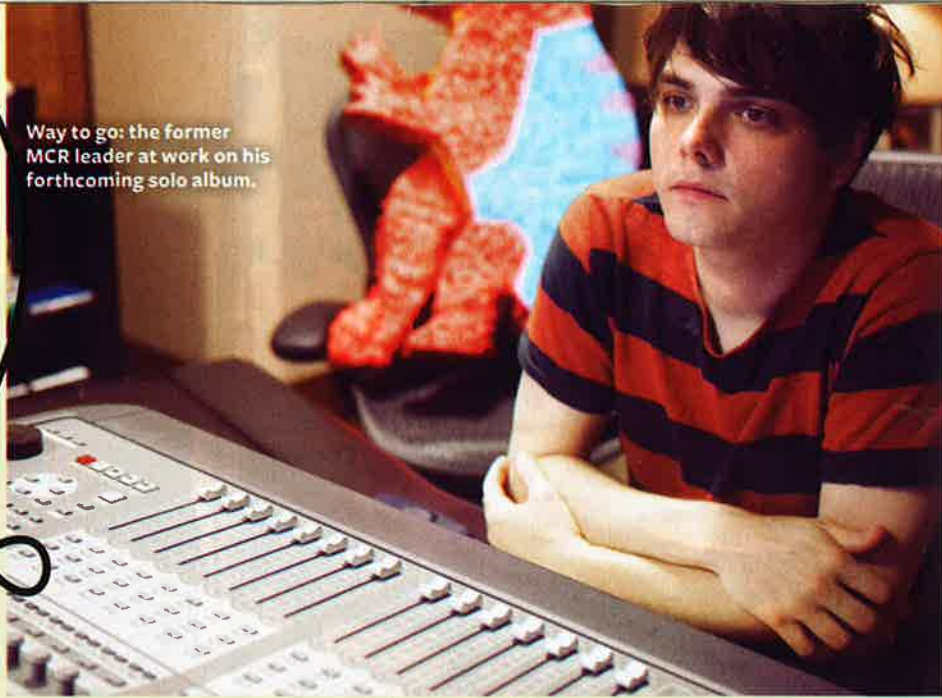


Way to go: the former MCR leader at work on his forthcoming solo album.



In The Studio

# A CERTAIN ROMANCE

Former My Chemical Romance singer **GERARD WAY** battles demons to release sunny, Britpoppy solo debut.

**M**y Chemical Romance's 2013 split was hard for their notoriously obsessive teenage fanbase to bear, but it was also traumatic for the emo kings' former frontman. "Doing the right thing is usually the hardest thing," grimaces Gerard Way, sat in his Los Angeles home. "I was the most depressed I've been in my whole life."

Way was rescued from this spiral of despair by a return to making music. He was back in the studio a month after MCR's split following the intervention of the band's producer/engineer producer Doug McKean, who persuaded him to "pull myself out of bed".

"At a certain point after the band had broken up, I realised this was the therapy that helped get me through it," he says with a laugh. "But I'd written an album by then."

MCR were no strangers to the bleak stuff – three million-plus-selling, cancer-themed 2006 album *The Black Parade* saw them demonised by the Daily Mail as a "suicide cult". Yet, despite Way's personal difficulties during the early sessions, his debut solo album, due this September, passes by on the sunnier side of the street.

It's an upbeat, Anglophile's alt-rock record that Way expects to appeal to fellow 30-somethings as much as his

former band's "MCRmy". Bureau is a Supergrass-style indie-rock stomp, with *Action Cat* a fuzzed-up slice of bliss-pop that could have fitted snugly between Ride and My Bloody Valentine in the early-'90s shoegazing scene. No Shows, meanwhile, was influenced by David Bowie's late-'70s Berlin period.

"[Bowie] was trying to escape the stress of his career trajectory," Way says. "I was trying to get out of the stress of being [part of] a machine."

Accordingly, while MCR album concepts and stage outfits were planned months before the actual music (for *The Black Parade* they all dressed up like a goth infantry unit from the Napoleonic wars), Way is now revelling in spontaneity, determined to leave decisions about album title and image until the last moment. "Though I could never wear jeans and a T-shirt," he's keen to add.

Having battled his depression and with MCR permanently put to bed ("It's done," he states), he's looking forward to a fresh start and will be showcasing the new material at his debut solo gig at Reading Festival in August. "Towards the end [of MCR], I wasn't being true to myself. It was when I decided to be honest with myself that I started to get better."

Fitter, happier... the period of mourning for MCR fans looks set to be a short one. **MARK SUTHERLAND**