

FEATURE

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Voice that made Marion is back

STUART GREER

MUSIC has been a double-edged sword for Jaime Harding.

The Macclesfield singer found fame and fortune with the band Marion in early Nineties. After hit singles and a critically acclaimed debut album they toured the world.

But the success also contributed to a crippling drug addiction which led to the band breaking up in 1999. For the past decade Jaime has battled a nightmare of drug abuse, poverty and serious illness.

But now, healthy, drug-free and with renewed belief Jaime and Marion are making a comeback - and Jaime, 36, could not be happier.

He said: "Music has given me the best things in my life, but then also led to a very difficult period in my life which I am lucky to have survived. Now I want those good things again."

"I have got my life back and I'm rebuilding my relationships with friends and family. Things are really looking up and I've a good feeling about things."

Jaime grew up around Thornton Square and

went to the former Ryles Park High School where he met guitarist Phil Cunningham.

The band built a huge fan base by gigging culminating in support slots with Radiohead and Morrissey in 1995.

Their single Sleep was used in an advert for Citroen and they made the cover of Melody Maker.

In 1996 the band's album This World And Body made the top 10 and they toured the world to great acclaim.

But then the cracks appeared.

Jaime said: "Travelling the world for 18 months exhausted us. We loved it, but we were drained at the end of it. Then there was pressure for a second album. We had spent all our lives writing the songs for the first album and were given 12 months for the next. It was too much and it was over."

Jaime fell into downward spiral of drug abuse, resulting in him cutting ties with those closest to him and living in poverty. In an attempt to kick his habit he fled to Eastern Europe where he learned to play the guitar and channel his energy and experience back into music. In 2006, Jaime and Phil began working together again but just as things started to take off



ALAS Despite finding musical fame with Marion, Jaime spiralled into drug addiction

Jaime became sick.

He was admitted to hospital with a heart murmur and blood condition related to his addiction and needed life-saving open-heart surgery. Jaime said the past five years have been a process of repairing wounds, both physical and emotional.

He said: "I've put my closest friends and family through hell, but that's over now. I'm positive about the future, about Marion."

"My voice is better than it has ever been and our songs are too. It was these things that got us to where we were the first time around. I hope there's enough love for us

to do it again." Although now based in London, Jaime has a strong pull to Macclesfield.

"Every time I come home I get butterflies. Macclesfield still has a profound affect on me. Every street, every corner, there's a story to tell. This is where it all started for me."

Marion are planning a comeback show at Manchester's Club Academy on Saturday December 17 which is to be recorded for a live album called Alive In Manchester followed by a new studio album later in the year.

■ For full details and tickets visit marionuk.co.uk



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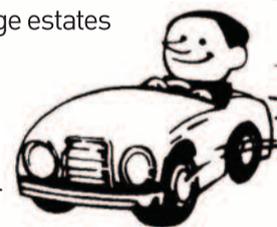


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