

I COULD NEVER BE YOUR WOMAN?

Jyoti Mishra of White Town

The succulence of ambisexuality can bring you far in any pop headline. The old *is he or isn't he?* trick has produced a library of hit songs for both straight and gay pop artists flirting with androgyny.

No one knows that more than Jyoti Mishra, the mastermind ruling UK's mystique ridden, synco-lite band White Town. Fresh with the top ten success of "Your

Woman" (the first single off the album *Women in Technology*) playing up the same Boy Georgian game of gay man/straight-man, Mishra's catchy sounds have masterfully baffled and conquered world charts.

Basking in the shadows of innuendo, Mishra's toying with gender-puzzled lyrics heads him into a pop musing that is "meant to make you forget about grunge" and adore sweet gay-basted songs.

Elio Iannacci: You've said you have been influenced by classic pop songwriters like Noel Coward and Cole Porter. Who would you call the Noel Coward or Cole Porter of our time?

Jyoti Mishra: Magnetic Fields come to mind because I think Steve [Merritt] is an astonishing songwriter. He's got that sense of humour, the way Cole Porter would sneak a line like you're the top, you're Mahatma Ghandi. The way Steve sneaks in lines like there's more stars in the sky than prostitutes in Thailand - I'm just attracted to that. I'm so disillusioned with rock-'n'-roll because it's one dimensionally masculine, it bores the arse off me.

How did you feel about "Your Woman" being called a new gay anthem?

I think it's quite strange because I would

not classify myself as anything but I'm going out with a very lovely girl now and have been for the last three years. I think people are just sexual and what I say is I'm straight so far...which is the most anyone can say. Same as if you're gay, you're gay so far.

kd lang has often criticized pop artists who she says are making a career out of sexual ambiguity.

If people are to label me, the best label I can have is straight but it doesn't really fit, it's an uncomfortable label. But I've never fitted anyway, being an Indian in white cities is never a comfortable label either.

"Your Woman" sounds like its sampled from Darth Vader's march from Star Wars.

No, no, no. George Lucas would be suing me if it was. It's from a 1930s pop song.

In your opinion, what makes a perfect pop song?

Passion...either the outrageous flamboyant passion like a Marc Almond thing or intimacy. I'm fed up with people whining for three and half minutes and that being their song. I'm sick of that moaning, groaning, post-grunge malaise...

I understand you get a great amount of gay fan mail especially by e-mail. What would be a typical e-mail message?

A lot of it is really flattering. They start from saying, Hi I'm a young gay guy from California, I'm 18 and I love your record. I don't feel like writing back and saying actually I'm going out with a girl...I could just imagine them crumpling and crying. It's sad.

Do you get any homophobic e-mail about "Your Woman"?

Oh God yeah. I get e-mail like, I love your song, it's a great song but I won't sing it until I know you're not some limey fag. I write back and usually say I'm actually really pro-gay so you can just fuck off. I've gotten e-mail from towns like Shit-kicker, U.S.A....you expect people to be just beyond that. It's a pop song, just relax and sing it!

What is your next move with White Town?

Possibly the next single off the album in America is "Wanted" and I got Vince Clark who remixed it. I'm trying to get a studio built in my new back garden for my next album. I'm going to try and make the next album more extreme. I want to shake people up. Partly I did write "Your Woman" [from] the perspective of a friend who was a gay man who couldn't go out with another man because he was straight. What I am trying to do is [make] songs with multiple perspectives. The stuff I hear now that is so called 'alternative' is just college kids with guitars. I want to do something with some grace. ♦

