



FOO FIGHTERS

Echoes, Silence, Patience & Grace

Having commemorated their tenth anniversary with a year-plus run commencing with a double studio album hailed by the *New York Times* as “an unexpected magnum opus,” a sold out arena tour built on that first disc’s rock foundation followed by a toned down and intimate theater trek that highlighted the softer side showcased on that record’s second half and capped off by a headlining gig at London’s Hyde Park for a crowd of 85,000, the question looms larger than any in the Foo Fighters’ career to date: What do they do for an encore?!?

The answer, in the form of the band’s sixth studio album Echoes, Silence, Patience & Grace is a resounding “whatever the fuck we want.” Ably assisted by producer Gil Norton, who last worked with the band on 1997’s double-platinum The Colour and The Shape (recently reissued in deluxe 10th anniversary form), Dave Grohl, bassist Nate Mendel, drummer Taylor Hawkins and guitarist Chris Shiflett have crafted a 12-track milestone that showcases and reconciles the band’s every strength and sensibility in the most complex and confident Foo Fighters album to date.

“Everyone in the band has become a better writer and a better player,” Grohl says. “This record is the sound of us realizing that we’re capable of things we never were before. It sounds fearless.

“But that also made the process more difficult. Breaking away from any kind of boundaries meant we were writing everything from country to old-school metal to piano and string arrangements, which meant we didn’t know what kind of album this was until it was finally done.”

The road to Echoes, Silence, Patience & Grace has been anything but easy. Even the formation of Foo Fighters as a band is hard to pin down to a concrete date or circumstance, 1995’s now classic self-titled debut itself evolving from home recordings of compositions created largely during Grohl’s tenure in Nirvana. Having handled all instruments and vocals save for a guest guitar spot from Afghan Whig/Twilight Singer Greg Dulli on “X-Static,” Grohl recruited Mendel, guitarist Pat Smear and drummer William Goldsmith to bring life to “This Is A Call,” “I’ll Stick Around,” “For All The Cows” and the MTV VMA-winning “Big Me” to stages the world over. This first Foo Fighters line-up would do just that, beginning well before the release of Foo Fighters with a U.S. club tour on which they pulled double duty as support act and backing band for Mike Watt



Foo Fighters endured their first personnel change during the initial sessions for The Colour and The Shape, during which William Goldsmith would depart, leaving Grohl to handle drumming chores on that record before enlisting Taylor Hawkins, who would fill the drum seat on the ensuing tour—and for life. Released in 1997, The Colour and The Shape remains not only the band’s best seller to date but as Mendel put it in the aforementioned reissue’s liner notes “the album we’ll always be judged against.” And with good reason: the record’s 10th anniversary edition sounds fresh and exciting enough to have been released yesterday. Nearly every track is a highlight of Foo Fighters live sets to this day: “Monkey Wrench,” “My Hero,” “Walking After You” and of course the song that in both its acoustic and electric incarnation has somehow become a prom anthem and marriage proposal soundtrack for a generation, “Everlong”—all begging the question: How many of today’s modern rock acts are going to be around to commemorate the 10th anniversary of their *second* records?

Later that year, Pat Smear’s amicable (and televised) departure from the band would leave a strengthened Grohl/Mendel/Hawkins nucleus in its wake. Following the conclusion of rigorous touring behind their multi-platinum sophomore disc (including a couple of dates opening for the Rolling Stones), the FF trio decamped to Grohl’s now derelict home studio in Alexandria VA to create 1999’s There Is Nothing Left To Lose. Heralded by the infectious “Learn To Fly,” the album was in large part their answer record to the lunkheaded rap-metal onslaught mounting in its year of release. Mellifluous down-tempo numbers rolled into one another (“Next Year,” “Aurora”) while the record’s few raucous numbers (“Breakout,” “Stacked Actors”) would become live staples. Upon its completion, the band rounded out the present and permanent Foo Fighters line-up, enlisting guitarist Chris Shiflett and embarking on yet another global conquest, this one concluding with two Grammy victories: Best Rock Album and Short Form Music Video (“Learn To Fly”).

One By One followed in 2002 and a difficult birth it was. The result of two passes at recording, it once again tested the mettle of the band and its personal bonds -- resulting in Grohl’s leave-of-absence to gain much needed perspective: recording and touring for a spell as drummer for Queens Of the Stone Age. Regrouping, regenerating and putting the record to bed, Foo Fighters released One By One to rave reviews and followed with the band’s biggest world tour to date. One By One would become the fourth FF record to surpass the platinum mark, putting two more Grammys on the band’s mantle: Best Hard Rock Performance for the “All My Life” single and a second consecutive Best Rock Album statuette, as the band wound down with a show-stopping Grammy performance of “Times Like These” augmented by legendary jazz pianist Chick Corea.



As a result of these cumulative experiences, not to mention down time spent with various side projects--Grohl's Probot, Mendel's Fire Theft, Hawkins' Coattail Riders and Shiflett's Jackson United--the collective Foo Fighters would become more assured than ever that this was the final lineup of their band-for-life.

The first Foo Fighters record to be created at the band's own custom-built 606 Studio, 2005's 10th anniversary double album In Your Honor would be their chance to commit that sentiment to music: The days of near-disintegration with every record had come to an end. In Your Honor's first single, the magnificent and grandiose "Best of You" packed that career's worth of passion, rage and melody into a breathtaking 4:16, Grohl executing one of the defining vocals of his career on lines like *"I'm getting tired of starting again/Somewhere new."*

And so it went over the course of In Your Honor's first disc. Confessional screeds melding fury and melody with precarious balance and finesse on "No Way Back," "DOA" and "The Last Song." With each track, it became more apparent why Hawkins called disc 1 "the best rock record we've ever made." Deeper still into the first disc, "Resolve," "The Deepest Blues Are Black" and the closing "End Over End" find the band's formidable rock power channeled into more varying tempos and arrangements, more than making good on Hawkins' claim.

But as Hawkins was quick to clarify, In Your Honor's first and second discs "really are two different albums." As such, they were created in two distinct manners, the recording of disc 2 being the first time all four Foo Fighters would be in the studio at the same time, laying down a song a day. The creation of the mellower half of In Your Honor veered from the scary to the surreal when the band's self described "insane wish list" of guest performers began materializing. Norah Jones lent vocals and piano to the sultry bossa nova of "Virginia Moon," Josh Homme of Queens Of The Stone Age played dueling acoustic guitars with Grohl on "Razor," Petra Haden added violin to "Miracle," while "Cold Day In The Sun" showcased Hawkins on vocals, Grohl on drums and producer Nick Raskulinecz on bass.

But nothing could prepare the boys for the day their calls to John Paul Jones were actually returned: The legendary Led Zeppelin bassist was in town to pick up a Lifetime Achievement Grammy, and would end up contributing piano to "Miracle" and mandolin to "Another Round." His most significant contribution, however, would be ensuring that Grohl would die a happy man: "Honestly, that was probably the musical highlight of my life because I've been so obsessed with Zeppelin since I was a little kid"—not to mention the fact that Led Zeppelin's milestone double album Physical Graffiti was in large part the inspiration for In Your Honor's very conception.



One final victory lap round the first disc later—actually three weeks of marathon sessions returning to and perfecting that half of the record--and In Your Honor was ready to be released to the best reviews and biggest first week sales of the band's career: Over 300,000 copies were moved in In Your Honor's first week, as THE NEW YORK TIMES hailed it as "an unexpected magnum opus," ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY called it "the year's first great hot weather record," and TIME magazine named "Virginia Moon" as one of the 10 best songs of the summer. The album eventually landed on ROLLING STONE's Best of 2005, while "Best Of You" made BLENDER and SPIN's songs of the year, ESQUIRE named Grohl and Hawkins best live entertainer and drummer of the year, and the Foos racked up a nother five Grammy nominations.

In Your Honor would be supported by the Foo Fighters' touring regimen to date: A full-blown laser light show rock spectacular drawing heavily on the first disc's bombast traversed the globe for a solid year, culminating in the band's single biggest headlining show ever, playing for 85,000 fans at a sold out Hyde Park in London on June 17, 2006.

It was in the midst of this yearlong endurance test that Grohl had an epiphany of sorts. His realization that he wasn't going to want to spend his later years "trying to outrun and out-scream the 20-something-year-old kid who's playing right before me at the Reading Festival" would give rise to the briefly named "Afoostic" tour chronicled on the 2006 live CD and DVD releases Skin And Bones. Skin And Bones documents Foo Fighters' most ambitious and risky live undertaking to date. Grohl, Hawkins, Mendel, and Shiflett were joined by In Your Honor guest players Petra Haden (violin) and Rami Jaffee (keyboards), percussionist Drew Hester and the returning Pat Smear for 14 intimate (and completely sold out) theater dates. The shows featured the live debut of songs from In Your Honor's quieter half alongside unique interpretations of favorites from the band's entire catalogue—as well as surprises like the brand new "Skin And Bones" and a version of "Marigold," a Nirvana B-side that marked Grohl's vocal/songwriting debut in that band.

At the outset of the two-year In Your Honor/Skin And Bones campaign, THE NEW YORK TIMES presciently noted: "among the quieter songs, there are enough supple melodies and hypnotic guitar patterns to suggest fine prospects for a follow-through album that would dare to mix plugged-in and unplugged." Echoes, Silence, Patience & Grace is that album: the sound of four bandmates who have become husbands, fathers and best friends for life along the way, but who have most significantly grown comfortable enough in their collective skin (not to mention their self-built, owned and operated 606 studio-cum-clubhouse) to continually challenge themselves with every outing.



In contrast to, and perhaps building on their previous record's sheer scale and grandiosity, Echoes, Silence, Patience & Grace opens with two prime examples of the newest weapon in the formidable Foo Fighters arsenal: First single "The Pretender" and second salvo "Let It Die" both begin with sparse, ominous minor key single guitar and vocal intros and build gradually into frenetic, explosive anthems that stop on a dime in just enough time to leave the listener fully winded but wanting more.

Longtime fans will be happy to know that Foo Fighters have not entirely eschewed their trademark hooks upon hooks writing style in favor of the epic arrangements of several songs on Echoes, Silence, Patience & Grace. The propulsive riffing of "Erase/Replace," the undeniable sing-along refrain of "Long Road To Ruin," and the hyper-melodic centerpiece of the record "Cheer Up Boys (Your Make-Up Is Running)" all stand to become instant fan favorites and staples of the FF live set for years to come.

It's the surprises, however, that truly define Echoes, Silence, Patience & Grace. The loamy sunset-tinged shuffle of "Summer's End," guitar prodigy Kaki King's guest spot on the acoustic instrumental) "The Ballad Of The Beaconsfield Miners" (dedicated to those trapped in the April 2006 Australian goldmine collapse—one of whom took Grohl up on his offer of free tickets and beer later that year at the Sydney Opera House), and a pair of majestic ballads featuring Grohl's debut on piano, "Statues" and the album closer "Home," which features the album's namesake lyric.

"That song choked me up," Grohl recalls. "It reminded me of how much time I have to spend away from what's really important for me, from what's going to be there when this is all over. Those are the moments you search for when you're making music. Real emotion. Something that hits the you and the listener both right in the heart."

If early response is any indication, Echoes, Silence, Patience & Grace has met and exceeded the goals of its creators. "The Pretender" is a bona fide smash and the album is already receiving the best reviews of the band's career: ROLLING STONE called it "an anthology of strong new songs by a great bunch of bands, all calling themselves Foo Fighters" while ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY raved "Every so often, a modern-day CD that reverberates with the conviction and artistry of bygone days comes along to blow a jaded mind or two." With pre-release shows already selling out and a long road ahead of the band, Echoes, Silence, Patience & Grace stands as testimony and tribute to both of Grohl's families: the one he records and tours with and the one he returns to at the end of the day.