

Ever since Scott Hutchison started releasing music as Frightened Rabbit more than a decade ago, his emotionally honest and incisively worded lyrics have been among the project’s most beloved qualities. Over the course of five albums, including their new *Painting of a Panic Attack*, Frightened Rabbit’s frontman has made poetry of his misery, and still somehow managed to make it sound anthemic -- like a triumphant rallying cry rather than a downer. In all of those respects, *Painting of a Panic Attack* - produced by The National’s Aaron Dessner - is the band’s most accomplished collection yet. “Great songwriters touch a nerve, and I think Scott really touches a nerve with these songs,” says Dessner. “To me, lyrically, this album is a step above anything he’s written before.”

Beginning with the 2006 debut album *Sing The Greys*, Frightened Rabbit have become one of the U.K.’s most beloved exports. Though originally self-released, *Sing The Greys* earned the band a deal with indie label Fat Cat Records, who re-released the album and the two that followed: 2008’s Midnight Organ Fight and 2010’s *The Winter of Mixed Drinks*. Their last album, 2013’s *Pedestrian Verse*, marked their Canvasback / Atlantic Records debut, as well as their most critically and commercially successful albums to date. In the UK, that LP was dubbed “a triumph” by *The Quietus*, while *The Guardian* described it as “a collection of stirring, instant anthems.” Equal praise came from wide swath of U.S. outlets, including *Rolling Stone*, *Time* magazine, and *Pitchfork*, who praised Hutchison’s “lucid assessments of social and emotional turmoil.” The album also helped Frightened Rabbit achieve new commercial milestones, bringing a Top 10 debut in the U.K..

“I think a lot of this new record is informed by reaching a conclusion of sorts with *Pedestrian Verse* -- closing a door on a sound that we came the closest to achieving with that album,” says Hutchison. After taking some time off from Frightened Rabbit to record and tour in support of the 2014 solo album he released as Owl John, the singer returned to his band with the goal of continuing to explore new approaches to songwriting. One important aspect of that evolution has been a shift to a more collaborative process, with all five band members contributing as songwriters.

*Painting of a Panic Attack* began in the summer of 2014, when the band -- Hutchison, his brother/drummer Grant Hutchison, bassist Billy Kennedy, guitarist/keyboardist Andy Monaghan, and multi-instrumentalist Simon Liddell (who worked with Hutchison and Monaghan on Owl John and joined Frightened Rabbit after Gordon Skene’s amicable departure) -- convened in Wales to begin demoing ideas. “We started as though we were making an instrumental album,” Hutchison explains. They wrote and tracked approximately a song a day during the course of a couple weeks and ended up with a dozen ideas that Hutchison took back with him to his new home in Los Angeles, where he would tackle the lyrics.

The singer had relocated there from Glasgow earlier that same year, and, although initially optimistic about the move, he was surprised to quickly discover that he felt profoundly out-of-step in LA. “I don’t usually get homesick,” he says, “but I’d never gone so far from home for such a long period of time before.” Being disconnected by friends, family, and especially his bandmates was a stark contrast to his life while making *Pedestrian Verse*, where the band moved in together, forging a camaraderie and connection that was, in Hutchison’s own words, “gang-like.”

As he worked his way through the Wales demos, Hutchison says, “I was circling what could be a central idea for this record -- this sense of not really being sure why I was in LA. But I was still avoiding admitting that that was how I felt.” He sent a few tracks to his brother Grant for some feedback. “Grant was like, ‘Are you really saying what you think here?,’” Hutchison recalls. “Initially I was pissed, but as I thought about it more I realized that he was right. That, out of the desire for this album to be different, I was avoiding writing about the stuff that actually matters to me and the things that were going on with me at the time. I was fictionalizing a bit too much. And after that conversation, a lot of things came into focus.”

The first thing he wrote after that -- the anthemic “I Wish I Was Sober” -- is sure to become one of *Painting of a Panic Attack*’s signature songs. “It’s a lonely song,” says Hutchison. “There’s a lot of that on this record, because I was really lonely in LA. And I think that’s what ‘I Wish I Was Sober’ came to represent: that desperate point where you’re like, ‘I have had too much and I don’t have anyone to lean on.’”

Of first single “Get Out” -- a tune about a lover you’ll never get over -- Hutchison says: “‘Get Out’ is about that person to whom you are completely addicted. They are a drug, and the one that you don’t feel like quitting. They live in your blood and will not leave. I’ve always found it compelling to write about the physical nature of love and loss, rather than the mental aspect. ‘Get Out’ continues that exploration and takes it to a somewhat obsessive level.”

As Hutchison continued to work on the new songs, he reached out to Dessner to discuss collaborating -- maybe writing a couple songs together. The two musicians originally met in 2013, when Frightened Rabbit opened for The National on a month-long tour. But Dessner was also a longtime fan of the band, and quickly became the obvious choice to produce *Painting of a Panic Attack.* “Before this,” Hutchison notes, “we’d never actually worked with a producer who had such a distinct awareness of our catalog and where we’d been as a band. And Aaron was very mindful of that -- what we had done in the past and where we needed to go with this album to take us creatively forward.”

Frightened Rabbit arrived at Dessner’s Ditmas Park, Brooklyn studio last August with thirty contenders for *Painting of a Panic Attack*, and whittled down from there over the course of the following month. As they considered which direction the album should take, Hutchison says it became clear that the best tracks were the ones with the most emotional immediacy. “‘I Wish I Was Sober’ is not the first song I’ve written about being drunk, and ‘Break’ is not the first song I’ve written about being a fuck-up and wishing I wasn’t, but it turns out there are many ways of expressing that,” says Hutchison. “I think people who are fans of our band come to us for a sense of belonging. I know that’s not unique to us, but I really do believe that our music can come to a person at a pivotal point in their life and that we can become this place to consider where you are in the world.”

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