

# Relient K

**Matt Thiessen – lead vocals/guitars/piano**

**Matt Hoopes – guitars/vocals**

**Ethan Luck– drums/vocals**

**Jon Schneck – guitars/banjo/bells/vocals**

**John Warne – bass/vocals**

In his profile on Matt Thiessen's Pack of Wild Blogs\*, **Relient K's** lead singer/guitarist/pianist talks of leading "an anomalous life." And the band's latest EP, ***The Bird and the Bee Sides***, certainly is an anomaly – with a total of 26 songs, it stretches the definition of an extended play record like Silly Putty. Ostensibly a collection of b-sides, as the title implies, it also contains a whopping number of new songs – 13, to be precise.

Of course, it didn't start out that way. In between studio albums, **Relient K** likes to put out EPs. So following the release of ***Five Score And Seven Years Ago*** – which debuted at #6 on The *Billboard* 200 in 2007, becoming the band's highest charting album to date – the guys decided to make their latest EP something of an alternate career retrospective, comprised of b-sides, demos and other rarities from its 10 year history. While they were at it, they thought, why not record a few new tunes, too?

"That materialized into 'hey, why doesn't everybody in the band write a song?'" recalls **Thiessen**. If you know **Relient K**, you know to expect the unexpected, and have no doubt surmised that this is where the project veered madly out of control. "All of a sudden, it turned into a 13-song original thing."

That 13-song original thing, which kicks off the disc, is called ***The Nashville Tennis EP***. It's followed by 13 of the aforementioned b-sides and rarities, dubbed ***The Bird and the Bee Sides***.

"We were just trying to think of what our fans would want from a b-sides record," explains **Thiessen**. "We're like, they probably just want everything – so let's try to give it to them."

**Relient K** played its first gig in December 1997, back when **Thiessen** and guitarist **Matt Hoopes** were still in high school and tooling around in the latter's Plymouth Reliant K, which inspired the band's name. The group recorded its first demo the following year with producer Mark Lee Townsend, who has worked on each of the band's subsequent full-length albums (although *Five Score And Seven Years Ago* was largely produced by Howard Benson). In the ensuing decade, **Relient K** has released five full-length albums (of which three have been certified Gold), five EPs and a Christmas collection, toured incessantly, scored a string of hit singles, a Grammy nomination and two Dove awards, and performed on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," "Late Night with Conan O'Brien," "Jimmy Kimmel Live" and numerous other national TV shows. The *Los Angeles Times* praised **Relient K** for "its smart blend of punk pop and power pop, weaving

together influences as diverse as the Beach Boys, Blink-182 and Fountains of Wayne” while *Spin* noted: “Few bands play punk-influenced modern rock as proficiently.” There have been changes along the way, the most recent of which came when drummer Dave Douglas left to focus on his other band, Gypsy Parade, and was replaced by Ethan Luck (The O.C. Supertones, Demon Hunter) earlier this year. But the band’s quirky sense of humor remains intact and there’s a fresh excitement about the future.

“It really does feel like a new chapter is opening for us,” says **Thiessen**, who notes that “**The Scene And Herd**,” one of the new songs, really sums up where the band is at. “The whole hook of the song is that it doesn’t matter what’s going on with the music industry or whatever – as long as we’re getting to make music and do what we love to do, we’re having a good time.”

Reuniting with producer Mark Lee Townsend and mixer J.R. McNeely, the team behind the boards for 2004’s *mmhmm*, the band repaired to a studio in Spring Hill, TN (about 40 minutes south of Nashville) to work on the project. The location gets a nod in the title of the collection of original new songs – ***The Nashville Tennis EP*** – and in the alt-country vibe of songs such as “**At Least We Made It This Far**” and “**I Just Want You To Know.**” “We really enjoy just kind of being slow and swingy with the guitars,” says **Thiessen**.

Of course, **Relient K** is better known for getting fast and furious with the guitars. With all five members writing and singing songs, ***The Nashville Tennis EP*** has its share of amped-up numbers – from the punk rock reggae of “**No Reaction**,” written by **Luck**, to bass player (and ex-Ace Troubleshooter lead singer/songwriter) **John Warne’s** “**The Last, The Lost, The Least**,” which is explosive both sonically and in its social commentary. The song is a potent reminder of our inherent obligation as human beings to care for those in need – a philosophy the band lives by. **Relient K** hooked up with Switchfoot last year for a tour that benefited Habitat for Humanity and gave the guys the opportunity to lend a hand at many Habitat build sites along the way. This summer, they’ll be bringing a representative from Blood:Water Mission along with them on their co-headlining stint on the Vans Warped tour.

**Relient K** has been called “a band that’s not afraid of being a little optimistic in a pretty pessimistic world” ([www.bandoftheday.com](http://www.bandoftheday.com)), but its optimism is tempered with a realism that acknowledges life’s frequent landmines. “When it all falls apart/and you can’t see the forest for the cemeteries/Oh isn’t it nice to know/...that the lining is silver?” sings **Thiessen** over a reggae-tinged beat and soaring backing vocals on “**The Lining Is Silver.**”

On the second half of the collection, ***The Bird and the Bee Sides***, **Relient K** reaches way back into the archives, including tunes from *The Vinyl Countdown*, *The Employee Of The Month EP*, *The Creepy EP* and, as **Thiessen** puts it, “a ton of other stuff that you can’t even find on the internet – at least not yet.” Everything’s been remixed and re-mastered and rest assured, **Relient K’s** more recent work is amply represented as well. There’s an acoustic version of “**Who I Am Hates Who I’ve Been**” (a Top 20 hit at Top 40 radio from *mmhmm*) and four tracks from the *Five Score And Seven Years Ago* sessions – acoustic versions of “**Up And Up**” and b-side “**Hope For Every Fallen Man**” plus two never-before-released demos, “**Here I Go**” and “**The Stenographer**,” wherein **Thiessen** employs an autotuner to give the ending a “cheesy Cher effect – something we don’t toy with too much.”

What is **Thiessen's** favorite song from the vast **Relient K** canon? "Everybody's always asking me that," he says. "I'm like, it's the one that I'm writing right now that nobody's heard yet."

So stay tuned...the best is yet to come.

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