

Natural Child - For The Love Of The Game (2012)

Written by bluesever

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1. – *8AM Blues* (03:12) 2. – *She Got A Mind* (04:15) 3. – *Baby* (02:08) 4. – *That's How I Got To Memphis* (03:23) 5. – *Hey Little Girl* (05:11) 6. – *No One Writes Sad Songs Anymore* (03:59) 7. – *D.T.V.* (04:25) 8. – *Paradise Heights* (03:14) 9. – *Faces Of Death Blues* (02:54) 10. – *Ain't Gonna Stop* (03:38) Seth Murray (guitar, vocals) Wes Traylor (bass, vocals) Zack Martin (drums)

Natural Child are a trio of scruffy youngsters from Nashville who, like countless other kids motivated to start rock 'n' roll bands, are dedicated to the pursuit of fun-loving good times, on stage and off. Throughout a couple of years of playing shows and releasing tunes, the band has developed a reputation - much of it perpetuated by their own songs - for worshipping the holy rock triumvirate of booze, drugs and girls.

Yet, while there is no shortage of youth attempting to get laid by jamming the hours away amidst clouds of pot smoke and beer spill, these guys have a certain something that allows them to stand (foggy) head and (sweaty) shoulders above the competition.

Spend time with the group's material and it becomes clear the three are interested in more than just getting their rocks off. In interviews, guitarist/vocalist Seth McMurray, bassist/vocalist Wes Traylor and drummer Zack Martin make clear their goal of playing music together forever. They see Natural Child as a band to refine and perfect over time, a la heroes The Rolling Stones, not as a genre exercise or jumping off point for future endeavors. And they've taken the concept of hard work to heart. In the past six months, while clocking miles with constant tours, they've released two full length albums via California imprint Burger Records, April's *For the Love of the Game*, and the just-dropped *Hard in Heaven*.

Both albums showcase a band steeped in both classic rock trickery and Southern heritage, although in slightly different ways. FTLOTG, wears its Music City country influence proudly, while Hard In Heaven skews towards bluesy, power trio workouts. '8 AM Blues,' which opens FTLOTG, is a swaggering hangover tune that sounds like vintage Uncle Tupelo, before they got all soft and serious. McMurray and Traylor sing in drawling, bourbon-soaked harmony over spirited riffing as Martin punches some Charlie Watts-style swing into the beat. 'DTV' punks up the proceedings courtesy of cable-fraying bass notes and guitar that builds from smooth blues soloing to club-shaking crash. An album highlight is a cover of Tom T. Hall's barroom tearjerker 'That's How I Got to Memphis.' The band plays the song straight and pure, highlighting the road-weary, brokenhearted lyrics with heart-on-sleeve harmonies. 'No One Writes Sad Songs Anymore' is their own, perfectly competent, high and lonesome ballad.

Hard In Heaven shows a band tightened by time on the road. 'Laid, Paid, and Strange' lays the group's M.O. out in the course of a two-and-a-half minute blur. Even on record, slow-burning vamps 'What You Gonna Do' and 'Blind Owl Speaks' - the first a love song, the second an 'I love substances' song - show their crowd-captivating potential. 'Derek's Blues' is the most overt Southern Rock track on the album, with McMurray firing off a barrage of deep fried six-string solos.

Ultimately, what comes through strongest on both records is the band's dedication to playing and recording the best music they can make. You can hear the effort these dudes put into their songs, something which separates them from crowds of garage-rock slackers currently criss-crossing the country in a parade of pungent vans. With luck, Natural Child will continue to work as hard as they have on these two records and keep enjoying life. Their potential has only been tapped. ---Ethan Covey, dustedmagazine.com

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