



2024 BIOG

One of the most influential bands of their generation and beyond, The Jesus and Mary Chain mark their 40th anniversary in 2024 with a new album, ***Glasgow Eyes*.** Released on March 8 by Fuzz Club and distributed worldwide by Cooking Vinyl, this is the band’s first studio album since *Damage And Joy* (2017).

2024 promises to be a bumper year for devotees of the Reids: the brothers will also unveil their autobiography,\* a documentary, and world tour starting in Glasgow on March 19.

The exact point of any band’s inception is hard to pin down, but for Jim, the ‘wish’ crystallised into reality one night in June 1984: “I always think it was the day we played our first show, because up until then the whole idea had been kind of abstract, it didn’t feel real. When we played in London, there were only about six people watching, but I remember thinking, ‘That’s it. The band is born’.”

From the moment the Reids first pressed the *record* button on their Portastudio in the early 1980s, the intense, sometimes brutal, often darkly romantic music they made has always felt like past, present and future smashed together, alchemising into something startling. *Glasgow Eyes* might mark a milestone but the Mary Chain are always looking forward. As for what fans can expect from the new release, “hopefully people will expect a Jesus and Mary Chain record,” says Jim, "and that is certainly what it is.”

The new album was recorded at the Scottish band Mogwai’s studio *Castle of Doom* in Glasgow: “we quite liked the idea of a title that suggested that we were kind of returning home to where it all started,” says Jim. “William had a front cover, a face with fucked up eyes. This seemed to suggest the title of the album: *Glasgow Eyes*.” As for their creative process, the Reid brothers approach the studio in the way they always have. “It’s remarkably the same as it was in 1984,” says Jim. “Just hit the studio and see what happens. We went in with a bunch of songs and let it takes its course. There are no rules, you just do whatever it takes. And there’s a telepathy there - we are those weird not-quite twins that finish each other’s sentences.”

The album’s first single, ‘JAMCOD’, blurs dizzying electronica with the immense guitar sound that can only be that of William Reid. Jim’s chant of ‘J A M C O D’ is part incantation, part incitation; this is at once an instant Mary Chain classic and something altogether fresh and radical. While the Reids’s enduring connection with electronic music, via an early love of artists such as Suicide and Kraftwerk, is clear on this album - not in itself new territory for the JAMC - other, more recently embraced and less obvious influences have also left their imprint here. “Don’t expect ‘the Mary Chain goes jazz’,” Jim wryly reassures, “but there are some parts (William) played on the album - and I don’t mean it the way it might sound - but they are just pure jazz. The trouble with jazz is there’s bebop and then there’s smooth jazz, which ruined the whole idea of it for lots of people - it did for me, for years,” Jim continues. “Then I started to listen to Miles Davis and John Coltrane and thought, ‘actually there’s a lot more to this than I had ever imagined, and I know William’s the same. It’s the attitude: they just go in with a ‘fuck it, let’s make some music, let’s get together and see what happens, and it’s always interesting.” This anarchic, spontaneous quality relates in turn to the punk attitude so interwoven into the soul of the Mary Chain and the Reids’ creative approach from day one.

While the recording process has remained largely the same over the years, some things have definitely changed; previously sessions have, by Jim’s own admission, often proved a ‘painful’ experience thanks to the notorious friction between the brothers. Has the antagonism mellowed at all? Jim: “We’ve learned how to deal with it. I mean, in the ‘90s it got totally out of control and it was about as bad as hopefully it ever will be. And we learned a lot from that, how bad it got. Now I know there are certain lines drawn and they’re hard to see. In the ‘90s, I didn’t see them because I was so wasted, and so was he, but now I know that if I say this or I do this, it’s going to have that reaction, so best just go about it a different way. Let’s just try and get the job done and not fuck each other off.”

The idea of the Mary Chain at 40 might be disconcerting for those who still associate them with the energy and frustrations of adolescence. But, as Jim says, “The Mary Chain is about whatever we want it to be. When the band reformed in 2007, one of the reasons I had a problem with it was because I thought Mary Chain was all about being young. I thought, ‘it’s going to be weird: wrinkly old guys going onstage singing ‘Head On’.’ But then the Pixies were touring the world singing, ‘Head On’ and I thought, ‘fuck it, they’re doing it, why can’t we? Yes, we were young when we made those records. But I think the record we’re about to release is as good as any of our other records, and it’s not about being 22 - we’re where we are now and it’s about us, now.”

Admittedly if you could rewind time and tell the Reids in their East Kilbride bedroom that the Mary Chain would one day celebrate four decades, you’d be given short shrift. “It would have been unimaginable,” says Jim. “I’d probably be mortified. But I always said, ‘I’ll do it until it feels wrong’. When I was young, I used to look at the Stones and think, ‘For fuck’s sake, they’re still trudging about all over the world. That’ll never be me…’ Sure enough, here I am. But music is what interests me. I can’t imagine doing anything else, or getting as much satisfaction out of anything else as being in a band. In some ways it’s more enjoyable now than it was in the beginning; everything now is totally on our terms.”

Something that has never changed is the fact that the Mary Chain have always stood for the outsider, the misfit, the ‘never understood’. After all these years of being rightly considered one of the great alternative rock acts in British music history, do the Mary Chain still feel like outsiders themselves?

Jim: “Absolutely. Never fit in anywhere, that’s just the way it is with us. For years I used to think, ‘well, fuck it, how come we never seem to be invited to the party?’ Then after a while I just thought, ‘Fuck the party. We’re the party.’ That’s it. We’re allowed to do this thing, and that’s good enough for me.”

\* to be published by White Rabbit

More info at

themarychain.com

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