

# NOTHING TO HYDE

**On a sweltering Texas tour stop, Barry Hyde of the Futureheads sits down and unravels the band's re-tooled commitment to harmony, label incompetence, and the band's latest post-punk reinterpretation, the excellent *News and Tributes LP*.**

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**In the interview with *Uncut*, you said that the debut was not as thought out as you hoped it would be, what could you have done differently looking back at that record?**

We couldn't have done it any differently. The thing is about first album, especially if you're a band with very few ambitions, long-term goals, you don't really ever think you're going to make an album, you know, you just think of yourself as this thing that exists live, so we wrote most of our album without realizing it was going to be an album, if you know what I mean, it was just purely for live.

If there is one thing I would change about the whole process of the first album would just be that we had more confidence. But the only way you gain confidence is through experience, and the only way to get any confidence is to make that first album, I suppose.

But it's good. We were pleased with the first album, in the end, but it was quite difficult to get there. You know, we recorded it once with Andy Gell, scrapped two-thirds of that, re-recorded all of them with Paul Etworth, and it turned out good in the end, but it's not really an album, it's more of a collection of songs to us. This is an album, like a Led Zeppelin album.



**Recording with Andy, and scrapping the materials, you had said that you weren't really prepared going into that. Do you think in that process, you might have led him to influence you, as in, you tried to take influence?**

I think the thing about it was we didn't allow him to influence us. We were a little bit like, "This is how we want to do it," [and] naively just said, "We pretty much want to record live," which really is not the way to do it. It's really not the way to make a dynamic album. As much as the playing can be dynamic, it's not.

The arrangements don't come off as well if they're all played live. The sounds have to be separate. We just wanted to do it in kind of the easiest way possible, I think, and not get too bogged down.

But, basically there was this communication failure between us and Andy, and we just were making good demos. That's what we'd do, we'd make good demos. But it was supposed to be

our album.

**On the new record you have a lot less harmonies. Did you make a conscious effort to move away from that?**

I think that we'd kind of taken that element of our music to its limits, really, on the first album. They're so dense. It really does overpower everything else.

We use the harmonies a lot more tastefully, I think, and because of that, the album has far more dynamics. If you've got harmonies going on constantly – CONSTANTLY – they don't sound like harmonies. You just get used to it. Whereas on this album, say, on a song like "News and Tributes," they're pretty, like a string section, as opposed to four blokes just shoutin'.

Everything on the album was deliberately placed for various reasons, but the main ambition for this album was to create space, and more of a definition between the vocals and the instruments.

**I read that you do a lot of the harmony writing on the piano. Is that something you're writing with?**

Well, me and Jeff can both play the piano quite well. I don't know if it will be used live. Maybe fifth album.

**And on "Burnt," bringing in an acoustic guitar. Do you write with an acoustic guitar?**

Always. Every song I've ever written has been at home on an acoustic guitar.

**Why can't you play that song on electric?**

I wrote it on acoustic and I thought maybe it'd be a good idea to have an acoustic guitar on there. The thing about acoustic guitar is that it can be more percussive and more abrasive than an electric guitar because it's an acoustic instrument...an acoustic instrument can be loud and overpowering.

But basically we had a few rehearsals back at home and I tried using an electric guitar on it, but it just sounded wrong. Because the thing about an electric guitar, if you play it hard, it distorts it. If you play an acoustic guitar hard, it almost gets quieter and creates this percussive element. We definitely wanted to put some acoustic guitar on the album.

On the "Area" EP, there's some 12-string acoustic on the song "Area," the da-da-da-do-do-duh-duh-duh-da-do. That was something we felt just, "Whoa, this fits." So we decided to put a couple on. There's "Face" and "Burnt."

**And people are really receptive to it.**

Especially here. We've had really good press so far. The UK has been hit and miss. Some of them think it's amazing, the album, because of the change. A lot of the people are just like, "Nah, this isn't right," as if they have any way of deciding that. It's like we decide if it fits. And over here it's been very well received.

**It seems like the U.S. can take an artist taking broader steps, and in the UK, that's why you get bands that**



**create a definition, like the Smiths or Blur, where they're taking changes – and you listen to a record and it's changing – but it's not like drastic steps, and then they become Britpop. They make these phrases to define it because they've stepped so tightly around themselves.**

Yeah, definitely.

**How did the idea for doing the "Tributes" shows come about?**

That was Jaff (Davey, bassist) idea. We did this secret tour in the UK where

we'd play quite small venues – did it all through the website, didn't advertise it – and we did it as a stress-free way of learning all the new songs, well before the album came out, just so that when it did come out, we'd be able to play them all.

Jeff just thought it'd be a good idea. We thought about, how about each night, in between band music, we'd play whoever we wanted. It'd be one person, like Captain Beefheart, where you'd play an hour and a half of Beefheart in between bands.

And then we kind of took it a little bit further and got these postcards made, and each of us chose a few people, then we'd get these really sweet photographs of Bruce Springsteen, and Jeff would wax on about how he loves Boston. And it turned into this thing where there'd be a different post-card turn-out from the people at each show. It became like a part of the tour.

It was Jeff's idea.

**And I read that the first time you played a lot of the songs was in Bangkok? How did that timing work out? It seems really strange.**

Well it was actually, we finished recording the album just before Christmas, and then after Christmas, our first gig was actually in Japan. We went to Japan for a few days, and then to Bangkok. We did this kind of small Asian trip, and they were some of the first shows we played after the album, and so it happened that we just played them then.

We kind of would take them to the limits, so we could play every song straightaway three months before anyone would hear them, which isn't the wisest thing to do, but that's generally how we go about things. We can be quite pigheaded.

Not bigheaded. Pigheaded.

**You have been more vocal than I would ever have expected about Warner and how you felt the butt end of the exchange. Have you had any backlash as a result of being so vocal about it?**

Well, we're not released by Warner's in America anymore, and they're the only ones we've ever said anything about, and we don't have anything to do with them, so they can't do anything.

I mean, it's fucked that they were shite on our album. Fucked. Look at how much we toured here, and what little returns we got out of it. We sold 50,000 albums or something. We should have sold more, but they just weren't working.

They were lazy, stupid people who didn't have much passion for what we were doing, and as a result of that, well, it seems like a company like that can only do one band at a time, so they did My Chemical Romance. They chose them.

It's you know, whatever. I don't mind that band or whatever. I don't give a shit, really.

But, yeah, you know, Warner's...those people can fuck off as far as I'm concerned. All of them.

**What a struggle it was to make that record, and then to get such a poor...**

Yes, and to hand it over to some people. That's the thing

when you make an album, you create something. That's why we're here. Bands aren't meant to exist so you can go out and party, travel the world, so that you can have sex with girls, get drunk every night, etc.



The basic thing of being creative, that's why a band exists. You put all the efforts in this album, and it takes you quite a while, and you end up with illnesses from the stress and stuff like that, and you hand it over to some people who couldn't care less about the music, the songs, and you go, "Oh, God."

You're in this position where you've given them the album, they own the album to some degree, and then they fuck it up. And we play good shows, continue to write good songs, and continue to grow as a band as they get worse and worse at what they're doing. And then you're left off with where we are now: we're on a new label who are working a lot harder, we have a real sense that they're [Vagrant Records] much better for us. And as a result of that,

we have a much more confidence in wanting to come back here more.

If we didn't get out of the deal with Warner's, we would never have come back to America.

### **Really?**

No, never. I wouldn't have come back because it would have been a waste of time, not only for us, but for our fans who would like see us basically stagnate because of other people. It's not fair on us, it's not fair on them.

**In the process you've gotten more confident, I've heard that the songs live are getting longer? Is that something through confidence, and through the experience of playing so many shows, you're not having to rush in and out of the songs?**

One of the reasons why we started making the songs longer was because we had to play for longer. You don't want to be writing songs so you can play for longer, you've got to have a purer reason than that.

We just started, like "A/B," for example, just jamming it out in the middle, just letting it break down, basically, We do mess around a little bit more, like "Return of the Berserker" can last anywhere from two and seven minutes or something.

**Do you think you're going to spend some time recording longer songs, or do you think this is just a live thing?**

Well, the songs from the first album to the second album, and it's funny, like, we only have two albums, but, in this day, it seems like that's a lot, you know? When we get to our third album, it will be like, to us, this real achievement.

In a different era, bands used to make ten albums before they got anything. So, knowing how times have changed...

But, you know "Burnt" is 4:15. Maybe that might end up being our average song length, or it depends, you know. Depends on what you've got to say. Sometimes there's no point in repeating yourself unless you really want to say it again. You know, you don't want to follow just typical songwriting tricks of having eight looped choruses at the end with a key change just so it's eligible to be on the radio.

The thing is about singles over time, I just think they'll get shorter and shorter because of the music industry and the world of radio, people's attention spans are getting shorter and shorter. So, eventually the average single time, ironically, will be probably be about two minutes. Which, when we first started, was just too short to be on the radio. But eventually it won't be.

**Is there any concept, as an artist, when making a single, saying that you're going to make it in the catchiest, most successful way, or do you sometimes just make it short, so you don't have to creatively spend so much time on it?**

The thing about a single is that once something becomes a single, you realize you're going to be playing it a lot, and it's going to be this song that really has to shine. You have to really love it because you go around the world singing it on television, on radio, and you don't want to be doing that with a song you don't love.

You also wouldn't want to have any songs on your album that you don't love, so you don't have to worry about that.

I think we'll be alright.

**Has the experience with Warner and Andy made any distaste with the last record? Do you love it as much as you love "News and Tributes"?**

The thing is about Andy, I really like Andy, we're good friends, we got along very well, had a connection, you know, and we never fell out with him, we were just disappointed with some of the work that we all did. We're not blaming him – we never blamed him – we blame ourselves a lot more than we blame him because we didn't take enough of the power that we should have.

On our first album, we should have been very gung-ho about how we wanted things to be done. But we weren't really, we were just a bit pigheaded about it, and it wasn't his fault.

The stuff at Warner's, that's just something I really need to try and forget about, and now that we've got the new people out here, it's a lot easier to do that.

But there's definite resentment when labels don't do their job.

