

# Something for the Weekend

BACK IN THE MOONLIGHT... guitarist Dan and with his bandmates, below

## We want the fans onside

TOPLOADER meets **SFTW**

**TOPLOADER** are back with plans to release a new album — and they're offering punters the chance to finance it.

By chipping in, fans can get the chance to buy things like signed lyric sheets or time to hang out with the band during studio sessions.

Guitarist Dan Hipgrave believes the time is right to embrace new methods.

He said: "Since we started, we've seen the landscape of the music industry change so radically. It isn't even recognisable."

"Bands like us still want to do things the old way. It's hard for us to change. But this time around we see the value in it."

"The fans feel more included and get more than just an album. And the upside is we get to do our own music, rather than some guy in a suit."

"For a band like us, doing this feels innovative. I'll be honest, it's a big big ask for people to pay for an album that hasn't been made yet."

"You hear everyone saying the music industry is dead. But it's not dead unless we allow it to be."

"People need to keep making music, otherwise it would be a pretty s\*\*\* world."

"It's about finding a way that works."

The band — also including singer Joseph Washbourn, bass player Matt Knight and drummer Rob Green — enjoyed their biggest hit in 2000 with *Dancing in the Moonlight*.

But Dan feels they weren't given enough credit for getting to that point and selling two million albums. He explained: "A lot of

people just think about *Dancing in the Moonlight*.

"That was a mega Top 10 hit all round the world, so I get why they think that."

"But others, and I'm sure a lot of our Scottish fans know, we spent three years in the back of a van playing our debut album in clubs to 100 people."

"It took years before we got to the *Dancing in the Moonlight* bit. And along the way we had three Top 20 hits as well."

"By the time the general public knew who we were, we were a finely-tuned machine." But the wheels came off and they split in 2003.

### 'We've kids and families now'

Dan — who revealed in *The Scottish Sun* this week that he was gobsmacked that ex-wife Gail Porter appeared on *Celebrity Big Brother* — admits that success sapped the fun out of the adventure.

He said: "I remember being on tour with Robbie Williams."

"He was really big at that time in 2001. 'Most people would cut their right arm off to go on tour with Robbie and play in front of 20,000 a night."

"But we were spent. We hadn't had any time off for a year. We were demotivated and something like that should be the kind of thing you cherish and look back on when you're older. But it wasn't."

"All any of us wanted to do was go home. When it gets to that point, you need a break. You do need time to sit back and reflect on success. But that won't happen to us this time — not as many people want us

EXCLUSIVE by  
CHRIS SWEENEY

anway now." Things are on their own terms now. So the guys are confident they won't end up back in that place.

Dan added: "We've got kids and families now. You can't go bugging off on tour for three months. Those days are gone."

"We didn't get a choice with what we did back in those days. It was like being in the army — we were told we were going away for months and to pack a bag."

"You're in a bubble and everyone panders to you, so you need someone strong to tell you things straight or it can be dangerous. That's the problem on the road, you're constantly either drinking or hungover — one of two states of mind and that's not healthy."

And while they're embracing this new model of making an album, Dan is worried that a fan books them for a private gig for a £3,500 contribution. He said: "That's quite cheap. A band like us playing at a wedding seems flipping weird, but we're up for it."

● TO get involved, go to: [pledgemusic.com/projects/toploader](http://pledgemusic.com/projects/toploader)

DAN has rubbed shoulders with tons of big rock 'n roll names. But it was Sir Alex Ferguson, left, who left him dumbstruck. The guitarist is a massive Manchester United fan. He said: "It was a party and I ended up with him. 'But I just f\*\*\*ing went to bits. And I've met some pretty cool people in my time and never had a problem. 'I just couldn't speak. I just didn't know what to say."



**NEW MUSIC**  
By JIM GELLATLY

### BATTERIES

**WHO:** Steven "Sci-Fi Steven" Clark

**WHERE:** Glasgow

**FOR FANS OF:** Bis, Devo, Blur

**JIM SAYS:** Hot on the heels of the Bis EP collection *I Love Bis*, the band's Sci-Fi Steven has emerged with a stunning album of electro punk under the name Batteries.

It's undeniable the self-titled album will strike a chord with fans of Bis, famously the only "unsigned" act to appear on *Top Of The Pops*.

Their performance of *Kandy Pop* on the TV show back in 1996, was a great victory for DIY indie at the time.

The trio (Manda Rin, Steven and his brother John) went on to sell over 100,000 albums in Japan.

They also signed to Beastie Boys' Grand Royal label in the States, and even recorded the theme tune for the *Powerpuff Girls* cartoon series.

He told me: "Batteries is certainly a more 'rock' project but I can't shake my love of a big chorus."

Batteries is just Steven, represented brilliantly in the video to the new single *Human Requirements*. It features a four-piece band, but thanks to special effects, each member is actually Steven in a different guise.

He said: "The video came from a totally uncool source idea, Paul McCartney's video for *Coming Up*, where he plays various versions of himself. I've got the current



me on guitar, the Dirty Hospital me (myself and John's techno project) on synth, the Ayr United following football fan on drums and, most hilariously, an exaggerated 90s me on bass, complete with wig cut to exact 1996 bowl cut specifications!"

Steven has gone back to his roots for his solo debut. He says: "I'm more or less DIY again now, just like the early days of Bis."

"I think the DIY ethos has to go hand-in-hand with a strong collective belief in what your band is doing."

"I think the idea of 'make the industry come to you' is still prevalent, especially here in Scotland. The days of bands getting signed and quitting the day job are mostly gone."

These days Steven juggles his music with family life and running a bar in Glasgow's West End. He explained: "If there's an industry even harder to make a success in outside music, then it's definitely the pub game!"

"I'm usually a house-husband during the day and out to work in the evenings."

"Nap-times are where my music-making happens!"

**MORE:** [batteriesmusic.com](http://batteriesmusic.com)

● JIM presents a weekly showcase of New Music on *Amazing Radio Sundays* 2-4pm. [amazingradio.com/jimgellatly.com](http://amazingradio.com/jimgellatly.com)

Watch video of Batteries at: [thescottishsun.co.uk](http://thescottishsun.co.uk)