

JIMMY SOMERVILLE - THE OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY

The unmistakable voice of **Bronski Beat** and **The Communards**, featured on massive hits such as *Smalltown Boy* and *Don't Leave Me This Way* – it can be none other than Jimmy Somerville.

Bronski Beat not only introduced the world to Jimmy's unique voice, their debut smash hit *Smalltown Boy* tackled pertinent social issues with its lyric addressing the isolation and rejection felt by a provincial gay youth forced into leaving town. Although not the first pop song to deal with this topic, Bronski Beat's chart friendly early 80's electronic dance sound and the everyday ordinariness and honesty of the three performers, made *Smalltown Boy* the biggest record about gay issues there'd ever been.

Jimmy's next band The Communards enjoyed a string of hits from their two hit albums *Communards* (1986) and *Red* (1987). One moment the Communards were hurtling to the number one spot - a position they held for weeks in the UK in 1986 - with their energetic, hedonistic cover version of the Philly soul classic *Don't Leave Me This Way*, the next stunning audiences into silent awe with their touching lament for a loved one lost to AIDS, *For A Friend*.

1989 saw Jimmy embark on a solo career with 5 more hit singles and two albums; *Read My Lips* (1989) and *The Singles Collection* (1990). These included a stirring cover of Sylvester's disco anthem *You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)*.

Jimmy's continued outspokenness on gay issues didn't prevent his records being played and selling in huge quantities. His honesty as a gay performer almost certainly helped to pave the way for his success.

The album *Dare To Love*, released in June 1995, is a typical rollercoaster mix of upbeat pop dance numbers and more serious songs exploring gay issues. *Heartbeat*, the first single from *Dare To Love* went to number one in the USA dance chart, and The E-Smoove and Armand Van Heldon mixes are still being played in clubs. Spring 1997 saw Jimmy release a single from *Dare To Love* on various European labels entitled *Safe*. Remixed by Todd Terry and DJ Tonka, it reached no. 1 in the Spanish charts and was played across Europe.

Having left London Records, Jimmy signed a new deal with Gut Records and the single *Dark Sky* was released in late 1997. The following album *Manage The Damage* followed in 1999, produced by Ash Howes and co-written with friend Sally Herbert; which included the singles *Lay Down* and *Something To Live For*.

The new millennium saw Jimmy release a new version of Bronski Beat's *Why (Almighty Mixes)* in 2000 through Almighty Records in the UK. The CD also included a version of *Can't Take My Eyes Off Of You* which featured on the *Queer As Folk 2* soundtrack for the Channel 4 TV Series. Warners also released a new compilation *The Very Best Of Jimmy Somerville, Bronski Beat and The Communards* in the same year.

Jimmy's next solo album entitled *Home Again* (2004) featured collaborations with Rosenstolz / Felix Gauder / Mauro Picotto / Rolf Elmer (Jam n Spoon) and Tillmann Uhrmacher was released on Jinx Music / BMG (Germany).

2009 saw the 25th anniversary of the release of *Smalltown Boy*, and was marked by the release of Jimmy's fifth solo album *Suddenly Last Summer*, which was inspired by and recorded on a trip to Australia in 2006. The album features his unique acoustic interpretation of some classic songs including *Sweet Unknown*, *Hush* and *Hanging On The Telephone*. *Suddenly Last Summer* was re-released on a limited edition CD/DVD via Cherry Red Records / Strike Force Entertainment in April 2010, featuring bonus tracks and two videos from the album in special packaging.

A new EP of contemporary electronica followed in 2011, Jimmy's first new material for 5 years. Collaborating with long-term producer and friend John Winfield, Jimmy emerged with his freshest material in years and the freedom to co-produce was evident in the results. The EP consisted of 4 new original tracks penned by Jimmy and John and to compliment these tracks the EP features 4 great remixes from Robert Dietz, Thomas Schumacher, Julien Chaptal and Felix Gauder.

Jimmy took to the road in the summer of 2011 on the *Here And Now* 10th Anniversary UK arena tour, alongside other artists including: Boy George, Jason Donovan, Belinda Carlisle, Midge Ure, A Flock Of Seagulls and Pepsi & Shirlie. A darker second EP entitled *Momentum* was released to coincide with the tour. Featuring 5 new original tracks plus 2 remixes, the title and striking artwork of *Momentum* were a response to the darker, fluid flow of production conjured by this new body of work.

Solent, the third and final EP from this trilogy, was released in May 2012. This collection of glitzy electro-pop was both an homage to the dance music of Jimmy's youth and a showcase of his seriously contemporary yet timeless sound. Featuring remixes from Fred Falke, Siriusmo, John Winfield and Felix Gauder, it was the perfect summer soundtrack.

Special double-CD fan editions of Bronski Beat's classic album *Age Of Consent*, along with both Communards albums (*Communards* and *Red*) and Jimmy's solo albums *Read My Lips* and *Dare To Love*, were released in July 2012 on Edsel/Demon featuring rarities never before available on CD and sleeve notes based on recent interviews with Jimmy.

2014 marked the 30th anniversary of the release of *Smalltown Boy*, for which he recorded the haunting *Reprise* version, released in June.

Famous for re-making disco classics as his own - *You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)*, *Never Can Say Goodbye*, *Don't Leave Me This Way* and *I Feel Love* to name but a few – his new album *Homage* was a logical next step in Somerville's career, one at which he can only excel considering his background, passion and undisputed vocal talent. The album was released in March 2015, and features a truly vintage feel enriched by his incredible vocals. A true 'Homage' to disco.

The record, a collection of 12 original disco tracks, is a tribute to the genre that inspired Jimmy all those years ago.

"An homage to disco is something I always wanted to do. I never really thought could pull it off but I did, and it's a really brilliant album to be perfectly honest" – says Somerville, exuding confidence and enthusiasm - *"All influences, all the music I've listened to are in it, when I listen to it makes me think of being 15, sitting on the bed, taking the vinyl out of the sleeve, putting it on the record player, then just sitting and reading all of the sleeve notes...There's a massive glitter ball in my head and it has never stopped turning"* – Jimmy Somerville

Over 30 years after he burst onto the scene with *Smalltown Boy*, Jimmy now takes us on a joyous musical journey to where his love for music started in disco; bringing to it his unmistakable vocals and unique talent.

Jimmy subsequently completed a short sell out German *Freedom To Dance Tour* with a 10 piece band in February 2016 which were his first headline shows with a band for 20 years.

'The Age Of Consent' by Bronski Beat was re-released in the autumn of 2018 on pink vinyl and also featuring an expanded CD release with previously unreleased tracks and new sleeve notes from Jimmy and Mike Thorne, the album's producer.

In the summer of 2018 after a break from live shows Jimmy performed at the 10 year anniversary of Rewind Festival in the UK with a 16 piece band. During the summer of 2019 Jimmy returned for some larger band shows featuring...16 musicians on stage once again!

Jimmy also performed with the 60 piece Orchestra of Opera North in Leeds Millennium Square in July and joined the same show for BBC Radio 2's Music Night at The London Coliseum on October 27th.