

BIG HASSLE MEDIA

FROM FIRST TO LAST

From First To Last battle back with their self-titled Suretone Records debut, a defiant statement of purpose which stands as the band's most self-assured work to date. Guitarist Matt Good assumes vocal duties and his powerful delivery combines with the band's melodic strength and musical muscle to drive songs like "World's Away" and "We All Turn Back To Dust."

"We feel like this record is the most definitive one yet," Good says, "as far as representing who we are, as a group of people."

Co-founding guitarist Travis Richter notes, "It's a rock record for people *now*. It's because we're all a little older, our feet are more grounded and we do things a little differently than we did in the past."

The path to *FROM FIRST TO LAST* was fraught with turbulence. Centered on the trio of Good, Richter, and drummer Derek Bloom, FFTL had emerged screaming out of Orlando with 2003's *AESTHETIC EP*. A year later, *DEAR DIARY, MY TEEN ANGST HAS A BODYCOUNT* pushed the band into the hard punk spotlight, as did a full-bore tour schedule that included shows alongside Fall Out Boy, Story of the Year, and the All-American Rejects.

The band had only just hit the road behind 2006's ambitious *HEROINE* when singer Sonny Moore, long plagued with health-related vocal issues, was forced to leave the tour. The band returned to Orlando and began writing and demoing new material, determined to get right back into the thick of things as soon as their singer had fully recuperated. The fates had different plans, however – in November, Moore informed FFTL that he was permanently resigning his post as vocalist. Having already undergone a number of radical lineup changes in its brief history, From First To Last was compelled to consider its future.

"The thought obviously crossed our mind," Good says, "like, 'Oh shit, do we have to break up now?'"

"It was weird," Richter says. "The rug was pulled out from under our feet. Matt almost disappeared, he was kinda shell-shocked; Derek saw it as a challenge; and I just tried to put the pieces together, to work it all out. It was more about survival than anything else."

They looked back on all that they'd accomplished and on New Year's Day 2007, From First To Last resolved to keep going as a band. Longtime friend and guitar tech Matt "EagleHawk" Manning signed on as bassist, with Good moving into the lead vocalist role.

"We knew that if we brought someone completely new into the band at this point it would definitely be the wrong thing to do," he says. "I've been singing back-up this whole time, and though that's not the same thing, you still have to sound good. So I'd

had some practice at it. Plus, it's something I've wanted to do for a long time, so I was just really excited about it."

Within weeks, From First To Last signed a new deal with Suretone Records and immediately headed west to begin work on a new album. Taking up residence in Studio City, FFTL got right to business, eager to assert its identity after the seismic shifts of the past year.

"It was our band from the beginning," Richter says, "but a lot of kids saw Sonny as the front man and assumed he was the heart of From First To Last. So we needed to hurry up and do something without him to show everybody who we really are."

The initial sessions went well, but FFTL opted to further hone their sound by doing what they do best – touring hard and fast, first supporting Hawthorne Heights, then with lifelong heroes the Deftones, and finally, a week of headline dates. The road worked its magic, sharpening the band's edge and reminding them of why they'd formed the band in the first place.

"That's what really triggered it," Good says. "We remembered what it was like to be on stage and just have fun."

"We couldn't actualize this record in the studio until after we'd toured," Richter says. "After that, it was easy as pie. Touring tightened us up and gave us a fresh perspective on what we needed to do with our music."

Fired up and reenergized, the band got back to work in October, this time pairing with producer Josh Abraham (Velvet Revolver, Slayer, 30 Seconds to Mars) and engineer Ryan Williams (Stone Temple Pilots, Rage Against the Machine, Mastodon) at Abraham's Pulse Recordings in Silverlake, CA.

"Working with Josh was so laidback and easy," Good says. "We'd go in to record something and it was like, 'Okay, let's set up the mics and do it.' It was all really organic, which was exactly what we were going for. That was really important to us."

"Ryan's a true master," Richter adds, noting the band's enthusiasm for the engineer. "I think he's got wizard powers. Those guys helped make this record sound so *real*. It's loud and aggressive and full of energy."

If *HEROINE* was FFTL's most cryptic and experimental album to date, *FROM FIRST TO LAST* sees the band reaching for a warmer, more approachable sound without sacrificing its trademark blow-your-face-off dynamism. A maelstrom of metallic chords, stadium-sized hooks, and frenetic rhythms, all unified by Good's power vocals and the band's sense of purpose propels tracks such as "Two As One" and "I Once Was Lost But Now Am Profound".

"We just wanted to do something different," Good says, "which is what we're always wanting to do on a new record. We decided we wanted to make something that had a bit more melody than before, while still having plenty of intense moments. We tried to make it feel just as energetic and intense, only not quite as dark and insane-sounding."

Their time in the wilderness naturally led FFTL to contemplate its place in the world, a period of self-examination mirrored in songs like “World’s Away” and “Tick Tick Tomorrow.”

“It took a while to write the lyrics,” Richter says. “We were stumped as to what we wanted to write about. I think that’s why, in the end, the songs are all very reflective. When you’re thrown into something that really scary, you start thinking about those things.”

“A lot of the songs are about taking control of your life, and being what you want to be instead of digging yourself into a hole until you’re really unhappy,” Good says. “Some of the songs have a more humorous tone, some are trying to be very inspirational. I don’t think there are any negative lyrics on the whole record.”

“The core group is still together and we’re continuing to get better all the time,” Richter says with no small pride. “Communication is a clear and open channel now. We’re all of the same mindset. We’re super-individual, we’re unique and different people, but we’re like one unit when it comes to this band.”

“There were a lot of bumps,” notes Good, “but the road is really long. We’ve learned what not to do and what to look out for. If anything, it’s been a great learning experience. Everything is finally started going smoothly.”

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