

MOTION CITY SOUNDTRACK

EVEN IF IT KILLS ME

Joshua Cain – Guitars, Backing Vocals
Jesse Johnson – Moog, Keyboards, Glockenspiel, Backing Vocals
Justin Pierre – Lead Vocals, Guitars, Keyboards
Matt Taylor – Bass Guitar, Backing Vocals, Keyboards, Piano
Tony Thaxton – Drums, Percussion, Backing Vocals

Growing up is never easy—and if you're a pop band, it's nearly impossible. However, with their third full-length release *Even If It Kills Me* Motion City Soundtrack haven't expanded their sound as much as transcended it. Since the band are film buffs, let's use this analogy: If their debut *I Am The Movie* was an unexpected indie hit and the follow-up *Commit This To Memory* was their mainstream breakthrough, *Even If It Kills Me* is the album Motion City Soundtrack have always wanted to make.

"I actually had a conversation about this with [*Commit This To Memory's* producer] Mark Hoppus when we starting writing this album and he said the worst thing you can do is overthink things," Motion City Soundtrack frontman Justin Pierre explains when asked if he felt any additional pressure going into the band's latest release. "I felt like that was what we should be doing anyway, but it was really reassuring to hear someone else confirm my thoughts." The result is an album that features everything from piano ballads to Weezer-worthy rockers without sounding like forced genre exercises, simply because the band wouldn't know how to contrive their sound even if they wanted to.

Recorded in New York City during the winter in two separate sessions with the Cars' Ric Ocasek at Electric Ladyland, and Fountains of Wayne's Adam Schlesinger and Girls Against Boys' Eli Janney at Stratosphere Sound, *Even If It Kills Me's* all-star production team came about somewhat accidentally. "Adam and Eli were both people we had on our wish list of producers, so getting them together in one session was pretty mind-blowing and we instantly jumped at that," explains frontman Justin Pierre about how the production triumvirate was achieved. "Ric was also amazing to work with because he's such an icon. His philosophy was that you don't need everything to be perfect; it needs to be real," Pierre continues, adding that for this album Ocasek was reunited with engineer Chris Shaw for the first time since the duo worked on Weezer's self-titled debut in 1994. "Obviously when you get our record you can see who did what, but I like the fact that people can't tell just by listening to it—to me, that's a great thing.

Although this seemingly unlikely combination wouldn't work for most bands, it turned out to be the best of both worlds for *Even If It Kills Me* due to the fact that the producers' respective strengths are as varied as Motion City Soundtrack's music this time around. From songs that sound like a supercharged take on the band's seasoned quirky pop formula ("Fell In Love Without You"), to tracks that evoke a collaboration between The Cure and Death Cab For Cutie ("Last Night"), to bonafide piano ballads ("The Conversation"), the red thread tying these seemingly disparate tracks together is frontman Justin Pierre's introspective lyrics, which are always insightful and pensive without being self-loathing.

"A lot of these songs seem to be about loneliness and failed relationships and that surprised me because I've never been happier," Pierre explains, adding in light of his well-documented struggle with alcohol abuse *Even If It Kills Me* is the first record he's written completely sober. However, it's probably best to not concentrate on Pierre's idiosyncratic thought process and instead focus on the greatness that spills out of his brain on the orchestral punk masterpiece "Hello Helicopter" (which features guest vocals from Say Anything's Max Bemis as well as members of the Matches

and Zolof The Rock And Roll Destroyer) and “Antonia,” which evokes the band’s longtime influence the Rentals, but with an emotional resonance that will cut the listener to his or her core.

It is this dichotomy between upbeat music and contemplative lyricism that has not only defined the band since their inception (a fact that might be best exemplified by their fan favorite “L.G. FUAD”); but also has allowed them to headline the Vans Warped Tour and share the stage with everyone from punk royalty such as Blink-182 and Fall Out Boy to pop acts like the All-American Rejects and The Format to their alt-country pals in Limbeck and the Weakerthans. “I think our band can really play with anybody and hopefully transcend any scene we’re attached to, so when that circle of bands disappears we won’t have to suffer the same fate,” guitarist Josh Cain explains when asked where he thinks Motion City Soundtrack fit in. “That’s not to say we’re better than anybody, we just seem to stick with a lot of people.”

Since Pierre is well-known for his borderline unhealthy obsession with director Wes Anderson (see the band’s video for “The Future Freaks Me Out” for evidence), let’s put it in these terms: Motion City Soundtrack started as the hyperactive student played by Jason Schwartzman’s character in the film *Rushmore* and have finally evolved into the elder statesman played by Bill Murray. The glint in the eye and attitude is still there, but there’s a life experience that can only be achieved by literally spending years on the road and constantly pushing the limits of what you can accomplish—and with *Even If It Kills Me*, that’s exactly what Motion City Soundtrack have done.

Hopefully, this is only the beginning.