

Merry Men?: Reed Calhoun, Shawn Dailey, Tucker, Sean Stopnik, and Ian Hendrickson



BY ANTHONY BOZZA

Jeff Tucker's first recording experience immediately led to a small problem. "My friends used to call me the Hermit," says the 27-year-old frontman for Los Angeles-based quintet Rock Kills Kid. "I lived in a studio for close to three years. There was no shower, so I'd clean myself with baby wipes."

Tucker—a morph of Billie Joe Armstrong and Brandon Flowers, with a chilly, resonant voice reminiscent of Thom Yorke and Jeff Buckley—was an aimless teen who picked up a guitar at 16 and joined a punk band

three years later. That was the original Rock Kills Kid: They never toured but were signed to nü-punk label Fearless Records in 2002 and released a six-song EP. The group drifted apart, but once Tucker met his current lineup—all of whom defected from other local bands—their "chill work habits" generated the perfect working relationship.

The lush Cure-meets-early-U2 ballads and raucous rock-disco tracks on their debut album, *Are You Nervous?* (Reprise), are culled from Tucker's stash of 150 songs written during his monkish squatter period. The singer admits his influences are simple ("I've been obsessed with three bands:

Guns N' Roses, Radiohead, and Air"). And though his bandmates' sonic touchstones are further afield (Patsy Cline, Metallica, Daft Punk, the Promise Ring), their tastes are bound by one constant. "Basically all of our songs are about my isolation," Tucker says. "I feel really weird saying that. But maybe that's because the other four guys are sitting here staring at me."

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