

HAIM + PASSION PIT + COLD WAR KIDS + JESSIE WARE

VARIANCE

THE SIGHTS + SOUNDS YOU LOVE



Phoenix!

THE WAIT IS OVER.



JAMES BLAKE

RUDIMENTAL

SAM JAEGER

JACOB ARTIST

#SXSW
IN PICS

30 YEARS OF
THE FLAMING LIPS

* 11 MUSICIANS WHO DESERVE TO BE BIGGER THAN PITBULL

**RYAN
GOSLING**

**BRADLEY
COOPER**

**EVA
MENDES**

and **RAY
LIOTTA**



THE PLACE BEYOND THE PINES

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF **BLUE VALENTINE**

FOCUS FEATURES AND SIDNEY KIMMEL ENTERTAINMENT PRESENT AN ELECTRIC CITY ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH VERISIMILITUDE A FILM BY DEREK CIANFRANCE
"THE PLACE BEYOND THE PINES" BEN MENDELSON, ROSE BYRNE, MAHERSALA ALI, BRUCE GREENWOOD, HARRIS YULIN, CINDY TOLAN
EDITED BY GABE HILFER, PRODUCED BY MIKE PATTON, WRITTEN BY ERIN BENACH, DIRECTED BY DEREK CIANFRANCE, EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS LINDAL WEINBERG, PRODUCED BY JIM HELTON & RON PATANE, PRODUCED BY SEAN BOBBITT, EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CARRIE FIX
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JIM TAUBER, MATT BERENSON, BRUCE TOLL, PRODUCED BY SIDNEY KIMMEL, WRITTEN BY JAMIE PATRICK, LYNETTE HOWELL, ALEX ORLOVSKY, DIRECTED BY DEREK CIANFRANCE AND BEN COCCIO
EDITED BY DEREK CIANFRANCE, BEN COCCIO AND DARRUS MARDER, DIRECTED BY DEREK CIANFRANCE



NOW PLAYING
ThePlaceBeyondThePinesMovie.com



A close-up photograph of a woman with long, wavy brown hair, singing intensely into a black microphone. Her eyes are closed, and her mouth is wide open in a powerful vocal performance. The background is a warm, textured wall with a repeating pattern of sunburst or floral motifs. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, creating a moody atmosphere.

KEEP YOUR
NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION.
FOLLOW YOUR
DREAM.

TATE MUSIC GROUP
PRODUCTION DISTRIBUTION MARKETING MEDIA

TATEMUSICGROUP.COM



WELCOME, SPRING.

AFTER A WHIRLWIND INTRO TO 2013, SPRING IS HERE AT LAST.

We don't have to tell you how fast the year is flying by; you already know.

As we present our Spring issue, we not only reflect on some of the greatest Sights and Sounds of the last few months, but we look ahead at some of the season's brightest faces and most exciting voices. And as always, we looked to you—the readers—for your opinion and feedback.

One of our last issue's featured artists, Tegan and Sara, have been making significant strides since the release of their pop-friendly album, *Heartthrob*. And we can't be more excited.

February saw the 55th Grammy Awards take over Los Angeles, and

we were there bringing you the latest, behind-the-scenes and up-close. From Mumford and Sons to fun., we caught up with the big winners and breakout stars.

In March came SXSW, and this year was mammoth. Besides surprise shows from the likes of Justin Timberlake and Prince, music mainstays like T.I., Fall Out Boy, Dave Grohl and others showed up to join in on music's biggest annual party. Rising hip-hop stars Kendrick Lamar and Macklemore were the kings of the festival, while up-and-comers Alt-J, CHVRCHES and Phosphorescent rose to the top of a roster that included more than 2,000 acts.

This issue, however unintentional, is in many ways our SXSW special. Many of the artists included this month are those who made the biggest impact in Austin, starting with HAIM—truly one of our favorites

FIRST THINGS FIRST

to watch this year. Rudimental, Cold War Kids, The Flaming Lips and Passion Pit also grabbed the spotlight down south. James Blake, while he attended the festival, did not perform, but his forthcoming album, *Overgrown*, is easily one of the best this year has to offer.

We also spotlight some of our TV favorites, including Sam Jaeger, the *Parenthood* actor that female fans just can't seem to get enough of, and Jacob Artist, the new eye candy on Fox's hit dramedy *Glee*. We also talked to Kevin Alejandro, who co-stars in CBS's new smash, *Golden Boy*.

Most excitingly, our cover stars one of our favorite bands of the modern era, an ensemble whose highly anticipated new album readers voted the spring release they are looking forward to most. Coming off a lengthy period of silence, Phoenix returns this month with *Bankrupt!*, one of the year's most talked-about new sets. And they're talking to Variance first.

We also had a little fun this issue, and are offering to you 11 Musicians Who Deserve to Be Bigger Than Pitbull. This one's pretty simple. There is some great music out there these days, and there's also some pretty awful stuff that seems to be inescapable. While Pitbull tops the latter list, we'd like to shine a light on the former—some of the talent that should have more Billboard hits and sold-out shows than the Miami-based rapper.

2013 is already shaping up to be an incredible year of Sights and Sounds, and we look forward to continuing to bring you the very best and amplifying your voice.



JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE
"Mirrors"
by @BretEastonEllis



HAIM
"Falling"
by @JordanPhillips_



WHISTLE PEAK
"Wings Won't Behave"
by @BroStephenScott



PURITY RING
"Grandloves"
by @StoneySundae



JESSIE WARE
"If You're Never Gonna Move"
by @knowlesxo



DANNY BROWN
"Grown Up"
by @Cody_Carlton



COLD WAR KIDS
"Miracle Mile"
by @nathanhinish



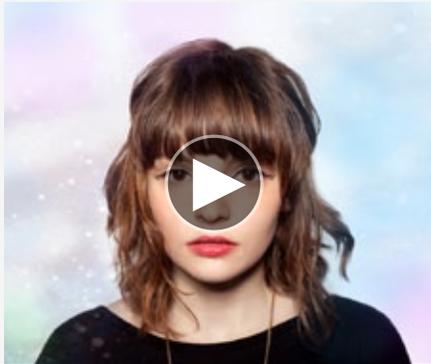
THE LAST ROYALS
"Friday Night"
by @allygreer



BLEACHED
"Next Stop"
by @john_storer



ANGEL HAZE
"Werkin' Girls"
by @ximoanxx



CHVRCHES
"Recover"
by @DJMuncle



BASTILLE
"Pompeii"
by @Aaron_Bumby

CONTENTS

VARIANCE

Spring_2013, Vol. 4, Issue 2

Editorial Director

Jonathan Robles

Managing Editors

Rachel Faylene & Weston Shepherd

Editor-at-Large

Amanda Morad

Features Editors

Merlyn Hamilton & Emily Hulseberg

Editorial Assistant

Laurie Tomlinson

Contributing Writers

Noel Abas
Chas Guy
Katie Herald
Aaron Lachman
John Mouser
Edwin Wilson

Contributing Photographers & Artists

Chloe Aftel
Bo Apitz
Eric Blackmon
Kate Davis-Macleod
Laura Fedele
Allison Green
Flora Hanitijo
Anna Hanks
Matt Kent
Lauren Keogh
Steve Laughlin
Taylor Hatfield
Eliot Lee Hazel
Nathan Malone
Jeffrey Marini
James Moriarty
Elizabeth Morris
Jason Nocito
Nan Palmero
Felix Perez
Nathan Presley
Claire Reynolds
Caitlyn Ridenour
Cara Robbins
Mark Runyon
George Salisbury
Marti Sheehan
Fefe Siriano
Janie Smith-Burns
Aaron Stern
Steven Taylor
Esther Teichmann
Aleksandar Tomovic
Willy Ward
Eli Watson
Matt Wignall
Laura Wilson
Derek Wood
Becky Zeiger

Web Production & Design

Nicholas Clayton
JP Jones
Jonathan Robles

Project Development

Bryan Norris

SPRING MIXTAPE (PLAYLIST)	05
SAM JAEGER	08
PJ MORTON	10
BLEACHED	36
KATIE AINGE	37

→ PHOENIX 42

JESSIE WARE	54
THE LAST BISON	56
NATALY DAWN	57
DAUGHTER	58
MATTHEW MAYFIELD	60
RUDIMENTAL	62
JACOB ARTIST	64
KEVIN ALEJANDRO	66
EAR CANDY	68

*THE SIGHTS AND
SOUNDS YOU LOVE.*

www.variancemagazine.com



30 | **11 MUSICIANS**
WHO DESERVE TO BE BIGGER
THAN PITBULL

38 | **FUTURE SOUNDS:**
THE SOUNDS YOU NEED TO HEAR

12 | **THE FLAMING LIPS**

The band marks 30 years with its darkest, weirdest album.

16 | **SXSW PHOTO DIARIES**

Austin showcased the best Sights and Sounds this year. We captured the best moments.

22 | **JAMES BLAKE**

On the eve of his most anticipated album release, the British singer talks about the future.

26 | **PASSION PIT**

One of the year's biggest indie-turned-arena bands talks tour life and times.

34 | **HAIM**

This year's band to watch shares sisterly love on the road to their debut album.

50 | **COLD WAR KIDS**

The band talks about the changes in store as they release their fourth album.

SAM JAEGER

THE
Parenthood
ACTOR TALKS
ABOUT HIS
ROLE OF
LOVING
HUSBAND AND
FATHER—
ONSCREEN
AND OFF.



WORDS BY MERLYN HAMILTON
PHOTO BY ERIC BLACKMON

“I would be shocked if [*Parenthood*] didn’t come back next season. I’ve been worried in seasons past where we’re kind of on the bubble, but I feel much more confident this year than I ever have.” ↖

Ask

any mother or wife who the best dad and husband on *Parenthood* is, and the answer is unanimous. Sam Jaeger (Joel) has definitely got it in the bag. This TV dad and husband is also a dad and husband in real life. And he says he draws inspiration from real life pretty consistently.

Playing opposite Erika Christensen as his onscreen wife, Julia, he says he draws inspiration from real life pretty consistently. “When we go into a scene, we start collaborating with the director, and a lot of times, I draw on what it means to be a father to me, and because she isn’t a mother in real life, I have a lot to say,” says Jaeger. “But it’s the same; she draws a lot from being a sibling. It’s the best job a guy could have because I get to work and test out the failings of my role as a father.”

Born in Ohio, Jaeger went to college for theater and interned in New York for ABC’s primetime casting office. But his desire to be an actor started much earlier.

“When I was about 11 or 12, I watched the movie, *Dead Poets Society*, and walked out and said to my best friend at the time, ‘That’s what I want to do,’” Jaeger says. “Everything else has been really complicated in my life, but that’s the one thing that I’ve always known.”

With television shows like *Law and Order*, *Friday Night Lights*, and of course, *Parenthood* on his resume, Jaeger says that he grew up adoring film but now just watches a lot of TV.

“I’ve got a three-year-old boy, so my wife and I are just like, ‘Okay, I’ve got maybe 40 minutes until I’m passed out,’” he says. “I think that’s part of the ride of making good television. The fact that there are parents who can now watch television and get at least remotely fulfilled instead of having to watch a movie over five hours or something.”

Parenthood fans seem to agree that this past season, season four, was by far the most intense season of the show. From the Sarah-Mark-Hank triangle to Christina’s battle with cancer and even Drew’s girlfriend’s pregnancy, it seemed every character and every family had

something going on. But the beauty of *Parenthood* is how they tie it all together.

Let’s not forget the adoption storyline with Jaeger’s family on the show.

“This was actually the easiest season we had,” Jaeger says. “Because we knew the struggles that we had with this boy, and I think they were struggles that any parent, especially the parents of adopted children, can relate to. You’re bringing somebody into the fold and trying to make them feel welcome, and that’s really, really difficult if they’ve had past experiences. You know, we wanted to represent that as realistically as possible and I think we did a good job with it. Thankfully, we had a really gifted actor in the boy [Xolo Mariduena] who plays Victor.”

A regular on the show from the beginning, Jaeger expresses his love for having been with the NBC series for so long.

“It feels wonderful,” he says. “This is the most fulfilling season that I’ve been a part of because I feel like the writing has really locked in with the acting. You know, often a show that’s four seasons, it kind of rests on its laurels and I think we keep excelling. Everyone on the show, from the directors to the actors and crew, are still striving to make it a better show than it was last year. I think this year was a testament to the hard work we all put in.”

But despite all the hard work, at the time of this writing, there is no guarantee that the show will be renewed for another season. Jaeger’s not worried, though. “I would be shocked if we didn’t come back next season,” he says. “I’ve been worried in seasons past where we’re kind of on the bubble, but I feel much more confident this year than I ever have.”

In addition to his on-screen roles, Jaeger can also be found behind the camera calling the shots. Having directed one of the *Parenthood* episodes, he admits that directing has always been an interest of his.

“I broke my nose shooting a movie with my buddy in the backyard in high school,” he says. “We were the antagonist and protagonist in a movie and he ended up breaking my nose with a garden hoe. So

we’ve been making movies since I guess my freshman year in high school, and I’ve kind of continued that on now. I love acting but I don’t believe I have a preference; I just like being a part of telling stories.”

So what’s Jaeger up to now that *Parenthood* is on hiatus? Well, making his own movie, of course. He’s writing, directing and starring in a film called *Plain Clothes*. Based on his conversations with real police officers, Jaeger says it has a lot to do with posttraumatic stress disorder and the expectations of cops.

“I just think it’s a harder life than I could possibly imagine and I’m fascinated by someone who sees mankind at its lowest and still tries to carry on a nine-to-five life,” he says.

Fans of his 2011 movie, *Take Me Home*, can expect to see much of the same faces in this film. With plans to have the film done at the end of April, Jaeger says he wants to make sure it’s good first.

“Because it’s a short film, I don’t have to adhere to any studio rules,” he says.

When he’s not on set, Jaeger says he’s watching his son play various instruments around the house.

“He puts on little concerts,” he says. “I taped a chopstick to the bottom of a ukulele and he uses it to play a cello. He saw a video when he was very young of Yo-Yo Ma and he impersonates him non-stop. He gets into it. It’s pretty insane. So that’s my free time, watching him grow and trying to wrestle the yard and stuff that dads do, I guess.”

So what else does this actor-director have in store for the future?

“*Dancing with the Stars*,” he jokes. “No, not really. I just like what I’m doing. If I can continue to do this, whether it is directing more shows or directing more features and acting, I’m a pretty fortunate guy.”

For the latest information on Sam Jaeger, follow him on Twitter: @Sam_Jaeger.



PJ MORTON

BY AMANDA MORAD

“I know it took a long time, but now I’m here; and I ain’t going nowhere, no more fear.” For singer, musician, producer and writer PJ Morton, these words aren’t just lyrics to his latest single. They’re evidence of a dream come true.

The Maroon 5 background vocalist and keyboardist releases his debut album on Young Money Entertainment/Republic Records May 14. *New Orleans* is a soul-

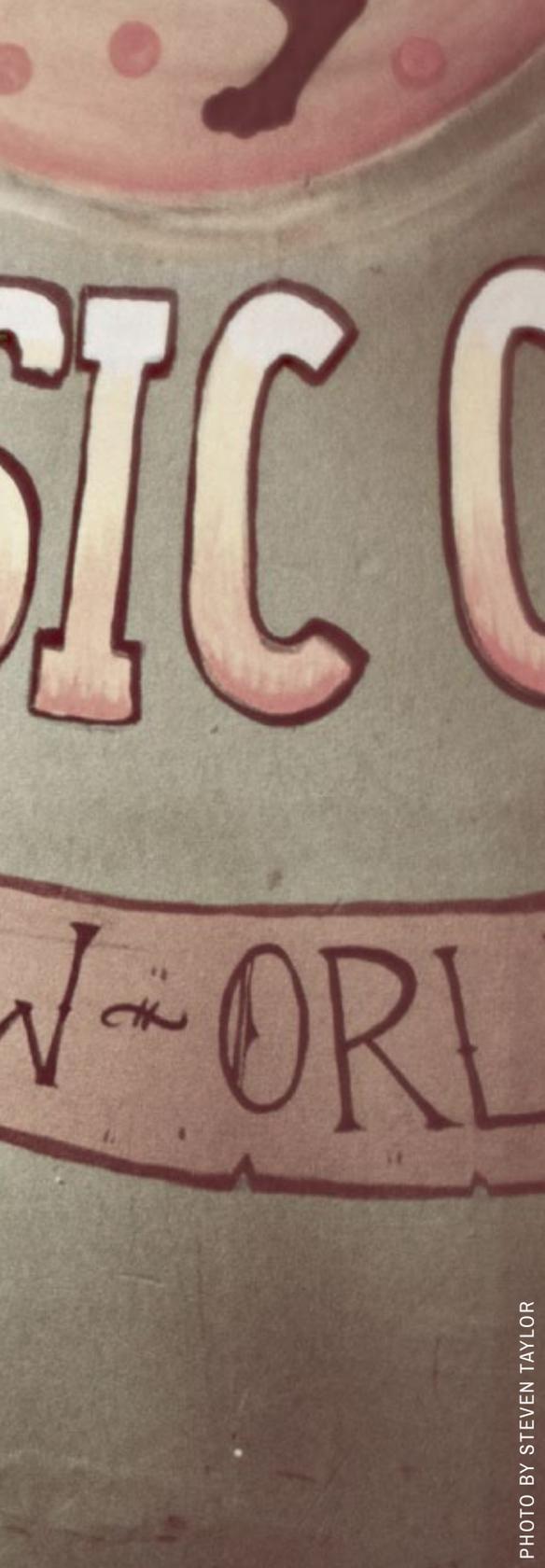


PHOTO BY STEVEN TAYLOR

THE MULTI-TALENTED MUSICIAN DISCUSSES BEING PART OF MAROON 5, HIS WORK WITH STEVIE WONDER & HIS FORTHCOMING SOLO RECORD.

you motivated.”

All that motivation led to Morton releasing a free EP, *Following My First Mind*, in March 2012, and two songs from that recording make a refreshed appearance on *New Orleans*.

The album features several collaborations, including appearances by Maroon 5's frontman Adam Levine and Busta Rhymes, but the one Morton is most proud of is on his new single, “Only One,” with the King of Soul himself, Stevie Wonder.

“Stevie is the one artist who changed everything for me,” Morton explains. “It's the true full circle for me as a musician to have his stamp of approval and his mark on my album.”

Wonder's approval isn't misplaced. *New Orleans* is a tapestry of genres and styles that truly showcases Morton's talent as a songwriter, producer and vocalist.

“Only One” is a soulful R&B number—also featuring Wonder's trademark harmonica—while “Work it Out” has a low key hip-hop feel. “Heavy,” the driving duet between Levine and Morton, is flat out good ‘ol New Orleans and “Hard Enough” is a brighter, reggae-infused pop ode.

But Morton's most personal track, “Motions,” is a bit more broken down: “It's talking about that moment where you're with somebody but they're not really there anymore and you're just going through the motions. I've been through

that before and it's a really heartfelt song, just piano and guitar.”

Placing Morton's soulful, eclectic style next to artists like Lil Wayne, Nicki Minaj and Drake seems a bit off-beat for the Cash Money imprint, but their quest to broaden their roster and Morton's mission to reach the masses melds well. “They go for authenticity; they sign what they believe in,” Morton says. “Most importantly, they don't touch creativity. If they sign you, they like you the way you are.”

A huge part of what bred Morton's talent was his growing up in New Orleans. The artistic, care-free attitude of the city is well-known for fostering great soul musicians. “New Orleans is where I learned how to play music. It's the best training ground you can get as a musician because it's such a big part of the culture,” Morton explains. “It makes you have integrity in the music because you respect the music.”

That integrity has served him well: Morton won a Grammy for his songwriting and production of India.Arie's “Interested” in 2002 while a junior in college. He then won a Dove Award and Stellar Award in 2008 for his collaboration with gospel artist DeWayne Woods. And that didn't just drop out of the sky.

Another key aspect of Morton's creative work is his root in gospel music. Growing up the son of gospel artist Bishop Paul Morton influenced everything from Morton's

themes to his instrumentation. “Those roots will always be a part of what I do,” he says. “It's ingrained in who I am. It's all there in the music as part of my DNA.”

The years between singing in his east New Orleans church and releasing his first major label album were spent writing, producing and recording on his own. Though Young Money has increased his visibility since he signed in 2011, Morton was never one to sit back and wait for things to come to him.

“My years as an indie artist taught me the business and helped me as I developed as a solo artist,” he says. “I was careful not to fall into the same trap I've seen others fall into. Labels are looking for that self-contained artist these days and being on the inside really helped me understand what it takes to handle a major label.”

With all that hard work now paying off big time, Morton is excited to take *New Orleans* on the road when he opens for Maroon 5 this summer.

“Performing is what makes me feel most alive—there's nothing better than singing your songs and having people sing them back to you,” Morton gushes. “It's an emotion I just can't describe. There's really nothing you can compare it to.”

ful, upbeat R&B project that pays tribute to The Big Easy from which Morton hails.

“I've been making solo records for a while, but I hadn't put out a record since 2005,” says Morton, who has been on the road with Maroon 5 since 2010. “While touring all last year, I was inspired to start saying what I want to say again. Being on the road and seeing all these amazing places—it kinda gets

Catch “Only One” on pjmortononline.com and watch for *New Orleans*' release May 14.





THEY'RE TURNING 30
AND DITCHING THE PARTY

THE FLAMING LIPS →

DARKER, WEIRDER AND MORE PERSONAL THAN EVER

BY JONATHAN ROBLES

IN many ways, the Flaming Lips' Hyundai commercial during this year's Super Bowl was the beginning of the band's campaign to promote its new album, *The Terror*. "Sun Blows Up Today"—the buoyant, upbeat track featured in the ad—caught the attention of longtime fans and new listeners, stoking anticipation for the new set. But upon listening to the full record, it's evident "Sun" is about as sunny as it gets this time around.

Celebrating their 30th anniversary this year, the Lips are betting against superstition and taking a very distinct left turn with studio album No. 13, hoping their decades-long streak of good fortune continues. "But it's a risk," admits multi-instrumentalist and songwriter Steven Drozd.

Drozd, who has taken on a bigger role with *Terror*, admits that while this record is outside of the usual Lips sphere, it's more personal. "I'm always very involved musically," he explains. "But this is different. We didn't struggle. [Wayne Coyne] and I got together; we would just record a sound and it just felt like he wanted me to do the thing that I do, and that sort of shaped the record in a way."

The album, which the band played in full for fans last month at SXSW, is noticeably darker, weirder and less flamboyant. And while Drozd admits there's a big question mark hovering over this project, he feels this is the natural next step.

"We think about, 'what if,'" he admits. "We also hope—or realize, especially the hardcore fans, they expect us to change or do different things. The fans that have been running for years know that the Flaming Lips is not all confetti or animal costumes on stage. I mean, if you go back to the records before I was in the band, there is some pretty heavy stuff and that was actually the Flaming Lips that I responded to."

But the question is, how will fans today respond to it?

"We definitely considered another 'Yoshimi' or 'Yeah Yeah Yeah Song,'" Drozd reveals. "But we would have to pack it in. This might not be a different thing for all of recorded music history, but for us, it certainly felt like a different record to make. It felt like the right record to make. There were a couple of times as we were doing it, I remember feeling like, 'Man, I really like this music and I want to listen to this music when we get done with it.' Sometimes you get done with a record and you're like, 'I don't want to hear that for a while.' I really still enjoy listening to it and it just felt like a good record

to make after *Embryonic*. I trust that the longtime fans will understand where we're coming from."

According to Drozd, this is all part of the Lips' "evolution."

"We've done a six-hour song and a 24-hour song," he says. "By the time we got done with all that, there was nothing idealistically that I was wanting to do as far as a new strain of music. Any idea I ever wanted to try, we did by the time we finished the 24-hour song. I was just kind of messing around and not really having an agenda. It just happened to be this sort of real bleak-sounding thing. Wayne really responded to it and really wanted to work on it and turn it into something, and it's the song 'You Are Alone.' We decided after that, instead of jumping all over the place or trying to do many different sorts of things, we were going to try to stick to one basic pallet. [The other] songs branched out from there. I was going through some personal stuff at the time and it did happen to be represented in the music."

Although he didn't realize it at the time, the final product would be a grimmer collection than previous releases. But Drozd insists it wasn't intentional. "When I hear that stuff now, it definitely feels darker, but it sort of happened organically. I really like that in music. I'm sure most people agree: sometimes when you're down, you want to hear depressing music because it makes you feel kind of connected to something."

The band also didn't aim to fit the new project snugly into one particular genre or category. They didn't have a checklist or even a set of goals. But they did have a plan.

"We didn't have verses and choruses," Drozd says of "You Are Alone," the track he claims is at the heart of the new record. "It didn't have a drum beat. It didn't have a pop chord progression. It was just this moment, three-and-a-half minutes of almost like a feeling, rather than a song. I think we decided early on that we'd like to create a record within this same vein, and we just consciously tried to stick to that plan."

Having been around for so long, the Lips have learned what makes them tick. They've developed an indestructible bond with their legion of fans. But they've also managed to maintain a healthy long-term relationship with their record label—something of a rarity in the music industry these days.

"Obviously, it doesn't go that way with every band," he cautions. "I'm sure you could talk to a thousand bands who have

had horrible experiences with a major label, and it could have gone differently for us. I think we got lucky in '96 or '97 when the whole 'alternative nation' thing was dying out and Warner Bros. was dropping bands and people were getting fired. We happened to be just enough under the radar where I think they forgot about us during that time. Otherwise it might have been, 'You know, they had kind of a hit in '93/'94, and then the last record didn't sell anything.' They might have dropped us, but I think being under the radar actually worked out to our advantage. Then we got a whole new kind of life with *The Soft Bulletin*. I think by then they felt like, 'Hey, we're happy to have these guys because the critics seem to like them and they have a pretty solid fan base.'"

While Drozd attributes much of the Lips' early label relations to luck, he acknowledges that this is a very different time for music labels and for bands. "I think in this day and age, it's hard to say what works. It's not in the age of, 'We're going to sign a band, give them three records to try and develop whatever it is their thing is.' That doesn't really exist anymore, so I don't know. I think the best the record companies can do now, which it seems like they're trying to do, is just latch onto a band's whole existence, their merchandise, their tour, etc.

"As far as a healthy, artistic, respectful relationship, I really don't know how that happens—even in our situation. Maybe it's how we worked things out where we weren't given a ton of money, so the record company doesn't expect a ton. It balances out."

While Warner does indeed have bands they push harder, the Lips received prime ad real estate as more than 108 million viewers watched their Hyundai spot during the big game in February. Sure, many bands would love that kind of spotlight, but more often, bands are hesitant about the possibility of having their art reduced to a jingle. Not the case for the Lips.

"I guess there would be some things that we probably wouldn't do," Drozd jokes. "The funny thing is, the Super Bowl song, I've seen people tweet, 'I love this song! I can't wait to hear the new record.' I want to tell them, 'This song sounds nothing like the new record.' I also like to think of the idea of some Midwestern dude who has seen our name before, but didn't really know about us. He saw the commercial and now he's like, 'Hey, I really like them! Oh, they have a new record! I'm going to go buy that and check it out.' And he's going to bring it home and be like, 'What the hell is this? This doesn't sound

PHOTOS BY GEORGE SALISBURY



like the band I thought I was getting.' I'm kind of into that idea, but I've also heard people say, 'They're doing a Super Bowl commercial! That's crazy!' It's not really, though. I mean, we did *Beverly Hills, 90210* in 1995. It's like the Jerry Garcia quote: 'we've been trying to sell out for years, nobody's buying!' I think it's all part of being an artist. You know, the ridiculous and the absurd. So for every Super Bowl commercial you get, you get Christmas on Mars or some crazy experimental thing. I think if we went just one way or if it was all trying to sell out for doing commercials, if we did that, we'd look a little suspicious. I think it gives us a little bit of credibility that we're always going back and forth and doing both of those things. I don't think anyone who hears *The Terror* will think, 'Oh, they're trying to sell out and create a big pop hit.'"

The Lips this month will perform a few shows with a band known for having a very similar stance on music and advertisement, The Black Keys. And according to Drozd, it's all about expanding their audience, plain and simple. "We played a show with them and we had a little conversation," he reveals of how it came

about. "They're nice guys and what not. I think it was just one of those simple things where they were fans of the band and wanted us to come play shows with them. Technically speaking, we're opening for them because they're pretty mega now. I don't think there was much of a struggle for us because we are always trying to play a bigger audience, especially younger people who might not have heard of us. We could play to some people we wouldn't normally play to."

As he puts it, while laughing, "That was a pretty easy 'yes.' They're huge," he says, while noting drummer Patrick Carney's Twitter battle with Justin Bieber following the Keys' Grammy wins in February. "To me, the Grammys is something my dad would get really thrilled about. It's not like I felt like we weren't legit until we won Grammys. But at the same time, it's not like we're multimillionaires like Bieber. The thing with Bieber, to me, it's just the latest brand of cheesy kids' pop music. I don't want to sound like a d---, but who cares, you know? We've won a few and it's nice. Maybe I would feel differently if we hadn't won Grammys. To think that you're only legitimized by winning a

Grammy seems kind of small-minded."

And as most Flaming Lips fans know, small just isn't their style. Although the album will result in a tour and other promotional activities, the band still has their sights set forward.

"It used to be a joke to say we always wanted to be the first to play in space," explains Drozd. "I think Wayne seriously is actively trying to make that happen because Richard Branson's talking about doing it, and I think he's been talking to Lady Gaga. We're like, 'No! Don't put Gaga in space! We should be in space first!' We used to say that as a joke, but if that could really happen, we would like to be the first band in space."

"First, though, our focus is on putting the new record out and hoping people respond to it. I really hope that people hear it as something different. I hope they connect with it. Maybe they won't at all, I don't know. This could be the time where either we lose some fans, or a lot of fans, or we find out that the fans we have will stay with us no matter what. I guess we're about to find out."

***The Terror* arrives April 16 via Warner.**

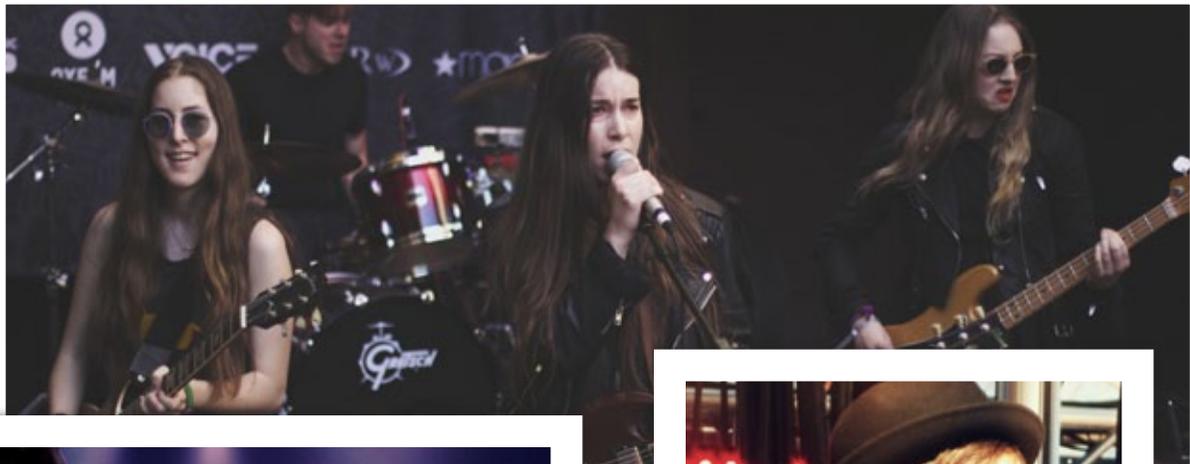
6TH STREET DURING SXSW 2013, BY STEVE LAUGHLIN.

VARIANCE
SXSW '13



PHOTO DIARIES





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT (THIS PAGE): MACKLEMORE PERFORMING RACHAEL RAY'S FEEDBACK PARTY BY JONATHAN ROBLES; FIDLAR'S ZAC CARPER BY BO APITZ; HAIM BY BO APITZ; KEITH JEFFERY OF ATLAS GENIUS BY NATHAN MALONE; PUSHA T BY ELI WATSON // (NEXT PAGE): LAUREN MAYBERRY OF CHVRCHES BY ANNA HANKS; TRINIDAD JAMES\$ AT THE MTVu WOODIE AWARDS BY NATHAN MALONE; VAMPIRE WEEKEND'S EZRA KOENIG BY LAURA FEDELE; CHARLI XCX BY BO APITZ; JACK BLACK OF TENACIOUS D BY NATHAN MALONE; ALLEN STONE BY JONATHAN ROBLES; TAYLOR GOLDSMITH OF DAWES BY MARK RUNYON.

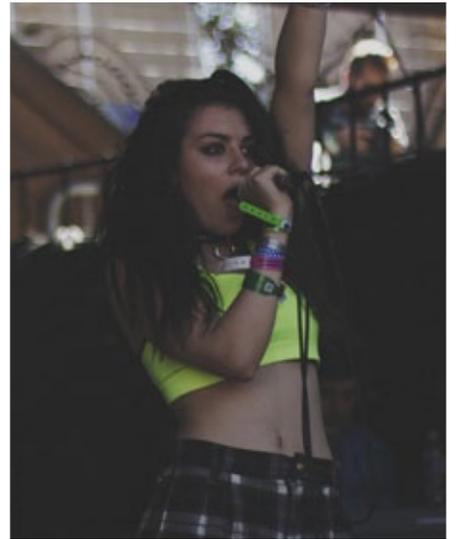
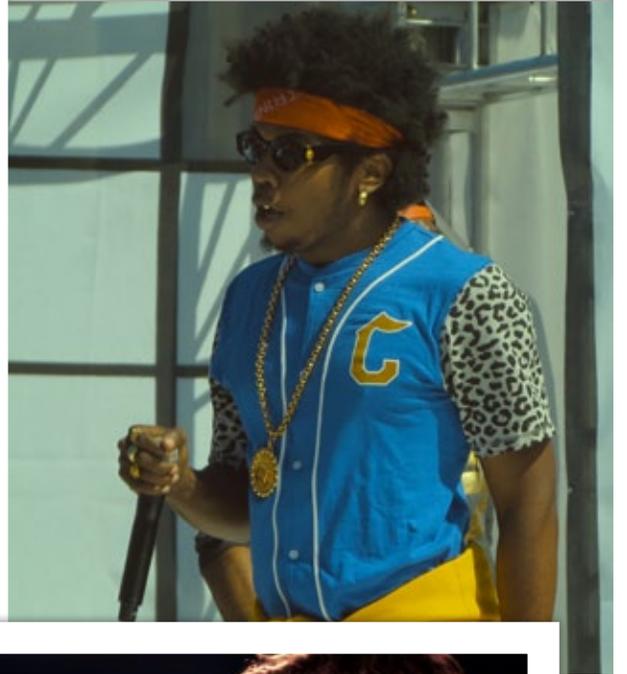


PHOTO
DIARIES



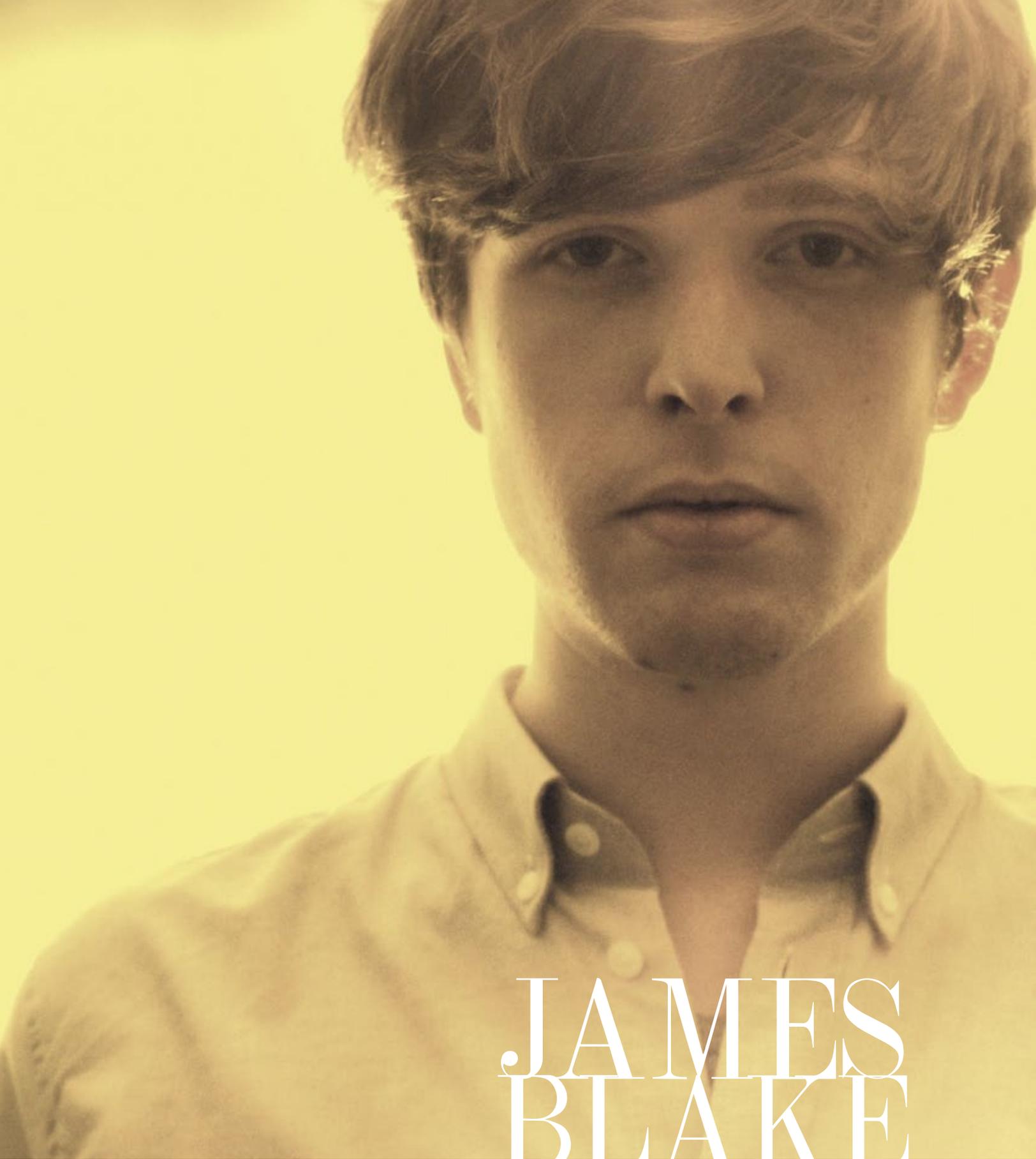
A photograph of Kendrick Lamar smiling and looking to his right. He is wearing a white zip-up hoodie. The background is dark with blue lighting and a neon sign. The text "KENDRICK LAMAR" is overlaid in the center.

KENDRICK LAMAR

PHOTO
DIARIES

A man with a beard and sunglasses is singing into a microphone on stage. He is wearing a dark t-shirt and a light-colored cap. The background is dark with a bright light source behind him, creating a silhouette effect. He has several wristbands on his left wrist, including a green one with a white arrow pointing left. A yellow arrow points towards the bottom right corner of the image.

PHOSPHORESCENT



JAMES BLAKE

TWO years after the release of his critically acclaimed eponymous debut album, James Blake is ready to show the world what he's really made of. The soulful singer, who

saw Brit Award and Mercury Prize nominations following his 2011 effort, has spent the past couple of years fine-tuning his sound ahead of a new project, *Overgrown*, which is due this month.

"I listened to more opinions this time," the singer-producer admits with a smile. "I think that's why it seems more refined—to me, at least."

Blake, having experimented with

OLDER.
WISER.
MORE PASSIONATE.
AND HE'S RETURNING
WITH HIS
MOST CONCRETE
EFFORT YET.



various formats and mixes between releases—and irking some critics in the process, recalls having many voices telling him what he should or should not do this time around. “I had a lot of people telling me the direction they thought I should take. And I don’t mean the label or just people in the industry. I’m talking about friends. I’d ask for feedback and they would say, ‘That’s not really a song.’ I had to step back after a while and think, ‘What do I want to do?’ I think that shows in this album.”

Of *Overgrown*, he says it reflects “how I feel about where I am and where I want to go,” revealing that he is very content with life right about now. “If I wasn’t happy, I’d drop out at this second. It’s actually getting more and more exciting ... I can’t explain the feeling to have the avenue open up to what you want to do. It feels unbelievable. It’s enabling me to invest in other stuff, like even writing music for computer games. I have the freedom to do that now. I feel very good about where I’m at, and I want to be able to give that to other people.”

Although he feels motivated to “give” to others from his own success, the London native doesn’t consider his musical ability to be a gift, but rather the result of hard work. “I feel like I’m very fortunate in the lottery of life,” he says. “But I don’t think anything is a gift. I believe you have to work hard for what you get.”

Quick to acknowledge his appreciation for where he is in life, Blake further explains that, in his opinion, there is too much of a glamorization of musicians and celebrities. “The tendency is to believe that if you’re good at music, that is somehow better than everything else—or football. There’s this idea of glamour, but I have friends that are just as happy as I am doing other things, following their passions. That is the goal, just to be happy in life. It’s not like, ‘I’m in music and it’s better.’ F--- that.”

It’s one of the reasons the singer hopes to be able to use his growing platform to become more involved as an advocate for education, pointing to his own experience and that of other students who have gotten lost in the system and ultimately given up on their dreams. “I think one of the saddest things about education in the Western world is that there are people who are incredibly talented, but it’s not recognized. It’s not better to be talented at making music than it is to be talented at making weaved baskets. If you’re good

at that, then people should be encouraged to do that. Unfortunately, they’re not, and it’s really sad. I was, fortunately, encouraged by my parents and others to follow my passion, but the reality is that everyone is good at something. It’s a shame that so many people are funneled into things that do not work for them. In terms of the education system, I was really enriched by it in some ways, but really let down in others. I would like to be able to draw more attention to those who don’t feel they have the support to follow their true passions.”

While Blake is clearly utilizing his personal talents, he claims he is careful not to give too much thought to what’s being said about him by critics, good and bad. Over the past 24 months, and especially leading up to the new record, he’s been showered with praise and even compared to music legends. But this soft-spoken artist takes it all with a grain of salt. “I hear what they say, but I can’t judge any of it. I mean, really, I can’t focus too much on what’s being said. Is it flattering? Sure. Does it change anything I’m doing? Of course not.”

The multi-talented musician may only yet be on the road to legendary status, but he has already worked with some very notable artists, as reflected in the new set, which demonstrates the influence of Bon Iver’s Justin Vernon, a previous collaborator of Blake’s. Legendary producer Brian Eno and Grammy-winning rapper RZA both appear on *Overgrown*, the latter of which Blake claims to be a custom collaboration intended specifically for the Wu-Tang Clan leader.

“The only reason the RZA collaboration happened was because I knew he was right for the track,” says Blake. “There was no one else I had in mind. I don’t have a list of rappers’ emails.”

One rapper, however, whose email he does have is Kanye West, as the G.O.O.D. Music head has evidently become a fan of the British vocalist, though Blake disputes previous reports claiming they recorded together. “I haven’t worked with Kanye, but I’ve had conversations with him. I went to his house because he asked me to and I’ve played him some music, and he was really kind about it. He’s really supportive and a real music lover. He obviously has his ears to the ground. And whatever you want to say about Kanye, he really cares about his music and I respect that.”

Even though West does not appear on

“ I DON’T THINK ANYTHING IS A GIFT. I BELIEVE YOU HAVE TO WORK HARD FOR WHAT YOU GET. ”

the new set, Blake seems open to working with him. But he admits he’s cautious about collaborations, pointing to the industry’s influx of left-field musical mashups. “Some of them are just s---. Any collaboration can go wrong. When it becomes almost like a mating season, like, ‘Alright, now kiss,’ that’s when it doesn’t work. It can seem forced, but it doesn’t have to be like that. Even major label collaborations don’t have to be like that. I believe there are people who collaborate just because they love each other’s music, and that’s when some pretty amazing things can happen, when it comes out of true appreciation for the music. Sometimes it can produce the most amazing sounds.”

Still unsure what to anticipate with the release of his second album, Blake is trying to set reasonable expectations. “I hope people just think it’s better than the first one. That would be enough for me. I hope they feel like they can play it in their car. That was so important to me. I played it so much in the car, this album, testing it. Even if I didn’t need to go anywhere, I wanted to make sure it worked because the car is the perfect balance of doing something important that you can’t take your attention off, so the music filters in subconsciously. I don’t want it to be excruciating for people to get the message from a tune.”

While the young artist could reasonably wonder how the album will play on the dance floor or whether a future Grammy nomination is in his sights, he’s not getting ahead of himself, although both scenarios are worth considering. The 24-year-old does, however, concede one thing: “I don’t want it to just be floating around beneath. Even if it wasn’t to become a massive album or anything, I want it to be some people’s favorite album. Everything else aside, if one person falls in love with it, I achieved my goal.”

***Overgrown* releases April 9 in the U.S. via Republic.**







THE ONCE-LITTLE INDIE BAND HAS GONE GLOBAL, PLAYING MASSIVE FESTIVALS—AND EVEN MADISON SQUARE GARDEN. SO WHAT’S NEXT? AND HOW DO THEY FEEL ABOUT BEING CALLED “SELLOUTS”?

Passion Pit

BY RACHEL FAYLENE

2012 was a year of both turmoil and accomplishment for Massachusetts-based indie rock band Passion Pit. On the one hand, frontman Michael Angelakos confronted his ongoing mental health challenges. On the other, the band's latest album, *Gossamer*, made them household names.

"It kind of feels like a junior release, if people use that term, because the *Chunk of Change* EP kind of felt like the first album, at least for Mike and I," drummer Nate Donmoyer admits.

During this time, the process to write and release the album wasn't easy for Angelakos. He was admitted to a clinic to seek ongoing treatment for mental health shortly before the album's release date, stopping the group's tour in its tracks.

News of this was posted to the band's website by Angelakos himself: "in order for me to ensure that there will be no further disruptions, I am going to take the time to work on improving my mental health."

Conflicted feelings and questions arose from fans and spectators everywhere as to what exactly would happen next for the group. A brave and necessary move had to be made for Angelakos' well-being, as well as for Passion Pit. But Donmoyer expresses support for his bandmate and the importance of ongoing treatment for mental health and what it has done for the group.

"To be honest, it affected us a lot. It's really hard to see one of your best friends go through that in every aspect and struggle with it, especially on the road and even in their personal space," Donmoyer says of the events of the past several months. "I think it's made us all closer and I think everyone has come through on the other side, especially Michael. I think it's made the band better than ever, and we're getting along better than ever and staying positive and keeping in perspective how lucky we are to do what we do. If going through that is what it takes to realize all of those things, then I think it's worth it."

Donmoyer also believes the writing has "grown up" over the past three years and that the direction the band is taking is leading them to incredible opportunities. While he was also busy working on his own endeavors during the writing of *Gossamer*, he says the separation has benefitted his performance.

"It's actually been more fun for me to play *Gossamer* live because I haven't heard it a hundred thousand times in the studio," he admits.

Since its release, tracks from the record have exposed the group to a broader audience through popular advertisements and commercials. And while the lines have been blurred when it comes to defining a "sellout," the band disregards such labels and only wishes for success in whatever avenue that may be.

"I like to think that 'selling out' is an old term," says Donmoyer. "I love Taco Bell. It pays the bills."

He goes on to explain that there are lines that the group won't cross when it comes to conducting business with some of these enterprises.

"It's not like we're going to do an NRA

ad or something like that—or Sarah Palin," he confesses. "There are some devils out there that we won't make money from. We don't really get offers like that, but ... if something is completely politically or ethically something we disagree with a lot, we won't take the bait."

Passion Pit has also made its mark in radio with *Gossamer* trumping airplay numbers from their previous release, *Manners*. And with their popularity originating on a college campus, the group has every right to bask in the glory of their exposure.

"I love Taco Bell. It pays the bills. It's not like we're going to do an NRA ad or something like that—or Sarah Palin. There are some devils out there that we won't make money from."

"If we become mainstream because we're popular, then that's great. I don't think the music's going to change because of that. I don't think we're going to dumb it down," he says.

Donmoyer isn't necessarily concerned with the group's every word or move being overexposed and twisted for the public eye—not yet, anyway. He does, however, want to see good things happen with Passion Pit's music, as anyone would in his position. Being considered an "indie" band has its ups and downs, according to the musician, including fame. While there will always be those who want to desperately hold onto that hope of their favorite band not being overplayed, there comes a time when a band simply outgrows its capacity.

"It's not like we're One Direction or something with personal stylists. We'll still be ourselves, and if that happens to be popular, then cool; I'll take it," he admits. "It does involve making a living playing mu-

sic and doing what I love. If being mainstream is a part of that process or plan, I'm okay with it."

Even with the amount of success the band has seen, they still prefer playing smaller venues, smaller crowds and a more intimate setting. The feedback loop is much quicker for the group in a tighter locale, and they are able to feed directly off the energy in the room, which affects the way they play.

"With a smaller venue, you can maybe play longer and play slower stuff like B-sides and everything and still have people react positively, and that leaves an energy," he explains. "Whereas, with a festival, you start playing slow jams from the beginning and everyone falls asleep or goes to get beer and hot dogs or whatever, and sees another band that's playing at the same time across the festival."

But performing at festivals can lead to great exposure for most bands and gives fans the chance to cram in as many of their favorite artists as possible in a short period of time. The downside to that, though, is that it can leave bands like Passion Pit feeling pressured to advertise themselves to a new audience in the right way. Not only are they playing for dedicated fans who are familiar with their music, but they're also presenting themselves to first-time listeners on many occasions.

"I think we play better when we don't feel the need to prove ourselves, just more that we can actually play our hearts out," says Donmoyer.

One way for the group to stay grounded and shake off the pre-show nerves is through tradition. As time passes, hundreds of shows are played, and touring might become mundane, the group relies on one another to keep up the spirits of a live performance. Whether it's to regroup or dust each other off before a show, they make sure to find time to have a little fun beforehand.

"About 20 minutes before the show, we just all hang out together and kind of make fun of each other so we can be comfortable on stage and just relax... especially bigger shows where maybe our stomachs are turning or we're starting to get nervous," Donmoyer reveals.



The group finds comfort in confronting each other's flaws in a joking manner, almost to get to it before anyone else has the chance to. Some might find this tradition a tad harsh, but for Passion Pit, it's just a pre-show ritual. The subjects of banter can be anything from what they're wearing, the way they conduct themselves, any embarrassing moments from past shows, or even just the manner in which they make fun of one another.

"That's the one tradition we keep. I hate it when we have to all

not see each other until we're on stage," says Donmoyer. "It's just a bad show, or at least a weird thing."

Long periods of travel and separation from familiar faces can make the simplest moments the most important ones. And with a group like Passion Pit, touring is a huge part of their musical career. Fan interaction and live shows keep fans actively engaged and supportive, but it can weigh heavy on a musician's state of being, both physically and emotionally. Though Donmoyer admits that

being away from home takes its toll mentally, he finds it necessary to remind himself that being able to travel and play music is a blessing.

"In the end, we still get to travel and see all these places, and that kind of keeps you going. All the places I've played music, it's kind of ridiculous and a dream come true," he recalls of the band's tour history, which, as of earlier this year, includes a headlining date at Madison Square Garden. "You just have to keep that in perspective and remember that, and

it makes it a lot easier. But being away from home and family or loved ones—that can be difficult; especially those who can't come out and visit sometimes."

For now, the group is individually writing music, but not for the band. According to Donmoyer, the writing duty for the band goes through Angelakos and the timing is up to him. And although the singer doesn't partake in recording while on the road, he does occasionally write while traveling.

Passion Pit plans to actively tour at least until the fall and then regroup, hopefully to write more music. ☒



We asked our readers earlier this year their opinion on the most underrated artists in music, those who aren't yet mainstream chart-toppers and some who just can't seem to catch a break.

Although the results were varied, many readers share similar views. The list that follows was created using readers' insight, each artist having received numerous votes. Variance selected the top 11—because round numbers are boring.

11

MUSICIANS WHO DESERVE TO BE BIGGER THAN PITBULL

WORDS BY
KATIE HERALD, JOHN MOUSER & EDWIN WILSON

SOLANGE ↘



We'll never know what it's like being the younger sibling to Beyoncé Knowles, but 26-year-old Solange understands first-hand the pros and cons of being the kid sister of Queen Bey. While the relatives of many celebrities—especially those viewed as favorably as the former Destiny's Child star—tend to have no trouble finding the spotlight, Solange has traveled a winding road, despite having the overwhelming support of her older sister.

Solange, who previously worked with her sister's R&B group, has actually demonstrated a wide range of talents as a DJ, a model and an actress. But she had a rocky start, parting ways a few years ago with Interscope Records follow-

ing what was supposed to be her official major label debut.

After resurfacing on the indie circuit, cynics questioned exactly what Solange might be trying to do. She then signed with independent label Terrible Records, which put out her next single, "Losing You," and it was as if a switch had been flipped. Suddenly, eyes and ears were turned in her direction.

At the end of last year, Solange released her *True* EP via Terrible, produced by longtime collaborator Dev Hynes. It was instantly evident that the singer wasn't allowing herself to be bound by conventional wisdom, and most importantly, she seemed to be finding her footing as

an artist. Blending dance sounds with bold synths and indie R&B/pop vibes, the EP has provided a glimpse into her forthcoming album.

Despite positive reviews, the younger Knowles remains somewhat in the shadows. Billboard's Bill Werde even pointed to "Losing You" as a song that "should have been a way bigger hit," calling Solange "still vastly-underappreciated."

Yes, she's related to an incredibly famous superstar, but all things considered, Solange is extremely talented in her own right. Perhaps she's just doing things on her own terms, but hopefully this is her time to shine. We certainly have our fingers crossed.



BEN HOWARD ↘

We haven't exactly held back in our fondness of Ben Howard, one of the greatest voices to come out of the U.K. in years. With powerful vocals and skillful lyrics, this singer-songwriter has yet to hit a sour note with the material he's released thus far.

Following two EPs dating back to 2008, he finally released his debut album, *Every Kingdom*, back in 2010. He continues churning out soulful, passionate tunes, including 2012's *The Burgh Island EP*, which led to his stunning wins at the Brit Awards earlier this year.

Having won Best British Male Artist and Best Breakthrough Artist at the Brits, sales of his music jumped more than 4,000 percent in the U.K. But Howard still doesn't quite understand: "It was a bit of a shock. It definitely felt like we were the underdogs and that we didn't belong there."

The musician/surfer—who recently toured with Mumford & Sons—most certainly does belong. (Ironically, Mumford actually opened for Howard before they exploded!) He belongs on the charts, on worldwide tours and major festivals. We caught him at last year's Austin City Limits Music Festival, and he undoubtedly delivered for the crowd of thousands gathered to watch him perform.

Sure, he might still be an "underdog" in many circles, but he is a true talent with a wellspring of potential. We only anticipate bigger and better things for him in the future.

Although Sweden's Little Dragon has been making music together for more than 15 years, the group, fronted by vocalist Yukimi Nogano, has made great strides in recent years around the globe.

Their third album, *Ritual Union*, was well-regarded by reviewers following its 2011 release. Since then, the group

has been keeping busy and growing its profile with TV syncs and hip-hop collaborations. Their most recent was a major contribution to rapper Big Boi's latest solo effort since OutKast, *Vicious Lies and Dangerous Rumors*, which released at the end of last year.

Due to logistics out of either

party's hands, their highly anticipated "Mama Told Me" collaboration with Big Boi was ultimately scrapped from the record and Kelly Rowland replaced Nogano's vocals, but the publicity was great for Little Dragon, eventually joining the MC to perform their version of the track live on *Late Night with*

Jimmy Fallon.

The group has been moderately quiet so far this year, but with good reason. They revealed a couple months back that they were going back in the studio, and it seems it's only a matter of time before the world will hear a new Little Dragon record. Perhaps this is finally their moment.



↙ EMELI SANDÉ

For those of us in North America, Emeli Sandé is still a fresh face in music. Her beautiful, lustrous voice has only been sprinkled on U.S. radio following her starring role at the 2012 Olympics, but last year she reigned supreme in the U.K. She was more or less the equivalent of 2011's Adele in the U.S. But this singer is worthy of dominating American charts as well.

Don't get us wrong, she is very much on the rise. But considering the amount of familiar pop voices being crammed in our ears, Sandé (whose first name by birth is actually Adele) provides hope amidst a tired list of crooners.

The singer spent Oscar night hanging with the likes of Bono and Elton John, and Clive Davis (the music industry legend who discovered Whitney Houston) declared back in February that she was "the one to watch."

The 26-year-old Scottish singer also dominated this year's Brits, taking home Best British Female and British Album of the Year. She's come a long way from her 2009 guest contribution on rapper Chipmunk's "Diamond Rings," writing for pop singers Rihanna and Leona Lewis, and the multi-talented artist seems primed for a worldwide takeover.



↙ LITTLE DRAGON

THE WEEKND ↘



Canadian songwriter The Weeknd (aka Abel Tesfaye) first burst onto the scene a few years ago, crooning his way into the hearts of hipster R&B lovers, with a perfect medley of soul, hip-hop, electronic and post-punk.

First releasing a trio of mixtapes independently, he quickly became one of the most sought-after artists for every major label seeking to add his name to their roster. In late 2012, however, he announced a partnership with Universal Republic, which resulted in the re-release of mixtapes as a formal set, *Trilogy*.

The Toronto native has quickly made a name for himself, landing collabo-

rations with Drake, Wiz Khalifa and others. He was also asked to join Florence Welch and her machine for their 2012 tour, and he recently confirmed plans to release an album this year titled *Kiss Land*.

At 23 years old, Tesfaye is only in the early stages of his career, but he is distinctly influenced by Michael Jackson and other music greats. In a world that continues to try pinning artists into genres and brackets, this musician defies the rules and breaks the molds, and he is paving his own path to the top. We only hope the next few years include mammoth success. Things just wouldn't seem right otherwise.

LECRAE ↘

Atlanta-based rapper Lecrae has been working hard making music for the last decade, mostly under the radar until recently.

Although a Christian artist by definition, his relationship within the associated music genres has been quite the roller coaster, having never been fully embraced by many conservative insiders who still can't grasp rap music within gospel categories. That's OK, though. His 2012 album, *Gravity*, not only topped the usual Christian charts, but it reached No. 3 on Billboard.

Following his performance in 2011 at the BET International Flow Cypher and the subsequent mixtape, *Church Clothes*, one thing was evident: Lecrae has a path to cross over, should he choose to do so. The mixtape had more than 100,000 downloads in its first two days.

What sets this recent Grammy-winner apart is that he's not just spitting "Jesus" over some tacky beats like many of his peers. The former drug dealer, who acknowledges that Christian radio "caters to 30-to-45-year-old

moms," has never been comfortable being labeled a "Christian rapper," and he recruited Kendrick Lamar for his "Church Clothes" video.

The moment is right for Lecrae, but whether he'll seize the opportunity remains to be seen.



↙ BIRDY



English singer Birdy (Jasmine van den Bogaerde) stunned the U.K. when she won their Open Mic competition at 12 years old. Now at 16, she continues to surprise the music world with blissfully unreal renditions of popular songs.

Following the release of covers of Cherry Ghost's "People Help the People" and Bon

Iver's "Skinny Love," it was obvious this fresh, young voice is just what the industry needs.

"I'm really excited for people to hear my own songs, but I want to get it right as well," she said recently. She will tour Australia for the month of April before recording her eagerly anticipated second studio album.



MAYER HAWTHORNE



Soulful crooner Mayer Hawthorne (whose real name is Andrew Cohen) has been keeping a low profile since his 2011 album, *How Do You Do*, but as he made evident during SXSW in March, he has been hard at work on new material.

"This is the first record I didn't produce by myself," Cohen revealed at SXSW during a preview of his forthcoming album. "Working with all these great producers made me a better producer."

He also explained that he had originally been working with a producer who asked him to "scrap all the 7th chords on the album, which for all you non-music folks is what gives it that jazzy sound. So I stopped working with him and put 7th chords in all my songs."

Those 7th chords have become somewhat of a signature sound for the singer, and we don't think he's yet to tap into the breadth of all he has to offer. Hopefully this next effort—which includes contributions from Pharrell, Chris Brown and Kelly Rowland, among others—sends him into the stratosphere.

His new album, still untitled as of this writing, is expected sometime this summer.



↙ CHET FAKER

Newcomer Chet Faker, born Nicholas James Murphy, caught the ears of many in the music industry last year with his debut EP, *Thinking in Textures*, which led to the Melbourne native's victories at the Australian Independent Record Awards, for Breakthrough Artist of the Year and Best Independent Single/EP.

Much of the attention centered around his gritty, soulful rendition of Blackstreet and Dr. Dre's 1996 No. 1 hit single, "No Diggity," which was featured in this year's Super Bowl commercial for German brewery Beck's in promotion of its Sapphire brand. Twitter instantly lit up with viewers wondering whose raspy vocals they had just heard.

As interest continues to grow in what Murphy calls "future beat" and "sex" music, the young Aussie is selling out shows (and adding more to keep up with demand), while working on new music. Just last month, he introduced a new three-track EP titled *Live Sessions*, which includes acoustic versions of "Archangel" and "Love and Feeling," as well as a new version of "No Diggity."

While little has been said about the singer's future music plans, he signed to Downtown Records at the end of last year, a good sign for those of us who can't get enough of the impeccable offerings of Chet Faker.



FUTURE ↘

Although one of the most prolific rappers in recent years, Future has yet to fully reach his potential. Since signing with Epic Records and creating his own imprint, Freebandz, the Atlanta native has not only produced his own hefty list of tracks, but he has been behind a handful of proteges.

He is featured on Rihanna's 2012 tune, "Loveeeeeee Song," which he co-wrote. And following the release of his newest mixtape, *F.B.G.: The Movie*, MTV included Future on its annual list of the Hottest MCs in the Game.

The 29-year-old is definitely worthy of be-

ing on that list. He's easily one of the most talented in the rap genre, but as demonstrated by his writing ability and business savvy skills, his talents go beyond spitting verses. He's made it clear he has more to offer than just a few catchy lines, claiming his forthcoming album (due this year) will be more substantive, also tapping into R&B and other musical formats.

We expect big things from Future, whose upcoming *Future Hendrix* album is slated to include guest features by Kanye West, Drake, Nicki Minaj and Rick Ross, among others.

In the three years since the release of his sixth studio album, *So Runs the World Away*, Josh Ritter got married and then divorced, setting the stage for his latest effort, *The Beast in Its Tracks*. The folk-rock singer-songwriter has always offered raw, emotional music for fans, but this newest project (dubbed by critics as his "breakup album") is unequivocally his most passionate and deeply personal work to date.

Ritter, who's been at this since the mid-'90s, seems to quietly progress artistically with each new record. While his fanbase is loyal and he never seems to fail, he has remained in the shadows of other better-known folksy musicians. And this should not be the case.

The singer, having spent years self-publishing and independently produc-

ing his work, only gets better with age, and it's a shame he remains unknown to many mainstream listeners. The multi-talent is also working on a second novel, after his first book, *Bright's Passage*, was praised by Stephen King.

"Before I ever really discovered music, I was always reading," Ritter has revealed. "Then I found songs, and that you could pour all your words into that form. I have learned there really isn't much difference between the two forms."

He is currently on tour in support of *The Beast in Its Tracks*.

JOSH RITTER ↗



Haim *is* Everything

BY EMILY HULSEBERG



→→

Meet the
uber-talented
sister trio bound
for one
incredible summer.

“WE LOVE FLEETWOOD MAC—KIND OF AN OVERWHELMING THING TO COMPREHEND. I LIKE TO THINK THAT BECAUSE WE’RE SUCH BIG FANS AND WE LISTENED TO THEM SO MUCH GROWING UP THAT IT’S JUST KIND OF INFILTRATED OUR MUSICAL TASTES.”

Many bands, artists and actors go to Los Angeles to get their start, but for Este, Danielle, and Alana Haim, it was just the place they call their hometown.

Despite only playing together as a band for the past five years, the group is making huge waves right now across the pond, and with their highly anticipated debut album somewhere on the horizon, the United States will surely follow suit with what the British have already discovered.

The girls’ parents can be blamed/thanked for their musical interest and ability to play multiple instruments, which they do, all while singing three-part harmonies.

“[Our parents] had day jobs and they were like working professionals, but when they would come home at night, my dad would get on the drums and my mom would get on the guitar, so music was always part of their lives,” Este explains.

“From the moment we would hold our heads up, my dad taught us how to play drums basically, and then once we could hold a guitar, mom would try to teach us how to play chords.”

While music was always a constant passion for the girls, they weren’t always on the same paths musically. It was when Este was at UCLA, Danielle was graduating from high school, and Alana was starting high school that they decided they wanted to start writing music together.

During their first writing session, Estes says, “We just wrote a weird, s----- emo song.” Luckily, they have evolved and the music they are making today is exciting, appealing, and embraces sounds from the past that are blended with popular styles of today. They have also been repeatedly compared to Fleetwood Mac.

“We love Fleetwood Mac—kind of an overwhelming thing to comprehend. I like to think that because we’re such big fans and we listened to them so much growing up that it’s just kind of infiltrated our musical tastes,” says Este.

After getting a few more songs in their lineup and putting in some hours of practice, they decided to debut their work and had a great turn out.

“We sold out our first show, and it was really an amazing feeling. And we decided maybe this was something that we should pursue.”

They quickly learned that their sold-out show was short-lived, that maybe this “band thing” was going to take some time to develop.

“We ended up gigging and writing and recording for about five years,” Este reveals. “We didn’t know how to get the sound we wanted to. We knew what we liked but we didn’t know how to get it.”

What was a learning experience that took time and patience is also something they are thankful for. The time spent learning about their sound and style brought them the opportunity to play with some unique and exciting people.

The girls have opened for Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros, Florence and the Machine, and Mumford & Sons, three of the biggest acts around right now, and certainly some of the biggest names in British music today. They were also named BBC’s Sound of 2013, a huge honor that is shared with past winners like Adele and Ellie Goulding.

“It was the craziest feeling and the biggest honor,” Este recalls about finding out they had won. “When we were on the long list, we were like, ‘Well, it was cool to be nominated.’”

Among the top five were groups all fronted by females—a great thing for women in the industry and something Este is excited about. “All of these people are appreciating the ladies these days,”

she laughs.

Since opening for these bands, HAIM will now tour in Europe this spring and keeps teasing a full-length album. “We’re knee-deep in it right now,” says Este. “Just trying to get these songs done; we are sifting through them and deciding which ones are our favorite. It’s hard. It’s like choosing kids.”

This past February, the group, which also consists of Dash Hutton on drums, released a three-song EP titled *Forever*, which is also expected to be the title track on their upcoming album.

Even though it’s three sisters in a band together, Este claims they get along splendidly. “Danielle, Alana and I don’t really argue about a lot of things,” she says. “We argue about who gets to wear what when we go out. Arguing about a leather jacket when you’re making an album and touring the world seems pretty minute when you’re in constant company with one another.”

The dynamic in the studio is also one of trust and understanding. “We kind of have the same vision when it comes to how we want things to sound,” Este explains. “I trust them enough to say whatever I feel and if it’s something that they’re not into, then so be it.”

Some of the band’s goals, like any normal human beings, include being able to see the world, but most importantly for this year it’s “to record the best record possible.”

HAIM is on tour—including several dates with Vampire Weekend—starting April 24 in London. Follow Este on Twitter (@jizziemcquire), Alana (@babyHAIM) and, of course, the band (@HAIMtheband).



PHOTO BY CHLOE AFTEL

Bleached

BY RACHEL FAYLENE

Bandmates and sisters, Jennifer and Jessie Calvin, are about as fun-loving as anyone could ever imagine. A hint of California can be heard in their very clear Valley Girl accents, accompanied by their laid-back attitudes. These ladies capture a vintage punk essence, both visually and sonically in their duo Bleached.

The Calvin girls share their growth and personal relationships on their debut album, *Ride Your Heart*. Jessie shines light on the origin of the album saying, “A lot of the songs are about heartbreak, falling in love, wishing you could be in love, and not being able to work on relationships.”

And while sparks from romance also light the way for creativity, the sisters don't seem to have any problems when it comes to dating.

“I don't think we've ever liked the

same guy. I think we like completely opposite types of guys,” Jennifer shares openly. “We like each other's boyfriends, we all get along, we're friendly, but we're different types for sure.”

“I feel like I go for really damaged guys and I don't realize it until we're into the relationship,” Jennifer admits with a laugh. “But then I think I'm a little crazy myself, so I'm attracted to crazy guys. I like taller guys, so that's one thing.”

Jessie, on the other hand, struggles to capture her ideal man. “I want to say metalheads, but that's not my reality type,” she explains. “Now that I think back to ex-boyfriends, they've all been so different...I have a celebrity crush on Chris Cornell—that's kind of a type.”

While they may not be on the prowl to lock down a similar husband anytime soon, the two do agree on the type

of guy they wouldn't mind having around as eye candy.

“One day we were joking and I was like, the fun type would be a long-haired dude in flannel, riding a skateboard, holding a pizza in one hand, a pack of Bud Light in the other hand,” Jennifer confesses.

Boys might be a solid foundation for the writing in Bleached, but inspiration also comes from their favorite bands like Siouxsie and the Banshees, The Cure and Blondie. Trying to create a sound influenced by childhood idols, Jennifer describes the writing process.

“I feel like my goal is always to try to write songs like that, but I wasn't really sure how to do it at first,” she says. “I think as we went on writing longer, I was able to make the songs sound more like what I imagined them sounding like.”

Studio time for *Ride Your Heart* was a steady mixture of work and play, and it shows.

“I've had s----- jobs, you know, which is real work,” Jennifer says. “It's fun because we're doing our own thing and we're playing music and recording. We're around people that we love, so it's really awesome and I think the energy you have recording reflects on a record.”

Jessie adds to recording vibes, explaining how important it is to get a good sleep before going into the studio. “I'll usually not go out during recording and just make sure that we're there on time and prepared for the work part,” she explains.

What's next for the punk girls of pop?

“All I know is, the other day I couldn't sleep, so I started going through my phone memo and I was listening to all these demos of songs that have never been recorded yet and I was, like, ‘Oh my god, I can't wait to record again,’” says Jennifer. “There are so many songs that I like!”

“It's true,” Jessie chimes in. “It kind of seems like the next thing now is to write a new record.”

ALL ABOUT KATIE AINGE



PHOTO COURTESY OF TATE MUSIC GROUP

BY NOEL ABAS

Katie Ainge is an artist on the move, having been working on her music since she was a child.

"I would hear themes from movies and pluck them out on the piano the next day," says Ainge, now 21. "I would invent melodies in my head and sing along with songs I had never heard before."

She is musically talented on a number of different levels. She picked up the clarinet in her elementary years, and she's always had a knack for the piano. At age 11, she started playing the bass guitar in memory of her grandfather,

who played bass in a band called Blues Society in Akron, Ohio. At only 14, Ainge was playing the keyboard, bass, guitar, and continued to sing and write music. According to the young singer, a turning point in her music came at 17, when she dedicated her life to Christ.

Ainge has a passion for songwriting and playing that is very unique and honest. "In my opinion, a song is a living expression of an emotion or thought following an experience," she says. She isn't in the industry to sound like everyone else or to follow the norm; she strives for her songs to sound as they feel to her.

And this has bred a true authenticity and poignancy to her work that perhaps separates her from other artists.

Music has played a huge role in Ainge's life and that, in turn, is proven in her work. "Growing up, music molded and changed me and, multiple times, even saved me," she says. Her biggest hope for her music is for it to touch people's lives and affect others the same way it has impacted her life.

"If I'm meant to write a song to change someone's life, then I have a mission," she explains. The main route for Ainge is music, and nothing will stop her from continuing

to pursue that.

Performing is also of huge importance to Ainge, who cites Regina Spektor, Bright Eyes and Norah Jones as influences on her music. She has been performing onstage every chance she gets. Whether it is performing solo or with other bands, the singer has always wanted to take every chance she gets to share her music with others.

"I'm at home when I'm on stage. I am free to tell my story and be who I really am."

Ainge's forthcoming album, *Then Sings My Soul*, debuts on May 14.



For those who don't remember, the early-to-mid 2000's rap scene in Houston was dominated by names like Mike Jones and Paul Wall. Entertaining at the time, sure, but with no real staying power, those names have disappeared and made way for a new breed of "H-Town" talent, most notably, Roosh Williams.

If you haven't heard his name yet, your time is quickly approaching. Equipped with a unique voice and introspective lyrics, he allows listeners into his mind during his rise

to prominence, leaving no doubts his talents will take him wherever he wants to go. On his latest project, *déjà Roo: Times Have Changed*, he flexes his creativity and wordplay, making quick fans with every track.

With features from Bubba Sparxxx and Action Bronson, Williams holds his own en route to creating an album that is a complete listen from start to finish. His style of rap is intense, in your face and unrelenting, often leaving listeners to believe he breaks the micro-

phone in half when he's done rapping into it. The video for the track "Introduction" serves as a perfect intro, showing Williams being rolled onto the scene wearing a Hannibal Lecter mask. It totally makes sense.

Whether you heard his name here first or not, don't be surprised when you hear it on the radio or in conversations about rap's next big thing. Rappers from Houston's past may have had to remind fans what their name was, but Roosh will have to do no such thing once he arrives. Soon.



ROOSH
WILLIAMS

HOUSTON, TX
ROOSH.BANDCAMP.COM

HEARTLESS BASTARDS

CINCINNATI, OH
THEHEARTLESSBASTARDS
.COM



Although FutureSounds is normally reserved for new, up-and-coming bands, Heartless Bastards have a sound that is aching to be heard by all. Sure, the first album came out in 2005, but the best is yet to come for this powerhouse band from Cincinnati, Ohio.

With a style that set the stage for bands like Alabama Shakes and others, Heartless Bastards have perfected the soulful female lead and made track after track proving just how impactful their music can be.

“Marathon,” the first track on the 2012 album, *Arrow*, immediately sets the tone for Heartless Bastards’ music moving forward, as this powerful track grows into a triumphant ending that leaves fans begging for more.

Often getting compared to The Black Keys, Heartless Bastards are on the cusp of big-time stardom, using multiple avenues to drive their point across. Whether it be slowed down and poetic, or upbeat and in-your-face, the group presents a

brand of music that entertains and impresses with ease.

So while this group may have been around for quite some time, expect even bigger things from them in the future. This segment is called FutureSounds, and if the future doesn’t contain more of this type of stuff, quite frankly, we’re not interested in hearing it.

For more information on Heartless Bastards, visit their website: theheartlessbastards.com.

THE SOUNDS YOU NEED TO HEAR



NERVES JUNIOR

LOUISVILLE, KY
NERVESJUNIOR
.BANDCAMP.COM

Coming out of Louisville, Ky., Nerves Junior is an indie rock group with a sound that the world has been waiting on.

After their critically acclaimed album, 2011's *As Bright As Your Night Light*, Nerves Junior has been touring, earning new fans at every stop. They've used their momentum to release an EP in early 2013, the *Craters* EP. The track "Goodnight Nobody" shows the true talent of the group, mixing haunting vocals and incredible instrument work to prove

exactly what they're capable of.

Often compared to Radiohead, the group comes at listeners from different angles, using a variety of sounds to create a brand that is all their own. While the similarities are certainly there, the mood of each song changes from track to track, giving them an edge that sets them apart from everyone else—including Radiohead.

Recently playing at SXSW in Austin, Texas, the band is continuing to make their mark on today's music landscape,

just beginning a climb that seems destined to land them on iPods and Spotify playlists in a matter of no time. From one listen, new fans will be looking for more from this extremely talented, yet under-the-radar group of young men.

For more of Nerves Junior, check out Spotify or iTunes to hear the latest EP, and 2011's *As Bright as Your Night Light*. For more information on when they will be headed your way, check: facebook.com/nervesjunior.



With a brand of uplifting music that is bound to make listeners smile, Sami Grisafe is a multi-talented artist out of Chicago that appears to have no limitations on her talents.

As winner of “Best Rock Entertainer” at the Chicago Music Awards, Grisafe is no stranger to the stage and creating a fun environment for her fans. Her album *ATLANTIS* received six pre-nominations for the first round of Grammys, offering up a full track list of songs that feel like Colbie Caillat

with a rock edge.

In addition to her music, Grisafe is also a quarterback on the 2013 U.S. Women’s National Football Team. Normally playing in Chicago for the Chicago Force, she was one of 45 women selected for the U.S. Team honors. A true multi-talent, she blends her two skills perfectly to maximize her potential.

When it comes to the music, Grisafe appears to have all the talent she will ever need, recently playing in Austin, Texas, at SXSW. Her ability to enter

tain and perform at a high level keeps crowds engaged, as her unique brand of feel-good music will keep fans on their feet.

To get a better feel for Sami Grisafe, visit SamiGrisafe.com for music, photos, video and more information. Also keep an eye out in June as the U.S. Women’s National Football Team heads to Finland to play for a world championship.



SAMI GRISAFE

CHICAGO, IL
SAMIGRISAFE.COM

PHOENIX

RISES

***AFTER A YEARS-LONG HIATUS, THE FRENCH
MUSIC MAKERS TALK NEW MUSIC, NEW TOUR
AND WHY THEY MADE US WAIT SO LONG FOR IT.***

BY
LAUREN
MORANOR

PHOTOS BY
FLORA HANITIJO AND AARON STERN



“What’s a biscuit?” Laurent Brancowitz seems slightly unsure of the menu at a little cafe in New York City. “Is it a sort of pastry? Or is it a bread?” Brancowitz is considered a rock star in some minds, although by his humble manner, one would never know. The four friends that make up the Grammy-winning band Phoenix walk into Peels almost unnoticed. Brancowitz and bassist Deck D’Arcy melt into a booth and settle on hot coffee and juice to recover from the blistering cold outside. They look calm and cool, not the kind of demeanor one would expect from a band preparing to release one of the most highly anticipated records of 2013.

Phoenix is coming off a four-year stretch that saw them rise from a small French band into electronic pop kings. Their critically acclaimed fourth album, *Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix*, turned out to be a favorite among electronic and rock music lovers. After its release in 2009, the band conquered *Saturday Night Live*, toured the world and won the Grammy for Best Alternative Album. Not bad for a band that started out in a small suburb of Paris.

“We never let ourselves get used to success. We always want to be reaching for that personal point of triumph, but we never want to settle on that feeling. That is when you become content. That is when your growth is stalled. So we try to always be reaching for something more, moving on to something greater,” Brancowitz says.

After a whirlwind of success and chaos from the album calmed down, there was no vacation for Phoenix. There was no rest, no sitting and soaking it all in. The band immediately picked

up after their last tour ended and began a new creation.

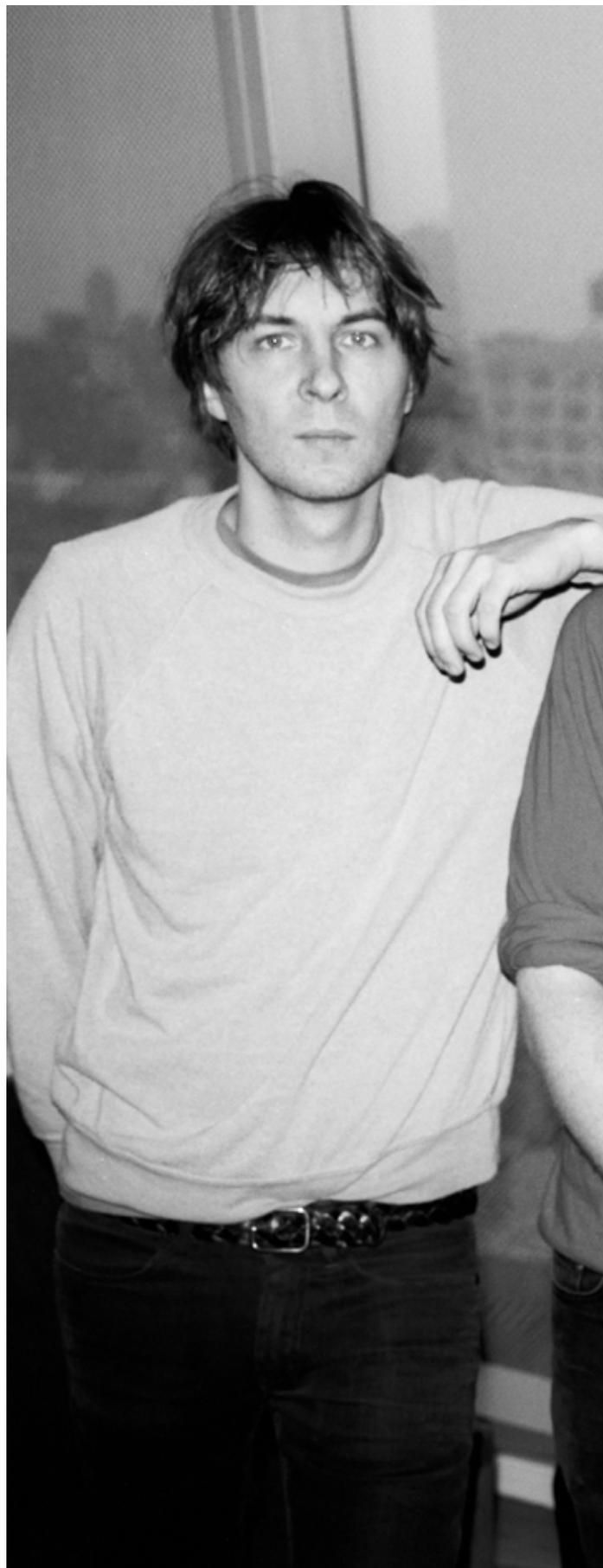
“We don’t like holidays,” Brancowitz reveals. “We don’t really take long vacations or breaks from each other. I do not like to stop. We are always striving to make something new.”

Phoenix’s fifth full-length album, *Bankrupt!*, was born almost immediately after the band walked off the stage of their last concert and their duties with *Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix* were put aside. There was never a specific moment where they thought to themselves that it was time to make a new record. It was always the plan to immediately begin the next piece of work after their last tour ended. D’Arcy believes the band’s minds never stop thinking about the next way to improve music.

The first step to a new creation was to cut off from the world for a bit. Much to fans’ dismay, cutting off meant exiting the world of social media. “I did not grow up in a time where you could constantly reach out to your favorite musician. A band put out a record and then they disappeared. You were left waiting. But that made the new material that much sweeter,” Brancowitz says. “Fans needed to be left in the dark a bit.”

In a time where fame and success can be taken away as quickly as it is earned, musicians will use social media like Twitter to stay connected with fans and stay present. However, Phoenix does not operate under this notion of having to be constantly accessible. If they wanted to create a new record, they needed to build anticipation, to make fans wait and wonder.

“We were out in the spotlight so much with the last album. We needed to go away for a bit. If I had something to say, we would tweet,



PHOENIX



but ultimately, we wanted the fans to miss us a bit," D'Arcy says.

And so the making of *Bankrupt!* began. There was never a set blueprint for the next album. There was no concept from which they were attempting to build. Phoenix just wanted to continue their growth musically.

The band traveled to places like Australia and began to experiment with sound and light. The goal was to create more innovative sounds and produce something new and unheard of. They did not necessarily seek out inspirations; they waited for it to come to them through experimenting with different engineers. Much of the early process for *Bankrupt!* was spent treating music like a math problem. "Beats are mathematical; it's about finding a solution," Brancowitz says with a smile. "Mathematics get people dancing." That was the attitude that made their 2009 record such a success.

The band never spent time in a traditional studio. To create the kind of record they intended on making, they couldn't be boxed into four walls with a microphone and mixing board. "We aren't the kind of band that can sit in a studio for hours day in and day out. We need open space. We thrive on recording in nontraditional ways because we think that is what creates the best sound," states D'Arcy.

One of the nontraditional methods of recording came by way of eBay. The band was searching the site for equipment and came across the recording console Michael Jackson used to record his 1982 album, *Thriller*.

After extensive research to find out if it was in fact the exact console, Brancowitz bought it, unable to believe someone hadn't already snapped it up. "I thought we were being scammed at first. But after discovering the ad was real, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to work on it." It's those kinds of unique devices that have allowed Phoenix to hone in on a specific technical sound.

Phoenix used the console to mix much of the record. After doing a lot of the pre-planning and experimenting in New York and Australia, the band put the final touches on *Bankrupt!* in Paris with producer Philippe Zdar, who the band worked with on *Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix*.

The band spent much of their time together during the recording process, something D'Arcy says made the record more emotional and precious. They also helped themselves to a diet of My Bloody

Valentine and champagne. "We spent much time eating good food, listening to good music and seeing good films. I think that translated into much of the record."

The original plan for *Bankrupt!* was for the record to take two years to make; however, perfectionism within the band caused the record to take about three years to complete a final product. "Whenever we think something is going to take a year, it takes two. Whenever we say it will take two years, it takes three. We never stick to the original plan," D'Arcy explains.

The extended period of time wasn't due to laziness on the band's part or a feeling of complacency after such success. It was, in fact, the fear of complacency that led to the prolonged process.

"Once you have success, you have to face all of these weird decisions that you didn't have to make before. The luxury thing is to say no, but it's a battle to say no all the time," D'Arcy says.

Phoenix was basically waiting for that feeling of completion. Each song the band creates is constantly evolving. They never feel something is truly finished, making the recording process a never-ending exploit. The way the band sees it, there is always something that can be added on, something that can be tweaked, a process Brancowitz says can be a bit mental at times. "You just have to hope and pray the song is ready, that the album is ready. We never really know; we just have to release it and hope it's at its best. We like to keep our fingers crossed."

The band admits nervousness with the release of *Bankrupt!* even though electronic music has surged in the United States. A lot has changed in the music landscape since the band's 2009 release. The lines between music genres have blurred. Sounds have become broader. The music created by Phoenix that was once unheard of is now taking over airwaves. Bands are producing electronic more than ever before, forcing the format to step up with something greater.

Phoenix is given much credit to helping the electronic genre take off in the United States. D'Arcy, however, believes the U.S. is still playing catch-up to Europe. "Electronic music has been big in Europe for 20 years or so," says D'Arcy. "The idea of people listening to it is not new to us. The United States is simply just catching on to something that has been popular. But, it's nice to see it's now more accepted."

With electronic music gaining more radio play, was there pressure on Phoenix this time around to make their new music

more radio friendly? Brancowitz simply laughs at the idea. According to him, radio play is the least of the band's concerns. "We don't make music with the idea that it will be played multiple times over radio for numbers. Radio is just an added bonus, but never the intention." The band's aim for the record wasn't necessarily to not have it picked apart, letting one song represent the whole product. It was to be treated as one entity.

The result is 10 songs that are unique in their own right, but connected to form one total body of work. With the exception of the record's first single, "Entertainment," and the track "Bourgeois," there are no songs that simply stand alone. Phoenix wouldn't yield to the trend of creating singles before albums. They wanted a whole project that was meant to be listened to from start to finish.

Brancowitz was once told that records are a dying breed. Single songs were now going to give a band success. People don't listen to albums anymore, they told him; one song was all a listener needed, all their attention spans could handle.

But he didn't believe it and didn't give in. He remained fully convinced albums were making a comeback. And people are starting to grasp the idea of a full project instead of a three-minute song. "As the record industries lose their grip on artists, albums will come back," Brancowitz predicts. "When artists no longer have to feel the pressure to please, they can create something on their own. The rise of the DIY movement is something music is benefiting from. Musicians can do their own thing and stop making disposable music."

Disposable music is something that *Bankrupt!* is not. The album is layers; full layers of sounds and structures. No two songs are formatted the same way, yet each contains that signature electro-pop sound. This was intentional. The band wanted the album to be deeper, maybe not lyrically, but sonically. Upon first listen, the record sounds nice, but once it is heard over and over, it slowly begins to unpack itself.

Bankrupt! offers a variety of speedy electro-rock, giant synth hooks and a few rave-like moments. The record's first single, "Entertainment," is a classic example of Phoenix's signature sound with bouncing drums and disco guitar melodies. "S.O.S. in Bel Air" is an overdrive of raving pop, while "Bourgeois" has a chanting chorus that will thrive in a live show.

Phoenix takes a risk with the album's

“WE DON’T MAKE MUSIC WITH THE IDEA THAT IT WILL BE PLAYED MULTIPLE TIMES OVER RADIO FOR NUMBERS. RADIO IS JUST AN ADDED BONUS, BUT NEVER THE INTENTION.”

title track, “Bankrupt!” The almost nine-minute song is made up of almost all instrumentals and thrown right in the middle of the record. The song is meant to hook in the listener and represent the continuity of the album. “We didn’t want the song as an intro or an outro because we didn’t want there to be something that represents an official start or end of the album. We wanted it to feel like things were never ending,” Brancowitz explains.

The goal was to induce a deeper engagement with the listener. “The more you listen, the more you hear,” says D’Arcy. “With each listen, there’s a deeper understanding of what’s happening. There are so many layers in each song, it takes time to fully grasp it all.”

While there is so much sound packed into a small space, the album never feels confusing or crowded. There is one fluid motion that happens from one song to the next. Brancowitz adds that the goal was to create a dizzying experience for the listener. “We wanted to create this feeling of triumph and a sense of elation. We wanted fans to feel like after listening to the record, they could take on anything.”

The influences for those feelings will be found more in the sound than in the lyrics. D’Arcy says the band first creates the sound and then lets the lyrics come after. Once the foundation of the song is formed, the lyrics can then be written. On *Bankrupt!* the lyrical theme is triumph and inspiration. It can all be summed up by the exclamation point placed in the album’s title, an excitement over the triumph of accepting failure and knowing there can be success when things fall apart.

Bankrupt! is a more mature sounding Phoenix. They have honored the sounds that fans fell in love with in 2009 and built from them to show another level of the band. “We have traveled the world. We have grown as people and as musicians, and we wanted the new record to show our development,” Brancowitz says.

A follow-up to an album that catapulted Phoenix into the global spotlight comes with high pressure. The band’s answer is a more complex sound that once again raises the bar of pop and electronic music.

Others will be forced to step up or fall to the creativity and heightened musicianship Phoenix is putting on display.

“We were feeling this vertigo, this feeling of being at the very limit of failure. It’s something that we love to explore. It’s more the possibility of everything collapsing,” Brancowitz says.

To say Phoenix doesn’t have expectations for the record would be a lie, but at the same time, their goal with the album is not necessarily to sell a million copies or to acquire every critic’s approval of its quality. With the acceptance of electronic music, the band is encouraged that *Bankrupt!* will be just as widely accepted as the last record. But with great success comes expectations, not only from the band, but from fans alike.

Fans of Phoenix will be expecting a great, if not better record than *Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix*—something the band is well aware of. “We are very excited. Fans seem very excited. There has been a lot of good buzz around the release and we think we can deliver on it,” D’Arcy says.

The next step once *Bankrupt!* is released on April 23 is touring. Before Phoenix can even begin to plan the tour, they must first plan how their music will translate in a live setting. With so many new layers to their sound, so much more complexity, the band must figure out how to properly credit that on stage. They admit that, while they may not be the best overall musicians, their technical abilities will make everything come together. “It is more about problem solving right now. We have a lot of instruments and a lot of planning to do,” Brancowitz says with a bit of anxiety in his voice.

But the band loves to tour, and seeing the fans’ reaction to the music only inspires them more. Phoenix has announced a slew of West Coast tour dates with musician Mac DeMarco, someone who they loved to listen to during the recording process of *Bankrupt!*. “Mac is hilarious,” D’Arcy professes. “We are excited to be on the road with him. He really gets music, gets what it means to create a good record.”

The highlight of the West Coast tour

will be headlining Coachella, the music festival which recently expanded to two weekends. They intend to put on the same show for both weekends and are currently discussing their set’s contents. “It’s two weekends now, so there’s a bit of pressure to be really good, especially as a headliner. We have a couple of surprises I think we are going to pull off. We can’t wait. Coachella reaches so many people; it will be great,” Brancowitz says.

The band plans on going on a worldwide tour once Coachella is wrapped up. While nothing has been announced at press time, D’Arcy hints that a big tour is in the works. The band’s favorite aspect of touring is finding new cities to explore. They often gain inspiration from new locations. “I really want to go to China,” Brancowitz confesses. “I think that might be one of the only places we haven’t been. I hear so many wonderful things about China. I just want to go everywhere, see everything!”

2013 could easily turn out to be the Year of Phoenix. Much like 2009, this year could see a whole different level of success after *Bankrupt!* is released. The band currently has no plans for projects apart from the record. They have scored a film in the past, but are focusing mainly on starting a new journey with new material. “We want to give this record all of the proper credit it deserves. We still plan on playing songs from *Wolfgang*, but the new songs will be [at] the forefront of what we do in the upcoming year,” Brancowitz says.

As the guys finish up their breakfast prior, they seem relatively unfazed about the hectic schedule ahead. While the band claims to be nervous for the world to hear the new material, they certainly don’t display it on their faces. Brancowitz feels relieved *Bankrupt!* is finally complete and the band is getting back to touring. “Now it’s time to go out and have fun,” he says, with a smile.

***Bankrupt!* releases on April 23 in the U.S. and is currently available for pre-order on iTunes Store. Keep up with the band on Twitter: @wearephoenix.**

Songza

good music makes good times.



Sweaty Dance Party



Relaxing at Home



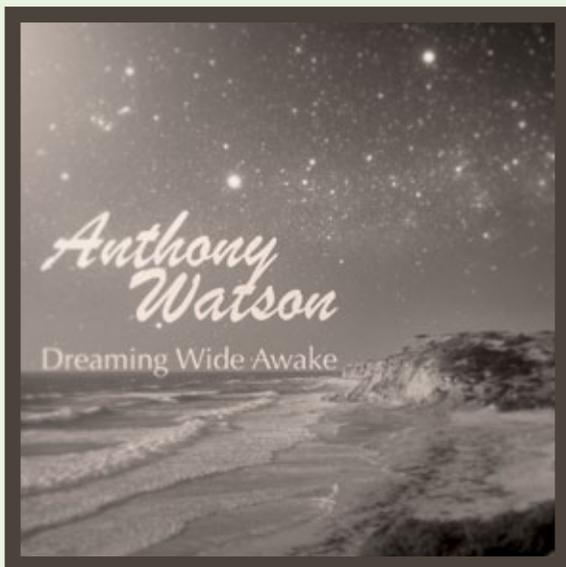
Staying Up All Night

Playlists by Music Experts. 100% Free. No Audio Ads.



listen now at Songza.com





THE NEW ALBUM

from Anthony Watson

NOW AVAILABLE
on iTunes

PHOTO BY CARA ROBBINS



Cold War Kids return this month with *Dear Miss Lonelyhearts*, their first album since guitarist Jonathan Russell's departure and the arrival of Modest Mouse's Dann Gallucci, who also produced much of the new record. It also marks a shift in the band's sound, as they have pointedly branched out and

toyed with a more eclectic range of music styles.

The title—and much of the content—of their latest effort was inspired by Nathanael West's 1933 novel, *Miss Lonelyhearts*, the story of an advice columnist overwhelmed by the troubles of his readers and his inability to help them without first looking inward.

Having taken a cue from West and done a self-examination, Cold War Kids have created one of their most honest and revealing works. Frontman Nathan Willett and bassist Matt Maust sat down on the road with *Variance* recently to discuss the new project, the journey to get here and what comes next.



GETTING PERSONAL WITH LONELYHEARTS

You guys seem to have experimented on this album a lot more. Was it a deliberate decision, kind of like, “It’s a new album, let’s go for a different sound?”

MAUST: I think we’ve always

experimented. With the last record, we experimented as well. I think it’s just different kinds of experimentation. With Dann [Gallucci] being a new guitar player and producing the record, there were going to be experiments. I think not having like a

time—we put time restraints on ourselves, but making the record at home in our own space allowed us to not keep looking at our watches like we had done in the past. It’s easy to look at the clock a lot when you’re spending those bucks.

Was having your own studio this time the biggest factor playing a role?

WILLETT: I think it makes a big difference. Also, Dann producing the record. So, those were two major factors. Just not having a sense of being in somebody else's studio, and even little things. Sometimes when you're in somebody else's space and there's some keyboards laying around, and they're somebody else's, you're less likely to want to try weird things, plugging them into different amps and just tinkering, basically. You're more likely to tinker in your own space and take the time that it takes to find a weird sound versus on a time schedule: "Let's just get it done!"

It hasn't been that long since the last album came out. You hear a lot of artists that say you have to come out with an album every couple of years to stay relevant and stay out there. Do you guys have that mindset as well?

WILLETT: I think we just wanted to put a record out. We're still doing this because we really like doing it. It's not like it's a job. I personally don't feel like it's a job. I think we really like putting records out and writing music. Touring is hard but really fun at the same time.

MAUST: It's nice, though, because we never had a record label or a manager or anybody say that we had to put a record out at a certain time. We always got to kind of move at our own pace.

Dear Miss Lonelyhearts (the title) was inspired by the novel, but where are you guys personally coming from with the record?

WILLETT: I think the storyline of a guy who is an advice columnist and having kind of this crisis about the advice he's giving and whether it's good or worth giving at all—I think in a way, I carry that kind of into the band. There's always this sense of—we write songs that have a narrative quality to them that, in some ways, have a heavier quality to them. I think asking yourself the question of, "Why am I doing what I'm doing?" I think you have to ask yourself hard questions. At the same time, you write songs; songs come from all different kinds of places. They come from kind of wanting to encourage yourself through something that's hard. They also come from wanting to maybe encourage somebody else in your life that's going through something that's hard. There's that common ground with

the novel and this record and where I was at in writing lyrics, and where we were as a band. It felt like a time when we're kind of looking really hard at ourselves and asking what it all means, but at the same time, just moving forward.

You see musicians many times overtaken by their personal lives and struggles to the point of it overshadowing their art. Would you say you guys use your music as therapy to get some of that out at times?

WILLETT: Yes and no. I think even for the third record, *Mine Is Yours*, I wanted to kind of have it—have the songs be more autobiographical. I think there were some kind of successes and failures about doing that. But I also think, a song is a good song and if it's kind of a narrative, fictional character or something that is deeply experienced by the singer or group. Either way, it's either real and it works, or it's not. Whether I'm drawing more from something that's coming from inside of me or outside of me, you just do your best to make something real, and you just kind of weave those two things.

This being album No. 4, how do you stay motivated to keep going? Obviously, you love music and this is what you guys love to do, but do you think, "We should do this now because it's our fourth record?"

MAUST: That's a good question, but I don't think that we ever think about these things too much. We've always been very organic. I think all of us create very organically and kind of don't think too hard about it. We think hard about it after we've made it.

WILLETT: There's something like a subconscious, not wanting to think too hard about it, but at the same time, wanting to be able to cover some ground that you haven't covered before. Wanting to risk something is important, whether it's through different arrangements, structures of songs or the actual whole style of how it's recorded. I think it's important, the more you go, to ask, "What are we doing that makes it risky and that we maybe haven't done before?" You kind of live between those two intentions.

Do you pay attention to trends and what other bands are doing, or do you kind of tune it out?

MAUST: We pay attention, and we like

other music—current music—a lot. I don't think that we—we're not like, "Oh, they're doing that, so let's do this instead."

The last three albums have each shown progress on the Billboard charts. What do milestones and accolades like that mean to you?

WILLETT: We all want each record to do better than the one before it. I guess in a way, it is important—charting and sales and things. But I feel like wanting to make your cultural impact amongst your peers is equally important. In some ways, I feel like that that's something of a hole that we're still trying to fill. We've been a band all over Southern California. We've gotten to tour with a lot of great bands, but don't necessarily have a lot of similarities between a lot of groups that we've been with. I think one of the reasons is that everything happened so quickly with our first record. At the same time, we're not hanging out and making records or collaborating with The White Stripes or Yeah Yeah Yeahs. In some ways, that's more of a concern—being able to have and being able to grow into a place where we have artistic peers. Making good records and charting is one thing, but having a lasting impact and artistic satisfaction for us will come when we feel like peers to some of the artists that we respect the most, working with them in some capacity. We're not there yet.

If you guys could share the stage with anybody, who would it be?

MAUST: The first ones that come to mind are the ones you'd probably never want to share the stage with because they're—you think so highly of them. We saw Nick Cave [recently] and it was a great thing. But I don't think I'd want to share the stage with him because you'd probably find out that he doesn't like you. Or Tom Waits. We've also played a couple of festivals with the Yeah Yeah Yeahs and we love their music; we think it'd be a good tour.

Is there anyone whose music you guys like, but fans might be a little surprised by it?

MAUST: I like a lot of things, personally. If I'm being honest, I love Lady Gaga.

Dear Miss Lonelyhearts is available April 2 via Downtown Records. The band will also be touring in support of the record. ■



**THE SEERS:
NEW WORLD ORDER**

NEW BOOK BY
M.D. KACZKOWSKI

THESEERS.COM

PROMOTION

Screenplay writer M.D. Kaczowski this spring ventures into a new world—literally. Having worked in film for years, he recently released his first novel, what he calls “a cyber-physical novel experience.” *The Seers: New World Order*, the first part of a new series, is the spellbinding story of a future dimension where science and spirituality meet, revealing unseen laws of the universe.

Told as a full multimedia experience, *New World Order* comes alive through accompanying music, illustrations and video, following New York detective John Scarcepho as he searches for answers upon finding dozens of homeless people

left for dead with their eyes surgically removed. His journey leads him to realize unique powers he has suppressed since childhood. And it doesn't take long before he learns the meaning of it all: the world is on the brink of a disaster, and he may be the only one able to save humanity.

Kaczowski developed the platform over a ten-year period, crafting “a story that would touch people's lives. There was such a struggle to create a science fiction world that stayed true to the rules of the genre but invoked drama so that readers walk away thinking about what they just read—what they just experienced.”





JESSIE

BY EMILY HULSEBERG

PHOTO BY JAMES MORIARTY

A POP STAR IN THE MAKING

WARE

2012

was a big year for London-born Jessie Ware. She went from being unknown to a full-fledged pop artist in a matter of months. In February, she was even up for two Brit awards for British Breakthrough Act and British Female Solo Artist. While she didn't come away with the coveted awards, having been nominated in such a short amount of time is remarkable.

Ware has a rare voice with ridiculous range to accompany it. In January, she released her EP, *If You're Never Gonna Move*, in the United States and hasn't looked back. This month, her full-length album, *Devotion*, is slated for release.

While she has always had a talent in singing, she didn't always believe she could make a living out of it. While attending college, she went through a confidence roadblock. With the idea that she was never going to be able to make her music dreams a reality, Ware graduated with a degree in English literature and pursued a career in journalism.

It was when an old friend of Ware's, Jack Penate, offered her the chance of a lifetime that she

began to fall in love again with what she is meant to do. "Jack offered me to sing on a session with him, and it got to the point where I had to quit my job 'cause he offered for me to come tour with him for three weeks in America," she says. "I thought it was a really amazing opportunity, so I thought, 'F--- it,' and I just kept on singing after that."

Ware took the plunge and made the confident and terrifying decision to join Penate in America, and the rest is pretty much history. The ultimate decision came to her when she decided, "I don't want to regret not doing this." What some would consider too big a risk, Ware decided to embrace, and the payoff seems to be very rewarding.

During her tour in America, Penate's guitarist introduced her to producer SBTRKT, and their track, "Nervous," is what catapulted Ware into the U.K. music scene. With her second track, "Valentine," recorded with U.K. dance scene powerhouse Sampha, she was able to sign a record deal with a U.K. label. These two songs would be the factors that ultimately brought Ware full circle and back into the U.S. this past January. But this time she was

playing her own music.

The two tracks that got Ware noticed also helped her to discover what type of artist she wanted to be. "I didn't know how to write songs—I'd never tried," she explains. "I really learned how to do that and, kind of, just have the confidence in how I want my voice to sound."

She describes her sounds as, "British, electronic, soul." Her voice is the perfect tone and quality to be able to mix genres and bring something different to a country that holds a true love for pop music.

Ware is obviously passionate about words, having studied English literature. "I'm very influenced by words. I'm not Bob Dylan and I'm not a writer, but [I] definitely know what kind of resonates well with me."

She has already shown success in the U.S., selling out or coming close to selling out every show she has played. While she's both shocked and thrilled about her success, Ware says, "It doesn't feel like a job. I just want to enjoy it and have fun."

Jessie Ware's debut album, *Devotion*, releases April 2.

The LAST BISON

BY EMILY HULSEBERG



PHOTO BY MATT WIGNALL

For Ben Hardesty, music was a staple in his home from a young age. Surrounded by his dad and uncles playing guitar, he picked up the instrument more seriously when he was 12. The one piece of advice his dad, Dan Hardesty, lent to him regarding the guitar was, “It doesn’t matter how you play it, just make it sound good.”

With those words, Hardesty began to make music. What started as him playing with his dad and friend, Andrew Benfante, at their church, quickly turned into a band literally filled with friends and family.

The band is a product of the marshes of southeastern Virginia and homeschooling. After the three of them started playing music, Ben’s sister, Annah, began singing with them, which led to Teresa Totheroh on violin and Amos Housworth on cello, both of whom are classically trained. Once the six of them started to write and play, Benfante’s brother, Jay, decided to join them on percussion.

The Last Bison has evolved into a seven-piece—yes, there are seven of them—folk-

rock band that fuses old and new to create a blend of music that isn’t quite bluegrass, but incorporates sounds from classical to modern to develop a back-home mountain vibe that is catchy and rhythmically interesting. The band’s aim is, “finding ways to bring out familiar tones in unfamiliar ways.” Not armed with the traditional instruments like bass and drums, they find different ways to project those tones. They come armed with a World War II-era organ and Bolivian goat toenails, which seem gross, but intriguing at the same time.

With a large band come different personalities and more opinions. Ben says, “It’s just about learning how to be selfless. We run like a big family; we each have our own personality.”

When it comes to working on new material and song development, everyone has a voice. “It’s meticulous, but it’s creative and fun—and a huge part of what we do,” he explains. Sometimes a song spends hours getting molded and changed before it is finished.

While the band isn’t Christian per se,

their faith comes out in the music they write and perform. “[Faith] plays a huge part in my life,” Ben says. “If what you believe isn’t coming out in your music, then I guess you don’t know what you believe.”

With the recent release of their first full-length album, *Inheritance*, Ben has a goal for the project. “My hope for the album is that it leaves people with a sense of joy.”

The band is filled with genuine people who make music because they love it. Not chasing after fame or fortune, the band wants to put out an album that ultimately helps people. “I guess we’re just happy people, so if we can translate that through our live show and the album, that’s awesome.”

Whether it’s playing for ten people or ten thousand people, The Last Bison is a group that plans on making and performing music regardless.

The band’s album, *Inheritance*, is out now, and they are currently on tour in the U.S.

NATALY DAWN

BY NOEL ABAS

Nataly Dawn, formerly known for her work in Pomplamoose, is about to launch her first U.S. tour in support of her label debut album, *How I Knew Her*, which released in January via Nonesuch Records, and was produced by her longtime partner, Jack Conte.

Dawn is well known for her plethora of YouTube videos with Pomplamoose, which has a markedly different sound than her previous solo project, *Her Earlier Stuff*.

“I think YouTube today is very different from when we first started accumulating our fanbase,” the singer says, recalling her past projects. “We have a fanbase of a lot of forward-thinking people, and some nerds as well—we like that because we are nerds, too. Our fans are enthusiastic and supportive. As soon as we started playing shows, we had [hundreds of] people there. Long before touring, we were making a living off of MP3 sales.”

But much has changed since then. *How I Knew Her* unveils a different side of Dawn that listeners may not be all that familiar

with from her past work. Insightful and extremely personal, the album reveals many different layers of the singer.

“I really put a lot of thought into how I wanted it to sound, and so did Jack. I still listen to it and feel a tremendous sense of gratitude for all of the things that turned out well,” Dawn says of her new project, noting the change of course. “The way Pomplamoose would traditionally record music was a lot of overdubbing and recording separately—working around the computer screen. What I did for this album was really different. I brought up a bunch of session players from L.A., and we started playing songs in the city. I had these demos I recorded, [and] we all got together in this room and started playing these songs, in one take and recording them to tape. It has been easier for me since I have been playing live shows; it sounds more like the album than it has with Pomplamoose.”

Dawn put a lot of thought into the writing process of the album, and as a result, it contains much of herself. “I was just thinking a lot about relationships at the

time,” she reveals. “I come from a deeply religious family where women, for the most part, are delegated to secondary importance, and are very much there to support the men. And people get married really, really young. Those are all things I was struggling with because I knew that that’s not something that I had connected with, and I was just trying to figure out why that was. It was definitely an eye-opening experience. I ended up watching a lot of family videos as well, trying to really figure out my history. I am still writing songs that have so much to do with family. I feel like it’s something you actually don’t ever finish processing, you just keep mulling over things.”

The scope of experience represented in Dawn’s work is part of what makes her lyrics so relatable to listeners, coupled with a distinct sound that leaves them yearning for more. Luckily, it seems this is only the beginning of the singer’s new chapter.

***How I Knew Her* is out now via Nonesuch Records.**



DAUGHTER



*The London-based trio on
their unconventional
road to the U.S.*

by Aaron Lachman



Elena Tonra knows about heartbreak. Performing as a solo act for a while, she started pouring her heart into her music, singing about its fragile state with her ethereal voice. In a college songwriting class, she met her boyfriend, guitarist and production nut Igor Haefeli, and Remi Aguilera, a lifelong, classically trained percussionist. Together with the self-taught Tonra, they started playing coffeehouses around London, and Daughter

was born. They self-released an EP of demos in 2010, followed by *His Young Heart* in 2011. These EPs got the attention of artist collective Community Records, which put out *The Wild Youth* later in 2011. This ultimately led to a deal with label 4AD, which put out their first full-length album, *If You Leave*.

While Haefeli and Aguilera are trained musicians, Tonra has struggled with being able to read music or play the way they do, so the combination of trained musicians with Tonra's self-taught instinct has led to an amazing collaboration. Through trial and error, they've landed on a unique songwriting process. Tonra says, "I come up with the lyrics and a bit of guitar line, and me and Igor work closely together. He's kind of the production side of things, and we work together on the melodic stuff and guitar, and after that we kind of all arrange it together, and that's when Remi comes in. It's a bit separated; we don't all sit in a room and jam."

She says that it's not a typical band situation, but it works for the members of Daughter. "Especially for me. I kind of need a bit of isolation to write. It would be terrifying, I think, to write in front of people straight away." This process makes sense, as Tonra's lyrics are often very introspective and personal, backed by haunting melodies.

"They're all very personal in a sense that I have to definitely feel something to be able to write," she says. "I don't really ever write sitting down saying, 'I have to write something about this now.' It doesn't really work like that. It always has to come from a place that's definitely personal, and some songs are about specific people and other songs coming from observations or interests.

Kind of the darker side of my own brain."

So far, the process has been working. Daughter recently made their worldwide television debut on *The Late Show with David Letterman*. Tonra says, "That was the scariest thing! It was great, but I don't know if I really enjoyed it. I think I was just that nervous. You can't really enjoy something when you're that shaky, but you know, I'm really glad we did it, and after we'd done it we were definitely proud of ourselves for being able to play on a TV show, which we'd never done before."

Now Daughter is touring the United States, playing to new audiences every night. Tonra has noticed the difference between British and American audiences. "We get heckled, but in a good way," she explains. "[Americans are] very enthusiastic. Not that London crowds or others aren't enthusiastic, but maybe not quite in such an expressive way. It's really cool when you have a crowd that's quite loud and upbeat, especially since the music we make is quite depressing; it's really cool to be able to kind of have that with an audience. To be honest, last time we were in the U.S., we had such a fun time."

The group's return to the States has led to a couple of sold out dates on their tour. As they set out to promote *If You Leave*, Tonra says, "We're really excited to play the new record and the new stuff; we haven't really played it to anyone yet. When we go on this tour, it will be the first time we've really played these songs to people. It'll be fun, and it's exciting to see what people think of them, but also it's kind of nerve-racking at the same time."

Daughter will tour North America throughout May. *If You Leave* is available now in the U.K. and will be released in the U.S. on April 30.

Q + A



MATTHEW MAYFIELD

IT'S TIME TO GET THIS MAN ON THE RADIO!

BY JOHN MOUSER

Matthew Mayfield is a fighter. After his band Moses Mayfield disbanded in 2008, the Birmingham-based singer-songwriter set out to build a solid fanbase that—without the support of PR representation or radio play—carried him to crack the Billboard Top 200 with last year's *Banquet for Ghosts*. Now the fighter is back, armed with a brand new EP, a covers EP and a live EP, and he is once again enlisting his supporters to assist him in conquering his next goal: radio. We had the chance to speak with Mayfield recently about these new releases and the road ahead.

Why the choice of doing a new EP rather than a full-length?

It's somewhere in the middle. Eight tracks. Four brand new songs, two remasters, an acoustic tune and a remix of "Fire Escape" from Catherine Marks (The Killers, PJ Harvey) featuring John Paul White of The Civil Wars. I'm keeping the price low for fans that may already have some of the tunes.

How did the material for *Irons In the Fire* (the new EP) come together?

It's a bit scattered. I wrote "Miles & Miles," "Look Me In The Eye," and "Follow You Down" on the road with NEEDTOBREATHE last fall. Creatively, I'm either on fire or I'm burned out. Being around talented folks like NEED and Good Old War inspires you in a subliminal way. You don't know it's happening, but all those sound checks and shows paired with nine different musical minds and the right amount of spare time makes for a perfect storm. I've been on fire ever since.

Would you say that this album is a departure from your previous record?

M: Irons has a little bit of everything on it. The opening track, "In Or Out," is the heaviest thing I've put out in a while. Felt good to turn up and dig in. Songs like "Miles & Miles" and "Look Me In The Eye" are new territory for me when it comes to the guitar sounds. I wanted to keep the acoustics in the back and let those jangly electrics be the foundation. I kept referencing Springsteen's "The River" in the studio because there's a magic to those guitar tones that I wanted to try and find. So rich and warm, but never overkill.

What song were you most pleased with on *Irons In the Fire*?

Today, it's "Miles & Miles." I struggled to find that song, chasing it relentlessly for months. I had a great verse, but couldn't find the chorus. It was like a fight with your girlfriend; sometimes it's best to step away and come back when the dust has settled. One night I came home from the bar and sat on the floor in the dark. I went through the verse once and the chorus just arrived out of nowhere. Those moments are gifts. I didn't sleep a wink that night. Nothing gets me more riled up than a great melody.

How did the live EP come together?

This was a lot of fun. On the last tour, I had a lot of recording capability because I was with a band that had their own console. My friend Mikey Reaves (NEEDTOBREATHE's monitor tech) was running sound for me every night, so we found a good mic and just went for it. It's five songs in five cities with just me and my guitar. Mikey did an incredible job on the mix by incorporating the dynamics to keep the live feel. It's an exclusive at Pledge Music.

You recently tweeted that you turned down *The Voice*. What motivated you to make that decision?

A lot of folks thought it was a jab to others who have gone that route. It wasn't; it's just not me. Can you see me up there with a big smile on my face during Tina Turner night on Team Adam? Me neither. I know myself well enough to avoid anything that has a shot-out-of-a-cannon vibe. My personality could never handle that kind of swing. If I arrive at a steady pace, then great. But you don't wanna be on the cover of *People* magazine when all you've done is sing karaoke on TV and gotten a record deal that won't last. I don't want fame without true fans. One minute you're flying high, the next you're doing commercials for the local car dealership. I'd rather jump off a building.

Over the years, you've witnessed huge successes within your community of musicians. How do you celebrate the successes of your peers? Is it bittersweet?

It's been amazing to watch. The NEEDTOBREATHE guys, JP and Joy (The Civil Wars), Will Hoge—too many to name, honestly. I couldn't be happier for them because they've truly paid their dues. They are blue collar acts. They've worked their a--- off for years; it's paying off. It gives me chills to listen to these huge crowds singing songs I've heard for years. I feel like a proud mother and have cried like one sidestage a time or two. Tears of joy are a rarity.

What have been some of the advantages or disadvantages of going the "independent" route as a musician and adopting DIY practices?

I got signed to a major label when I was 21 with my band, Moses Mayfield. We were wine and dined. I thought I had won the lottery because all I had ever dreamed of was being a rock 'n' roll star. We got a big advance and made an expensive record in

some of the country's most incredible studios. That was eight years ago. The industry has completely changed and been turned upside down by the digital and streaming waves. Artists have to find other means of paying expenses. Everything costs money. Our expenses are moderate in the studio and insane on the road. It's important for fans to realize that buying a record, coming to a show and spreading the word about the music you love is more important than ever. Supporting independent artists isn't about charity; it's about believing in the underdogs. It's about artists who view music as a true craft, not a means of becoming rich and famous.

In every love story, there is a potential for both euphoria and pain. Many of your songs focus on post-breakup stories of grief and pain. What about all of the good parts of love?

There are good parts? Surely not. [Laughs] I certainly write about the good things. "Follow You Down" from the new EP is a perfect example of that. It started as a hypothetical. Someone asked me to write a song for a film and all they gave me was a two sentence synopsis of the couple's story. I started with that line, "first time to meet you, or could I be wrong," and it all spilled out from there. That song quickly became about me, but not a single experience. It's about the idea. The Fight. I've never believed in anything more than I believe in the Fight. Good things aren't easy and human beings are often selfish and extremely hurtful towards one another in relationships, myself included. But that's the beauty of realizing the strength of what we're up against and how helpless we truly are. It's so important to acknowledge that fact, but to never give up. I can't give up.

Matthew Mayfield's new EPs, including *Irons In The Fire*, are currently available on Pledge Music. As he is an independent artist without airplay support, funds collected go toward the radio promotion of his new material. Download them and get updates at pledgemusic.com/projects/mmiron.

Bringing Soul to EDM **And to North America**

BY
JONATHAN
ROBLES



RUDIMENTAL



“

WE'RE ALL BIG FANS OF LAURYN HILL AND THE FUGEES, BUT LAURYN HILL, WE'RE MASSIVE FANS OF. WE WOULD NEVER SAY NO TO A COLLABORATION WITH SOMEONE LIKE JAY-Z OR BEYONCE. OH, NO, WE WOULD LOVE THAT.

”

London's Rudimental has been gearing up to carry on the trend of U.K. acts sweeping North America. The producer-based band recently confirmed the upcoming release of their debut album, having already built anticipation with hit songs “Feel the Love,” featuring John Newman, and “Not Giving In,” which features Alex Clare.

The soulful dance maestros have created music infused with intense energy and club-worthy beats, but as ringleader Piers Agget puts it, the road hasn't been easy, as the quartet acknowledges in the title of their album: *Home*.

“*Home* is where we grew up,” Agget explains. “Our home has played a big part in who we are and in our music, and it has had a massive influence in our creativity. Three of us grew up in Hackney [borough of London] and one of us grew up in Camden. We all remember what it was like growing up. Across the road, there would be shootings and drug deals. It's nothing glamorous. But this is our chance to show that light can come out of that culture. It's our baby album, so it's exciting and also personal.”

While the group has been an official unit for a few years, their powerhouse jam, “Feel the Love,” has topped charts worldwide since it was unleashed last May. And while the band could have hardly predicted subsequent events, Agget admits they knew it was a standout track. “I think deep down, we all knew that it was an amazing song and brought a lot of emotion when you heard it for the first time. We didn't think it'd be No. 1 on any charts, and we didn't think it would take us to Australia and America and actually allow us to make our album. We definitely didn't see that coming.”

The group isn't alone in that. Before their rise, many in the music industry tried to shutter their efforts.

“We've been making music for ages and presenting it to labels and

publishers,” says Agget. “I remember my old publisher heard ‘Feel the Love’ and said that ‘with your name, Rudimental, it's not big enough to put it on the radio.’ I remember that so clearly. We were told many times it couldn't work, because we are too new, because we didn't fit certain criteria. Then I started introducing it to more people and got some feedback. The right person heard it from the label and he loved it. I feel like we finally are able to do what we really wanted to do, and we've been trying to do it for years, but people haven't gotten us. I think people understand our music now.”

Agget believes much of why audiences are finally grasping the Rudimental concept is because listeners are starting to once again appreciate the soul in music.

“Going back to the soul music from the '60s and '70s, Motown, Marvin Gaye, and even Prince in the '80s, I think people have been listening to that soul for decades,” he explains. “I remember being little and picking up my parents' vinyls. I think there's a general sense of musicians using old instruments and mixing it with the new. It definitely seems to be a recurring the past few years. You've got bands like Disclosure that are doing really soulful, house-y music. I think the world is just starting to place a higher value on the sounds our parents and grandparents loved. I think music eventually comes back around in many ways, and I hope we see more of it because it's definitely something I think the music industry could use: more soul.”

Although the band has done its best to maintain its roots in the midst of a whirlwind rise, Agget is quick to recognize it's a challenge staying on top of everything and keeping their lives in balance. “You get put on massive stages, big festivals,” he recalls. “We're performing our songs and people are singing them back to us. We kind of got pushed into the beacon. We enjoy

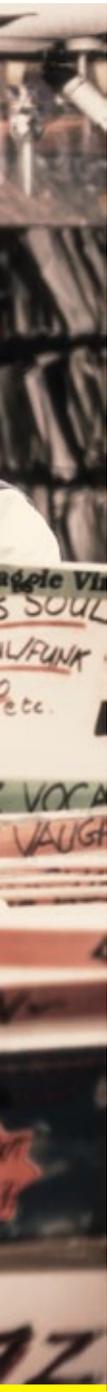
that and we've stepped up to the task, but if you're not careful, you stop putting the time into perfecting your craft and working on your music. I think time is the biggest challenge for us, not only to finish things we started, but to see our family and enjoy life.”

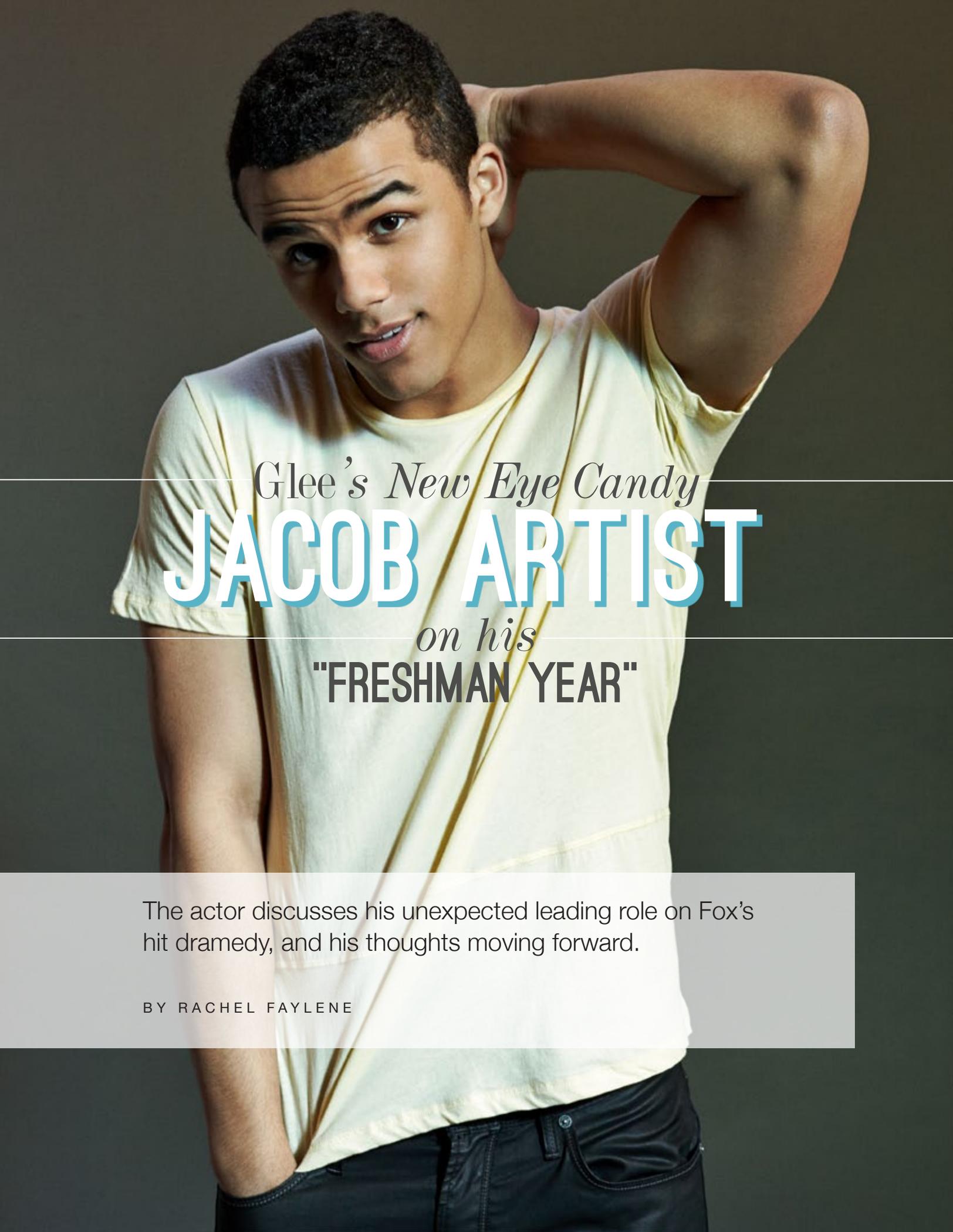
The band maintains what they call their “extended family” of singers and musicians that they enjoy working with, many of whom are featured on the debut record, including Alex Clare, John Newman, Foxes and Emeli Sandé. But Agget admits they still have a lofty wishlist. “We're all big fans of Lauryn Hill and the Fugees, but Lauryn Hill, we're massive fans of. We would never say no to a collaboration with someone like Jay-Z or Beyonce. Oh, no, we would love that. Alabama Shakes, we really like Brittany [Howard]. And of course, Little Dragon, [Yukimi Nagano] has a great voice. At the same time, we go to open mic shows in London and we're quite into finding young, fresh talent. That's exciting to us. Into album two and album three, I'm sure we'll be working with young talent and artists that we found ourselves.”

While it may seem presumptuous to some for Agget to be eyeing the band's second—or even third—album, it comes from a place of honesty, and it's not at all unlikely this is only the beginning of Rudimental's success as they continue to create anthems that resonate with listeners around the globe.

“All we're trying to say with our album is to be proud of where you're from,” says the producer-songwriter. “It's about finding happiness in a dark place; it's about breaking out of poverty and overcoming things that hold you back. I think a lot of people can relate to that, and we're kind of saying, ‘Hey, we get it. That's our story, too.’”

***Home* is out in North America on April 29 via Warner Music.**



A photograph of actor Jacob Artist. He is wearing a white t-shirt and dark pants. He has his right hand behind his head and is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a plain, dark grey color.

Glee's New Eye Candy
JACOB ARTIST
on his
"FRESHMAN YEAR"

The actor discusses his unexpected leading role on Fox's hit dramedy, and his thoughts moving forward.

BY RACHEL FAYLENE

Glee's freshest face and new bad-boy star Jacob Artist took on the role of Jake Puckerman shortly after moving to Los Angeles to pursue an acting career. Being fresh out of high school, Artist declined the opportunity to advance in his dance career at The Juilliard School. Acting was not a field that he had familiarized himself with before he made the decision to relocate from Buffalo, New York, to sunny California. But he says the support of his family made his venture to an unfamiliar career choice much less of a struggle.

"My parents have been so great from day one with anything I've ever wanted to do in life, and they've just been so supportive. Having that kind of backbone with your family is so, so important," he expresses confidently. "Initially, of course, they were like, 'You know, you want to move to L.A. and act, and you've been doing [dance] your whole life. This is Juilliard; are you sure this is what you want to do?'"

Once the decision was made, Artist and his family wasted no time shipping him out to start his new life.

"When I came to L.A. for the first time and met my manager, he was like, 'What kind of job could you really see yourself doing?' And I was like, 'You know, I'd really love someday to be on *Glee*; I know that that's such a pipe dream.'"

Artist landed the part as a Puckerman brother shortly thereafter, going into his audition with little experience under his belt, especially with singing.

"I think every actor kind of goes into the audition room and leaves it at that and doesn't expect anything, and this was the same exact thing," he admits. "Obviously, I was really excited about it and probably more nervous than normal because it's *Glee* and I know the show and was a fan of it."

The dancer-turned-actor stepped into the audition room to sing for the casting, making it his first vocal performance in front of an audience. During the casting, material for Artist's future character hadn't been written yet, so he read lines originally intended for Noah Puckerman's character (Mark Salling). His performance landed him the opportunity to test his skills in front of *Glee*'s famed creator, Ryan Murphy, and all the Fox executives and executive producers for the show.

"That was literally the first time I sang in front of people," Artist confesses. "I kind of

was always humming to myself or singing along to the radio like everyone does, but I never performed or never thought anything of it. Then, when *Glee* came around, it was like, 'Okay, here's your chance, you gotta sing now.'"

After locking down the part, Artist got in front of the camera in the most iconic room on set—the choir room. As a long-time fan of the show, filming in such a staple location was a bit of a shake-up for him. But more than anything, the experience was surreal.

"I kind of didn't know what to expect ... because it was my first day on this brand new show," he admits. "The crew and cast have all been so welcoming and so supportive, and it's just made everything very, very easy."

The acceptance that *Glee* has shown for all the new cast members is important for behind-the-scenes as well as on-screen.

"The set is literally so fun," he says. "Everybody is like a family, goofing off and laughing. [It's] such a great time and I think that that's really a testament to a show's success as well, because I think these people are having so much fun and it makes the work even better and the environment even better, and it just makes the show better."

The man behind Sam Evans' character, Chord Overstreet, has played a major role in connecting the new cast members with some of the veteran actors, according to Artist. Like his character, Overstreet is known for doing impressions off-camera as well, keeping things entertaining for everyone. That is not the case for Artist and his character, however.

"I think I'm a little bit more opposite. I mean, I like to laugh and goof off a lot and Jake's kind of, initially, anti- all of that stuff," he confesses. "He's very, very guarded and kind of closed off, but it's fun to kind of tap into that side of myself. It's kind of nice, and he's a really fun character to explore."

With fans being so familiar with the original actors, it can be difficult introducing new personalities to the show. Luckily for Artist, his character is one that continues to surprise viewers with personal struggle and growth.

"I admit, for me as an actor, it's so fulfilling to see complex characters that do have all these layers, and I totally think that's what Jake is. I think it's been so cool to

kind of peel back a little bit and see the new side of him," he says. "I think just in general, all the relationships he's making at McKinley with Marley and his brother, it's all really helping him for the best. And I really would just like to see these relationships keep benefitting him, because I think it's making him a better person in the long run."

Artist adds that he would also like to see the Fox series cover a Frank Ocean song, something he has been stressing this for some time now. Adding to his personal playlist, he also admits to being a fan of indie bands, listing Freelance Whales as one of his current favorites.

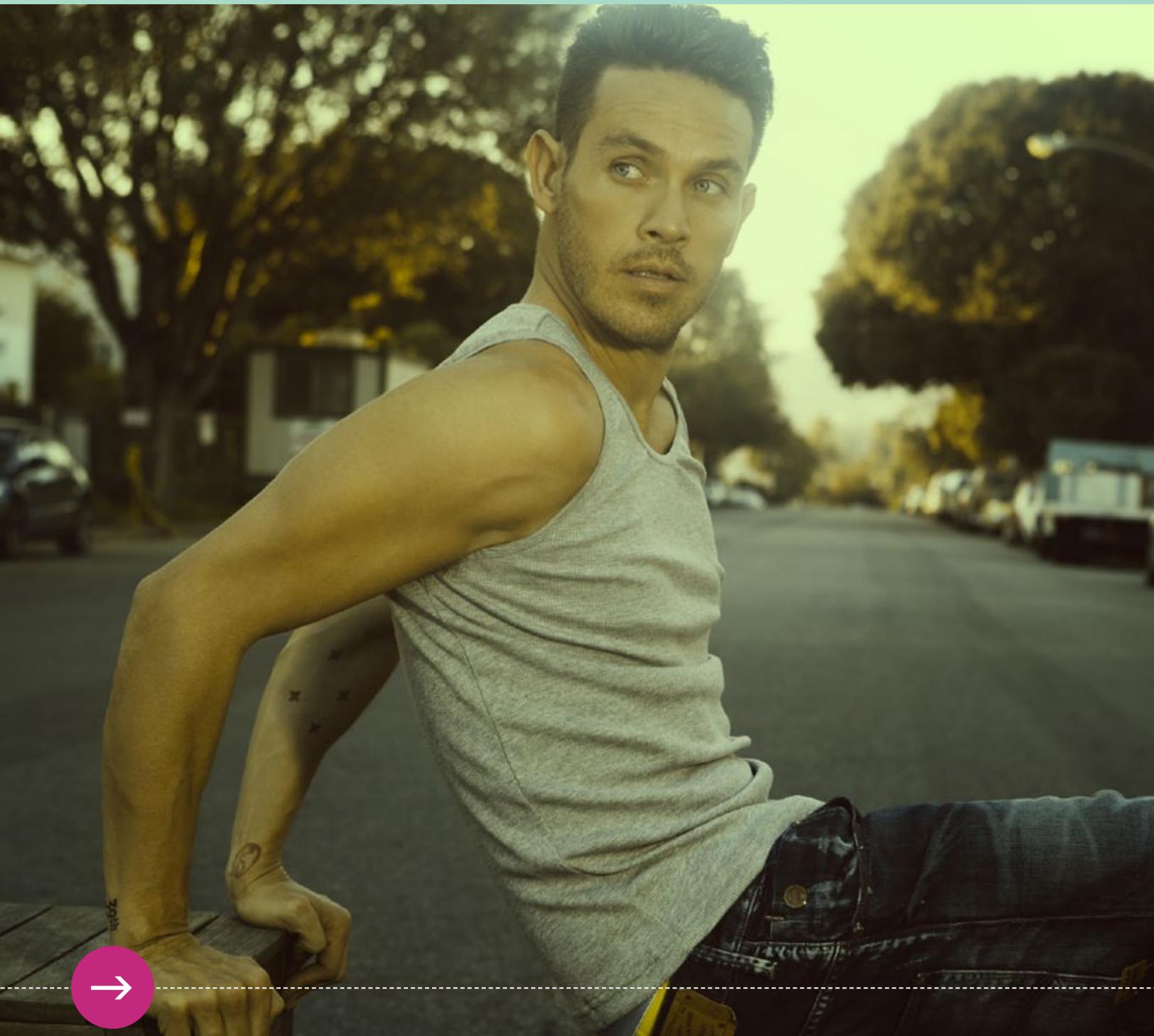
"You know, I feel like I'm doing all of these interviews and I'm saying, 'Please, one of the writers, see one of these because we need to sing some Frank Ocean!' I think he's just so talented."

For an actor like Artist getting his start with such a major role, it couldn't have gone any better. *Glee* is a show that incorporates every aspect of entertainment. And although Artist's only focus is on this current venture, he views *Glee* as the perfect stepping stone for his later career.

"I think that you have to definitely develop a certain sense of discipline to be on a show like this because we're shooting, and doing dance rehearsals, and we're singing," he explains. "Managing all of that, I think it definitely will help in any project that any of us do in the future because we'll have such a great sense of organization and, kind of, figuring our way around it."

***Glee* airs Thursdays at 9 p.m. EST on Fox.**

KEVIN ALEJANDRO



**Is He TV's New
Golden Boy?**

BY
MERLYN HAMILTON

From HBO's *Southland* to *True Blood* and now to CBS's new series, *Golden Boy*, Kevin Alejandro is becoming a familiar face on cable and network television.

No one would ever guess that this successful Texas native was once the same guy that loaded up a 1987 Nissan Sentra with trash bags full of clothes and Gatorade bottles full of change. Selling all that he owned, he set out with his childhood best friend and fellow actor, Stephen Taylor, with big dreams of making it in Hollywood.

Now, 12 years later, Alejandro has indeed made it. There is no doubt that his talent is what carried him and brought him to where he is now, not to mention his mixed heritage.

Alejandro claims he hasn't noticed any challenges in his career relating to his heritage. "I have been fortunate that I'm one of the lucky ones," Alejandro says. "I'm just as Caucasian as I am Hispanic, so I've been able to sort of dive into both worlds. I've been fortunate enough to get jobs playing both parts of my heritage. I love being able to do that and just have a variety of things that I can do. And people recognize that."

It is undeniable that TV has become more diverse over the years. Alejandro agrees and says that he absolutely feels like minority actors are making greater gains in more prominent roles.

"I think the line is being blurred to where a Latin guy is just a person. I definitely see that throughout [the industry]. Friends of mine who are also Latin are given lead roles in things where the character wasn't written [as a Hispanic]. They don't necessarily change it either; it's just this person who is doing this job."

Alejandro is currently seen on CBS's new drama, *Golden Boy*, which is about a cop that becomes the youngest police commissioner in New York. He says that he's never played a character quite like his current role.

"He's so colorful, and there are so many different levels to him,"

Alejandro says. "My character's name is Christian Arroyo, and he was the golden boy before Theo James' character comes in. You get to see this guy who is at the top of his game and who [has] the 'golden boy' status. He starts to see a challenge immediately when he sees this young kid come in. You see him unwind through this entire journey that he goes through. You see him start at the top and end up where he ends up at the end of the season. Everything about this character is really great for me. I get to use an accent, and it's really fun to do. I get to turn on a different person and a different swagger."

But with all these other investigative crime shows on TV, what really makes *Golden Boy* so different? In Alejandro's opinion, it sets a new standard for investigate crime series.

"It's not just about the case," he says. "It's about what these guys go through to achieve the accomplishment of solving the case and how it directly or indirectly affects the character to the audience."

The CBS drama, which premiered in February, released its pilot a week early online, generating mixed reviews. While the subsequent ratings have been decent, as of this writing, it is not yet locked in for renewal. Despite the circumstances, Alejandro didn't seem fazed.

Full of confidence, he says, "You know what I think? I think you have to give it a chance. You have to give the season time to unfold ... There are certain things in storytelling that a person has to do, particularly with a show like this, so that it unfolds nicely towards the end. Just give it a chance and let it really take in and seep into you. It'll all make sense in the end."

Regardless of *Golden Boy's* level of success, Alejandro is sure to remain onscreen for years to come. Also known for his role as Jesús on seasons three and four of HBO's *True Blood*, he says that he was really intimidated coming into something that was already established with so many great actors.

"I'm sitting at the table reading for the first time, listening to these guys live, and I'm like, 'Holy crap. Can I hold my own?' Eventually that wore off and I got into my head space, and formed some great relationships with some people there."

After having a few guest appearances on season five, Alejandro admits there is talk about his character coming back for the sixth season, but he doesn't know how much is going to go on beyond just the talk.

Alejandro is no stranger to guest roles. He has appeared on earlier episodes of NBC's critically acclaimed *Parenthood* as well as *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, in addition to many other shows. But Alejandro says that's part of what he loves about acting.

"It's a challenge in and out," he explains. "You play this guy; you play that guy. I think everyone who is an actor kind of gets off on it. That's why we do it, to be somebody else for that long and be shipped over to the next challenge, and see if you can actually get through it. Sometimes it's a little intimidating when you go from one to the next. Therein lies that sort of self-fulfillment when you accomplish two totally different characters."

While it's evident Alejandro loves acting, that's not all he's passionate about.

"Usually you can find me in the ocean, surfing," he reveals. "That's one of my favorite things to do—wake up at 5:30-6:00 in the morning and go jump in the ocean for a couple of hours."

He has also dedicated time working on an independent "passion project," titled *The Keepers*. A web series about good and evil, Alejandro and his team have begun a Kickstarter account to fund their artistic project. They will also be releasing a comic book in addition to the web series.

For more information on *The Keepers*, go to kickstarter.com. Follow Alejandro on Twitter: [@kevinmalejandro](https://twitter.com/kevinmalejandro).



HOT AS SUN

L.A. power pop trio Hot as Sun, comprised of Jamie Jackson (singer/songwriter/composer), Deborah Stoll (lyricist/megaphonist/visual artist) and WAZ (songwriter/guitarist), recently released their debut album, *Night Time Sound Desire*, a collection of upbeat doo-wop-slash-electro-pop sounds that are guaranteed to add a dash of sunlight to any playlist heading into spring.

Jackson and Stoll, who bonded over shared tastes in food and music at a sound bath at The Integratron in Joshua Tree, eventually teamed up with songwriter

WAZ and became the group they are today. Since then, they have opened for Gotye, Phantogram, Foster the People and others, garnering the acclaim of music lovers and critics alike.

Something about their music is both addicting and refreshing, full of lively beats that nod to '80s pop, gospel music and even the Beastie Boys.

"I think our songs are relatable without hitting you over the head with their meaning," Stoll said in a recent interview. "You can listen to them and access different things at different times. You know those songs you listen to at full blast banging

your head with joy that are also relevant at full blast when you're totally pissed off or hurt and sad? I feel like our songs have the ability to channel whatever emotion you're feeling at the time and satisfy."

Although the pool of indie pop and synth records is quite overwhelming these days, Hot as Sun seems to effortlessly create lighthearted, magical tunes that are sure to win over even the greatest of skeptics.

***Night Time Sound Desire* is out now via Last Gang Records.**

HOUSES



Houses are by far one of the most refreshing duos making music right now. Although their history spans only as far back as 2010, Dexter Tortoriello and Megan Messina seem to have something of a Midas touch when it comes to creating glorious, pulsating tracks.

Married in real life, the couple's inspiration for their first project, *All Night*, came from living off the land in Papaikou, Hawaii. They did without modern conveniences, drinking, showering and cooking with rain water. Their second effort, *A Quiet Darkness*, also tells a unique story—a tale of unrequited love which unfolds in the midst of a nuclear disaster. Each song on the album represents an abandoned house along Highway 10 in California, where the

fictional lovers bravely and hopelessly set out to find each other while surrounded by turmoil.

In a truly honest effort to capture the dark, bleak moments conveyed in the new record, each song was recorded on location, with each sound created while the musicians experienced firsthand the fictional tale of the star-crossed lovers.

Sure, this all started as a side project for Tortoriello, who's also part of Dawn Golden. But Houses' latest offering, *A Quiet Darkness*, is buzzworthy in its own right. From the amazing artistry to the powerful narrative, this pair has embarked on a musical journey unlike many of their peers.

As summer approaches and you're searching for new Ear Candy, Houses deserve to be at the top of any playlist.



SEAN BUCHECK

Sean BucHECK began playing music when he was only eight years old; now, at 20, the alt-rock musician is not only a singer-songwriter, but he plays piano, bass, guitar and drums. To top it off, he runs a recording studio in Nashville and has a passion for working on a variety of projects and genres of music.

Although influenced by a family of strong musicians, he credits a performance by singer-songwriter Josh Varnadore as a turning point. "After the show, Josh asked me to play a song I had written for him, and as a first-time songwriter, I was extremely nervous about it. He signed my guitar and told me to just keep writing because it could only get better."

The following year, Varnadore began to meet with BucHECK once a week for nearly a year, working on songs together; the collaboration eventually led to Varnadore recording BucHECK's first EP.

BucHECK's soulful, soothing voice engages the listener with the melodic, comforting combination of acoustic guitar and piano with velvety vocals and genuine lyrics that do not disappoint.

His latest record, *From The Top*, comes out on April 23.



Skullcandy NAVIGATOR



STYLE & PERFORMANCE

AVAILABLE NOW AT
SKULLCANDY.COM

@SKULLCANDY / FEATURING KAI OTTON

