

b a n d Q & A

Receiving End of Sirens



THE EARLIER LINEUP OF THE RECEIVING END OF SIRENS, BEFORE SINGER CASEY CRESCENZO (RIGHT) LEFT THE BAND.

By **BEN BIROS**
GEORGE SCHOOL

On a cold, rainy day back in November, I ventured to the back room of the Electric Factory to interview The Receiving End of Sirens. The Boston-based experimental rock band was on tour with New Found Glory and Senses Fail, promoting its second album, "The Earth Sings Mi Fa Mi," on Triple Crown Records.

In a setting full of mannequins, a poker table and '50s nostalgia, we talked about everything from where they draw inspiration to their thoughts on their former lead singer to what it's like touring alongside their childhood idols.

Q: *How was the writing and recording of "The Earth Sings Mi Fa Mi" different from your first album?*

Alex Bars (lead vocals/rhythm guitar): I think it was done over a more concise period of time. We had Brian Southall (guitar, keyboard, backup vocals) on board, that was different. Having him on board this time was uhh...

Andrew Cook (drums): Life-changing!

Alex: I think there was just a mission when we started this record. We have more of a concept behind this record regardless of what people think about the last record. I feel like there was a more clear and concise vision and we had to research as we went along and, I don't know, mold the songs, and just the different themes ... and all that stuff.

Andrew: And we wrote it in one place, whereas last time we had written some of the songs at our old singer's house, and when we made the record he wasn't even in the band anymore.

Q: *Speaking of old singers, what do you think of (former singer Casey Crescenzo's new band) The Dear Hunter?*

Andrew: Like musically, or like...

Alex: Well, yeah, we played with the guy for quite a while...

Andrew: He's without question a very talented musician, I would say. And usually when a band breaks up or a member goes their separate way they usually don't listen to each other because it's just weird, you know? It's not like we sit there and listen to it all the time, but we don't have anything bad to say about it. Several of our friends were playing with him. Erik Serna, his guitar player, is one of our really good friends.

Q: *What's it like playing with New Found Glory and Senses Fail compared to your last tour with Circa Survive and Portugal. The Man?*

Andrew: Oh man, it's a different crowd, that's for sure. It's a little tougher for us to go over with the New Found Glory kids. Senses Fail kids are a little more open to us, they're a little bit heavier. It's pretty trippy for us to be on tour with NFG because I know (bassist) Brendan (Brown), Alex and myself are all huge NFG fans, like back in our early days in high school. If you had told any of us back in 10th grade that we'd be touring with NFG we'd have (expletive) our pants, so...it's cool (laughs). Even if no kids like us each night, it's still

freakin' cool.

Q: *Is there a specific message you want to convey to fans?*

Alex: Geez ... uh ...

Andrew: I don't think there's one specific message. We're not like an Anti-Flag kind of band where we're like politically driven.

Alex: I feel like if there's anything our band tries to do, we try to be musically challenging and we just try to make people think outside the box in terms of whatever scene we've been birthed in; whatever genre and direction music is going these days. For us, a big part of writing music is to challenge ourselves and do things we've never done before, and I think all of us just hope our fans grow with us and try to look at music in different ways.

Andrew: I think open-mindedness might be a message, if you want to get it down into one word.

Q: *What are some of your favorite concert experiences?*

Andrew: Oh wow, that's a good question ... there's a lot of 'em.

Alex: (With accent) Boston!

Andrew: I mean the last show we did in Boston was really overwhelming. We headlined the Avalon for the first time ever.

Overwhelming is the only word I can describe it as. The first time we played Avalon was co-headlining with Circa Survive and that was another one of my favorite moments ever, and we played City Hall plaza with Taking Back Sunday and there was like 25 to 30,000 people there. That was the biggest show we ever played, and

that's a day I'll never forget. Also because I got drunk and got food poisoning that day, but that's beside the point.

Alex: I feel like some of the times we went to the UK were some of the more interesting, reflective personal experiences too. You know, showing up in Scotland and they know your band. It just makes the world feel smaller but at the same time, I don't know. It's a crazy thing to describe, just thinking that there are other people around the world with the possibility to connect to, and you do what you do and you don't even see these people on a daily basis, and you hopefully start new relationships with these people and learning from them as well.

Q: *You know you guys are actually pretty big in Costa Rica.*

Andrew: Costa Rica? That's great! We're always trying to go to different countries to tour, and like a lot of bands are going to Puerto Rico now, like our buddies As Cities Burn went there. It's a really big hardcore market. Like bands that will draw a couple hundred here will draw a few thousand there just because they're stoked to have shows, and they like heavy music. I want to go to Hawaii.

Alex: Send me there right now. I'll go tomorrow. In this weather, man.

Andrew: We're going to Australia in February, which will be pretty sweet for all of us because going to England is one thing and it's great, but like, going literally across the world, taking a 20-hour plane ride and seeing this amazing place

that I never thought I'd get to see is pretty ... it's great (laughs).

Q: *What bands have you been listening to while on tour?*

Andrew: New Found Glory and Senses Fail (laughs).

Alex: Yeah, a lot of that stuff. The new Jimmy Eat World record is probably the most played one.

Andrew: We listen to that like every day. And the new Thrice EP we listen to all the time. Recently I got the new Motion City Soundtrack record, which I love, and the new Weakerthans record which I love. What else ... Mute Math, the newest Feist record gets a lot of spins, the new Radiohead, "In Rainbows."

Q: *Oh, did you guys pay for that? (The album was initially released as a pay-what-you-want download on Radiohead's Web site).*

Andrew: Nope, I actually paid zero dollars for it (laughs).

Alex: Me too. I felt a little bad.

Andrew: Well, I didn't, because they have millions of dollars (laughs). It's good though, it's really good. I thought it was (expletive) great, that whole go around the record company idea. What's amazing too is I saw online that it was being downloaded illegally more times than legally and they were like, this is a pretty sad state of affairs when people are stealing a free album. It doesn't get much more ridiculous than that.

Q: *What's the meaning behind your new album's title, "The Earth Sings Mi Fa Mi?"*

Alex: It's from Johannes Kepler. I

think it's mostly a commentary about the human spirit and a lot of reflections on human emotions and experiences and in that I think we touch upon a lot of negative things that happen to people and that people have to deal with, but I think the end message is a positive one. It states that we're all in this together and experiences with other people can be a great thing, and the world isn't necessarily a negative place that Kepler described back in his lifetime. I just think it's more of a unifying experience for humankind. Although it sounds kind of epic, that's pretty much what I think at least.

Q: *If you could set up one concert with any bands, past or present, who would be on the bill?*

Andrew: Let's each do one.

Alex: Well, present, Metallica would be on the bill. Mostly as a joke, and we could cover half of their songs that they play.

Andrew: Brendan would say Nine Inch Nails, (lead guitarist) Nate (Patterson) would say Radiohead.

Alex: And Jimi Hendrix.

Andrew: Brian would say Pearl Jam.

Alex: Bands that I would love to see would be Queen and Guns N' Roses, back in the original lineups.

Andrew: I would say The Clash, or Elvis Costello. All of these are bands that we would never go over well playing with.

Alex: All the bands that we'd just want to watch, and we wouldn't care how we went over.

More info on the band at www.myspace.com/thereceivingendofsirens