



## BACK IN THE NEWS STORMY WEATHER

WHILE MAKING HIS FIRST ALBUM OF ALL NEW MATERIAL IN 19 YEARS WITH HIS BAND THE NEWS, HUEY LEWIS WAS STRUCK WITH MÉNIÈRE'S DISEASE. BUT THE HEART OF ROCK & ROLL IS STILL BEATING IN THE 69-YEAR-OLD STAR.

By Sarah Rodman

GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, HUEY Lewis has a remarkably upbeat attitude. "I'm having a really good day today," he says, sitting on the balcony of his L.A. hotel room. The beloved rocker—launched to stardom leading his band the News in the early '80s thanks to their quintuple-hit-spawning, Grammy-winning juggernaut *Sports*—is here to discuss both his cracker-jack new album *Weather* and

learning to live with Ménière's disease, which causes his hearing to fluctuate from nonexistent to the "really good" he is experiencing on this fall day.

"Usually, it's episodic," he explains of the chronic condition for which there is no known cause or cure and with which he's been dealing since January 2018. "I'll have maybe a week or two of good, like now, but then it just goes to hell. There's no rhyme or reason to it."

Unsurprisingly, with the onset of the disease, the Bay Area native was despondent. It's a destructive condition for anyone. For a musician to be unable to hear or perform for uncertain stretches of time or perhaps ever again? That's a special circle of hell.

"The first two months were just horrible," he remembers. "Loud tinnitus, couldn't hear anything. I thought, 'I might as well kill myself; I can't do anything.' It was just tormenting." But, mercifully, his mood improved, thanks in part to the support of his kids and the reality that "you can get used to anything, it turns out."

In two years, three weeks has been his longest stretch of "good," and one week his worst spell of deafness. The unpredictability has made booking gigs impossible. But Lewis flashes a grin on that genial mug—the one that launched a thousand MTV spins ("Heart and Soul," "Stuck With You," "If This Is It") and helped propel Marty McFly back to the future ("The Power of Love")—and says, "I still have hope."

To that end, he's excited to discuss *Weather*, whose seven tracks manage to evoke the band's vintage-'80s vibe—sing-along choruses, bar-band brawn, wry humor with the occasional melancholic twist, and Lewis' familiar rasp—while maintaining a contemporary verve.

Songs such as "While We're Young," "Her Love Is Killin' Me," and "Remind Me Why I Love You Again," with their blend of pop, R&B, and rock, would not have sounded out of place on *Sports* or its hit follow-up, *Fore!*

"I've heard that comment a lot, that it sounds like [back in the day]," says Lewis. "We actually made this record like we made *Sports*, production-wise, and we haven't recorded like that since. So maybe that's some of it."

There's also a moving country jaunt, replete with pedal steel, called "One of the Boys," contentedly recounting a long, lucky life in music. The tune was commissioned by producer Dave Cobb (Jason Isbell, the Highwomen) for an unrealized Willie Nelson album. "I thought, that's the weirdest thing anybody ever said to me," Lewis says with a laugh. "Me write a song for Willie Nelson? I didn't think another thing of it. And I woke up three weeks later with a whole song in my head."

When the project didn't materialize, he says, "I thought, that's too bad, it would've been great for Willie. Then I listened to it again and I realized, it's my life story!"

And that story is very much still a work in progress as Lewis prepares to promote *Weather* and continues to tinker with a jukebox musical—*The Heart of Rock & Roll*—he hopes to bring to Broadway. He also has been cheered by the response to his diagnosis. "The empathy from our fans has been amazing. I look at other people who have [medical issues], and I have a lot to be thankful for. In spite of all this, I'm a very lucky guy." ●



← He's Huey Lewis and they're the News (front to back): Chris Hayes, Johnny Colla, Bill Gibson, Sean Hopper, and Mario Cipollina

## The Power of Huey

FROM SPRINGFIELD TO HILL VALLEY, HUEY LEWIS AND THE NEWS HAVE BEEN POPPING UP IN POP CULTURE FOR 35 YEARS. By Alex Suskind



### The Simpsons (2005)

You're not a legend until you've been enshrined in yellow. The band re-created the video to their 1984 hit single "I Want a New Drug" for the season 16 episode where Mr. Burns decides to cut his power-plant employees' prescription drug program.



### American Psycho (2000)

Between fetishizing custom business cards and committing murder, Patrick Bateman (Christian Bale) was apparently listening to "Hip to Be Square" on repeat. As he asks his co-worker before planting an ax in his skull: "You like Huey Lewis and the News?"



### Back to the Future (1985)

When Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) realizes he's late for school, he hops on his skateboard and cruises through town to the tune of "The Power of Love," an eventual No. 1 hit that the News recorded—along with "Back in Time"—for the film's soundtrack.