

# THE FRANKLYS

WORDS BY  
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"Did feminism ever happen? Did history teach us nothing?" The Franklys are disappointed - and rightly so. A few weeks ago, a small article that was published in an undisclosed magazine, devalued the London four-piece's ability and work ethic to merely being, *'proof that girls can make great noise too!'* Whether that was the intention or not remains to be seen, but with a single, careless sentence, the misogynistic and stereotypical view of women in music - that has plagued the industry for decades - had once again been furthered.

"It's tiresome and lazy writing, and something we should be done with by now," bassist Zoe Biggs defiantly states. "It's something we should not be having to even defend. We're living in a world that's going backwards and as a female; it feels that you have to prove yourself constantly. There needs to be a revolution and everyone needs to be on board."

A revolution, however, is sadly, easier said than done, and uneducated writers are just a part of the problem. As The Franklys rightly point out, the reaction of some gig-goers when they see an all-female band rocking out on stage or readying themselves for their set is often a sexist one. Whether

the comments are overt or sub-conscious, complimentary they are not - despite what the people making them seem to think. Some, however, don't even try to be nice.

"We played a gig recently where we overheard two girls talking, sounding almost disgusted. They were saying, *'oh, it's a girl band next'* as if it was something very much outside of the norm for them, which is a shame. There are always the classics like, *'I don't usually like all girl bands, but I like you'* or *'you play well for girls.'* A personal favourite of ours is, *'oh where's the drummer gone? Has she gone to do some shopping, to buy some new shoes?'"*

As well as the derogatory remarks that female musicians so frequently have to challenge both on and off the stage, the undeniable lack of female bands currently featured on some of the UK's biggest music festivals, is also a worry. The likes of Reading and Leeds Festival, for example, has constantly come under fire due to its lack of gender diversity and constantly male-heavy line-up. It's a consistent occurrence that begs the question of whether or not festival promoters are purposely shying away from female bands. But The Franklys - who've played at both Isle of Wight Festival and Download Festival - suggest it might

After years on the road and a number of major festival appearances, The Franklys finally decided to record their debut album. Following its release, we sat down with them to speak about juggling music with full time jobs, misogyny in the music industry and British politics.



Photography by Derek Bremner





Photography by Paul Johnson

actually be a result of the lack of young women being inspired by rock music.

“Commercially, there just isn’t enough rock music out there that makes girls want to pick up an instrument and go nuts. If you turn on your TV, there’s the X-Factor. If you turn on the music channel, it’s mainly R’n’B and pop. Rock music has never been such a hard business, so I’m not surprised people are being put off. Rock music needs to be made more available to everyone.”

Earlier this summer, The Franklys finally released their long-awaited debut album, *Are You Listening?* - a relentless, forty-odd minute onslaught of punk rock punches, in which there’s no respite. To say it’s been a long time coming would be an understatement. But debut albums are a once in a lifetime occurrence, and so it’s vital that they don’t materialise prematurely.

“We didn’t want to rush into it. You only get one debut album and you want it to be the best representation of yourselves that it can possibly be. I think playing together you build up a really good connection and energy that can then hopefully shine through on the record. We really wanted to wait until we had the right material, right arrangements, right producer and right studio.”

Desperate to capture their ferocious live energy on record, The Franklys enlisted the talents of Sean Douglas - who worked on their debut EP - and Jimmy O and Mikey Sorbello from rock-duo, The Graveltones. But without an energy-exuding audience to perform in front of, capturing the same atmosphere and raw quality that is so prevalent during their emphatic live shows wasn’t going to be easy.

“It’s very different being in a studio, as opposed to jumping around on stage, playing in front of people. We’ve always strived to capture that live energy and sound on our recordings, but we had felt in the past that we didn’t quite manage to translate it onto record. The closest we had got was with our first EP, which we recorded with Sean Douglas at Fish Factory studios. So we went back to Sean and we finally

managed to get that raw energy on to the record.”

Prior to the recording of the album, The Franklys had a long discussion about which tracks to walk into the studio with. Some were old favourites that would go on to be re-recorded and even re-arranged. But not all of their older tracks were quite as lucky.

“We were pretty ruthless and knew which songs we wanted to record. Some old songs we just felt didn’t represent our sound or us as a band anymore, so they were left behind. We recorded twelve songs, so we’d have a good choice, but there was one that we all knew wouldn’t fit with the album. But we have kept it aside for the future. All the rest for us were no brainers.”

Despite what major festival slots and mammoth touring schedules so often lead many to believe, being in a band in 2017 is very rarely a viable source of income. Many of the country’s most promising, young upstarts have to hold down part time or full time jobs just to keep their dream alive - and for The Franklys, it’s no different. All four members currently work full time and therefore when it came to recording their debut album, they often wouldn’t leave the studio until the early hours of the morning. And with time not always on their side, they remarkably managed to record the backbone of the album in just a matter of days.

“The sessions were just fitted in whenever we were free or after work. We would sometimes work as late into the night as we could. We went into Fish Factory Studios in the summer last year for five days and recorded all the drums, percussion and bass, along with some guitars. Then for everything else that was left, and all the mixing, we went to Orgone Studios and Juno Studios.”

In addition to balancing her work and band commitments, Zoe has also been studying a degree at the Open University for the last nine years. Regardless of the long hours and having very little free time, it’s an experience that she describes as “rewarding” and insists that schools and colleges need





Photography by Derek Bremner

## “You can see how life under May is panning out.”

to encourage the alternatives to University a lot more than they are currently doing.

“When I was finishing my A-levels, immediately the question was, ‘*what University are you going to?*’ Nothing was forced down our throats more than, ‘*you have to go to university.*’ I can only speak from my personal experience, but studying with the Open University was one of the best choices I’ve ever made. It’s not perfect, but at least they have a vision for something different.”

At the time of writing, the General Election is only two weeks away. Theresa May is rather surprisingly being thrown to the wolves by the mainstream media over her cowardly U-turn on the so-called ‘Dementia Tax’, and Jeremy Corbyn is busy gatecrashing Libertines gigs and conversing with Grime artists over afternoon cappuccinos. Tory parents are at loggerheads with their Labour-voting children’s new found interest in British politics, and the millennials have turned out in record-breaking fashion, determined to avenge Brexit and take back control of their future. From the Conservative’s perspective, the polls are a bit too close for comfort, but Corbyn’s not won everyone over just yet.

“It’s a difficult one isn’t it?” The Franklys ponder. “If everyone who claims to really support Labour goes and votes for Labour then I think he stands a chance. But then again, it all depends on whether your local Labour MP is any good! He’s been subjected to such a subtle, and sometimes un-subtle, smear campaign it’s boggling. The general theme when he is brought up in conversation with a lot of our friends is ‘*yes, seems like a decent guy, hard working, honest, good values, stands by his principals,*

*but is he a leader? He seems weak!*’ I think you can already see how life under May is panning out.”

The Franklys are also very much in tune with what’s going on across the pond. In January this year, as part of the Women’s March, they put paint to placard and took to the streets alongside 100,000 other Londoners - and over 3.5 millions Americans - in protest of Donald Trump’s Inauguration. It was a demonstration fuelled by his lack of respect for women’s rights and the realisation that, unless you are a white, male in agreement with his questionable ideologies, the next few years could be very bleak. Zoe still remembers hearing of his shock win.

“A few of my friends were trying to stay up all night to watch the results roll in. I think Jen was actually staying round mine and we all thought it might be a tight result, but surely he couldn’t win. It was terrifying waking up during the night to notifications of him winning various key states. And when it was finally sinking in that he had won, I felt angry, sad and then scared. Scared that his behaviour, his words, his appalling racist, homophobic, sexist tantrums and stamping of feet had all just been validated and normalised.”

As rave reviews for *Are You Listening?* roll in, it would be easy for The Franklys to get complacent. But unsurprisingly, that’s not their style.

“It’s probably a dangerous thing to think, ‘that’s it we’ve made it’. You’ve always got to be pushing for that next level and that next step, just never forget where you have come from.”