

Red-eyed and poised to rock, the boys of All Time Low connect with us from Germany, where they're gearing up to play the Backstage Club in Munich. On the heels of a two-day stint in Sweden, this is the pop punks' third show on the Deutschland leg of their European tour, which climaxes in Berlin the following night — and then they're off to Amsterdam and the U.K. "We're all on weird time schedules," laughs frontman Alex Gaskarth. "None of us wakes up before three in the afternoon, and we don't go to bed before six in the morning. The jetlag is definitely crushing us right now."

With their pounding, melodic guitar licks and playfully sneering vocals, the Maryland natives have come a long way since their first gig. "I think our first show ever was at a birthday party at some girl's house. We were probably in ninth grade," Gaskarth recalls. "Jack (Barakat, guitar and backing vocals) and I went to the same middle school for a year in eighth grade. Then we went to the same high school, where we met Rian (Dawson, drums), and then Zack (Merrick, bass and backing vocals) a couple months later — and we've been a fully dysfunctional band ever since."

Chaperoned by their parents, All Time Low began touring in 11th grade, during spring and summer breaks, to support their four-song 2004 EP, *The Three Words to Remember When Dealing With the End*, which was followed by their full-length, *The Party Scene*, released shortly before high-school graduation. "Going into senior year we started talking to labels," the easy going young crooner relates, "and that's when we really realized that we wanted to do this for a living, and put the idea of college aside to try to take the chance while we could. We signed our deal with Hopeless Records on Valentine's Day 2006, and graduated that year, and immediately started touring full-time." Currently tearing it up in support of their latest release, *Nothing Personal*, the self-determined wunderkinds are the darlings of MTV

and major alt-rock and Top-40 stations, and they were named 2008's Band of the Year by Alternative Press, all while remaining on an indie label. They gather huge crowds at the Vans Warped Tour which they've hit four years straight, where the kids simply love 'em.

"Without sounding trite," confesses Gaskarth, "we wouldn't be much of a band without our fans, so we try really hard to keep an open connection at all times with them. We go out and sign, we do meet-and-greets, we try to think of unique ways to interact with our fan club, and on the Internet in general. Twitter has become a big thing for us, letting people in on a little more of our lives than they see onstage. I think that keeps the connection really strong, which is important. The days of the mysterious rock star that only a few lucky people get to meet — I think those days are over."

Having spent their formative years covering the songs of their heroes, All Time Low are reveling in full-circle adventures like cutting a track with Mark Hoppus of Blink-182, one of their major influences. "It's eye-opening," Gaskarth confides, "and it makes you look back and say, 'Every piece of this was worth it — the ups, the downs, everything.' And it's cool to see that once you meet a hero of yours, a lot of the time you find that they went through the exact same thing. They had people that they idolized, they ended up meeting them, and it's a continuing trend for some people." Acknowledging the role of luck in all this, the wisecracking songster quips, "Oh yeah, you have to have a horseshoe up your ass, for sure." ▼

Nothing Personal debuted in July at #4 on the Billboard 200. To purchase, visit www.hopelessrecords.com. Also check out *Put Up or Shut Up* (2006) and *So Wrong, It's Right* (2007). Catch them live at *The House of Blues on Sunset on November 7*, and *HOB Anaheim November 8*.

