

Spotted



US hip-hop star and 'What's Luv' singer **Fat Joe** (left) partying at **Movida** and reading **Time**

Out Dubai at the Radisson Royal Hotel on Sheikh Zayed Road. Retired US professional skateboarder Tony Hawk admiring the view from the Burj Al Arab and trying his hand at sandboarding in the desert.

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Hot seat

Starsailor's James Walsh

As the Brit songwriter prepares to play a solo-acoustic gig supporting The Stone Roses in Media City, **Rob Garratt** got to know the 32-year-old musician



So, James, what can we expect from solo Walsh? Hopefully a really good show – having The Stone Roses coming on afterwards is going to be all the incentive I need. They're obviously going to be fantastic. If I thought about it too much, they're such a great band I'd probably crumble.

You're a big Stone Roses fan? Like all people my age, I grew up with music such as The Stone Roses blasting out of my older brother's bedroom. Then I introduced him to Oasis and The Bluetones.

Have you ever met the band? I've met Ian Brown and Mani before – Mani's a great bloke and Ian Brown's cool – he's a bit more laid back. Mani's a bundle of energy: whenever Primal Scream play he's always bouncing around backstage.

What are you like backstage?

It depends – I've been known to let my hair down pretty well, but because I have to carry the show by being the frontman, I'd have to wait until we had a day off to knock a few back.

'I don't want to top the list of the most miserable men in music'

How does playing solo compare to playing with your band, Starsailor?

There's a lot of freedom – if I'm in the middle of a show and I think I want to play a song that isn't written down, I have the freedom to do that. But if

I break a guitar string or have a technical issue, there's no one else to back me up.

What's the biggest disaster you've ever had on stage?

There were a few times in the band where I nearly knocked myself out. Once I took my guitar off and ended up on the floor. That was a disaster.

Are you still in touch with the rest of the band?

I speak to them all the time. Me and drummer Ben [Byrne] are big Liverpool fans; bassist James [Stelfox] has gone out on tour with Spiritualized. We're just trying to find the right time to get back together.

But you will reform?

I think so. The longer we're away, the more important it is to get the timing right and to come back with music people will take notice of. It gets to the point where you're just counting on a similar fan base – it's a noble thing to do, but it's more exciting to win people over with each album. When that starts to wane, you need to recharge things.

You're known for writing pretty depressing songs.

Are you a happy guy?

Pretty happy. I think I'm a big worrier – it might be going well now, but what about the future? I don't want to top the list of the most miserable men in music.

What did you think of Dubai on your last visit?

There's obviously quite a lot of opulence – everything is gold plated and the most expensive materials. But I'm sure if you look beneath the surface, Dubai has great people and culture. *James Walsh supports The Stone Roses at Dubai Media City on Thursday February 21.*

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