

## THE 88

THE 88 have been hailed as one of the finest pop/rock/alternative bands in recent memory; a distinction proven all the more relevant by their superb new self-titled collection. The Los Angeles-based band has cooked up a modern take on their classic style. Swirling with chiming guitars, melodic bass, groovy keys, and rocking drums, *The 88* grabs the listener at the first note and never lets go, from the organ-fueled album opener “Center Of The Sun” to the shimmering beauty of “As Far As I Can See”. Songs like “Automatic Brain” and lead single “They Ought To See You Now” – the latter featuring guest vocals from the one and only Ray Davies – boast all the vitality and exuberance of a great rock ‘n roll band in full flight, brimming with both confidence and creativity.

Founded in 2002 by high school pals Adam Merrin (piano/keys) and Keith Slettedahl (vocals/guitar), and solidified as a band with the addition of bassist Todd O’Keefe and drummer Anthony Zimmitti, THE 88 made their bones on the Southern California indie scene, releasing two well-received albums and earning acclamation as “Best Pop/Rock Band of the Year” from L.A. Weekly.

The band’s lively stage show soon attracted major label buzz. In 2007, THE 88 signed with Island Records, releasing their major label debut the following year. A mutual parting of ways came in 2009, allowing the band to return to the independent landscape that allowed them to thrive. Slettedahl spent the early part of the year making home recordings, which were later finished by the band and released digitally as 2009’s “unofficial album” *This Must Be Love*.

Toward the end of the year, the band reconvened at their Highland Park practice space with no real agenda; “just four friends making music for the love of it,” as Zimmitti recalls. New songs began to take shape, built organically around the band’s distinctive interplay. Realizing that they were onto something, THE 88 booked studio time at Grandmaster Recorders in Hollywood, with engineer/mixer Andrew Alekel (Weezer, Tool, Queens Of The Stone Age) behind the board. The goal from the start was to preserve the spirit of the Highland Park sessions, with minimal overdubs and production trickery. To get into peak performance condition, the band rehearsed extensively, fine-tuning the arrangements so that they’d be more than prepared to hit the studio.

“We’ve always gone into it thinking, ‘Okay, we’re gonna keep this live and raw,’” says Slettedahl.

“It’s difficult to capture in the studio,” admits Merrin. “But I really feel like we did it.”

Shortly after recording commenced, THE 88 received word that Ray Davies was looking for a band to both support and accompany him on a 2010 U.S. tour. Avowed fans one and all, the band recorded a half-dozen Kinks classics for Davies to assess. The result: THE 88 found themselves on the biggest tour of their career, alongside one of their greatest musical inspirations. “I still can’t believe it,” says Slettedahl. “I mean, he’s my hero.”

Upon the tour's conclusion, THE 88 returned to Los Angeles to put the finishing touches on the new album. Two months later, they crossed the Atlantic for Davies' UK tour – culminating in an incredible show at London's historic Royal Albert Hall – as well as their own first-ever British headline shows. Davies also invited the band to record a number of tracks at his own world famous Konk Studios for an upcoming Kinks tribute compilation, including a version of “Till The End Of The Day” sung by the late Alex Chilton. To show his appreciation, the legendary Kink lent his voice to the gang harmonies on THE 88 single “They Ought To See You Now”.

“From going into our rehearsal space on that first day with no expectations, to all of a sudden finding ourselves playing the Royal Albert Hall with Ray Davies and recording at Konk Studios... it was pretty magical,” as O’Keefe describes it.

What’s more, *The 88* reveals the same spark and ingenuity that has kept steak on the band’s plate throughout their career. In addition to touring with such artists as The Flaming Lips, The B-52s, Matt Costa, Smashing Pumpkins, and the late Elliott Smith, the band has sustained itself in large part thanks to a seemingly infinite series of high-profile song placements – spanning films, commercials, video games, and TV shows – as well as resourceful projects like self-produced YouTube videos and the recent digital single, “Love Is The Thing,” recorded entirely via iPhone app.

“We’re always trying to discover new things, and come up with new ideas,” says Merrin. “It’s really cool that you can do all these alternative things to get noticed *and* make a living.”

By remaining true to themselves, THE 88 have crafted a fully conceived and immensely satisfying album that stands tall as the definitive work of their career. But like any true craftsman, their best is never enough.

“It feels like a beginning,” says Slettedahl. “And the future is bright,” echoes Zimmitti. Adds Merrin: “We have huge ideas for this band.”

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