

# BUXTON

## HALF A NATIVE (NEW WEST RECORDS)

Sergio Trevino – vocals/guitar  
Austin Sepulvado – guitar/vocals  
Jason Willis – lead guitar  
Chris Wise – bass  
Justin Terrell – drums

Buxton broadcasts a wandering sound, from the dusty tones of guitar-slinging anthems to lonesome acoustic affairs that look outward and within. Their latest effort *Half A Native* is music for the search for home; the long journey to find somewhere, something, or someone that makes everything fall into place. Raised in rural Texas by Mexican parents, vocalist/guitarist Sergio Trevino experienced life stranded between two cultures, unable to really identify with his Hispanic heritage and never quite fitting in musically with the local arts community.

In a city where country and hip hop are the ubiquitous regional sounds, Buxton's music stands alone in the Houston scene. "I'm on the outside looking in," Trevino croons on the sweeping album opener "What I'd Do," his warm drawl scaffolded by Justin Terrell's airy drumming, and slow-burning electric guitar. "This song I think best captures the bittersweet spirit of the album," Trevino says, "which really is the longing for love, an exasperated expression saying 'what I would do if I had a chance' and finding solace in the thought."

*Half A Native* is a departure from the rustic sound that earned the band a devout following in the explosive Houston scene and beyond. While their acclaimed 2012 album *Nothing Here Seems Strange* leaned toward folk, *Half A Native* ventures into vast sonic territories, sometimes pairing atmospheric piano with off-kilter electric guitar, blanketed by Trevino's heart-clenched voice and melancholic, but optimistic lyrics. "We take from a lot of different genres and present it in a way that I think is most honest for us," Trevino says. "You'll hear rock, folk, country, ambience, and distortion, all interpreted through us."

For their third record, Buxton decamped to Los Angeles and worked with a producer for the first time. They sought out storied producer/engineer Thom Monahan following years of admiring his catalog, especially the records he made with Devendra Banhart, Vetiver, Beachwood Sparks and Jonathan Wilson. Under his guidance and vision, and with the band out of their element and away from the daily distractions of life, they took apart their songs, put the pieces back together and created their most realized album to date.

Monahan's work shines throughout, from the darkly cinematic "Old Haunt," in which, as Trevino explains, Monahan "stripped it down to the root of the song, with a nice little twang sludge vibe that goes along with the tone of the bleak lyrics. It reminds me of a chain gang of ghosts," to the title track, "Half A Native," which elides acoustic strums from Trevino's \$30 thrift store guitar with the distant textures of Jason Willis' lanky slide guitar. The seemingly disparate sounds and textures could be jarring, but Buxton seamlessly weaves them together in a unified sound and feeling. "The band is in a constant state of evolution and this is the first record we've actually written with Austin in the band," bassist Chris Wise explains. "His additional guitar has definitely added some meat to the bone."

Perhaps benefiting from this new dynamic the most is the album's centerpiece, "Miss Catalina 1992," a driving, punky burst of indie rock self-described as the most "rock" song the band has ever written. Originally beginning life as a stripped down acoustic tale, it was spontaneously revved up following the band's excitement after learning they were heading to LA to record with Monahan. "It's by far my favorite song to play, it gets so wild and jittery with energy, like a game of raging musical chairs," Trevino says.

“Icebreaker” meanwhile hints at the band’s Texas roots and marries some deft piano playing from Adam MacDougal of Chris Robinson Brotherhood with psychedelia-laced honky-tonk and twang, adding up to what Trevino describes as a “sort of Gram Parsons on speed sound.” “Pool Hall,” a song about that universal all-consuming feeling of being compelled to talk to an attractive stranger after locking eyes across the room, closes out the album on a stately, beautiful note. Beginning as an aching waltz, it builds to a shimmering climax as Trevino pines, “If you change your mind/ We could go someplace and talk face to face/ You might see I’m kind.” In Trevino’s mind, he imagines the “pool hall” and bar from “Icebreaker” side by side on a dark Houston street, both lit by cheap neon lights but as opposite as can be. “These two songs are absolutely two different approaches to the same situation, which really says something about the band in that we don’t feel confined to a style,” Trevino says. “We’re not afraid to play the bar band, or be honest and sincere, and aren’t afraid of being silly or sentimental.”

While their music scans the horizon, Buxton became a pillar in their vibrant hometown scene built upon the solid foundation of their many years as a band. “They’re my family,” says Wise, who has spent 11 years writing music with Trevino, and lead guitarist Jason Willis. They grew up together, and as the band grew to include drummer Justin Terrell, and guitarist Austin Sepulvado, their core sound remained the same. “What’s great about the Houston music scene is that we make it work with pretty limited resources,” Trevino says. “The city is so widespread, finding an audience takes time and is seldom very immediate.”

With *Half a Native*, Buxton has distilled years of long hours on the road and late nights on tour into an album that reveals new treasure the deeper you dig, and in this sediment, their friendship is bedrock holding together this band of brothers. “There’s a sort of respect for the relationship and chemistry we have to continue making music and continue to explore what that means,” Trevino says. “And it’s fun, I think if it wasn’t then we would’ve stopped a long time ago.”

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