

Hawk Nelson

Hawk Nelson Is My Friend

Everybody needs a friend. From the modern phenomenon of social networking websites like MySpace and Facebook to the classic comfort found alongside special schoolmates and work buddies, we're always looking for someone with whom we can laugh and cry.

Since 2004, music lovers have enjoyed a real camaraderie with rising pop-rock band Hawk Nelson, helping the quartet sell nearly half a million albums, land personal appearances on major television and motion picture projects, and gain high-profile song placement ("Bring 'Em Out") with NBC's NFL Sunday Night Football campaign.

Now the true bond of friendship between the group and others continues to strengthen, mature, and be more overtly celebrated than even before with the Canadian-originated act's third Tooth & Nail release, *Hawk Nelson Is My Friend*.

"Going into this record, we sat down and thought about how we've always had this mentality of not so much winning fans as making friends," says born frontman Jason Dunn. "We want to be clear that we're all about being on the same level as the audience."

"The album title is also what's printed across the front of our most popular tee shirt," adds quintessentially friendly Hawk Nelson bass player Daniel Biro. "And there's a little joke in there, because so many people still think 'Hawk Nelson' is some guy's name."

To be fair, that mix-up happens a lot less these days. In fact, the band's good name helped recruit some cool new compadres for the recording of *Hawk Nelson Is My Friend*. For the first time, the guys worked with top producer David Bendeth (Elvis, Paramore, The Red Jumpsuit Apparatus), tracking at his New Jersey studio. And in addition to writing with longtime friend Trevor McNevean from Thousand Foot Krutch, Dunn and Biro also met and wrote with Matthew Gerrard (*High School Musical*, *Hannah Montana*), Our Lady Peace lead singer Raine Maida (Avril Lavigne, Kelly Clarkson), and '80s pop star-turned-hit songsmith Richard Marx ("Right Here Waiting," Keith Urban).

Refreshingly, Hawk Nelson doesn't rest on its youthful success and had no problem reaching past the pop-punk core to create something uniquely enjoyable for its audience.

"We don't want to be that band whose record sounds just like the last one," Biro explains. "It's great to work with people who have so much experience and can help us grow."

In a raucously poetic sort of way, *Hawk Nelson Is My Friend* opens with first single "Friend Like That," a pounding rocker with fuzzy, spiraling guitars and fist-pumping *Hey! Hey! Hey!* Ramones-like shouts. Seeking heavenly guidance and earthly alliance at the same time, the song declares, *I need somebody on the inside, somebody who can set*

me free . . . Make some noise if you feel this way. Anybody got a friend like that?

Dunn explains, “So many people are struggling today. Most of all they need a friend, and we believe everyone has a friend in God.”

Deeper into the record, electrified new anthem and sure favorite “Arms Around Me” finds Hawk Nelson touching on social and spiritual issues of regret and forgiveness, thankful for the friends who are, *Always near me, even when it’s ugly.*

Like its loyal audience, Hawk Nelson shows clear signs of growth on new songs like “One Little Miracle.” Co-written with Marx, the track captures a perfect pop moment that blends innovative playing, great melodies, and a strong belief: *One little revolution could turn it all around, back to the kingdom we once knew; just a little bit of me and a little bit of you . . . one little miracle to get us through.*

“Not the Same” marks a clear step ahead in the band’s artistry as well. Although Hawk Nelson’s early punk influences (Green Day, Blink 182) are still evident, this richly textured song about the past represents a progression into mellower yet no less passionate musical territory that is matched by the lyrical declaration of *we’re onto something new.*

Essential to the all-around appeal of *Hawk Nelson Is My Friend* are the contributions of guitarist Jonathan Steingard and drummer Aaron Tosti. In talking about cuts like “One Little Miracle” and “Not the Same,” Biro describes the remarkably dynamic and highly melodic and muscular guitar parts as being “so good I could cry.” And it was Tosti who set the energetic tone for the entire record, laying his confident, seasoned rhythms down first alone in the studio when a time crunch required the rest of Hawk Nelson to stay out on tour with a fill-in stickman.

For all of their adventures and successes thus far, the members of Hawk Nelson still see themselves as “four guys just trying to make it,” says Dunn. “We’ll always be working toward that, trying to write the best songs possible.”

Hawk Nelson Is My Friend most definitely lives up to that goal. Their friends will love it.