

THE FRONT BOTTOMS

IN SICKNESS & IN FLAMES

When you turn on a record from The Front Bottoms, you hear the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of two lifelong friends who stare down personal tragedy and the madness of a world gone haywire by simply playing a little louder together. The duo—Brian Sella [vocals, guitar] and Mat Uychich [drums]—spin all of these emotions into a tapestry of punk, folk, and alternative on their new full-length album, *In Sickness & In Flames*.

“When you listen to this, I definitely want you to feel the anxiety,” affirms Brian. “There are some pretty rock and roll songs and heavy moments on *In Sickness & In Flames*. I hope the tension comes across. We went through all of these unbelievable life changes, and then all of these insane things happened in the world. If you get anything out of it, we want it to be that creativity can basically solve any problem and will save us. This was made from a tense place. Look around. You literally see sickness and flames right now, but we can grow from it. Metaphorically for The Front Bottoms and the community, we’re basically saying, ‘*There’s a lot of craziness happening, but here’s an album out of it*’. This is the creativity we need to keep our heads above water.”

They’ve shared in that same creativity since back in grade school. The New Jersey natives began performing in high school bands and after Brian finished college, The Front Bottoms officially formed. Brian’s mom gifted the boys 12 hours of recording time at a local studio for Christmas, resulting in their 2011 self-titled independent debut. A whirlwind of prolific output and countless gigs followed. The Front Bottoms reached a critical peak with 2017’s *Going Grey*. It received praise from the likes of *The FADER*, *Stereogum*, *VICE*, *A.V. Club*, and more. Along the way, the band performed on *Late Night with Seth Meyers* and *NPR*’s “Tiny Desk,” graced the stages of *Coachella*, *Lollapalooza*, *Austin City Limits* and *Bonnaroo*, and toured with the likes of Blink-182, Manchester Orchestra, and many more. Not to mention, the group has tallied nearly 100 million streams, sold over 500,000 album equivalents, and launched the annual holiday festival *Champagne Jam*, which expands year over year at an unprecedented rate.

Their union only grew strong with each subsequent show and release.

“It wouldn’t be The Front Bottoms, if there wasn’t a partnership. We just naturally always progressed by figuring everything out together,” smiles Mat.

“He handles the business though...I need to call him to find out my social security number,” laughs Brian.

However, it seemed like life began testing them last year. In between tracking everywhere from their New Jersey home studio to the famed Sonic Ranch in El Paso, TX on the Mexican border, the guys assembled what would become *In Sickness & In Flames*. Following an appendicitis diagnosis, Brian underwent emergency surgery in December. The property they co-owned as a creative hive caught fire and burned down. Still, the musicians soldiered on.

“It felt like every time we came home, some other shit would happen,” recalls Brian. “Finally, we finished the album, and the pandemic hit.”

In the middle of this upheaval, they introduced the record with “camouflage.” A palm-muted verse rolls towards caustic confessions like, “*Think I was having a mental breakdown the same time you were painting your walls.*”

“It goes back to this idea of wanting to connect with nature, disappear into the background and blend in,” Brian explains. “I wouldn’t normally wear camo, but it’s how I feel sometimes.”

A wall of distortion absorbs lush strings on “everyone blooms” as it blossoms into a grand chorus.

“It follows the overarching themes of growing up, coming into your own, and realizing everything you’ve been told is a lie,” says Mat. “Flowers all bloom, but not at the same time. I’ve always related to late bloomers. Everyone grows at his or her own pace. There’s no rush.”

On the single “montgomery forever,” a nimble bass line crashes into fleet-fingered acoustic fretwork and a call-and-response chant, “*We used to live here; now they’re blowing it up.*”

“There was a public housing building called Montgomery that was going to be demolished in Jersey City,” says Brian. “My girlfriend and I woke up early at like 8am to see it, and the city blew it up. It was super emotional and intense. As I was walking back to my apartment, there was a woman with a shirt that said, ‘*Montgomery Forever*’. I definitely saw her emotion. These were people’s homes. It’s the emotion of losing everything. It sparked the inspiration for me.”

“Fairbanks, Alaska” hinges on a thought-provoking visual as Brian admits, “*I haven’t checked my mind since I saw the Northern Lights of Fairbanks, Alaska.*” Refracting a burst of raw energy, a rattling scream quakes through “leaf pile.” On the other end of the spectrum, the record closes out on the sparse piano of the poetic ballad “make way.”

“The original thinking of *In Sickness & In Flames* related to me getting married,” Brian reveals. “However, it makes even more sense now. We needed all of this crazy stuff to happen to make the album, and now it speaks to the times for us.”

However, as with everything The Front Bottoms have done, it speaks *beyond* the times as well.

“Everything’s been bad news, but we hope this is good news for our fans,” Mat closes out. “We’re just documenting our lives through music.”

“We’ve dedicated our entire lives to this,” Brian leaves off. “It’s the creative expression of what we’ve been going through. Because of that, we keep getting closer and growing up.”

BOILER

When you turn on a record from The Front Bottoms, you hear the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of two lifelong friends who stare down personal tragedy and the madness of a world gone haywire by simply playing a little louder together.

The New Jersey natives went from playing in the woods to performing in high school bands. After Brian finished college, The Front Bottoms officially formed. Brian’s mom gifted the boys 12 hours of recording time for Christmas, resulting in their 2011 self-titled independent debut. A whirlwind of prolific output and countless gigs followed. The Front Bottoms reached a critical peak with 2017’s *Going Grey*. It received praise from the likes of *The FADER*, *Stereogum*, *VICE*, *A.V. Club*, and more. Along the way, the band performed on *Late Night with Seth Meyers* and *NPR*’s “Tiny Desk,” graced the stages of *Coachella*, *Austin City Limits*, and *Bonnaroo*, and toured with the likes of Blink-182, Manchester Orchestra, and many more. Not to mention, the group has tallied nearly 100 million streams, sold over 500,000 album equivalents, and launched the annual holiday festival *Champagne Jam*, which expands year over year at an unprecedented rate. Overcoming a series of challenges, the duo—Brian Sella [vocals, guitar] and Mat Uychich [drums]—spin raw emotions into a tapestry of punk, folk, and alternative on their fifth full-length

and second album for Fueled By Ramen, *In Sickness & In Flames*, led by the singles “camouflage,” “everyone blooms,” and “montgomery forever.”