

Meghan Baier: Hey everyone out there. This is Meghan Baier from iamwarmandpowerful. Phil and Will are here from Someone Still Loves You Boris Yeltsin for a breakdown interview for their album Let It Sway. Say hey guys!

Philip Dickey: Hey guys.

Will Knauer: Hey.

[Meghan laughs]

Meghan: Alright, we're going to keep the introductions short since I have a lot of questions to ask. Let's start with the first one. It's about Back In The Saddle. "It's an amazing song and makes the perfect opener for your album. Did you consider using any of the other songs as your opener?"

Will: Actually, yeah. It was an ongoing discussion for most of the recording process.

Phil: Yeah.

Will: What song to use. We were trying to decide if it should be Everlyn, Sink/Let It Sway, or Back In The Saddle.

Phil: Yeah.

Will: Did you have another idea at one point?

Phil: I feel like there's one more idea, but yeah. And I feel like Let It Sway was the one that we were leaning towards the most for the longest time, but did John suggest that Back In The Saddle?

Will: Yeah, John said it had to be Back In The Saddle.

Phil: Okay. [laughs] And then we liked that because we liked the transition from the end of Back In The Saddle into Sink.

Will: And it was hard to see where Back In The Saddle would go on the CD if it wasn't first.

Phil: Yeah. Oh oh! I remember one other. For a while when I was making like mix CD's of our early mixes I would put In Pairs first sometimes too.

Meghan: Mm-hm. Well it seems like you made a great choice choosing Back In The Saddle.

Phil: Thanks.

Meghan: Because it talks about your new sound, the entire album is defined by it.

Phil: Yeah yeah that was, I think, something I thought. Like yeah it made the lyrics fit, you know, for the rest of the album and stuff like that.

Meghan: Alright. Well that moves us on to the next question. "The album sounds much different sonically than the last two. Was this a sound that you had in mind before going into the studio, or was it something that took shape during the recording process?"

Will: Probably a bit of both I think. I think we expected it was gonna to sound different just because we were going to be in a studio, but we didn't know exactly how it was going to come out. Or we didn't really go in with a specific sound in mind I think.

I think we just kind of wanted to- We really trusted Chris and Beau and we knew that-

Meghan: Your sound is pretty much like what you were exposed to.

Will: Yeah, we just kind of went with whatever was happening.

Phil: Yeah. And I guess I thought, I kind of thought there would be even more conversations. But when I imagined recording the album before it happened I kind of thought that Chris and Beau would like- I didn't know how they would approach it. So in my head they would, I guess I thought they would have like a game plan for each song and say, 'Well let's make it sound ____.' You know? "Let's try to do this." And that really didn't happen too much. A lot of it was just we would just set up and we would start playing the song and I think they would kind of start making the adjustments and maybe give us some advice to like play it slower.

Or not play it so hard, especially on drums and stuff. Like, don't hit the cymbals so much, you know? So a lot of it was just happening kind of at the moment, which was nice because then they spent less time worrying about is this the perfect way to approach this song, you know? You just kind of did it and committed to the idea.

Meghan: As you went along?

Phil: Yeah, yeah.

Meghan: "How did you like recording with Chris Walla and Beau Sorenson?" I'm sure it was a totally different experience for you guys.

Will: Yeah we liked it.

Phil: Yeah it was awesome. I mean it was like they were in the band. It was like they were just in our band for, you know, two months or however long they worked on it.

Meghan: Well that's great... "Along with the new sound, there seems to be a move away

from the piano/acoustic based songs like Travel Song, Gwyneth, Dead Right, and so on. Was this premeditated or did this also just happen in the studio?"

Phil: That's a good question. I would say it was kind of like by circumstance mostly because with a lot of the earlier stuff we always had a piano around. And starting with Pershing we just...we've never centered the recordings around the piano being the first track. Whereas with Broom I feel like a lot of the songs like the piano was the first thing we did, like on What Will We Do, and Travel Song.

Meghan: Yeah, that's what a lot of people were talking about on the forum. They're like "it moved completely away from the piano". It's still there, but it's not as...

Phil: Yeah, it's a lot different. Were you going to say something, Will?

Will: I feel like we did write a lot of the songs that could've been used for more piano-based. But somehow I think when we practiced and were working on the songs there was no piano there for when we were practicing. The songs kind of were written more around what we had, what we were practicing. Those songs didn't really get as much of a chance as some of the guitar-driven ones.

Phil: And for some reason we didn't even use that much acoustic guitar on Let It Sway either. You know cause Pershing has acoustic on almost every song.

Will: Yeah.

Phil: So, I don't know. I was just like I think there were a couple times we said to Chris like maybe we could put an acoustic one on this. And you know we would talk about it, but a lot of it just sounded so full already that we didn't really explore it. I feel like, I mean this is kind of a guess, but I feel like the next album would have more acoustic. Just kind of natural without even like forcing it on there. I feel like we always try to do acoustic guitar stuff anyways.

Meghan: Yeah, I mean it's nice to hear the new album. It's so complex, it really shows the evolution of you guys as a whole. But a lot of people do want to know, "will there ever be a possible return to a 'bedroom record'?" You kind of answered it I guess when you said that the next one would be more.

Will: I personally hope so. I would like that.

Phil: Yeah, I would kind of like it too. I think it would be- What would it be like? Yeah, I think the bedroom stuff is kind of fun to do. Yeah. I think-

Meghan: It would be interesting to hear if you guys ever do make it. To hear it after all this evolution, what that bedroom record would sound like compared to your first one.

Will: Mm-hm.

Phil: Yeah, it's so weird. I mean I was thinking about this the other day but one thing that is so different back then and now is even just like how our days are structured and stuff because the way we would do Broom was kind of like- A lot of it was like hanging out and just hanging out around the house together or something. And then now it's so much harder to get us all in the same space.

Meghan: Same room?

Phil: Yeah. And another thing is that since Jonathan has his own studio now that when we do a lot of the bedroom stuff it's kind of- When we do a bedroom recording I think it just seems like it's a demo because, you know, we've gone to this...been in the studio and stuff. But yeah. I mean, I would like to try it again.

Meghan: It's a maybe.

Phil: Yeah. And we have...almost every song has a demo. Like a bedroom-type demo or something.

Meghan: Okay, well the next question. Sarah Wilkes told me Chris Walla was an old Tape Club subscriber? "How did it help to have someone that knew both your present, as well as where you came from?"

Will: It really helped because he understood what people liked about us. And it was really good to know he was a fan too and he wasn't just trying to make our record because it would help him in some way. I feel like he's always wanted to help us in a really genuine way. And already it seemed- I remember when we walked into the studio he knew all our names already and that was just kind of a good feeling. That kind of represented how we worked with us in the whole CD. Yeah, I feel like he really took some time to get to know us. But also just genuinely liked us already.

Phil: Yeah, and one thing- Yeah when we went to his house in Portland he had some of the Tape Club stuff. We actually haven't listened to it in a long time so he had a cassette tape player at his- Or a four-track at his house. We were kind of listening to it at that and stuff. So yeah, I thought it was awesome because even in the band we don't always agree on like what sounds best. Like sonically. Cause we all have different preferences and stuff. But it was so cool to work with- It was awesome to work with someone who like liked the drum sound we got on Broom, but also knows how to do different sounds too. You know? It's like- I just think it just made us feel like we were trying to do just what was right for each song, you know? Cause some of the recordings there's parts on the new album that are pretty raw and kind of lo-fi in a way.

Meghan: Mm-hm. Now I'm going to start asking some questions about some songs. Stuart is a big hit from a lot of people that I talked to. It calls back more to the piano stuff which I think they really like, and they all want to know: "How did Stuart get it's name?"

Phil: Wow. Oh yeah, Will can take this one.

Will: Oh yeah. Uh Stuart. Was it when Stuart Gets Lost, is it...

Phil: Dans.

Will: Dans Le Metro?

Phil: Dans.

Will: Or Sur Le Metro? Yeah, I guess I wrote that title about ten years ago. [laughs] I think. Yeah, the title of the song. And it was sort of an old song that was floating around for a long time, but it was a kind of like a rock song. And Stuart was a little disco ball that sat on the floor and it would spin around projected colored lights around the place we used to play music in. And often we would play at night with only Stuart. I think every New Years we would do that. And then I went to France on a school trip and thought- I remember one time I was riding the metro in France and I thought it would be really funny if Stuart was there with me and he somehow got lost on the metro? And I pictured him like riding around and looking really sad and kind of scared. Or just like seeing different images of him being on the metro. And then I guess I named the song after that. But my French wasn't very good. The way it was originally was I think Stuart Gets Lost Sur Le Metro. Which means he gets lost like literally on top of the metro. Like on top of a train car. But John wanted it to be technically correct. The French. So it was changed to Stuart Gets Lost Dans Le Metro. [laughs]

Meghan: Well that's a good story. That's one no one will guess.

Will: Yeah, no one's going to guess that.

Meghan: The next one's about Phantomwise. "Can you tell me how you came up with the idea to use Lewis' acrostic from the end of Through The Looking Glass as part of the lyrics for Phantomwise?"

Phil: Yeah. Actually my, well my girlfriend Grace, she showed me the poem and I just really like the poem. And actually when we were on tour in Portland I found a book of his poems and then I remembered she'd showed that to me and I read it again. So it was like my favorite poem. And then about I guess like a year- The music had always been kind of working on separately and it actually had a different version of the song that didn't have the poem in it at all. You remember that one, right? It was like kind of happier.

Will: Whatever. [laughs]

Phil: It was a lot of happier. Yeah, it was a lot happier and I thought it just sounded kind of awkward because like, I don't know, I thought it should sound sadder than happier. [laughs] Or something. Actually this is just another- Phantomwise is just one of those songs that have five or six different demos that all sound completely different. And

eventually the melody I chose for the rift fit perfect with the cadence of the poem and stuff so it just eventually kind of settled in.

To make a lot of the lines work I kind of had to cut and paste the poem to fit certain parts with the syllables and stuff, so I don't really do it- Some of it's like not in order. And then I put some, wrote some like other lyrics of my own to put in there so it would be complete. But yeah, that whole song is kind of a collage, especially if you heard like all the six different versions. It might sort of make more sense, I guess.

Meghan: Well I would love to hear the different versions sometime.

Phil: Yeah, I mean we've talked to Polyvinyl about releasing all the demos for Let It Sway and stuff. I don't know how it'll come out or when, but we're kind of like sitting on them for now. But eventually-

Meghan: Alright, I'm going to move on to the bonus tracks. First one's Bended.

Phil: Mm-hm.

Meghan: "What made you put that break in the song where it bursts from a tender acoustic picking into a full-on electric glory? It's so unexpected and it's absolutely beautiful."

Phil: Oh yeah. Will still hasn't heard it.

Will: I haven't even heard it, no.

Meghan: [laughs] Really?

Will: Yeah.

Phil: That would be a question for John because that is 100% his song.

Meghan: Oh really?

Phil: Yeah. Yeah. The whole recording is just John and Jonathan too. Will and I are not on it. But yeah. I was so glad he did that because the original demo, yeah it kind of makes me feel bad because I didn't really like the first demo. Because it was just acoustic and it was like the first verse repeated for the second part. So I thought it was kind of like the song wasn't fully written, you know? It seemed like more half song. So then Jonathan lost that file and we couldn't find it. So John had to re-record the whole thing because we decided, you know, it was going to be B-side. And then it turned out completely different. And yeah it sounds really pretty. I'm glad he added the second part.

Meghan: Yeah I think it really makes the song- It's beautiful, but it could easily get lost without that break.

Phil: Yeah. Does it kind of remind you of like Some Constellation a little bit?

Meghan: A little bit. But yeah.

Phil: Yeah, it reminds me of Some Constellation and our version of Cora that was originally a Michael Holt song.

Meghan: Okay. And then the other bonus track, Tanks Jam.

Phil: Oh.

Meghan: Is that sort of a band or a person?

Phil: That's another one of John's thing. But that one I do know. That was actually written for a friend's movie. And that was- Tanks Jam is like the very last scene. It's like the outro music for the whole movie that the credits plays in and stuff like that. So he did it, I think he wrote it even watching the movie.

Meghan: Here's a question about Jonathan James. It's actually a two-fer. "We saw in the credits that Jonathan James actually contributes to vocals." The person wants to know which songs. And "does he have a role in the songwriting process as well?"

Will: I know he does- He wrote a lot of the drum parts for the CD.

Phil: Yeah.

Will: And the bass especially. He wrote a lot of bass parts. I think...I know he did the bass on Made To Last and Critical Drain.

Phil: And Banned (By The Man).

Will: Banned (By The Man). And what did he do drums on? Dracula?

Phil: He did Dracula, Back In The Saddle.

Will: Did Back In The Saddle for sure.

Phil: Yeah that was a big-

Will: Jonathan did a lot for Back In The Saddle to give it the feel it has.

Phil: And, um...

Will: Probably In Pairs. He played drums for In Pairs.

Phil: Yeah.

Will: And Phantomwise.

Phil: Yeah, In Pairs he's also pretty big on. Like he- This is kind of funny, but John and Jonathan saw after we got done recording one night at Smart they went out to a bar and saw a like a really crappy reggae band or something. And they said that every song the band played is like "duh juh doo, duh duh doot" or this beat that actually is like the beat on the chorus in In Pairs. And that when we started jamming on it, since they'd just seen that band that they remembered that beat and like just put it in to just be kind of funny. And it ended up working perfectly and I think Chris really liked it. So I think they both think it's kind of funny that them seeing this really crappy band led to-

Meghan: Actually contributing to your album?

Phil: Yeah, yeah. [laughs]

Will: But what did Jonathan sing on?

Phil: He sang on...he did some "woah's." The "woah, woah woah" on Back In The Saddle.

Will: Oh yeah.

Phil: He did the "na's" on...

Will: Banned (By The Man).

Phil: Banned (By The Man) with me and John.

Will: Is that it?

Phil: I think that might be it. I think he was just doing, yeah just doing some group vocal stuff. He might be at the end of Made To Last maybe. And then the live shows he does a lot. He does a lot of harmonies with John.

Meghan: Okay. Speaking of live shows, "I know how versatile the band is when it comes to playing each other's instruments. Did that also happen a lot when making Let It Sway?"

Will: Yeah.

Phil: Yeah. [laughs]

Meghan: So, how do you decide who plays which instrument for a particular song? Do the band members just say, "I want to play drums for this song."

Phil: On this album every song that- The songs that I started out on, like if the song was originally like my idea and then we finished it as a band, I would end up playing guitar on it and Jonathan would play drums. And then for John's songs on all those I would play- I play drums on all of John's songs. And for Will's, for yours I did either did piano or drums.

Will: Yeah.

Phil: It kind of depends on who- Yeah, I don't know.

Will: But also like on Animalkind in the studio you play drums, but live you'll play guitar on it.

Phil: Yeah.

Will: So just whatever seems to work the best sometimes.

Phil: Yeah. On Animalkind Jonathan went to see a movie and we started doing the drums while we were at the movie, so that's why I played drums on that one. But...there's one other thing I was going to say. Oh, I can't remember it. [laughs]

Meghan: That's fine. "How has the band grown in their songwriting process?"

Phil: Oh boy. I don't- Yeah. [laughs]

Will: I don't know.

Phil: Actually someone wrote that on an email question the other day, like how has your songwriting process evolved? And out of all the questions that one I didn't really know how to answer because, I don't know, I guess maybe the actual process is probably pretty much the same because it always starts out with one of us just playing guitar or playing piano. You know, just being in a room by yourself.

Meghan: It just happens naturally.

Phil: Yeah, yeah. Just being in a room by yourself and just playing your own. The other thing I think is every song kind of happens differently too, because sometimes the song it's really easy to get from the start to finish with all the parts and other times you only have one part and then you link it up to another part of another song. So I think that might be another reason why it's kind of a hard question to answer.

Meghan: It is. I think it's asked a lot though because I noticed in the newest album it seems a lot more personal compared to Broom and Pershing. There's a lot more depth to the lyrics in the songs. And I think that's why people are more curious about the songwriting.

Phil: Yeah, that's a good-

Will: I feel like John's songs, if I look at the booklet, there are so many lyrics to some of his songs and I don't know what he's thinking when he writes that stuff or how he memorizes it. Yeah.

Phil: Yeah, and also I was listening to some of the demos and I realized a lot of John's lyrics he changed them from the first times he showed it to us, to the way it ended on the record. So I think he is like constantly kind of like editing them and trying to make them better and stuff.

There's actually a time, this is kind of interesting, but we almost- Like it wasn't really a fight, but there was like a disagreement on the first lyrics in Everlyn, because the original version instead of- Now it's like "wasn't the pulse just rocking us." But the original version was "wasn't we off our rockers, no sense and all pretend." I think that's it.

Yeah and then he changed it to "wasn't the pulse just rocking us" and Will and I- I didn't like it at all because I was so used to saying "wasn't we off our rockers," you know? And he really wanted to change it. And Chris actually liked the "pulse" lyrics better. And me and Will liked the "rockers" lyrics better. So I was like sad that he wasn't using that line anymore. So then I had one other part in Dracula that had to be finished and I still loved that line "wasn't we off our rockers." So I got that into like the very last part of Dracula.

Technically he should have like a songwriting credit on Dracula because he wrote that line.

[Phil and Meghan laugh]

Meghan: Alright, I chose this question because I'm biased. "If you had to categorize Let It Sway as a Weezer album, which one..."

Will and Phil: Pinkerton.

Phil: Definitely. [laughs]

Meghan: We just wanted to hear a confirmation on that.

Phil: Yeah yeah. No I feel like it's a bit like, I mean...yeah. When we were making it I was even thinking like, wow something about this really reminds me of Pinkerton especially cause some- One reason I was so excited about it is like because a lot of the progressions and like the songs are kind of like they weren't- They were like kind of happy, you know? Especially the chords and stuff like on Dracula, and like Everlyn. But when we were recording them they just came out like much- They just sounded a lot darker than I expected. And I don't know, I think I just really like that because I thought it was a really cool contrast.

I think the same thing kind of happened on Broom where there's a really nice contrast of like a happy song like Oregon Girl going into a like House Fire. And I think that's kind of when we're at our best when that contrast is really good. And I think that was a problem with Pershing, or a problem I kind of had with it. It all kind of sounds a little too airy. There's no edge to it at all or any dark parts. I think the lyrics are kind of like being depressed and stuff sometimes, but the sound-

Meghan: Yeah, Pershing's a pretty peppy album.

Phil: Yeah, yeah.

Meghan: Okay, and then I just had one more question. In the album you gave a special shout-out to everyone here at iamwarmandpowerful. Would you like to announce any special thanks to anybody in particular right now.

Will: Yeah, I'd like to shout out to Ray M, and Trevor, and "yourmom"...er "yourmother." [Phil laughs] Yeah, and Sarah Wilkes and Carl and "El Zilcho."

Phil: Uh, yeah, that's Trevor.

Will: That's Trevor, yeah yeah.

Phil: I don't want to forget anybody. There's this one. She's been writing to me. She wrote an email about sending her- She's, I think she's from the Philippines, but I don't really know how to say her name. Like Kan-nu-ku or something? Is that how you say it?

Meghan: Oh, Ka-nni-ka. [Editor's note: Turns out Phil did say it right :)]

Will: Yeah.

Phil: Darn it. [laughs] Also if we left you out, like if- Oh boy. I'd feel bad if we left anybody out.

Will: Yeah.

Phil: But that's pretty much everyone. No, that's not everyone.

Meghan: Okay. They can just send you an email and you can apologize to them.

Phil: Yeah. There's one, like Lori? I think there's a Lori.

Meghan: Oh yeah, there's a Lori.

Phil: And um- Wait, did we say Sarah Wilkes?

Will: Yeah.

Phil: Okay. [laughs]

Meghan: Thanks for taking the time out to do the interview with me. A lot of people were really looking forward to this. And thanks to everyone who submitted questions. Let It Sway is available through Polyvinyl Records. All the info can be found at iamwarmandpowerful.com, and thanks for reading!

Phil: Yeah. Oh hey actually I thought of- Actually I thought of a couple more, sorry. [laughs]

Meghan: A couple more? Okay, go.

Phil: Sarah from Nashville she actually, I need to send this to you Will, but she actually knitted us...made some scarves for us. I got those in the mail like a couple days ago. And also Melissa from Modern Mystery.

Meghan: Oh true, Melissa. She would be very upset if we forgot about her.

Phil: Oh yeah. Hold on one second. One second. Will and I are having a discussion.

Will: The video tape?

Phil: Oh um, Angela.

Will: Angela. Yeah.

Phil: [laughs] Yeah.

Meghan: Is that it?

Phil: Yeah, yeah.

Meghan: Okay. [laughs] Alright. Thanks guys.

Phil: Okay.

Will: Thanks Meghan.

Phil: Bye!

Questions contributed by: Meghan Baier, Trevor Reagan, Sarah Wilkes, Kannika Peña, Brian Magno, Melissa Nastasi, and Chris La Jaunie
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