

THE CRIBS

BIOGRAPHY 2017

The seventh album by The Cribs is a bit of a paradox. It's the quickest thing they've ever recorded, done and dusted in five days compared to a relatively leisurely seven for 2004's self-titled debut, yet it's also been six years in the making. It's a release that's going to surprise fans and it's called – quite brilliantly – 24-7 Rock Star Shit.

The album's origins lie back in 2011, when the three Jarman brothers were making *In The Belly Of The Brazen Bull*. After recording the bulk of ...*Brazen Bull* with producer Dave Fridmann at his isolated Tarbox Road Studio in upstate New York, they flew straight to Chicago's Electrical Audio, home to another unique producer, the venerated Steve Albini, of *Shellac* and *In Utero* fame.

There, over two cold November days, they stayed in the on-site dormitories, drank copious amounts of Albini's trademark fluffy coffee and laid down four tracks for possible inclusion on ...*Brazen Bull*, but which had such a spirit and sound of their own that they were laid aside for a rainy day. "We were really into the tracks, but they definitely had their own vibe - it didn't make sense to try and shoehorn them onto *Brazen Bull*" explains vocalist/bassist Gary Jarman. "Sometimes when we work with producers we're pretty on their case, and that record was pretty involved" says drummer Ross Jarman. "With Steve we just took a step back and let him do his thing. We just wanted to get his raw power down on record."

When it came time for the next album, there was a plan to make two LPs to represent two distinct strands of their work: a pop record and a punk record, one polished and melodic, the other raw and underworked. Yet the former took precedence, and became 2015's *For All My Sisters*. The punk album – hinted at in the press – instead became a thing of fan myth. "It's what we often do in this band – we have the stripped back, lo-fi, in-your-face stuff, but there's a side of us that has this affection for pop music," says singer/guitarist Ryan Jarman. "We always start off being more punk rock but often the pop influences come in and we make a record like the last few, which combine those things."

After touring wrapped on *For All My Sisters*, the band made it their mission to complete the punk album, and convened on Gary's house in Portland, Oregon, determined to keep that pop side in check. It involved working on – but not overworking – songs they'd been storing up. "When we make an album now, it's a pretty long process," says Gary. "We jam and we write the songs and we record demos and we finesse them, then we work on the lyrics and harmonies and by the time we get in there to do the proper version we know that song so well. With these songs, it was about doing the opposite – it was about retaining that visceral excitement that you get when you first write a song, when you're excited and adrenalinized because it's new and unfamiliar, not tightening the bolts on them too much."

"We were in the mindset to make a punk rock record, but we had to make sure we stayed in that paradigm, keeping those pop elements out," says Ryan. "No overdubs, you know."

And so, in November 2016, exactly five years after that first visit, they entered Electrical Audio with the intention of recording another four songs, which soon became six. And three days later, they left with an album. "We figured if we made it an EP it would take some of the pressure off, and we could indulge ourselves a bit...but working in this way was so galvanizing that we kept going, and ended up with an LP" laughs Ross.

Albini, who describes himself as an engineer, not a producer, and has famously esoteric techniques, proved a good fit for the band. They recorded as-live straight to tape, onto sixteen tracks. "I've always had more of an affection for recording live, spending more time in the rehearsal room rather than the studio," says Ryan. "If you're in the studio for too long, the energy starts to get edited out."

"When you record with Steve, he sets up the mics and says, 'This is going to sound great – all you guys have to do is just nail your takes,'" says Gary. "So we just played good versions of the songs and that's why it only took five days. Not for dogmatic reasons or to try and prove some kind of point - we just had it in the can. We could have been done in four days, but we had one extra song that held things up a little bit."

The resulting recordings, Ryan says, are "really immediate, really raw and it really represents where we are at this point, and that's all I really want from a record. Something that's stripped back and unsterilised. I miss that in what's in vogue today, and I'm sure other people do."

So The Cribs had 24-7 Rock Star Shit up their sleeves while touring for the tenth anniversary of Men's Needs, Women's Needs, Whatever in spring 2017, a tour that was to the delight of fans – who helped The Cribs sell out a hometown gig at Leeds' First Direct Arena on May 20 – but not a natural fit for a band focused on never looking backward. "It was a great tour and it gave us a taste of being an arena rock band and that's cool, but we don't like wallowing in nostalgia," says Ryan.

In fact, the run ended with the surprise release of new single 'In Your Palace' – and the album will follow similar shock-and-awe tactics. "It's the only time we've ever thought of doing a surprise release, rather than the normal thing of teasing singles for a few months," says Ryan.

"We've been in a band a long time – this is our seventh record – and we've been doing this for 15 years now," says Gary. "You get to the point where certain parts of the machinations of the music industry become monotonous and laborious. But we've got the luxury of being quite autonomous, we've got a dedicated fanbase who've been with us for a long time and we thought, why not just cut out all the extraneous stuff for once? This way we bypass as much of the usual protocol as possible – we just want to get it to people as quickly and easily as we can."

It's a fast release for an album that throbs with immediacy, from Give Good Time's squeal of feedback to Year Of Hate's yelped vocals and sense of paranoid urgency. But it's not all about going full throttle: In Your Palace is as melodic as anything the band have done, and Sticks Not Twigs, one of the last tracks written for the album, is an acoustic track. It means that, though the fans have long had an inkling about The Cribs' mythical punk album, it's a safe bet that the finished thing will still surprise. A new era for The Cribs, then. An album that's as fresh as can be, as few steps as possible between writing sessions in Ross's Wakefield garage and your ears. And soon to be heard in a venue near you. That, as ever from these three, is 24-7 Rock Star Shit. Cribs vs the world – just as it should be.



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