

## Mister Heavenly

Mister Heavenly dabbled in love and affection on their first record, 2011's *Out of Love*. This time, however, Ryan Kattner, Nicholas Thorburn and Joe Plummer are in a scrappy mood as they embrace a tougher sound on the band's new album, *Boxing the Moonlight*.

"It seemed like it was a good idea to pivot from the subject matter of the first record," Thorburn says. "That was maybe a more emotional thing, and I think this record is much more physical."

The physicality is evident right from the start, in the hammering piano and terse rhythm that fuel opener "Beat Down," or in the buzzing chaos on "Dead Duck," a psych-heavy freakout that evokes the Monks. The experimental '60s garage-rockers aren't the only musical reference point on *Boxing the Moonlight*. Seventies Krautrock band Faust was a big influence while the songs were being written, as was the sound of hip-hop production in the late '80s and early '90s, which informed the deep groove of "Hammer Drop" and the spacious guitar sound on "Magic Is Gone." Meanwhile, "Crazy Love, Vol. III," is a smooth jam with an ulterior motive.

"My only hope is that 'Crazy Love' can be somebody's wedding song," Kattner says. "But the bride has a shiv hidden in her dress."

If it sounds eclectic, that's no coincidence, though Mister Heavenly's knack for catchy hooks ensures that it all hangs together with remarkable cohesion. "I personally hate albums where every song sounds the same," Kattner says. "It all makes sense in the grand scheme of things. People are complicated. People have a lot of different vibes running through them at any given moment."

If people are complicated, so was making *Boxing the Moonlight*.

Kattner and Thorburn started Mister Heavenly in 2010 as a chance to collaborate for the sheer fun of it, and they soon invited Plummer to join them. After releasing *Out of Love* in 2011, the band started work on their second album, snatching a few days at a time whenever their cluttered schedules allowed: Kattner is also known as Man Man visionary Honus Honus, Thorburn was busy with his bands Islands and the Unicorns (both now dormant), and Plummer plays with Cold War Kids and has worked with Modest Mouse and the Shins.

“Every time we got together, we had to continually relearn how to play the songs,” Thorburn says. “When we finally got into the studio, there was such a built-up reserve of energy that we were ready to hit it fast and hard.”

That fast-and-hard aesthetic also reflects a sense of place. “I don’t know if it’s cliché or not these days to have an L.A. record, but this feels like an L.A. record,” Plummer says. Indeed, Kattner and Thorburn currently live in Los Angeles (Plummer is in Seattle). Kattner refers to the city in his lyrics, and Thorburn says he thought of L.A. as the setting for some of the characters in his songs.

It all adds up to make *Boxing the Moonlight* another successful pursuit toward one of the band’s long-term goals.

“We’re always trying to write the perfect little nugget,” Kattner says, that will endure even into the dystopian future that looks more and more likely every day. Or, as he puts it, “When you find that melted jukebox, and that Mister Heavenly record is spinning, you’re going to try your damndest to find a coin to put in it.”