

The Juliana Theory

Deadbeat Sweetheartbeat

If you want something done right, do it yourself. These words could not ring more true for The Juliana Theory, whose stunning fourth album, *Deadbeat Sweetheartbeat* (Paper Fist/Abacus), represents just how rewarding the DIY ethic can be. For The Juliana Theory, this newfound independence produced their most raw and live-sounding album to date. Consider it a kiss-off goodbye – literally and metaphorically – to the past, with a serious rock ‘n’ roll attitude in all its driving, infectious glory. “It’s basically a goodbye album, a farewell record,” says singer Brett Detar. “It’s one long series of goodbyes after another, except they aren’t sappy, sad goodbyes. Most of them are good riddance type of goodbyes. ‘See you later, I’m glad you’re gone.’” Lyrically the songs convey almost elated farewells to lovers, towns, and bad relationships.

Comprising of Detar, bassist Chad Alan, guitarists Josh Fiedler and Josh Kosker, and drummer Josh “Chip” Walters, The Juliana Theory have bid adieu not only in a breakup/relationship sense, but also to their old way of recording, where overdubs and studio experimentation once ruled. “We really set out from the beginning of the writing process to make an album that’s a lot closer to our live show. We didn’t want many overdubs or piles of vocal harmonies that we couldn’t pull off live. We just basically set out to make an album that showcased what our band actually *is*,” says Detar. The band recorded at least 70-percent of the album live, all together in one room, which resulted in organic, urgent, and incredibly addictive rock ‘n’ roll.

DIY being the name of the game, Detar recorded all of the vocals himself, aside from the vocals he tracked live with the band. Though the process was indeed tedious, it adds to the live and honest feel of the album, where the sound is natural and unimpeded. “When it came time to do the record I just realized that I was more relaxed and singing better on my own, so I did the whole record-worth of vocals by myself,” Detar contends. He co-produced *Deadbeat Sweetheartbeat* with John Travis (Social Distortion, Kid Rock), and the album was mixed by Joe Barresi (Queens Of The Stone Age, Rancid).

From its inception, *Deadbeat Sweetheartbeat* is *the* TJT album: it’s sound is a culmination of the best of the group’s past, updated by taking a new path. The future, they know, rests on their shoulders, and they are truly taking things into their own hands with this effort. It will be the first album they release on their newly formed label, Paper Fist. With their first two albums released on Tooth & Nail, and their last album, *Love*, released on Epic, the band was ready to branch out on their own. “We’ve been doing this for eight years now, and I think we found ourselves comfortable enough to do it ourselves . . . We found a way to be really happy and this way we’re able to do it on our own . . . it’s exciting,” says Alan of the move.

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With a fresh, new approach to the process, *Deadbeat Sweetheartbeat* at the same time represents somewhat of a return to form, but with an added edge. "It sounds like *Emotion Is Dead* [TJT's second album] on crystal meth," explains Alan. It's also quite personal and exhibits darker themes than past efforts. It could be said that *Deadbeat Sweetheartbeat* is TJT's anti-Love album. "In a sense you can almost look at it that way. It's some of the darkest stuff I've ever written, but with substantially more attitude and less grief," Detar says. "Both Chad and I have had seriously tumultuous relationships since writing our last album. The past few years have been complete rollercoaster rides as far as our love lives were concerned. That has definitely helped fuel the lyrics and vibe as well as some serious business breakups and things of that nature." Writing the lyrics on this album was "absolutely cathartic," for Detar. "That's the number one way I deal with things that are inside."

The anthemic and explosive "This Is A Lovesong...For The Loveless," launches the album excitingly with a mammoth galloping guitar that builds to a cathartic chorus. It is one of the album's four thematic cornerstones - showcasing *Deadbeat Sweetheartbeat*'s direction. Another example, "This Valentine Ain't No Saint," is fueled with the realization that life is much better after shedding a destructive relationship; complete with pealing, cathartic guest vocals from Dan Weyandt of Zao.

"Shotgun Serenade" continues the "See ya' - don't let the door hit you in the ass on your way out"-style. It was co-written by Alan and Detar. "I had intended it to be a murder ballad ala Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds or Johnny Cash 'straight up shoot your woman down'-sort of lost love thing," says Alan. What begins as an acoustic affair culminates in big, ringing guitars that sweep the sing-along chorus upwards. With the smart, biting lyrics of, "You're just a waste of a song/You're a simple regret/I thought I knew who you were/but watch how fast I forget/You wore your prettiest dress/but there's a mess in your head/They say old habits die hard/I say they're better off dead," it's evident that this kiss-off drives the point home.

The final and most revealing track indicative of the album's vision is "French Kiss Off." There's an immediacy to the song that pervades the rest of the record. "I really wanted to turn this one up on the tempo and intensity meters. It was one of the fastest and most explosive songs we'd written early on in the demoing process and it went on to really help shape the rest of the album," contends Detar. Though it was one of the first songs written for the album, it is the ultimate bon voyage and a very fitting closer.

Although *Deadbeat Sweetheartbeat* is replete with "Forget You, I'm Over It"-sentiments, there are also moments where the sentiment lets up - like the peppy and intoxicating "Leave Like A Ghost (Drive Away)." A song that appears to be about life in a small town, it beckons the listener to "drive away." The freeing, catchy vibe, with its indelible melodies and hip-shaking grooves, could serve as the perfect road trip soundtrack. In another different direction, the lullaby with a twist, "I Love You To Death (Drive Safe)," which Detar describes as "A lullaby for the end of the world," captivates with spacey atmospherics and sprawling sound.

Deadbeat Sweetheartbeat is more than just an upbeat album filled with smart lyrics and stellar songwriting. Like in the past, TJT is ever evolving. And in doing it their way, they have reaped impressive results. It's ballsy, charismatic rock 'n' roll - The Juliana Theory wouldn't have it any other way.

-Althea Legaspi

