# Andy Vella reflects on the lasting impact of The Cure's Boys Don't Cry cover image



# The Enduring Iconography of The Cure: An Interview with Andy Vella

In the world of music photography, few images resonate as profoundly as the cover of The Cure's single "Boys Don't Cry." Recognised not just for its aesthetic appeal but also for its cultural significance, the photograph was immortalised during a video shoot in the early 1980s, capturing a moment that would define a generation. Andy Vella, the photographer behind the iconic image, reflects on its impact, describing its journey from film to iconic status, and the serendipitous moments that shaped his career with the band.

During an interview, Vella reveals his surprise at the cover's wide-ranging influence. “I think this is the Cure image that’s most reproduced,” he shares. The photographer candidly notes how the image has transcended mere album art, with fans even commissioning tattoos based on it. However, he laments the poor quality of many bootleg reproductions, which often feature subpar craftsmanship. This speaks not only to the image's popularity but also to Vella's skill in creating something authentically expressive.

The photograph in question, a black-and-white original that was later colourised for the cover, exemplifies Vella's artistic ethos. By adding subtle hues while maintaining a monochromatic essence, he aimed for a balance that enhanced realism without veering into stylistic excess. “I do think I captured exactly who the Cure are with that picture,” he reflects, asserting that the image continues to resonate with audiences who appreciate its authenticity.

Vella’s relationship with The Cure spans over three decades, beginning in 1981. His collaborative process is characterised by spontaneity; he captures the band in moments that reveal their true selves rather than relying on staged poses. This approach has led to a treasure trove of candid images, as evidenced by his book, "Obscure: The Cure," which serves as both a retrospective and a testament to the band's enduring legacy. The book features a wealth of previously unseen photographs, showcasing the band’s evolution and their playful, creative dynamics behind the scenes.

Such candidness extends beyond just photography. Vella recalls an incident during a shoot when a film jammed, leaving him uncertain whether any images had been captured at all. When he later discovered the frames contained remarkable shots, the joy expressed by Robert Smith and the band's then-manager Chris Parry underscored the unpredictable beauty of creative work. “Sometimes we’re successful because of the choices that we make, but sometimes it’s the choices other people make,” he notes, highlighting how collaboration can yield unexpected results.

The band’s atmosphere fostered creativity; Vella describes working with them as a privilege. “Robert knows what he wants... it’s good to work with people like that,” he explains, reflecting on the musician's distinctive vision. Smith's unique stage presence and artistic sensibility significantly shaped the images that Vella created, making their partnership a rich ground for exploration and expression.

Beyond his creative achievements, Vella’s journey has also been marked by reflections on the music industry at large. In an era saturated with digital imagery, he encourages emerging photographers and designers to pursue their passions with authenticity. “If you’ve got talent and passion, you can do whatever you want,” he asserts, echoing his own journey from a paper round to a groundbreaking career in music photography.

In a charitable initiative, Vella is currently part of a global online auction featuring 700 unique artist-designed record sleeves to support War Child, a charity dedicated to aiding children in conflict zones. This project not only highlights his continued relevance in the music industry but also underscores the broader responsibilities artists and creatives can embrace to effect positive change.

As Vella’s work with The Cure continues to captivate and inspire new generations, the legacy of the "Boys Don't Cry" cover remains a touchstone of artistic achievement within the music world. Through the lens of his camera, Vella has documented not just images, but moments that encapsulate the spirit of a band that resonates deeply through the ages.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/may/07/robert-smith-cure-boys-dont-cry-andy-vella), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/may/07/robert-smith-cure-boys-dont-cry-andy-vella)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/may/07/robert-smith-cure-boys-dont-cry-andy-vella), [[4]](https://www.designweek.co.uk/issues/september-2013/obscure-designs-for-the-cure/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/may/07/robert-smith-cure-boys-dont-cry-andy-vella), [[3]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturepicturegalleries/11105295/The-Cure-rare-and-unseen-photos.html), [[5]](https://www.bigissue.com/culture/music/robert-smith-isnt-peoples-perceptions-stories-behind-classic-photos-of-the-cure/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/may/07/robert-smith-cure-boys-dont-cry-andy-vella), [[6]](https://thecuretc.wordpress.com/2014/09/20/guest-columngallery-obscure-the-cure-by-andy-vella/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/may/07/robert-smith-cure-boys-dont-cry-andy-vella), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/may/07/robert-smith-cure-boys-dont-cry-andy-vella), [[5]](https://www.bigissue.com/culture/music/robert-smith-isnt-peoples-perceptions-stories-behind-classic-photos-of-the-cure/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/may/07/robert-smith-cure-boys-dont-cry-andy-vella), [[4]](https://www.designweek.co.uk/issues/september-2013/obscure-designs-for-the-cure/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/may/07/robert-smith-cure-boys-dont-cry-andy-vella), [[5]](https://www.bigissue.com/culture/music/robert-smith-isnt-peoples-perceptions-stories-behind-classic-photos-of-the-cure/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/may/07/robert-smith-cure-boys-dont-cry-andy-vella> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/may/07/robert-smith-cure-boys-dont-cry-andy-vella> - In an interview with The Guardian, photographer Andy Vella discusses his work with The Cure, particularly focusing on the iconic 'Boys Don't Cry' album cover. Vella reflects on the spontaneity of his photography sessions with the band, emphasizing the relaxed and natural moments he captured. He shares anecdotes from various shoots, highlighting the band's dynamic and his approach to capturing their essence. Vella also touches upon the challenges and serendipities of working with film, recounting instances where unexpected outcomes led to memorable images.
3. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturepicturegalleries/11105295/The-Cure-rare-and-unseen-photos.html> - The Telegraph presents a collection of rare and unseen photographs of The Cure, captured by photographer Andy Vella. The gallery showcases intimate moments from the band's history, including behind-the-scenes shots from video shoots and candid backstage images. Vella's unique perspective offers fans a glimpse into the band's off-stage life, highlighting their camaraderie and the creative process behind their music videos. The collection provides a visual narrative of The Cure's evolution over the years, emphasizing the band's enduring appeal and Vella's contribution to their visual identity.
4. <https://www.designweek.co.uk/issues/september-2013/obscure-designs-for-the-cure/> - Design Week features an article on Andy Vella's book 'Obscure: The Cure', which compiles his extensive work with the band over three decades. The book includes photographs and album covers, offering insights into Vella's creative process and his collaboration with The Cure. The article discusses Vella's influences, his approach to capturing the band's essence, and the significance of the images in the context of The Cure's legacy. It also highlights the personal and professional relationship between Vella and the band, underscoring the authenticity of the work.
5. <https://www.bigissue.com/culture/music/robert-smith-isnt-peoples-perceptions-stories-behind-classic-photos-of-the-cure/> - The Big Issue provides an in-depth look at the stories behind classic photographs of The Cure, featuring insights from photographer Andy Vella. Vella shares anecdotes from various photo sessions, including tours in Italy, Brussels, and France, offering a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the band's life on the road. He discusses the dynamics of working with Robert Smith and the band, highlighting their personalities and the challenges of capturing authentic moments. The article delves into the creative process and the unique relationship between Vella and The Cure.
6. <https://thecuretc.wordpress.com/2014/09/20/guest-columngallery-obscure-the-cure-by-andy-vella/> - The Cure's official fan site features a guest column and gallery showcasing Andy Vella's book 'Obscure: The Cure'. The article includes a foreword by Robert Smith and discusses Vella's approach to presenting the band as they truly are, emphasizing their playful and mischievous nature. Vella reflects on his 33 years of photographing The Cure, sharing insights into his creative process and the evolution of his work. The piece highlights the authenticity and depth of the images, offering fans a personal perspective on the band's journey.
7. <https://thecuretc.wordpress.com/2014/09/20/in-pictures-the-cure-behind-the-scenes/> - The Cure's official fan site presents a collection of behind-the-scenes photographs of the band, captured by Andy Vella. The images offer a glimpse into the band's off-stage moments, including video shoots and candid interactions. Vella discusses his experiences working with The Cure, sharing anecdotes and insights into the band's dynamics. The article highlights the spontaneity and authenticity of the photographs, emphasizing Vella's unique perspective and his contribution to documenting the band's history.