

Domain.

ISSUE 4 **06**



INSPIRING PEOPLE TO BE PROACTIVE IN THEIR LIVES





DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE

RIDING IN THE CAB ALL THE WAY TO THE BANK



WORD: SHAW



SOMETIMES YOU JUST DON'T GET TO ASK ALL OF THE WEIRD QUESTIONS YOU WANT TO. LIKE, SAY, WHEN YOU REALLY WANT TO ASK DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE'S BASSIST NICK HARNER WHY HIS ENTIRE BAND SPROUTS MIRROR IMAGE HAIRLINES, MAINTAINS AN IDENTICAL ANEMIC PALLOR, AND HOLDS ABOVE THEIR SHOULDERS THE SAME ODDLY SQUARISH HEADS. (WELL, EXCEPT FOR THAT CHRIS WALLA GUY, BUT I SUPPOSE EVERY GROUP HAS TO ENJOY A LITTLE BREAK IN THE SYMMETRY.)



But sometimes you just chicken out. Instead you take the goddamned high road. You ask about the major label brouhaha surrounding Death Cab's new record, *Plans*; you ask about their increasing cultural relevance; you ask whether or not they went through a geeky, awkward teenage phase just like the rest of us.

And even if you shy away from asking if Death Cab is just a group of identical robots (minus the Walla one), sprung from the pop music vortex to produce a steady stream of indie rock balladry meant to inflict everlasting financial damage to wallets everywhere—which is really the lone question searing itself into your cerebral cortex—Harner still gives you some interesting dialogue to mull over. (Although the robot thing would be pretty cool if it were true.)

On that other city in Nevada

We're two days into our current tour and it's very surreal. It's a very surreal way to start the day when you wake up in Reno, Nevada, and you're thinking, 'There's gotta be rock and roll *somewhere*'...but it feels like we're playing a convention or something.

On their pocket protector past

It's funny, in all my years of touring and all of the bands and musicians that I've met, I've never met a musician in a band who says, 'I was really popular in high school and everyone really liked me and I was well-adjusted.' So it kind of comes with the territory a little bit that we were kinda geeky, nerdy, music kids that never really fit into the big picture of things. I think that's good, though—when you don't find any satisfaction in what the other kids are doing, you have to make your own fun.

On living in Mischa Barton's stick-thin shadow

We'd been a band for almost 5 years before the whole O.C. thing really came around. For us, it was really funny that The O.C. was kind of the first time people heard of our band. Maybe people weren't as proactive about music as we thought...maybe we were being overly romantic about how you discover music. It seems a lot of people are listening to our old records and looking into our history. We had our moment and it was fun, and certainly no regrets.

On silvery shiny pants (and Atlantic Records)

At no point were we really dissatisfied at Barsuk Records. I think we had always made up, from day one, this big laundry list—sort of a dream list of everything we'd ever want from a major label deal if anyone should ever come knocking. Lo and behold, Atlantic came by and got ahold of our 'dream list,' and they said, 'Ok, this looks doable.' Really, our relationship with Barsuk (and it still continues today) is really strong—it feels like it's our home, like our

family and our parents. And we said, 'Maybe we should try moving away from home for a while and go to college and meet some people; and we may flunk out of school, and there will always be a place for us at home.'

I think people just collectively held their breath and asked questions—'Are they going to start wearing silver shiny pants and no shirts?' 'Will their album suck?' Once *Plans* came out, people said, 'Oh, it's still the same band and they still make the music that we like, so it's no big deal.' We had our guard up really high and thankfully so far, things have been going really well. It's increased our confidence and now we're looking forward to the future, rather than towards how we can protect our present.

On pleasing the hipsters, the scenesters, and every "ster" in between

I don't even think most people can define what 'indie credibility' is. I think the only thing we've ever been credible to is the music we make. We're in a position now where we could be taking a whole lot more money, but I don't think that feels right. I don't want to sell clothing. We're not trying to sell a fashion or a style—we're not part of a movement. We just make music—we don't want to get caught up too much in the cultural politics of music; it's a fool's game. At the end of the day, you're driving down the road and a song comes on the radio and you like it. We've never tried to trade anything in on our looks or our style or our clothing or any of that stuff. It's not about having the right tattoos or the perfect haircut. Yeah...we're kinda scrappy and that's just how we do things. We always quote that weird saying, 'You never ask a centipede how it walks or it will trip.'

On comparing life stories with The Prince of Darkness

When we were kids, all of our favorite bands were all of these bands that you got this sort of sense that they were the same people offstage as they were onstage. But I wouldn't want Marilyn Manson to be a cool guy that you can have a beer with and just have a conversation with—he's freakin' Marilyn Manson! He needs to be larger than life. We try to be the same people all the time. It gets a little more difficult as our band profile grows; people start to put that on you, whether you want it or not. We're just regular guys.

I'll sort out what it is we've done and what it means when I'm 60 years old on a rocking chair on a porch. The bass player from a band that no one really knows—do you wanna read that book? No, I'd rather read Marilyn Manson's autobiography at 85.