



GYM CLASS HEROES CLIMB THE ROPE

Hip-hop band The Gym Class Heroes took a leap of faith and signed with Fueled By Ramen a non-hip-hop focused label and that leap has paid off. GCH has attracted traditional hip-hop fans and broke down barriers by winning over indie-rock fans with their mix of live instruments, rap vocals and relatable lyrics. One of the most versatile bands out there GCH can tour with Fall Out Boy one week and reggae band John Brown's Body the next, feeling the love all the while. This diversity and accessibility and versatility has The Gym Class Heroes getting that tingly feeling as they climb the rope of success. We talked with vocalist/lyricist Travis right after their set at The Webster Theater in Hartford, CT on April 22nd.

Hearts And Sleeves: A quick introduction?

Travis: My name's Travis and I'm in Gym Class Heroes. I'm the vocalist.

H&S: First let me give you a little background on me. I've never interviewed anyone from a hip-hop band so I don't know what the fuck I'm talking about.

Travis: It's all good.

H&S: So what do you want to talk about? Anything on your mind?





Travis: Actually there isn't really anything on my mind right now. I've got bronchitis so they gave me some really good cough medicine. So I'm a little... I'll do my best to answer your questions.

H&S: Helps with the facial expressions right?

Travis: I don't play an instrument so I have to play my face.

H&S: So lets start with the usual. What do you have coming up?

Travis: We're doing a short tour

right after this one with a reggae band called John Brown's Body. Then we're heading out with a Victory band, Streetlight Manifesto and Whole Wheat Bread right after that we'll be on the Warped Tour.

H&S: How long ago did you record Papercut Chronicles?

Travis: We recorded it last summer and it just came out. They pretty much put it out as-is, which was pretty cool. We did it on a super low budget in four days. I guess people like it.

H&S: Any videos?

Travis: We just shot a video for Papercuts. It should be on the Daily Download on Fuse next week. It's pretty exciting. It came out really cool too?

H&S: To prepare for interviews I always read other interviews that you've done and every interviewer asks you the same thing: "How did you get sign to Fueled By Ramen?" So we all know the answer to that. [If you don't, just go to google and put in "The Gym Class Heroes interviews"]. I'm curious to know WHY you singed to FBR instead of a hip-



hop focused label?

Travis: Yeah for sure. For the most part there was a lot of interest after we put the album out and after we found out that Fueled By Ramen was interested we were like “alright now we know what to do” because they build bands, like grassroots style. Most labels... I mean if we had signed to a major label they would have just thrown us out there for the kids to digest. It’s gonna take awhile. We’re trying to knock down doors. There’s not a lot of bands doing what we’re doing. When we found out they were interested we were like “awesome let’s build this up and tour our asses off and make a name” as opposed to just being thrown out there and

getting shelled. The music industry is pretty shady. Actually Fueled By Ramen started working for us before we signed with them. They were awesome. Trying to get our name out so it wasn’t even a question.

H&S: Labels create an identity by pretty much staying within a genre usually. You know when you buy an album from a specific label you have an expectation for it and this can definitely help record sales. So do you think your record is getting into more hands on Fueled By Ramen than on a hip hop label because it’s different?

Travis: I think we definitely stick

out like a sore thumb on the roster. And that’s cool in a sense. Granted the whole Fueled By Ramen tag will do whatever. But at the same time kids that wouldn’t necessarily check out hip hop are checking us out and it’s cool because we can get off a tour like this and do a tour with a reggae band and get the same love. It’s awesome.

H&S: Do you think that barriers between genres are more blurred.

Travis: Absolutely. There was a time with the whole rap rock thing. And I was thinking, “Man this could go one of two ways” ‘cause I didn’t want to get pigeonholed as one of those. ‘Cause kids see live instruments and hear rap and they





think this is that whole –

H&S: Limp Bizkit.

Travis: Yeah, Yeah and it's actually on a whole different level. To each his own you know, but at the same time it's like, what we're doing has been done wrong, a lot, but it's cool that kids aren't pigeonholing us.

H&S: So has being on a label and touring with non-hip hop bands helped to develop a more diverse sound within your band?

Travis: All of us listen to different types of music. So when it comes down to making music that all comes into play. We never sat down and said, "This is the type of music that we're going to play." We make songs, and if we like 'em we use them. I don't think we set out to make a certain type of music.

H&S: What give you the inspiration behind your lyrics?

Travis: Just life. I just talk about experiences, you know? It works. A lot of kids are into it because it's like stuff that they've been through. I think that's why hip hop has been really monotonous lately because there's a lot of people talking about a lot of stuff they really have no idea about. But it sells so I don't blame them, you know. Cool whatever helps you sell records. But at the same time I feel super uncomfortable talking about a situation I've never been in. But at the same time we try to keep a sense of humor. The album is super personal but we still try to crack a joke here and there.

H&S: Papercut Chronicles was written before going into the studio right?

Travis: Yeah. Basically it's just about two years of my life. I was just writing stuff and shoving it aside. And we did demos and

stuff. But when it came time to do the album I went back through all those notebooks. And that's kind of where the name Papercut Chronicles came from. So I went back through those notebooks and dug through stuff and found things and just random thoughts. Like the song "Taxi Driver" almost didn't happen. I found just the Death Cab line and I called up John and I'm like "I think this is kinda cool." And he was like "Yeah!" So I wrote a few more lines and called him up like every two minutes "What do you think about this!" Just randomly. That's another thing. Just to change the subject for a second. When we signed to Fueled By Ramen we would get all flak and all that, that "Taxi Driver" song was a gimmick to pull kids in. But it wasn't it's not even really a song there's no chorus. It was just a thought you know. What's funny about the song though is that it's like bait kids that wouldn't necessarily get a chance to hear us give it a chance. So it works out.

H&S: Do you ever freestyle or improv?

Travis: Oh yeah for sure. Actually I won a freestyle battle on MTV a few summers ago. It was really, really, really funny. I won a cameo in this dude Stylez P's video and if you sneeze you'll miss it. It was still fun. It was an experience.

H&S: I read an interview with you at hatesomethingbeautiful.com and in it you said that you're not an activist.

Travis: Not at all.



H&S: Today just happens to be Earth Day. Is there anything that you believe in that you are willing to fight for?

Travis: Innocence, man. It sounds really stupid and cliché but everyday for me is a fight to try to stay young and be happy. There's so much nonsense going on that I feel personally that I can't waste time focusing on one thing. The only thing that I can focus on is trying to smile. That's what I meant when he asked me that question about being an activist because our

"Face in the Hall" song is about the whole whatever goes on in high school where kids are homophobic or whatever. Honestly I just live life and try to smile. So I'm not an activist. But Earth Day is cool. I like Earth.

H&S: Wouldn't want to live anywhere else right? So the last thing I have is: Finish this sentence: The most important thing is...

Travis: Laughing. I like to laugh. It's good for the soul. Crying is alright too but I like laughing better.

H&S: Nice. You make people laugh too.

Travis: I try to.

H&S: Anything else you want to add?

Travis: Family guy is a really funny show. I suggest you all watch it and it'll make you laugh. I'm going to name my first son Stu.

H&S: Cool. Thanks for taking the time to talk to me. Good luck on the tour.

