

The Gibson Brothers - Mockingbird (2018)

Written by bluelover
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1 *Travelin' Day* 3:25 2 *Cool Drink Of Water* 3:43 3 *Love The Land* 3:30 4 *Sweet Lucinda* 2:46 5 *Special One* 3:39 6 *Lay Your Body Down* 2:32 7 *So Much Love In My Baby's Eyes* 2:27 8 *Come Down* 3:09 9 *Everybody Hurts* 3:48 10 *I'm A Better Man* 3:15 11 *Not Gonna Be Tonight* 3:17 Leigh Gibson - vocals, guitar Eric Gibson - vocals, banjo, guitar Mike Barber - bass Clayton Campbell - fiddle Jesse Brock - mandolin

If this music we call “Americana” has shown us one thing, it’s the fact that country- and rock-tinged musicians need to increasingly change their approach. There’s no “traditional” sound in modern music. With that need to adopt in mind, the new release from the Gibson Brothers, *Mockingbird* (Easy Eye Sound), largely trades in the sound that won Eric and Leigh Gibson two International Bluegrass Music Association Entertainer of the Year Awards for a sleeker, late 60s/early 70s vibe.

Produced by Dan Auerbach of the Black Keys and Fergie Ferguson (Johnny Cash, Sturgill Simpson, Tyler Childers), the album draws from a number of early country-rock influences. “Cool Drink of Water” recalls an early Eagles tune, complete with a road trip and a beautiful companion in the passenger seat – “I’m so crazy thirsty ‘bout to lose my mind.” “Lay Your Body Down” has a more aggressive rock sound, while “Special One” has an almost doo-wop feel to go with the steel guitar.

There’s some traditional country in the mix, too. “Sweet Lucinda” carries a honky-tonk vibe, complete with banjo and mouth harp. Slide work (including guitarist Billy Sanford) is a highlight throughout the album, especially on “Come Down”, a tale of waiting on that one woman to make up her mind: “I could wait forever/Better late than never/But the sooner, the better.”

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One of the surprising departures on the album is an out-of-nowhere cover of R.E.M.'s early 90s weeper "Everybody Hurts". Their take trades in Michael Stipe's harrowing vocals for a more relaxed, lush approach, complete with simple, sunny harmonies, keys, horns, and (yes) handclaps. It probably won't have you crawling out of your car and walking down a jammed-up highway like the original, but it'll leave you feeling more hopeful than distraught.

Two standout originals bookend the album. "Travelin' Day", written by the brothers with Ferguson, reflects the losses that all three men felt upon the death of a loved one. Backed by piano, acoustic, and slide guitar, the song both mourns leaving and celebrates moving on: "I'm as good as gone...But I'm ready to go home." The final cut on the record, "Not Gonna Be Tonight", has the singer promising to give up drinking – "Someday I'll change my ways/Walk out of this haze" – but there's no commitment to back up the promise. It's a much different – and more honest – take on your typical country drinkin' song.

Mockingbird was written and recorded in Nashville. The album also features the work of Gene Chrisman (drums), Bobby Wood (keys), and the Flaming Lips' Derek Brown on slide guitar on "Everybody Hurts". ---americanahighways.org

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