mick Ronson, Marc Bolan, David Bowie, for pure love.

Joni Mitchell, for her raw energy and passion when she plays.

Robert Smith, for his melodic weaving and power.

God this is a hard question... There are loads.

Pete Townsend, Syd Barrett, Phil Manzanera, Keith Richards, Neil Young, mostly players from the heart rather than technically brilliant players. I like the fire in the guitar and don't have too much time for muso's

Will we ever be able to enjoy again Porl Thompson playing sax for **The Cure?**

I hope not !!

A photograph of Porl Thompson, a man with short dark hair and a goatee, wearing a dark t-shirt and a necklace. He is looking upwards and to the left. The background is a cave wall covered in ancient cave art, including several large black-painted faces with prominent eyes. In the bottom left corner, a hand is holding a white object with black markings, possibly a piece of art or a tool.

porl thompson
hispacure exclusive interview

picture by andy vella

Getting into more personal questions. We are aware of your personal relationship with Robert Smith at a family level, apart from the relation into the band. In this sense, do you prefer Robert as your band mate or as your brother in law? What was your relationship with him like, during the years you were not a member of The Cure?

We have always been friends even before I met his sister and it has stayed that way throughout he has stood by me even when I went a bit off the rails. Just good friends.

And what about your current relationship with former Cure members, especially with the two who stopped being in the band last year?

Well... we are still on talking terms but anything like that is going to put pressure on people..... I wish them the best in what ever they do.

Robert said during the interviews promoting the Wish album that they gave one special copy to you that included all your solo guitars, hehehe... Will you ever release that copy, to let the fans know how it sounded?

It wouldn't be fair on the world !!

What do you do when you aren't playing or painting? How's your family life? Do you and Janet compose or play music together regularly?

We do all sit around and play songs together anything from Frank Sinatra to Bowie my eldest boy Tod is a great guitarist and the others can pull their weight when it comes to White Stripes or Supergrass!

My boys have a band and we write songs together which is great as I get to experiment even further.

Have you ever thought of making a solo project as a musician?

I am sure that later on there will be a place for some other music but at the moment I still am in love with what we do.

What do you think about free music downloads on Internet? ¿Has the band planned to make any material available in this way in the near future?

It wouldn't be my decision, I don't really have much of a view about it.

In 2004, The Cure was involved with the Curiosa festival tour in the USA. What do you think of this kind of project? Now you are part of the band again, would you like to participate in a festival with a similar concept, but organised in Europe?

Well I personally like playing our own shows and creating the whole environment for the event so I don't know how that would tie in with other performers.

After the lamentable incidents that happened during a Cure gig in Argentina in 1987, the band has barely played in South America, except for a couple of gigs in Brazil in 1996 and Mexico in 1992 and 2005. Are there any plans to play in South America when the new album launches?

I believe plans are in the offing. I am looking forward to it.

Cure fans tend to be, at the same time, cheering, demanding and indulgent...To what extent are band decisions influenced, or even conditioned/determined, by the reactions of the fans?

I don't get too involved in the planning... I just say yes or no when asked what I think.

While the new album is being gestated right now, could you give us an idea of how the sound will be like? Will it be something completely different to former Cure albums, or can you draw some kind of comparison between this album and any Cure past work?

I won't say too much other than a lot of passion and raw sounding but it could change over night! I love it though it is Gorgeous!

Pictures by Andy Vella (Parched Art), kindly provided to hispaCure by Porl Thompson and used with his permission.

Thanks to The Cure Portugal, MexiCure and A Pink Dream for their help :)

With the current line-up, the band sound in gigs is now heavily orientated to guitars and lacks any keyboards/piano. Do keyboards have any role in the new album?

Not really. Robert is happy with the way the Band is sounding and that is how it will sound on record. I love our sound so I don't see any good reason to mess it up and get too ironed out.

Going back to the first question, after all those many years being part of The Cure, the many shows played, and experiences shared with Robert & Co., which are the best and the worse things about being a Cure member?

The best is playing live..... the worst being photographed all the time!

And talking now about songs, which one is your favourite and which one really touches your heart when you play it live?

From the edge of the deep green sea always trips me out !! and *Faith* moves me.

Finally, the last but not least important question, which is actually in every Cure fan mind: Did you come back to the band to stay indefinitely?

I don't have any plans to go anywhere else... if every one in the Band is happy with the way it is going then that is good enough for me.

Ok, we lied... this is really the last question: The legend says that Robert always keeps an eye on everything with the name of The Cure on it. Is he going to check your answers before you give them back to us to be published in the hispaCure website? (Hehehehe ;D)

No unless he has access to my computer !!! ;)

Thank you very much indeed, Porl, for your patient ,and for being so incredibly nice, you truly made our dreams come true with this interview :)

Love

~P~ x

