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Hands-on:  
Never Shout Never's  
CHRISTOFER DREW

POP BY JASON LIPSHUTZ

## A Savvy Connection

**Never Shout Never Claims Top 30 Debut With First Warner Bros. Album**

Boosted by a bright, bedroom-pop sound and a grassroots marketing campaign, Never Shout Never's first full-length album, "What Is Love?" (Loveway/Warner Bros.), debuted at No. 24 on the Billboard 200 last week with 21,000 copies. Credit for the set's noteworthy debut, however, belongs to Never Shout

Never principal Christofer Drew. The 18-year-old has already released five EPs under the alias, resulting in cumulative song download sales of 1.3 million, according to Nielsen SoundScan. His modus operandi: constant fan interaction.

"My No. 1 goal is connecting with people," says Drew, who was recently featured on MySpace Music's "Introducing . . ." program for breaking artists. "I try to write songs that are relatable but also draw upon every crazy thing I've

gone through up until now."

Drew started writing songs in 2007, playing at a local coffee shop in Joplin, Mo. When he posted his songs on MySpace, Drew says the positive fan reaction "made me realize that I didn't suck after all."

After dropping out of high school at 16, Drew played local shows and sold merchandise out of garbage bags. As his songs began attracting attention on MySpace, he hired a manager and issued "The Yippee EP" at 17. It has sold 46,000, according to SoundScan.

More EPs followed during the next year (including "Summer," also at 46,000) as Drew became the subject of a label bidding war. He eventually signed with Warner Bros. Records ("I felt like Warner was a 'career' label," he says) and recorded his debut album last summer in Santa Monica, Calif., with producer Butch Walker (Weezer, Katy Perry). Warner Bros. also allowed him to form his own imprint, Loveway Records.

Drew's hands-on approach has driven the promotional campaign for "What Is Love?" Never Shout Never followed a live chat with an acoustic performance Feb. 4 on MTV.com's Buzzworthy Blog. A partnership with Hot Topic resulted in an exclusive EP (which has sold 27,000) and the distribution of Drew's personally approved merch, including T-shirts and skate decks.

While Warner Bros. is invested in growing the Never Shout Never brand, Drew's tireless touring and presence on social networks have helped his fan base quickly expand. "Christofer knows his fans better than anyone," Warner Bros. VP of marketing Xavier Ramos says. "He has a do-it-yourself mentality. But as his following has grown, we've given him the resources and expertise to keep that bond intact."

Never Shout Never will headline a spring U.S. tour beginning March 17 in Mission, Texas, before joining the Vans Warped tour in June. ●●●