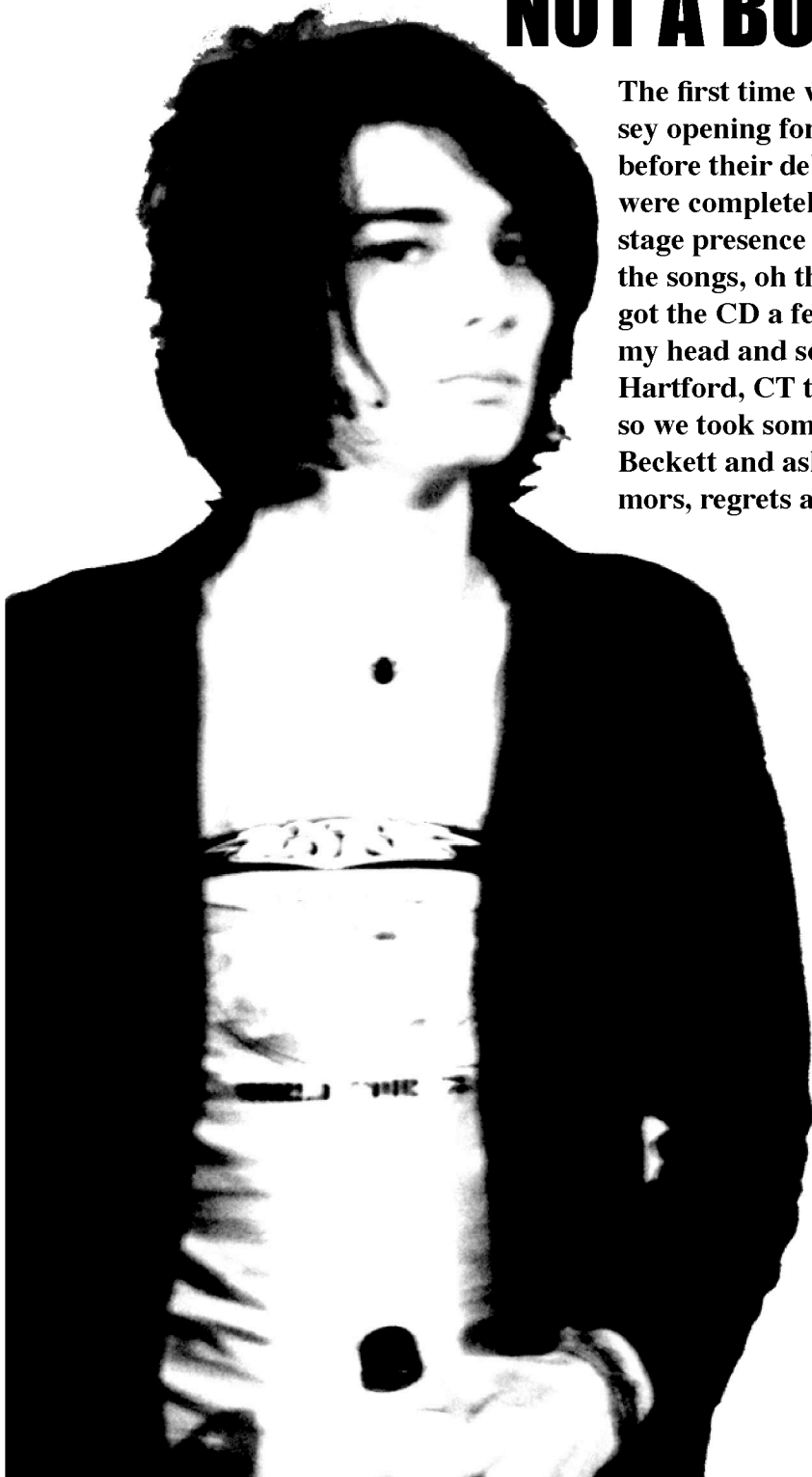




THE ACADEMY IS... NOT A BUNCH OF JUNKIES!



The first time we saw The Academy Is... was in New Jersey opening for Something Corporate. It was a few weeks before their debut CD *Almost Here* hit the street and we were completely blown away. William Beckett has the stage presence of a rock star, the music was right on and the songs, oh the songs are catchy as hell. When we finally got the CD a few weeks later the tunes were still fresh in my head and sounded familiar. The Academy Is... came to Hartford, CT to play at the Webster Theater on April 22nd so we took some time to sit down with lead singer, William Beckett and ask him some intimate questions about rumors, regrets and world domination.

Hearts And Sleeves: We're going to do something a little different for this interview. I took one or two lines from each of your songs on *Almost Here* and have come up with a question inspired by that line. I'm not interested in knowing what the meaning of the lyric is because I think that's for the listener to decide.

William: Okay.

H&S: So we'll go ahead and start. In "Attention" the line is: "It's not like it hurts that much anyway." What hurts you the most?

William: Fear of failure. And failing in anything.

H&S: In "Season" the lyrics are. "We're shaping up to be all you wish you could have been." What do you wish to be?

William: I wish to be someone that people look to and are inspired by and can learn something from as far as what I'm doing with my art. And I'm taking it on a global level. With a lot of the bands that we've toured with and stuff it's very evident that they have sort of a narrow scope and their goals reflect that too. It's like "dude I'm just tour-



ing and drinking and we're screwing girls and it's awesome." So for me I want to use this indie scene as a vehicle, you know. One way to put it is when my parents were younger there were bands like U2 and The Beatles...

H&S: When your parents were younger there was U2? 'cause when I was young was when U2 first came out.

William: My parents are young though. They're like 40.

H&S: I'm 31 so they're 9 years older than me.

Kimberly [H&S Asst. Editor]: Oh my God.

[ed note: Age sneaks up on you so enjoy it while you can].

William: Like Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd and bands from their generation that really stood out. Like bands that they loved when they were 16 years old and they still love being 40 years old. A band that they can grow with. A band that you can constantly relate to. Those are the bands that end up moving mountains and

inspiring nations. And transcend language and transcend sex and age. And transcend social class and things like that. And that's what I want to do.

H&S: A related question then is what do you consider success? But I guess you've pretty much just answered that.

William: It's not a dollar sign for me. But I understand that it's a business and I'm a smart guy and I'm going to make money doing what I love. But there's that ultimate goal at the end of the road and that's that global inspiration.

H&S: In "Slow Down" the line is "Take back everything you've ever said." Have you ever said anything that you want to take back?

William: Ummm. I think at times. For me I'm always honest. I was actually thinking about this a few weeks ago and I wrote it down. I thought it was an interesting thought. Honesty should never be relative but your delivery of it should be. I think that sometimes I've said things to whom-ever and said things that I could have said differently but there's no use living in the

past.

H&S: and another line from "Slow Down": "You kiss me like an over dramatic actor." Have you ever considered acting?

William: Oh man. Every day. My one big regret from high school was not getting into theater and not getting into musicals and things like that because I think I could have benefited so much more than I did doing nothing.

Kimberly: Teen angst.

William: Yeah right. It's that shitty teen angst.

H&S: I DON'T WANNA JOIN A CLUB!

Kimberly: Try going to Catholic school. You wanna see angst?

William: I used to play baseball and then I stopped playing and I started playing guitar and carrying around a notebook and wearing "emo" glasses and wearing tight pants. And then I was the "gay kid." I was the "gay kid" who went out with all of their ex-girlfriends.

H&S: In "The Phrase That Pays" you sing: "Some things I may have taken for granted again and again." What do you now realize that you have taken for granted in the past?

William: Easily everybody in my life that helped me get to this point. Like my parents and my close, close friends and my girlfriend. I think I take all those people for granted daily. I constantly try to remind myself that while I have this personal goal that's like: "I want to do this, for other people." At the same time I have to acknowledge the balance between this life and life back home with my parents and everyone that I love and everyone who loves me and has always supported me. It's easy to get selfish and get so wrapped up in yourself. When you're so self sufficient as well and you're not dependent on anyone for so long and you've forgotten what it was like to be dependent



and how much you need them. So yeah. Everyday.

H&S: “Black Mamba” “We’ve got one chance to break out and we need it now.” How is the record doing?

William: The record is doing great for the short time that it’s been out. We wrote the record that we wanted to write and it’s honest as hell. Everything about it is honest as hell. That honesty is sort of permeating throughout the record and permeating throughout the room upstairs [the Webster Theater stage] and throughout the country. It’s doing really, really well. We’re really happy with how it’s building. It’s very natural too. We’re not shoving radio down your throat. We’re not shoving singles down your throat. It’s just a really natural, organic growing experience. Kind of like how The Police built from their roots building it slowly with touring and touring and touring.

H&S: I think one of the things that makes your record great is that it’s so personal to you because it’s auto-biographical. And that makes it personal to the people who listen to it. In “Skeptics and True Believers” the line is “Don’t believe a word you’ve heard.” Have you heard anything lately that you just couldn’t believe?

William: Most of the gossip that goes around the Net about our band I cannot believe. There’s just crazy, crazy things about us. Like, I don’t know, there’s just some crazy stuff. Like that we’re heroin addicts and—hey you checked! I saw you! You looked! [indicating to his arm]

H&S: No I didn’t! But you’re so thin.

William: Yeah yeah. Like the Rolling Stones or Scott Weiland.

H&S: Now the rumor’s going to be that you’re the gay guy that goes out with all the girls.

William: Yeah, right.

H&S: They’ll take that one line out of context.

William: Oh man.

H&S: In “Classifieds” there’s the line: “He’s got a decent voice.” So where does your voice come from? You’re about 90 pounds and you have this big, operatic, theatrical voice.

William: I don’t know. I started singing and playing guitar when I was a sophomore in high school and I just sat in my room and played and sang. And sang my

favorite songs and learned Beach Boys songs and wrote my own songs right away. But I don’t know, my voice is a lot different than it was. It was whiney, I was trying to sound like someone else kind of. Then for this new record I just dropped it all and just sang naturally and it just came out really naturally. I study many, many vocalists but I don’t try to emulate any of them other than phrasing. Like phrasing that’s interesting or certain enunciation. But I don’t think too much about it. Just sing and be articulate.





H&S: No formal vocal training?

William: I've done a lot of research on it. I have a vocal Doctor in New York that I went to because I was really sick on the Something Corporate tour. In Jersey I was sick as hell. I had bronchitis so I went to this Doctor and he gave me steroid shots and this crazy shit. But I have a pre-show ritual and I have a vaporizer with this serum so I put a few drops in and I breathe that in.

H&S: I took another line from "Classifieds" "Will you promise yourself this isn't all we've got." Do you have any plans for the next album?

William: The albums been out for what, like a month? And I've written like 13 songs already. Mike, our other writer has written 10 or 11 songs already. So I'm in this crazy zone where I just love song writing. And I'm just studying Simon & Garfunkel and great songsmiths like Don Henley. You listen to his greatest hits and it's like a fuckin' generation... of '80's movies. But they're all great songs. I'm just really, really excited about writing. I'm not even worried about what the next record is going to sound like. These are just acoustic. Like just acoustic songs that are kind of folky. But for the next record I

think that we're going to get a little more rock 'n roll.

H&S: As opposed to?

William: This record sort of covers a lot of bases but I want to incorporate more instruments. I want to incorporate piano and perhaps some strings and percussion and shakers and tambourines. Where we can really focus on making great pop songs with this twist of throwback rock 'n roll. I'm so fucking excited to do a new record because we just want to write like a hundred ballads. Like a hundred Rolling Stones rock 'n roll songs. Just awesome in your face and you can just smell the whiskey on the recording. And a hundred songs that are like this record. And you know on this record each song has it's own little feel, like "Black Mamba" has a flamenco feel. I'm just so excited about writing. But we're constantly touring. We're on the road and then after this we're doing support for Mae. Their new record is great and they're incredible live. We're going to like touring for them. And then we're doing a headlining tour out here on the east coast and the mid-west. Like small intimate spaces. And then we're doing two weeks of Warped Tour. And then we're talking about doing something in late August and then we're going to Japan in September.

H&S: In "Down and Out" "Always up or down, never down and out." What's a high point in your life?

William: Pretty much performing is the highest point of my life. As well as just overall happiness with my view on the world and my view of things. That's sort of what that song is about. It's about all of the bad things that happen to people, that happen to families, that happen to friends. That happen to loved ones. People die. People get divorced. People get raped and domestically abused. And kids see that. And that's not a good thing. But the whole thing is that if you look at it. I'm trying to look at life in a different way. I use this exercise that I try to do every morning. I try to envision both my creative mind and my perception of the world. Lets say that the back part of your psyche is a dark room and you have this little candle in front of you so your only source of perspective is this 4 or 5 inch bubble in front of you and that's all you're focused on. This goes past your view of the world it goes into a writers view of the word as well. A lot of bad art and bad lyrics are from that candle lit view of the world. They're so wrapped up in themselves that they can't just feel around and feel the wall and find the light switch. And you can flip the switch and the whole room illuminates around you and for me that's the rest of the world and that's all of the bright parts of life. It's everything that's happy. But it's also everything that's not. But with that perspective of the entire world you're taking in everything, not just this isolated microcosm of life. And looking at things less selfishly and that's sort of the way that I try to look at life. Those are the kind of lyrics that I'm writing a lot of now. Less focused on self I guess. But in a way that's sort of thought provoking in a positive way.

H&S: Well I'm sure you have a different view of the world now than you did when you wrote this album.

William: Totally. I totally do. But it wasn't too far off. I had it. There was an EP that we did before this and it was so self-righteous. I was just out of high school.

INTERVIEW

Hearts and Sleeves

April 30, 2005



H&S: One of those things that you're glad to have out of print?

William: Yeah, I guess. Uh Yeah, totally. But lyrically it was really good. I was really proud of it. I was singing about a lot of really good things. But it was from the wrong angle. It was me sitting with a candle in front of me in a dark room. It was: this is what everyone else is doing wrong in their lives but I'm not going to address what I'm doing wrong. Because I don't want to show you that part. It's what people did wrong to me.

H&S: It's hard to admit that shit.

William: Right. I think that's what this record is. I think it's stepping into that.

But it's okay. It's okay to have faults. It's okay to make mistakes. It's okay to accept those things and take a deep breath and look around you and notice that there's people that love you. And you're on tour with your band and you're doing what you love. Or you wake up and you have 3 kids and they're doing well in school and you have a loving wife and it's like this is good. This is really good. So that's the direction that I want things to continue to go.

H&S: The final song is "Almost Here" the line I chose was "Hey now we're almost home" What do you miss the most about home?

William: The weird thing about home is, I hate to do this but you've seen Garden

State, right? His whole idea of home isn't a place, it isn't a house anymore it's just a feeling of home. And for me I guess it's just this daily feeling where it's regimented and I'm used to this but home is when I'm on stage. Home is when I'm talking to people. And talking to fans. That's home to me. I feel it when I'm home as well, you know, in the people around me. I was thinking about that the past 2 days you know, this is home for me. I love it. I mean I miss my girlfriend like hell. I miss my family. But this is home.

H&S: Thank you for taking the time to talk with us and we wish you the best of luck on the road.

