

POOR YOUNG THINGS

You can try and find a gutsier, harder working, more determined bunch than Toronto's Poor Young Things. But even if you succeed, it's doubtful you'll also find one as clearly positioned for greatness.

Just two years after collectively relocating from Thunder Bay, the pop-rock quintet has issued a massive, sweat-soaked, insanely confident debut, *The Heart. The Head. The End.* Not only that, they've picked up a record deal, marquee management, a Sirius XM Emerging Artist of the Year award and a swelling fan base. Few can make something as tough as pursuing a dream *look* so dang easy.

"Oh man, we are so lucky," confirms singer/guitarist Matt Fratpietro on behalf of his cohorts. "Touring across Canada is so hard. And there are lots of bands that do that for years and years and don't get the breaks we've had.

"We came here and were signed within a year to a small, very supportive label, Bumstead Productions. I mean, obviously we sold our souls to the devil," Fratpietro howls. "But still. What a deal we got!"

Kidding aside, *The Heart. The Head. The End.* could not have emerged if Poor Young Things – high school pals Fratpietro, guitarists Michael Kondakow and Dave Grant, bassist Scott Burke and drummer Konrad Commisso - had elected to play it safe.

"It's scary to leave your hometown," Fratpietro admits of the big move south in November 2010. "We had been playing together for about three years at that point in some incarnation or another. The five of us all agreed to move together, which made it a bit easier though we are all living in the same house now which is... cozy. I mean, we see each other *every day.*"

That friction is part of what drives the propulsive *The Heart. The Head. The End.* Equal parts grit and groove, fun and fury, the record is a crisply rendered snapshot of five guys who've crisscrossed the country playing anywhere they could to anyone who'd listen just for the privilege of being there, logging 100-plus shows last year alone.

"This record is a reflection of getting older and thinking about that. We are all going to be 27 this year," Fratpietro says, adding that yes, they're aware of the infamous 27 Club curse and no, they're not planning to join though they have had some close calls on the highway.

Fratpietro continues: "'Sign of the Times'" (the album's scorching first single) is based on what the world is like today. But the over-arching theme is experiences we've had – on the road, relationship-y things. There are also songs on there about having a good time and meeting people. 'Revolver' is one of those."

'Revolver' is also an example of just how essential Toronto producer/engineer Jon Drew is to Poor Young Things' lightning-in-a-bottle sound.

“Originally, the chorus of that song just had me singing ‘revolver.’ Jon suggested we should get a gang of people and blow it up to the next level. So we got (East Coast singer/songwriter and Bumstead label-mate) Tim Chaisson’s cousin and bassist Koady Chaisson and drummer Nat Lamoureux into the studio one night, had a couple of drinks and just sang our hearts out.

“Plus Jon has an ear for percussion,” Fratpietro says of Drew, whose sterling production dossier includes albums by Fucked Up, Tokyo Police Club, Alexisonfire and Matt Mays as well as Poor Young Things’ 2012 EP, *Let It Sleep*. “And we happen to have a drummer who is as solid and hard-hitting as you can get.”

The new record’s spit-shine polish – it’s melodic but unfussy and clearly made by flesh-and-blood people playing actual instruments together - reflects the swift, organic manner in which it was written and recorded.

“We toured until the end of summer 2012, then practiced for a while, wrote the songs, went in and did half the record, went on a month-long tour with Tim Chaisson across Canada in late-fall of 2012, then came back and recorded the other half of the album,” Fratpietro explains.

“We had a chance to play those new songs across the country and that’s where you get to the meat of it. Also, that tour impacted the vocals because when I came back my voice was destroyed. But it sounds awesome on the album and much closer to how we are live.

“I write most of the lyrics,” Fratpietro says, “and usually we’ll get the songs down first and the lyrics will come later. We don’t really demo because we don’t have anything to demo with,” he laughs. “But that’s how we are; we just jam and jam and jam until the song is right. Let’s call it the natural way. But we do capture the vibe of togetherness.”

Asked to cite a song that seemed to write itself, Fratpietro name-checks ‘Black Lightning,’ one of several tracks on the record with a chorus so hooky it double-dog dares you not to holler along. Like ‘Revolver,’ it also features backing vocals by Koady Chaisson and Nat Lamoureux as does ‘Sign of the Times,’ ‘Dress It Up’ and ‘Transformer.’

“‘Black Lightning’ only took a couple of days. And that was typical of most songs on this album. We were actually very surprised how easily everything came out when we finally sat down together. Everything went where we wanted it to go. I honestly can’t think of a song we had to struggle with.”

With the obliging hand of fate pressed firmly on their backs, what now for Poor Young Things? “I really just hope the album does well, that we’re on the road for most of the year and get to go to the States a lot,” Fratpietro says. “I hope people can listen to it and see a little bit of themselves in it.

“The thing is, we’re a hard-working, 24/7 rock-and-roll band. There are no gimmicks and there are no tricks. We go out there and we play. The shows are fun and they’re real. *We’re* real. There’s nothing fake about it.”

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