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LIVE'S ED KOWALCZYK: 25 YEARS OF 'THROWING COPPER' + FUTURE RECORDING PLANS



[CHAD CHILDERS](#)

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MSO PR / Photo by Clay Patrick McBride

This month, [Live](#) will celebrate the 25th anniversary of one of the '90s greatest albums, *Throwing Copper*. It catapulted the band from upstarts who were just starting to make a dent in the industry with their 2011 breakout *Mental Jewelry* to a full-fledged, chart-topping, platinum-selling rock band. In fact, *Throwing Copper* has been certified eight times platinum in the years since 1994.

This summer, the band will join co-headliners [Bush](#) and fellow '90s era peers [Our Lady Peace](#) for the "ALT-IMATE tour," with plans to definitely turn a focus on their landmark album. We recently spoke with Live singer [Ed Kowalczyk](#) about the summer tour and reflected on how some of the themes from this album have evolved over the years. Check out the chat below.

What a great bill this is. I'm so looking forward to this tour with Live, Bush and Our Lady Peace. Can you talk a little bit about what you admire about your touring partners this summer?

Well I'd say we're coming back from a long break. You know, we got the band back together about 2 to 3 years ago now, and we've been slowly working our way back into

the venues that we were playing before we split. We started off by playing festivals and now, probably six to eight months ago, we were looking toward the 25th anniversary of *Throwing Copper* this year and started to think about other bands that might be celebrating a big record from that era.

Immediately Bush came up and I've known the guys in Bush for years, and they're great guys. We played on festivals with them off and on over the years but never toured together, and so, we reached out to them. Or, I'm not quite sure who reached out first to everybody. But it was immediately both bands were like, 'Yes, let's do it.' We felt really good about it. We just felt energetically and sonically, this is a really good bill and a really good match. There are songs, of course, great songs between all the bands. Our Lady Peace as well, obviously. So we were just excited to get out and rock and really be able to do us, and obviously, we're co-headlining.

This is us getting back into the full production and getting to have all that control over that. So, in a lot of ways, I really feel like this, even though we've been playing a lot over the last couple of years, but this tour is like the real comeback if you would. This is our fanbase that has been hearing that we're back and now they get a chance to see us all over the country. So, we're pretty excited.



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You mentioned being able to do the full production and thinking back on *Throwing Copper*, you guys were still a band on the way up. So, you might not have been able to do what you had fully envisioned in terms of production at the time ...

Oh yeah. There's definitely a lot that we've learned over the years and how we've developed these songs into, they're still really close to the original version, but we've

expanded some of them and done a lot of really cool stuff. Even the last few years since the reunion, we've been tweaking things. So, it's really exciting to get to bring all that experience to now this record, which is obviously 25 years old. But it doesn't feel like that to us because we've been regenerating these songs and reinvigorating them with our new energy as a reunited band. So, it just feels really good. The time is perfect. The time is really perfect.

This is the first time we've had a chance to talk since you've reunited with Live. Can you take me through what that experience was for you, the first time being back in the band and how you've seen things develop over the last couple of years to where the band is now?

Yeah, it was really exciting. We had definitely come to the end of this break period. All of the things that happened between us were water under the bridge, and we just missed each other, so we were really excited to get back onstage. It felt great.

I went through the first show, and it was kind of a slow release that we only announced right at the last minute for about 300 fans. I think we were all a little bit nervous. We're all a little bit out of our depths for that first one. But we quickly got back into it and were firing on all cylinders definitely by the end of that year. We did a bunch of great festivals and just got super inspired being around all these bands, and by the second year of the reunion, obviously, we did a tour with Counting Crows. I feel like we got the band sounding better than ever, but the transition into the reunion was really natural, it was really surprising to everybody, how great it felt. There really wasn't any [rust], well, that first couple [shows] we were a little like okay but it's been awhile.

Really it was such a fast and easy transition back into what we love to do that I don't even remember any great [hurdle] getting back on the stage with the guys, and definitely now I feel like we just have a confidence up there. It's really powerful and the band sounds amazing, really big, and so I think this is really going to be a great bill for us to show it off.

Revisiting *Throwing Copper* ahead of this interview, I realized you were really asking some hard life questions on that record lyrically at a time where you were just entering young adulthood in your early twenties. All these years later, do you think you're any closer to understanding some of life's mysteries and the questions you were asking on that album?

I like to think so ... I think. I like to think that, I don't know if I have any answers, I don't know if we ever do, but I'd like to think of my journey as a man, and a performer and an artist, tradesperson that all of that time spent, and still being spent contemplating spiritual things has made me over the years more at peace with myself and more confident onstage, more confident just in general. I would hesitate to say that I have found the Holy Grail. We're just a continual journey in the process of growth, and it's fun being in a band and to do it as an artist because of these things that are inspiring me, I get to think about it and/or try to make songs that invite people into these considerations

as well, and just, and that's what the fans like, it's what they dig. They like to chew on it, digest it, really take it into their lives and a lot of these songs have become a really big part of their lives and that's pretty incredible.

One of the things that I gravitated toward with you guys, and I'm sure a lot of other Live fans as well, the vulnerability in your vocals at some points, the emphatic passion at other times. The way that you convey your message, there was no doubt you were feeling these things on a personal level. 25 years later, and revisiting these songs on this album, how do you connect to it now?

I would say it's evolved. I would say the passion's the same. I would say, what you hope happens as you play hundreds and hundreds of shows over the years is that you get better and that you become slightly more sophisticated in your approach. I mean, we put these first couple albums out, we were just really our early 20s. I mean I was 23 when *Copper* came out, and I was just this fireball of energy and my excitement in those days was a different tenor than you're going to get after 27 and a half years when you've seen and done it all.

At the beginning we were just so fresh and so young, we were experiencing these big stages for the first time and things were coming at us really fast, and so a lot of that was just learning how to last an entire tour singing and playing the way we liked to, which is pretty intense. So, I think all of those things and all the years have combined me as a performer and I'm more confident. I feel like the vocal approach to the singing is still super emotional, but that I have some more tools in the toolbox after 25 years vocally and onstage as to how I want to portray the songs.

Songs can take on different meanings over time and one of the first things that came to my head as I was listening to "White Discussion" — it was written way before the social media age but man does it feel like it could fit....

I was thinking that the other night onstage. We were playing it, and I really feel like lyrically it could have come out yesterday and made a lot of sense to people. It's really fun to go back and the way that I wrote these songs, the way that I wrote the lyrics was to always try to keep it not vague, but universal in the sense of letting people have their own interpretation also hoping that by writing that way, maybe 10, 15, 20, 25 years later, people will still be able to find something in it and so it's been fun to play these songs 2018, 2019 and go, 'Wow, they still really feel relevant to me.'

25 years ago I was singing about these things, and 25 years later they still have these themes. They're sort of perennial. They don't really change that much. The world changes but when you nail it in a lyric, and I hope I have nailed it a few times, they don't really change. They sort of, they may adapt to the times, but they don't change. We still get that feeling of, 'Wow, I'm singing something that still matters to me and still matters to my fans.'

Live - White, Discussion



Obviously you guys will play the hits in terms of what came off this record but I'm guessing with revisiting *Throwing Copper* for the 25th anniversary you've kind of delved in a little bit further. Is there a song that's striking you now off the album or something that's more of a personal song to you off this record and if you can talk about why that's reaching you more now?

Yeah. Of course, they're all personal to me because I wrote lyrics to all of them with the music, but I would say "Lightning Crashes" to me. I have four kids now, and when I wrote the song, I didn't have any kids. But it's about birth, about the circle of life and all that. So now with having been to four births of my kids, it's a deeper song to me for sure. It's more grounded in a reality whereas opposed to just figuring out more to sort of just conceptualizing this story. Now it's like I go a whole other level of experience with life now. All these years later and with my kids, and that song definitely still gets me. And I've had fans look to me and actually say they've had the same experience with that song. Since they liked it in the '90s, but now they have their own families and they're like, 'Wow, this is really deep to me, deeper now for me than it was then.'

Live - Lightning Crashes



***Mental Jewelry* was the album that initially turned me onto you guys but *Throwing Copper* is where you guys kind of exploded. So many things happened for you on that cycle. You've got Woodstock, you played *SNL* and *MTV Unplugged*. For you, maybe some reflections on what that time meant to you and your personal highlights from that album cycle?**

Yeah, gosh, there were so many and you just mentioned a few there. They were coming like every couple weeks, these milestones that you dream about as a young band of getting that kind of exposure and those kind of opportunities. You know, I still look back on the *Saturday Night Live* performance as really special, cause I had grown up watching that show and saw so many of my favorite artists on that show. That was a pinch-me moment. Above and beyond everything else maybe. I don't know. It's hard to split hairs within that year because there was the cover of *Rolling Stone*, *Saturday Night Live*, all the big benchmarks that you dream about. But I would say *SNL*. That performance, that one really just stood out to me as like yeah, we did it, you know?

Taking it back to where we are now. You had a couple of new songs pop up this past year. The *Local 717* EP, very cool with a fresh energy. The band feels vibrant again. Can you talk a little bit about where the band is at creatively at this point?

Well, we started writing pretty much right away when we got back together. Which I think again surprised everybody that we felt that comfortable that quickly to get back into something as intimate as the songwriting process. So we've got a bunch of songs lying around, little bits and bobs of things that we started. And then, you know, of course, we put out the EP last year.

But there's been just such a demand for the band to tour. Also, this 25th anniversary of *Throwing Copper*. We're really trying to balance all that. How to stay in a creative mode but also achieve all the things that we want to for the band with this anniversary

and all the touring that has come our way. So, I'm hoping that, after this tour, that we're gonna really be able to focus on writing and making some new music in the fall.

We have an amazing studio in our hometown headquarters of York, Pennsylvania. And so, we're excited to get back in there. We all sit around and bemoan the fact that we haven't had a chance because of all the touring. So, I think we're gonna try to massage the schedule after this tour, and keep us all free into next year so that we can put out something.

LIVE - Be A Giver, Man (Lyric Video)



I thought it was cool that you came back with an EP, and obviously things have changed in the music industry since Live's first era. Did you like the EP experience? Do full albums still mean something to you? Or is the immediacy of getting music out there of most importance?

Yeah, I love EPs, and our first release was called *Four Songs*. It was our EP before *Mental Jewelry*. We've done them in the past and I really enjoy the five songs, four to six songs whatever you call it. I just think of the EP as five songs. When you have five songs, you can really sequence them and you can have, it's not the full experience of an hour, hour-and-ten-minute album, but we can treat it like a little mini album. And also, it doesn't take as long. We don't have to wait till all these songs are done to release something.

So we've toyed around with the idea of putting one song out at a time too and just not even worrying about it. Just saying, when they're done, we'll just put them out. So, there are all kinds of ideas floating around. But I do agree. I think, you know, with social media and with the internet, it's one of the things that we don't have to do anymore is have that sort of tunnel vision on the old-school album cycle. In the time that used to take, now we can just get the stuff out to the fans and keep them excited.

In terms of creativity, what's inspiring you at the moment? Are you a reader? World events? Or are you more abstract ideas when it comes to writing?

Yeah, I read. I'm always writing music and always playing music, listening to music. You know, I'm a late comer to the vinyl revolution. So, I'm spending way too much money on vinyl records these days. Yeah, I've been like headlong, head over heels in love with the blues, the early delta blues, and blues music and early rock and roll for the last couple years.

So again, it's sort of a piece of my musical education that I left for now. I was joking on Instagram the other day like, I kind of left it like I guess God leaves golf for some guys. I don't play golf, but you know to me, it's come later in life, [laughs] and that for me is the blues and getting really, really into the early blues, or delta blues, like I said, early rock and roll, early country, early bluegrass. The internet is such an incredible resource now for discovering that old footage and records. So yeah, it's been a blues season for me the last couple of years.

Have to ask, I'm also a big vinyl collector myself. Do you have a prized vinyl in your collection?

Oh man, I just picked up a bunch. There's a great record store here in Denver County not far from where I live called Kenosha Records. He actually, it was funny cause he ended up procuring an entire blues collection. He had like this really small collection for a while, and like out of nowhere right when I got into it, and then he had like 4,000 albums overnight. And I said to him, where did all these come from?

I just scored like this really great Canned Heat record cause I'm a huge Canned Heat fan. I know it's not early blues, but it's early enough. Just flipping through here, and I'd say my number one is a Lightning Hopkins and it's on the Fire label, and back says, "VOG, Vintage Version, Fascist Fear Records, so it says Fire Records and it says Fear Records on the back. But anyway, it's really old, and I love Lightning Hopkins, too. And here's Johnny Cash, I picked up an original Johnny Cash release and that was really fun to listen to. Meanwhile, it's a rabbit hole. You can go as deep as you want.

Thanks to Live's Ed Kowalczyk for the interview. As stated, Live will be on tour with Bush and Our Lady Peace this summer as part of the "ALT-IMATE Tour." They've also got some spring dates and festival appearances stateside and will be making a brief trip to Europe before the "ALT-IMATE" run begins. See all of their scheduled stops and get ticketing info [here](#). Plus, you can pick up their 'Local 717' EP at [this location](#).

Live, Bush and Our Lady Peace The ALT-IMATE Tour Dates:

June 6 – Mashantucket, Ct. @ Foxwoods Resorts Casino

June 7 – Atlantic City, N.J. @ Hard Rock Live

June 8 – Burlington, Ontario @ Spencer Smith Park

June 11 – Boston, Mass. @ Rockland Trust Bank Pavilion

June 13 – Gilford, N.H. @ Bank of New Hampshire Pavilion

June 14 – Canandaigua, N.Y. @ Marvin Sands Performing Arts Center
June 15 – Holmdel, N.J. @ PNC Bank Arts Center
July 26 – Appleton, Wis. @ Neuroscience Group Field at Fox Cities Stadium
July 27 – Council Bluffs, Iowa @ Stir Cove at Harrah's Casino
July 28 – Kansas City, Mo. @ Starlight Theater
July 30 – New Orleans, La. @ Bold Sphere Music at Champions Square
Aug. 2 – Wichita, Kansas @ Hartman Arena
Aug. 3 – Denver, Co. @ Fillmore Auditorium
Aug. 6 – Los Angeles, Calif. @ Greek Theater
Aug. 7 – Concord, Calif. @ Concord Pavilion
Aug. 9 – Tuolumne, Calif. @ Black Oak Casino
Aug. 10 -- Costa Mesa, Calif. @ OC Fair
Aug. 11 – Tucson, Ariz. @ AVA Casino
Aug. 14 – Rogers, Ak. @ Wal-Mart AMP
Aug. 16 – Tampa, Fla. @ MIDFLORIDA Credit Union Amphitheater
Aug. 17 – Miami, Fla. @ Bayfront Park Amphitheater
Aug. 18 – Jacksonville, Fla. @ Dally's Place
Aug. 20 – Atlanta, Ga. @ Cadence Bank Amphitheater at Chastain Park
Aug. 23 – Essex Junction, Vt. @ Champlain Valley Exp0
Aug. 24 – Baltimore, Md. @ MECU Pavilion
Aug. 25 – Pittsburgh, Pa. @ Stage AE
Aug. 27 – Allentown, Pa. @ The Great Allentown Fair
Aug. 29 – Wantagh, N.Y. @ Northwell Health at Jones Beach Theater
Aug. 30 – Bethel, N.Y. @ Bethel Woods Center for the Arts
Sept. 4 – Dayton, Ohio @ The Roxy Music Center at The Heights
Sept. 6 – Tinley Park, Ill. @ Hollywood Casino Amphitheater
Sept. 7 – Allegan, Mich. @ Allegan County Fair
Sept. 8 – Rochester, Mich. @ Meadow Brook Amphitheater

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