

It's not about everyone liking you...

Reformed hellraiser Liam Gallagher may have mellowed of late, but there's still plenty of fire left in the Oasis avenger. **Sally Browne** discovers on a night out with the band

HE'S had both of the Gallagher brothers in his taxi, the London cab driver informs me, as we wind through the city's narrow streets. The nice one and the naughty one.

The "nice" one he dropped off at his house, at the height of the band's Britpop fame, when crowds of people were waiting outside.

"Then another time I picked up the naughty one," he says, "when he was still with his missus, Patsy Kensit. She was pregnant. I didn't really want him in my cab in case he started something, but he was with her, so it was all right."

Ten minutes later I find myself alone in a room with the "naughty" one, although on this occasion 36-year-old Liam Gallagher is being exceptionally nice.

We're at the Roundhouse, the iconic north London venue, where Oasis will be taking the stage as the closing act of the week-long BBC Electric Proms series. The gig sold out in 42 seconds.

Liam, wearing a black leather jacket and scarf, is in a chilled-out mood.

He might be doing a special show with a

handle it any more — the hangovers." Back in their day, the Gallagher brothers, Noel and Liam, were the unlikely princes of British pop culture. Growing up in a rough area of Manchester, in the north, with a devoted mum and unkind dad, they had a fearless ambition.

They sang about living forever, not dying young, and their music — along with that of arch rivals, educated southerners Blur — will be forever associated with Britain's optimistic renaissance. They were the anti-grunge.

Staying true to rock 'n' roll, Oasis's latest album, *Dig Out Your Soul*, their seventh UK No.1, recorded in the famous Abbey Road studios, recreates the magic.

In the foyer at the Roundhouse, where fans mill outside, photographs of Oasis's greatest moments line the walls, including two giant headshots, where the Gallagher brothers appear like Roman caesars, un-touchable, godly.

One photograph, of a stadium gig in Manchester, attracts a lot of attention. "What I wouldn't give to have been there," one fan says. Later, another fan points to the

celebrity and the band stops. The crowd erupts into a frenzied soccer chant: "Who are ya? Who are ya?"

It's actor Daniel Craig or, as Noel points out: "Bond, James Bond."

Each of the brothers dedicates a song to his woman — Noel, 41, sings *Waiting for the Rapture* from the new album, to girlfriend Sara MacDonald. Liam sings *Songbird*, which he wrote for Nicole shortly after they got together. The girls look like teenagers in love, dancing and waving to their men.

Dig Out Your Soul contains three Liam-penned numbers, including the single *I'm Outta Time*. A wistful, romantic tune, it could have been written by the ghost of John Lennon, and at the end of the song Lennon's voice can be heard in a quote recorded just before his death.

Liam says: "I've always thought it would be nice to have someone speak on it, and obviously John Lennon's the man. So we went through these tapes and that was the first one that pops out. Sometimes you get lucky. That was the magic in that. It just fitted straight away."

four, but who's counting?). Where Noel delivers answers worthy of a stand-up show, Liam keeps his short and to the point, but he's not ungenerous, chatting about his wife and kids. He recently appeared on Gordon Ramsay's *The F Word* with Nicole. Is Ramsay a man that can outswear him? "He can have a go. But mine's for real. He says it just for the sake of it."

Swearing is good for you, he maintains. He doesn't think much of the current crop of enfans terribles dominating the scandal rags, who instead of mixing a little drugs with their sex and rock 'n' roll have let it take over their lives.

"Pete Doherty and Amy Winehouse? They're f---ing scumbags, aren't they? They really need a wash. Apparently they're really talented. They're talented at being scruffy. I know that. I don't care for them. They're grubby little bastards."

In a strange turn, his kids listen to Gorillaz, the hip-hop cartoon band created by his former arch-nemesis, Blur's Damon Albarn. Liam's got no beef with Albarn now, though.

"That's how I've chilled over the last 10 years, but it was fun at the time, do you know what I mean? And I meant it, because I did think they were f---ing ridiculous."

But a more important relationship that has weathered many storms is his and Noel's. More like colleagues than family, the brothers don't hang out socially — while Liam prefers to be in bed by 11, Noel's off out with his celebrity mates.

"We were never that touchy-feely, cuddly brothers kind of thing anyway, so it's still the same sort of; we don't really speak that much," says Liam. "We only speak when things need to be said. The thing is about our relationship, there's no bullshit involved."

Recently in Toronto Noel was attacked on stage by a random fan. Liam was ready to get into the ring to protect his brother.

"Without a doubt. I think he'd do the same thing I'd do it for any of them. Without a doubt. You've got to look after your brothers haven't you?"

Liam now has two sons, close in age, of his own. What legacy would he like to pass on to his children?

"Just to be themselves, man. Nobody's perfect. You wouldn't want to be. Be yourself. It don't matter what people think of you. That's the only thing."

Those words sound familiar. Their message echoed in the first line of *Supersonic*, Oasis's first single, released in 1994: "I need to be myself, I can't be no one else."

Now he says: "Yeah, man, be yourself, man, and don't worry if the world doesn't fall in love with you. Because it's not about everyone, is it? You can't change the world. It's not about everyone liking you. As long as you like yourself then you'll be all right."

Dig Out Your Souls out now.

"BE YOURSELF, MAN, AND DON'T WORRY IF THE WORLD DOESN'T FALL IN LOVE WITH YOU."



50-piece choir, but it's all in a day's work for the younger Gallagher. He would be at home, which is just around the corner, but his missus — All Saints singer Nicole Appleton — and her mates are "getting dolled up".

In his 15 years singing upfront in one of the biggest bands in the world, Liam has earned his reputation as an enfant terrible — from getting himself banned from airline Cathay Pacific to allegedly head-butting an Australian fan.

Now, though, he has settled down with Nicole, whom he married this year after eight years together, and spends time with his three kids. He gets up at 6 every morning, goes for a run, likes to eat out early, and is likely to be in bed by 10 or 11. He couldn't be happier.

He admits he has mellowed a bit. "Not too much, though," he says quickly. "You've got to be when you get older and you've got kids; it's your duty, innit? You can't go out every night drinking. I can't

same picture. "See, that's me there," he says, pointing out a black spot in the crowd.

A fan sums it up for me: "Their songs were about being from a working-class background and being downtrodden and rising above that. And when you're a teenager you're always feeling downtrodden."

To Liam, music is as important to him as it ever was.

"Yeah, man, if not more important," he says in his raspy voice, put to good use over the years. "This is my life. This is what I do. This is it. This is where I get my kicks from. This is what makes me feel untouchable."

On stage: "It's like being in a war zone." On stage Oasis are whipping up an electric mayhem as the thirsty crowd, drunk on a collective dream of youth, almost drowns out the 50-piece choir.

In a dress circle, the band's partners and celebrity friends, including Noel's best mate controversial comedian Russell Brand, watch from above.

Suddenly, a spotlight singles out a certain

Liam's love of Lennon is no secret — he even named his son after him. "He's just the best. He's a f---ing dude, isn't he? He's got a great voice. A funny personality. He didn't give a shit. He didn't take no shit. He's a dude. I'm not obsessed with him. I like his music and I like his voice."

At Abbey Road studios, Liam says, he definitely felt the vibe.

"I always felt the vibe. It's the best studio in the world. That's where we should make our music all the time. That's why our record sounds good. Obviously our producer's good and that, but you can hear Abbey Road in it. If you don't make a decent record at Abbey Road, then you shouldn't be making music."

Liam is not the first Gallagher brother I've spoken to. When people ask me who has been my favourite interview, I always say Noel Gallagher. I spoke to him two years ago, and he had me in hysterics, talking about the day in the life of a Jedi-cum-rock star and delivering unto me the 10 Commandments of Rock (we only got to number



Unlikely princes: Liam and Noel (middle two) were the anti-grunge. Oasis's latest album stays true to rock 'n' roll