

EAGLES FIND COMMON GROUND

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MEMO:

Sue Gold is a free-lance writer in Los Angeles.

TEXT: It's hard to tell whether the name of the current Eagles tour, "Hell Freezes Over," refers to the Eagles reuniting or the band being accepted by critics.

The Eagles are back 14 years' after they split and with the same line-up the band ended with in 1980: Don Henley, Glenn Frey, Timothy B. Schmit, Joe Walsh and Don Felder.

What finally prompted them to put aside their differences and reunite? "So people will stop asking us 'when are you getting back together' Henley laughs.

Actually, Henley says it was the release of "Common Thread: Songs of the Eagles," a tribute album comprised of Eagles hits sung by popular country artists, that brought band members together. When Travis Tritt made a video for his version of "Take It Easy," he convinced all five members of the last Eagles line-up to participate. "We just started jamming together during the making of the video," Henley says.

"That was how it all began. We always maintained that if we ever decided to tour again, we didn't want it to just be two or three of us. We had to have all five of us together."

While it took some time to get back into the swing of being in the Eagles again, Frey says, "There was a certain bond, a great familiarity with the old stuff so it came back to us fairly quickly. The first few days we were a little rusty, but it's all about repetition - doing it over and over." Henley says "Get Over It" rekindled the songwriting spark between him and Frey. "Our most recent songwriting sessions were very much like the ones in the '70s," he says. "We sat and tossed ideas back and forth and continued to volley like that until we had the song almost finished. It's an incredible feeling when that happens and it was so gratifying to know that we could still do it."

Frey and Henley wrote most of the Eagles' biggest hits, including "Hotel California" and "Desperado." Founded in 1971, the Eagles formed after Frey and Henley played in Linda Ronstadt's back-up band together. By the time the band broke up in 1980, it had garnered four No. 1 albums, including the multi-platinum "Hotel California," four Grammy awards and sold more than 80 million albums.

"It was good fun and hard work, but the band just ran its course," Frey says. "This band didn't break up because we didn't get along. We had nine good years together and there was all the pressure to follow up 'Hotel California.' It was just time to stop."

"Hotel California" brought the band unprecedented success, but it was during this time that members' relationships with each other and the rock media deteriorated. Frey and Henley constantly found themselves at odds with music journalists. "We did the unthinkable," Henley remembers. "We talked back to the critics. We actually had a great deal of fun with it, but it seems that some people thought we were serious. We always welcomed constructive criticism as long as it was about the music, but it was incessant attacks on our personal lives that we found difficult to tolerate."

The Eagles are one of the few bands on the road this summer without a major corporate sponsor. "We turned down millions of dollars from beer and soft drink companies because the Eagles don't consider themselves a corporate rock band," Frey says. "We like to do things our way."

CAPTION:

PHOTO 1 BY JOHN HALPERN The reunited Eagles are getting along just fine, says Don Henley. COVER PHOTO All together once again. Eagles ease back into old songs, new attitudes.

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