

## SPOTLIGHT



### THE KOOKS

#### After years of accolades at home, this band opens their ‘Junk’ yard to the U.S.

Luke Pritchard, frontman for U.K. rockers the Kooks, has a very set-in-stone way of presenting his songs to his bandmates. Or does he? “I am not like those songwriters you read about who are going to the guys with all the parts and saying, ‘Here’s what you guys do,’” says Pritchard. Then he stops, shakes his head and laughs, realizing that’s exactly how several of the songs on the Kook’s new *Junk of the Heart* came together. “Oh my god, now I’m going to contradict what I just told you!” he says. “For about half of them, songs like ‘Runaway’ or ‘Junk of the Heart,’ I did go in and say, ‘This part really, *really* needs to be like this.’”

The group’s clearly still-evolving approach isn’t surprising given that Pritchard formed the band as something of a lark a few years back with a few Brighton Music College buddies bonding over the Police, the Strokes and the Everly Brothers. When the band’s 2006 debut *Inside In/Inside Out* hit No. 2 on the U.K. album chart and the sophomore release *Konk* grabbed the top slot, the band and its music were still in flux. But *Junk of the Heart* reflects a maturation led by Pritchard’s own personal growth. He cites the new song “Mr. Nice Guy” as being targeted at both the sort of person he can’t stand and the sort of person he used to be. “He’s the guy in the bar who just wants to talk about himself, is yelling in your ear and doesn’t want to listen to anyone else,” he says. “I could have been included in that way of life at one point.”

One major step, Pritchard admits, was realizing he had a drug problem. “I don’t take cocaine anymore, and I don’t want anyone to think I’m glamorizing it,” he says. “I got pushed into the hard-partying world of rock ‘n’ roll, and you can hear that in the music. The second album was more about the raucousness. This album

isn't. I wanted it to be much more philosophical and straightforward." These days Pritchard's addictions are less dangerous: film, squash, tennis and a zealous devotion to getting his hands on an increasingly digital world's ever-dwindling supply of analog tape. "You can't get decent tape anymore—it's all just crap," he muses. "I know this one guy in Liverpool who has loads of really good tape. I really need to call him."

—Nancy Dunham

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