

# Relient K

## Forget and not slow down

**Matthew Thiessen – lead vocals/guitars/piano**  
**Matt Hoopes – guitars/vocals**  
**Ethan Luck – drums/vocals**  
**Jon Schneck – guitars/banjo/bells/vocals**  
**John Warne – bass/vocals**

Sometimes the best way to deal with a break-up is to write a batch of great songs about it, turn up the amplifiers and just rock out.

Think of enduring classics – from Liz Phair’s *Exile In Guyville* to Nine Inch Nails’ *Pretty Hate Machine* to Beck’s *Sea Change* – and how they achieved musical catharsis from the crumbling walls and crossbeams of a relationship gone bad.

On their latest release, *Forget And Not Slow Down*, Relient K carry the break-up album into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, tweaking it with clear-eyed songwriting and a four-to-the-floor optimism that is positively refreshing. Yes, there’s sweet sorrow in “If You Believe Me.” And yes, there’s lingering nostalgia in “Part Of It” and “Savannah.” There’s even the occasional recrimination, as in the bitter sting of “I Don’t Need A Soul” and “Over It.” But when it comes to regret, lead singer and songwriter Matt Thiessen is not one to wallow.

As he sings on the rousing title track, “I’d rather forget and not slow down than gather regret for the things I can’t change now.”

Not that it doesn’t take some effort of will. As Thiessen says, “It’s hard to forget and move on emotionally, but sometimes it’s better for you. You have to keep the bigger picture in mind. If you’re feeling sorry for yourself or reflecting on things that aren’t good, you’re not being productive. So to move forward is to concentrate on ‘What can I do better?’ That’s the whole idea of the record.”

The band’s guitarist Matt Hoopes agrees. “It’s about learning from mistakes and not just focusing on all the things you wished you would’ve done differently. Everyone has those things. What’s important is the knowledge that when you make a mistake, your life is not over.”

To gather material from these forward-thinking convictions, Thiessen made like Thoreau, retreating to a remote lake house in Winchester, Tennessee. “I was by myself for about two or three months, in total isolation,” he says. “It was awesome. You could think about something, and keep thinking about it, and no one would interrupt you for six or seven hours. You could keep your brain on one train of thought. I’ll never want to write another record any other way.”

For Thiessen, the solitary creative process was a lot like prayer. “Songwriting and praying are kind of synonymous for me,” he says. “You’re using your heart, you’re using your brain, you’re collecting your thoughts, inner emotions, and putting them all together, and you’re saying, ‘Where does this all fit into my life?’”

During his sojourn, Thiessen stayed in constant contact with Hoopes and the rest of the band – drummer Ethan Luck, bassist John Warne and guitarist Jon Schneck - sharing song ideas and mapping out a direction for the album. One guiding principle soon emerged: this record should rock.

Reteaming with longtime producer Mark Townsend (“We’ve got an almost telepathic relationship,” Hoopes says. “He’s family”), the band brought the spontaneity and revved-up spirit of their live performances into the studio. On such standout songs as “Therapy,” “Candlelight” and “This Is The End,” their trademark blend of sweet melodicism and caffeinated pop-punk has never sounded as urgent and powerful.

The album was mixed by ace engineer Andy Wallace (Nirvana, Jeff Buckley, Sheryl Crow), who ups the ante even further by imbuing the songs with widescreen grandeur and crunching clarity.

“We definitely wanted to make a rock record,” Thiessen confirms. “We wanted it to be uptempo and energetic. As far as the sonic aspect, we wanted to make it less modern sounding, with classic rock textures - Counting Crows, Foo Fighters, those kind of ‘90s albums. That was a good time for rock ‘n’ roll.”

It was also a time before computers took up permanent residency in recording studios. Thiessen says, “A lot of bands use MIDI and synthesizers – fake instruments. We have too. But on this record, everything you hear is really played. It’s organic. I know a lot of bands do that now. But for us, it was really the first time we made it the real thing.”

That humble claim aside, Relient K has been making the real thing since 1997, when Thiessen and Hoopes formed the band in high school. In the decade since, they’ve released five full-length albums (three are certified Gold), five EPs and a Christmas record, toured the globe, and racked up several hit singles, a Grammy nomination, two Dove Awards and performances on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, *Late Night with Conan O’ Brien* and *Jimmy Kimmel Live*. The *Los Angeles Times* has 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.”

With anticipation high from fans the world over and upcoming tour dates, the band’s hopes for *Forget And Not Slow Down* – the first release on their new Mono vs. Stereo label - are simple.

“The songs that tend to be the fan favorites in the past are the ones about making mistakes but ultimately moving past them,” Hoopes says. “And this record has a lot of that feeling. No matter what trials and tribulations you encounter in your life, it doesn’t have to be the end of your story. You can move on and be happy and experience joy.”

Thiessen adds, “We always hope our listeners understand the resolution and positivity that the songs are alluding to. All these songs are written out of a good state of mind, and that’s what the songs are encouraging people to do - find that in their own lives. If you’re going through turmoil, you can find your way through it.”

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