

Teenage Wrist
Still Love
(EPITAPH)

Teenage Wrist are a difficult band to define. Over the past eight years the act have continually evolved their sound, a process that's peaking with their third full-length *Still Love*. Reaching new heights in both scope and execution, the album sees the duo—Marshall Gallagher (vocalist, guitarist, bassist) and Anthony Salazar (drums, vocalist, percussion)—producing the album themselves to handcraft their most expansive collection of songs to date from the ground up. The result is a self-realized collection of songs that saw the band borrowing vintage gear, bringing in friends in the form of members from 311 and Softcult and incorporating tasteful pop sensibilities to craft a collection of songs that redefines the band's sound while staying true to their guitar-driven roots. "With this album we were just trying to get ourselves out of the safety zone and into the danger zone," Gallagher explains. "We took a lot of risks and it was a really fun record to make."

The process of creating *Still Love* started in early 2022 with a writing retreat at Joshua Tree National Park a couple of hours from the band's homebase of Los Angeles, where the duo started planting the seeds that would become these songs. "We found a small place and just isolated there," Gallagher explains. "We set up all the equipment in the living room and this whole record was an attempt to do a lot of things we've never done before." That sense of liberation carried over into every aspect of the album from the production to the artwork and overall aesthetic. "We didn't have a preconception about how we were going to be received for this record, so we decided we should just create something organic that we feel completely present making," Salazar explains. "There was no other intent than for us to express ourselves." While the playing on *Still Love* is remarkably proficient, there isn't a lot of studio trickery present on the album. It is the sound of something being created in real time with no goal outside of self-discovery and pure expression.

From the atmospheric, fuzzed out opener "Sunshine" (which Gallagher says is "the coolest riff he's ever written") to the midtempo rocker "Dark Sky" (the latter of which features the aforementioned cameo from 311 vocalist/turntablist Doug "SA" Martinez), the album will undoubtedly please fans who favor distorted guitars and crunchy chords. However, that's only one aspect of the album and Teenage Wrist aren't ashamed to admit that there's a strong pop sensibility on the album that shows how much they've grown as songwriters since 2021's *Earth is a Black Hole*. From the brain-invading ballad "Something Good" to the downbeat electronic vibe of "Diorama," the album is teeming with unexpected moments that are reminiscent of Radiohead's flair for experimentation. Then there's "Sprawled," which features soaring saxophone and crescendoing drums that bring Teenage Wrist's sound to triumphant new heights. "We wanted to try to go full Pink Floyd on that song and it's a standout for me, just that whole last section," Gallagher admits.

"There was no central theme in mind when it came to the lyrics of this record but it was centered around a period of time during COVID where my mental health just plummeted; I hit rock bottom

and didn't recognize myself," Gallagher responds when asked about the album's lyrics, adding that this album was more introspective and in comparison to the nihilistic energy of *Earth is a Black Hole*. "There's a bit of chronicling that dive and the bounce back where it was a lot of struggling to love myself and that [process] really flipped my perspective and allowed me to be super grateful for where I'm at and everything that's happening around me." That resilient spirit is paralleled by the music on *Still Love*—and although the band have toured with acts like Thrice and Citizen, they're not afraid to also pay homage to acts like Smashing Pumpkins. "Marshall and I are pretty open-minded and we have varying tastes but the things that we connect on help us navigate musically," Salazar explains. "I've learned so much from playing with Marshall; we met when I was only a year out of music school and now it's been ten years of making music and I'm so grateful for that."

Listening to *Still Love* it's obvious that instead of relying on nostalgia the dynamic between these two musicians drives them to push the limits not only of Teenage Wrist's sound but their own personal forms of creative expression. "I feel like a lot of guys play together and they get annoyed with that but I never feel that way," Salazar continues. "There's always the keen sense of wanting to explore what's out there musically and I think that's what helps us a lot with creating and staying connected." The powerful bond between these two collaborators lies at the core of Teenage Wrist's music and, more than any other factor, that's evident on every moment of *Still Love*. "There was a certain feeling that music gave me as a kid and this is honestly the first time on any record I feel like we kind of came close to achieving that," Gallagher says of the end result. "We just shot from the gut on this record and tried not to overanalyze things... and I think the record speaks for itself."