

## JOSIAH & THE BONNEVILLES

"I'm nostalgic to the core," says Josiah Leming. "I think back on things a lot. I get hung up on certain moments, and that's when I feel like I've got to get a guitar into my hands."

Nostalgia might be a surprising motivation to hear from Leming, the young, erudite, emotional powerhouse behind Josiah & The Bonnevilles, especially considering his band's entire bright future is unfolding right before his eyes. But one listen to Leming's songs and you'll understand: his nostalgia isn't a longing for the past, but rather a quest for understanding of the present. Boyish though he may look, Leming writes with the weathered wisdom and unflinching self-realization of an old soul. Inquisitive, witty, and fearless, his lyrics are high beam headlights piercing through dark nights of the soul, illuminating the pain and joy of growing up, falling in love, falling apart, and moving on.

"These songs came from a really difficult place, and I don't think there's any way around that," Leming says of the 'Cold Blood' EP, a preview of his arresting debut album for Vagrant Records. "I felt like I was in a hole that I was never going to dig out of, so I started writing. Some of the songs were to remember better times, and some were to get me out of the shitty times I was living in."

In the summer of 2013, Leming had just completed a grueling tour of the United States plagued by setbacks and disappointments. Burned out seemingly beyond repair, he relocated to Las Vegas and questioned his next steps until fate intervened. First, a friend introduced him to the music of Townes Van Zandt. Then his brother sent him a copy of Leonard Cohen's 'New Skin For The Old Ceremony.' Josiah felt something important brewing, so he began teaching himself to fingerpick on a small Martin guitar he'd received as a gift from a fan. Clumsily at first, but with increasing finesse every day, he obsessively explored the instrument and his tumultuous emotional surroundings. Slowly but surely, the tumblers began to align and the locks started to turn. What at first appeared to be impenetrable walls ultimately revealed themselves as hidden doors, and suddenly previously unknown musical worlds opened up before him.

"When I was young, the folk and country stuff never connected with me," confesses Leming. "I was more dramatic than that. The flair of the British stuff like Morrissey and Echo and the Bunnymen was what really hit me."

The new material Leming found himself writing in Las Vegas combined the two, fusing the plainspoken poetry of American roots music with the emotional drama of Brit-pop into something of a new-Americana. He set up a microphone in his living room and recorded the meat of what would become the new album by himself, layering guitar and piano and vocals a track-at-a-time. The songs mined his childhood in Tennessee and the longing he felt to escape. They traced his journeys around the country, never settling down in any one place for too long. They mapped his fears and anxieties, spoke candidly to ex-girlfriends, and pulled no punches.

"For me, the music follows the words," says Leming. "I think the lyric creates the hook, and the words are what build connections in people's minds. If you get the words right,

and if you sing them with conviction, no matter the melody, people will relate and they'll want to sing along."

And that's exactly what happened when Josiah began performing the new songs live with guitarist Stephen Johnson and bassist/percussionist Josh Nyback. Under the name Josiah & The Bonneville, they landed a residency in LA that quickly garnered a devoted fanbase and showed Leming just how far those simple, stripped-down tunes he'd recorded in Las Vegas could go. The power of the live shows and the audience reactions inspired Leming to bring his new bandmates into the studio in LA with co-producer/mixer Dave Way (Fiona Apple, Paul McCartney) to flesh out several tracks and finally complete work on the album.

The resulting record showcases the full spectrum of Leming's talents, from the bittersweet farewell of "Back To Tennessee" and gut-wrenching confessional "Lie With Me" to the Dylan-esque "Please" and infectious "Swing." The arrangements are understated, drawing emotional power not from bombast or grandeur but rather through intimacy and intensity. Leming and the band create wide-open vistas with their music, leaving room for the lyrics to live and breathe and cut you to the quick. "Cold Blood" displays Josiah's mastery of intricate fingerpicking techniques, while "Long Gone" makes beautiful use of his delicate falsetto, and "London" transports you into an entire world built of nothing more than an acoustic guitar and his quavering, passionate voice.

In the end, that's what Josiah & The Bonneville do best: transport you. Each song is a journey in its own right: of memory, of regret, of hope, of self-discovery. Josiah may be nostalgic to the core, but out of the darkness of his past, he's crafted a brilliant beacon of an album that's shining a bright, blazing light onto all the promise of his future.