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RESISTANCE IS (NOT) FUTILE...

JIM JONES & THE RIGHTEOUS MIND cast a 'Super Natural' spell over VLR's Rich Deakin.

WHEN it was announced in June 2014 that the Jim Jones Revue were splitting up it came as a huge shock to their fiercely staunch followers. Since 2007 the Revue had been tearing up venues across the UK, Europe and the US with their incendiary, high-octane live performances, typified by displays of sheer unbridled energy. The obvious question was why after seven successful years, countless gigs and three albums did they call it a day?

Jones simply states: "A general consensus that it was time to move on, partly a feeling that the band had said everything it could in its current formation, and to continue would have begun to be a self-parody... and partly that the process of constant touring was becoming too much for some of the members."

That said the band did one final tour, aptly named The Last Hurrah Tour. Culminating in a triumphal sold-out farewell show at The Forum in Kentish Town, London. After such a rapturous send-off Jones surely must have had second thoughts even if only fleetingly? "Of course", Jones responds: "But at the same time I felt really pleased that everyone had agreed to do the final tour and how successful it had all been and that we ended on a really positive note!"

Barely had the flames from that final 'Last Hurrah' at the Forum died down, when Jim Jones was back in the studio. Having brought along Revue bassist Gavin Jay for the ride too, Jones wasted no time in setting about forging a "sonic vision" for his new band, The Righteous Mind. Jones also enlisted drummer Phil Martini. The Revue's keyboard player, Henri Herbert, was also initially involved, but says Jones, "[Herbert] left the party to pursue a solo boogie career that had suddenly taken off."

It took several months for the band's line up to stabilise. Making their debut with a handful of live dates in France in May 2015, the band subsequently underwent two more personnel changes before playing their first live UK show in London a month later. Jones explains, "Matt (Millership) and Mal (Troon) swooped in and saved the day. Matt was one of the piano players we'd been in touch with for the Jim Jones Revue when Elliot Mortimer left. Matt had been too busy then, but luckily was available for the Righteous Mind. Malcolm, we had known for a while - a gifted player and a former bandmate of our drummer Phil Martini, from many moons previous in The Tokyo Dragons."

Preceding Matt Millership was Joe Glossop who was "poached by Tom Jones" says Jim Jones, "[but] Joe still joins us from time to time if Matt can't make it." Jones further elaborates on those early personnel upheavals, "Mr Paul Seacroft was the first one to show us what the pedal-steel would sound like in the line-up, but was too busy with work to commit to a full-time position. David Page, a really talented player took over for a bit, but then he got dragged away too - off with Rick Rubin to record with the Ruen Brothers at Shangri-La Studios in Malibu."

The incorporation of pedal-steel guitar, and Jay's deployment of upright bass, certainly adds a darker dimension to the Righteous Mind's sound than the Revue's. In fact, there appears to be a dark undercurrent running right through The Righteous Mind - from the band's suitably macabre and occultish Kenneth Anger-esque promotional videos, the lyrics, and the cover art, to the title of the new album, 'Super Natural'.

Jay's response is measured: "I wouldn't call myself a believer in the occult, but I find the imagery and ideas that come from it fascinating. I like Alan Moore's notion of using rituals to open up imaginative spaces without necessarily following it as an absolute 'truth.' Anything that lets you step out of mainstream thinking and question societies morals and prejudices is a good thing in my book."

Equally esoteric is the band's name. Taken from a book about psychology, Jones explains, "The book is about morality and what motivates those feelings and beliefs in us... quite fascinating reading, but the truth is, I just liked the way the name looked. I always liked the term 'Righteous', and now, coincidentally, it seems to fit with the world we're living in at the moment and ties in with a sense of resistance."

On the subject of "resistance", Jim Jones is obviously very passionate when it comes to political issues too. He was an avowed advocate of populist Democrat Bernie Sanders during the Primaries in the run-up to the recent US Presidential elections, and more recently, closer to home, Jim Jones & The Righteous Mind, along with the likes of Paul Weller and Robert Wyatt, played a gig in celebration of and solidarity for Jeremy Corbyn's progressive policies. So, what does he think of the current global political situation - what with the likes of Trump, Brexit, the rise of the far-right and the forthcoming UK General election?

"I'm not really in favour of any one party or movement, I'm more just against all forms of oppression and cuntishness, so I tend to stand with anyone who offers resistance against that. The current rise and acceptance of fascism is very troubling, it disturbs me to see my brothers and sisters so easily corralled into standing up for leaders who ultimately don't give a fuck about them by the corrupt mainstream media - the good olde divide and conquer, it's been working like a charm for centuries. It would be so great to see the people get together and turn the tables on that shit... you know, in my lifetime!"

Since their formation in 2014, The Righteous Mind having increasingly moved towards keeping things in-house. Although they have employed the talents of renowned French illustrator and tattooist Jean-Luc Navette for the artwork on their 'Boil Yer Blood' single and debut album 'Super Natural', Gavin Jay is an artist in his own right. ▶

"IT'S BEEN A LONG, HARD BATTLE MAKING THIS RECORD HAPPEN."

GAVIN JAY





PHOTO BY DAVID ARNOFF

◀ “Like many rockers before me, I followed the traditional and approved route into rock ‘n’ roll, via art college. The call of the bass was strong so I knew that’s what I had to do by the time I left, but I kept my hand in with the odd bit of creativity here and there. It was whilst making the cover for ‘Heavy Lounge #1’ that I began experimenting with collage, and it’s just taken off from there. I’ve always loved surrealism and occult imagery, with Max Ernst and Joseph Cornell being the most obvious influences on the work I’m making now. And I’m gearing up for my first ever exhibition in June, which is really exciting.”

As for Jones, he has already produced and directed one of the band’s promotional videos, and whereas Jim Scavunos from Nick Cave’s Bad Seeds and Grinderman produced the last two Revue albums, Jones has also produced all their singles, including the debut album ‘Super Natural’. This has also been released on their own label MaSonic. Given the Jim Jones Revue connection to Scavunos, it might be argued that it’s hardly surprising that The Righteous Mind have been likened to Grinderman on occasion, but insists Jones, “None of our music is supposed to sound like that by design, but if it does have parallels in any way I would take that as a compliment.”

Jay is equally quick to dismiss any similarities as coincidental: “... the songwriting I think comes from a wider range of influences. Jim Jones is like a musical archaeologist, digging up rare treasure that he’ll bring into rehearsal for us to study and learn from. I think the biggest mistake a musician can make is to slavishly copy someone else. We definitely wanted to find our own voice and be as open as possible.”

They’ve certainly done that with ‘Super Natural’, with Jones saying that “I feel like I finally know what I’m doing in there.” A change of direction had already been hinted at on the Revue’s Savage Heart album, and in some respects this has been carried over into The Righteous Mind. But Jones agrees that guitarist Mal Troon and keyboard player Matt Millership have played a significant part in providing a completely different dimension and sound than that of the Revue: “Yes, you have these great players and it’s important to use them. If you know you’re working with a killer, then you need to give ‘em the knife and let ‘em get to work!”

Of course, Stooges and MC5 influences are never too far away from a Jim Jones album. But just how influential are they? Jones responds: “A huge piece of the puzzle... they opened the door in both directions; all the way back to the caveman blues, and far ahead to the future and cosmic travel.”

But, there’s been a shift away from the more traditional rock ‘n’ roll boogie style that typified the Revue, towards a more straight down the line no-nonsense, heavy rock sound, which has even been likened to Led Zeppelin - espe-

cially on the band’s new single ‘Heavy Lounge #1’. Jones neither agrees with or refutes this comparison, but does offer an explanation of the inspiration behind it, “It’s just your typical apocalyptic, existentialist blues and the sanctuary and redemption that comes from a lover’s kiss... the power of a thing that can take you beyond another thing... rock ‘n’ roll basically! Musically, the original inspiration came from a section in a Charles Mingus number that’s been a favourite for many years, called ‘Better Git It In Your Soul’... our song is a punk rock version of that.”

It also seems that Jones can’t stay off the road for too long. With tours of France and England just completed the Righteous Mind are now returning to the continent for a series of festival appearances, including yet another date in France. The French, it seems, hold a particular affection for Jones. When asked why, he replies,

“This magazine is called Vive Le Rock! - there’s a connection! I think there is something in the French and Spanish culture that goes with rock ‘n’ roll... a rebellious spirit to change things you don’t like... cut off the heads of the aristocracy and establishment etc. Also, I think, generally, when you get outside of England there is an attitude of appreciation and respect for artists purely because they make the effort to be that. It isn’t so necessary to be trendy like it is in the UK. You find people are much more open to enjoying something just because it’s good on some level.”

Although the Righteous Mind already have several singles under their belt, it’s taken nearly three years for their debut album to come to fruition. But if the Righteous Mind have somewhat remained in the shadows of the Jim Jones Revue so far, the release of ‘Super Natural’ has now changed all that. Gavin Jay says: “It’s been a long, hard battle making this record happen but I really think it’s the best thing we’ve ever done, so it’s very gratifying to read [the] reviews.”

After ever-dynamic live performances, and such a critically lauded debut album, how do the pair of them think the Righteous Mind will respond, and where will their ever accelerating trajectory take them?

Jones simply says: “Keep turning up the heat, and take it to the next level!” Jay concurs, adding: “To step up it another gear, to hit the road hard and record as much as possible. We’ve already got a ton of ideas for the next LP, so getting on with that - we basically want to be workaholics.”

I don’t think anyone will argue with that. **VLR**

*‘Super Natural’ is out now on MaSonic / Hound Gawd Records
For more Jim Jones & The Righteous Mind visit Vivelorock.net*

“IT WAS TIME TO MOVE ON”

JIM JONES