

PANIC! AT THE DISCO

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Stuttgart Die Röhre

TD/Brendon Urie & Spencer Smith: GENERIC RADIO INTERVIEW**1. For starters: What made Ryan and Jon leave the band in 09?**

Spencer: Yes, you know, it wasn't something that happened overnight. Obviously, uhm... you know, from the time that we were finishing "Pretty Odd", recording, and we were writing in the studio. So some of those last songs that we wrote were recorded just a few days after. And then also while we were on tour, we didn't start writing new stuff right at the beginning of tour. But, you know, the last maybe 6 months of touring for "Pretty. Odd" we started writing. But it was kind of apparent then because ah, Brendon was writing on his own and Ryan was writing on his own. And I don't know, there is a, it just was kind of apparent to us that the dynamic or the relationships weren't the same. Didn't feel the same, didn't feel as comfortable. It felt like we weren't necessarily as eye to eye as we had been previously. And so, when we got done touring, at first there was sort of a, you know... we had talked about maybe Ryan doing a project as sort of a side thing. Taking a little break and then still doing Panic which was an option. We also considered, we knew that Ryan and Jon, when they decided that they definitely wanted to do something under, you know, a different name. And we didn't know right from the beginning if we were going to continue with Panic. There was like, you know, we talked about for a little while maybe doing our own thing. But I think that it, we kind of looked back and even at the time attributed to the fact that, most the bands we look up to you know, were putting out their first record at the age that we are now. You know, and so we were kind of going through the time where you're figuring out all of exactly what you want and who you are in the band. You, you know, might or hopefully turn into your career. While being on tour and having fans kind of keeping up with what you're doing. So, you know, but now looking back on it - after were done with this record - I think that it was, it was the right thing to do. And I think that they're happier doing what they're doing, and as are we.

2. What about the name? Why keeping Panic! for the two of you?

Brendon: No, there, I mean there were I'd say a month at least where we were unsure. When that process was happening we kind of talked about starting a new project and putting it under a new name. But then we realized like even the demos that we had were more in line with what, you know, we had done in the past as the band. So it would have made sense to just keep going. And Ryan and Jon wanted to leave the idea of Panic anyways and start a new project. So it made sense, yeah of course we should keep the name. This is what we want to do anyways. So it just made sense, and I'm actually, I'm really glad that we did. Because it is, it's, it's a new band, but in the same energy as when we started.

3. Was "Pretty. Odd" pretty much Ryan's album then?

B: Oh no, not at all. I mean, we definitely worked on that as a band. And that was, we're still very proud of that record. And a couple songs, one I can think of specifically right now, called "Always", definitely comes from a similar vein of "Pretty. Odd." I was able to have a couple songs on that record as well on my own that weren't just the band working on songs. So that was another indication uhm... we all had songs where we wrote them on our own. So I guess that was more of an indication of where everything was going, Ryan and Jon leaving and us continuing Panic, so.

4. But you're obviously over that Beatles psychedelic pop thing?

B: Oh, we still love The Beatles very much. Ah... I mean we'll continue to love The Beatles. I think that was coming into our own and figuring out, you know, on the first record we were jumping around so much with influences, and I think now we've figured out like we... You know, I think there's a lot of bands that we stuck with over the past 4 years that haven't changed. So that, that's good to know, feels reassuring.

5. Why continuing with just the two of you, instead of forming a new band with new members?

S: At the beginning we were in somewhat of a unique situation. Because there are plenty of musicians out there who would love to come into something that already has somewhat of a name for itself. But that's fine, but that doesn't work, you know. And it's finding people that, first of all, you can get along with and live with as a, you know, have a really a strong relationship with. And, you know, then creatively as well. There's so many, there's such a long checklist of things that you can't just say: "OK, we need two people", and in a few weeks find those two people. It's just not going to happen. And so at the same time, with bands we love, we always are interested in: "How do they work? How do they write songs? Who does what in the band?" And all you have to go off is interviews. And you may not, you're not there in the studio, you don't really know. And so for fans of our band I think each person would have their own idea of what they, how they, you know, thought that our band maybe worked. And I think for us it was nice to just be able to show people that we were able to, you know, we were a part of those writing those records. And it wasn't just one person's project, and we weren't just going in and going along and following somebody else. We are able to make a record that we are really happy with and proud of - the two of us so. You know, that was part of it, but at the same time we've been playing with Dallan and Ian, the same two guys that we've been friends with for a while for two years. We haven't had anybody change since. They were the first guys, and now we're going to start writing new material as we go on tour, and we'll see what happens. Because we are fans of things that they have, you know, wrote in the past. So, it could lead to something more.

6. You being the creative core now, is that more liberating in a sense? Does that make for a different dynamic?

S: It does, because I think that in doing "Pretty Odd", although we grew up on a

lot of the influences for that record, and like Brendon said that was the... the thing was that talking with Ryan and Jon at that time we weren't arguing about influences and what bands we loved. Because we genuinely loved a lot - or I mean I completely understand all of the places that they wanted to go and why. We were just kind of disagreeing on where we wanted the music we were going to make to go. So it was nice, because we felt a little bit confined uhm... on what was sort of allowed during "Pretty. Odd" for the whole band of, of what was going to fit into this record. And now we are able to kind of step out and go back to not really having any rules and, you know, do some things that were a little, a little different.

7. Is that why there are so many different styles on the album and why there's keyboards again – like on the first one?

B: Yeah, definitely uhm... the keyboards ah, yeah we really miss that. You know, it was fun to kind of get out that for a little bit. And ah, you know, we were seen as a particular band after our first record, which kind of put a little pressure on us, I think. And maybe we reacted out of that...

8. "Pretty. Odd" was the complete opposite of the first album, wasn't it?

B: Exactly, and so I think that was in its own right liberating for us as a four piece to try something new. Record songs live like they did in the 60s and the 70s. And uhm... yeah, I think we just, I mean I know that we just really missed the keyboard sounds. And not really having a limit as to what we can do in the studio. You know, like it can only be, you know, live recorded, and it can only sound like this particular time period. And it was definitely fun, and we are still - like I said before - very proud of that record. But it was fun to kind of have no limitations. And Spencer and I definitely are on the same page creatively, uhm... and in the studio it was just, it was great to mess around with stuff that we haven't since the first record, yeah.

9. Are you still in touch with Ryan and Jon? And have you heard their new songs? What are Young Veins like?

B: Yeah. We actually own the record and ah, it's fun. It might sound weird to say or to hear it, but it's true: We are fans of their band and uhm... it's kind of funny, because ah, I mean we've always been a fan of their talents. That's pretty much why I wanted to join the band, it was because I was a fan of Spencer's and Ryan's respectively, just separate talents. And it was just uhm... it was kind of, you know, weird at first to be like: "Oh, this is weird, we're not in the same band, but we're listening to their music." But it was good, it was really cool. And I can say the same for them about us, they've told us we're really excited for you guys, we want you guys, you know, we wish the best for you. And that was important, I think, kind of letting that animosity go uhm... and having that mutual relationship. 'Cause we realize we are just friends and we didn't want to compromise that for a musical taste, you know, and that was a huge breaking

point I think.

10. So you might start a side project with them at one point?

B (laughs): I mean, we haven't talked about it, but, you know, yeah we'll see.
(laughs)

11. What made you pick VICES & VIRTUES for the album title?

B: Uhm... yeah, it's funny. It sprang from the lyrics, the idea of "Vices & Virtues" came from just going through... Usually album titles for us come later after the lyrics have been written. So we went through and started noticing these little things like envy and pride and, you know, all these little things we all get caught up in. Ah, slothfulness. It started ah, springing up ideas. We started doing more research on the internet and found these lists, like multiple lists. There's biblical, there's ah, Aristotle has a list of vices. I mean, there was so many lists of vices and virtues. And it was interesting not having any clue about that before. And uhm... really you know, looking at things like pride and these things that you wouldn't consider vices. I mean, when we heard vices it was things like drinking and smoking and laziness and stuff. It wasn't things like pride and animosity and manipulations, verge and all these things. So, that was uhm... kind of just another point of creativity to look at the lyrics and come up with ah... We usually come up with the album title last so, ah, it was fitting. And it also, it didn't have a bad ring to it. You know, it sounded kind of nice, too. But it definitely ah, tied in all the themes of the songs.

12. Rumor has it you've written songs with Rivers from Weezer as well. Is that true?

B: Oh we did, yeah. We did a writing session with Rivers Cuomo. Uhm... it didn't make the record, but we did get to spend it was probably, it was like an afternoon. It was probably like 3 hours, 4 hours at his house. And we were huge fans of Weezer, we still are. So that was a little unnerving, like going and get to his house and meeting him. And ah, he made it really, he made it really nice though, he was really nice and calm, and we just went in, and he asked what we wanted to write about, we just started writing. And it, it was probably 3 or 4 hours like I said, uhm... and yeah, it didn't make the record, but we have a lot of songs that didn't make the record. It was a long process of writing so, there's still some one's that may be B sides. And, you know, we'll see what happens with them, but he was great, he was really cool.

13. So you had some 30 songs to pick and choose from?

B: Yeah, we had, I mean ultimately 32 song ideas and full songs, like 40 ideas or something like that.

14. Meaning: The next album is already done?

B: We'll see. (laughs) We always love writing new stuff and, and we still want to

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try writing on the road, too. Like when tour actually kicks up again, so that'll just be a nice little exercise.

15. However, this took longer than you expected it to?

B: Yeah, I think at one point during the process we thought the record was done. Uhm... and then we sat back and, 'cause we were so in the process that you don't really have an objective point of view, and so we took about a week of just listening to the demos and the songs and what we had recorded at the time. And just ah, during that time we were still writing, and listening to those songs on their own. And it, we just decided no, we want to keep going, this doesn't feel right, we should keep writing until we're satisfied and excited about this record. That's really gonna make the difference. So we kept going another 5 months, 6 months, and finally I think. You know, we had tell ourselves to stop though, because we... It got to a point where we had these new, new songs. And we were like: Oh, this is awesome, we feel really good about it." And we said: "OK, now we're done, we're done, we'll keep the old ones and keep some new ones, and I think it's a good mesh of the two. So..." It was good. (chuckles)

16. And Mark Hoppus was supposed to be producing some?

B: We talked about it. It was never decided fully. We didn't have a deadline or any dates set for it. But ah, yeah I still think it would, it would be really great to work with him in the future. But we'll see what happens.

17. How was touring with Blink? It's been their reunion tour, hasn't it?

B: Yeah, it was their reunion tour. And that was really awesome of them to bring us out.

S: Yeah, yeah. I mean, but that's kind of a good, it was weird that that was the first thing that we did. Because they were a band that we loved growing up, and obviously the same sort of thing - except they did their own projects and uhm... individually, and then that was the first time they were coming back. So, you know, the time that we got to hang out with those guys we definitely were able to relate with what was going on (chuckles) uhm... splitting. Yeah, and, you know, they were further along ah, they had, had done a lot more as a band. But, you know, it was somewhat similar. So that was yeah, it was interesting. And I guess they're working on a record now. So, you know, it's a... I guess you never know what can happen.

18. With the two pairs in the old band going into different directions, was there a concrete concept or plan you were following with this album?

S: No. It, nah, it wasn't like we had a story or some, you know. Yeah, exactly, we didn't have a concept for the album. But at first some of the songs were just

ah... I mean, you know, lyrically it was a big change. That was probably the biggest change. I think musically it was we had to step up and do ah, take on more, but lyrically was, was the biggest thing. And uhm... a lot of it was just kind of getting in more practice and getting, you know, finding for Brendon finding a voice in what he wanted to, to write about. We had a lot that, you know, we wanted to write about, but some of those first songs were you know, just good practice. Although then at a certain point some of those songs ended up making the album. But then, as we were finishing it, it became apparent that, you know, there was somewhat of a through line, at least lyrically. And that's what led to the title.

19. As opposed to your previous albums that were more soul digging, and more introverted? This time it seems like you're more outgoing and extroverted...

B: Yeah, I guess it's like a practice in becoming outgoing. Uhm... 'cause we were very introverted and we were very much in our heads. And didn't, you know, necessarily want to share too much or disclose too much information. It was like that withholding information and how do you share this in a manner, in which you can kind of mask emotion. But this time around it was still wanting to tell stories and have grandiose lyrics, because we've always been fans of that, but ah, my style of writing is still pretty different. And uhm... it was finding that voice and finding that confidence that took a little bit of time. But uhm... yeah, it was just a new exercise, it was kind of a just new practice for me to kind of create these, these new things. And I mean, like Spencer said, we had a lot of things to talk about. You know, there's a song that uhm... I mean it seems to me that it directly just ah, it talks about the split, you know, Ryan and Jon leaving. And how we were feeling about it at that time. And uhm... you know, and there's other songs, too, where there's just a lot going on. We had just moved to California and, you know, we were getting to know a new area. And uhm... yeah, it's just a lot going on in our heads and in our hearts. I mean, there was a lot of emotion and things just carried on. And yeah, it was just a good practice for us to kind of become outgoing. And ah, I think the last song on the record called "Ready To Go" is kind of a nice exercise in that, too. Like we had just, it just shows: Yeah, we been in the studio for long enough and here's our voice and we're ready to get out there. We want to get back out there and let's do this, so.

20. Not sort of decoding stuff anymore?

S: Yeah, I mean there's a, there's a few things, you know, like uhm... in the songs that seem like they're about one thing and are about another. Like "The Ballad Of Mona Lisa" seems like it's about a guy and a girl in the story. But really it's about a duality in nature, in yourself really. And ah, kind of a, like the whole record is kind of a case in like human behavior and how we saw things playing out, and how they actually played out. Uhm... so it was just interesting getting used to ah, just the two of us writing and just a new experience altogether.

21. And what made you pick the Mona Lisa for an image? Because it is this mysterious painting, and nobody knows what Leonardo Da Vinci

really meant by it.

B: Exactly, yeah I think that you said it. It's ah, Mona Lisa is one of those pieces of art, just one, you know, but a very prevalent one in the art community that is so beautiful, because it, you can interpret it so many ways. And for us, the way that we were writing it, it just, it touched on that. It was, you don't know whether, you know, she's smiling, she's frowning, she's... what emotion is she masking that, that isn't getting across here that you are, you know, inferring for yourself. And uhm... it's really the case for everybody, ah you kind of assume one thing and it might be another, but who's to say? You know, it's open for interpretation. So that for us was kind of an important uhm... tie even for the song lyrically. It was like. "Oh, that really ties the idea together", because that's exactly what it's about, it's masking that emotion in character form and story form. But really it's about this one thing, so.

22. You mean you've had your Mona Lisa moments?

S (laughs): We've had Mona Lisa moments, yes of course. I think everybody does, you know, trying to mask that, yeah. (laughs)

23. Especially in LA. So what on earth made you leave Vegas and move to Santa Monica?

S: Yeah, yeah Santa Monica. I think a few things. We kind of wanted a change in scenery, mostly. But uhm... I don't know, California is great, like the art community and the music community is totally different from Vegas. Uhm... we both discovered that, you know. Vegas doesn't really have too many venues that are letting bands play, especially younger bands, up and coming and so. LA they're everywhere, and so that's really great to just get out there and watch bands live, which you couldn't really do in Vegas. Uhm... you can go see a show and a production on the Strip, but it's a little different. So that intimate setting we kind of missed, and even being by the ocean kind of has a different feel. So that was cool to be a part of that.

24. Are you near 3rd Street or where are you at?

S: Close! I'm pretty close to there actually. I'm a, I'm probably like 2 miles away, 3 miles away from that. But ah, yeah, it's still near Venice and Main Street which I love that area. So, it's uhm... you know, not too far of a drive to get to the beach and ah, or up to the mountains even. And, you know.

25. You guys started surfing as well?

B: We did. We'd started surfing like right when we moved there actually - like two years ago. And ah, we, we've tried it out a little bit, it's good exercise. (laughs)

26. Apart from playing "Call Of Duty"?

B: Oh, man. That's a, that was, I think in the last uhm... God probably in like the last month of recording, just every time we'd get home from the studio like late at night, it was a, we'd just play that for a couple of hours. (chuckles) It's addicting. That's a vice, that's one of our vices, I guess. There you go. It ties in. (laughs)

27. And then there's "Sarah", I hear.

B: Yes, "Sarah Smiles". That was important, personally for me uhm... that was a song where I wanted to get that message across to her. Uhm... it was really to woo her. I had only been talking with her and seeing her on and off for a little bit. But I had never felt that way about anybody and I was so infatuated with her that I felt the best way for me to explain it and get my emotion across to her was through music. So that was like, you know, uhm... ultimately my best medium for telling people how I feel. And especially for her I just ah, I really wanted to win the girl in this situation. You know, so I wrote her the song and that won her heart. So I feel very proud of that.

28. So it worked?

B: It worked, it worked. (laughs) I did it, I won the girl, yeah it was awesome.

29. Are you part of the LA community yet? Have you actually settled down to the point where you are getting to know people?

B: Yeah, yeah we've gotten to know a few people. Uhm... we're familiar with, you know, there's some friendly faces when we go in certain parts of LA. I mean, it's so massive, there's so many different pieces to LA, it's such a big community. But, yeah, you know, it's great for us, because you can go to so many different parts for different things that you need. Uhm... whether be it art or restaurants or friends, you know, it's, it's kind of a nice big place to see all that. So we do, we have some friends though. Especially going to the studio with John Feldmann and Butch Walker, uhm... separately, but it was kind of, kind of cool to just be making some friends, and music friends at that, you know. It's more comfortable that way.

30. Plus it should be helpful if you want to go into scoring. Like you did with "Jennifer's Body"...

B: Yes, I mean we would love to be a part of soundtracks. I mean, that was, that was fun. Ah, we had that song written before we knew it was going to be for a movie. But it was cool at least to be a part of that. And I think, you know, knowing that we could be on a movie score or something, maybe we would write with the intention of making it more cinematic sounding. So that would be really cool. But I think ah, scoring would be something we'd be definitely would be into. Yeah, it's good, good idea.

31. You're touring as we speak, but there's two parts to this - one is said to be more intimate, and the other is bigger venues after the release of the album. What are you planning on?

S: Yeah, well we uhm... we've got three shows. We did the New York show a week ago, the London show last night and then tomorrow uhm... the show here. So, ah, these are, tomorrow is going to be actually the largest venue of the three. But uhm... it's the first time we're playing the new songs live. And uhm... it's just, it's nice for us playing, you know, smaller venues. Although, you know, a few hundred people to us, you know, a few years back is still a decent amount of people, honestly. But, you know, everybody in the audience was ah, a big fan, you know, and people that uhm... whether it's the fan club people or, you know, people who had to wait in line early to get a ticket. So, uhm... it's nice although every video ends up online, like 5 hours after you've done the show, it was nice to debut some of the new material in front of a smaller audience. And after this uhm... in April we're coming back to the UK and Europe for a few weeks. And then we're going back to the US. But it's going to be uhm... theatre, you know, 1000-1200 seat places. I'm not sure uhm... that's what we're planning for the US. And we're just sort of booking the stuff over here. So I would say, you know, 800 to 1200 seat places. Which is ah, really comfortable or 'cause it's a lot of times - like I said - theatres. So it's very conducive for the show that we like to put on. And we can dress up the venue ah, into our night.

32. Will there be new outfits as well?

B: Oh definitely, yeah. We like to dress up, you know this. It's a, it's a good time. Yeah, we like to setup, it's like a special occasion, we love dressing up for these shows. And creating an environment where it feels like you're stepping into this new world. So it is fun, and we're definitely going to have some outfits. I mean, were gonna, you know, we like to dress in some outrageous clothing. Oh, we like to dress in some outrageous clothing - as usual. Uhm... just usually stuff that we haven't done before. Uhm... and, you know, this time around it's not as grandiose as maybe a circus tour, uhm... maybe not that theme. But ah, we still like to dress up. So whatever it ends up being ah, being talked about right, it'll still be a good time - as it usually is.

33. When are you going to do launch your musical then?

B: Woo, that would be awesome! I don't know. Like a Broadway, I don't know. I've always been a fan of that stuff and I, I hope to do that in the future.

S: Yeah, I've been wanting to - if we ever get a chance in New York - to ah to see the Green Day one. I mean, that's a really, like one of the first uhm... rock bands that I've heard of ever, ever doing. I don't know if it's happened in the past or not, but, you know, in the past decade it's the first thing that I've known of. So it'd be awesome to see what they are able to do.

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