

## Jack Antonoff discusses

# BLEACHERS

"I didn't plan to start a new project. Furthermore, looking back on it, it was an extremely un-ideal time to make a record, as I was on a world tour with fun. Yet I felt extremely compelled to do it. Many times when I should have been asleep, or resting, or eating, I would go to the studio. In Stockholm, Malaysia, in my room recording all day in Australia, literally all over the place. When I'd have two weeks off, I'd head into the studio in New York or L.A. and sift through everything I had done overseas and figure out what was interesting and what was garbage.

Then one day I realized I had an entire album and that I had made it all over the world. My experience making albums before this was that you lock yourself in the studio for two weeks, make the album, and it's a documentation of the art in that moment. This could not have been more the opposite. I had, in the most literal sense, a wide perspective. I would work on something in South Korea, then I'd come home and be like, "this sounds like someone recorded it in South Korea at 4 a.m. and they're jet-lagged. But this one vocal part is really cool. Let's build on that."

It took me a second to find the rhythm of the album. I became fascinated with that time in culture when John Hughes was making his classic movies. The music was so incredible — all these epic, unapologetic pop songs with incredible forward thinking production. I wanted to hearken back to a time when the hippest shit was also the biggest shit. It made me mourn the happy teen years I never had. I grew up in New Jersey and went to public high school and was tortured for being gay, and I'm not gay. But that's how things were then. I felt really disconnected in that formative time. I think we all freeze at a moment in high school in some way. Hopefully you freeze in a moment where you feel like a piece of trash who needs to prove something and be better, not in a moment where everyone thinks you're a blast. It's where the name Bleachers comes from. It conjures feelings of that time for me in a non literal sense. I don't know why, it just does.

I wanted Bleachers to have a nostalgic element, so some of the emotions almost do feel a little John Hughes-y. But I didn't want it to be a retro album. It had to be fully pushed into the future while grounded in that moment that means so much to me. That's why I brought in the producer John Hill. He is very modern in everything he does. He's always looking for new techniques and a way to differentiate the work. Vince Clarke, from Depeche Mode, Yaz, and Erasure, worked on a bunch of stuff as well and added the grounding in the time period I was inspired by. I mean, Vince literally made some of the albums that inspired me to do Bleachers in the first place. It was really full circle to have one of the people who inspire you to create with you.

Lyrically, I'm writing about a lot of the same things I wrote about with my previous band Steel Train, one of them being my sister dying when I was 18, which completely changed my entire existence. Right before that, 9/11 happened. Like most of us, it had a massive impact on me. Then my cousin was killed in the Iraq war. All this at once was a real end of innocence time period. I went through so much in the aftermath of all that and developed a very intense panic disorder. I had a really hard time for many years before I started to find my way a bit more. But obviously, it is a huge part of who I am. As a result, I feel like the songs are generally about loss and finding a way to pick up the pieces and move on without

carrying too many of them with you. But even though they can be really dark, they always come around to something positive. Moments where I think, "Fuck it all," aren't what drive me to make music. It's more like driving home at 2 a.m. and having a breakthrough about how you're going to survive that makes it into the music."