

Car Seat Headrest Biography

Car Seat Headrest is the project of Seattle artist Will Toledo. With a vision that is both sweeping in scope and intimately personal, Car Seat Headrest embodies the DIY ethos at its best. The songs are often long and complex, but they are anchored in irresistible melodies and a piercing emotional directness. Dispersed across the globe, Car Seat Headrest has an intensely dedicated fanbase of several thousand internet denizens who deeply connect with Will's startlingly honest and unfiltered approach to writing and performing.

While many of his home-recording contemporaries prioritize aesthetics over meaning, Will's lyrics are central to his artistic mindset. His songwriting is sharp, literary, and culturally omnivorous as it touches upon youth and death, love and depression, drunken parties and 2nd century theologians. Ever surprising, his imagery ranges from playful to sexually frank to sorrowful, often within the same song.

Car Seat Headrest began in 2010 in Will's hometown of Leesburg, Virginia. Needing a place of solitude (and soundproofing) where he could record his often frantic vocals undisturbed, a 17-year-old Will set up shop in the family car (hence the name). From this humble origin, he has since built up an 11-album catalogue of staggering depth, gaining a devoted following through Bandcamp, where he has logged over 25,000 downloads - all without the muscle of a record label, publicist, booking agent, or manager.

Car Seat Headrest went through several live lineups while Will attended The College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, VA. The albums remained solo affairs, with occasional collaborators. After Will moved to Seattle in 2014, he assembled a West Coast lineup with bassist Ethan Ives and drummer Andrew Katz. *Teens of Style* is the first Car Seat Headrest album recorded with a full band, and the sound is vibrant and powerful, with a wide dynamic range.

On *Teens of Style*, Will has taken material from the first three years of the band's existence and reworked it to generate some of the most realized arrangements to date. Drawing material from 3 (2010), *My Back Is Killing Me Baby* (2011), and *Monomania* (2012), *Teens of Style* provides a concise overview of the band's many sonic and emotional facets, with the songs ranging from electronic psychedelia to punky anthems and melancholic acoustic numbers.

At William & Mary, Will majored in English and minored in religious studies, and references to classic novels, art history, and various global faiths abound. The longest track on *Teens of Style*, "Times to Die," is just under seven minutes, applying breakbeat cut-ups and "Low Rider" horns to a groove-driven neo-psych jam with lyrics about Judaism, Hinduism, and the record business. Similarly, "Maud Gone" is a wistful 60s-inspired pop number paying homage to Yeats's unrequited love, while the intricate party track "Los Borrachos" borrows its title from the Diego Velasquez painting.

The quiet-loud-quiet dynamics of "Something Soon" highlight one of the album's best melodies: In the keyboard-driven verses, Will ponders mental illness and bad sitcoms before bursting into a soaring, cathartic chorus: "Heavy boots on my throat, I need something soon/I can't talk to my folks, I

need something soon." It's a paean to that feeling of purgatory, somewhere between panic and boredom.

While many of the songs are in the 5-7 minute range, the shorter tracks are equally compelling, the briefest being the ([sic]-inducing) "psst, teenagers, take off your clo." One of the earliest-written songs on the album, "psst, teenagers" is a one-minute rush of melody and energy that would make Robert Pollard proud. The track's more reflective counterpart, "Bad Role Models, Old Idols Exhumed (psst teenagers, put your clothes back o)," serves as a poignant late-album interlude that climaxes in a jazz funeral fanfare.

Car Seat Headrest's conceptual ambition and frequently stunning songwriting has been apparent since its early days of laptop recording, the scale of Will's vision going far beyond the constricting "lo-fi" term. Now on its Matador Records debut, *Teens of Style*, we witness the group presenting ideas with more clarity and refinement than ever, delivering an enthralling collection of songs destined for wide acclaim.