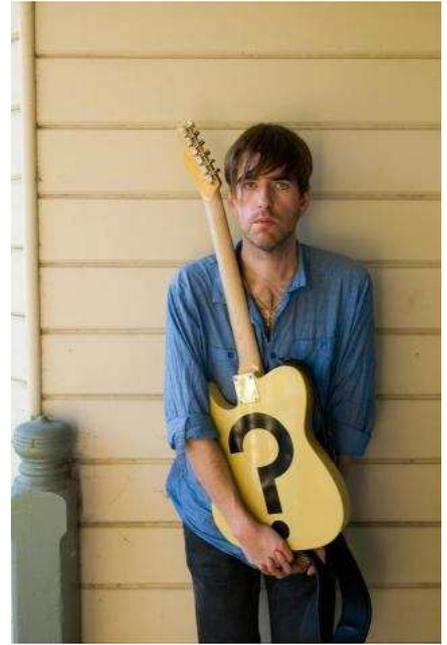


---

## ‘It’s in the longing that I find solace’: 5 questões a John Murry

Para um artista que no último ano recebeu uma importante dose de atenção por parte da imprensa musical, foi com uma considerável generosidade que John Murry aceitou responder a algumas perguntas do *Pior Que Um Estranho*. Aqui, Murry tece considerações relacionadas com a produção de *The Graceless Age*, a sua relação com o Mississippi, influências musicais e literárias, deixando ainda no ar uma possível passagem por Portugal.

***Pior Que Um Estranho*: On the piece I wrote about the album I compared it to a long continuous transmission crowded by sound bites, pirate radio stations, different frequencies and waves crossing but with something in common. It also seems to be what really brings it all together. Is it something you would agree on? What was the idea behind it from the beginning?**



*John Murry*: Yes! I’m glad you caught that! That was very much the idea! I wanted to ensure there was a continuity inherent in it. I wanted to make it clear that the album was a singular piece, in reality, and not a “song”. From the beginning, I wanted to create “interludes” that tied things together – a thread that stitches as the listener listens. Your analysis of my use of Rodgers’ tune was spot-on. I almost feel caught! Ha! I also wanted it to be what Tim [Mooney, producer] often called it: a “document of a time”. As with all memories and realities, they’re disjointed and inherently subjective, hence the broken transmissions and in-fighting and confusion. What I hope those pieces do, though, is take the disjointed and broken and use them to un-break and re-join by using what we, as humans, are forced to live with: confusion and questions even death might not answer. The human condition is, in my mind, this confusion mixed with need and hurt and all we experience. It never ends, never begins, and is senseless. But perhaps we can “paint” a portrait of the absurdity of it all. I am trying....

***PQUE*: Death and redemption seem to be two very important and obvious themes on the album. Then there’s always a sense of uprooting – even translating into pain – particularly when it comes to being away from Mississippi. Could you elaborate a bit on the notion of distance?**

*JM*: Faulkner’s Compson, before committing suicide in New England, said of his native Mississippi, “I don’t hate it.”, three times, just as Peter did in denying Christ. Mississippi is where I’m from; it’s in my blood, it’s my home. But I despise it as much as I love it. I can’t exist there. I hate that. It’s where I found salvation – not in church – but in rock and roll and the hill country blues I was surrounded by. Also by distance from the rest of the United States. Mississippi is seen as “backwards” and “redneck” and “poor”. It’s all those things, but not any more-so than any other place in this imbecilic country we call a “union”. Mississippi is the place where people were forced to create art to escape the oppression they were forced to live out. It still is. It began with the enslavement of a people whose skin wasn’t white. Then, following the Civil War, sharecropping made most all poor or “lesser than”, regardless of skin color. Reconstruction

by the Federal Government involved little more than infiltration of a broken place by capitalists hell-bent on enslaving the entirety of the State of Mississippi by controlling and enforcing on an agricultural society a Dickensian industrialization. Catholics, Jews, Native Americans, artists, homosexuals: hell, ANYONE outside of the wealthy (or formerly wealthy) “gentry” or “aristocracy”, became subject to the oppression of both the State and Federal Governments in addition to the ruling hatreds of the ignorant (given free reign following the breaking of a spine that was already corrupted). It still exists as a place controlled by its own past. California exists as a place unaware of its history, which is a horrifying one. Blood is on the hands of us all, I suppose. Or it’s thrown at us. Regardless, I find both places to be places I love and hate. California will never be home, though. When you’re born into a place like Mississippi, it becomes a part of you and you are a part of it. I miss it, or my idea of it, deeply. But it’s in the longing that I find solace. And it’s in the confused freedom here in California that I can attempt to make myself the “actor” that becomes permanent that Camus spoke of and attempted (succeeded) in becoming. Faulkner wept when he read of Camus’ death. Camus’ first work was to create a play of “As I Lay Dying” to perform in Algiers as a high school student.

***PQUE: Almost every single review struggles categorizing your record as rock, southern rock, folk, blues, gospel or country. Obviously there seems to be a trace of each. But can you point a specific genre or musicians more significant in your musical background?***

*JM:* Music is generally about sound, no? I am quite drawn to the atmospheric and expansive sounds created by artists like Slowdive, Mogwai, Arab Strap, Spiritualized, Spacemen 3, etc. I am also equally drawn to the direct heart heard in Stax recordings, in bubblegum pop from the '60's, in the Motown and Philly sounds, and in the blues; specifically hill country stuff like Kenny Brown, R.L. Burnside, and Junior Kimbrough. I adore Mark Linkous' work. It's his alone. It's truth. I love Isaac Brock's continued battle with himself in his work to out-do himself. At times, it's utterly stabbing and brilliant. In the indignation of The Clash and the brilliance of the interplay between Lloyd and Verlaine in Television, I find solace in “punk rock”. I listen to a lot of music. I wanna play guitar with the fire and emotion of Neil Young and Cary Hudson; with the unabashed fearlessness they attempt at every turn. My friend – the songwriter and artist Carlos Forster – has been a great influence on me. Bob Frank and Tim Mooney and Chuck Prophet have been mentors to me. I couldn't have gotten more lucky: they are all geniuses in their own right. Michael Mullen, my friend who plays piano with me, is an inspiration, as well. As is Mike Carnahan (as both a player and engineer) and Joe Goldring and Kevin Thomson (my favorite guitar players in the fucking world – regardless of anything). Kevin Cubbins has golden ears and we struggle to \*get\* each other, but hopefully do now to a greater degree. David Baerwald, a new friend, has created some masterpieces and I find myself almost trapped in them. Dennis Herring, as a producer, amazes me. I listen to a lot of music. I steal a lot from all over. Hip hop is something I am rarely asked about, but it likely influences me as much as anything. Frank Ocean is about to change the genre forever, as Outkast did with Stankonia. It all begins to sound the same to me: if it's good, if I can feel it, then I dig it. The Stones, The Beatles, Triple Six Mafia, The Reigning Sound and all the Memphis guys (Jack O., Jeff Evans, Bubba and Terrence, J.D., the real ones..) and The Satyrs and post-rock Memphis folks.... It all runs together in my mind.... Then it comes out as something else entirely, I suppose.

***PQUE: The lyrics also seems to be a major concern on *The Graceless Age*. Who influences you the most when it comes to writing?***

*JM:* Honestly, songwriters rarely do. Dylan does, always has. Springsteen, too. But literature is where I

find my needle and thread, for the most part. I love Don Quixote above all books. Obsessively so. Graham Greene, Philip Roth, Faulkner, Styron, Flannery O'Connor, Camus, so many other. I read too much, my wife says. My current obsessions are Machado de Assis and Roberto Bolaño. I'm still waiting for Creston Lea's next one....

***PQUE: In January you'll be touring the UK. Any chance it could be extended to continental Europe?***

*JM:* This year it will certainly extend to the rest of the continent. My booking agency, Free Trade, has assured me I'll make it to Portugal and Spain (I must! Unamuno and Cervantes and Goya and the rest!). The Portuguese have taken to my record and I owe it to those who give a damn to make it down there, I believe. There are festival dates lined up and I'm looking towards a Southern European tour this year, as well. Physical distribution of *The Graceless Age* will change dramatically in April. There's some great news to come! So I will certainly make the rounds and am looking forward to seeing these places that have inspired and moved me throughout my life.