



IDLES

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IDLES have been one of rock/punk rock music's most influential bands of late. Joseph Talbot, IDLES front man is unapologetically outspoken, inspirational, and an activist with brutal charm. Their new album TANGK recently charted #1 in the UK and with it brought a new level of success, notoriety, and balls to the wall self-analysis.

Joseph speaks to me from his tour bus on video chat in Prague.

Michael Holdaway: Congratulations on TANGK Charting #1 on the UK charts. Two out of five albums hitting #1 is not a bad ratio.

Joseph Talbot: Thank you.

As expected, following your highly anticipated new release TANGK has been reviewed up one side and down the other with fierce comparison and critique. What would you like to communicate about this new body of work, TANGK?

It really isn't important for me to communicate anything. I'm a musician and I think the music does it for me. I think our latest album is a continuation of "Crawler" because it's all part of the same chapter. We had a lot of time to transgress and express our gratitude through our music.

Any artist who isn't entitled, who feels like they are lucky in their position and lucky to have what they have, challenges themselves by working hard by going deep within themselves to resonate with what they are going to communicate. That should then speak for itself.

You struggled a lot during the early years of the IDLES. can you talk about that struggle?

Yeah, at the time I was lost and felt extremely alone. I also knew there was something missing from the music scene I grew up in which was birthed by The Strokes onward. There were loads of bands that dressed like them, but they didn't have the same magic.

You can be a great clothes horse, but it doesn't mean shit if you write boring songs and look bored on stage. Nothing made me more resentful than paying money to see a band and them looking bored on stage. It made me want to pull my fucking eyes out. So, I started the band because I needed an outlet, something to save me. I wanted to re-create the magic and energy I felt was missing.

Can you talk about the band and your music as it relates to business?

Some artists may see business and art as a dirty word, but they probably aren't very good at it. To Me, business is not about monetizing art.

One of the first things we did as a band is make an agreement to split everything equally 5 ways and we've never since questioned that. To succeed as a band and a business we had to understand the infrastructure that creates live music and give our fans a valuable product.

What are some good business practices in music as a business that you follow?

Turning up to a venue early or on time, respecting your customer or fan base, remembering the staff's name, treating people with respect, treating your craft and opportunity with respect.

If I want to validate my opportunity and succeed in life I need to treat my business with respect otherwise, I'm ignoring the facets of longevity.

I've often heard versions of the following statements from musicians: "I don't want to think about "The Business", I want to make art." or "I don't want to be a sell-out; I'd rather rock out."

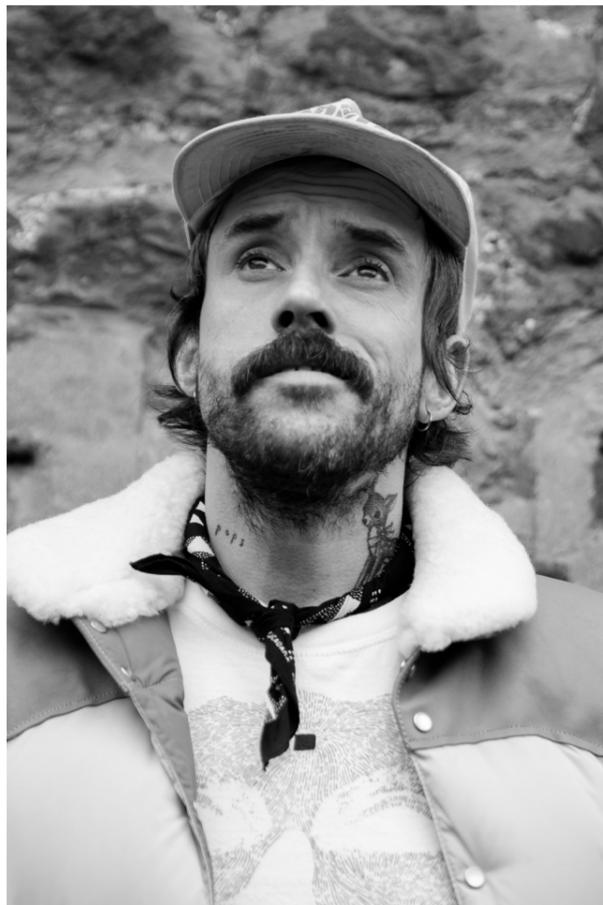
There is a dichotomy as an artist. I don't treat writing the music like a business. That would be insane. I treat touring, merchandise, and the finished product as a business.

What happens after I write the music is that I respect the art of what I've created and then treat that like a business to manifest making a living. In return I have more time and space to do what I love, create music.

Any advice to the artist who struggles with the business of music?

If you don't like the business aspect of the "music business" try dislocating yourself from the art of the product or surround yourself with people that can make your business happen brilliantly.





It sounds like as a band, you've identified each other's strengths and work together in a healthy making it possible to survive the past 15 years. Five different personalities for 15 years. How were you able to make that happen without breaking up?

From the beginning I was the cheerleader for the band. I had to wake up every morning with purpose and the desire to create something.

So, you were the motivator when times were tough, and moral was low?

I kept everyone focused on us as a band and not paying attention to what everyone else was doing.

It only took 15 years to figure out that two of us, Bowen, and I, wanted to drive the steering wheel and the other three wanted to be passengers. It doesn't mean that they don't write parts and that they are not instrumental because they are. We work very expressively and are very open with each other.

You've developed deep personal and business relationship with each other?

We all have more patience with each other in our friendships because we have so much respect for the art that we create together.

Can you give me an example of how the respect you have for each other has manifested in the way you work together?

What has evolved most lucidly is Bowen and my relationship. We are really speaking each other's language. It developed naturally from me accepting my insecurities and allowing him to be the driver. I wasn't always good at doing that.

Sometimes Bowen takes the lead and sometimes I take the lead. That's the way it works. Every democracy needs a leader.

You've mentioned that you learned a lot from being on tour with LCD Soundsystem. Can you elaborate?

They are just beautiful, kind, and caring human beings. I saw how they put everything in place to make sure everyone on tour feel comfortable and safe in what is typically a volatile working environment.

Also, they've had the same people work with them for a long time because of the environment they create. It's

like a productive working family who loves and trusts each other. It makes for a much better show for the crew, artists, and the fans.

At what point in your bands career did you get sober?

I'm not completely sure, but at one point I sobered up for two years and now its about 9 months. Meritocracy and time around sobriety work for some people but I think for me the less I think about it the better.

Like if you decide to have a beer one night and its straight back to day one again. No, you've just stayed sober for 9 months and achieved something amazing, what the fuck? You shouldn't have to just write it off like it was nothing.

Agreed. In a situation like that do you feel there's implied shame attached to what some might consider a relapse?

Yeah, It's a pressure for some, like age. Some people feel the pressures of ageing, and some don't. I think that those who don't have a freer perspective.

I'm clean and I'm happy!

The difference between writing and touring sober.

Writing, nothing changes because I'd never write drunk or on drugs. Not my thing,

Touring sober is a million times easier and so much better sober. You cannot perform well as a mechanism if you are poisoning yourself. I try and under-think my performance and be as present as possible to authentically connect with the audience.

Music is my therapy and I'm aware how many times my life has been saved by music, so I don't take it for granted.

A quote from you- "The love of an innocent child can dispel myths and take out a lot of the drama of life. " What drama has been removed because of fatherhood?

I have a purpose of fatherhood and it's the most lucid purpose I've had. It has prioritized things much like death has. When I've had loss, it's made my time with the other people I love so much more valid.

Then, I gained someone so innocent, gentle, vulnerable, and beautiful. You can either feel trapped or feel free with this purpose. I feel free. Fatherhood got rid of all the noise.

What noise?

Like album reviews, people telling me gossip about other bands, idiots commenting online, the internet, it's all noise.

My daughter is an absolute luminescent reminder every day of how lucky I am.

You seem like someone who may not be able to sit still for very long. How do you maintain a meditation practice.

I'm a musician. I meditate for 90 min a day in live performances. It's the most mindful thing I do and its the most present I ever am. I do Yoga Nidra when I need to sleep. I also love cycling and boxing they're all liberating and meditative.

Can you throw out the bands or artists you love from the following decades?

50s- The Flamingos

60's- The Monks

70's- Bauhaus & Joy Division

80's- Gun club

90's- The Notorious B.I.G.

2000's- The Strokes

The strokes invented the 2000's. What about the 2010's?

Sure... who comes to mind?

The IDYLS!!!!!!!!!!!!



