



INTERVIEW - NOELGALLAGHER

COUNTRY - UK



INTRODUCING: NOEL GALLAGHERS TRAINERS - 09/04/02

INTERVIEW HELD AT OKI-NI, SAVILLE ROW, LONDON.

GA I just wanted to talk to you about trainer culture, specifically in the UK. Over the last 15 - 20 years many would say that Hip-Hop has been a driving force in global culture and everybody, when they talk about trainer culture, seems to relate it back to hip-hop whereas in the UK you've got a trainer culture that's pretty much unique to this country that didn't really happen anywhere else.

NG I don't think it was a UK thing, I think it was exclusive to the North West. When I first moved down here with a couple of holdalls full of adidas trainers and I was checking into hotels I'd e like "Don't lose me fucking trainers." They'd be going "What is it with you man-unians and trainers?"

That's when it first stuck me, I don't think it even came as far as London to be honest with you. Cos we were obsessed with it up in Manchester. It was a football thing as well, really, in the eighties it was exclusive to adidas and I don't know why that was. I don't know whether they were...or maybe they were...maybe it's just... I don't know whether it was the price of them or whether they were more readily available, but nike weren't really a force then in the eighties. They weren't doing anything that was considered street culture, I mean they still aren't as far as I'm concered anyway. It's all gimmicks isn't it? It's all things you can pump up and walk on air and fucking ski on sea with and all that shit but they look shit to me.

GA Yeah, cos when I go back up north, I always get lads coming up to me going "why don't you get adidas to reissue this, why don't you get them to reissue that?" and the thing is in order for adidas to reissue it, the shoe has to have the support of the product managers in more than one country and a lot of the products that are relevant in the UK might not have that same relevance in say Italy or Germany.

NG Yeah totally yeah

GA *In the same way that a Superstar is a basketball shoe but when a kid sees a shell toe he associates it with far more than basketball- he might know it was originally designed for playing basketball but probably associates it with hip-hop. The same way that an indoor super is an old fashioned squash shoe to someone from a sports company but to a kid up north it's like "yeah, this is a shoe that everybody wore on the football terraces back in the early 80s." So are you convinced that the connection between the football terraces and trainers began in the North West?*

NG *I mean saying that I would be biased saying that cos that's where I grew up. All I can relate it to is when I first moved to London or even when I was a roadie and we used to come down to London when I was in me twenties and stuff like that, nobody would stop you in the street and say "where'd you get them trainers from ?" I remember going to Argentina and getting a pair of adidas Marathon in navy blue with white stripes, this is years ago, and it was literally the minute I walked out of the airport somebody pulled up in a car- "Where did you get those from?" and I said "Argentina" and they go "where's that?" cos they thought it was a shop! I said, "its in South America isn't it" Down here they don't seem to get it, maybe it's because when I moved down here I was living in North London, which is a bit posh anyway, maybe if I'd have gone down the East End it might have been a bit different.*

GA *I wanted to talk about some of your earlier memories of getting into trainers. For me, the first pair of trainers I got were from a shoe shop and weren't branded. The first pair of adidas trainers I really remember getting were adidas kick.*

NG *That's my first pair - adidas kick.*

GA *Then I got, erm, "Power Tunis" (both laugh) which was like a black foxy trainer and then onto SRS, Samba. I was thinking back through early trainers I wore last night and I realised that because I used to play football as a kid that the priority was getting trainers that could stand up to regularly kicking a ball about. I wore a lot of black leather trainers because I used to play football so much and if I'd got suede trainers and played football they would have lasted about 5mins.*

NG *Well, I remember the first pair of adidas shoes I got weren't trainers actually, they were a pair of adidas football boots and they were black leather and they had like a sky bluish molded sole and the first pair I had after that were adidas kick, I didn't get them from a*

shop, I bought them off a lad in primary school cos he had them and they didn't fit him so my mam bought them off his mam. I suppose it started becoming an obsession when you were old enough to go to the match on your own and everyone had adidas. Adidas were massive, massive, massive in the North West- huge. And in the first division it seemed to be only scousers and manc's who... and Leeds as well. When we drew Leeds in the cup, all the hooligans were wearing adidas.

GA *Yeah cos I remember the thing with samba (they call them Samba Super now) – there was a time when nearly every lad I knew must have owned a pair.*

NG *I hated them though, I always hated them, I couldn't stand them- that big white thing on the toe man always got on me tits.*

GA *As I remember Puma G Vilas and California were the only time Puma had any credibility as far as they lasted 3 months and then I remember all the adidas trainers with the pegs coming out.- LA Trainers came out and I remember getting SRS cos everyone else had already got hold of LA Trainer and I got a pair of SRS. Then it went into like all the sort of suede stuff, I used to go into Manchester to shop and remember Gazelles being massive and there was another suede range that we used to call 'poor man's gazelles'. Shoes like Madeira, Monaco and Samoa (not the same silhouette as the current adidas Samoa re-issue which dates back to the 70s). They were all suede with like a plastic sole on them and I remember getting them in the sale from JD for like £12.99 reduced from £18.99 (Gazelles were £24.99) - it was the same shaped shoe but they did them in all different colours of suede. I remember going into Manchester and picking up trainers up from JD, Gansgear and the underground market. Where were you did your shopping for shoes in the early eighties?*

NG *Yeah, Oasis centre in the underground market, it wasn't actually underground it was the bit at the top, and they used to sell...what was the t-shirts with the penguin on?*

GA *Munsingwear*

NG *That's 'em. That was all they used to sell and fucking wrangler brown, flared cords and they used to have about maybe, in stock, about a dozen pairs of adidas trainers and they were always, I always remember them having the Dublins - toffee coloured sole, blue suede with red stripes and it was just in there really and I mean, I don't think, in the eighties it wasn't really a massive thing, I mean trainers is fucking big business now, it wasn't then, it wasn't even,*

trainers weren't really... you'd never see an advert on the telly for a trainer back in the eighties, ever. Like now, adidas spend a couple of million quid or fucking £500 on an advert to get David Beckham to sit in a car for 30 seconds and it's an advert. But back then it was all word of mouth and if you had a cool pair of adidas on you got the looks in the street man.

GA *Cos the guy who ran the Oasis shop was a City fan wasn't he?*

NG *He was yeah, that's where I claim we got our name from. Liam always comes up with another dull story that he saw it on a poster somewhere, and it's like "Shut up man." But that was a wicked place to go, we used to wear these levis yellow checked shirts, they were yellow with like a sort of red check, brown wrangler flared cords and any adidas you could get, Nike didn't even exist then.*

GA *Yeah, it's funny to hear you talk about the way trainers are now in comparison to how it was then cos I remember moving to Manchester in 1988, I got on a college course in Manchester at the time and I used to wear trainers and anoraks and students would call people like me "townies," cos students in Manchester at that time were wearing Smiths t-shirts and overcoats...*

NG *We used to go to Manchester uni, when the bands you'd be into would come and play the uni and if you wore what we wore they'd never let you in. If you turned up with like an anorak on and a pair of flares and a pair of adidas trainers, fucking half stoned or summat, they'd say "No, Students only tonight" just because for some reason they thought you looked rough, don't know why.*

GA *If never ceases to amaze me, it's taken on this fashionable connotation but at that time it was seen as being...I wouldn't say dangerous, but kind of like an underclass thing.*

NG *It's the same, without trying to use the word ghetto or anything like that, but people from council estates- that's what they wore. It's as simple as that. So you can call them the projects or whatever in America, it was council estate wear. It's as simple as that.*

GA *And what about going abroad for trainers? One of your mates Chris, who Liams mentioned to me, used to get his clothes from all over. I know up our way there was a big culture of people going out to Switzerland, Austria, Germany to get hold of adidas trainers...*

NG *Scandinavia as well. Ian Brown used to travel out there all the time with Cressa, although I don't know whether it was to buy*

trainers or not. But I never left the country until I became a roadie, I remember going to America and being shocked that they didn't have anything there that you couldn't get in Manchester. I was going there thinking, "That's it, I'm gonna fucking spend every penny I've got on these trainers that no-one else has got," but they didn't have that much adidas, it was all reebok and nike. Then we went to eastern Europe – adidas tracksuit tops like you've never seen before...ever. I mean, I've got one at home and it's pink with red stripes and it's fucking amazing and I've got another which is yellow with chocolate brown stripes and they're the fucking bollocks and I've had them for years. It seems to be a European thing, adidas, it's not really a global thing I don't think. Especially in places like Berlin, I remember going to Berlin for the first time and being knocked out buying adidas handball specials- red with white stripes, this is back then, this is back in the eighties, the end of the eighties, and I've still got them now, somewhere. I hardly ever wore them cos if I'd gone down the Hacienda in them and somebody had stood on them with a big pair of fucking daft reebok boots and there was a big footprint left...it'd have gone off!

GA Did you actually collect trainers yourself in the eighties?

NG Well the only reason I collect them now, my missus has got a theory about this, she fancies herself as a bit of a psychologist. She goes "You've got all the money in the world, what is it with these manky pairs of old fucking adidas trainers you're bringning home, you'll come in the door and you'll go (smiling) "Fucking guess what I bought today?" and she goes "what" and I'll go "look at these" and she'll go " they're fucking falling to bits." She reckons it's because when we were all on the dole and we couldn't afford to buy them, and we'd see them in the shops and you'd just think "fucking hell man" and there was no such thing as a second hand culture or second hand clothes- second hand clothes were for tramps, it was a mod thing, everything had to be brand new, so there was no second hand culture then. She said it's probably because you grew up on the dole looking through these shop windows and now you've got the money to buy them it doesn't matter if they're in or out of fashion. It's all the ones you go back to like the adidas "Highway" you think I could never fucking afford them, but I'm gonna buy them now. I don't know what it is, it's like collecting guitars and sunglasses for me- they're just cool as fuck, to me it's part of the past and I stick them on once in a while for a photo shoot and a photographer turns up and he'll go "where did you fucking get them from?" Like them adidas brown shoes (adidas Korsikas), I've worn them once in a photo shoot and interview and I'll spend more time talking about me shoes than me new fucking album. To me they're just important artefacts of the eighties.

GA I've come across people who seem to re-write history for themselves, your one of the few people who's in the public eye if you will who's taste in footwear I respect. It's like when we re-issued the forest hills, forest hills as I remember them had a white sole it was a 1982 shoe, the yellow sole one was like a myth round our way. Since I've worked for adidas I've looked into it and found out that originally there was only ever 400 pairs of the yellow sole forest hills came into the UK in the late 70s - Wade-Smith in Liverpool got them and they were basically bought up by scouse footy fans. The lad who works with me at the minute used to work in a sports shop and he used to get these lads coming in going "I haven't seen these for years, I used to wear these on the terraces in the eighties" and really unless you're about 40 years old and from Liverpool chances are you weren't wearing the yellow soled ones.

NG I'd never seen them before until you sent me the pair. Mani phoned me up and goes "Have you got the new Forest Hills yet?" I said "No I haven't"
He goes "They're the ones with the yellow sole"
I go "Fuck off."
He said "I'm telling ya, I've just got them off Gary"
I'm like "I don't fucking believe you mate"
And then I seen them, and there they are.

GA This is the thing about that Manchester scally culture, because they were so young at the time that it was happening it was really poorly documented. There is very little documentation of that whole scene...

NG Well I was in a meeting with these guys yesterday who were doing a film on the nineties, it's two proper Hooray Henrys. They're going, "Look, If you're not going to be in this film then it aint going to happen and blah, blah, blah." And I asked them what else they had done and one of them goes "I made a film about trainers" and I looked at him and I thought "You? Who give you the fucking money to make a film about trainers" Nice guy and all that but not from where we're coming from where we're coming from. This guy has probably gone to Oxford and I've gone "and whats it about then?" He's going "well, it's just about people and trainers"
I was going "Why didn't you phone me up I'd have fucking done it?"
He actually said to me "You probably won't enjoy because there's not a lot of adidas in their"
And I went "well then the films going to be shit isn't it"

GA So, How many pairs would you say you've picked up, at a guess?

NG *A hundred? I don't know*

GA *Have you got any stories about anywhere mad you've picked em up? Your Liam said you went to the adidas office in Argentina.*

NG *Argentina's fucking having it for adidas over there. I got a pair of grey gazelles there with black stripes and a black sole. Like you say though, they won't issue anything that's not got a global appeal now. But when I went back in the eighties, about '89, with the inspiral carpets, I was just shopping, I couldn't go to the adidas offices –you know 'who are they?' But that was the best time cos they had a lot of stuff I'd never seen before. But you go to all these places now, I suppose it's a reflection of the globalisation of the world, you don't get anything that's unique to... You know, you'd go to Yugoslavia and you'd see stuff that you'd never seen before in your life and it was unique to that country. Where as now, everything is mass produced and it all becomes, like fast trainers to me, it's just like fast food.*

GA *In the last few years I know that adidas has, from an internal point of view, they've been trying to get the licences back from various countries, because I think there are still a few countries out there that still have the adidas licence to produce what they want. I know that there was a couple of South American countries where that was going on. So you'd have stuff still being produced. I remember a seeing an Argentinean catalogue a few years ago and, as a person that's into trainers, I was going "Jesus, they're still making them!" But, from a company point of view, they want to put out a consistent message.*

NG *I can understand that to a certain extent. It's a hell of a shame. Japan is probably the best place in the world because you'll see stuff, like the white leather Handball Specials, that you won't see anywhere else simply because they have to make stuff unique to Japan simply because it costs so much, so that's the only reason they can get kids to buy it over there. But, again it means that if you want anything unique or from the past you've got to find out where a car boot sale is going on in Germany and you'll see stuff there. But, in a way that makes it more exciting because when you do find a pair... Like when you got me them adidas brown shoes the amount of people I phoned up- Gaz Whelan from the Mondays was fucking devastated when I got them. Cos he always goes on about the adidas brown shoes and I'm like "I've fucking got a pair man."*

GA *Well, this is it with the adidas shoes. That's another example of a shoe that is particularly popular here in the UK because of their association with terrace culture. The number of people that ask me about the adidas Palermo or the adidas Korsica and that whole adidas leisure shoe range...*

NG I'll tell you a funny story about adidas shoes. My mums house got robbed in the eighties, this is no word of a lie, and all they took was me adidas brown shoes. So it must have been guys that I knew, who robbed my mams house- put the back window in, climbed over the fridge. We go up the next morning and there's a bit of glass in the kitchen and it's like "It's alright, the tellys still there, the videos fucking still there," you know, anything worth anything, it's like "me fucking adidas shoes have gone." So some cunt's robbed me house for a pair of adidas shoes- so that's how much it meant to people up there.

GA So how do you find it when they re-issue a shoe that you're into?

NG They always get it ever so slightly fucking wrong. But it's great to see them and it's great when you see kids wearing them because obviously they have never seen the originals so they don't know any better, but you feel a bit of an old fart going like that "Hey, but I've got a pair" and you say "look, it's an eight of a millimetre too thick at the top." It's like you said before, it's a train-spotter thing, but, it is fucking important. Because is you're going to re-make adidas Dublin, you've got to get the right colour blue. It's like when you make the Handball spezial, it's got to be the right colour sole. To us, anyway, you just go "it's not as good as the fucking originals man." But seeing them prototypes of Indoor Super you've got over there, they are as close as you'll fucking get to the original and it's good to see them coming back man, I just hope they don't mass produce them so there's loads and loads and loads of them and everybody wears them.

GA Which shoes would you like to see re-issued?

NG The adidas brown shoes.

Ga Yeah?

NG yeah. Them and... I bought a pair right, and it was in this fucking little shop, this is when I was a kid in Southern Ireland when I was out with me mam once. I can't remember what they were called but they were like Indoor Super and they had a really flat, thin sole and they were white with navy blue stripes. If any, I think the adidas shoes or adidas cord man, them brown ones with beige stripes, they were pretty fucking cool. But all of them, there's just something about them, for me. Me missus is always going on about it and Liams the only one that understands. We were out the other night and some random geezer's wanting to talk about Oasis and he's wearing these adidas trainers, and Liam goes "Hey, our kid has got

the best fucking collection of adidas." And that was it for 45mins. To us it's something to be proud of in a way and it freaks people out in a way. Because we've been all around the world you know, I've met Oscar winners, I've met one of the Beatles and all that, but the most prized possession I've got is me adidas trainers, I wouldn't go anywhere without them.

GA *What about your own taste in trainers? I personally am a big fan of mid 80s running trainers but I know you quite like your flat shoes..*

NG *I like the flat, thin sole, basic. Flat, thin, preferably suede. As for colour combinations, navy blue and white is usually fantastic, whichever way you put them. Anything with a flat, toffee coloured sole I'd pay top whack for them.*

GA *What did you think about adidas re-issuing the old sixties shoes like the Italia?*

NG *Great, mega, especially when you see old pictures. I've seen a picture of the Spencer Davis Group playing outside the Albert Hall and Spencer Davis is playing his hammond wearing a pair of adidas Italia. They're fucking great man. And they've got them perfect as well actually. I've never seen an original pair but I've seen pictures and they look pretty close.*

GA *Is it possible to remember different occasions in your life by the trainers that you wore?*

NG *I always have this funny thing. Gem pulled me up on it once, because I said to him- "You're not going to go on stage with trainers on are you?" For me, for some reason, I've got a mental block about going on stage in trainers. I don't know why it is, I always wear shoes. Gems response was that "Keith Richards used to wear gazelles on stage." Trainers are for going out in, they're not for working in dyknowhatimean? So back in the day, I would only wear them on aeroplanes. Back when we were starting off the clubs were really small, and it's like I say, if someone would have thrown water onstage and stained a pair of me trainers I would have gone fucking mental. Growing up at Maine Road really, I was wearing a pair of adidas the day city got relegated, by Luton! I remember that. One of the first photo shoots we did outside Maine Rd, I'm wearing me original gazelles in that. That's another thing about Gazelles man. That pissed me off when they started re-issuing them, the soles are too thick, on the ones I used to buy the soles round the edges is slightly rounded, and the tongue was different as well. Trainers to me these days, they just look fatter as opposed to longer and sleeker. I don't know why that is.*

GA So, are you pleased about adidas doing the city named shoes again?

NG Yeah, Stockholm are the ones... Them adidas Munich over there, they're mega. I went out new years eve 1998, and I had a pair of Munich on- Black suede with amber stripes and Bez spent 45mins going "Where'd you get them from?" I said "I've had em fucking years" And he goes "They're too cool for Christmas man!"

GA So, whats missing from your collection?

NG This pair that I got in Ireland that I can't remember what the fucking name of them is. Like them Barrington ones there with red and blue stripes rather than three grey stipes. I remember having a pair of slightly off red colour Gazelle, in fact, they were almost pink. Me mam ended up somehow putting them through the wash and they actually did go a faded pink and they were fucking mega. I don't know where they've got to. I've forgotten all the names because there's so many but I've got pictures of them in my mind.

GA What about peg stuff, are you into that kind of stuff like kegler etc?

NG I'll tell you want I'd like to get hold of- "adi - colour." Also them adi -court you've got down there, that's what I'll be looking out for this year when we're touring Europe.

GA Why adidas for you? I know you can say about growing up with it, but there's a lot of stuff I wore then whose appeal has worn off.

NG It's three things. The blue box, with the three stripes on the side. I've still got an original box that I got when I bought a pair of shoes a few weeks back. When I get them I always stick em in me bedroom, put the shoes on top of the box and sit there for hours just going..."Fucking the business" boring the missus, she's going "Are we going out for dinner or what?" "No man, just give us another half hour, fucking look at them though." I stop short of taking the camera out. It's the old logo and it's just the three stripes. Any more than three stripes on a pair of trainer looks fucking stupid and any less - it's not enough. Nike have done some pretty cool old trainers but the three stripes it's just...I don't know...it's just it for me.

GA I find it amazing when I walk the streets and I see people wearing two stripes on their tracksuit tops and thinking nothing of it.

NG *What the fuck is that all about?*

GA *I just really don't understand it cos when I was growing up if you wore two stripes you'd get beaten up!*

NG *There's been a rumour going around that adidas are going to make the city kit when they move into the new stadium, I forgot to ask the chairman on Saturday. I was saying "It'd be just the business" and he (the chairman) said "why?" and I was going "not for the kit, for the tracksuit top" Cos if you're going back to the old logo. If they do a tracksuit top which has got a fucking round knitted collar, three stripes down the side, city badge on one side and the adidas logo on the other- I'd fucking die a happy man. I'd just buy six hundred, I'd buy little ones for me daughter at every stage that she's going to grow up and that'll be fucking it, I'll get buried in one.*

For more information on this interview including a shoe-by-shoe description from Noel's collection, please pick up the launch issue of 'Introducing...' magazine; available from Selfridges, Size?, RD Franks and the ICA; plus selected branches of Waterstones + key stores in NYC, Berlin and Paris.