

his early twenties, turning heads as he belted out Queen hits such as *We Are The Champions*, *We Will Rock You* and, of course, *Bohemian Rhapsody*.

FAMILY SPOOKED

Even John's mum and dad, Patricia and Ron, were startled by their son's ability to morph into the flamboyant Freddie, who died from AIDS-related illness on November 24, 1991, at the age of 45.

"Mum and Dad were a bit freaked out," John tells *Woman's Day* as he starts taking on Freddie's persona with the help of some make-up and specially made buck-tooth dentures.

"They said that once I got my costume on, they lost their son; I didn't even speak like John any more. And it's true.

"I channel Freddie as soon as I get dressed. I just look into the mirror and say something like, 'Hello darling', and Freddie is here. I even walk differently once I'm in that state, more up on my toes, the same way he did, a combination of boxer and ballet dancer."

The transformation is downright spooky, and John is the first to admit some sort of spiritual force is coming into play.

"Every time I finish a gig, a Queen song will suddenly play out of nowhere," he says. "The other day we were staying in an old pub in outback Queensland and *The Show Must Go On* came on the jukebox.

"I said to the publican, 'Did you put that on because I play in a Queen tribute band?'"

"She said she hadn't put the song on and that it had never played before. I've also had a few weird dreams where Freddie has been talking to me.

"It was Freddie who told me to do the '70s stuff in our show.

He said, 'No-one performs our '70s songs'. He's also guided me when it comes to choosing the costumes."

John takes us on a surreal tour of Freddie's varying guises. We begin with the shadowy look of *Bohemian Rhapsody*, complete with black nail polish and darkened eyelids, right through to the moustachioed prancer of his latter phase.

With each look, John pays meticulous attention to detail and becomes more and more like



Freddie, even demanding champagne for his dressing room.

'IT'S TOO EERIE'

John says he feels his tribute band, Killer Queen, is respectfully keeping Freddie's memory alive.

"Freddie lit the torch and I'm carrying the candle, keeping his flame burning," John says. "It's an honour to be able to get up and sing these extraordinary songs. They're not just songs, they're amazing works of art.

"I try and bring people as close to Freddie Mercury as they will ever get."

And that's so close it often freaks John's audience out.

"I have people saying they're staring at the face of a dead man.

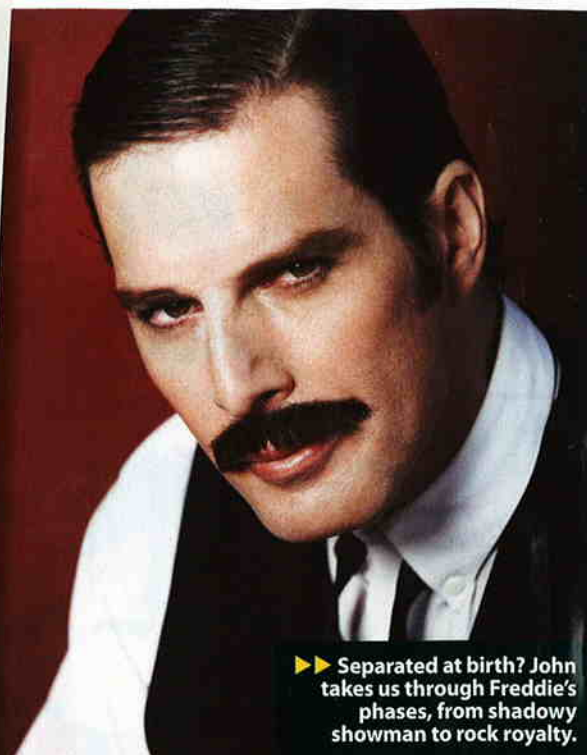
I had one woman come up to me after a show just the other day and she was shaking me quite violently. She kept saying, 'You have got to be Freddie Mercury, you are Freddie Mercury - you're

his reincarnation'. She said, 'It's too eerie; I'm not even sure if I'm enjoying myself'."

And John, 38, is bracing himself for a spiritual visit as the 16th anniversary of Freddie's death comes around next week.

"I'm sure Freddie will make himself known," he says. "We have a spiritual connection and he's been guiding every step of the way. Amazing things happen once I tap into his spirit and channel Freddie."

BY GLEN WILLIAMS



►► Separated at birth? John takes us through Freddie's phases, from shadowy showman to rock royalty.

**'PEOPLE SAY
THEY ARE
STARING AT
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►► For more information on John and Killer Queen go to

www.killerqueen.com.au