

GARY MOORE T SHIRT

I was walking to town one morning when I saw a man walking the other side of the road. He was about my age with a round stomach and a bald patch and he was wearing trainers, shorts and a Gary Moore t-shirt. When I saw the t-shirt I felt sad and I wished I was a fan of Gary Moore because then I could have stopped him and said, "Hey, I like your t-shirt. I'm a huge fan of Gary Moore." And then he might have said, "That's cool, I've been a Gary Moore fan since for ever."

"Me too," I would reply. "I have all his albums, even including Gary Moore Rocks."

"That's a very rare record. I don't even have that and I have almost all his records."

"I know, right?" he said, with a smile. "I was in the record shop and the owner knew I liked Gary Moore and he called me over and said, normally I would put this in the window so people would know how cool this shop is, but seeing as you're such a big Gary Moore fan, I thought I'd save it for you. In fact," the owner went on, "since you're probably the biggest Gary Moore fan of all time, I'm going to give it to you."

"No way," I said.

"Yes way," the owner replied. "Look, if you take this record with you and carry it home in one of our bags with our logo on it, that's going to be enough for me. When people see you, in your Gary Moore limited edition t-shirt, carrying a bag from my store, they'll be banging on my door at ten o'clock in the morning to be let in."

"Is that so?" I asked, genuinely intrigued.

"Oh sure. I mean, we don't open at ten o'clock in the morning, because we're a record shop not a dairy, know what I mean, so I'll let 'em stew for a bit. But in the end, I'll have to relent because, after all, the customer is always right."

I took the Gary Moore record home and sure enough, a small crowd of men my age with big bellies and one or two younger, attractive-looking women, began to follow me. I wasn't sure what to do but when I got to my front gate, I turned round to face them, pulled the album from my bag and held it over my head like a trophy. Everyone looked amazed, then they lowered their eyes and, one by one, began to shuffle off again as though they realised they'd got a little carried away.

"That's a hell of a story," said the man in the Gary Moore t-shirt.

I wasn't listening because I had just noticed something.

"Turn around," I said with bated breath.

"Oh, you saw," he said and turned round.

On the back of his t-shirt was a list of place names with dates next to them.

"Wow," I said.

"I know, right," the other man replied and turned back to face me.

"That's a very rare t-shirt," I said. He nodded.

"Limited edition. You literally had to be there to buy one."

In reverent unison we said the hallowed words.

"Gary Moore Live At The Melkweg."

"It never came out," I said.

"Not even a bootleg," he agreed.

"And you were there."

"I was there. I had front row tickets."

"Front row! Was it a good show?"

His face lit up with a broad smile.

"It wasn't good," he said, "It was great!" Then his face clouded over.

"I was supposed to go with my friend from work," he said, his face clouding over a little. "But Ken was hit by a bus three days before the show."

"Oh no! Were the tickets transferable?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied, "But there was no way I was going to go without Ken."

"Of course not," I agreed, hastily.

"I remember going to see Ken in hospital. He'd lost part of one leg and all of the other so he was pretty groggy from all the drugs. I brought him grapes and a big bottle of Lucozade."

"I'm not really hungry or thirsty," said Ken.

"That's OK, I am," I said, and we both laughed as I crammed a fistful of grapes into my mouth and washed them down with Lucozade straight from the bottle.

"I'm really sorry I can't come to the show," said Ken. "But you know, with the pain and everything, the doctors say I might bleed out if I go on the coach."

"Sure," I said understandingly. "It's just a shame because I don't know anyone else who likes Gary Moore. I mean, a couple of people remember buying Parisian Walkways when it came out but that was because Phil Lynott was on it, and besides it was only a single."

"Yeah, it was a trailer for the album," agreed Ken. "Listen," he said suddenly, "The doctors say my remaining leg has gone septic so I may be dead or in a coma when you come back from Holland."

"OK," I said, and we shook hands.

He smiled at the memory.

"I miss Ken," he said. "And you can bet he would have loved that show."

"Tell me about it," I replied.

"Moore opened with Back On The Streets," said the other man, "and then it was a mixture of old material and new, with some emphasis on the slower, bluesier numbers. The encores may surprise you."

"Parisian Walkways?"

"First encore."

He shook his head. I hesitated before speaking.

"Was it Still Got The Blues?"

He nodded, and it seemed to me he was both pleased and disappointed at my guess.

"You got it," he said.

Then he stood up.

"Listen, I have to get home," he said. "But here's my card."

I read the name on the card and gasped.

"You're -"

He shook his head. "I'm just an ordinary guy like anyone else."

Now it was my turn to smile. I shook my head.

"No," I said, "You're wrong. You're not an ordinary guy at all. And neither am I. Because we're -"

"Stop," he said. "You don't even have to say it. I know."

And we shook hands and went our separate ways.