

BRITISH AIRWAYS

high life

OCTOBER 1997

jon_bon JOVI chills out

WOLVES IN YOUR BACK YARD

PLUS: ISTANBUL, YEMEN, NORWAY AND ENGELBERT'S VEGAS



New Jersey's Leading man



LOTS OF ROCK SUPERSTARS TRY THEIR
HAND AT ACTING. FEW WORK AT IT SO
HARD AND HAVE EARNED SO MUCH
RESPECT FOR THEIR FIRST EFFORTS AS JON
BON JOVI. WITH A NEW MOVIE AND AN
UNUSUALLY INTROSPECTIVE NEW ALBUM
OUT TOO, HE FINDS TIME – JUST – TO SPEAK
TO TESSA SOUTER

"YOU ARE going to love Jon Bon Jovi," his PR assured me. "He's so normal. Not a star type at all." That's not what my friend Farakh thought. When I told her that I was going to have lunch with him ("at this really cool little restaurant right on the waterfront not far from his house," said the PR) she actually screamed.

"God, I'm so jealous!" she sighed, when she'd recovered herself. She needn't have been. Two days before the interview the PR called to confirm the arrangements. "A car will be picking you up from your home and driving you to New Jersey. The plan is to get you to the airport by noon to interview Jon who will be taking off for New Orleans at one." Airport? "Yes." Not the cool little restaurant right on the waterfront not far from his house? "No. You'll be interviewing him in the plane before take-off." Lucky I'm on a diet.

At the airport, we stand around the windswept field keeping our eyes peeled for pop stars, and about half an hour later I spot a young blonde who looks sufficiently out of place to excite my attention. "Are you Tessa?" she says, coming towards me. She is Jon's personal assistant, Christine. "I don't know where Jon is," she says. "He should have been here by now." We both scan the empty airfield forlornly.

Maybe he's overslept. Hey, the man's been very busy lately. In the past two and a half years, along with fulfilling his musical commitments, he has made no fewer than five films (most veteran actors should be so busy). It all started with 1995's *Moonlight and Valentino*, starring Whoopi Goldberg, Kathleen Turner and Gwyneth Paltrow. It successfully cashed in on his movie-star looks (and "nice ass") by casting him as a sexy

painter and decorator. In spite of it being such a small part, it won him rave reviews and the Most Outstanding Newcomer Award from the American Motion Picture Club.

Since then, he's been working on *Homegrown*, with Oscar-winner Billy Bob Thornton, *Little City*, a romantic comedy, and *Long Time, Nothing New*, with director-actor Ed Burns. *The Leading Man*, which stars Bon Jovi, opposite Thandie Newton, as an unscrupulous movie star making his West End stage debut, is just out. He has also just released a new solo album, *Destination Anywhere*, and an accompanying MTV video – a 30-minute short with music and dialogue starring Demi Moore, Kevin Bacon and Whoopi Goldberg. No wonder he's late.

Eventually a car pulls up and Jon Bon Jovi gets out. He's handsome, yes, but not as absurdly handsome as he is in photographs and on film, both of which hide the fact that his head is just slightly too big for his body. He's wearing a leather jacket, T-shirt, '80s-tight jeans and rock star-befitting black suede pointy-toed cowboy boots. His much-written-about trademark big hair is long gone. Nowadays he sports a much shorter, somewhat tousled mop which, on closer inspection, looks suspiciously as if every single hair on his head has been dyed a subtly different shade of reddish brown. The colour job offsets the I-don't-care-about-my looks effect and reminds me that this is the guy who insisted on removing all his chest hair for his brief topless scene in *The Leading Man*.

"I'm sorry I'm late," he says, baring big teeth and leaning forward to shake my hand. "I had a late night

From rock'n'roll star to *Leading Man*... songwriting, says, Jon Bon Jovi, will always be his first love. But he's so busy now that most of the songs on the new album were written in the trailer, on the set of his latest film



"It's the thrill of the chase really," he says. "That's what it's about. It's not even the rewards. It's **getting there**" (on acting)

last night." Somehow, I find myself simpering "Oh no, that's fine" – all but adding: "it's probably my fault for being on time."

Despite the PR hype and the fact that he requested to be interviewed by this magazine, he is not an easy interviewee. He has a guardedness which makes me wonder if he grew up playing that game where you have to answer questions for two minutes without saying yes or no. Or maybe it's true what they say about being beautiful; you don't have to try so hard in the conversation department.

Whatever the reason, getting him to open up is like playing Frisbee with a small child. You throw the Frisbee, the child misses it. You

Man. He invited him over one Sunday for a jam and Dave Stewart was there. "Dave said we should write a song together sometime and I thought, well, I'm here for three months. So we did."

I take it a little less personally after I subsequently hear from an actor I know that when an actress friend of his had to kiss Bon Jovi in one of his movies, she described the experience as "the iceman cometh". And it must get tiring being interviewed over and over again, especially for someone like Jon Bon Jovi who for nearly 15 years has been front man to one of the most successful rock bands ever. They have sold over 75 million albums, their last CD, *These Days*, went platinum,

No more big hair days...
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go get the Frisbee and throw it again, the child drops it again.

His answer, for example, to whether he thinks there's a time limit to being a rock star is: "Ask Mick Jagger." On whether he hangs out with Ed Burns since working with him on *Long Time, Nothing New*: "I would if I had time." On growing up in the public eye: "Like having embarrassing baby pictures." On whether there are any negatives to the life he leads: "Not too many." Several times he even answers with a terse: "Correct." But I have yet to ask "The Dave Stewart Question." his PR was so eager for me to ask. I spring it on him about ten minutes into the interview but even that excites only a hundred or so words, including conjunctions and repetitions. Bruce Willis was filming *The Fifth Element* in London at the same time as Bon Jovi was filming *The Leading*

and they regularly fill stadiums and arenas to bursting with screaming fans. It is, he is eager to point out, "ridiculously" hard work. "Last week I shot Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. Flew to Chicago, played a show Thursday. Came home and shot Friday. Had Saturday off. Had a meeting with a film director last night (Sunday) and I'm flying to New Orleans today. It's ri-dic-ulous!" he says. Still, it's the life he chose and he's happy with it. "It's a good thing I like airplanes. I go home and expect my wife to tell me to fasten my seat belt."

He's so busy, in fact, that most of the songs on the new album were written in the trailer on the set of *The Leading Man*. "It's the only opportunity I had to be alone," says the 35-year-old who says he spent the first half of his life living with his parents and has spent the second



half with his wife (they've been together for 17 years and now have two children). "You sit in a room this big for hours, so after a while you pace around, watch a movie... Thank goodness I was able to write." (Songwriting, he says, will always be his "first love".) The experience was so positive that he wanted to buy the trailer and put it in his back yard. And the hours of lonely introspection show in the album's songs.

In fact, *Destination Anywhere* is quite a departure from the music of Bon Jovi, the band, and a long way from Jon's early days as front man in a

local band doing covers of his hero, Southside Johnny. It's more percussive, almost Bruce Springsteen-like. It also seems a lot more autobiographical. *August 7* is about the murder of his manager's daughter. *Janie Don't You Take Your Love to Town* was inspired by a fight with his wife, and the lyrics to *Learning How to Fall* could easily apply to his new acting career. "Everything came so easy/A king's ransom couldn't please me/Now I'm learning how to fall."

Being famous already, he claims, has been more of a hindrance than a help. "You have to really prove that

you're ready to work as hard as someone for whom it's their whole life," he says. It has been like starting again from scratch. "It's the thrill of the chase really," he says. "That's what it's about. It's not even the rewards. It's getting there." And there's no denying he has worked hard. He didn't go after his first job until he had three years of private acting lessons under his belt from coach Harold Guskin, whose other clients include Bridget Fonda, Michelle Pfeiffer and Geena Davis. "It's like having Harvey Keitel be your acting coach," he says. "He just sits there for

two hours a day with a cigar in his mouth and tells you how bad you are. Doing a love scene with a guy with a beard and a cigar, that's acting!"

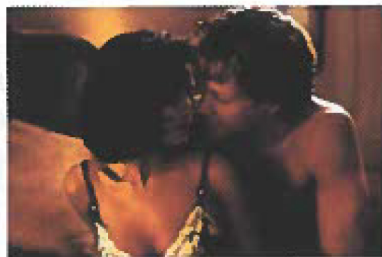
Although he tried out for the lead in the blockbuster *Heat* (the role eventually went to Val Kilmer – an actor he rates highly, along with Sean Penn, Johnny Depp and “the usuals” Robert De Niro and Jack Nicholson), Bon Jovi seems to be concentrating more on independent films. “I’m drawn to those,” he says. “I’d rather go see them on a Friday afternoon. I’m looking for things with good dialogue, good stories.

“It doesn’t have to be bigger to be better for me. I have the luxury of having a great day job so I can choose my roles.” He seems particularly drawn to playing the kind of blue collar character he might have been, if he “hadn’t written a bunch of songs as a kid and pursued music.” Would he have been happy with that life? “Definitely!” he says. I’m not so sure I believe him. In the meantime, however, he’s having a lot of fun playing make believe. **high life**

THE BEST OF JON BON JOVI'S WORLD

bar	The mini bar in my hotel suite somewhere
beach	Long Beach Island, New Jersey
walk	Why walk when you can run?
drive	Pacific Coast Highway One in California
restaurant	Chen'du in London
food	I like everything but Indian food
swim	In my bath tub. I can see the bottom
monument	I don't know. I'll skip that one.
city	New York, New York – London being a very close second
country	America and Italy
continent	Europe, because of its distinctive character
foreign word	I can't think
world leader	Hillary Clinton

Getting in on the act... “It’s ridiculously hard work,” says Jon Bon Jovi, of his new-found film career. Yet he’s had fine reviews for: *The Leading Man* with Elizabeth Perkins (below, left and centre) and *Moonlight* and *Valentino*



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