

dar: eisley

family ties

for texas pop-rock quintet **eisley**, everything is relative. by liza darwin. photographed by chris pheips

ENVY, OF ALL THINGS, is what led to the formation of the band Eisley. "I was about eight years old, and I was so jealous that my older sisters Sherri and Chauntelle were having fun without me," remembers singer/keyboardist Stacy DuPree. "They were playing around with music in the bedroom, and I wanted to be involved, too, so I wrote my first song and they eventually let me play with them."

Since that fateful day in 1997, the band—composed of siblings Stacy, Chauntelle (guitar), Sherri (vocals/guitar), and Weston (drums), and their cousin Garron (bass)—have grown from a casual family ensemble playing coffee shops and church services in their hometown of Tyler, Texas, to sharing the stage with everyone from Coldplay to the Fray. And after a couple of name changes ("We started out as Mos Eisley, after the *Star Wars* character, but were worried that George Lucas would come after us," says Stacy with a laugh) and some rocky record label relations over the past few years, it's safe to say the band has officially come into their own on their third album, *The Valley*.

Though it's still filled with the group's signature sing-along choruses, warm harmonies, and catchy hooks (Sherri cites the Beatles as a major influence), the band's latest effort is decidedly more mature and darker than their previous two albums. Over the past few years, they've experienced battle wounds both personal and professional. In 2007 Sherri divorced her husband, New Found Glory's Chad Gilbert, after just 10 months, and in 2008 Chauntelle called off her engagement to Taking Back Sunday's Adam Lazzara (both sisters have since remarried). And

in 2010 the band ended its messy seven-year relationship with Warner Bros. These tender experiences take the spotlight in new tracks like "Smarter," with its cutting lyrics and chugging guitars, and the delicate, piano-driven "Oxygen Mask." "We actually had many of the songs off *The Valley* written a while ago," Sherri says. "It's great to finally perform them—it's a fresh start."

After more than a decade playing together, the new album reflects the band's evolution. "I feel it's bolder, both in sound and lyrical content, while maintaining its whimsy, which is classic Eisley," says Sherri of *The Valley's* sonic departure. "It's Eisley with more meat on its bones." This summer, the band will share their music with the masses on a U.S. tour. While many people would cringe at spending months at a time on a cramped bus with their family (father Boyd DuPree is their manager), the band members say they wouldn't have it any other way. "The best part is that we all grew up so close that our musical ideals and dreams are very similar, so it makes it easy to maintain our creative goals," says Sherri. "There is no worst part!"

▶ itunes.com/eisley



FROM LEFT: weston dupree, sherri dupree, stacy dupree, chauntelle dupree, and garron dupree