

Michael Fitzpatrick, Jeremy Ruzumna, James King, John Wicks, Joseph Karnes, and Noelle Scaggs.



# DREAM CATCHERS

AFTER SEVERAL YEARS OF SCHLEPPING ON THE SESSION-MUSICIAN CIRCUIT, L.A. POP UPSTARTS FITZ AND THE TANTRUMS HAVE ARRIVED. BY DAN FRAZIER. PHOTOGRAPHED BY AARON STERN

**THE MEMBERS** of Los Angeles band Fitz and The Tantrums were never just a fresh batch of college dropouts benefiting from blogger buzz. “We’ve all been doing this for a long time,” says vocalist Michael “Fitz” Fitzpatrick, his cockatoo hairstyle adding inches to an already towering presence—even seated, as he is now, next to co-vocalist Noelle Scaggs, who recently traded in her sleek Supremes-style bob for a highlighter-hued buzz cut. For many years, Fitzpatrick, Scaggs, drummer John Wicks, bassist Joseph Karnes, keyboardist Jeremy Ruzumna, and multi-instrumentalist James King were session and touring musicians for other bands, so it didn’t take long for them to solidify into the dapper pop powerhouse they are today.

The band’s critically acclaimed debut album, *Pickin’ Up The Pieces*, and a productive work ethic quickly led to opening slots on national tours with No Doubt and Maroon 5 as well as late-night television appearances. “We all felt that there was a different energy about this band,” says Fitzpatrick. “Magic happens for some people right at the beginning of their career. Then there are the rest of us with tenacity and perseverance. If you stick around long enough, your time will come, and that was the story for all of us. So maybe our collective juju was at such a maximum

capacity that it just had to happen.”

Persistence mixed with juju or not, Fitz and The Tantrums’ popularity can ultimately be attributed to their sound, a fresh mix of Motown and new wave that stands out against some of the more riff-heavy offerings on the pop radio dial, not to mention their outrageously energetic live performances. “We always think about the audience when writing songs,” continues Fitzpatrick. “We consider them the seventh member.”

When Dangerbird Records president Jeff Castelaz left the label for Elektra, he took Fitz and The Tantrums with him. The band’s first step in declaring their continued

grooming: cori bardo at the magnet agency using oribe. makeup: tsipporah liebman using m.a.c cosmetics.

success was to name their follow-up *More Than Just a Dream*. “A lot of people didn’t expect us to get to where we are today,” says Fitzpatrick. “This [album] is a statement about how we’re here to stay. On the first record, people heard throwback or retro. But on this one we’re pushing the boundaries of how people define us.”

A big reason for the shift is that the first album was primarily Fitzpatrick’s vision, while *Dream* carries the collective input of the band and producer Tony Hoffer (M83, Goldfrapp). The energy and tempo remain, but the elements have either evolved or expanded. “We brought in vintage synthesizers and drum machines,” says Fitzpatrick. “The first record was ’60s in the foreground and ’80s in the background. This one is the reverse of that.” But *Pickin’ Up the Pieces* fans need not worry—the album still makes you want to dance. “It’s definitely a party record,” assures Wicks. “BPMs were bumped up. At the end of our gigs, we still want people to be sweaty messes.”