

PSYCHIC ILLS - Musicians

It's a sweltering evening in late May – summer has come early to New York. It's 1am, yet the air is still thick with humidity. Outside Glasslands, a club and gallery space in Brooklyn, people are loitering, subjugated by the heat. The event, dubbed a “Psych Fest”, has brought together nine bands with various associations to that genre. The last group, who have retained a crowd despite the sauna-like interior of the venue, take to their instruments, charging the atmosphere of the room immediately. One of their members holds a rope of tiny silver bells above her head, stalking the stage like a hunting feline. As the band builds behind her, a synthesizer swells with bewitching effect. Coupled with the heat, it's intoxicating.

Formed in 2003 by founding members Tres Warren, Elizabeth Hart, and Brian Tamborello, Psychic Ills make haunting, hypnotic records; modern psychedelia that fuses the requisite drone with tribal rhythms and electronic textures. “I have known Tres for a long time, from Texas. We both lived in California for while, and then wound up in New York, where we started playing music together,” explains Hart. “Prior to playing with Ills, I was just working on stuff at home, teaching myself to play. Tres actually gave me my first guitar, over 10 years ago. Actually it was my second guitar, I didn't really play the first one that I received on my 11th birthday...”

After self-releasing a single and touring locally, they joined forces with New York based label The Social Registry to release another single, and then Dins, their debut album, in 2006. A solid year of touring followed with Ariel Pink and Indian Jewelry, other artists bending the definition of psychedelic music in the modern context. Despite all three members being heavily involved in side projects, the band was refreshed by the addition of Jimi SeiTang on keyboards, after which Mirror Eye, another full-length album, was released in 2008.

Meanwhile, their music had caught the attention of Australian label The Spring Press, whose head Jeff Burch approached the band directly. A single, Astral Occurrence, was released earlier this year. Warren recalls the sessions wryly: “We recorded it to an old four-track recorder in the space that we were practicing in at the time in the East Village, across from the Hells Angels HQ – I think those vibes may have made their way on there [the recording]. Every time that we loaded in or out, we had to deal with a lot of jive from some 'hangaround' who thought we were gonna knock the bikes over.”

Plans are now afoot to tour south of the Equator in support of yet another 12-inch vinyl-only release, *Catoptric*, out now on The Social Registry. It signals deepening experimentalism for a sound that is ever-evolving. “There's never been a concept – I don't like sticking with something just for the sake of it,” says Warren, assuring all listeners of their recordings of more magic to come.

Interview Rebekah Davies