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Interview of The Jim Jones Revue: Rock'n roll attitude

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Dr. Javnaire: We all know the tragic Peoples Temple's history. How did you choose such a name and what does it mean to you?

Rupert: Because, Jim Jones is the name of the lead singer. What happened was, when we first started the band, a friend of us who was starring a club heard us playing and said us "you gotta play". And we said, look, we're not ready: we haven't even got a name. And he said, I don't care you call the Jim Jones So Punk Revue, and you'll play with the side of it. And that's the end of it.

So, it's just the name a guy gave us. But, the show that night was really soul out, people dancing on the tables. We didn't really have a chance to change the name after that. We became to be known as The Jim Jones Revue. And it's just afterwards that all the connections with the other Jim Jones came about.

Dr. Javnaire: Would you prefer that people compare you to early rock, to garage or to punk music?

Rupert: I think the important thing to remember with us is that, undeniably, we take a third in each branches. But that is also a big bang of popular music. All these three elements come together at that time. You have this explosion of exciting music, of wide blackout coming together.

What we do is just drawing a line between all the exciting rock'n rolls of all these years. And it could take roots a couple years ago with Grinderman, or a few years before that with The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, and go further back still then to the Sex Pistols, The Clash, and on, and on, and on, towards Little Richard and Robert Johnson. And, well, it's timeless...

Jim: But fifties were the point where everything went "Bang !" That's the point where white music and black music came together with the same message. It was just for a short while. It didn't take very long before people realized that there was money to be made. And it became commercialized, and softened. And never since people tried to rediscover that original energy, and original life, from the first breakthrough. And we're another one of those which try to carry some of that light. But that's not nostalgia: we don't want to sing about pink Cadillac, you know. Or anything like that. We talk about being alive today, you know...

Dr. Javnaire: About London, about modern life...

Jim: Yeah! And authors like Charles Bukowski and people like that who managed to talk about normal life, but who can sum up things in a few lines and say something which stops you in your tracks, you know. I'm not saying I can write like that, but that's what influences me and that's the way I think about it when I'm working on the lyrics of the songs. And it's just about my life, you know.

Dr. Javnaire: And because of all those influences, how would you describe your music?

Jim: Rock'n roll! (*laughs*)

Pierro: Just rock'n roll?

Jim: Yeah... it's like "just rock'n roll", but it's already so much. And the 50's part of the rock'n roll is like the ignition key.

Pierro: Apart from Charles Bukowski, which writers inspire you?

Jim: Well... A lot. But I like... Ernest Hemingway, or anyone who can say something with a little bit of fuss... I also love William Burroughs and the Russian writers, such as Dostoyevsky or Mikhail Boulgakov... people like that you know.

Dr. Javnaire: We know it's not about nostalgia, but could we say that you are maybe born 30 or 40 years too late?

Jim: I don't think so. Despite all the things that might be attractive about going back in time, I wouldn't want to go back. You know, my life is now. Do I lose so much? We all are the way we are. And that means you need to sort of hang on today and express yourself where you happen to be.

And there were problems back then, you know. When you rely on to musically, in the 50's for example, it was only independent labels, and, you know, they sort of struggle to have a certain amount of success. They worked damned hard! People like Little Richard: he only made it through sort of persistence, and blood and guts, and energy. It was hard work!

Pierro: What do you think about French audiences?

Rupert: We love them. I mean France was the first country to really...hum, get what we did. More than our home country, Brit', you know. Very quickly we were touring, playing in festivals and were doing TV and stuff in France. About two years before we kind of kicked off in Britain, so... We got a very special place for France in our heart. It seemed to be like a chemical reaction between French people and our music. I can't clearly remember, but I think this is our fifth tour, or something, in a couple of years, and it is always great. And tonight was a wonderful show, and, you know, it just keeps happening! This tour has been our best tour so far: we have fantastic shows here, in Poitiers, but also in Paris, in Lyon, in Marseille, in Bordeaux as well. And audiences have been each time great. It's just brilliant the way French audiences react to what we do; they get it instantly. There's no kind of intellectualized, you know, they just want to have a good time.

Jim: I was thinking of something in the French culture that just relies to rock'n roll, you know: the spirit of independence and liberty. And the all kind of like "Fuck you!", you know. If people start to take liberties, if people in government, the French people they don't stand for it. They immediately have a strike or something...

Pierro: Strike spirit... fuck spirit!

Jim: Yeah! There is a parallel with the idea of rock'n roll about sort of expressing yourself as an individual and not being crashed down too much, you know. In a positive way! And our music is that: it has a lot of fools and a lot of aggression, but it's meant to be positive and uplifting.

Pierro: Another question I'm just thinking about: for both of you, what was the first musical emotion which gave you the will to make music?

Rupert: What really made me want to play music was (I was really young) when I saw The Ramones. It had a real primal effect on me, you know. I thought it was simple enough so I might be able to do it myself. (*Laughs*) Even if I found it wasn't. It appeared to me as naïve, like young kids, and it was the initial thing.

Jim: I think, for me, it was probably Chuck Berry. When I was quite young at school, during the lunch time, someone showed me how to do the Chuck Berry style. And then I have realized that maybe I can do this also... but there were many other things after that.

Dr. Javnaire: You also just produced a new album. So, what do you prefer: lives and tours or the process of creation, studio?

Rupert: For us it's kind of the same thing because when we go to the studio, we play live. I mean, the main difference is that we can then produce what we've played or maybe make it more into the sound we find the most exciting. So, both are quite closely related. It's not like when we go in studio we track everything individually; we do it as a band. We just got more time to develop it. The album we just recorded, we did it with a guy called Jim Sclavunos. He was drummer in the Bad Seeds and Grinderman. And it was great time because he played in lots of bands and musicians we really love, like the Cramps, Sonic Youth, all these people. So, playing with him producing was great.

Dr. Javnaire: Finally, we can feel a true alchemy in your band. Do you think that it is, for you five, the good band?

Rupert: An interesting thing about this band is that when we first had to play together it came apparent that there was an immediate chemistry. Since the very first song we played together, which was "Hey, hey, hey, hey" of Little Richard, we became aware that there was something there. After that, we played with a lot of different musicians, but we never get that. So, it was pretty immediate we had something different from other bands that we played with.