



James Minchin III

Rhyddian Dafydd, Ritzy Bryan, Matt Thomas

# THE JOY FORMIDABLE

The ambitious indie rockers explore a bolder, broader range of textures

AFTER SPENDING YEARS REFINING their debut album, Welsh rockers the Joy Formidable wrote their follow-up, *Wolf's Law*, on a much shorter timeline. Though the writing process started off in a familiar place, they didn't let that limit them. "We went back to the basics of

songwriting, which was me and Ritzy with a guitar, jamming vocal ideas over it, or one of us playing piano and singing along," says Rhyddian Dafydd, who plays bass and co-writes songs with frontwoman Ritzy Bryan.

The band emphasized lyrics, with song topics ranging from the story of

Kenyan activist Wangari Maathai to more personal matters, like the loss of people close to them—including Bryan's grandfather—during the recording of the album. "We've always been a lyrical band, but this brought a nakedness to the songwriting process," says Dafydd.

Known for a blistering alt-rock sound, the band varied the pallet of *Wolf's Law* by incorporating fewer rock instruments. "We really enjoyed experimenting with instruments," says Dafydd. "There's a harp, timpani and Chinese drums—not for the sake of being excessive; we just enjoy being playful with sounds." The band also wrote their string arrangements, a first after the guitar-bass-drum instrumentation on their debut, *The Big Roar*. "Ritzy and I have a bit of a classical background, but we're very much self-taught. As long as you've got a good ear, piecing together any composition is a beautiful challenge. If you can hear the notes and know what timbre you want, then it's absolutely possible."

More than possible for a band that's hands-on in every step of the creative process—including producing their own records. It's not about being precious; we just know what we want the records to sound like," says Dafydd. Still, they brought in an outsider to help them with the mixing process. "We definitely needed an extra pair of ears when it came to mixing the record. That's where Andy Wallace came in," says Dafydd. "He understands what you're trying to do on a musical level."

The band is on a mission to grow. "The key thing for us is not to have this formula to repeat on every album. That would be just boring," says Dafydd.

—Amanda Farah

