

**Biography 2019.**

In the midst of a sprawl of council estates and terraced houses that snake down the high street on the way east to the Tynemouth coast, there’s a square patch of parched grass with goalposts at each end. Before his guitar offered an escape route from North Shields, Sam Fender would roll around its cracked pavements with nothing much to do and nowhere to go. Invariably, he’d be kicking a ball around or smoking cigarettes, always with a song in his head.

“I love my hometown, but when I was growing up I did feel trapped,” he begins. “I felt suffocated, it was claustrophobic.” Fender couldn’t stand the inertia, and turned to his guitar rather than his A-Levels to find a way past it. A sense of abandon informs his urgent, heartfelt, already *essential* rock‘n’roll songs, which tell stories of a life on the fringes.

“I grew up in a place where there are lots of kids that came from families that didn’t work, and then they didn’t work,” he says. “There’s a lot of fear involved when you grow up in a town like that, fear that you’re not going to make something of yourself. I mean actually having a life and seeing places, I never wanted to be stuck there. I butchered my A Levels ‘cause I was too busy being an idiot and playing the guitar. I ended up working in the pub for two or three years and I had no direction really, I didn’t know how I could get me music off the ground. It looked almost inevitable that I’d be stuck there…”

Now, Fender has no reason to be afraid. Last year he signed with Polydor Records (building a recording studio close-by the Tyne with the initial outlay) and released the devastating Dead Boys EP. It was a short collection of razor-smart songs that did enough to convince industry heads to vote Sam their BRITs Critics’ Choice for 2019, following the likes of Adele, Florence & The Machine and Sam Smith. This year that momentum has continued to gather apace; bigger shows are selling out, bigger, bolder songs are being written, and with a debut album almost complete, Sam Fender remains the young British songwriter most likely to.

It’s not just his fans and critics that are touched by the tunes, there’s an edge to Fender’s songs that can also make him tremble. The surging, urgent Dead Boys deals explicitly with male suicide and mental health issues, and has caused outpourings of emotion among that growing band of followers. Sam’s song-writing oeuvre is for impassioned observations about the state of the world around us, socially-pertinent, simply relayed. If the happily and blissfully ignorant characters he creates in the essential Hypersonic Missiles sound familiar, and this mythical, destructive world sounds frighteningly similar to our own, well ‘that’s just coincidence’, he grins.

Making his first steps into the US this year, he’s already found welcoming ears. Jimmy Kimmel gave him the floor to perform Hypersonic Missiles for the first time on TV, where Sam sings of American consumers having the wool pulled over their eyes by the master marketeers, whilst the world sits on the brink of destruction. Potent messages aside, the first live shows sold out, replicating the pattern of everywhere else. It takes quite an effort to make a dent out there, but Sam’s primed with a chisel.

“I rant about the stupid stuff we idolise, but feeling helpless because I’m not smart enough to pose an argument for its destruction,” he explains. “I’m panicking all the time. I just don’t understand the world we live in and I think a lot of people feel like that.”

That last point has allowed Sam Fender into the hearts of many. He’s speaking frankly to a confused generation. His vivid stories make his messages loud and clear. This music doesn’t come easy.

“My songs come from a very real place, a lad from the North-East of England writing about what’s in front of his face,” he says. “I never will claim to be an expert about the issues I talk about, but I will try and talk about them.”

One thing Fender can claim to be an expert on is North Shields, the area that has shaped his gnarled, addictive songs more than anything else. “It’s a very proud place. My dad was a club musician, and worked as an electrician and various other jobs. He played social clubs for years, people I grew up with were grafting through the week in different jobs and playing gigs at the weekend,” Fender says. “They were part of a big community and industry that got destroyed in the ‘80s, so I grew up when everything was dismantled.”

With a debut album now receiving its final mixes and slated for unveiling in the Summer, that bleak source material is proving potent inspiration for a blockbuster release.

“This is genuinely all I can do, so I best go and do it.”

[**www.samfender.com**](http://www.samfender.com)