

# AMERICAN BANG

Jaren Johnston — vocals, guitar  
Ben Brown — guitar  
Kelby Ray — bass  
Neil Mason — drums

When their EP, *Move to the Music*, is released by Maverick / Reprise Records on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, music fans across the country will experience what this up-and-coming quartet's sizeable grass-roots following has known since 2005. That American Bang, four high-school friends from Nashville, TN, are the real deal. Their unruly brand of Southern-fried garage-rock packs one hell of a punch, with Jaren Johnston's swaggering bluesy vocals muscling up against Ben Brown's blistering guitar riffs, Kelby Ray's aggro basslines, and Neil Mason's burly drumming. The guys tear through songs like "All Night Long," "American Ride," and "Good as Gold," with the flair and confidence of rock'n'roll veterans.

And the critics agree. *Nashville City Paper* called them "one of the city's sharpest performing ensembles — and one clearly ready for national stardom." Noting their stew of influences, which includes everyone from The Black Crowes and Lenny Kravitz to the Sex Pistols and the Dead Kennedys, Knoxville's *Metro Pulse* said: "American Bang is a balls-out rock juggernaut that takes its cues as much from AC/DC as from Elvin Bishop. At certain moments, the band even channels some of the kinetic proto-punk energy as the Stooges or the MC5."

"Sonically, we wanted *Move to the Music* to capture the energy of our live show," Mason says. "We've always been big fans of the classic rock sound of the Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin, but we've also been very influenced by pop culture and some of the newer bands out there, so I think there's a nice blend of both on the EP."

American Bang formed in June 2005, after Mason, Brown, and Johnston's previous bands dissolved and the friends began to flesh out main songwriter Johnston's tales of hard-living, hard-drinking, and loose women. ("I'm a total sucker for all those '70s bands that wrote about either getting their heart broken, or getting laid at the party after a long night of drinking," Johnston says.) After Ray took over bass duties, the four knew they had something special.

The band's first show as a quartet was opening for their friends O.A.R. at the legendary Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, the original site of the Grand Ole Opry that has hosted Johnny Cash, Loretta Lynn, Hank Williams, and countless others. "We had just made the transition bringing Kelby over to bass," says Mason," and decided to make the switch knowing that we wanted that show to be our best ever. When we got in that room and heard how it sounded, we knew immediately that we had just accomplished something very big for our band. The feeling on that stage and the reaction from the audience were enough for us to know that we had the group we all were looking for."

American Bang built up a grass-roots audience playing locally, earning a reputation for their high-energy, no-holds-barred live shows. Encouraged, the band recorded a debut album, entitled *I Shot the King*, which they released themselves in 2005. In 2006, American Bang found itself packing clubs with Nashville rock acts the Pink Spiders, AutoVaughn, and Be Your Own Pet, to opening for old pros .38 Special, The Black Crowes, and Lynyrd Skynyrd. "By the end we were high-fiving people in the audience," recalls Johnston of winning over Skynyrd's 15,000-strong crowd. "We were like, 'fuck, *yeah!*'" In 2007, the band performed at Lollapalooza, Bonnaroo, and Summerfest, and spent some time on the road with ZZ Top, which Mason describes as "an amazing experience. They've been a band for 35 years and they still get out there and bring it every night," he says. We were really blown away by it. And their audience is as diehard as it gets."

American Bang's catchy hooks and musical chemistry soon caught the attention of Warner Bros. Records, which signed them last year. The four-track *Move to the Music*, produced by multi-platinum producer James Michael, is the band's first shot across the bow — a taste of what's to come when American Bang release their debut full-length album, also produced by Michael, for the label next year.

"Everything we've been doing for the last two years has been building up to getting to make this album that we have been hearing in our heads," Mason says. "I think people will be surprised by it. We went in with the goal of capturing the live energy of the band but also having the best songs that anyone's heard from a rock band in a long time. We've been recording everything live, with hardly any overdubs, so the tracks have a really raw feel. Our goal is to leave everyone knowing exactly who American Bang are and show that we're planning on sticking around and making kick-ass rock'n'roll for a long time to come!"

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