

## COIN opens tour at Brick



BY EMILY WILLIAMS | APRIL 28, 2015 | CULTURE

When the crowd of students gathered around Brick Street’s stage started chanting for another song, the members of the synth-pop band COIN looked at each other, puzzled. They didn’t have an encore planned.

They talked among themselves for a moment as the crowd continued to cheer, lifting their half-empty plastic cups in the air, before Chase Lawrence, the band’s lead singer, stepped up to the mic again.

“We haven’t played this song in two years,” Lawrence laughed, before drummer Ryan Winnen tapped out a beat and the four musicians slipped into another swirly, enigmatic tune.

Lawrence and Winnen, along with their bandmates Joe Memmel (Guitar and Vocals) and Zachary Dyke (Bass), started performing together in 2012, but with the June 9 release of their self-titled debut album, a performance at Chicago’s famed music festival Lollapalooza and shows with Passion Pit, Betty Who and Neon Trees on their calendar for 2015, COIN is just arriving on

most listeners' radar.

Their April 23 performance at Brick Street was their first stop.

The band, based in Nashville, Tennessee, found its beginning in a classroom at Belmont University. Memmel and Lawrence first met in a music theory class. Winnen's then-girlfriend, who sat next to the pair, overheard the two talking about forming a band and volunteered Winnen as their drummer, passing along his phone number to Memmel.

After Dyke shot a music video for the trio, they realized that the producer, musician and fellow Belmont student would be a perfect fit as their bassist.

"We basically asked him to be in the band that day," Winnen said. "I think, to this day, he's probably thinking, 'This is crazy I got forced into this thing.'"

Although Lawrence and Dyke completed their degrees at Belmont, Memmel withdrew from school as the band started to pick up, and Winnen did not attend college.

"If you're an artist and you're playing shows you need to go out there and play shows. You need to play at a club for ten people and understand what it's like to fail," Winnen said. "Me being removed from school, it kind of helped us have that gritty work ethic."

The men of COIN have paired that gritty work ethic not with seriousness, but with a commitment to carefree abandon.

Their three-track EP, "1992," was named for the year in which all of them were born. Their sound, which has been influenced by bands like New Order, The Cure, The Killers and The Strokes, isn't reminiscent of tunes from the '90s. Rather, the swirly, danceable tracks capture the worry-free, fun-loving mindset of being a kid.

After he heard of a friend naming his band after a racehorse, Lawrence started looking through the names of horses from the early '90s and came across one called Lucky Coin.

"The horse actually performed pretty terribly," Winnen said. "It wasn't very lucky, as we like to say, but it was a good name for us to keep."

Noticing their penchant for the '90s, a lot of interviewers ask them what their obsession is with *Saved by the Bell*, *Full House* and other cultural icons of the decade, Winnen explained. But that's not what COIN is all about.

"This band is the essence of our youth," Winnen said.

The music video for their single "Run" shows the band boldly performing death-defying stunts

around a city, from dangling off the edge of a bridge to standing on the roof of a car as it zips down the highway.

“It’s about this period of life — post-teenage, pre-adulthood — when you’re just figuring everything out and you’re so excited that you feel like nothing can stop you,” Winnen said.

The EP and the new album’s all-white cover art also speaks to this idea of navigating the real world as a hopeful twenty-something.

“It’s like painting your bedroom after moving out of your parents’ house,” Winnen said. “You’re writing your own story, you’re painting your own picture, and you have a blank slate.”

For the emerging band, this year is like a blank slate, too.

“We’ve been a band for two years, but this is the first time that people will be really hearing us,” Winnen said.

Before COIN took the stage last Thursday, Memmel speculated that the majority of the audience probably had no idea who they were. Looking over at the patrons milling around Brick Street’s bar, he shrugged and smiled. They would still get all of them up front dancing, he said.

First-years Leah Marshall and Lisa Poyar were two of those audience members who, although not familiar with COIN prior to their stop in Oxford, got caught up in the quartet’s charisma and genuine enthusiasm.

“COIN puts on a really great show, and you can tell they do it for their love of music,” Poyar said. “Those guys are really living out their dreams.”

Even after their amplifiers were unplugged and their illuminated “COIN” sign dimmed, the men of COIN didn’t retreat backstage. They took pictures, chatted about music, about Oxford, about how surreal it was to be kicking off their tour — and they couldn’t stop thanking everyone for coming out to listen.

“They didn’t seem like they were talking to us because they had to,” Marshall said. “They were excited.”

“That’s why we’re playing music,” Winnen added. “We’re trying to connect with people and give them a little bit of joy.”