

Deeper Cuts

DUOS WHO MAY INSPIRE

THE GAY BLADES' FUTURE WORK.

Evolution is a tough trick for any band. *Savages*, the sophomore record by New York duo The Gay Blades (think Errol Flynn, not *Glee*) shows a marked progression from their debut, *Ghosts*. The record finds them trying

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to blend glam rock, janky blues riffs, and arena-ready melodrama into their post-emo punk sound. It's an iffy proposition, but one that has found them sharing the stage with diverse bands like

MGMT, Cursive, and The Black Lips. While the mélange is admirable, it doesn't fully gel, which is why I've decided to toss out the names of a couple of musical duos from whom guitarist Clark Westfield and drummer Puppy Mills may well borrow as their musical progression continues:

Hall & Oates: While The Gay Blades show plenty of signs of lusting after pop perfection on songs like "Try to Understand" and "November Fight Song," they would do well to check out the lush, powerful back catalog of Daryl Hall and John Oates, whose string of hits through the '70s and '80s couldn't be more impressive. Imagine The Gay Blades channeling the stinging wit of "Rich Girl" through their aggressive emo lens, or slowing it down with their own version of "Sarah Smile," or handclapping their way to the top with a nod toward "Private Eyes."

OutKast: It's a real shame that Big Boi and Andre 3000 haven't been more active together in recent years, but that shouldn't stop the Blades from mining creative cues from the hip-hop twosome's defining records *ATLiens*, *Aquemini*, *Stankonia*, and *Speakerboxx/The Love Below*. Tracks like "Puppy Mills Presents" already show the

Blades showing off a funky, damaged side, but with a few beats on loan from "Da Art of Storytelling" or "Elevators (Me & You)," the Blades could really play up a yin-and-yang image, with Puppy playing the sophisticated G-funker (like Chico Dusty) and Westfield getting psychedelic and sexy (like Benjamin).

The Louvin Brothers: Known for popularizing "close harmony," fiercely religious lyrics, and a tumultuous personal life, Charlie and Ira Louvin have plenty to offer the Blades in terms of creating art fueled by the struggle between the profane and the holy. Blades singer Westfield has alluded to his Baptist preacher father in interviews, and a couple of well-placed gospel hymns could add real hellfire to such Blades tunes as "Burns and Snakes." Double points if the Blades can come up with a record sleeve as iconic as the Louvin's *Satan Is Real*.

Steely Dan: The Blades have made no secret of their love for Elvis Costello, but if you ask me, they could garner a lot of ideas from another sardonic and subversive musical icon of the '70s: Steely Dan. Donald Fagen and Walter Becker's sarcastic hits like "Reeling in the Years," "Do It Again," and "Hey Nineteen" could offer a few pointers to the Blades, who aim for a similar tone on such tunes as "Wasted on the Youth" and "Mick Jagger."

Seals and Crofts: Songs like "Every Night Is Like a Revival" display the Blades' ability to tug on the heartstrings, but for all the dramatic tension, never once do the guys frame the tunes with enough cheese to make it really sink in. A copy of S&C's *Greatest Hits* ought to repair this condition, giving the Blades a serious lesson in soft-rock bliss, as well as some creative suggestions for facial hair. If the guys soon achieve easygoing classics like "Summer Breeze" or "Hummingbird," they can ensure that their scene-girl fans stick around as they mature into soccer moms.

The Gay Blades are scheduled to perform on Saturday, December 11, at the Rogue in Scottsdale.

