

COVER STORY

PARAMORE

This female-fronted
foursome is adding some

SPUNK to PUNK.

Band Buzz

The group decided on the name "Paramore" because it sounds like the word *paramour*, which means "secret love."

BY JANE BIANCHI

Even though she's only five foot one, 19-year-old dynamo Hayley Williams doesn't have any trouble getting people's attention: all she has to do is open her mouth. Read on to find out how the powerhouse vocalist—who is already being compared to belters like Kelly Clarkson and Avril Lavigne—has led the explosive rock band Paramore to new heights.

Coming Together

Early in her teen years, Williams's family moved from Mississippi to Franklin, Tennessee, where she started taking singing lessons. At her new school she soon met the Farro brothers (Josh, 20, and Zac, 18), who play the guitar and drums, respectively. After wooing bassist friend Jeremy Davis to join them in 2004, they formed the band Paramore, and began performing at school talent shows and local venues. Davis, 23, the oldest member of the group, initially had reservations: "In the beginning, I had very, very, very little faith in the band, because they were all so young. But the ideas that were coming out of their heads astounded me at times; they're all super creative."

The group's sound is a mash-up of all their influences. The intense, pop-punk rhythms they create are delivered with the aggressive urgency of Jimmy Eat World and the enthusiasm of No Doubt, while the vocals contain the plaintiveness of Death Cab for Cutie and the soulfulness of Etta James. Most songs develop from collaborations between Williams and Josh Farro. Farro composes the grooves and chord progressions and then goes to Williams for melody and lyrics. After that foundation is laid, the other band members help with the arrangement.

Once the band started hitting stages outside of their home state, they built a buzz. John Janick, CEO and co-founder of the music label Fueled by Ramen (home to acts like Fall Out Boy, Gym Class Heroes, and Panic at the Disco), got hold of a few of their demos early on. In April 2005 he went to see them play in Orlando, Florida, and immediately signed them. "Some of our favorite bands are on that label, so we knew they'd know exactly how to carry out the vision for our band and music," said Williams. "And so many kids started checking us out just because our name was on their roster. It's like a big family, because we all share such a massive unit of fans."

Musical Identity

In July 2005 Paramore released their up-tempo, hard-driving, guitar-heavy debut album, *All We Know Is Falling*. While the first single, "Pressure," was selected to be part of the soundtrack to the popular video game *The Sims 2*, the album failed to pick up much steam. But a nonstop tour throughout 2006, which included performances at high-profile festivals like the Warped Tour and Bamboozle, helped the group gather fans—and allowed them the chance to discover who they were. "On the road, we learned how to become an actual band. We decided on a style and figured out what songs work for us. When you play a show every night, the band grows into what it needs to become," said Josh Farro.

By 2007 the group had developed enough new material to release their second record, *Riot!* Coming up with the album title was easy for them: "When we wrote these songs, it seemed like

our thoughts and emotions were coming out so fast that we couldn't control them. It felt like there was a riot within us," said Williams.

This sophomore effort presented a more confident sound, which may be why it landed in *Billboard's* Top 20 in its first week—and eventually went platinum. It features plenty of the energized tracks fans expected, like the singles "Misery Business" and "Crushcrushcrush," but unlike the first album it features some slower, slightly softer, more radio-friendly songs like "That's What You Get" and "When It Rains," which puts Williams's voice on full display.

The album made such a splash that in 2008 the group garnered a nomination for "Best New Artist" at the Grammy Awards and "Best Rock Video" at MTV's Video Music Awards. The band went on tour again to promote the record, performing all across the country and even in Europe and Mexico.

A Fire That Grabs You

So what makes Paramore stand apart? Many point to Williams—whose talent, quirky charm, and fire-colored hair inspired singer John Mayer to call her "the great orange hope"—and the fact that she leads the group in a male-dominated field. But Williams, who never wants to hog the spotlight, says her gender isn't a big deal: "We play music, just the same as a bunch of dudes." More than girl power, what Paramore brings to the table is an undeniable sense of fun. Whether she's sticking her tongue out or pumping her hands into the air, Williams soaks up the band's raw energy and projects it right at the audience. Who could resist singing along with that? **MA!**