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April 9th, 2013

20 minutes with: Rob Ackroyd

Days after working on Florence and the Machine's next album, the band's guitarist sits down with us at Chicago's Drumbar to talk tattoos, driver's permits, and how he keeps his ego in check.

Written by Jourdan Crouch Fairchild

Photographed by Marc Moran

I was born in Hitchin, Hertfordshire, England in October 1982.

The thing I miss most about home is the people. I miss my friends and family like mad.

The first instrument I ever played was the guitar, which I started learning at 18. My dad said to

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me, 'Don't bother trying to be in a band because it won't happen.' So because of a combination of it looking impossible and what my dad said, I took it up.

I love playing guitar because when you take that first strum and recognize that what you're playing sounds like your favorite record, it's like, my god, you did it! That sense of satisfaction is addictive.

The name of my first band was The Sextones. My brother and I started playing with these brothers, Rich and Andy Sexton, so obviously the logical and artistic progression of Sexton for a band was Sextones. None of us were great players, but we thought it'd just be fun to get drunk and make some noise.

My first music idol was Slash. When he played "Paradise City" and "Knocking on Heavens Door" during the Freddy Mercury Tribute concert, and he had his double neck sg guitar, leather pants, denim jacket, top hat, and all that hair...it was the coolest thing I'd ever seen.

I met Florence in London about six years ago. Her manager and I have a friend in common, and he told me that his friend was managing a girl who could really sing. We went to see her and she was incredible.

My relationship with Florence always surprises people because we all—everyone in the band—really kind of love each other. We go on tour and everyone loves each other, halfway through we all want to kill each other, and by the end of the tour, we want it to go on forever.

The writing process begins with Flo. She brings stuff to us and we work on it.

We're taking a year off so we don't oversaturate the market and so people don't get tired of hearing our songs. Flo also wanted to have a year of living a normal life and be inspired again.

My favorite song to play is a something we don't play anymore called "Blinding" from the first album. It lets Chris, the drummer, Mark, the bassist, and me put on our heavy-metal heads for a minute.



My favorite city for a day off is Los Angeles. I've lived there for a year now, but it's still a novelty to

be in America. I've joined a soccer team, and even when we play in January, we're almost getting suntans. It's a joke!

I keep my sanity by talking to my friend Hannah Dickenson back in London every week. She's about as cynical as you can get and will never for a second allow me to indulge anything that my career has provided.

I love my tattoos because I think they look cool, even though my dad always said only prisoners and ex-cons have tattoos. Nowadays, it's not even that I love them, but with every tattoo you get, there's a negative space that appears on your skin that you have to fill or it looks unbalanced.

The toughest thing about living in LA is just how enormous and sprawling it is. I never learned to drive, so Uber cabs are rinsing me out. When I first moved there to Hancock Park, I was doing sessions with Kelis in Glendale and spending like \$50 a day just to get back and forth to the studio.

But I plan to start driving soon. I just got my driver's permit and I've done eight hours of school so far. I love it, but it's absolutely terrifying and I'm always thinking I'm just gonna lose control somehow.

Dating in Hollywood is not on my list of things to do at the moment.

Being nominated for a Grammy is not something you ever really consider when you're making artistic choices in the studio. You're appreciative of the recognition, but there are thousands of albums released every year that will never be on a Grammy nomination list.

If I weren't a musician, I'd be a film director. I went to film school and it's something I feel I really understand and find incredibly satisfying.

Next up for Florence and the Machine is our new album. We just spent some time at a studio in Jamaica working on a few demos. And this summer, we're doing a festival in Poland and a show in Dubai. It's gonna be a big year.

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