

Colony House Only The Lonely

Picture the quintessential rock band. Maybe they're standing on a grimy street corner with their arms crossed, looking tough, or maybe they're goofing around in a sunlit field. They could be wearing motorcycle jackets or cowboy shirts or feather boas. They might sound austere and angry or epic and stadium-ready. But what they have in common, regardless of aesthetic, is that they stand together, shoulder-to-shoulder, brothers and sisters in arms. A real rock band is a gang. A group of people united by a shared commitment to what matters in the world, what matters in life, and an insatiable need to communicate that sensibility to anyone else out there who might relate.

It's this idea – that your band is your life and vice versa - that bonds the four members of Nashville-based rock band **Colony House**. Frontman Caleb Chapman, drummer Will Chapman, guitarist Scott Mills, and bassist Parke Cottrell are all married guys in their twenties, so they don't really fit the rockstar cliché: there's no champagne cork popping or model chasing with this crew. "We always kind of joke – you think people think we're a cool band?" says Caleb, chuckling. "The joke is that we know we're not a 'cool' band. We're regular guys." But when it comes to that most sacred rock and roll thing, where you move on a mission from town to town and stage to stage getting "gnarly and sweaty" as Caleb puts it, in honor of the thing you love, this band has that part down cold. "We're not sex drugs and rock and roll," Caleb says, laughing. "We're *just* rock and roll."

Colony House is gearing up to release their major label debut, **ONLY THE LONELY**, via Descendant/RCA. The title is a shout-out to the king of elegiac melancholy - "Obviously it's a direct Roy Orbison reference," says Caleb. And that might initially seem at odds with Colony House's sound, a madcap aural rollercoaster borrowing from the anthemic swell of the Killers to the harmonic sass of the Beach Boys to the wit of Vampire Weekend. But beneath the band's whirlwind of ecstatic guitar playing and intricate melodies you'll find their real signature: emotion. They write about being desperately lonely. They write about being desperately joyful. But what makes a Colony House song a Colony House song is the sheer *feeling* it conveys. "We want to connect with people," explains Caleb, mentioning a favorite quote by van

Gogh. *There's a great fire that burns within me but no one stops to warm themselves by it, and passersby only see a wisp of smoke.* "I mean, this is Vincent van Gogh we're talking about!" he continues. "The whole world knows his work! But he felt this loneliness, this sense of, *I have so much I have to offer but no one stops to see it.*" Colony House's primary aim is to see that fire. To witness it, as Caleb puts it, "in ourselves, and in the people that come to see us play. That's what we're about."

If this sounds like an unusually high-minded goal for a bunch of twenty-something dudes in a rock and roll band, there's a reason for that: the guys in Colony House may be young, but they're serious about their work. And they've been at it a while. "So ... me and my brother, we know each other for obvious reasons," says Caleb, as he begins to explain how they all met. Caleb is older, "by sixteen months," he points out. "I think we have twin tendencies." The two brothers come from a long line of musicians. "If you're ever in Paducah, Kentucky and you see 'Chapman Music' on the side of the road, that's my grandpa's music shop," Caleb says. Grandpa Chapman's son, Steven Curtis Chapman, Caleb and Will's dad, is also a musician. He grew up "playing southern gospel and bluegrass," in Kentucky, Caleb says, then moved to Nashville and became a songwriter. "He found success in the contemporary Christian music world," Caleb continues. "This is a proud son thing to say, but he really helped shape what that industry is." For Will and Caleb, visiting dad at the office meant climbing aboard a tour bus. "That's what really inspired me and my brother to start playing music," Caleb recalls. "We were like, we want to do what dad does."

Knowing what you want to do and actually doing it are two different things. It took the Chapman brothers a while, but by the end of 2009, around the time they met Scott, things really started to gel. "My cousin brought him to our little sister's birthday party, and he's like, Scott plays guitar if you ever need a guitar player." They actually did, and eventually Scott became the first guy in the band not named Chapman. Scott knew of Parke from back home in Knoxville. He had a reputation as killer guitarist and piano player, but they'd never met until Colony House asked Parke to open up, as a solo artist, for one of their Knoxville shows. He did. It went very well. And thus began a multi-year getting-to-know-you period between Colony House and Parke. Three years after that show in Knoxville, Colony House asked Parke to come out and play bass with them for a couple weeks. Parke borrowed a friend's bass, met the guys in Atlanta, and has played every show since. He was officially added to the line-up in the spring of this year.

It matters, when you tour with the intensity Colony House tours, that all the people you're sharing a van with have your back. And it matters that all the people waiting for you back at home do too. "For us at least, they go hand in hand," Caleb says. "If you're falling apart in one place, it directly impacts the other." After the band released their 2014 debut (on *Descendant*) they proceeded to play over 200 shows the following year in support of it. "We wouldn't want to be anywhere else, this is the dream," says Caleb. "But it's also work." Discovering that they could be exactly where they wanted to be, living the dream out on the road while simultaneously

missing home gave the band a new insight into what they see as a universal human struggle. “Everyone has things they miss, everyone has things they’re worried about – even when life is going great, it can still feel hard, and there’s no shame in saying that, there is no shame in saying you’re lonely or sad, that’s part of the beauty of life,” Caleb says.

And that’s really what *Only the Lonely* seeks to capture in thirteen impassioned tracks: joy reached via a shared appreciation of struggle.

Producer Peter Katis known for his work with Interpol, The National, Frightened Rabbit, and more worked with the band on many of the album tracks on ONLY THE LONELY, as well as notable mixer Vance Powell (Jack White, Elle King, Beck).

The album’s first single, “You & I,” reflects this quest for communal catharsis. It started as Caleb’s attempt to step outside the super-personal stance he usually takes with lyrics and move instead towards something more of the times. “I was challenged by a friend of ours, he was like Dylan or Kristofferson or the Highwaymen, they wrote songs about the times, about the political climate and the social climate, and you just don’t hear as much of that in our music.” He was right, Caleb thought. “So I decided to give it a shot.” “You & I” is not a political song, per se, but it’s as close as the band has come thus far. “I’ve seen the same thing on the news over and over again and it’s heartbreaking, infuriating, depressing,” he says. “Basically, when someone says, ‘I disagree with you,’ what’s normal seems to be to say, ‘okay, build the wall!’ I feel like my role is to keep that wall from being built as long as possible.”

Another of the album’s stand-out tracks is “You Know It,” which Caleb accurately characterizes as “this total surf rock jam.” The song gets at that “push pull,” as he puts it, of wanting to pay enough attention to all the different things you love in your life. It opens with lyrics directed to his wife, reassuring her that he’ll be back from the road before she knows it, and mid-song, flips to say the same thing to the crowd. “I want to be both places,” he says, smiling. Caleb finished writing the song, appropriately enough, in the back of the van, on a sleepless cross-country sprint from Nashville to San Francisco, with a stop over at the Grand Canyon. They had to drive it straight because they’d stayed home as long as possible, but the drive was so inspiring, they played the newborn track at the very first tour stop.

“The greatest performers, whether they’re jumping all over the stage or standing still the entire night, they manage to connect with everyone in the room,” says Caleb. “They are able to make you feel not just like, I was honored to be in the room that night, but like, I was a part of something that night.” That feeling is what drives and inspires Colony House. And it drives and inspires them to very lofty goals. “When we play our music, we dream about hearing it in an arena one day,” Caleb says. “Some people say you shouldn’t dream so big, but why would we put a ceiling on something that we love so much?”