

the Fratellis

Jon Fratelli isn't sure of THE moment in the 18-month world tour in support of 'Costello Music' – the moment when he and his fellow Fratellis knew their debut album had become some kind of phenomenon. Was it hearing Chelsea Dagger hoovering up radio play throughout the latter half of 2006, or being sung on the terraces at Stamford Bridge, Celtic Park and Love Street? Was it the crowds roaring their approval as **The Fratellis** toured at the end of that year? Selling out four nights at Brixton Academy off their own back? Winning the 2007 Brit Award for Best British Breakthrough Act, as voted for by the listeners of Radio 1 (a people's award for a people's band, innit)? Maybe it was Simon Pegg and Edgar Wright asking the Glaswegian trio to cover T Rex's 'Solid Gold Easy Action' for the closing credits of 'Hot Fuzz'. Apple requesting the use of 'Flathead' in an iPod ad. Burberry being sufficiently bowled over by a tune called 'Got Ma Nuts From A Hippy' to use it in a perfume advert. Or was it selling over one million copies of 'Costello Music'?

Nah. Jon does know THE moment, the tipping point, the solid gold easy action brain-melt snapshot.... *"T In The Park, July 2006, no question,"* he nods. *"We'd only released [first single] 'Henrietta'. 'Chelsea Dagger' wasn't out, the album was two months away."* **The Fratellis** were playing the Scottish festival's New Band Tent, a slot that had had been pre-destined in part by various magazines that spring anointing them the best new band in Britain. *"And I couldn't believe how many people turned up – and we were on at the same time as The Who! Incredible. It's still my favourite memory of that whole year and a half."*

This summer, Jon (vocals/guitar/piano), Barry (bass) and Mince (drums) are back at T In The Park. This time **The Fratellis** are on the Main Stage, second from the top. Rage Against The Machine are headlining, *"and you can't really argue with that. Well, I tried to!"* laughs Jon, a man with cheeky Glaswegian street smarts. A songwriter who wouldn't – couldn't – rest for more than a few days after **The Fratellis** finally stopped touring with a triumphant homecoming show at Glasgow's SECC on 30th September 2007. And a man who knows his band have just finished making an album that tops even their staggeringly successful debut.

'Here We Stand' is the bigger, fatter, stronger, even catchier sound of **The Fratellis** '08. With added rock'n'roll piano. *"To me,"* Jon told Q magazine a couple of months back, *"'Costello Music' sounds little bit foreign to the band we ended up being."* What did he mean by that? *"When we made it we'd only been together nine months or so. Even in that time we'd only done 25, 30 gigs, we hadn't played live nearly enough – not enough anyway to decide how it is that you sound. After you've toured for two years, that's when you end up becoming the band you're gonna be."* **The Fratellis** did six tours of the UK in 2006. They did three tours of the US in 2007. At times it got a bit much: after one gig too far for the road-weary Jon, he legged it after the band's set,

hopping on a flight back to the UK and on to a Maltese holiday with his girlfriend (now wife), the soulmate and burlesque performer whose stage-name he'd pinched for 'Chelsea Dagger'. But that which doesn't kill you....

He was soon back in the touring saddle, playing even bigger shows in the US. The wheels nearly came off again, when **The Fratellis** supported The Police on a leg of their mega-selling arena tour. *"It's funny when you come onstage and no one in the crowd makes any noise,"* he laughs. *"It's even funnier when you start playing and they still don't make a noise..."* All of which changed **The Fratellis**. *"Costello Music' didn't sound like us any more. I thought we'd got naturally heavier. And the songs we ended up writing for this one leant more in that direction."* So the band put all these experiences – these tour muscles and performance chops, high times and higher times – to good use back in Glasgow. Jon spent last autumn writing while the band's newly adventurous sonic ambitions were made real: the building of their own studio in the city's West End. They said to their label: *"instead of spending money on a producer, we'll buy a building and you pay for the gear. And we'll produce it ourselves..."* says Jon. *"We made the first album in LA with [Beck, Air producer] Tony Hoffer. For the second one we did everything the hard way and made everything difficult: no safety net of a producer or proven studio. It could have all gone wrong..."*

Oh no it didn't! That's self-evident roughly, oh, eight seconds into 'My Friend John', the opening track on 'Here We Stand'. It's a galloping tune about a geezer who's *"a serious one, buttons up the back and a job half done... his teeth get itchy and his rubber soles burn, when will he ever learn?"* *"Oh aye, that's definitely me,"* admits Jon. Although he didn't realise this at the time of its writing. *"It's basically me saying to myself, stop being such a prick."* And going all the way up to 11 while he says it. Almost instantly, **The Fratellis** top this storming opener. 'A Heady Tale' is like one of Pete Townsend's more lavish moments from 'Who's Next?': a piano-led barnstormer with windmilling riffs to take your head off. Jon seems to remember writing it while stuck glumly on a video set in America, being cajoled into making a new, fancy-pants video for 'Chelsea Dagger'. The frenetic rock'n'blues-slash-glam-stomp of 'Tell Me A Lie', meanwhile, was written in a Copenhagen hotel room. *"It's kinda about all the lies... well, half-truths we used to tell interviewers,"* Jon admits with a grin, while insisting that his dad might have played with skiffle legend Lonnie Donegan (obviously that was before Pa Fratelli was an Ordinance Survey mapper). Then there's 'Mistress Mabel', the first single, which starts off with a burble that sounds like Stevie Wonder's 'Superstition' before exploding into the kind of airwave-melting gold that **The Fratellis** have turned into an art form. And it features more bar-room piano of the kind that Seventies Elton – or Fifties Jerry Lee – would surely approve. *"I hear plenty of indie slow ballady piano these days,"* says Jon. *"But I don't hear big piano slides. They always make things exciting."* **The Fratellis**, buzzing off their own energy and gung-ho excitement, knocked all this out in four weeks in December and January. Then triple-Grammy-winning mixer Tom Lord Alge (everyone from the Manics to Oasis, U2 to Stones) sprinkled some fairy dust – and a sniff of angel dust – into a set of songs already gleaming and sweating with the stuff. Then, hey disco-presto: 'Here We Stand' was finished, an album bursting with jump-around, heart-swelling, lung-bursting anthems. You won't hear a meatier, beatier, bigger record all year.

With their second album, have The Fratellis trumped their British guitar-slinging peers? What peers?! “*That thin indie-clatter – that’s the new mainstream pop in this country,*” sighs Jon Fratelli, a man who knows what he likes (Pink Floyd, the name ‘Camel Toe’ for their studio – “*I think that might get vetoed though...*”) and what he doesn’t (desperate Hollywood producers who asked to use ‘Chelsea Dagger’ in all manner of dodgy Z-list movies). “We wanted to get as far away from that indie-band clatter as possible. ‘Here We Stand’ doesn’t sound like that. It sounds like a really great rock record.” Once you’ve picked your ears off the floor, you’ll agree.