

Black Joe Lewis & The Honeybears

On their new album *Backlash* (out February 10), Black Joe Lewis & the Honeybears reclaim their original moniker and return to their much-celebrated take on classic soul and punked-up R&B. As Lewis explains, the band's fourth full-length confronts the ugly reality of "dealing with the backlash from the things you've done in the past," delivering a host of songs rooted in regret but steeped in a defiant spirit. Bombastic but nuanced, *Backlash* ultimately unfolds as an album both joyfully chaotic and intensely cathartic.

Recorded at Big Orange studios in the band's hometown of Austin, TX, *Backlash* finds Black Joe Lewis joining forces with Grammy Award-winning producer Stuart Sikes (The White Stripes, Cat Power, Modest Mouse) and revisiting his most deep-seated influences. "I wanted to go for more of a soul/blues/rock-and-roll sound compared to the last one—the kind of stuff I was doing back in the day, but with the songwriting a little more evolved," Lewis says. The band's most stylistically adventurous work so far, *Backlash* expands their sound by bringing gritty guitar tones and Stax-styled horn sections to intricate, danceable arrangements inspired by the likes of Nile Rodgers.

Kaleidoscopic in mood and unrestrained in emotion, *Backlash* channels its restless energy into tracks like the infinitely catchy and groove-drenched "Sexual Tension," the fed-up and fired-up "PTP," and the fantastically unhinged "Freakin' Out." On "Lips of a Loser," meanwhile, Black Joe Lewis lays down a beautifully devastating breakup ballad powered by sprawling guitar lines and cinematic swells of strings. "'Lips of a Loser' is my Isaac Hayes impersonation," notes Lewis of his smoldering vocal performance on the album's stunning centerpiece.

Elsewhere on *Backlash*, Black Joe Lewis addresses unrest on a broader scale: "Global" infuses howling vocals and heavy guitar riffs into a rowdy meditation on environmental destruction, while the chant-driven "Nature's Natural" emerges as the album's most striking and mournful moment. "That one's about black-on-black crime, and also about police killing black dudes all the time," says Lewis of the latter, pointing out that the song was written in the aftermath of Ferguson.

A Texas native, Lewis discovered his love for the blues soon after learning to play guitar his late teens. "I grew up on hip-hop and whatever my dad was listening to—Springsteen and Curtis Mayfield and Donny Hathaway—but once I picked up the guitar I started getting into the deep cuts," Lewis recalls. Naming Lightnin' Hopkins and Iggy Pop among his main inspirations, he formed Black Joe Lewis & the Honeybears in 2007 and released his major label debut *Tell 'Em What Your Name Is!* (Lost Highway/Universal) the following year.

Known for their can't-miss, full-throttle live show, Black Joe Lewis & the Honeybears are now gearing up for a 2017 North American headline tour, the band's first comprehensive run since 2013.