

INTERVIEW – Eliza and the Bear



London band of five, Eliza and the Bear, are half way through their extensive UK tour and they don't look remotely fatigued by any of it. The only thing that is affecting lead singer, James Kellegher, is a bad cold. 'How many cold and flu tablets should you take in 24 hours?' he asks. A pack of 12 has already been consumed as he offers me some of his flu remedy stash as I explain I am suffering the same symptoms.

Even bunged up with the cold myself, I can still smell the stench of kebab. James said: 'Yeah, we haven't eaten very well on tour,' as two of his other band mates tuck into some.

It is the quiet before the storm; everyone is surprisingly relaxed upstairs in the dressing room of Electric Circus. It was only seven months since the band played the same venue with Luke Sital-Singh, Farewell Jr. and Annie Eve on the inaugural Communion tour. Since then, Eliza and the Bear are rising into a category that considers them serious contenders to become a gigantic indie rock outfit. With an album due within the next half-year, I talked to James Kellegher about tour life, new music and a new record label.

How has the tour been so far?

Yeah, really good, feels like we have been on tour for absolutely ages. I think we're about half way through now. We're probably into tour mode – we're used to staying in Travelodges and Travel Inns – but it has been amazing, really good fun.

You've just signed to a record and you're yet to release an album – is there a lot of focus on that aside from touring?

We've finished writing it and I think it is two weeks after this tour finishes we'll be away recording. It feels like it has been a long time coming for us, we've been writing it solidly for about 18 months; so it really feels like we've put our heart and soul into it and we're really excited to get the finished product and actually hear it.

You've said in previous interviews that you wanted to take time to decide the best record label to sign to, what made you sign with this one?

It could have been very easy for us to jump at the first one and screw ourselves over, but this label, when they came to us, it just felt like the guy knew what he wanted. Every other record label was only just interested in how many tickets you sell here and how many records you sell there, but this guy came in and said 'I want you'. Done. And it was like that head-strong sort of attitude that we were really into.

Will there be an album release before the end of the year or after?

It will be after the year. We record pretty much up until Christmas then we will have a couple of weeks off with the family then really start with the album cycle. I don't any specific dates next year but most likely end of Spring, early Summer.

What made you tour before the album was released?

We had been locked in the studio since April writing and it felt like the right thing to do: to put a single out so people aren't really waiting that long and there isn't a massive gap between the singles and the album. Some people may lose interest. That's why we decided to release an EP and tour on the back of it then really start the ball rolling with the show on the road.

You done Communion tour at the start of the year, you also

done festivals – do you plan to road test some new songs?

At the Communion tour and the festivals, we only played about one or two new songs in the set, obviously because we were only getting half an hour sets in those places we wanted to keep it so people knew the stuff that we released, then we could slip a new one in the middle. On this tour, there are five or six new songs in the set because we're playing for an hour, it felt right to start road testing newer tracks from the album and see how they go down. We've really gauged how these new songs are going to work. They're not all the same. A lot of the songs we've released are kind of uplifting pop songs. The album is written with loads of different slower tempo, faster tempo and heavier tracks – we've had the opportunity to road test them on this tour which is really helpful for us, especially right before we go to record it.

What did you think of the other artists playing on Communion tour?

They were great, we made some really good friends on that tour. Annie, Farewell, Luke, we still see all of them on tour. We saw them this year at festivals, it felt like a good family on that tour. It was a really nice experience and atmosphere.

You're climbing up the ranks and making a big name for yourself, how are you keeping up with demand?

I think we're completely oblivious to it all because we're forced in with the album, but I think it's something we're only really realising on this tour. Now you can see the difference in fans and people, they know our names, they know the songs, they are very passionate about the music. Whereas on the last tour they were sort of curious in attendance – people would come to the show to see what we were about. This year it is proper fans. This tour it has shown that things have pushed forward quite a long way.

With supporting the likes of Paramore and Imagine Dragons

while being featured on the Bulmers advert, these things have obviously helped significantly.

When we play shows, we'll go and meet people outside and they will say that they know us from the Paramore tour or Imagine Dragons or adverts.

What other music are you listening to at the moment and is there anything influencing you?

All of us listen to quite a lot of different stuff and come from different backgrounds. But right now I'm quite into a guy called Tycho in Leeds, it's quite of like a live electronic dance company but the production really interests me. Our bass player comes from a punk background, our keyboardist likes pop music, our guitarist is heavily set on AC/DC and rock n' roll stuff. So it is all a big mix which is handy for when we come to write. There is a bit of push and pull with everyone, it is not too stressful. For example, let's just write a pop song or a rock song, something that has optimal influences.

Are you getting any other tempting offers at the moment?

We haven't actually got any other TV offers. BBC have that thing where they have our songs and they can use them as they wish. Sometimes we'll get a random tweet and you've been played on the Masterchef final or the Winter Olympics. We have no idea until it actually happens. So you see Twitter go absolutely mental. Masterchef was massive for us, it was a big deal.

Eliza and the Bear are on tour until October 24th and are playing their biggest headline show at London's Islington 02 Academy on October 16th. They play two Scottish shows after Glasgow King Tut's in Aberdeen and Dundee. Tickets can be purchased [here](#).