

Jack & Meg White

>> MUSICIANS, 31 AND 32, NASHVILLE AND LOS ANGELES

- > **Meg's really afraid** of this interview, by the way. That's why she's not talking.
- > **Simple is not** always better. For Michelangelo, no. For the White Stripes, simple is better.
- > **I was an apprentice** in an upholstery shop when I was a teenager, and there were three staples in a piece of fabric. After I stared at it for five minutes, I was thinking how three was the minimum number of staples it would take to hold that fabric on one side of the board. A wheel could have no less than three lugs on it. A table could stand with three legs.
- > **I always return** to the number three. I use it as a basis for everything I do.
- > **Red, white, black.** Vocals, guitar, drums. Storytelling, rhythm, melody.
- > **I was also** one of three upholsterers on my block growing up.
- > **The Holy Trinity**—that's the big one.
- > **Constraints lead to creativity.** You don't come to the studio, play a couple of hours, see you tomorrow, you know? Eight months later, \$2 million later, four hundred tracks later, you're left with nothing of what your goal was to begin with.
- > **The records I love** were probably made in a day.
- > **I'm very conscious** of playing the room. You start thinking, How am I going to trick them, how am I going to get to the point where we'll be friends?
- > **It's not cool to care.** It never has been. We've battled that. It scares a lot of people away.
- > **Our presentation** of the band is the greatest insurance policy. It might bother someone so much that they can't take the band seriously: "You're not wearing a T-shirt with some clever logo on it, something sarcastic and cynical. How can I take you seriously?" If they can't get past that, there's no point in sharing music with them.
- > **Irony is** the easy way out. It's an anti-opinion, an opinion without taking any chances.
- > **I've never really had** a moment when I thought bagpipes wouldn't appeal.
- > **Love?** I've got an inkling. I've got an inkling. But I've got a lot to learn.
- > **I don't get nervous** when I go up there. I've always thought that I should, but I don't.
- > **We don't have a set list.** We don't know what our first song is going to be. We just walk out onstage. No safety net. And the struggle begins immediately, ten thousand people or a hundred thousand people. We come out, guns blazing, and see what happens next.
- > **You're asking me** all the questions! Makes me feel rude.
- > **Each one** of my guitars came to me accidentally. They're all hard to work with. They're all cheap. They don't stay in tune very well. But they're ferocious.
- > **I present the song** to Meg, and we treat it as if we're covering someone else's song. That breathes life into it.
- > **Critics have** an undying urge to compare everything to something else. Every riff has to be compared to another band's riff, and every chord change is compared to every other band's chord change. Anything kind of powerful is Led Zeppelin. Anything kind of poppy is the Beatles.
- > **We always come back** to redheads. I find them fascinating. Aspects of good and evil wrapped up into one person. Some cultures are afraid of redheads and consider them evil, and some venerate them. They have a fire inside.
- > **Someone told me,** "You're going to like your thirties. Things don't bother you as much." That's true, it seems, almost instantly.
- > **My daughter's a year old now.** You start to see the whole world over again. That's what I was hoping for, and that's what I've been getting.
- > **When Meg sat down** at the drums, that was a really important moment. We recorded on a little two-track, but it sounded heavy and full and simple. It was a marriage—Detroit garage rock, the Velvet Underground, blues—and it all came together as a platform where I could start writing. It was finding Meg.
- > **I can sit and pretend** that I'm in control or in charge, but the song is very much in charge. It always is. The album isn't in charge. The name of the band isn't in charge.
- > **The funny thing is** when you learn what your songs were actually about. ■