

Q&A with Ryan Key of Yellowcard

Written by Melissa Larsen

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On Thursday, Oct. 8, Yellowcard and New Found Glory kick off their co-headlining tour at Scottsdale's [Livewire](#). AZFoothills.com chatted with Ryan Key, lead singer of Yellowcard, about touring with his longtime friends, what he's listening to right now and what he can't wait to eat when he's in town.

Have you spent any time in Arizona?

Probably six or seven years ago, when Yellowcard took a long break—we took some time off in 2008—I started writing music for a side project thing with a longtime friend of mine, and Yellowcard guitarist Ryan Mendez had a house here. Ryan got a hold of some of the songs, and we ended up spending a lot of time at Ryan's house—in the hundred-thousand-degree summer. I probably spend four to five months there.

What did you enjoy most about being here?

I will kill for some Oregano's hot wings. Best wings I ever had in my life.

As you head into this new tour, what do you most look forward to?

I think this tour is such an amazing thing to be happening. A special thing. New Found Glory and Yellowcard really shared a career path together. We went through a lot of the same experience together at the same time. We both shot up into mainstream success in the mid-2000's at the same time. We were doing MTV shows together. Our records have come out around the same. We made the same amount of records. We have been friends with these guys for going on 15 years. We never played clubs or theaters together. This has been a long time coming. We share a lot of the same fans. We're looking forward to the whole experience. It is an amazing thing—makes everything more fun and easier, more comfortable. We have a high level of mutual respect between our two bands. It is hard to put a finger on one thing that I am looking forward to. But the anticipation for the tour is really high, and we are ready to get going.

How is touring different now than it was when you first started out?

We would need a whole day to talk about that. It is a whole different world. When we first started, we were in an eight-passenger panel van with a trailer behind it. That was in 2000, 2001. It has been quite a long time. We are super lucky we get to tour, being on a tour bus and having that level of comfort that we get to have. We are grateful we get to pull this off. Social media is a double-edged sword. It can be good or bad. We may be a little old school but we can get frustrated when we look out the crowd and—and if I had to find anything to change—seeing people's phones instead of their faces. That can make it frustrating and make it hard to connect. That isn't something we deal with on regular basis or on a large scale. I can't say that I have noticed any real dramatic changes. We just do what we do and just try to put on the best show we can, play the best we can, put as much into each show as we can. The one thing that changed for us too is set list. The more records you make, the harder it is to make a set list. That is an ongoing challenge. For this tour, I am really excited about the set list. We are co-headlining [with New Found Glory] so we each only get 70 minutes to play. The flow of the set list is awesome.

You have been performing some of your songs for 10-plus years. How do you keep it fresh for yourself?

I don't know if I have a scientific answer. The show as a whole is something we take a lot of pride in. It is more about the whole show than a song-by-song basis. A show is an experience. Some nights you get out there and it is totally insane from the first note of music and some nights you have a lot of work to do to get the crowd connected and involved in the show. There is always something that is a curve ball that will get thrown at you every night.

Tell me about Lone Tree Recordings.

Over the past couple of years, I have gotten into songwriting and producing outside of Yellowcard. I think I discovered that I want to move forward with that later in life and have a career doing that. I moved to Nashville a year ago. They call it the 'Songwriting Capital of the World.' It is incredible and thriving and new. There are a lot of different types of songwriters and producers moving there, and the types of music being created there is expanding and growing quickly. I knew that was happening, and I felt that it would be good to get on the front of that. Now that I have been there a while, I love it. I decided that I would try to put my roots down and open up a space for making music and writing songs. I launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise money to open the studio, for gear, construction. It was a nerve-wracking thing. You don't want to do this thing and seem like you are taking advantage of anyone. I did a lot of research. I tried the best I could to provide content, merchandise and packages for those who backed the project. In that way, I felt really good about what I was doing. The project ended up being over 30 percent over the goal to get it funded. We are just now getting into the first stage of building now, treating a room acoustically, collecting gear, wiring. It is many months down the road until it will be up and running. It was a really cool experience. For me personally, it will open the door for me to create music for the rest of my life.

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Who are you listening to?

The new Muse record. Right now, at this moment, I cannot stop listening to the Ryan Adams' 1989 record. I am a huge Ryan Adams fan to start with. Whether you are a fan of pop music or not, it is hard to deny that Taylor Swift has great songs. To hear a musician like Ryan Adams interpret those songs, it is so, so good. If you haven't heard that yet, I strongly advise you do.