



Chain Mail

Preliminary Issue : Spring 1990



Tim, La Locomotive, Paris

*News, Reviews and Previews
for the James Fan-Club*

James Chain Mail, PO Box 182, Manchester, M60 4DU

The Golden Hour

Since the release of 'Come Home', James have spent much of their time - apart from the odd live appearance here and there - slogging it out in the studio, putting the finishing touches to the greatly anticipated LP, 'Gold Mother'.

Due for release on June 4th, Gold Mother is a fifty-minute long fusion of new techniques with the more traditional James sounds. It is the long-awaited studio follow-up to 'Strip Mine' and the first album release on the new Fontana/Phonogram label.

Side One starts with **Come Home**, A nice way to ease the oft-experienced alienation to a new LP. Following comes **Government Walls** - which should be familiar at least to gig-going, Snub TV-watching James fans - A well developed song, musically and lyrically powerful, and a good demonstration of teamwork between Andy and Saul.

God Only Knows continues the critical commentary with a savagely amusing opening spiel the world of TV evangelism - pop music has been twisted by the devil and thrust into the minds of this generation! - talk so twisted it becomes a parody of itself. The song is wild, full of brassy energy and fury. Its the perfect backbeat for a car that's driven fast.

The wildness continues through **You Can't Tell How Much Suffering On A Face That's Always Smiling** where organised, chaotic guitar work intermingles with some seriously taught vocals. This is the song that makes the car swerve but it will take **Crescendo** to slow things down properly. Crescendo is beautiful. It has a slow, sustained bass-line that sings a million songs at once to you, all different yet all in perfect harmony. It has ethereal, almost scared lyrics - 'I'm afraid of a loneliness swallowing me' - which disappear into a Cocteau Twins-esque world of their own and it has a level of orchestral restraint that the Cowboy Junkies would kill for. Listen to Crescendo quietly and dream...

Side two of the records and tapes cracks off with **How Was It for You?**, the band's first major chart success which, together with a slinky video, re-introduces the rave bombardment neatly portrayed on side one. This song is testament to James' ceaseless ability to produce good dance music and the fact that it has charted demonstrates that there is at least some justice in the world.

Hang On is the next track; an off-beat accent carries a mid to late sixties style of tight verses, opened intermittently by the drums into a sound boppy number. This song should be perfect for building up a concert sweat to on the forthcoming tour.

The tempo is brought down again for **Walking The Ghost**, a haunting lament lead by bass chords and spine chilling string effects. Close your eyes to this song and picture the Chateau and the despair.

(Mother Tongue)

The Title Track, **Gold Mother**, leads a poppy, oompah-oompah frolic without stooping to triviality. In some places it reminds of a lighter 'Medieval' but why it does is something that can't be fathomed. Its also got a fantastic rhythm and a marvellously over-long ending which your 'tuned-in' reviewer can say climaxes in a 'Sonic Cathedral of Sound' (And I mean that most sincerely, folks!)

After Gold Mother comes the best track ever written by anyone ever in the entire history of songwriting (And I'm containing myself not to be sycophantic here). **Top Of The World** is bassy, relaxing and Cool with a capital K. It is moving and it is strong and, whilst the lyrics warn 'Don't Let Go', the gossamer-like music is screaming at you, saying 'Get Stoned!'. Even sober, this song is a very fitting ending to what is a fine collection of songs without any major faults. Gold Mother runs as smoothly as a Rolls-Royce on an airport runway. If only everything in life were as reliable as Mother.

Golden Opportunities

To mark the arrival of this new magazine, *Chain Mail* has arranged a competition with the band, giving you the opportunity of owning a personally autographed white label copy of the 'Come Home' 12-inch plus whatever else we can persuade the band to throw in between now and the next issue. So, get your sleuth-caps on and work your brain around these two simple questions:

- Question 1 : What was the highest UK chart position achieved by the song Chain Mail?
- Question 2 : Someone or Something is missing from one of the photos included in this issue - What is missing and where from?

The next issue of *Chain Mail* will be released towards the end of August, so please have your answers in by the beginning of that month. You know the address (It's on the cover if you're observant!) so get writing and good luck!

Gotta Get Down...

On a sunny, though otherwise ordinary Monday afternoon in Manchester's Market Street, who would expect to see a snake of coloured tops and baggy jeans twisting its way back from the entrance to the newly opened Our Price Record Store. However, things weren't that ordinary. The date was April 30th, the day on which the poster in the window beckoned people to come and enjoy a unique musical experience.

This was the day James released their new single, 'How Was It For You?' and the band were in-store to promote it. The original queue was for the acquisition of autographed copies of the new single; a treat in itself perhaps, but the crowning glory was yet to come - A free concert by the band themselves.

When given their cue, the awaiting throng surged into the store, jostling for position. As the numbers swelled to over 200, the enthusiastic crowd were entertained by the sounds and images of the new single on three video screens. This heightened expectation, and, as the temperatures soared, the cheers began as Tim and the rest of the band squeezed themselves onto a stage that had probably been a snooker table in a former life.

The set lasted a brief 35 minutes but it was enough to sway the multitude and bathe us all in the music, lyrics and atmosphere of a real experience. The songs covered ground from 'Sandman' through 'Come Home', the new single, a rejuvenated 'Hymn From A Village' - Or was it 'Tim From A Village'? - to the completely new song 'How Long Will It Take?' - a song so new that the album is old in comparison.



When the performance was complete, more records and items of clothing were autographed and the hot and sweaty onlookers slowly moved off, their expectations fulfilled and their souls contented. So, if you were one of the fortunate few to be there, 'How was it for you? Was it as good as it was for me?'

Getting SASSed

Charity, it is said, begins at home. Back in March, three Manchester bands donated their home gigs to a worthy cause. Raintree County, The Waltones and The New Fast Automatic Daffodils assembled to raise funds for the Southern African Scholarship Scheme, a charity set up at UMIST in Manchester to enable a non-white South African to receive an education. This was a special gig, where local celebs mixed with fans and the politically right-on, where hearts were stuck firmly to lapels and where, unusually for this (in)famous hedonistic utopia, people care.

To set the scene, Raintree County and The Waltones kindle a cosy atmosphere with pleasant sets - highlights being County's 'What's the World' and the Waltones' classic 'Smile'. What really sparked the fire though was the arrival of the surprise guests. Those in the know had spent the early evening phoning mates to tell them to come. Those who didn't know were pleasantly surprised by the sight of local folk-singing heroes **Tim Booth** and **Larry Gott** who strolled onstage to strum a couple of singalonga James tunes, backed by a rapidly swelling stagefront chorus. With a wry grin, Tim leads off into the subversive favourite 'Promised Land', closely followed by a thankfully outdated 'Why So Close' and that's it, they're gone like poll-tax rebels in the night....



So, just as we were warming ourselves to an increasingly special gig, the New FADs appear to pour petrol over the campfire ambience. The older songs, all choppy chords and smouldering wah-wah pedals suffused into the newer material of spacey dance anthems, more hypnotic than hysterical and aimed for the juggular with the precision of a needle.

The FADs left, saying they're 'nice people to do business with', and when the organisers counted over £1600 raised, who could disagree? Pop stars with a conscience - James on acoustics - you can't beat em!

Paris 22/2/90

It was always going to be a mega event. Right from the moment we boarded the coaches outside the Hacienda in Manchester, Passports and Gallic currency in hand and a taste for 'la bonne vie' about our persons, every one of the 150 or so lucky punters who trekked down to La Locomotive in Paris knew they were in for a huge rave. The 36 hour round trip was made with one purpose in mind; to experience James, live and rowdy in the city of lights.

The ferry was the place for the first bout of socialising as the assembled mass found out their common interests. By the time we were standing at Blanche Metro station, our particular group numbered about thirty unsupervised Perries in Paris; no-one could tell what was going to happen.

Arriving mid-day gave everyone the chance to take in something of the city before the show began. So, armed with baggy clothes and much cheap plonk, a sunny afternoon was spent in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower discussing music, James and the bravery (foolishness?) of the few who attempted to climb up the thousand-odd tons of steel that loomed overhead.

After taking in bits of the Louvre, and some really neat bars it was time to join the throng outside the venue. Manchester was set to take over...

Inside, the club was dark, loud and exciting. Three different floors offering three different types of music and atmosphere. James were set to play on the main stage in the middle floor and consequently that area was buzzing. Parisians were doing their best to take in the spectacle of hundreds of wierd Mancunians wiggling out in a style that only the Hacienda could breed and were determined not to be left out of the running, even though most of the local clientele had never heard of the James before. They had certainly been given an appreciation of the Manchester style from the large FAC51/Hacienda banners and the coolness of Dave Haslam's DJ. work. The course of the night was clearly up to the away supporters.



"This is the Hacienda, isn't it?" - James walked onstage to the sight of 150 sweaty Mancunian fashion victims leading the forray of fevered dancing, and played a stormer. Saul's violin introduces the anthemic 'Hang On' and the Perries erupt. The locals back off bemusedly, trying to maintain their cool and come to terms with these wierd foriegners and then, taking the Mancs in their stride, commence pogoing like people possessed.

Culture shock under our respective belts, it's back to James who launched into a break-neck 'Violent Rain'. From here on in I'm captivated. Listening intently to the new songs - the mesmeric, haunting bass of 'Top Of The World'; and the beautifully crafted 'Walking The Ghost' - and then throwing my body about wildly to the upbeat favourites, 'Johnny Yen', 'Come Home', an inspired 'What For' and the stomping classic-to-be 'God Only Knows'. The set must have lasted around two hours. The lights blended into a surreal blur of club, concert and acid party culture. The air grew hot and steamy as the raving crowd sweated out their souls trying to keep up with Tim's dervish swirl and the band's manic percussive beat. The man was in fine form, exercising his talent as the ideal front man; sensitive, sensual, appealing and with enough energy to keep him going long after many others would have burned out. A lucky figure from the crowd took to the stage to wreck out the last moments of the set proper, and the floor became a mass of seated, swaying revellers for the first encore, 'Sit Down'.

Finally, the song to end all songs, 'Stutter' thunders along like a train, and then the band were gone. James had held their heads high and said "We were the best, we are still the best and we will always be the best". A sentiment with which no-one disagreed.

The British fans had needed no prompting to go on the trek. They knew James would be excellent. The regulars at La Locomotive were taken completely by surprise. It was their overwhelming response that said just how good James had been. James won many supporters that night; they were far too good not to.



We arrived back in the rainy city of Manchester at 6.00 pm. The day had been excellent, the evening, superb and the gig was the icing on the cake we had been mixing since leaving a day and a night before. If the upcoming tour turns out to be half as good as that one show then I hope you all find out how good the cake really does taste!



Taking Paris by Storm



James merchandise

T-shirts, Long sleeved shirts, Hooded tops plus the new tour range.

For an order-form, write to:
James Merchandising
P.O. Box 182
Manchester
M60 4DU

To obtain a discount, please quote your fan-club number.

Italy Can Wait

Running alongside the first stages of the 1990 World Cup Finals, James have strategically planned their British tour dates so that neither they nor their fans should miss any of England's matches. This has led to some awkward concert scheduling for the band to cope with - playing at Hull then Exeter on consecutive evenings - all so that football fans can watch the home countries clash when England do battle with Ireland.

The most notable absence from the dates confirmed so far is a Manchester show, but *Chain Mail* can confirm a special event in the North-West, currently being put together. The Empress Ballroom in Blackpool has been booked for the 3rd and 4th of August, with a view to creating a weekend festival. Coaches will run from City-Centre Manchester up to the venue, and a campsite should be available to create a cool 'Weekend With James' rave. We'll keep you in touch, as and when the final details emerge so watch this space...

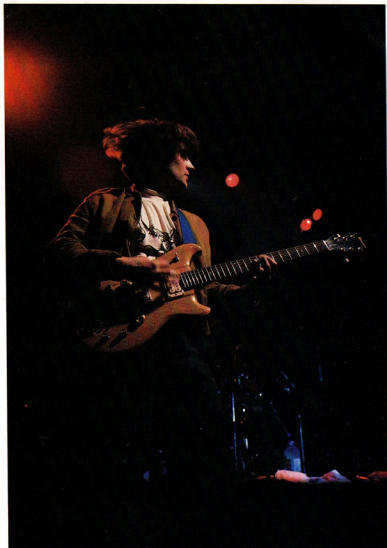
As well as their own mini-fest, James are playing at two other major festivals:

Firstly, details about WOMAD can be obtained from : Lancaster County Council, Morecombe, Lancs (0524-417120) - This is not a camping festival, though guest-houses are available, and a public campsite is situated 2 miles from the venue.

Secondly, the famous Glastonbury. James take the stage on the Saturday afternoon, although tickets are only available for the whole weekend and it is not possible to buy a ticket on the door. Details from : Glastonbury Festival Office, CND, 22-24 Underwood St, London (071-250 4010). Have fun!

James tour 1990. The Dates...

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 13th May - Cambridge-Corn Exchange. | 15th June - Liverpool-Royal Court. |
| 14th May - Brighton-Top Rank Club. | 16th June - (England vs Holland) |
| 19th May - Morecombe Bay-WOMAD. | 17th June - Norwich-U.E.A. |
| 4th June - (Album Released) | 18th June - Nottingham Rock City. |
| 5th June - Glasgow-Barrowlands. | 19th June - London-Kilburn Ballroom. |
| 6th June - Lancaster University. | 20th June - Birmingham Hummingbird. |
| 8th June - Hull City Hall. | 21st June - (England v Egypt) |
| 9th June - Exeter University. | 23rd June - Glastonbury Festival. |
| 10th June - Bristol Studio. | 27th June - Belfast-Queens University. |
| 11th June - (England vs Ireland) | 28th June - Dublin-McGonagles. |
| 12th June - Middlesborough Town Hall. | 3rd Aug - Blackpool Empress Ballroom. |
| 13th June - Leeds University. | 4th Aug - Blackpool Empress Ballroom. |
| 14th June - Sheffield Octagon. | |



A Soiree with Saul!

...Speak Out...Speak Out...Speak Out...

These pages are for you. We are after any letters, queries and contributions you wish to make about James or *Chain Mail*. This is the preliminary issue, so we should apologise to those below if they didn't expect to see their letters in print. Lack of time prohibited us from contacting everybody to ask for material (Cheers, Emma!). Still, you'll know for next time! The address is on the front cover so if you want to see yourself in print, or you just want a pen-pal, then you know what to do...

Heaton
Newcastle Upon Tyne

Dear James,

I am writing to say just how much James have given me, and I'm sure many others, over the past few years.

From the beginning and Folk Lore, to the present, ever increasing, popularity, James have proved to be the band that can produce just what it takes, time after time.

James have now emerged as a band that have become not only 'Manchester's Finest' but have also gone a long way to becoming 'Britain's Finest'.

If current trends continue, I am sure that James will very soon be 'On Top Of The World'!

Love and best wishes for the future,
Emma Farmer

From his views...

My favourite LP, well, not to sound funny, has to be *Stutter* because its James, the James I got to know in 1985, and before then...

...I don't watch many films, but the best film I ever saw was *Escape From Sobivor*. The film was so good, such sorrow. It made me so mad to think no-one knew what was really going on...

Religion? I have none.

Politics? *The Working Class - Labour*.

Feelings? I have very sad feelings about everything, the world, me, people...Change in life is what we all need from time to time, just to keep us going...Love is just pain; unless you find someone who is really in love with you. Me, I don't want to get close to anyone just in case I hurt them. Yes, love is pain...And Nature? Nature would be lovely if we only look after it.

Brian Snowdon

...Speak Out...Speak Out...Speak Out...

James Chain Mail,

I am French, j'ai 19 years old. James is one of my favourite bands.

It's at the 'Locomotive' in Paris, the 22/02/90 that I discovered James. It was like a revelation, this concert was like a dream and it will stay a long time in my memory. I give my thanks to James for their concert and hope to see them again soon.

Frank Cicala

p.s. I would like to know if you could get me in touch with a member of your club to correspond with....?

Dear Whoever,

I'm very happy that I joined Chain Mail. All the information you sent is great, thank you! The discography was an amazing revelation, but I'm afraid that even in the record stores that sell the more obscure things, when I ask for James, the response is still, invariably, James who? Can you tell me how I might acquire some of these records?

Also, The tour plans seem to be limited to the UK - Are James coming to America? There must be lots of people wanting to see them here!

Thanks very much,

Frances Lee

(These two letters were selected from many that have been sent from all over the world. If you'd like to write to another club member from your own country or elsewhere - someone to help with your record collection perhaps - drop us a line and we'll try to put you in touch.)

Dear Coming Home,

Firstly, thanks for all the 'Chain Mail' correspondence. Its nice to be informed. There are a couple of things that you could perhaps do for 'Chain Mail' members (How many are there?). My first thought is a tape of unreleased material from years gone by, for sale only to members.

Secondly, and the most important reason why I have written, is that I often find it difficult to get hold of advance tickets. Perhaps you could arrange it so that all 'Chain Mail' members have a chance of buying advance tickets, or perhaps you could have a 'Chain Mail' guest-list (but we still pay of course!).

Yours

Spencer Barnett

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Richmond, VA
23237, USA

Home.

This is the preliminary issue of *Chain Mail*, the new publication from the James Fan-Club. *Chain Mail* will be issued quarterly and will offer news, reviews and previews of anything from the world of James. It will be produced in this format and fan-club members will receive four issues for each year's subscription.

Since *Chain Mail* is quarterly, some news will obviously arrive outside of the publication time. So, we have planned a special bulletin, *Chain Mailing*, which will keep Chain Mail members bang up to date with news and events.

We hope to offer Chain Mail members, not only an up-to-the-minute bulletin on the band's affairs, but also the chance to make a worthwhile contribution to the movement that they have joined.

For a start, we have lined up a series of interviews with each of the band members in turn. The best way of organising these is for you to set the questions. Issue 1 will feature Guitarist, Larry Gott, so if there is anything you would like to ask him, scribble it down and send it to us.

We are also looking for special features and letters. Anything you think is worth printing, be it artwork, writing, a quiz, a crossword or a query, send it on and we'll see what we can do.

Finally, if you have any suggestions of your own about how we can improve this magazine then let us know. Remember though that while we can mail news bulletins to you, we cannot send a personal reply to anything unless you send us a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

See you on tour,

Janet

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