

Among an average population of 15,000 people on the island of Martha's Vineyard, you typically hear about a small and select headline-grabbing few.

Like Cape Cod's answer to The Hamptons, all of the shine goes to The Kennedys, The Clintons, David Letterman, or whatever other magazine-covering celebrity spent his or her summer vacation there. A stone's throw, yet leagues away from the ritzy cocktail parties and Hollywood glitz and glamour, you can find the cozy working-class home where Family Of The Year's brotherly core—Joe [vocals, guitar] and Sebastian Keefe [drums, vocals]—spent their formative years after moving from Wrexham, Wales. Long before the brothers linked up with bandmates James Buckey [guitar, vocals] and Christina Schroeter [keyboards, vocals], earned a massive hit in the form of "Hero," generated nearly 200 million cumulative streams, garnered countless syncs, and toured worldwide, they can recall life-shaping moments on "*the other side*" of the Vineyard.

Many of those memories bubble to the surface on their 2018 fourth full-length album and Warner Bros. Records debut.

"One of the byproducts of living in a place like that is it's a crossroads and a melting pot," explains Sebastian. "You get exposed to a lot of incredible, talented, and worldly people. On the one hand, it's inspirational to mow the lawn of a movie star. On the other hand, it's a bit of a bummer. We lived in this tiny house. Joe and I shared a room and my drum set was crammed between our beds."

"Music was an escape," adds Joe. "It's how we bonded with some of our best friends to this day."

"If you didn't have anywhere to be after school, you spent those unaccountable hours learning how to fucking play Nirvana and Led Zeppelin songs and smoking weed at 12," laughs Sebastian. "Because you're parents weren't around or working all night, that's what you did."

It laid the groundwork for the group's quiet rise. Following 2009's *Songbook*, they toured relentlessly and organically attracted a devout fan base. 2012 saw them release *Loma Vista*. In the aftermath, the musicians earned praise from the likes of *USA Today*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Billboard*, *Interview Magazine*, and *Paste* in addition to performing on *Jimmy Kimmel LIVE!*, *Conan*, and more. Its breakout single "Hero" would figure prominently in the trailer and soundtrack for the Academy® Award-nominated and Golden Globe® Award-winning drama *Boyhood* and surpass 170 million Spotify streams. Coming off the road in late 2015 in support of the self-titled *Family of the Year*, they began crafting new music. The quartet first retreated to a rental house in Mount Washington during January 2016 before holing up in Bear Valley Springs throughout the spring.

"For this record, we decided to start from scratch," Joe recalls. "While making the last album, we were on tour, and we just put together pieces of other ideas. This was a blank slate. In Bear Valley Springs, we spent two months waking up and trying to write personal songs all day. It was quite a fucking emotional rollercoaster."

At the same time, interpersonal relationships started to fray under the weight of too much time together on the road and intense creative pressure.

"We were drinking and taking lots of drugs," admits Sebastian. "We thought we were going to create magic, but we were just fucked up. We went crazy. I know I was drinking and doing too much, so I stopped. The band went through a fucking identity crisis. We wanted to write something deeper, but we

weren't going to get there due to the partying. I made changes for myself. We all made changes. It was about being more thoughtful and introspective and showing respect to those around me. It was a philosophical shift. That had to happen for us to reach our potential for honesty, vulnerability, satisfaction, and creativity."

During this period, the brothers endured the loss of their mom, and the concept of "*home*" came into focus for Joe. That brings us to the new album and one of its standouts "Latchkey Kids." Awash in dreamy hummable harmonies, robust percussion, and pristine guitars, the song paints a picture of how "*mom worked overtime and dad was gone,*" but "*I could be whatever I wanted.*"

"I think it's weak when people complain about growing up in broken homes or poor," says Joe. "I wanted to write about how great it was to have the freedom to do whatever we wanted when we were young. I love the fact that our parents weren't rich and strict. That made me who I am. I hung out with the bad kids and did dangerous and stupid things. I was exposed to scary shit and forced to feel the value of what I did have. I don't know what the fuck I would be like if I didn't experience that."

"It's a very accurate depiction of how life was," agrees Sebastian. "At the same time, Joe wouldn't have minded some of the other stuff, but that's part of his personality. He finds the bright side, while I'm the depressive one," the drummer laughs.

The album's infectious lead single, "Hold Me Down" tempers danceable synths, keys, and production with a propulsive handclap-driven chant. "That's about wanting someone to help you settle down and become who you want to be," Joe continues. "It's a crazy world out there, and you need help to turn a corner and feel safe."

Then, there's the follow-up "Let Her Go." Over sparse piano chords, the opening line sets the tone for a new beginning—"*Do you want to know how far I've come?*"

"It's a breakup song," says Christina. "You're trying to prove, '*No, I'm different now, so let's give it another shot.*' It's so hard to accept when someone is gone."

Throughout this journey, Family Of The Year got closer than ever. In the end, their name has taken on a new meaning.

"We're just trying to create the family we never had," Sebastian leaves off.

Joe continues, "I started a band so I'd never be alone again. The name came from a family in Newport Beach who won the '*Family Of The Year*' award. On the outside, they looked perfect. A few years later, everyone found out they were seriously fucked up. I had this running joke in my head that we were a dysfunctional family — but we are a family together, nevertheless. None of us feel alone."