

SPOTLIGHT



Justin Coit

Benji Madden, Joel Madden

THE MADDEN BROTHERS

The Good Charlotte rockers take a detour to explore a new creative path

HERE'S WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW upfront about Joel and Benji Madden's debut record as the Madden Brothers: "It's completely different from Good Charlotte," says Joel. "If you're looking for high-energy pop punk, it's definitely not that."

The tattoo-covered twins started jamming in their tiny, unheated Maryland bedroom at 15. After moving west with big goals, they became Good Charlotte and released five award-winning studio albums from 2002 to 2011, creating a new industry paradigm for "high-energy pop punk."

But three years ago, they began itching for a fresh start. "We had been on a good run with Good Charlotte. When we got into our 30s, we were like, 'What is life now?'" Joel says. "We're different guys from when we started the band. We thought, 'What if we didn't just have to make Good Charlotte records? What if we made our own record?'"

The Madden Brothers' *Greetings From California* was inspired by the records from their dad's collection that they grew up listening to: the Animals, the Beach Boys, the Eagles, Steely Dan and others. And in the spirit of vinyl, *California* has an A-side and a B-side. The brothers enlisted the help of Eric Valentine—producer of Good Charlotte's *The Young and the Hopeless* and *The Chronicles of Life and Death*—for

one side, and producer Joe Chiccarelli (the White Stripes, the Strokes, the Shins) for the other. Joel describes the A-side as "experimental pop" with "all kinds of sounds and harmonies going on," and the B-side as "more of a live band sound." But, he notes, "It would be inaccurate to say that Joe's side is completely live, but that's how he works. It's very old-school. It's fun making music that way. It's really inspiring."

Joel credits Valentine with a knack for making him a better singer. While recording "We Are Done"—which became an instant Top 40 hit—Valentine instructed Madden to watch a Marvin Gaye video for inspiration. "He was smiling when he sang, and you could almost hear the smile in the performance," Joel says. "Eric has a way of guiding you through it. I can honestly say he teaches me a lot."

The brothers also collaborated with longtime friend Pharrell Williams on "California Rain" and "Good Gracious Abbey," fulfilling their goal of teaming with individuals with a proven track record for making memorable music. "I wanted the record to be special," Joel says. "We're not jumping onto a wave. We're not taking anything from anyone else. We wanted to create a record that could stand the test of time."

—Shauna Farnell

