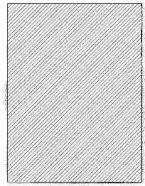


**106**



# WAKE-UP CALL

**FOALS** FIND THEIR FEET ON THEIR SECOND ALBUM OF EPIC INDIE-ROCK. BY NICK DUERDEN. PHOTOGRAPHED BY JUNG KIM

IT'S EARLY IN the afternoon on the second date of Foals' first U.K. tour in well over a year, and singer-guitarist Yannis Philippakis is still trying to wake up.

"We played Liverpool last night," the 24-year-old says, stifling a yawn, "and the crowd got really into it. We did, too. It was—" he can stifle the yawn no longer, and so here it comes—"feral," he concludes afterward.

It was also something of a relief for the Oxford, England-based quintet, which back in 2008 were among the more notable emerging British acts. It was then that they released their debut album, *Antidotes*, an urgent post-punk record of unusual lucidity and fidgety tunes in the spirit of Talking Heads. Two years later, on the eve of their second album, *Total Life Forever*, they want confirmation that they still have an audience. "And last night we got it," Philippakis says, with palpable relief.

Foals made for a fairly atypical British indie act, one marked not just by the angular fervency of their songs but also an overriding intelligence (Philippakis, for example, was an English major at Oxford University until he ditched school to pursue music full-time). They quickly became the recipients of a great deal of hype, but in hindsight, the singer says, they didn't handle it particularly well: "Early recognition is like receiving a compliment from a distant auntie. It felt embarrassing, and we wanted to shake it off."

*Total Life Forever* is a considerable leap forward from its predecessor. It's less urgent and more widescreen, more cinematic; one of its overriding inspirations, Philippakis explains, is the ocean. "We were watching films like *The*

*Abbyss* and *The Big Blue*, and we wanted to write songs with that kind of atmosphere."

Literally, it's still knitted together with Philippakis's habitual sense of soul-searching anxiety. "It's that whole, you know, 'Show me a hero and I'll write you a tragedy' thing," he says, quoting Fitzgerald. "Full of doubt and insecurity."

The singer is already on record as having described the band's new chapter as "tropical prog" and even "like the dream of an eagle dying," statements that surely add credence to the rumor that he likes to write songs while stoned. "I do smoke, yes," he concedes. And had he been high when he made those claims? "You might be right...."

The band chose to record the album in Sweden, the main reason being they had never been there before. "We like to record in places we have no external ties with, no connections," Philippakis says. "It keeps things interesting." Not quite as interesting as Thailand, however, their first choice of location. "They've actually got some fantastic studios there," he says, "and we'd just seen *Apocalypse Now*, which is why we wanted to go somewhere exotic. But we were eventually persuaded against the idea." He pauses. "Probably for the best. The outside temptations could have interfered with our focus."

Foals will release the album in June, and the singer admits that the band's collective mood is one of anticipatory caution, perhaps even nervousness. "There are days when we feel quite insecure about all this," he says. "But then there always was a healthy amount of neurosis in this band. And to be honest, I wouldn't want it any other way. It keeps us alert."

FROM LEFT: walter gervers, jimmy smith, edwin congreave, jack bevan, and yannis philippakis.