

RECORD STORE

AS TALL AS LIONS



ALBUM
You Can't Take It With You

RATING
★★★★☆

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"You Can't Take It With You"

RHYTHM AND INDIE BLUES

Though commonly associated with emo, Long Island, New York's As Tall As Lions always stood apart from that scene. They never sounded like the bands with whom they shared stages, and they never fit the stereotypical Long Island sound. While their peers found inspiration in '90s alternative bands, ATAL fashioned their music from a pastiche of influences spanning decades, from Miles Davis to Motown to My Bloody Valentine. The band's 2006 self-titled full-length displayed their fondness for a bygone era when musical freedom trumped financial aspiration.

You Can't Take It With You maximizes all of its predecessor's strengths and further removes the band from the emo milieu. These songs ooze soul, R&B and progressive rock. Dan Nigro sings with all the heart-on-his-sleeve yearning of a young Al Green, while his band issue repetitive melodies and beats like a Stax Records version of Can. Some of the material is more traditionally pop-minded, such as "Is This Tomorrow?" or "In

Case Of Rapture." Yet the band defy pat categorization with the Middle Eastern-tinged title song, which makes this album the first in a number of years to use a nay on a recording *and* be reviewed by AP. It's dizzyingly brilliant, and evidence of how tall these Lions have grown. (TRIPLE CROWN; triplecrownrecords.com) *Casey Boland*

IN-STORE SESSION WITH VOCALIST/GUITARIST DAN NIGRO

Why did it take two years to complete the album?

Well, it didn't really take us two years to finish the record. We actually worked on it for about 10 months from start to finish, but we had to find a producer and book studio time. So it was about 10 months of writing and six months of bullshit. It became a lot longer of a process—us meeting with producers and getting their vibe. We found one producer and stopped working with him after going back and forth for two months. Then we started working with another producer and that didn't work out, so we finally got a third producer. It became a lot longer than we anticipated.

So in the end, you were happy working with Noah Shain?

Noah was amazing. He really brought it all together. When we began recording with him in February, our confidence was shot. We felt like we weren't supposed to make the record. There was a point for a few weeks where we thought we were going to break up. Our previous producer really shot our confidence in the songs. It became an ego battle with the second producer. We would say, "We have this idea for this song," and he would say, "I have a better idea for this song."

Did you do anything differently when you

recorded this as opposed to the self-titled record?

We were a lot less meticulous about it this time around. We tried to make it so that we didn't overthink anything. We intended on doing the record live, but with [Shain], we just didn't have the tools and the time. So we had to do it more in a piecemeal fashion. To make up for that, we tried to take as many real takes from the process as possible and we tried not to use any [studio production aids like] Beat Detective or Auto-Tune. It was off the cuff. It was more freethinking as opposed to analyzing each part, which is what we did with our [previous] record.

The new album has a very organic sound to it.

Yeah, [all of the] instruments on that record, with the exception of ["You Can't Take It With You"], are organic instruments. There are no beats, there's no programming—it's all played with live instruments. None of it was conjured up in a computer.

Which is rare these days.

Right, and even parts you might think sound like beats or programmed loops—it was all done by us actually performing them, with the exception of "You Can't Take It With You." But every other instrument on the record was performed by us. [CB]

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