

“Flamingo”: Brandon Flowers’ love letter to Sin City

Written by
Friday, 24 September 2010 12:22

Brandon Flowers’ soulful debut record, “Flamingo,” is an ode to his fabulous hometown of Las Vegas, Nev.

Last week Flowers, known internationally as the voice of rock band The Killers, released his first solo record packed with songs about the joys and pains of love — all under the effulgent backdrop of the Las Vegas Strip.



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Living since youth in a suburb of Sin City and working as a bellhop off the strip at Gold Coast Hotel and Casino on Flamingo Road in his late teens gave Flowers plenty of fodder to create a romantic depiction of both the glamour and the dark underbelly of the town he’s called the “jewel of the Mojave.”

Album opener “Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas” echoes the words inscribed on the famous city limits sign. Flowers takes you down the road to the “neon encrusted temples” asking for “your dreamers, your heartaches and your sins.”

As the song intensifies with layered vocals, synths and electric guitars (like any good Killers’ song), he ends with “didn’t nobody tell you the house will always win?” And it does.

The opening track of the album is like a good Shakespearian prologue - it tells you the entire tale, but in no way spoils the thrill of listening to every word (or, in this case, note) written. What follows are some undeniable and timeless gems that show exactly why Flowers is the primary songwriter for The Killers.

Flowers shows his old soul in “Only the Young,” which holds the same weight as “Welcome.” The song makes the best use of the singer’s sweet tenor, using it to its maximum effect. His voice is layered, like in most of the album to create effective harmonies for the chorus and pleasant ambient flourishes from his falsetto to deepen the production of the song.

He is joined later by indie-folk sweetheart Jenny Lewis on the charming “Hard Enough,” which is sure to please many fans of both artists. The song is not totally a duet. Lewis doesn’t share billing with Flowers, but her voice is unmistakable (which, judging by the breakup theme of the song, is completely what was intended).



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“Flamingo” is littered with tracks very similar to the type of songs Flowers has created before with his bandmates in The Killers. Some tracks are a bit more sonically intimate than those of The Killers, the album’s big tracks are less vast and stadium rock-oriented, but the same formula of synth-based pop rock persists.

The crowning successes of the album are “Crossfire,” “On The Floor” and “Jilted Lovers and Broken Hearts.” “Crossfire” is a love song for the ages; an instantly hummable “us against the world” track with cataclysmic proportions. “Jilted Lovers and Broken Hearts” is the heartbreak that drives the darker moments of the record — complete with classic gambling metaphors that, somehow, manage to not be too cliché — packaged as a sleek rock pop single that is sure to make some waves. And “On The Floor,” what should have been the album closer, takes you quietly to the end of a crazy night in Vegas, gospel choir in hand. All that is left is you counting your “fabulous” sins.

“Flamingo” is available now from Island Records and digitally through Amazon.com or iTunes.

Catch the music video for "Crossfire" featuring Oscar®-winner Charlize Theron below: