

The Vegabonds

Young & Unafraid

The Vegabonds may be the best damn rock 'n' roll band that you've never heard of – yet.

Formed in 2009 by a group of college-aged buddies from Auburn, Alabama, The Vegabonds hit the road a decade-and-a-half ago and haven't let a foot off the proverbial gas since. Headlining clubs and playing opening tour slots behind a handful of independent albums, the band became an under-the-radar gem in America's loud and rowdy Southern rock scene – known for playing a can't-miss live show, no matter if its a 3 p.m. festival set in the gooeey-hot Georgia sun or a midnight romp inside a bar soaked in cheap beer and neon lights.

But under-the-radar can't last forever. And after the world starts spinning their ambitious new album *Young & Unafraid*, it'll be hard to keep The Vegabonds a secret much longer.

"It all goes back to the music," frontman and songwriter Daniel Allen said about the band's 15-year career in the country-rock scene. "If we didn't believe in it, we wouldn't keep doing it. Our goal is to make people catch the vibe that we feel the first time we play a new song in the practice room."



photo credit: Garrett Cardoso

Long before *Young & Unafraid*, The Vegabonds cut its teeth in Alabama college bars, playing four-hour shows in Tuscaloosa and other nearby towns between day-job shifts at stores like Office Depot, where Allen once worked. The group caught its first break in 2012 when a European touring company booked an international run that took the group "from Switzerland down to Spain and everything in-between," Allen said. It was The Vegabonds' first touring experience outside a circuit of familiar bars close to home.

Now, the group – featuring Allen, Richard Forehand on guitar, Paul

Bruens on bass, Beau Cooper on keyboards and Bryan Harris on drums – has logged about 500,000 miles on the road, opening for Blackberry Smoke, Lynyrd Skynyrd and Gregg Allman, among others. Despite getting a first taste for touring while overseas, Allen said the band's most comfortable trekking through the south, where stops often include Atlanta, Charlotte and Nashville, the band's adopted home since relocating in 2012.

And this summer, they'll take *Young & Unafraid* on the road. The album debuts independently on June 20, marking the culmination of songs that the

group began workshopping about five years ago. Channeling the heartland rock spirit of Bruce Springsteen, the simple-worded charm of Tom Petty, the earnestness of Kings of Leon – Allen’s favorite band – and rambunctious picking inspired in-part by the Allman Brothers Band, *Young & Unafraid* tells a coming-of-age journey that tackles big dreams, broken hearts and an untamed search for happiness.

Allen stumbled into the concept for *Young & Unafraid*. “I’ve always wanted to write a record with a good character arc,” Allen said. “These songs were written over a 5-year period without a concept in mind, but when we put the tracklisting together a story of nostalgia, heartbreak, and redemption naturally formed.”

The album opens with “Where Do You Have To Be Tomorrow,” a throwback rock number that sounds perfect for a breezy summer day fueled by wanderlust and the nostalgia of when youthful possibilities seemed endless. From there, the band takes listeners to “Till The Hurt Don’t Hurt” – a country-rocker about tough choices that come on the road to dream-chasin’ – and into “Never Cross My Mind,” a slow-burning piano ballad drenched in heartache from a relationship that ended too soon.

Standout title track “Young & Unafraid” – a slice of heartland rock that spins a melancholy story behind anthemic power chords – gives the story a spin, Allen said.

“It’s this love story and you find out that the [character] didn’t



Cooper credited on a pair of songs.

The protagonist’s tale continues on “Bet The Farm,” a rowdy, head-bobbin’ Southern rocker about going all-in on a dream that kicks off with a four-count before the band rolls in with a loud, heavy lead riff. *Young & Unafraid* also takes listeners down a relaxing path with “Not Today,” an R&B-inspired number that adds a layer of solace to the story.

“It’s a snapshot of a perfect day,” Allen said. “You find out the [character] now has a wife and kids. He’s learning to slow down and live in the moment. Enjoy the little things in life.”

On the anthemic song “Leave The Light On,” the story leads listeners back to the things that matter most in life, like hard-earned time spent with family and friends. By the closing song,

“Lonely,” the character finds his redemption – declaring victory over life’s unexpected twists and turns.

The Vegabonds take *Young & Unafraid* on the road this summer, with dates booked in Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Colorado and South Carolina, where the new album gets a two-night release party at coastal rock club The Windjammer. And this summer may be the best time to catch ‘em on the road. After all, a band with a good story to tell can’t stay under-the-radar forever.

just break up with the person,” he said. “His first love died. It’s more final than a breakup because you’ll never get that back. It’s about dealing with that trauma and learning to live on with it.”

The band cut most of the album with longtime producer Tom Tapley at West End Sounds in Atlanta, Georgia (Allen tracked vocals at The Loft in Franklin, Tennessee). Allen co-wrote nine of the 10 album cuts, with the full band credited on two tracks (“Shortcut” and “Lonely”) and

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