

BIG HASSLE MEDIA

FRAN HEALY WRECKORDER

“If you’re the singer in a band, people always ask, ‘Are you gonna go solo?’” says Fran Healy. “My answer was always, ‘Why would I do that? I’m in the best band in the world.’ But last year, out of the blue, I suddenly thought, okay, it’s time.”

As it turns out, the wait proved worth it. WRECKORDER sees the singer and songwriter of the beloved Scottish band, Travis, striding a new creative path that allows his incomparable songs to shine in an altogether different light. The tunesmith behind two “Album Of The Year” Brit Awards and responsible for such classics as “Sing,” “Driftwood,” and “Why Does It Always Rain On Me,” Healy set out to craft an intimate series of recordings trying to capture what he felt was sometimes misplaced or lost in translation in the journey from Dictaphone to recording studio. As a result, songs such as “Anything” and first single, “Buttercups,” reflect a more singular and personal vision, showcasing Healy’s beguiling vocals and insistent melodies. Simply put, WRECKORDER is unlike anything Fran Healy has done before. “My biggest concern was that it would sound too much like Travis. What would be the point in going solo only to make a record that sounded like Travis” he says. “I’m relieved it doesn’t.”

Upon the conclusion of Travis’ 2009 world tour, Healy teamed with Travis guitarist Andy Dunlop for a truly unique US trek. Dubbed “A Chronological Acoustical Journey Through The Travis Back Catalogue” the concert/slideshow presentation saw the duo covering the breadth of Healy’s entire songwriting career, from the first song he wrote to the last, “Holiday.” The rapturous reception received by the tour left Healy energized and eager to make a career-defining album.

“Being in Travis is what I’ve been doing since I was a kid. I needed a break...an artistic break,” he says. “It took a few months to sort of think, ‘Okay, I’m gonna go do something by myself.’ When you’re in a band, there are things ingrained into you. You don’t ever need to step outside of your comfort zone. Everything you need is right there.”

The aforementioned “Holiday” proved the catalyst for WRECKORDER, opening up a floodgate of new material specifically written for his debut solo album. In September 2009, Healy began recording in Berlin, accompanied only by producer Emery Dobyns, with whom he had previously collaborated on Travis’ Ode To J. Smith. With the Grammy-winning producer assisting behind the board, Healy created the album, playing “nearly” every instrument.

“The only thing I couldn’t do was bass,” he laughs. “You look at the bass and think, ‘It’s only four strings, how hard can it be?’ It’s actually the most difficult instrument to play, because there’s a certain touch you need. And I didn’t have that touch.”

To remedy the situation Healy enlisted such top players as Sam Dixon (Sia, Duffy, Corinne Bailey Rae) and Paul McCartney, who lends a hand on “As It Comes.” After

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pondering who might play bass on the song, Healy took a shot and dropped McCartney an e-mail asking, ““Would you mind? Here’s the track. If you have a minute, give it a listen. Love you to play bass on it.””

McCartney promised to find the time and three months later, took the largely finished song to his studio where he used his famed 1963 Höfner to put down an instantly identifiable bass track. Infinitely grateful, Healy was eager to show his appreciation but found himself flummoxed, wondering what kind of gift do you get a Beatle?

“He’s probably been given a million presents,” Healy laughs. “Like, he’s got a room that’s just full of unopened presents from people. Then I thought, Paul’s a big veggie, my son’s already vegetarian, it’d be nice to maybe have the whole family do it, so I asked my wife and she said, ‘That’s a great idea, and what a way to say thank you.’”

“When I told him, it completely blew him away,” he continues. “Three days later, a package comes to the door – he’d sent us three Linda McCartney vegetarian cookbooks with a note saying, ‘Here’s a little something just to get you started. Love, Paul.’ So I got a bass line and cookbooks.”

Further flavor was brought to the album courtesy of Noah & the Whale fiddler Tom Hobden and singer/songwriter Neko Case, who shares vocals with Healy on the hauntingly beautiful “Sing Me To Sleep.” Inspired by the way Burt Bacharach wrote for his own muse, Dionne Warwick, the enchanting duet was “made to measure for her.”

“She’s amazing,” Healy enthuses, “like a grown-up Pippi Longstocking. I don’t just mean the red hair – it’s her whole spirit. She was great, such a cool woman. And that voice.”

The poignant and refreshingly honest odes to life on WRECKORDER proves an ideal fit for Healy’s trademark lyrical warmth and good humor. As ever, the intricacies of human relationships remain at the core of his writing, from the elderly couple nearing the end of their lives together in “As It Comes” to the wrenching “Rocking Chair,” inspired by British newsreader John Suchet’s chronicling of his wife’s battle with Alzheimer’s.

“It’s a good snapshot of exactly where I am at this point in my life,” Healy shares. “These are songs written by someone who is comfortable in their skin. I really feel like I’m in my skin at the moment, I’m feeling like, here I am. Here’s my wife. Here’s my son. Here’s my life. Here are my songs.”

Healy is spending summer 2010 introducing fans to his new songs with a series of North American solo dates supporting Keane. Next he intends to put together a small group of players in order to bring the album “to as many corners of the world as I possibly can.” WRECKORDER finds an energized and evolving Fran Healy having a lot of fun as he turns the page on a new and immensely creative chapter.

“This is just the start,” he says. “I’ve only just scratched the surface of this new journey. I’m really excited about seeing what I do next. I remember when we started the band, the potential felt huge. That feeling has returned.”

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