

Fly Golden Eagle

Ben Trimble's musical awakening began in a basement.

No, that simplifies it too much. Ben Trimble's musical awakening began at birth — raised in Detroit with Kentucky roots, music was always a part of his life, as natural as breathing. His was a religious family, steeped in gospel choirs, honky-tonk keys, and the to-the-rafters twang of the faithful.

But it was in a Nashville basement that Trimble lost himself in rock 'n' roll. He found himself working for a music supervisor with a 60,000-strong record collection, and dove headfirst down the rabbit hole. Motown. Blues. Glam rock. Psychedelia. And soon, all of the disparate sources of his inspiration — his lineage, his Detroit roots, his need for expression, the newfound discovery of a musical community in Nashville — slowly began to weave together into the musical tapestry that would become Fly Golden Eagle.

“That was a big part of unlocking music for me, as a means to express myself,” Trimble says. “I realized that there was a long line of people who had expressed rebellion — both serious and casual — through music. They'd done so in different ways and in different parts of the country.”

Trimble's musical origins are one piece of the puzzle. Bass player Matt Shaw hails from Celeste, Texas. Mitch Jones on the keys is from Knoxville, Tennessee. Richard Harper, drums, hails from Huntsville, Alabama. Each possesses a musical prowess that encompasses technical skill, deep roots, and a whole lot of heart, evident in their playing and performance styles.

And then there's Trimble, and his downriver Detroit gospel-twang sound.

It's an “only in Nashville” combination that leads to a new sound, a sum that is equally indebted to all of its parts. Fly Golden Eagle has also stepped up to become power players in the emerging, way-beyond-country Nashville scene — they've worked extensively with Adrija Tokic, cut music in The Bomb Shelter, and played on some of the most significant albums representing the new Nashville sound, including Benjamin Booker, Hurray for the Ruff Raff, Majestic, and Alabama Shakes.

But while Nashville may be responsible for bringing these musicians together, their sound speaks to a much bigger musical world.

“In Detroit, it's all about heart,” Trimble says. “There, it does exactly what you as an artist hopes for: it brings people together.”

Trimble is describing these points of influence on the road home from Nashville to Michigan to see his family. Family runs deep here. And the spirit of togetherness, of telling a bigger kind of story, is essential to understanding Fly Golden Eagle's latest release, *Quartz*.

“I wanted this album to be a real reflection of the whole band effort, of the vibes of us playing together,” he says. “I want people to listen to it and be able to feel the chemistry.”

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This was a definite contrast from Fly Golden Eagle's previous psych-funk release, *Swagger*, and Trimble's project through-and-through.

"It [*Swagger*] was my thing," he describes. "*Quartz* is about something bigger."

"Bigger" is something of an understatement — try momentous. *Quartz* is a 26-song epic, a collection of songs that join together to form a narrative arc describing a story that is sometimes vulgar, sometimes profane, and sometimes beautiful. It's about the psychedelia found in the natural world and it's a love story.

It's a work that can stand alone, from the pump-up car chase rhythm of "Tehuacana," straight out of a '70s road movie, to the heart-string twang of "Monolith," a tender love song inspired by the birth of Trimble's niece.

Quartz is also meant as an artistic pairing, of sorts — the album lines up with the groundbreaking 1973 film *The Holy Mountain*, an avant-garde masterpiece directed by Alejandro Jodorowski, produced by The Beatles' manager Allen Klein, and funded by John Lennon and George Harrison. Trimble found himself inspired by the film while writing the material that would become *Quartz*. It was not a given that the music and the movie would run in tandem, but as Trimble continued to write, the through-lines of both works matched up, leading to an inspirational set piece of visuals, music, and story.

But to limit *Quartz*'s point of references to one film would be a disservice to the music, and to band that created it. *Quartz* is a representation of Fly Golden Eagle itself — the psych-rock-glam-funk-gospel sounds that unify to create a beautiful whole. You'll hear the stomp-heavy drama of T.Rex and the swirling colors, and textures of The Doors. A growl of punk rock mixed effortlessly with the choral echos of the gospel church. It's also a reflection of place and the environments in which musical mastery is created. For *Quartz*, that includes Bomb Shelter and "Lil' Biv Town" in Nashville; Trimble's bedroom; a garage in Celeste, Texas; but mainly, Trinity College in Tehuacana, Texas.

The college was abandoned in the '40s, but the gorgeous art deco site still has working power, and even functional dorms. The band decamped with girlfriends and friends to record, cook, and create. They set up shop in what was once the library — the space was flooded with natural light, and windows to the surrounding environment. Days were built around the music; nights were for sharing stories over dinner and wine. The fully immersive experience, and the deeply inspirational space, led to the kind of band chemistry that dreams are made of.

This is evident in the power of the overall effort, and the integrity of each individual song. Consider the impact of 12-track *Quartz Bijou*, a consolidated offering of the longer album effort. *Bijou* ebbs and flows seamlessly; it's a deeply satisfying stand-alone musical effort, with the bonus realization that there's more to be heard and experienced.

Bijou starts out strong, with the cacophonous celebration of "You Look Good to Me," an exercise in musical layering — from the swath of keys to the slap of bass, Trimble wails a sentiment you soon find yourself relating to: "Oh, it's all the way to the bones/I can't fight it."

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The energy never flags. From the stomp-heavy bombast of “Stepping Stone” to the kaleidoscopic Southern swell of “Medicine Hat,” where the nature of *Quartz Bijou*, and *Quartz* as a whole, as a necessary journey is solidified: “Moving down the street with no horizon/One way ticket I’ve got nowhere else to go.”

The music is a ride. And it’s one that you should take as often as you can, with the volume turned up. Just say yes to the question posed in slinky seduction of “Horses Mouth:” “I’m never bending to the imitations/ Why don’t you come and take a trip with me?”