

THE ANSWER

BIOGRAPHY

Introducing: Cormac Neeson (vocals)
Paul Mahon (guitarist)
Micky Waters (bassist)
James Heatley (drummer)

In these days when the transient is so often perceived as something more crucial, meet The Answer. Yes, they're Irish. Yes, they're carrying on the great tradition of Thin Lizzy, U2, Therapy?, Rory Gallagher and Van Morrison. But, no they're not merely re-hashing what's gone before. This is a band for the modern era, who are bold enough to take the chops forged by Led Zeppelin, Free and the Black Crowes, propelling these into the 21st Century.

This is the first major new British name to hit the world of classic rock this decade, this century, this millennium. And this is an overnight sensation that's been brewing for six years. Yes, count 'em! These Downpatrick dervishes only got started in the Spring of 2000 – and even then, fate played a big role.

“In 1999, I was out in New York, playing in bar bands, and serving in pizza parlours, when I got this letter,” explains Neeson. *“It was from Paul (Mahon) and Micky (Waters). They were putting together a rock 'n' roll band, with a bit of the blues. Someone had suggested that I'd be the man to sing with them.”*

Despite correspondence and enthusiasm on all sides, nothing seemed to develop. Until, once again serendipity played an ace. Neeson enrolled in an ethnomusicology course at college, and made the luckiest mistake of his life.

“On the first day, I stuck my hand up and said I could play guitar. So, they gave me this Brazilian instrument called a cavalcanto. I had no clue what to do with it. So, I turned to the guy behind me and said, ‘Please tell me you can play guitar. I'll swap you this for your tambourine’. It was Paul!”

Re-acquainted, and with Mahon having saved Neeson's embarrassment, they quickly organised a rehearsal for the formative band, with Waters also included. A few months later, drummer James Heatley was brought in. The Answer were ready to ask the right questions!

Initially, it was a struggle – only Ash and Relish spring to mind as bands from Downpatrick to make their mark – but, slowly, The Answer got their message across. They had the chance to play on the bill for the celebrated Witness Festival at Fairyhouse Race Course in Ireland (now known as the Oxegen Festival) – alongside The Darkness, Sonic Youth, The Prodigy and Ash – and also recorded three demo EPs. *“We bombarded everyone we could think of with those demos,”* laughs Neeson. Towards the end of 2004, they finally got that critical break for which every band preys (sic).

“We sent Steve Lamacq our last EP, and one night he was going through this box of demos, pulled out ours and threw it to a mate, who was over that night, thinking he might like it. That bloke was Dave Bedford!”

Bedford loved it so much that he flew over to see the band play, took them on for management, and the rest is rapidly becoming history. This management liaison led to The Answer signing a deal with the prestigious Albert Productions. Since then, they’ve released the acclaimed ‘Keep Believin’ EP and the single ‘Never Too Late’ (respectively, in July and November 2005), got the chance to support the legendary Deep Purple at the Astoria in London earlier this year, and have also been out on the road with the equally seminal Whitesnake. Oh, and just to underline their growing strength and importance, the band picked up the ‘Best New Band’ accolade at the first ever Classic Rock magazine awards last October. Talk about ‘overnight success’, eh?

Now comes the next phase in their surge: the release of sensational debut album ‘Rise’. Recorded at the famed Olympic Studio 1 in London (both Hendrix and Zeppelin left their sonic fingerprints all over this place), this was produced by Andy Bradfield and Avril Mackintosh. It’s already been called ‘The Best British Rock Debut Of The Decade’ by Classic Rock magazine. And, in a world where hype overrules sense, here’s a rare record that outpaces all media hysteria.

Not to pussyfoot around, this is the album that brings a sparkle back to British blues rock. It has edge, energy and songs that are refined, defined and definite. This isn’t just a homage to influences and a bygone era. Rather, it opens up the airways for a renewal of the passion, heartbeat and power surges that were once the trademark of those who helped propel this sort of music to Olympian heights.

“This is a snapshot of where we are at the moment,” explains Neeson, with an almost understated bravura. *“It’s got rock ‘n’ roll, blues, soul and even a touch of metal. We’ve made an honest record, representing what we believe in.”*

In years to come, rock fans of all ages, sizes and appetites will view ‘Rise’ as one of the great landmarks. As hard rock music celebrated its fifth decade of pre-eminence, it’s The Answer who are proving it still has value and substance. Whether you’re 60+, and grew up with the reality of Zeppelin, The Who and Free. Or whether you’re 12, and can only witness the myths of these giants...The Answer are for YOU!

Malcolm Dome
(TotalRock Radio/Classic Rock magazine)