

SPECIAL
EDITION

Radiohead



EVERYTHING IN ITS RIGHT PLACE

The Complete History • New Interviews • Unseen Pictures

“Like me, please like me.”
Thom speaks!

OK Computer: still the
greatest album of all time?

The Stories behind

JONNY GREENWOOD

FACTS

BORN 5 November, 1971

ROLE lead guitarist, multi-instrumentalist, colour-blind eccentric

CV On A Friday, Radiohead. Composed the soundtrack to the film *Bodysong* (yet to be released).

Watching Jonny Greenwood play guitar evokes the odd image of a prehistoric bird about to snap in half during flight, or of a malnourished ostrich thrusting its neck into the sand. Greenwood is a guitar player in the most physical sense: head bent, lanky body arched forward, shock of black hair almost obscuring his angular cheekbones. Studying his expressions, it's hard to tell whether he's in a euphoric trance or considerable pain.

Greenwood's use of an arm brace during Radiohead shows was a direct result of his raw, physical playing style, which caused repetitive strain injury. Now it's almost become part of him.

harmonica then switching to keyboards before he mastered Colin's guitar.

Greenwood is the only member of Radiohead without a degree, a fact that still makes his mother anxious. When the band regrouped in their home city in 1991 after stints in various universities, Greenwood dropped out of Oxford Polytechnic College three months into a Psychology and Music degree and began writing songs with Yorke. He quickly became an intrinsic part of Radiohead, often the one who came up with the band's teeth-grinding riffs.

Although the youngest band member, Greenwood is the virtuoso of the group, the precocious talent willing to master any number of

a transistor radio. And during gigs, he's often hunched in a corner, thrashing at his gadgets while he uses the headstock of his guitar to depress piano keys.

This fiery onstage manner continues in the studio. Phil Selway once described Greenwood as "naturally funny", but added that he is also "terribly impatient". Greenwood admits as much and says that although he wants everything done properly, he wants it done immediately. Indeed, it wasn't the lack of guitars on *Kid A* that he found a problem but the length of time it took to complete the album.

Other personality quirks have contributed to label Greenwood as the band's most eccentric member. He

style (he has suffered from a leaky ear as well as repetitive strain injury) pit a rock'n'roll attitude against a sensibility far removed from that of the stereotypical guitar hero.

While Yorke has assumed the mantle of bandleader, he admits that writing with Greenwood is crucial to developing his songs. "I always get to the point with a song when I can't go any further," he said. "Or it's the other way around—Jonny's got something and can't take it any further. We've always done it like that." Greenwood likens Yorke's songwriting ability to that of his early musical heroes, Elvis Costello and R.E.M., and has said that although initially he didn't think his involvement with the band was "a big deal", Yorke's songs have always held his interest: "It was music that was really good to make."

Such wide-eyed persistence has characterised his history in Radiohead. When he was asked to participate in *On A Friday's* rehearsals, he turned down his keyboards without telling the rest of the group, assuming the best way to keep his position in the band was to remain as unobtrusive as possible.

Today, he is less bashful about his natural musical ability. In the wake of the media frenzy that surrounded OK Computer, he made much of his lack of formal training and relished his contradictions. One journalist wrote of her shock of seeing the softly spoken young man she'd just interviewed nearly hurl himself offstage during a gig that evening. And these days he definitely keeps the volume turned up. *Sharon Steel*

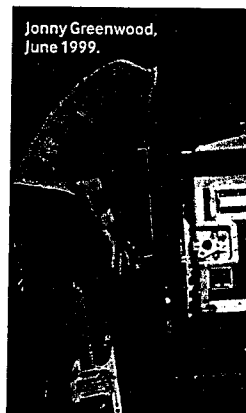
GREENWOOD ONCE LIKENED THE RITUAL OF STRAPPING ON HIS ARM BRACE TO THAT OF A BOXER TAPING UP HIS HANDS BEFORE A FIGHT.

He once likened the ritual of strapping on his brace to that of a boxer taping his hands before a fight, an apt comparison considering the visceral sounds he coaxes out of his guitar.

Greenwood was a 13-year-old at Abingdon School near Oxford when his older brother Colin began rehearsing with Thom Yorke, Ed O'Brien and Phil Selway. Then a viola player with the Thames Vale Youth Orchestra fond of French composer Oliver Messiaen, Greenwood was allowed to hang around at band rehearsals, as much to keep him out of trouble as anything else. After pestering his brother, Greenwood was allowed to join what became *On A Friday*, initially playing

obscure instruments. "Guitars are over-idolised," he told one interviewer, and he put aside his guitar almost completely for the *Kid A*/*Amnesiac* sessions. Instead, he started working with an Ondes Martenot, a Theremin-like instrument comprising a keyboard, a ribbon and a ring that produces a wailing sound. He also began to use a Korg Kaoss Pad, a compact unit that controls effects when a finger is dragged across its touch-sensitive screen and was used by Radiohead to mutate live samples of Yorke's vocal melodies on *Everything In Its Right Place*.

For other songs, Greenwood has grappled with organs, glockenspiels, recorders, synthesizers, even



is colour-blind and has joked that his brother "retarded" his early development by mixing up his paints when he was a boy, thereby causing him to paint a number of disturbing pictures. His distaste for alcohol and acceptance of the hazards of his playing