

ALMOST GET SERIOUS

Blink-182

an interview with
Mark Hoppus

By Iris Wiener



In 1999 punk rock had yet to experience its full rebirth. Sure, Green Day had opened the door, and the raw quality of their music was undeniably influential, but their sound hadn't fully resurrected the genre as we've come to know it in the present. When Blink-182 took the world by storm with *Enema of the State*, no one could have guessed the wealth of sound that would permeate the airwaves for years to come. With an unrivaled mix of creative flair and humorous twang impeccably mixed with soul-searching sentiment, Blink would eventually capture the hearts and imaginations of millions of dotting fans. November 2003 brought the release of their darkly motivated self-titled album, and with a rejuvenated tour on its way, Blink continues to intelligently create and progress. Vocalist and bassist Mark Hoppus took some time out to reflect on the new album and his bandmates, and to give Long Island a taste of the band who will take to the stage of the Jones Beach Theatre on June 9.

Blink-182 marks a turning point for Blink, as it evolves from their signature teenage punk sound to a resounding attempt to search for an even, emotional plane of understanding and contentedness. "We really thought that this record stood apart from other records, at least to us. We approached this record in a different manner, it was the most honest we've written, we wanted the songs to stand on their own," remembers Hoppus. "We've always tried to be honest with the music and the lyrics, but this record is really about what we're feeling right now. In the past we've written about things that have happened to

us years ago, or maybe something that happened in high school, or a friend of ours, but this record is about things that are happening to us right now."

Right now Hoppus, guitarist and vocalist Tom DeLonge, and drummer Travis Barker are touring the U.S. as they co-headline with No Doubt. With the enormous response *Blink-182* has already garnered, the tour will be one of the biggest of '04. But the album's anything-but-airtight equation made for an interesting journey to this point in time. "We had all these different ideas when we started, and we recorded this record over the course of a year, so any notion that we had in the beginning completely changed by the time that the record finished. We started off and we thought that we didn't have a place we wanted to go with the music, but just that we wanted to try all these different sounds and instruments and arrangements and things. When we were recording and we came to a point where we were saying to

ourselves, 'Is this too different, will people understand this?' we embraced that, and tried to push it even further."

And with that, the band self-titled the album, really allowing it to show their true colors. "We wanted the songs to stand for themselves, and for people to not have any preconceived notions as to what was going to be on the album. We also felt that this was the rebirth of our band. We approached this album like it was our first record and we had that attitude through the whole thing and when it came time to title the album, we didn't want to have a title because we didn't want to try and label it in any way."

With major hits "I Miss You" and "Feeling This," Hoppus gives the band's concurrent support and workmanship much of the credit for the exultant, unique quality of *Blink-182*. "We've always been very collaborative, but even more so on this record. Everything and everyone was putting in different ideas for all kinds of stuff; different lyric ideas, different arrangements, different guitar parts, all things and anything like that. We were involved in every aspect, it was really fun," he says fondly. "It was cool because it took so long to record the record, and we didn't record things in a linear fashion. We didn't work on one song straight through, we'd work on different parts of the same song, or work on a new song, but we had all this time! And everyday, any new idea we had, we went in and explored. We're very blessed to be doing what we do, and if you're not having fun at it, then why are you doing it, you know?"

One of the many things Blink is well known for is the childish, yet liberating fun

they've had on-stage in their previous tours. But with a new angle to their music, might their stage personas change? "This summer is going to be a little different than Blink shows that people have seen in the past, we don't talk as much as we used to not that we don't talk, we definitely still do," Hoppus laughs. "I have to let people know that Tom likes to listen to Enya! But back then we used to play a song, and talk for ten minutes and play another song, and talk for a half-hour. This time it's like we play two or three songs, and then we play another three or four songs together. We're trying to make this more about the music, we still act like fools every now and then if we feel like it," he admits. "It's just that we don't feel the need to get up there and try and act silly for an hour and a half; we're just ourselves. There really isn't a standard Blink show anymore."

Yet for Hoppus, performing at Jones Beach brings back memories of his wilder side. "I threw my bass into the water at Jones Beach once, that was fun!" he admonishes. "Every time I look at the water, I want to jump in but there are sharks in there. The last time we played there at 2am, we were hanging out by the water, there were sharks in there, about two or three feet long. They're small," he says in a half-hearted, less than convincing tone. And thankfully, the sharks haven't scared him away. "New York is always so fun, I love it there. The energy in New York is amazing, it's so alive, there's so much happening and so many different things going on!"

Blink has never failed to please fans with their unmatched sound and sporadically inspirational lyrics. As the band revs up to show the nation another side of the iconoclastic punk they've scrupulously created, listeners should be prepared for a different ballgame. "The songs [fans] will hear on this album are more introspective and moodier. I just think we were ready to explore that side of our minds. We can't wait to be on tour and come to town to let people hear for themselves." ■