

The All-American Rejects *Send Her To Heaven* (EPITAPH)

The All-American Rejects need no introduction... but we'll give you one anyway. Since forming in Stillwater, Oklahoma, in 1999, the group have released four albums, numerous hit singles such as “Swing, Swing” and “Dirty Little Secret” and toured alongside everyone from Blink-182 to Bon Jovi. Admittedly things have been relatively quiet for the band since their last full-length *Kids In The Street* came out in 2012, but armed with a three-song single and a new lease on the music business, their Epitaph Records debut shows that the latest chapter of the band is a natural progression in the career of an act who never broke up, never compromised, and always stayed true to their own artistic vision, regardless of what A&R executives tried to mold them into being. “We were doing things one way for so long that all of us kind of had to step away and have some different experiences both personally and professionally,” Wheeler explains, “now we feel really re-energized and ready to share these songs.”

Admittedly things are a little more complicated these days for the band—bassist/vocalist Tyson Ritter, guitarists Nick Wheeler and Mike Kennerty, and drummer Chris Gaylor—as they are now living all over the country. However as they proved with 2017's *Sweat* EP, they're still harnessing their creativity in exciting new ways. The songs on *Send Her To Heaven* were all written and recorded two to three years ago with different producers, a process that was a relatively new experience for the band. “The last couple of records were fun to make but they were pretty draining, whereas I think recording this way keeps us on our toes and excited,” Kennerty explains. “We recorded each of these songs on their own and didn't think of them as a package. We just took each song and went to a different producer to see what we would come up with,” he says of the process, “Because of the way we went about it, I think we created a diverse group of songs that might not have happened if we did it the way we've always recorded in the past.”

These songs may not have been created with the intention of being released together but despite their sonic differences, they coalesce to form a cohesive narrative about elation, excess, and the inevitable comedown. “I think these songs do have a through line and not only because these songs were written during the same period of time,” Ritter explains. *Send Her To Heaven* kicks off with “Send Her To Heaven,” a Pixies-inspired song that came out of a co-writing session Ritter had with Weezer frontman Rivers Cuomo. In order to capture the guitar-driven energy of the song, the band recorded it with producer Tony Hoffer (Beck, OK Go) in a live setting that recaptured the dynamic of the band's early days. “I feel like so many songs today are recorded as overdubs,” Wheeler explains, “with this song we actually got in a room together as a band again and recorded most of it totally live.”

Then there's “Gen Why? (DGAF)” a song that Ritter likens lyrically to “a tongue bursting through a cheek.” “We started playing that song while we were on tour with Blink-182 in 2016 and since then people have been asking for a studio version of it,” Gaylor explains, stressing the satirical nature of this incredibly infectious track. However, while the song's content matter may seem absurd at times, Tyson is quick to point out that its inspiration came from a very real place. “I was driving one night next to this teenage girl who was smoking with the windows up and looked like she was part of this crazy lifestyle that I had no understanding about,” he explains. “Lyrically it was a truthful moment and I think all we've ever cared about as a band is writing something that didn't seem forced.” While Wheeler admits that he never thought there would be an All-American

Rejects song with a trap beat, Ritter describes the song—which was produced by Kanye West collaborator Benny Cassette—as “just falling out of me naturally, the way the best ones do for us.”

Send Her To Heaven culminates with the massive-sounding ballad “Demons,” which Ritter wrote on his piano one night in Los Angeles during an unexpected burst of inspiration. “That song is about things that people experience in their late 20s when you’re struggling with your own isolated ideas and then something happens and your consciousness is broken wide open and you start to care about yourself in a really unique, thoughtful way, even though it’s frightening,” Ritter explains. “The song is about a relationship and putting to bed those demons.” In order to capture the cinematic vibe of the song, the band enlisted pop producer Justin Raisen (Angel Olsen, Charli XCX), who helped the band construct the song from the ground up. “This was the first time we cut a song where essentially we’re all just sitting in the same room while we build a song one piece at a time, not really following anything other than Justin’s eccentric suggestions, which was really fun,” Ritter continues. “It was a really different kind of experience for us.”

Having been a part of the major label system for almost their entire career, there’s something inherently liberating about the band embarking on the latest phase of their career with a new label, no management, and a fresh slate. So what’s next for The All-American Rejects? “I don’t know,” Ritter responds, “but I think it’s the not knowing that’s exciting. A lot of our contemporaries make a big deal to break up, and we get it, it’s probably good for their psyche to draw a line in the sand, but we’re never gonna do that,” he summarizes. “As much as we might have going on in our lives, the one thing that we can all agree on with The All-American Rejects is that we’re never gonna stop doing this.”