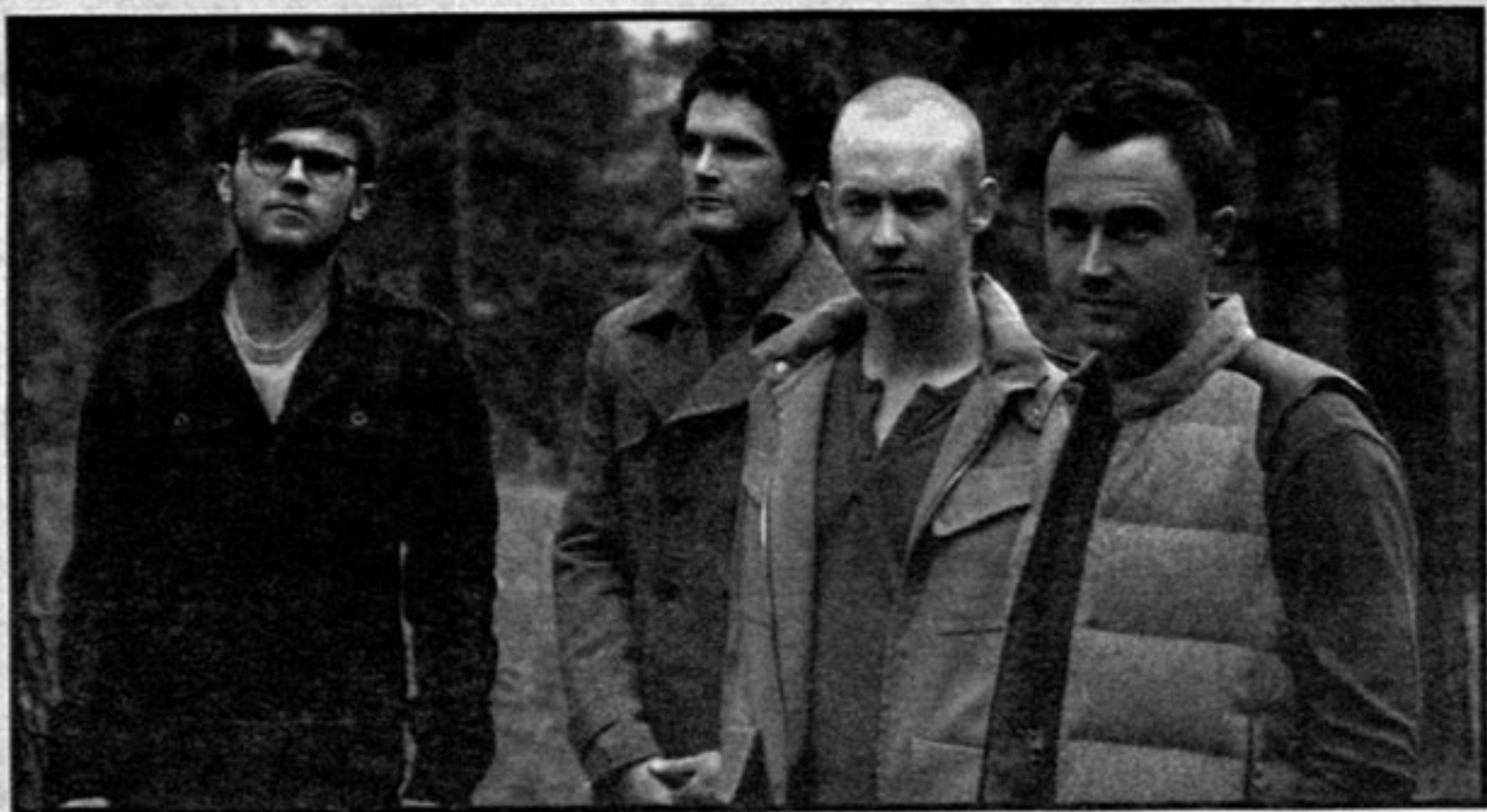


Once they worried that people wouldn't buy their record.

Then it went double platinum.

Left to right are Dave Welsh, Ben Wysocki, Isaac Slade and Joe King. PHOTO BY

JAMES MINCHIN



# How to pull good shots

## THE FRAY

With special guest Nathaniel Rateliff & The Wheel

Tues., Sept. 22, 8 p.m.

The Ryan Center, University of Rhode Island, One Lincoln Almond Plaza, Kingston

Tickets: \$33, \$20 URI students with ID

(401) 788-3200

www.ticketmaster.com

BY MATT KEEFER

When you stop at the record shop, could you pick up something for me and, if you've got time, start up a double-platinum adult alternative band?

Denver's world-weary The Fray began innocently enough. Former schoolmates Isaac Slade and Joe King came across each other in a record store in 2002 and serendipity and synergy took it from there.

"He showed me some songs, I showed him mine. We liked each other and took it to the next level," Slade, the band's pianist/vocalist said of that fateful encounter with guitarist/vocalist King. Their casual connection would eventually lead to 2005's "How to Save A Life," which went certified double-platinum, and had its title track featured on ABC's "Grey's Anatomy." The band, which also includes drummer Ben Wysocki and David Welsh also on guitar, will perform at the University of Rhode Island's Ryan Center Tuesday, Sept. 22. The concert is presented by URI's Student Entertainment Committee.

Slade, 28, remembers the quiet — and the anxiety — of their

first year and a half. "In our contract, we had to sell 150,000 or else they'd drop us. That's all we wanted to do. We just wanted to not get dropped and make a record we liked."

Their latest album from Sony released last February, the 10-track self-titled "The Fray," takes their mature and developed pop from its four-year hiatus to become certified gold. But it essentially comes down to a love for music. Slade said they continually peruse record stores.

"All of us boast fairly formidable record collections. Ben ... is the most avid, I'd say. He collects vinyl and wishes he was Questlove. He has a portable (record player) that he brings on the road, and it's a piece of crap."

Their second album is two songs shorter than their first, but Slade is glad they're able to continue with their music: "When you stand up on stage and play a song you wrote with your best friends, and some kid in Milwaukee is in the front row screaming along to every word, it all clicks."

Said Slade of their latest album, "Well, the second record will be bigger or smaller than the first record. And if it's bigger, we'll be happy; and if it's smaller, we'll be happy. I think either way, we've come to a peace, like a resolve, that it's all about the music, the friendships, and hopefully we can make enough money not to go back to the coffee shop."

Coffee shop? Before his music career set in, Slade worked behind the counter at Starbucks and displays a frightening depth of coffee knowledge.

"The hardest thing to do is

pull a good shot and make good foam. There's a thing called the double macchiato, which is a double shot with just foam on it, and I sucked at it so bad. We had a manual bar, and the machine; you would pull 10 shots for every good shot you get. 'Cause it has to be between 17 and 23 seconds. ..."

"It's a really magical art," he continued. "And nowadays, Starbucks is a little McDonald'sy: you push a button and it comes out."

Though currently fixated on drinking chai, Slade and the rest of the band enjoy international status, having toured in Europe.

"You go to Scotland and big girls are throwing big bras on stage. When you go to Spain, there's 35-year-old men standing in the front row screaming, jumping up and down. And then you go to Germany, and everybody's sort of reserved and polite. But then they come up to you afterwards and just rave that it's the best show of their life. But I love that every country is so close and so packed that it creates a really cool cultural surfing experience."

When The Fray come to Rhode Island, they come as a worldly band with only two albums but plenty of expectations. Slade recalled his band's initial push into music: "We all grew up watching our heroes play music and touch an entire generation ... and I think we all felt that power and draw from the beginning." Like pulling a good shot and sharing the foam with their fans

*Matt Keefe knows how to foam and pull a shot. Just don't ask him to ever do it again.*