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Interview: Sharks, on the road with the AP Tour

The UK's [Sharks](#) have had a very busy year. Aside from taking a short break to record their new album, the band has spent most of 2011 zig-zagging the US and Canada to bring their live show to the North American masses for the first time. They toured with Social Distortion, Mockingbird Wish Me Luck, Warped Tour, and are now responsible for warming up the crowd on this Fall's AP (Alternative Press) Tour. The Royal Leamington Spa natives also shared a stage with The Mighty Mighty Bosstones, The Bronx and Title Fight at UK's Reading and Leeds festivals and The Strokes and Beady Eye in Japan at Tokyo's Summer Sonic fest. Their fierce, punk-influenced melodic rock made fans of everyone who was smart enough to get to these shows early as well as music journalists and past touring mates like Against Me! and Chuck Ragan. If you're one of those music fans who loves to be in on the ground floor before a band totally takes off and becomes "The Next Great Band", now is your chance.





Singer James Mattock of Sharks

Lorraine Schwartz

Lorraine Schwartz

Sharks recently played Toad's Place in New Haven, CT with the [AP Tour](#) where singer James Mattock, guitarist Andrew Bayliss and drummer Sam Lister took a few moments to speak to me about the new record, influences and tattooed Mums.

The [last time](#) we spoke, you were in the middle of Warped. How did the rest of the tour go for you from that point on?

JAMES: Well, it kind of fizzled towards the end. I mean, it's SO long. But our last few shows were amazing. We were lucky with our set times. I remember it being really good and I was really grateful that we ended on a good one. All our friends came and watched us and celebrated.

ANDREW: The last show was probably the best show we played on

that tour, which was nice. So that was a nice high to end on. The first few shows were a bit ropey cus we had our driver playing bass, so it was a little bit weird. But I'm glad we did it. I think we got a lot out of that tour.

Speaking of bassists, please tell us something about your current bassist Luke Schwartz, with the hope that fans learn they like him so that no one has to off themselves as Sam suggested in a recent [tweet](#).

ANDREW: What?! I don't think I've seen that!

SAM: (laughs) I just did it on my own Twitter. It was just a private joke actually. I forgot that people actually look at that stuff! Anyway, he's just filling in for us for this tour. He got recommended to us by some friends of ours. He was really up for doing it, he can sing, he can play really well, etc. It's been working out great and it's been awesome.

Via your band Twitter you often encourage people to come say hello at your merch booth after your set. Have you had any memorable fan encounters recently?

JAMES: Once this girl came over. She was wearing a Black Veil Brides t-shirt, and had her Sharks poster and everything, wanting to buy stuff. So I said "How are you doing? Nice t-shirt. We toured with them." She kind of had a blank look on her face. And her Mum was also there with her. I signed this autograph and the Mum said "Oh yeah, I've got loads of autographs now." She pulled up her sleeve,

and this girl's Mum, who was in her 50's or whatever, had these two autographs tattooed into her. One was Black Veil Brides and the other was Falling In Reverse. She kind of acted like, well obviously I must know who they were. But really I was like "Uhh, I haven't heard of them!"

ANDREW: These were some seriously visible tattoos on her wrist. And this was after she asked for the cap off your can of Coke just so she could keep it!

OK...! So anyhow, you're playing New York City next month for the first time at Irving Plaza. When you played Brooklyn with Chuck Ragan this past Spring, were you able to check out Manhattan at all?

JAMES: Yeah, after that night we drove through Manhattan. We've all been there before anyway, but we drove through Times Square at 4 in the morning which was cool.

You just got finished recording your new album in Baltimore, MD. Why Baltimore as opposed to somewhere in England?

SAM: It was cheaper.

ANDREW: Well we did it with [Brian McTernan](#) who's in some of the old Hot Water Music records and stuff like Cave In. He's got quite a good back catalog of stuff. That's where his studio is based. It's a really nice studio that's in the center of Baltimore. It's two floors and it's got an amazing living space, and the bottom floor's converted

into a studio. It's ideal for a considerable amount of time, so it's a good base for recording.

When you were writing this album, were you worried at all about what your growing number of fans would think of the new material? Did that affect the creative process at all?

SAM: No, you can't worry really.

ANDREW: Well, we've been writing the record for quite awhile. Some of these songs are quite old and some of them are new. So we weren't really thinking about anything when we wrote these. It was a very natural process.

What's your method for deciding whether a song is ready for a record or if it should be cut from the list?

ANDREW: We had a week of pre-production with Brian, so he kinda cut through the fat. He wasn't shy about telling us about a song he didn't like, so it was easy to know what was going to be put on the record.

You recently covered The National's "Blood Buzz Ohio" for [Daytrotter Sessions](#). Why did you choose that song?

SAM: Well our manager told us we had to do a cover of some kind.

ANDREW: Yeah and we really like that band. I guess we thought if we're going to do a cover, do something different.

Something unexpected.

JAMES: Yeah. It's good to show another side of the band as well. We've done loads of like, Replacements covers and the Misfits and that stuff. It's obvious that we're into those sort of bands. But we really like that kind of American indie stuff as well. So we just wanted everyone to know that we could kind of spill over into that sort of thing if we wanted to. We didn't want to wig everyone out when the new album comes out and they see it's a bit different. Not that we really thought about that (fan reaction), but that's kind of probably why we did it. Other than it's just a good song and it's fun to play.

ANDREW: I don't really even know that last record they put out. I mean, they've done a few records. I'm not really that familiar with the older stuff. But we all really liked that record.

As far as other bands you're a fan of, what was the first band that got you really excited about rock and roll to the point they became a real influence on you?

JAMES: Probably the Ramones. I grew my hair and listened to them every day.

SAM: Yeah...cutting holes in your jeans and all that!

JAMES: That's when I started learning music, cus then it was like "I really need to play."

ANDREW: Probably a band like Nirvana. Nirvana, The Ramones... the live Joy Division stuff was a big influence.

How did Joy Division make an impression on you?

JAMES: It was a big deal living in England to be into that band.

SAM: They're like a legacy.

ANDREW: They weren't a band for very long. I'm not a huge fan of the records, but their live stuff, I think, is something else. That's incredible stuff.

SAM: I really like their records. I think they're really cool even though they're really badly produced. Like, amazingly bad. But it really works.

Before we part, any idea when the new record will be out?

ANDREW: We haven't got a date, but I think it's going to be around March.

JAMES: We haven't even heard the album yet or anything. We're in this painful in-between wait at the moment. We're expecting mixes to be sent through today. So we're already itchy!

SAM: We were meant to have some today, but nothing happened. But we'll just keep waiting. It'll be great.

I'm sure it'll be good.

ANDREW: I hope so!

Check out photos of Sharks from the Toad's Place show [here](#), and additional photos [here](#).

Catch Sharks opening on the [AP Tour](#) this November. They'll be at Irving Plaza on November 22nd, and Starland Ballroom on November 23rd (tickets available on [Ticketmaster](#)). For more info on Sharks including tour dates and music samples, check out their Facebook [page](#) and their [Twitter](#).

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