

LAST YEAR'S MEN

Sunny Down Snuff

"One of the year's most addictive records"
– **Grayson Currin, *The Independent Weekly***

"The razor-sharp power-pop of the late, great Exploding Hearts is clearly an influence on Last Year's Men as the band zips through songs about teenage problems. But even when singer Ben Carr seems down, there's an optimism and energy that helps separate his band from its peers."

– **David Malitz, *Click Track @The Washington Post***



The notion that four Chapel Hill youngsters would play under the moniker Last Year's Men is odd to say the least. The name refers to "Last Year's Man," one of the seminal numbers of '60s songwriting icon Leonard Cohen, and it's a safe bet that gravelly-voiced poets don't turn up on many high school iPods these days. There's also the implication that they were full-fledged men last year. By many people's standards they'll barely be men two years from now.

But beguiling as their name is on the surface, it makes perfect sense when you listen to the music. Combining the buoyant melodies of '50s and '60s pop and rock with a youthful pop-punk sneer, the trio is ruled by influences that don't get the attention they deserve in 2010. They shake and shimmy through the kind of retro rock usually pumped out by jaded old curmudgeons, attacking break-ups and shake-ups with the kind of youthful intensity that can fight through any failure.

After surviving teenage pop-punk bands, the group came together as Last Year's Men in 2010. But despite its relative newness, the band has grown swiftly thanks to the ambition of singer/songwriter Ben Carr. He saw a link between the punk anthems of his school days and classic cuts from the '50s and '60s.

"There's sort of this natural progression that I saw just all leading back to that style of music," Carr says. "Those melodies that I was listening to on the pop-punk records pretty much came from Sam Cook and Otis Redding. That sort of led to me digging deeper into the whole history of garage rock."

The result of Carr's studied attack is a sound far advanced from the band's tender years, but that also retains all the energy of a teenage punk rock band. With help in the studio from producer Dan McGee, leader of fellow Chapel Hill rock band Spider Bags, Last Year's Men have matured quickly into a confident and vivacious garage rock outfit.

"When you surround yourself with people who are of such a high caliber, you have to force yourself to write on a better level than people when they're 18," Carr says. "It's like if you ever had a swinging competition when you were a little kid, and one person would jump off the swing and they'd get 10 feet out. And you'd be like, 'Fuck, I have to get 11 feet out.'"

Now out of school with the seal of approval from indie rock veterans, Last Year's Men are ready to take their stuff on the road. And like everything else they do, they'll do it the old-fashioned way, winning over one town at a time with sweat, toil and raucous hooks.

RIYL: Reigning Sound, Black Lips, King Khan & BBQ