

The Stepkids – Biography 2013

The Stepkids formed in 2009 after playing in bands and as sidemen for other musicians for years. Guitarist/vocalist **Jeff Gitelman**, bassist/keyboardist/vocalist **Dan Edinberg** and drummer/vocalist **Tim Walsh**—came together to “really get back to the nucleus of why we play music to begin with, to go back to the art,” notes Gitelman. The resulting music is a gleeful blend of classic jazz, R&B, funk, 70s pop rock and countless other genres and styles to create a uniquely personal brand of modern psychedelic soul.

The Bridgeport, Connecticut-based trio’s one-of-a-kind sound is the result of the creative and instrumental alchemy that occurs whenever they get together, opting to record on a reel-to-reel versus recording songs using loops and samples like many of their contemporaries. “It’s amazing what a human being can do when reacting to another human being,” Gitelman explains. “When you play a song all the way through together, you never play it the same way twice, and that’s the stuff that really excites us. We’re able to come up with humanistic approaches that no machine will ever be able to do.”

The world got to first hear The Stepkids through their self-titled debut, released on **Stones Throw Records** in the fall of 2011. The album received critical praise and led to extensive tours of North America, Europe, Japan and Australia, which included stints supporting Kimbra, Mayer Hawthorne & The County, Grace Potter & The Nocturnals, Mates of State and The Horrors. “We started to tour really hard as a band right after our first record and we haven’t really stopped since,” says Edinberg. “Along the way, there have been times where we’ve had to ask ourselves, ‘Are we musicians? Are we businessmen? Or are we both?’”

Out of those thorny questions rises ***Troubadour***, the band’s head-spinning second album. From the opening “Memoirs of Grey” through the closing “The Art of Forgetting,” *Troubadour* follows the travels and travails of the titular character as he grapples with love, life on the road, and the commercial requirements of the music biz. “The album’s kind of autobiographical,” explains Edinberg. “The troubadour character represents an extremity of who we really are.” “Though honestly,” adds Walsh, “It’s a character anyone can find themselves in.”

On *Troubadour*, The Stepkids take on and surpass the challenge of making art that resonates beyond the rehearsal space and recording studio and bringing it into the commercial arena. They enchant the listener with the immediately accessible songcraft of cuts like “Sweet Salvation,” “The Lottery” and “Insecure Troubadour,” while transporting them through a multi-colored musical landscape that couldn’t have been conjured up by anyone else.

As anyone who’s ever witnessed an eye-popping Stepkids live performance can attest, the band also strives to extend that creativity to the concert stage. From early on, they’ve utilized kaleidoscopic projections to enhance their music and turn their sets into fully immersive experiences for their audience. But there, too, the band is evolving. “We’ve actually started to do acoustic performances and acoustic videos, broken-down stuff without any production,” says Gitelman. “We’re trying to expand the brand and do more psychedelic stuff, but also more

of the revealing, conventional type of performances.” “We thought our fans would want to be able to focus on what we’re actually playing and who’s actually singing,” adds Edinberg. “We’re all for that, too. We like a healthy mix.”

That mixture of intense creative vision and the desire to entertain forms the very essence of what The Stepkids are about. “That’s what I love about Louis Armstrong,” says Gitelman. “He was so deep musically, but he could also let go to the point where it was just raw entertainment and emotion.” “Or even Sun Ra,” suggests Edinberg. “Entertainment was the number one priority at any Sun Ra show.”

Deftly dancing on the ledge between art and commerce, harmonic skill and raw emotion, The Stepkids are just getting started. “I really believe that we still haven’t discovered some of our most exciting stuff,” enthuses Gitelman. “Everybody is so deep musically, there are whole sides of us we haven’t really explored yet.”