

Questions & Answers with Ben Folds Five

By APRIL TOWER
Staff writer

The interview was scheduled for Tuesday afternoon at 4:30. Promptly at 4:20 p.m., a phone rang in *The Battalion* newsroom. This was not unusual, but the conversation that would take place would be an extraordinary occasion.

On the other end of the line was Darren Jessee, drummer for Ben Folds Five, whose second album, *Whatever and Ever Amen*, recently went gold. The band's third album, *Naked Baby Photos*, a compilation album of miscellaneous recordings and live tracks, was released last month.

Jessee explained that he had placed the phone call 10 minutes early because he was running late and was expected to take his girlfriend to dinner that evening.

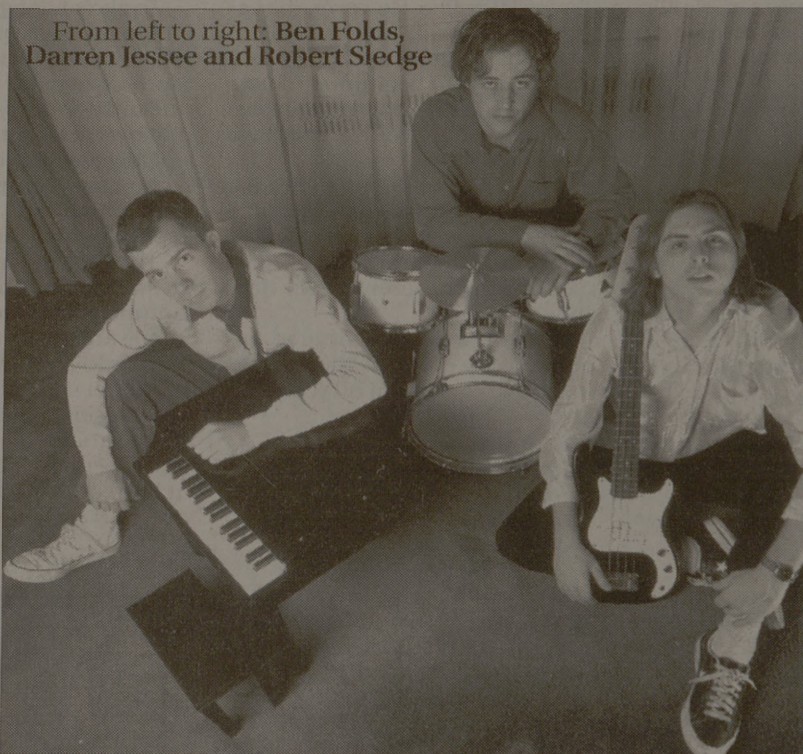
He did take 15 minutes to speak to *The Battalion* about the success of the album and the band's sold-out shows tonight at Dallas' Deep Ellum Live and tomorrow at Houston's Numbers. The conversation went something like this:

Battalion: "What are some differences between your first album and *Whatever and Ever Amen*?"

JESSEE: "Whatever and Ever is a little bit darker. It has a bitter tone, but it wasn't meant to be that way. We listened to it, and we were like, 'Hey, what's up with this bitter s***?' The first record is livelier."

Battalion: "What do you think about playing in Texas?"

JESSEE: "Texas is a different place. I was born in Houston, but drugs and music brought me to



From left to right: Ben Folds, Darren Jessee and Robert Sledge

Chapel Hill."

Battalion: "What makes Ben Folds Five unique?"

JESSEE: "That we're the greatest. No, I'm so full of myself. Really, I think what makes us unique is that we're so honest and straightforward."

Battalion: "Tell me about the lyrics to 'Brick,' your hit song."

JESSEE: "I wrote the lyrics to the chorus about a sinking relationship. Ben put it together and arranged it with the verses. Then the story became more clear that it was about a guy taking his dog to the vet."

Battalion: "How do you get inspired to write songs?"

JESSEE: "Sometimes we just

rub baby oil on each other. Sometimes we just go to church."

Battalion: "Do you target college students with your music?"

JESSEE: "When we made the record, we were targeting 50- to 65-year-old black women, but now kids like it. That's really good because they buy more records."

Battalion: "What are your shows like?"

JESSEE: "Our shows are just like the records, but twice as fast, with lots of dancing and screaming. Generally, the girls in the front take their clothes off. Come experience some of our sushi."

PLEASE SEE BEN ON PAGE 5.

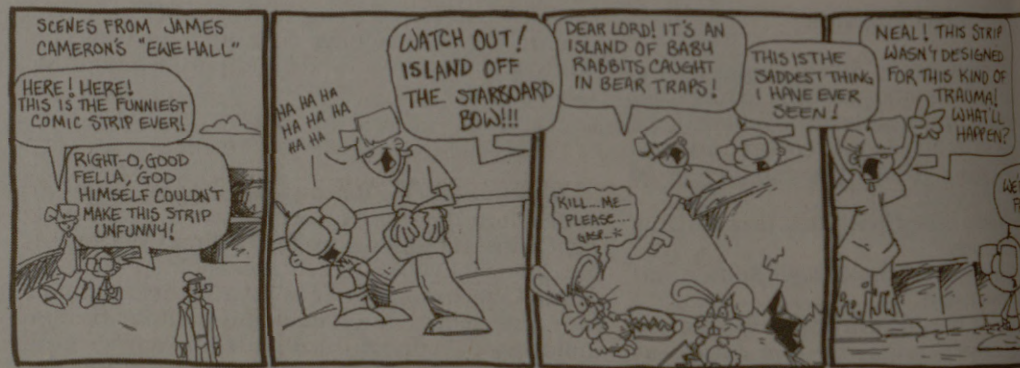
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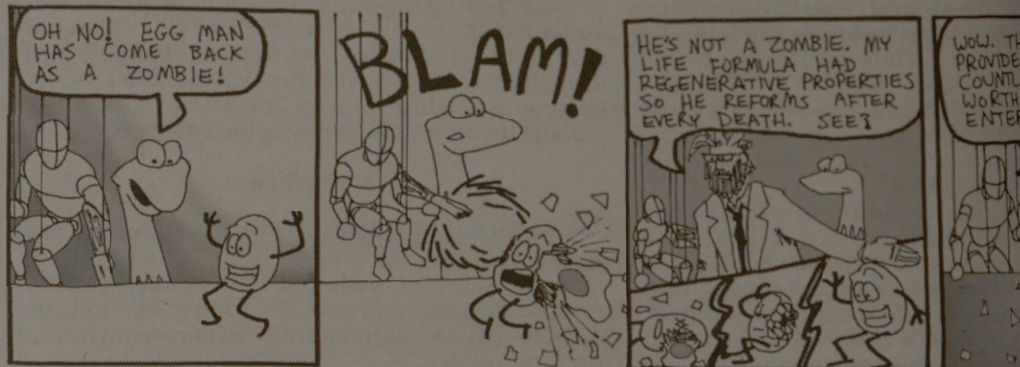
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