

spin doctors

NICE TALKING TO ME

Nice Talking To Me (Ruff Nation/Universal) is the first new studio album in eleven years by the original Spin Doctors: Chris Barron (lead vocals), Eric Schenkman (guitar, vocals), Mark White (bass), and Aaron Comess (drums). But that's not all.

Nice Talking To Me is the Spin Doctors' most musically accomplished album—a mature work that sums up their individual artistic growth over the past decade. It's the end product of a three-year period during which the band renewed their dedication to songwriting, live performance, and the creative process. Finally, it's the *best-sounding* album the Spin Doctors have ever made, with Matt Wallace's state-of-the-art production framing band performances that have the freshness and energy of first takes.

This exciting new chapter in the Spin Doctors' unfolding story began in September 2001 during the closing week of Wetlands. This Lower Manhattan club had been like home to the band in the early years, and was the scene of their debut live recording. As he arrived to rehearse for the Spins' 9/7/01 show, Chris Barron admits to having had "all these feelings of trepidation, of not knowing what the payoff was gonna be."

"I had a list of all the songs from our first two albums," he recalls, "and the first one I called was 'What Time Is It.' Eric went into that signature riff of the intro, I started singing—and it was like *wow*. The synergy of this particular ensemble just came flooding back, and to be a part of it was indescribable."

"I'd left the band on Labor Day, seven years before [in 1994]," Eric Schenkman notes. "So it seemed like the circle was coming complete. The chemistry of the ensemble is unique—that was instantly apparent—and together we started clawing our way back."

Reuniting for an ecstatically received one-off show was one thing, whereas a joint commitment to renewed touring and writing was something else again. But gradually, one thing led to another...

"In the spring of 2002," says Aaron Comess, "we did a two-week club tour and had a really good time. Then we got another bigger tour offer for that summer, and Chris and Eric started writing a little bit in hotel rooms...We took our time, worked some gigs, got together every few months for songwriting sessions-and eventually began playing those new songs live."

He continues: "There's an old saying that a band has its whole life to write the first album and about two weeks to write the second one. This isn't our first album, of course, but *Nice Talking To Me* has had the longest gestation period of any album we've made since *Pocket Full of Kryptonite*. An individual song may have been written by Eric, or by Chris and me, or by all four of us-but this album contains the best material from all those sources."

Nice Talking To Me was recorded at Sound City in Van Nuys, CA-the classic "old school" studio where Fleetwood Mac made Rumors and Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers created *Damn The Torpedoes*. The process began with ten days of intensive rehearsal spearheaded by producer Matt Wallace, whose credits includes production and mixing for everyone from Faith No More and the Replacements to Sheryl Crow and Maroon 5.

"Matt's thing was to break the songs down to acoustic guitars, rather than just going into the studio and start pounding away on our instruments," Aaron explains. "He wanted to hone in on the melodies, the chord changes, the real nuances of the songs. We had to feel sure that the song and the arrangement totally held up with just acoustic guitars and voice."

Mark: "*That* was a mind-blower. But Matt was totally into it."

Wallace had booked 12 days in which to cut basic tracks but "we finished in just about half that time," says Chris Barron proudly. "We came home, then went back to do overdubs, then I went back once more just to finish a couple more things."

"Matt would mix a song each day and email each of us the rough mix for our input...it all felt like a continuous effort, with not a lot of down time between stints in the studio."

Nice Talking To Me will be available as a Dual Disc (CD/DVD) containing live performance footage from the Spin Doctors' UK/European tour in March 2005.

THE STORY SO FAR

Formed in 1988 in New York City, in 1990 the Spin Doctors were signed to Epic Records/Sony Music by a&r executive Frankie LaRocka. The band's Epic debut EP *Up For Grabs* was recorded live at Wetlands in Lower Manhattan and released in January 1991. (In 1992, these EP tracks were remixed and supplemented by additional live recordings to form the album *Homebelly Groove*.)

In August 1991, the Spin Doctors released their full-length debut album *Pocket Full Of Kryptonite*, co-produced by Peter Denenberg and Frankie LaRocka. Relentless touring and a wave of positive press kept the album alive into the next year, when sales began to increase dramatically. ...*Kryptonite* was certified gold in September 1992 and received an additional boost from the band's October appearance on "Saturday Night Live." Reaching the one million mark in January 1993, ...*Kryptonite* entered the Billboard Top Ten one month later.

By June 1993, the album was triple platinum and had breached the Top Five among Billboard Pop Albums while spinning off two major hit singles: "Little Miss Can't Be Wrong" and the No. 1 Rock radio song of 1993, "Two Princes." Ultimately, *Pocket Full Of Kryptonite* sold over five million copies in the US and another five million overseas.

"[Their] popularity is based on universal rock & roll virtues," said *Rolling Stone*, which put the band on the cover of its January 7, 1993 issue. "The Doctors aren't trying to blaze new trails-they know we've been down this way with the Stones, Curtis Mayfield, and a few of their other touchstones. But the proof-plenty of it-is in the party."

In June 1994, the Spin Doctors released their second Epic album, *Turn It Upside Down*. Once again co-produced by Peter Denenberg and Frankie LaRocka, the album featured new originals like "Biscuit Head," "Bags Of Dirt," and "You Let Your Heart Go Too Fast." The band set out on a three-month headlining tour, and played to immense crowds at the Woodstock and Glastonbury festivals. Their cover of the Creedence Clearwater classic "Have You Ever Seen The Rain?" was a highlight of the multi-platinum *Philadelphia* soundtrack.

Deeply weary of the road, guitarist Eric Schenkman left the group in September '94-just as *Turn It Upside Down* was certified gold-and was replaced by Anthony Krizan for their fall tour of Europe. In November-

December 1994, the Spins opened for the Rolling Stones on a series of eleven North American stadium shows. In March 1995, their album hit the one million (platinum) mark in the US, moving an additional million copies overseas.

The Spin Doctors' next Epic album, *You've Got to Believe In Something*, was produced by Danny Kortchmar and released in May 1996; more touring followed. After Anthony Krizan's departure, the band soldiered on with a new guitarist and a new label (Uptown/Universal) for the 1999 album *Here Comes the Bride*. But during these sessions, Mark White left the band. Later, Chris Barron lost his voice to an attack of vocal cord paralysis-and soon the Spin Doctors called it quits. (In October 2000, Sony Legacy released the 17-track retrospective *Just Go Ahead Now*.)

Mark White moved to Houston, Texas to practice and teach bass. Eric Schenkman earned two degrees from the New School University in New York before moving to eastern Canada. He has played and/or recorded with Natalie Merchant, Carly Simon, jazz composer Kip Hanrahan, Canadian songwriter Jimmy Rankin, and his own groups Cork (with drummer Corky Laing) and High Plains Drifter (with the late Blues Traveler bassist Bobby Sheehan).

Chris Barron undertook what he calls "a journeyman songwriting experience," composing tunes with Blues Traveler's Jon Popper and with former BMI executive Jeff Cohen. Aaron Comess produced and/or recorded with Joan Osborne, Chris Whitley, Mark Cohn, Rachel Yamagata, and Bilal, among others. He is one-third of the New York Electric Piano Trio, and appears on the albums *New York Electric Piano Trio*, *War Oracle* and *Citizen Zen*.

LOOKING AHEAD

Chris Barron: "There's something really authentic about this band. It's partly that those guys are amazing musicians who've all worked hard at their individual craft. But there's another element that emerges through the combination of these four people...Everybody's seven years older and-for lack of a better analogy-it's like the way that a wine matures. There's an added complexity and richness to everybody's feel in playing these songs."

Mark White: "I've been playing music for 25 years in over 50 bands, and I've never been in a band like this one. I feel like I'm in the Navy

SEALS-these guys will never let you down. I'm doing something I love to do, with people I love to do it with."

Eric Schenkman: "*Nice Talking To Me* represents a lot of work in writing and gigging, the kind that you can't do right away on the heels of a huge success. It's a tremendous achievement to write and record an album like this-one that sounds like the Spin Doctors but is not a remake of *Pocket Full of Kryptonite* and shows amazing growth on the part of all the musicians involved."

Aaron Comess: "We're entering the next phase. We're not a revival band, just going out there to play our first two records and milk the cash cow. I think we've all come back into this with a greater appreciation for each other and for the band as an entity-I know *I* appreciate what we have now, more than ever.

"If we can continue to write songs, to play great shows, and to keep the music fresh and alive-I think we can be around for a long time."

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