

Edited by Andrew Frisicano
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Music & Catfish

Gone fishin'

Catfish and the Bottlemen stakes its claim as the hardest-working band around. By Eve Barlow

From left: Robert Hall, McCann, Bond, Matthew Blakeway

BRITISH FOURSOME CATFISH

and the Bottlemen has had quite the journey since putting out its debut album, *The Balcony*, in 2014. Led by frontman Ryan Evan “Van” McCann, the crew has been touring all around the globe, building up from beer-soaked sweatboxes to massive festival slots. This U.S. visit, which includes a Terminal 5 show on Tuesday 18, is a warm-up of sorts for the band’s first, mostly sold-out U.K.-arena tour later this fall. Both come on the heels of its second LP, *The Ride*, released in May: an on-the-road indie-rock album built on big riffs, clattering drums and pint-swiggling, anthem-chanting opportunities. We talked with McCann before the crew sets out.

Hello, Van! Where are you, and how are you?

In scummy Newcastle [England]. It’s class! We just played at an outdoor venue to 5,000 wild Geordies [*Ed. note: People from an area of northeastern England*].

After two years on the road, do you ever want to take a break?

Nah. There are artists who like recording music, but we love

touring. We do albums as quick as we can. Writing songs is about adding to the set list. Like writing a script and watching it play out in front of ya.

Are there bands you look to for career inspiration?

Me and Bondy [guitarist Johnny Bond] were up on the balcony, watching the Killers headline Governors Ball. We had a proper arms-up moment, belting their tunes. They’re dons, proper legends.

What are your rules for the road?

Follow the *craic*! [*Ed. note: Craic is Irish slang for “good times.”*] We just go out wherever’s good. Every night is a night out for us; we play sold-out gigs and go nuts with the crowd.

“Everything’s based on making euphoric melodies that blow the doors off.”

What about daytime?

The boys play golf. In America there are Tin Cup courses. For \$10 you get clubs, a golf cart and a beer.

The Ride contains loads of references to drinking. What’s your booze of choice?

I love Australian white wine, me. Don’t have a specific brand. Never liked wine. Couldn’t even look at it. Then I went to see Van Morrison with my dad at a black-tie thing, and it was all that was on the table.

What is it about your lyrics that fans connect with?

People get tattoos of them, but it’s hard to know. I write lyrics as if I’m texting somebody, having a laugh with it. Everything’s based on making euphoric melodies that blow the doors off.

How do you keep it real when you’re out there in front of thousands every night?

We’ve never been caught up in another world. It’s just me and the lads living on the road, always. We’ve never been like, “Oh, let’s get signed and move to London and be that band.”

What’s your relationship like with New York?

[Mumford & Sons bassist] Ben Lovett, who signed us [to his label, Communion Records], flew me over when I was younger. That was the first time that music put me on a plane. I proper felt the impact. Every time it makes me feel like being an extra on a set—what am I doing here?

If you could have anyone standing at the back of your upcoming NYC gig, who would it be?

Where does the Rock live? Imagine! Probably Mike Myers, but he’d need to come as Austin Powers, my favorite character of all time. I idolize him over anyone. Is he my spirit animal? Oh, he’s in a different league from me.

What’s happening with the third record?

If the label said it wanted another album before Christmas, it would be there. We’d go every six months if we could.

→ Catfish and the Bottlemen plays Terminal 5 on Tue 18 at 8pm (terminal5nyc.com). \$25.