



## **Detroit's decline inspires Flogging Molly's latest**

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Flogging Molly lead singer and lyricist Dave King took the saying “write what you know” to heart on his band’s latest album. “Speed of Darkness” was written primarily in Detroit, a city hit harder than most by the economic downturn of the past few years. All seven members of the group squeezed into the basement of the home King shares with his wife and fellow band member, Bridget Regan. They fine-tuned and rehearsed the songs that ultimately would make up the record, which focuses on the recession and its harsh impact on the working class. While not a concept album, “Speed” was clearly influenced by the band’s surroundings. “We walk around here with him every day,” King said during a recent interview at the house, pointing to his panting dog, an Irish wolfhound. “And you’ll walk by six, seven, eight, nine houses that are just abandoned.” One day, driving in the city, King spotted a burned-out factory on which someone had spray-painted the words: “Shut ‘em down.” All of this “really started to affect” his songwriting, King said. Regan said “the city started to become almost a muse for the album,” which is the first put out on Flogging Molly’s own record label, Borstal Beat. The result was another hit record — 2008’s “Float” debuted at No. 4 on the Billboard chart — and a sense of satisfaction knowing they’d successfully taken what King calls “a big step” forward. “Speed” marks the fifth album for the genre-defying band that’s perfectly at home in front of fans of any number of musical types. Flogging Molly headlined a punk music festival in England one night two summers ago and played at a folk event in Belgium the next. The day after that they were in Germany — this time thrashing out at a heavy metal fest. “We don’t label ourselves,” Regan said. “Because we can’t.” Flogging Molly may be masters of eschewing simple musical classification, but they haven’t been able to avoid success. “Speed of Darkness” opened at No. 9 earlier this year; not bad for an oversized band that has never had a major-label record deal and whose members play instruments not typically associated with rock music — tin whistle, accordion, concertina and uilleann pipes. “We were told by people in the music industry that we were nothing and would never amount to anything more than a bar band,” Regan said. “We were like, ‘Screw that. We’ll show them.’” And they did. King and Regan met in 1997 at a Los Angeles bar called Molly Malone’s. After forming the band, they agreed to play Monday nights there for \$40 per person and two drink tickets each. They played the bar so often and for so long — a year and a half — they decided on the name Flogging Molly for the band. During that time, they also perfected their unique sound, which infuses punk rock with Celtic instruments. They eventually branched out to other venues and garnered a rabid following of fans who continue to come out in droves to see the band during its aggressive and wide-ranging touring schedule. They’re set to play a trio of dates this weekend on the East Coast before embarking on a three-week tour of Canada. Then they’re off to Europe. “We’re growing as people and maturing, and I’m sorry, but we’d be bored to tears if we kept” making the same kinds of records, Regan said. “It’s not that big of a stretch what we’re doing. It always seemed like a natural progression to us.”