

WESTLIFE ON...

Back with a new sexy image, Westlife come clean on trashing hotel rooms, sex with fans and lots, lots more

When Westlife walk into the London cinema where we've arranged to meet, they're looking noticeably sharper and sexier, to coincide with the unveiling of their new rock-pop sound. Here the boys reveal all about their past 11 years in the music business – and, quite frankly, *Cosmo* is shocked...

So, what's with the edgy new image?

Mark: "It's not that we're trying to be more edgy. It's more that we're going back to who we really are. We'd become too safe. And the safer something becomes, the blander it is."

Shane: "We were too boring! When I put on a suit now I want to feel special again – I don't want to just feel that I'm putting on a uniform."

Nicky: "The year off enabled us to give ourselves a good kick in the arse. But then we came back and the record company started on the same page – 'Right lads, here's the song we suggest' – and we said no."

What input does Simon Cowell have?

Kian: "Simon has a natural talent for knowing what the audience wants. His best advice ever was to release *Mandy* as a single. Our first single from that same album only went to number four and Simon warned us, 'Your career is going to take a serious dive if you continue down this road. You can turn that around by releasing *Mandy*'. He was right. We're very lucky to be with a man like Simon."

Nicky: "I don't see Simon as Mr Nasty. He's really approachable. He's very eager to sit down and hear your points of view. He may not agree with you but he doesn't just have

it all his way. Everything is achievable if you do it the right way with Simon."

What's the most rock 'n' roll thing you've done?

Shane: "We've destroyed a lot of hotel rooms. We're banned from one venue in South Africa. I was jumping around in my boxer shorts, taking the piss out of the others and I got literally everything thrown at me, including fruit. Mark threw a chair out of the window once too. We were drinking four storeys up at the time so it was like, 'Oh, Jesus!'"

Mark: "It sounds like we're trying to be cool. It was a very expensive chair! We didn't grow up knowing how to be on TV, so there are going to come points in this crazy, mad lifestyle where your judgement lapses for a minute and you do stupid things."

What's your idea of a big night out these days?

Mark: "We love getting dressed up as a band. When we went to Simon's 50th birthday party, we all got ready together in a hotel room and put expensive suits on."

Shane: "The older we get, the more we prefer a good restaurant to a club. But as long as you have a drink and a laugh..."

Nicky: "If you think back to when we were 21, it was like, 'Who cares about

food? Just get a bottle of vodka down your neck by 12 o'clock! Now that we're hitting 30, it's different."

Who gets the most attention from girls?

Nicky: "It used to depend on where we were in the world. Scandinavia was big for Kian, Asia was big for Shane – usually everywhere was big for me!"

Mark: "Back in the day you'd have girls with Mark or Nicky banners."

'THERE'LL BE POINTS IN THIS CRAZY LIFESTYLE WHERE YOU DO STUPID THINGS'



MARK FEEHILY, 29 – WITH PARTNER KEVIN McDAID, 25, FOR FIVE YEARS. NICKY BYRNE, 31 – MARRIED TO GEORGINA, 30, FOR SIX YEARS. SHANE FILAN, 31 – MARRIED TO GILLIAN, 30, FOR SIX YEARS. KIAN EGAN, 29 – MARRIED TO JODI, 26, FOR SEVEN MONTHS.

Kian: "We've fallen out of the boy band hysteria. I think we're past the stage of walking down the street and being mobbed because our audience is more mature now."

Nicky: "Not some of the banners they write! On the last tour there was a girl holding up a banner that said, 'Shane f*** me!'"

Shane: "Another one said, 'I'll be your horse and you can ride me home!'"

Mark: "Then there was, 'I want to taste your Irish cream!'"

Nicky: "'Nicky, you make my knickers sticky.' That was quite nice!"

What's the weirdest request you've had from a fan?

Nicky: "There are a lot of girls with tattoos



...BOOZE, SEX & ROCK 'N' ROLL

(YES, REALLY!)

of our faces on their arms and backs. They come to signings and ask us to sign underneath our faces and then they get the signature tattooed. That's mad to have four people's faces on you. We're not the Beatles – it's not like we're going to be iconic forever. But fair play, I take my hat off to them."

Have any of you ever had sex with a fan?

Shane: "No. Me and Nicky had found our perfect women before we joined Westlife. And Kian's known Jodi a long time too."

Kian: "There were all those rumours about certain other boy bands having sex with their fans, but you knew that if anything

happened, your mum would pick up the Sunday paper and it would be on the front page. We wanted to steer clear of those situations – like Gareth Gates with Jordan – early on in our career."

Mark: "I had one kiss and tell episode because I dated a lot of girls early on."

Shane: [laughs] "Mark's dated more girls than me!"

What have been your worst dating disasters?

Kian: "Jodi will tell you her worst date was when she thought she was coming down from Liverpool to have a nice romantic meal with me, but instead I'd got two buddies over from Ireland for a mad

weekend on the beer. They started really taking the mickey out of her."

We've heard rumours Jodi's new girlband [who Kian is managing] is touring with you next year?

Kian: "If they're ready to do it and the boys agree, I'd love it. But it's still early days for them. They're recording their album. It'd be difficult in a way as she's going to have to be with her band, whereas if she comes to see Westlife on tour, she stays with me."

Nicky: "There's going to be a lot of early-morning walks over to your hotel room!"

Are there any outfits you'd be uncomfortable with Jodi wearing?

Kian: "Yes, I'll certainly be very controlling >



Nicky and Georgina



Shane and Gillian



Kian and Jodi



Mark and Kevin

of their image because I think a lot of the girl bands now are way too tarted up. If you look at Girls Aloud's last tour, it's too over-sexed. Jodi's is more of a classy catwalk, Gucci look. That's the sort of sexiness I want to achieve with them."

Nicky: "There are ways of being sexy without going that far."

Which female stars do you think are sexy?

Nicky: "I think Sandra Bullock's quite sexy in *The Proposal*."

Shane: "Charlize Theron is very beautiful."

Nicky: "I met Natalie Portman at the U2 concert in Dublin and she was really, really pretty."

Mark: "Claudia Schiffer was in one of our old videos and she was gorgeous."

Kian: "I saw Eva Mendes when we landed back from LA and she was beautiful."

Your partners must get so jealous of the people you meet!

Shane: "All our partners are good-looking, they're happy with themselves and know we're in love with them. So they don't worry."

Nicky: "Waitresses will flirt with you in a nightclub situation but people flirt with our partners as well."

Mark: "In our year off, Kevin got way more attention. Walking down the street he gets more looks than I do."

What kind of partners are you?

Nicky: "Loyal and honest."

Mark: "I try to be as stimulating as possible – in mind, body and soul. I don't like the idea of just sitting down and accepting monotony. I'm trying to make Kevin get out there and live his life to the full."

Shane: "I try to keep things exciting. I tell Gillian every day how beautiful she is. I think that's very important, as well as hugs and kisses."

I think we're actually getting closer over the years."

Kian: "Jodi and I feel like we're only just starting to enjoy the fact that we're married now, as my father passed away a few months after our wedding. We've just moved into a new house and it feels like it's a whole new start. We're starting to remember the good times again."

How did Stephen

Gateley's death affect you all?

Nicky: "The day after the funeral affected me most. When it happened, I just couldn't believe it. We were talking to all the Boyzone boys and to Louis, and it was so tragic. Being at the funeral was such a lovely celebration of Stephen's life, he would have loved it. I'm sure he was



Sadness and shock at Stephen Gateley's funeral

looking down and laughing at us all. But the next day waking up and seeing the papers and them carrying the coffin – that's the end of it. If it's hard for us, can you imagine how it must be for the boys and Louis, as well as Stephen's family, friends and husband. It's incomprehensible."

Shane: "Thirty-three is too young to die. No mother should ever have to bury her son or daughter. Our hearts go out to his family and Andy, and the Boyzone lads."

It must make you appreciate being back together again?

Mark: "The best way to explain it is that when we saw Brian at the funeral, although he hasn't been in the band for six years now and has been in Australia, it was like we were never apart."

Shane: "We're like brothers."

Mark: "It'd take a lot more than a year off to disconnect us all from each other." ❊

• Westlife's latest album *Where We Are* is out now.

'A LOT OF THE GIRL BANDS NOW ARE WAY TOO TARTED UP AND OVERSEXED'