

**R**OBERT SMITH wasn't prepared for what he was about to see when he watched the concert documentary of the Cure's 40th-anniversary show, filmed last year in Hyde Park in London. "The first close-up of a human face I saw was *me*," Smith says of the horror of seeing his 60-year-old face in 4K. "It was quite terrifying." The doc and film of the group's Meltdown Festival set last year are being released together as a new box set, *40 Live – Curætion-25 and Anniversary*. It marks the first new release from the band in nearly a decade. Smith, however, plans to keep up the momentum with a new Cure album, tentatively titled *Live From the Moon* and out this fall – and partially inspired by Smith's newfound contentment in being an all-time-great sad bastard. "One of the lovely things is that we're able to headline Glastonbury, play Hyde Park, be in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame," he says of the Cure's place in culture. "But we're still considered to be slightly weird and an outsider kind of band. It's a perfect position to be in."

**Before the interview, I got an email from your rep that said, "Robert is NOT a fan of the word 'goth,' so please don't use that in any reference." What do you have against that word?**

That didn't come from me. [But] before I even read what [the marketing team] wrote about the film, I figured it's going to start with "goth rock," "gothfather," "goth this." And sure enough, there it was. So I wrote a bit of a stinging email saying, "For fuck's sake..." Was I responsible for goth? No. If I was, I'd be very happy. But I wasn't. Goths were outraged that people would think we're a goth band [with] "Let's Go to Bed" and "Lovecats" and "The Walk" and all these sort of stupid pop singles.

**Where do the Cure fit in in 2019?**

I hope the Cure don't fit in in 2019. I don't think the Cure have ever fit in. I think there's something that we do



Q&A

## Robert Smith

*The Cure singer talks recording on acid, not inventing goth, and being happier and more depressed at the same time*

By KORY GROW

that just appeals to a certain kind of person. I don't think it has to do with age or time or whatever else is going on.

**You were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame earlier this year. What did that mean to you?**

I had a difficult time, because there's been 13 members of the Cure through the 40 years and they would induct only 10 of us. I thought I had written a very reasonable letter explaining why [everyone] should be inducted. I

didn't really get very much back. Up until two weeks before the event, I wasn't actually going to go. But the rest of the band chipped away at me. And once I got there, I was thinking, "Whoa, it really does mean something to people [in America]." We made the right decision.

**It's the 30th anniversary of *Disintegration*. What do you remember about recording the album?**

I didn't speak. I used to pass Roger [O'Donnell] notes

when he was playing keyboards telling him what he was doing right or wrong. It sounds really contrived, but I felt like I was trying to create an atmosphere whereby we could communicate with each other in a nonverbal sense... You can tell that I was taking acid, can't you? Somehow, I felt like writing it down was different. Of course, it's exactly the same, and it would have been easier and quicker if I'd just spoken. I used to go back

to my room, and I'd burst out laughing. I'd think, "I'm going mad." But as it took shape over two or three weeks, everyone realized what we were doing.

**It's a dark album. How do you handle depression these days?**

I'm actually a lot more depressed than I used to be, and yet I'm probably just generally happier. It doesn't make any sense. When I look back to how I was when I was in my midteens, I think, "Why did I feel that bad all the time?" But it was kind of a sense of futility that's never really left me. If I allow it to, it still kind of creeps up and swallows me. But I suppose I'm more outward-looking than I used to be. I'm resigned to my life.

**You might be calling the new album *Live From the Moon*. Why?**

I can remember the moon landing. I was 10, standing in the back garden with my younger sister and my dad, looking at the moon. [My dad] was explaining to me what was going on – that there were men up there. I was thinking, "What is the world going to be like in 50 years?" And it just dawned on me as we turned into 2019: Good grief, is this it? It's so fucking poor. It really is. There was a brief moment in the late Seventies, before Ronnie [Reagan] and Maggie [Thatcher], that you thought, "Hey, maybe the world is moving in the right direction very, very slowly." And honestly, since the Cure started, it's been a relentless downward slide, as far as I can see.

**But when you're playing "Just Like Heaven," do you ever just pause and think, "This is a perfect song"?**

Yeah. When I sing "It's just like a dream," and Roger starts doing the piano bit, everyone suddenly looks over at the piano, and I look at the crowd. It's one of those really lovely moments. When I wrote it, I remember saying to the others in the studio, "That's it. I'll never write something as good as this again. We might as well pack up." Thankfully, we didn't. 📀