

# FUELED BY RAMEN

Since its official inception in 1996, Fueled By Ramen Records has been less of a record label than it has been a brand for the ever-growing community that has embraced what the label stands for. With president/co-founder John Janick at the helm, the label has become the nucleus for today's best and brightest punk-inspired rock/pop bands. Janick initially conceptualized the label while attending high school, but it wasn't until he enrolled at University of Florida in Gainesville and teamed up with Less Than Jake drummer/lyricist Vinnie Fiorello that Fueled By Ramen became a reality.

"We were really passionate about the independent rock scene, but record labels didn't really seem to be taking notice of what was happening in it," Janick explains. "We said, 'We like these bands, these bands all work hard, why not try and get this music out to people?'" Kicking off with the now highly sought-after Chinese take-out sampler cassette compilation, Fueled By Ramen began unleashing a series of limited edition 7-inch singles as well as full-lengths from indie combos like The Hippos and The Impossibles. Headquartered in Janick's dorm room, the label spread the word in classic grassroots fashion: via hard-working bands and mail-order sales.

In 1998, Fueled By Ramen released a self-titled EP from Jimmy Eat World, a five-song collection that proved a breakthrough for both the label and the Arizona-based band. With increased distribution demands and a rise in radio play, Fueled By Ramen set up its first real office space that same year. In 2002 the label experienced yet another turning point when it released Yellowcard's *The Underdog EP*, a seminal release that's widely regarded as the artistic breakthrough that preceded the Jacksonville band's mainstream success. The following year, Fueled By Ramen released Fall Out Boy's *Take This To Your Grave*. "I instantly knew there was something special about that record and knew that everyone would love it if we could just get it into their hands," Janick says.

“For two years we pounded the pavement, selling the record,” he adds. “Most labels would’ve given up, but we just kept on pushing it. We went from selling 500 records a week, to 1000, to 1500 to 3000 records a week. By the time we put out the next Fall Out Boy record, we were at 225,000 records. We had built this great base for the band, helping to launch what’s now a multi-platinum career.” At the heart of Fueled By Ramen is the close relationship between the artists and the label; Janick has long viewed the label as an integral part of the creative process, making Fueled By Ramen a fully collaborative environment where bands participate in all aspects of their identity, every step of the way from recording to marketing.

“Our job is to help bands get their creative vision out there,” he says, “We try to be involved in every step of the process in order to help them express their vision and make sure that we can get that across to the fans.” As a result, Fueled By Ramen has become more than just a record label; it has spawned an integrated community where the lines between artists, employees and fans are difficult to discern. The [www.fueledbyramen.com](http://www.fueledbyramen.com) site has become a hub for the label’s online community, directing fans to the FBR YouTube Channel—which is the fifth most viewed channel on all of YouTube—as well as other sites like MySpace, where their bands have an active presence. “It was the kids that really helped build this into a community,” Janick says. “The cool thing about our fans is that they feel a real connection with what we do, and really want to support our bands and the label.”

In 2004, Fall Out Boy’s Pete Wentz introduced Fueled By Ramen to fellow Chicago rock outfit The Academy Is... who released their acclaimed debut album *Almost Here*, the following year. Soon thereafter, Janick joined forces with Wentz to create Decaydance Records and released a series of albums from a disparate-sounding group of acts ranging from the alternative hip-hop of Gym Class Heroes to the indie-pop combo The Hush Sound. In September 2005, Decaydance and Fueled By Ramen released *A Fever You Can’t Sweat Out*, the RIAA platinum-certified debut album from Las Vegas’ Panic At The Disco.

Correspondingly, 2006 proved to be the most extraordinary year of Fueled By Ramen’s 10-year history: Among the high-water marks

were Panic At The Disco's international rise to stardom; the label's then biggest-ever first week sales with Cute Is What We Aim For's debut album *The Same Old Blood Rush With A New Touch*; popular breakthroughs from Paramore and Gym Class Heroes and the #1 Top New Artist debut from Cobra Starship.

Amazingly, as Fueled By Ramen embarks on its second decade things look even more promising. In 2007 the label opened an office in midtown Manhattan and that same year Paramore's album *RIOT!* debuted in the Billboard Top 20, was certified gold and is currently nearing platinum status. Even more recently, the band participated in a co-headlining tour with Jimmy Eat World, bringing the label's history full-circle. "Paramore is a very important band to me and the label," Janick explains. "They had the time to find out who they were and we helped amplify this to the kids naturally," he adds. "We worked together paying attention to every detail and taking the right steps at the right time. They have become very successful and we are very proud of them."

The same can be said of Panic At The Disco's sophomore effort *Pretty. Odd.*, which debuted at number #2 on Billboard's Top 200 chart, selling over 139,000 copies its first week and making it the fastest-selling album in the label's history. "Panic is a phenomenon; we knew the debut was going to do very well, but it moved a lot quicker than expected," Janick admits. "I think we have built an amazing home for artists and the people who work at the label are remarkably creative. We want to continue to break new artists and take our current artists to new levels. My goal is to always make Fueled By Ramen a better company and to continue to find new ways for fans to connect with our artists and label."

So far 2008 has already seen a #1 Top New Artist debut for The Cab as well as a well-received release from Phantom Planet. Later this year the label will put out much-anticipated releases by superstars such as Cute Is What We Aim For, Gym Class Heroes and The Academy Is... as well as tomorrow's class of hot new acts such as This Providence and Forgive Durden.