

## Plain White T's

For almost a decade, the Plain White T's have been playing to packed audiences craving for that perfect pop-punk punch. Their journey, which began in a small suburban basement playing covers, has taken the band to Warped Tour three times, landed them opening slots for bands like Jimmy Eat World and AFI, and now finds the high-energy five-piece about to kick-off the 2006 Nintendo Fusion Tour with Hawthorne Heights. The Plain White T's are road warriors in the truest sense and with their first major label album, *Every Second Counts*, the band is ready to rock in a big way. Call it hard work or call it destiny, one thing's for sure — the Plain White T's were put on this earth to entertain you.

PWT's story started back in high school, when frontman Tom Higgenson first stepped into Chicago's famed rock club the Metro and saw his future on the stage. With the local music scene exploding nationally courtesy of bands like Smashing Pumpkins and Veruca Salt, he decided the time was ripe for his own dreams to be realized. Armed with paper, pen and guitar, Tom went to task, experimenting with lyrics and melodies on a four-track in his parents' Villa Park, Illinois home. Once he'd reached a level of comfort with his songwriting, he worked up the courage to hand off a tape to Christian Lane, singer of 90s buzz band Loud Lucy, and to his surprise, Christian actually listened to it. "I saw him at a show and he remembered me," Tom recounts. "He told me, 'You should lock yourself in a room with a guitar for a year and you'll be there.' It was very inspirational."

Once he'd recruited a group of school pals — including guitarist Dave Tirio—it was only a matter of a couple years before the Plain White T's, who'd attracted a loyal following thanks to Tom's ridiculously melodic tales of teen angst and loveless nights, were playing the Metro themselves. "Anytime we could get in front of a bunch of kids who'd never heard of us, we saw that as a huge opportunity," he says. "Winning over fans, that's what it's all about. And even from when we were 16, we always wanted to be successful and have a wide audience."

The music industry took notice of that success and after selling thousands of copies of their self-released 2002 debut, *Stop*, PWT's were picked up by Fearless Records (home to Sugarcult, At The Drive-In and The Aquabats) who re-issued the album along with 2005's *All That We Needed*. But it was their heartfelt, acoustic-tinged "Hey There Delilah" that cemented their status as potential hitmakers. "We knew "...Delilah" was going to be something people would like," says Tom, "and it's turned out to be our biggest song yet."

Tom's songwriting evolved after the success of the romantically frank "...Delilah," which really was a departure for a band known for their energetic power pop. On Hollywood Records debut *Every Second Counts*, Tom, along with bandmates Mike Retondo (bass and vocals), De'Mar Hamilton (drums), and Tim Lopez (guitar, vocals), continues to turn the personal into the universal. Throughout the album, he sings of hook-ups and break-ups and the emotional rollercoaster in between. A prime example is lead single "Hate (I Really Don't Like You)," which Tom says is "kind of vindictive, the story of this girl that

I liked who just blew me off, but I couldn't be that mean, so it's more like I'm pissed off. That's what the 'I Really Don't Like You' line is about."

In a similar vein, the lyrics for "Friends Don't Let Friends Dial Drunk" also showcases Tom's offbeat take on love and life, while its melody sucks you in with every turn of phrase. "It's about a girl who would only call me when she was drunk," says Tom. "Then, when she was sober and we'd hang out, she wanted nothing to do with me." Delving slightly deeper into emotional territory are upbeat tracks like "Our Time Now" and "Come Back To Me" as well as one of the album's quieter numbers, "Write You A Song." "Love is what everyone wants," says Tom. "It's what people think and obsess about and I'm no different.

Relationships make you crazy sometimes." Of course, this all begs the question: what's up with his love life? "It's more of a 'like' life," he quips. "As in, the ones I like never like me." But don't cry for the Plain White T's. Like their album title says, this band is making every second count and thoroughly enjoying the ride. "Things are moving faster than expected and we are proceeding with caution," says Tom. "But we're not going to change. Whether we're playing a small club or an arena, we're gonna sweat the same. And if it gets really big, maybe we can finally have a light show!"