

# Musician escapes to Wales cottage

By Jae-Ha Kim  
Tribune Content Agency



A museum aficionado, OMD's Andy McCluskey said the Art Institute of Chicago is one of his all-time favorites. **ED MILES**

The British synth-pop band OMD (Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark) have a plethora of well-known songs, including "Enola Gay," "Tesla Girls" and "Dreaming," that have resonated with generations of music fans. But their most iconic is "If You Leave," played during the prom scene at the end of the 1986 John Hughes film "Pretty in Pink."

Now almost 50 years into their career, OMD is back on the road, playing in cities across the United States. On a break from their tour, Andy McCluskey chatted about the group's early beginnings, some of the memorable venues they've played and how they stay fit on the road — hint, it includes dancing.

This interview with McCluskey has been edited for clarity and length.

**Q: Where are you right now?**

**A:** I have just climbed off the tour bus after an eight-hour drive from Orlando to Atlanta. Hallelujah for the sleeping bunks! Tour buses have become more luxurious, and the ride is smoother than back in the 1980s. Though I don't know if that is the suspension or the road surfaces.

**Q: What do you remember about your first professional gig?**

**A:** The first concert that we played as Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark was on Oct. 12, 1978. We had a crazy idea for two

guys to play our electronic hobby music in a new wave club called Eric's in Liverpool. That is why we invented the crazy name. We wanted people to know that the music was different. Also, we thought that the name didn't matter as we only planned one gig as a dare. Now here we are more than 46 years later, still in the same band.

**Q: Everyone says that touring can be difficult. What do you do to maintain your health while on the road?**

**A:** My idiosyncratic dance style on stage keeps me fit. I certainly burn calories. The hardest part is not damaging my new titanium knee! I make sure that I get electrolytes on tour and lots of sleep. I am always the first one into my bunk on the bus. Two gin and tonics, sleeping pills and a history audiobook in the ear pods. I am usually asleep before the bus moves. So boring, but the party is on the stage, not afterwards these days.

**Q: What is your bucket-list venue that you have yet to perform in?**

**A:** We are working our way toward filling the Hollywood Bowl. Possibly on the next tour. We have played The Royal Albert Hall in London three times. They were all special. We remember that it was the most prestigious concert hall in the United Kingdom when we were young.

**Q: Do you have any free time built into your tours**

**to go sightseeing or just enjoy the city you're in?**

**A:** I have always loved the opportunity that the band has given me to travel to different cities and countries that I never could have dreamt of seeing as a working-class kid from Merseyside. I especially adore being able to visit some of the greatest museums and art galleries in the world. The Art Institute of Chicago is one of my favorites. An incredible permanent collection.

**Q: Where are your favorite weekend getaways?**

**A:** I am so fortunate that I have a lovely little cottage in North Wales that I can quickly escape to. It is only 80 minutes away from my house, but it feels like a different world. A stream in the back garden, a river in the field out front and steam trains sending ghostly, echoing whistles down the steep valley. It's not the most luxurious place, but I can go for long walks along the river bank, then kick off my muddy shoes, collapse in front of the real fire and totally chill.

**Q: Where would you like to go that you have never been to before?**

**A:** I need to go to Egypt. I would love to take a cruise down the Nile and see the incredible ancient sites. Just got to get the time of year right. I'm not good in big crowds, nor in heat over 85 (degrees).

For more from the reporter, visit [www.jaehakim.com](http://www.jaehakim.com).

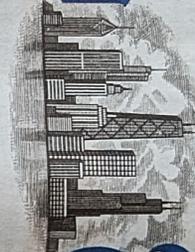


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