



THE JEALOUS SOUND

Blair Shehan-Lead Vocals/Guitar * Bob Penn-Drums * Jeremy Tappero-Bass/Backup Vocals * Michael K Richardson-Guitar

Blair Shehan says that his time away from The Jealous Sound wasn't a matter of losing his way. It was a matter of finding it.

"I got zeroed out, and I had to figure out how to do things in a healthy way," the singer-guitarist says, recounting the long, strange trip it's been to 2013, when the Los Angeles quartet will release its first album in ten years, *A Gentle Reminder* [street: Feb 5, 2013 on Rise Records]. "I've been humbled, and now I'm a very different person than I was in 2003. I've learned a lot about just being in the world."

Many of those life lessons are revealed in the grandeur of the new album, a poignant and emotional triumph that not only proves a worthy successor to *Kill Them With Kindness* — named one of *Spin's* best albums of '03 — but reveals the foursome at the top of its craft. Open-hearted, yes, but not really gentle at all, *A Gentle Reminder* represents a 44-minute epiphany set to cascading guitars, thundering rhythms and Shehan's evocative vocals.

Made in the Foo Fighters' Studio 606 with John Lousteau producing, *A Gentle Reminder* features founding members Shehan and guitarist Pedro Benito working alongside the Foes' Nate Mendel (filling in on bass for the departed John McGinnis) and new drummer Bob Penn. Josh Staples (The Velvet Teen/The New Trust) contributes backing vocals (and bass on three tracks).

How the quartet coalesced to recapture the magic is a labyrinthine tale that covers three states and includes a lot of emotional baggage, but the first turning point came in late 2004 after rigorous touring behind *Kill Them With Kindness*. A major label was poised to come on board and help with a follow-up. "But we were simply out of gas," Shehan says. "I was spent. I remember John telling me, 'You know, you don't have to feel bad if you don't want to do this.'"

A half-hearted attempt at carrying on yielded only 2008's *Got Friends EP*, and it was painfully evident The Jealous Sound had stalled completely. So Shehan set aside the band life, moved to Las Vegas and got a day job.

"There's a sense that I flipped out and left; people thought I went crazy," Shehan says. "But what's crazy? Staying in a band at my age with no stability? Ignoring the normal parts of becoming an adult? People don't necessarily understand what we do, and the commitment it takes to do what we do."

After two-plus years in Las Vegas, "things there fell apart in very dramatic fashion," Shehan says, so he moved to Florida and at one point was even poised to take the LSAT. He bought a guitar instead, and reconnected with Benito, whose friendship with Mendel helped The Jealous Sound land a spot opening a 2009 tour for the bassist's previous band, emo pioneers Sunny Day Real Estate. The old juices started flowing.

When that tour ended, The Jealous Sound began meticulously piecing together the ideas that would become *A Gentle Reminder*, an experience that at once thrilled and horrified Shehan. "Sometimes I'd be writing a song and think, 'Oh, man, I don't really want to say this, do I?'" Shehan says. "But the process of writing removes any filters you have — you're not as in control of things as you'd like to be. It ended up being very liberating."

That sense of freedom rings throughout "A Gentle Reminder," which finds Shehan taking inventory of the past, for better or worse, and looking stoically toward the future. He acknowledges the weight of his regrets in "Here Comes the Ride" but sounds up to the task of bearing it. The effervescent "Your Eyes Were Shining" seems on the surface directed to a sweetheart, but when Shehan sings "The heavens opened wide / and let you in," he could just as easily be talking about reconnecting, happily, with his songwriting muse. That theme of renewal re-emerges in the "beating drum" and "beating heart" of "This Is Where It Starts." There, as he likens his visions and dreams to "a rush of blood," fans of The Jealous Sound's open-hearted buoyancy will be happy that the quartet has once again opened a vein.

Indeed, after almost a decade, Shehan is still spilling blood. It's just more mature blood.



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