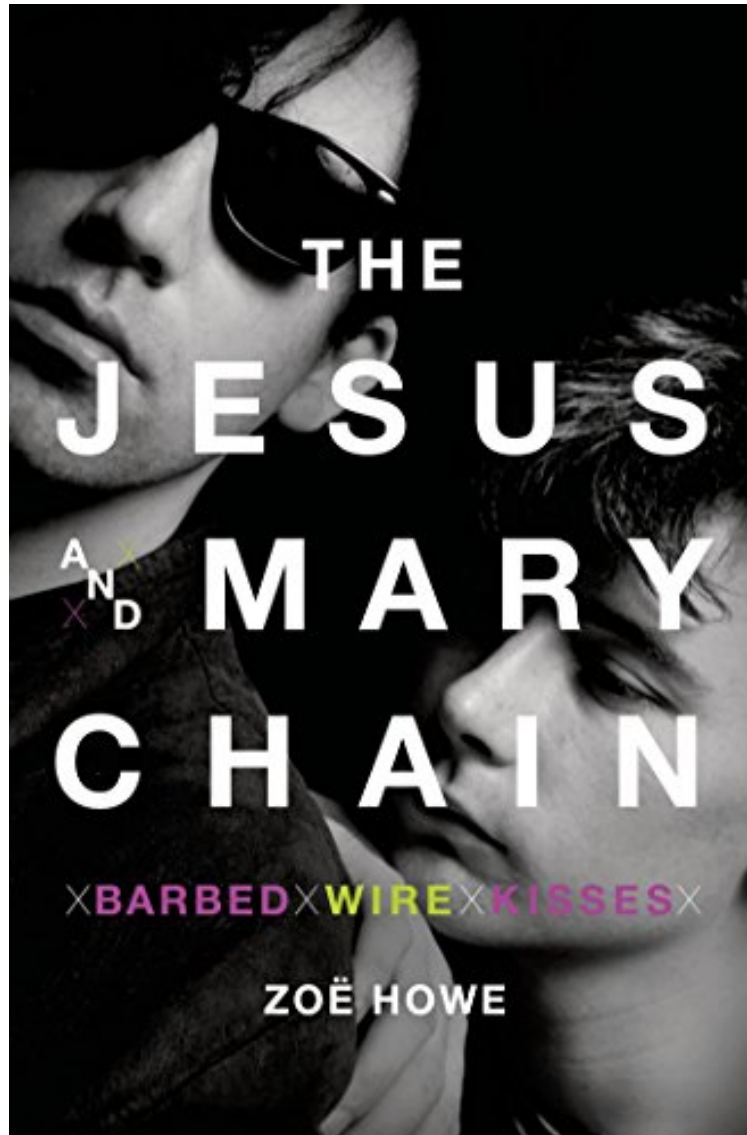


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Zoe Howe

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Zoe Howe : The Jesus and Mary Chain: Barbed Wire Kisses before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Jesus and Mary Chain: Barbed Wire Kisses:

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Musically, culturally and even in terms of sheer attitude, the Jesus and Mary Chain stand alone. Their seminal debut album *Psychocandy* changed the course of popular music, and their iconic blend of psychotic white noise and darkly surreal lyrics that presaged the shoegaze movement continues to enchant and confound. Zoe Howe's biography is the fierce, frank and funny tale of the Jesus and Mary Chain, told by the band members and their associates for the very first time. The story begins in the faceless town of East Kilbride, near Glasgow, at the dawn of the 1980s with two intense, chronically shy brothers, Jim and William Reid, listening to music in their shared bedroom. What follows charts an unforgettable journey complete with incendiary live performances, their pivotal relationship with Alan McGee's Creation Records and those famous fraternal tensions; with plenty of feedback, fighting, and crafting perfect pop music along the way. It is high time this vastly influential group and sometime public enemy had their say.

'This Mary Chain book is a million times better than the Morrissey autobiography' - @drphunkneuro 'Highly recommend @zoehowe's JAMC bio. A touching story of kids in the music business, recalled by their adult selves. A cut above the usual' - Euan McColm 'The best band in the world' - Neil Taylor, NME 'Pretty Scottish boys surfing a wave of doom and gloom and enjoying every moment of it. The Jesus and Mary Chain's debut is a decadent alt rock masterpiece of bubblegum pop' - Rolling Stone (naming the band's debut album one of the 500 best albums of all time) 'Thoroughly enjoying 'Barbed Wire Kisses'. Great anecdotes teenage memories' - Vic Galloway 'I just finished the Mary Chain book 'Barbed Wire Kisses'. It's f***ing brilliant. Get it read people' - Stuart Braithwaite, Mogwai 'Barbed Wire Kisses' adroitly charts the Mary Chain's career from their pre-Creation Portastudio demos through to their alcohol-fuelled implosion on 1998's ill-fated Munki tour [-] It's engaging throughout, but the chapters on the myth-making early years [-] leap especially vigorously off the page' - Record Collector 'Bunking the biographical trend, pleasingly filled more with anecdotes than footnotes' - The Quietus 'One of my favourite authors writing about one of my favourite bands, wonderful!' - Den Browne About the Author Zoe Howe is a freelance journalist and author whose writing has featured in NME, the Guardian, Classic Rock, BBC Music, Channel4 Music, The Quietus website, Company and Marie Claire, amongst many others. She has interviewed artists as diverse as PolyStyrene, Biffy Clyro, Mariah Carey, Pete Dinklage, Suggs and Human League. Her book, *Looking Back at Me* (Cadiz Music 2012), was written with Wilko Johnson, ex Dr Feelgood. Zoe lives in London, with her husband, jazz drummer Dylan Howe (son of Yes guitarist Steve Howe). Previous publications include *Typical Girls* (Omnibus 2009), the definitive biography of The Slits and *How's Your Dad? Living in the Shadow of a Rock Star Parent* (Omnibus 2010). Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. New Town, Punk Rock, Dole Queue; East Kilbride, located close to Glasgow, is a central base for business, a great place to live, shop, work and play. EastKilbride.org, the 'premier community information site for East Kilbride'; East Kilbride was fucking Neolithic. Stonehenge with windows. Douglas Hart East Kilbride, Scotland. The 1980s had dawned with little fanfare and, for many, even less opportunity, unless you didn't mind the idea of working in a factory for the rest of your life. Margaret Thatcher (who, oddly enough, died while this paragraph was being written) and her vice-like grip on Britain might have heralded a golden 'me-centric' era for the moneyed entrepreneur, but for most the reign of the Conservative government would be a dark time that, in many areas, destroyed industry and wrecked communities. The postwar new town East Kilbride might not have been as mind-numbingly bleak as it has sometimes been described, but a heady concoction of boredom, inertia and, occasionally, fear; of violent 'neds'; mostly hung in the air. East Kilbride wasn't the worst place in the world to grow up; it was just dull, antiseptic and uninspiring. There is always, of course, another way; at least, there is for those who have the talent, wherewithal and determination to find and pursue it. The spirit of punk, which lit the creative touch-paper for so many young people in 1976 and in the brief period that followed, was incandescent enough to continue burning in the hearts of many teenagers who found themselves inspired by the music, imagery, strength and sheer can-do/fuck-you attitude. This would carry them through, not only to the new decade, but also beyond. Punk also celebrated seminal American acts including the Velvet Underground, The Stooges, Television, Patti Smith and the Ramones, and introduced British youth to transatlantic treasure that they might not otherwise have been exposed to. These influences were essential to unlocking a new life, and as music in the mainstream became more slickly packaged and over-produced they would pass the flame of urgent, raw guitar-based music on to a new generation. The pioneers of this new generation lived here. In East Kilbride. William and James Reid were actually born in Glasgow, William on October 28, 1958, and Jim on December 29, 1961. The family left the tenement block they once called home after their tiny flat was broken into. Nothing was taken, largely because there was nothing to take. 'They must have been the most disappointed burglars in the world,' Jim later quipped. Still, a life somewhere safer and quieter beckoned. The Reids graduated from what was basically, as Jim puts it, a 'slum' to a small, neat, suburban house in East Kilbride in South Lanarkshire, less than ten miles southeast of Glasgow. Fast forward to the end of the 1970s, and the two brothers are in their teens, as close as twins and often too close for comfort, skulking in their family home. They barely emerge except to sign on the dole or walk the dog. But, while a shared bedroom in a blustery Scottish new town might

not strike one as a potential petri dish of creativity, the Reid brothers were slowly (very slowly) creating something that would not only offer them an escape route, but ultimately change the course of pop during a time of disinfected chart fodder and anodyne tweeness. This is impressive considering that music was not treated as an important part of life by their parents, who, according to Jim, "would buy a single once every five years and then play it over and over again." "My mum and dad were into music, but very casually. We got our first record player in about 1971, but we had no records, so we went round to our neighbors' house and borrowed one. It was 'Chirpy Chirpy Cheep Cheep.' We were so amazed we played it about fifty fucking times." At least Jim and William had an older cousin, a music fan who lent the Reids his precious Beatles and Bob Dylan albums, but it was glam-rock that first sparked the Reids' serious obsession with pop music. Hard as it may be to believe, Jim Reid remembers getting "really excited about waiting for a new Slade record to come out, seeing them on Top of the Pops, talking about it at school the next day." But exhilarating as the stomping rhythms and dazzling personalities (and trousers) of glam-rock undoubtedly were, punk provided the sea change that ultimately made the idea of forming a band accessible, necessary even. "Having a band just seemed like something that other people did. It was punk that made you think, you know, what are the alternatives here? We could go and work in a factory, or we could start a punk band," says Jim. "But unfortunately me and William were both incredibly lazy. William bought a bass guitar that just sat in the corner for about five years." The Reid brothers felt keenly that they were very much alone, culturally, in East Kilbride, which added to their insularity—at the very least they had each other ("we became like weird twins, finishing each other's sentences," Jim noted). But a young Douglas Hart was another creative spirit adrift in faceless East Kilbride who was kick-started by punk rock. He was more outgoing than the Reid brothers, who were, to be fair, shy to the point of being completely anti-social, but he was still a sensitive outsider who had little in common with his peer group. For Douglas and the Reids, punk was not just about the music, it was about the DIY culture, dissolving notions of artistic perfectionism and encouraging people to just try things out. You could pick up an instrument, create a fanzine, use a camera or customize your wardrobe—it didn't matter what you chose to do, it didn't matter if you made a mistake, and it wasn't important where you came from, what your gender or social standing was, or what you'd been exposed to (or not) so far. What was crucial was that you were being authentic, autonomous and artistically curious, and expressing your individuality. This could manifest itself in a joyous way or in a nihilistic way, but the most important thing was that you were being true to yourself. Not a new concept, granted, but one that had for many become buried under concrete layers of conditioning passed down through the generations, particularly if you were working class or female. For some at least, punk blasted that conditioning into oblivion. It would have been hard for a kid in East Kilbride to take advantage of punk in its live form, and the music might have been boycotted by the mainstream media, with John Peel's BBC Radio 1 show and The Old Gray Whistle Test being the most feted exceptions, but when glimmers of this liberating movement shone through the cracks, they didn't go unnoticed. Douglas Hart says: "Everyone was starting fanzines. You'd make your own clothes, because you couldn't buy them anywhere, and start bands. That's when I got my first bass. I was in a band called Teenage Vice, but I was only twelve! A lot of people dropped out after a couple of years, but a few of us were totally lit up by punk and that gave us the fuel that drove us creatively up until now." Douglas also had the benefit of his older brother's record collection, which introduced him to David Bowie, The Velvet Underground and The Stooges. "So even when I heard punk rock, it was familiar to me from hearing those records," he explains. "I guess I was a bit advanced for my age in that sense. I didn't know anyone who had that love and was trying to trace things back." It was at this point that Douglas first met the Reids, thanks to his school friend Ivor Wilson. Ivor went to karate classes with the teenage Jim Reid, and on noticing the band names scrawled on Douglas's exercise books, Ivor realized he knew a potential ally for Douglas who would share his musical tastes. Douglas, and subsequently Jim, finally realized they were not alone. This discovery was a lifeline. "It was, God, someone else like that!" says Douglas. "It was a goldmine for me because both Jim and William had great records, so for a kid like me that was so hungry for things musically, it was incredible." Ivor Wilson was a nascent guitarist himself, and shared Douglas and Jim's love of the Sex Pistols, The Slits, The Stooges, Subway Sect and other punk bands not necessarily beginning with "S." In fact, the three boys would unite briefly as a band, with a young Edward Connelly (later of the early Creation Records signing Meat Whiplash—another group from East Kilbride) on drums, to play at a local party. It would be Jim and Douglas's first gig together. "We played to an audience of six in some kid's front room," Douglas remembers. "A proper garage band. Me on vocals, Jim on bass, Ivor on guitar, and Eddy on drums. We did 'Pretty Vacant' and 'Anarchy in the UK' by the Pistols, 'New Rose' by The Damned and 'Art School' by The Jam." It would be Ivor Wilson who also sold William his first guitar—a Gretsch Tennessee that, unbeknownst to Ivor, was a prized possession of his dad's and was also worth rather more than the pound;20 he sold it to William Reid for. "I think his dad kicked the shit out of him when he found out," says Jim. "But that was how we had at least one decent guitar." Most of their instruments would come from junk shops or from Woolworths. Jim was then seventeen to Douglas's fourteen, and William was already twenty. Quite an age gap, admittedly, and Douglas

looked young for his age as it was. Not that it bothered Jim, but his dad was more than a little concerned. "We called him Todd, short for toddler," says Jim. "He looked about nine years old. My dad was really worried. I think he thought there was a touch of the Jimmy Saviles or something. He was saying, 'Whore' that wee boy who keeps coming down to the house?" "It's just my mate!" Playing records and getting lost in endless discussions about music and films—Billy Liar and the Lindsay Anderson movie *if...being enduring favorites*—provided some respite from the drudgery of everyday life, which for Jim meant working in the local Rolls-Royce Aerospace factory, where Boeing airplane engines were being manufactured. William, meanwhile, was a sheet-metal worker. "A terrible job," he remembers. "I was always worried about losing my fingers." William, apparently, also worked in a cheese warehouse. This is worth mentioning if only to share this cautionary tale with any lovers of parmesan out there. "My main task," William explained to journalist Max Bell, "was to inspect the parmesans, because cockroaches thrive on them. I had to go through the cheeses, find the cockroaches burrowing inside, pull 'em out and stomp them." Buon appetito. Each brother hated his job with a passion. The money at least allowed them to buy records, and would go toward Jim's first guitar, but, as Douglas recalls, "They were stuck in a rut and maybe got depressed stuck in that small room together, you could tell there were stresses there. Obviously they loved each other and had a lot in common, but they weren't so young any more." After a series of dead-end jobs, William finally jacked it in and started signing on, while Jim gritted his teeth at the factory. All of this, coupled with a serious case of stifled creativity, led to a less than comfortable atmosphere at home, and it wouldn't take long for the pressure to become unbearable. By the time he reached the end of his teens, Jim could take no more. However, the idea that Jim was going to just walk out on gainful employment was anathema to his stalwart working-class parents. "Things were tense with my dad," Jim remembers. "I said I was going to chuck my job, and he said, 'Well, you're not living in this house!' So I went to London. It didn't work out. I stayed there for about six months." Jim took the long bus journey from Glasgow and stayed at downbeat Earls Court hotels, trying to find work. He stayed in touch with Douglas by writing messages on the back of customer-comments cards from Burger King, sticking a stamp on the back and sending them off like postcards, but when the prodigal son returned to East Kilbride, the person who had changed most was not Jim but Douglas, who was unrecognizable. Within a matter of months the curly-haired punk-rock "toddler" had grown up. Jim recalls: "When I got back there was this bloke at the door [deep voice], 'All right, Jim' 'Who the fuck are you?' 'It's Douglas!' 'What?' 'I went away for six months and this nine-year-old has turned into a man, stubble and all that. 'Do you want to come out?' 'Are you sure? You're really Douglas?' 'I've literally grown six inches over one summer,'" says Douglas. "It was like in *An American Werewolf in London*. I was racked with agony. It was unbelievable." "We kept calling him Todd though," adds Jim. "We still call him Todd." Copyright copy; 2014 by Zoeuml; Howe