

**New Visions By Chantelle Thompson**

James Hart, front man of Eighteen Visions talks to me about the new record, inspiration and stepping up to a world market.

**When Obsession was released in 2004, you were described by Revolver Magazine as one of the few bands to form the future of American Metal. Did that add pressure for the next album to do so well?**

No, not really. We really just took that as a compliment. We didn't take it and apply it to our music. We don't feel like a metal band and when we compare ourselves to bands like Lamb Of God and Killswitch Engage from over here, and there are some real metal bands over here. Although we come from a metal background or a metal/hardcore scene, Obsession album was more of a departure from that genre of music and more of a straight forward heavy rock album that had metal parts to it here and there, and a lot more melody. So with this album [Eighteen Visions] we didn't really feel pressure at all with "we've got to make a great album because this person said or some people want that". We wanted to make a great album for ourselves and that was the most important thing. I found that, working on the material, we worked really hard. We took a lot of time making the record and we wanted to make sure that everything was how we wanted it to be before anyone else jumped in and said anything about it.

**And has it lived up to your expectations?**

Yeah, absolutely! It's just totally different for what we're doing now just in general. Before we were viewed as a metal/hardcore band and we would go out and do tours with metal and hardcore bands and that's the way it was. But it's not so much like that anymore. There's a lot more behind it; going to radio and trying to work a song up the chart and go out and tour with bands that we wouldn't have necessarily toured with in the past, that are doing the same thing we are like working a song for radio and trying to get it up the chart as well. And we're trying to play more for that type of audience, which is good for us because we still have the old fans that are still coming out but we're also playing to a whole new audience which is amazing and what I think inevitably that's what every band wants to do anyway; is to play to a new audience.

**As the main lyric writer for Eighteen Visions, how difficult is it to take something personal and translate it to a universal market?**

It's really hard actually. I used to write on the older records a bit more abstractedly and I just wrote for myself and my feelings came across the way I wanted to get them across and I didn't worry about the next person being able to interpret what I was saying.

The words were for me and if somebody could make what I was saying out of it then that was cool, and if you didn't quite understand what I was talking about and thought I was talking about something else then that was all fine too, but with this album I wanted people to really

be able to connect to what I was singing about. I wanted it to be more straight forward.

Emotionally, I wanted people to feel the impact as I and the rest of the band do. It's a lot harder to try and find the words and the way you're feeling and also incorporate into a song and melody so it was a little bit tougher this time around but I am extremely happy with the way everything came out and I think that the lyrics this time, on this album, are a lot more universal instead of really tightly personal.

**Well Last Night is the perfect example of being tightly personal. How do you come to the conclusion to take something like that and decide to put it on an album and put it out there and share that with potentially millions of people?**

Because it's something that most people go through in their lifetime and it was a first time experience for me, losing someone that I was really, really, close to. I've always tried to write about stuff that has impacted on me and my life in a way that drives me to write about it and throughout the course of my life that is personal and dear to me.

Not that everything is worth writing about and talking about but this was something extreme that happened so I felt like it was worth trying to put it onto paper and in doing so out came a song and it's probably the most personal song on the album. I think that it's probably one of the songs that's going to connect better with most of the listeners.

**You're personal goal for this album and the rest of your career was to become a better singer. How did you achieve that?**

I just have a really good work ethic. I've always had that. Whether it's been in my previous work or just living, doing jobs and going to school, stuff like that.

I've always just wanted to get the job done so I went and saw the best vocal coach there was and when I did that he had me really find my voice and he helped me to know how to use it properly and from there it was about singing straight on the record and not just sounding like any other singer, and that's a lot to contribute to our producer, Machine, who was really able to strip the personality out of my voice and really take me and push me into that space vocally so that it would really come across artistically rather than just someone singing on the record, which is what I was more comfortable doing in the past.

I never really had somebody pushing me to feel the music and really try to get across what I was saying and it was awesome. It was life changing for me.

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**'Let's get acquainted' with Gotye By Cara Williams**

**Melbourne lad Wally De Backer, commonly known to most as musician Gotye, explains how a gift received from grief-stricken neighbour inspired him to create an album.**



"It was a bit of a sad story", Wally recalls. "My neighbour's wife died, and he didn't want to stay in Australia anymore, he was going to move back to England because he wanted to be closer to family. His wife used to collect a whole bunch of really bad '80s records - he came over one day and said 'they just keep reminding me of her, I'd prefer to give them to somebody who might be able to use them rather than just throwing them away'."

"I ended up just putting them in a corner and listening to a few," he continues.

"I thought there might be some good records in there but there really weren't - Wham's Last Christmas came out of the pile! It took a while for my friend Andy Hutchinson to suggest that I should sample some stuff and it just went from there. We spent one stupid night on beer sampling crap records, it's pretty hilarious."

A few years later and Gotye has released two full-length albums, Boardface in 2004 and Like Drawing Blood in May 2006, a colourful, intricate album that contains over 700 samples from used records. Two and a half years in the making, the album is a complex landscape of sounds that are captivating at every level. Combining blissful electronic beats with darkened pop, intertwined with distinctive samples and sweet vocals, the listener embarks on a fascinating journey track after track

"It's a 9-track", Wally describes. "There's not quite 100 samples to each song but one song got up to almost 100 samples - A Distinctive Sound on the record has all these little snippets of instructional videos, music documentaries - all sorts of stuff on it."

It is no secret that Wally encountered many obstacles when creating the album. After all, Like Drawing Blood was produced solely on his home computer. Moving to and from share houses, numerous computer crashes and external duties (Wally also plays in The Basics) helped contribute to a loss of motivation and an immense amount frustration when creating the album.

"There was certainly a lot of times, especially during computer crashes when I was like 'ah you're kidding me!'," he recalls.

"I was working close to full-time hours in various

customer service type jobs and then coming home and wanted to chill out rather than retreating to a bedroom ... it's hard when you come home from a day of work and organise some stuff for your other band and then go right, I want to go to bed, but I should really do some of this otherwise I'm never going to finish an album."

Thankfully Like Drawing Blood was completed and received a brilliant response from the Australian public. The success of the album has provided Wally with numerous award nominations, vast amounts of recognition throughout the Australian music industry and several invites to perform at various Australian music festivals.

Alluring as these offers of playing to thousands of fans may be, Wally prefers to "present my music in a darkened space", opting towards theatre venues.

"I did this thing last year at the Opera House called Feasting on Flesh, where I incorporated some of my songs into an original theatre piece. It was a mixed media piece that included acrobatics, burlesque, circus, and I covered the music aspect. That really inspired me to take my music into theatre venues with a really specific lighting routine and getting visuals happening that really synchronises with the music."

It must have been inspiring, with Feasting on Flesh encouraging Wally to embark on a (sold out) national tour, performing theatre shows that contain a nine-piece mini-orchestra and fascinating visuals.

"I just received a [myspace] comment before for people begging me to do another show in Brisbane, but it's really hard! I really wish I could upsize the venue."

"I'm starting to feel fairly nervous because the tour is nearly two weeks away", Wally admits.

"There's a fair bit of stuff to pull together, visuals and backing tracks. We're getting pretty close to the wire."

Gotye plays the Athanaeum Theatre in Melbourne on August 10, 11 and 12. Details: visit [www.gotye.com](http://www.gotye.com)

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