

Jon Savage returns with new track *Hold Back the River*

By  Martin Myers

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Jon Savage was the lead singer of the South African globe-trotting rock band Cassette, who won the South African Music Awards in the Best Rock Album category in 2007 for their debut album *Welcome Back To Earth*. He also co-wrote multiple collaborations for the 5FM collaborations including the The Parlotones ft Khuli Chana song *Sleepwalker* and the Van Coke Kartel/Seether collab track *Goodbye Tonight*.



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These days Savage tends to mind his own business, unexpectedly dropping searing tongue-in-cheek songs or complaints when it suits him. One thing is certain, unlike a good wine, age has not refined him.

And now after a decade, Savage has new music; a track called *Hold Back the River*. For Savage, this work is very personal where he reflects the space and time he finds himself in.



We recently chatted...

■ ***What is your purpose?***

To create projects that will change the world and that uplift creators.

■ ***What does music mean to you?***

Not a lot. I mean that's if you consider oxygen, climate change and hurricanes not a lot. ;)

■ ***My music is about...***

When I was in Cassette, our music was political, emotional, abstract, and fun. But I can tell you without a doubt that *Hold Back the River* is the most personal song I've ever written. It feels very different to anything I've ever written before. Maybe I'm growing up, who knows?? Unlikely but possible.

■ ***What is your motto?***

There's got to be another way!

■ ***Fame is about...***

Literally no idea.

■ ***I don't do...***

Smooth and easy. I'm intense. As anyone who works with me knows (sorry).

■ ***I would love to co-write with...***

South African composer and musician, Caiphus Semenya.

■ ***Where do you go for inspiration to create?***

I'm a voracious content devourer and I'm inspired by people doing amazing things in life. I think creativity is a muscle that needs a lot of exercise. In the work that I do in the creative industry, I have to do creative brain sit-ups all day every day. The trick is to be able to respond to an idea quickly enough to get it down in the studio before it floats away.



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What is the most enjoyable aspect of your work?

I haven't released a song in **ten years!** And so, there was no pressure on me to write a song or what the song should be. So, I wrote from my most vulnerable self right now.

I actually got a 4-minute emotional voice note from one of my favourite artists in SA (actually in the world) about how she connected to my song and how it resonated with her new upcoming album and how the lyrics in *Hold Back the River* struck a nerve with her. A lot of people have loved songs that I've written before, but not quite on that level. I'm finding the feedback very powerful!



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The song you must do during every show?

Hmmm, not ready to start doing shows just yet, calm down.

▣ ***Any funny moments on stage?***

I once created an alter ego character called Disco Dave, put together a 13-piece Motown-style band and did a wild performance on the main stage at Rocking the Daisies. I was dressed in a custom gold lycra suit with a wig and big sunglasses. I was so determined to keep my identity a secret that halfway through the gig I slipped off to the side of the stage (during a trumpet solo), exchanged my costume with a friend (who had a similar beard and physique) and brought *myself* on next to Disco Dave to perform a short duet – just to throw everyone off!

So, if you ever suspected that I was Disco Dave, how was it possible that we were both on the stage at the same time!!

That was a fun and very crazy show!

▣ ***My heroes are...***

Muhammed Ali, Fela Kuti, Madiba and my mom.

▣ ***My style icon is...***

My mom again – she's run one of the most stylish clothing shops in SA for over 20 years – Studio 8 The Origin.

▣ ***Which living person do you admire most and why?***

I admire the people who fight for what they believe in, despite impossible obstacles.

▣ ***What is your most treasured possession?***

My vinyl collection and my Telecaster.

▣ ***It's your round, what are you drinking?***

Whisky. Forever and for always.

▣ ***What makes you stand out?***

I'm just more stubborn than most other people. It's a blessing and a curse.



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■ ***Any nicknames?***

Don't need them. My parents did me a solid with my name.

■ ***If you were not a musician, what would you do?***

Make movies, projects, studios, concerts, podcasts, collaborative projects. Just make stuff.

■ ***Pick five words to describe yourself.***

Dad; trouble-maker; music-maker; film-maker and...whatever I feel like-maker.

■ ***Five must have songs on your Spotify playlist please***

Osama – Zakes Bantwini (Best song of the last decade)

Whose Laughing Now – Durrý

Too Late for Mama – Brenda Fassie

Watch Me Bleed – Tears for Fears

Water Got No Enemy – Fela Kuti

■ **Greatest movie ever made?**

The Godfather

■ **What book are you reading?**

Brenda Fassie's biography, *I'm not your weekend special* and *The Tau of Wu* by RZA (Wu Tang Clan)

■ **What song changed your life?**

The entire live DVD of Queen at Wembley 1986 changed my life and made me start a band.

ABOUT MARTIN MYERS

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