
In The Psychiatrist's Chair

With Orange Slices' resident psychiatrist Edward Komocki

For ages I had been pondering on what to write for the next edition of *Orange Slices*. As a practising psychiatrist, it dawned on me that maybe I should put my professional psychiatric skills to the test in a somewhat different setting!

After all, there'd been dozens of articles devoted to both *The Wedding Present* and *Cinerama* in all kinds of publications, but none had ever taken a specifically psychoanalytic approach before. This certainly had the potential to be a bit different from the usual David Gedge interview !!!

Now the most obvious way to attempt this would be to analyse the man through his music, the assumption being that by examining the form and content of his songs, I would gain a vivid insight into both his conscious and unconscious life! Well, not being too unkind, but this produces a picture of David Gedge as a sex-obsessed, adulterous, underhand love-cheat whose every relationship founders on the rocks of infidelity and who exists in an almost permanent state of morbid envious longing for a love just dangling out of reach.

Now this didn't strike me as being the David Gedge that I felt I knew.... or at least I certainly hoped it wasn't!!! From other interviews, he usually comes across as being rather disarmingly shy and keen to stand several feet outside the spotlight of celebrity.



David Gedge - Madman or Genius?
Edward Komocki investigates.

Photo: Sally

After all, the number of David Gedge snapshots on the covers of his albums can be counted on the fingers of one Simpson's hand. And his 'Live in Concert Persona' is at times almost painfully bashful !!! Here's a man who "never does encores," ...what better way of escaping from the limelight and adulation? He clearly isn't beyond exerting his authority and certainly possesses a perfectionist streak... on several occasions I've witnessed him bring a live number to a sudden halt after only a few bars because of some minor imperfection.

With so many apparent contradictions, there really would be only one way to know for sure and that would be to interview the great man himself! And so, fuelled by a combination of curiosity and trepidation, I suggested the novel idea of performing a 'David Gedge Psychiatric Assessment' to the Editor of *Orange Slices*.

Several e-mails later, and somewhat to my surprise, the deal was clinched and I had secured an audience (...and a curry!) with David Gedge.

And so, like all good psychiatrists, I prepared my questions well in advance, collected together a series of intriguing, projective psychological tests and, when the big day arrived, donned my most professional-looking attire and headed up north! Eight hours later I'm pulling off the motorway into a service station and feeling like I need to see a psychiatrist myself!

I sat in the car for quite some time trying to work out why I was feeling that way and drifted into "free association" mode. My initial reassuring thought was that David Gedge hadn't turned out to be the villainous Casanova of his songs.



David pictured during the recording of a concert at the BBC's Maida Vale Studios for the John Peel Show (14th June 2000).

He was an amenable, friendly, hospitable bloke! He seemed contented with his life, was very self-deprecating about his success and celebrity and possessed enough positive strength and forgiveness to contend with the harshest of critical appraisals of his work! He had drive, motivation and optimism, laboured diligently and with care to create songs of consistently high quality and...

...and that was when it started to dawn on me! David Gedge was... completely normal !!! David Gedge wasn't "rock'n'roll" at all !!! Now, I hadn't been expecting to spend the afternoon swilling Jack Daniels by the side of a guitar-shaped swimming pool or hearing stories of debauched escapades on the road with Slash and Axel Rose, but I guess I was anticipating something... something more !!!

He didn't seem at all like the man who could produce the startling aggression of 'Dalliance' or the passionate melancholy of 'Your Time Starts Now'. He seemed just like you and me. He'd come from a "stable working-class background." He enjoyed a good (albeit uninspiring) university education. He was living in a long-standing supportive relationship and even planning a pension !!! No traumatic or scarring life events. No horror or despair!

Indeed, the most startling fact I came away with was that David Gedge dyed his hair - an observation made from having taken up the true psychoanalytic position in the chair above his head !!!

And that was when the next lightbulb of realisation slowly dawned on me. This “David Gedge” that I had anticipated meeting - this tortured artist struggling with his inner demons of desire - was more to do with me than it ever was to do with him!

This “David Gedge” was my creation - the product of over-zealous song analysis, long-distance dramatic interpretation and the professional drive to seek out psychopathology which just wasn't there! My “Franken-Gedge” bore little relationship to the man of real flesh and blood who was warmly- personable, relaxed and humorous! And therein lay my disappointment. I had got him so very wrong! Those who claim that dissatisfaction is inevitable when you meet your heroes may well be right, but it's not always they who let you down - sometimes you disappoint yourself.

But enough self-analysis and more of the interview. At the very beginning, David himself asked how I'd know if he were telling the truth. I suppose that did cause me a bit of a flicker in the suspiciousness department! In the real psychiatric world, such uncertainties can be overcome by taking corroborative histories from closely-related others and confidentiality is assured. But this wasn't the real world - this was Orange Slices business and, being reasonable, just how many people would be completely willing to bear their souls to a psychiatrist knowing full well that the findings were heading to the printing presses and the scrutiny of the general public!?

So, do I think David was less than judicious with the truth? I guess the answer is “no”, but I do wonder about the depth of some of his responses. I didn't get very far with some of the questions about his main influences.

And subject matters for songs were “not necessarily related to any personal experience... they're sometimes based on things I've overheard.” And, by his own admission, he doesn't dredge through his past experiences or probe into his own unconscious for inspiration: “I want to look forwards, not backwards!”

His responses to the ‘projective tests’ were also a little cagey. He underwent versions of the Rorschach Inkblot Test and the Thematic Apperception Test. In both tests you are presented with a series of pictures and have to describe what you see. There are no right or wrong answers, but, in theory, you project aspects of your personality into the descriptions you give of these ‘neutral’ images. David was quite concrete in some of his responses, often using single word answers.

If the inkblot looked vaguely like bullet-holes or a face, then that's the reply I got! “Bullet-holes”. “A face”. (Now me, I saw Lee Van Cleef and Clint Eastwood squaring off on a tennis court during a snowstorm in that one!) More evidence of my own overactive imagination!

So my psychiatric assessment of David hadn't uncovered any sordid or dramatic revelations and although that might not allow me to write up an article worthy of the salacious tabloids, I was left with my hero intact! And if I was now putting the finishing touches to an article entitled “Putting the Sin in Cinerama - The Perverted World Of David Gedge”, I'd be struggling with even greater dilemmas and losing no end of sleep!

It could have been the biggest selling edition of Orange Slices though...