

Spotted



US actor and funnyman Owen Wilson (left) tucking into dinner and drinks at Okku in The Monarch Dubai.

Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan nibbling on kobe sliders and lobster tacos at swanky DIFC eatery Caramel. **East 17's Tony Mortimer disapproving of the toilets at Dubai airport after the band's Friday gig, tweeting, 'You couldn't pay me to use one'. Precious?**

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Hot seat East 17's Tony Mortimer

Reformed UK '90s boy band East 17 landed in Dubai for a Christmas-themed gig at McGettigan's last week. *Rob Garratt* chatted to the 41-year-old singer



We hear there's a new album on the way – tell us more.
It's a great album – some of the best songs I've ever written are on there. It's mature and shows how we've grown musically. I can't wait to see the reaction it gets.

How close do you live to the London E17 postcode that inspired the band's name?
I live 25 minutes away and always park my car there when I travel by tube. I think John [Hendy] lives a little closer.
You've had 18 top 20 hits. When will you make it 20 top 20s?
In 2012 – our 20th year!
Twenty years... What's the proudest moment of your career to date?
Playing Red Square in Moscow [in 1996] in front of hundreds of thousands of fans.
You famously fell out with rival boy band Take That in the '90s.

How are relations between East 17 and Take That today?
We really don't see or think about them now. I doubt our paths will ever cross again.
Did their successful reunion inspire you to do the same?
Not really. We [East 17] are

'Take That? We really don't think about them now. I doubt our paths will cross again'

friends from school, so have different reasons, but it certainly didn't put us off.
Why do you think so many UK bands – Pulp, Blur, Stone Roses, Suede – are getting back together at the moment?
Maybe some for the money and

some for the music. Us? We have unfinished business.
What else have you all been doing, job-wise?
John has a building business, Terry [Coldwell] had a bar in Spain, and I live the dream, baby – I gave up work when I was 19!
Have your fans aged with you, or are you recruiting new ones?
If the songs are good, yes, we'll get a new audience, as well as our original army.
Are you still in contact with [former lead singer] Brian Harvey?
We see him from time to time and the door is always open to him. He's one of the four brothers. We tried to recruit a replacement, but it wasn't to be.
Why didn't he come on board with the reunion?
He makes videos and is working on a brilliant solo album.
We find it odd you're playing an Irish-themed pub in Dubai for Christmas...

I'm Irish, so it's not that strange! [Laughs]
How do you feel about the band's reputation [specifically Brian's use of illegal substances] being big enough to raise questions in the UK's Houses of Commons?
It was flattering, as was being mentioned on a song by U2 [1995's 'Miss Sarajevo'].
UK mobile phone firm T-Mobile recently used your 1992 single 'House of Love' on a commercial. Did this help your comeback?
It was very funny, but nothing more. It was hilarious to watch.
How would you like East 17 to be remembered?
As the greatest pop band ever to come out of Walthamstow.
East 17's as-yet-untitled new album is due for release next year. For updates, see www.east17official.com

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