

# Fighting Fit

**SILVERCHAIR ARE BACK AND FRONTMAN DANIEL JOHNS IS STRONGER AND HAPPIER THAN EVER**

**DANIEL JOHNS** is sitting on a grassy embankment in Windsor, enjoying the sunshine. In the UK for Silverchair's first tour in more than four years, the vocalist/guitarist appears happy and healthy, laughing as he explains he's recently given up smoking after a bad bout of laryngitis, a habit he took up in an attempt to deliberately roughen-up his voice.

"Before I knew it I was addicted and I was like, 'Shit, that's what they mean by addictive!'," he chuckles. "I thought that didn't apply to me."

Johns and his bandmates – bassist Chris Joannou and drummer Ben Gillies – have recently released their fifth album, *Young Modern*, and the singer is counting his blessings that he's healthy enough to tour in support of it. Having been struck down with reactive arthritis upon the release of 2002's *Diorama*, rendering the frontman almost immobile, Silverchair were forced to sit on the sidelines as the album died commercially, after which they embarked on "an indefinite hiatus".

A benefit show for the victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami at the beginning of 2005 laid the foundations for the trio's return, however, and the resulting *Young Modern* has been a multi-platinum, Number One success in the band's native Australia. But as Johns explains, the goal now is to make up for lost time everywhere else...

**YOU'RE PRETTY MUCH HAVING TO REINTRODUCE SILVERCHAIR TO THE WORLD. ARE YOU ENJOYING THE CHALLENGE?**

**DANIEL JOHNS:** "We're really enjoying it. *Young Modern* is the first record where I can honestly say I'm really proud of the band and where I've believed that we're really good. Even with *Diorama* and *Neon Ballroom* I was still way too insecure to really enjoy promoting my band. I just thought I was shit! But this record, it feels like a fresh beginning but we've got a really huge head start."

**WHAT DO YOU ATTRIBUTE THIS NEW-FOUND CONFIDENCE TO?**

"Time, but also just experience. I think a lot of my insecurity came from being famous at 15. I found it hard to become a better artist because

I was always stuck with people's perceptions of us. I just assumed that everyone hated me. After I did *Neon Ballroom* I felt like I was worthy of something and had more to offer than just ripped-off Black Sabbath riffs (*laughs*), and then once I did *Diorama* I just kind of thought, 'Fuck everyone, I don't care if anyone hates me!'. And I think *Young Modern* is a really confident album, and I'm really proud of how we've managed to steer the ship around. I'm dumbfounded that we're still friends, to tell you the truth."

**WHY?**

"Just the law of averages suggests that we shouldn't be! It sounds over-sentimental, but it's almost like Silverchair is a second family. Me and Ben have been playing music together since we were seven or eight years old, and Chris and Ben knew each other when they were two or something stupid."

**HOW COME YOU THOUGHT EVERYONE HATED YOU WHEN YOU WERE SELLING MILLIONS OF ALBUMS?**

"I didn't even acknowledge that. You forget the millions of nice things that people say and you remember the one guy that called you a c\*\*t. That's just human nature. Now if I read a bad review I go, 'Fuck off, what would you know, I'm heaps better than you!'. But back then I was like, 'Oh my God, we're so shit!'"

**YOUR BATTLES WITH ANOREXIA, DEPRESSION AND ARTHRITIS ARE WELL DOCUMENTED. HOW BIG A ROLE DO YOU THINK HAVING TO GROW UP IN PUBLIC PLAYED IN ALL THIS?**

"I don't like to say it because then it makes it sound like it's something's fault that I got sick. I think I was just born very sensitive to things and probably fame and all that stuff... I was just a scared kid, so I guess from that it just started turning into things. Then I was anorexic and just as I started getting better the repercussions from the anorexia started to manifest and turn

into arthritis. I don't know, it's a really hard one to answer."

**HOW'S THE BODY STANDING UP TO TOURING?**

"Pretty good. I've got bruises everywhere from being an idiot onstage, but I'm not aching other than from the self-inflicted wounds."

**THE BAND PAID FOR THE RECORDING OF YOUNG MODERN, AND YET STILL FOUND ROOM IN THE BUDGET FOR AN 80-PIECE ORCHESTRA IN PRAGUE... WOULDN'T A 40-PIECE ONE IN SYDNEY HAVE BEEN MORE ECONOMICAL?**

"That's what our manager was saying! (*Laughs*) It's definitely the most expensive record we've done. I think we ended up being \$700,000 [about £300,000] in debt or something. I had so many arguments with everyone who has any kind of financial investment in the band. I don't know if it was delusion or what but I was like, 'Nah, it's going to be fine, we're going to release this record and it's going to be fucking amazing and it's all going to be fine'."

**COULD YOU HAVE BEEN BANKRUPT IF IT FAILED?**

"We were bankrupt as a band for nearly the majority of the record. But that was the excitement, I was like, 'Oh man, if this doesn't work I'm fucked', and I was loving it!"

**DOES THIS FEEL LIKE A NEW BEGINNING FOR YOU?**

"Yeah, definitely. I feel so happy that I'm actually allowed to write music as a career. After being so sick – I was literally in hospital for two years and in a wheelchair and on crutches and a cane, I couldn't breathe, I couldn't shower – once you've been through that, nothing is really that significant, it's all pretty fucking minor. If you can walk and breathe, it's fine."

YOUNG MODERN IS OUT NOW ON ELEVEN RECORDS.

**"I WAS NOTHING"**



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G IS THAT SIGNIFICANT..." DANIEL JOHNS

Back from the edge:  
Silverchair (Daniel  
Johns, centre)