Alabama Shakes - Boys & Girls (2012)



1.Hold On 03:46 2.I Found You 02:59 3.Hang Loose 02:24 4.Rise To The Sun 03:08 5.You Ain't Alone 04:44 6.Goin' To The Party 01:45 7.Heartbreaker 03:47 8.Boys & Girls 03:25 9.Be Mine 04:14 10.I Ain't The Same 02:55 11.On Your Way 03:05 Zac Cockrell – bass, backing vocals, guitar Heath Fogg – guitar, backing vocals, percussion Brittany Howard – lead vocals, guitar, piano, percussion Steve Johnson – drums, percussion, backing vocals + Paul Horton – Farfisa and Rhodes (4), piano and organ (5) Micah Hulscher – piano and organ (2,3) Mitch Jones – organ (7) Ben Tanner – piano and organ (9)

The Alabama Shakes' first album, "Boys & Girls," is an electric jolt that anyone who loves blues-based rock music should track down immediately. Consisting of three men and one young explosion named Brittany Howard on vocals and guitar, the group, which formed in northern Alabama in 2009, offers stripped down truth, minus any affectation, histrionics or irony.

Rather, the Shakes make rock & soul music as if the last 40 years of popular sounds had never happened; you won't hear a single hip-hop rhythm, disco beat, tripped out guitar effect or dubstep bass drop on "Boys & Girls." Songs instead suggest that sweet period from 1966 to 1974 when electric blues and rock music were intermingling: the Rolling Stones circa "Let It Bleed," Janis Joplin at her 1968 peak and Otis Redding and the classic Stax Records house band on "Heartbreaker." You can even hear a hint of Bob Marley-esque roots reggae guitar on the opening song, "Rise to the Sun."

To mention the group alongside such luminaries is dangerous, but one listen to the seminal riff on "Hang Loose" should silence any doubters: You'll wonder how the world has never produced this eternal lick until now. Or, actually, Howard's huge gospel-inspired voice will shut you up whether you like it or not. The same could be said for half a dozen other riffs, choruses and joyous refrains on "Boys & Girls," a record that grows with each listen. ---

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