

SPOTLIGHT



Shane McCauley

SKATERS

After paying dues separately, the punkers find overnight success together

BAND BIOS ARE NOTORIOUSLY FILLED with bunk, but Michael Ian Cummings' story checks out. Ask the singer and guitarist where in New York City he and his fellow Skaters tended bar, and he'll list a string of watering holes where young rockers actually congregate, swill Pabst, and tell stories that might inspire an album of crackling indie-punk jams, as the group's press release says.

While Cummings, drummer Noah Rubin and guitarist Joshua Hubbard know the NYC terrain—naming their debut LP *Manhattan*—they're not the Lower East Side natives their music suggests. Cummings comes from Boston, and Rubin arrives via L.A. Meanwhile Hubbard hails from London, and bassist Dan Burke is also a Beantown native.

Upon forming Skaters in 2012, the four friends decided to meet on neutral ground and "start a late-'70s-influenced roots New York post-punk band," as Cummings

says. And it didn't take long for Skaters to hone their sound: Ramones crunch meets grimy-sexy Strokes swagger and a Clash-like knack for tastefully done reggae. But as Cummings says, it wasn't just a matter of borrowing from their heroes. "It also helps to be in the city," he says. "It's got its own pace, its own life—and if you listen, you'll tap into that."

After some live shows and a self-released EP, Skaters were off like runaway subway cars. They quickly signed with Warner Bros. and tapped John Hill—an eclectic producer whose credits include Devo, Santigold and Snoop Lion—to helm *Manhattan*. "We had a Skype meeting with John when we were trying to pick a producer, and he listed a bunch of influences that were like ours," Cummings says, "Pixies, Hüsker Dü and the Clash. We were like, 'All right, yeah.'"

Weeks before *Manhattan* dropped, Skaters announced a series of U.K. tour dates as well as a June appearance at New York's Governors Ball festival, where headliners included Jack White, Vampire Weekend, and the recently reunited OutKast.

If it seems like *Too Much Too Soon*—to borrow an album title from another influence, the New York Dolls—Cummings says the band isn't lacking the kind of camaraderie that comes with years of thankless slogging. "We've already gotten that because we've all been in other bands for 10 years, scrapping along, sleeping on floors and touring crappy clubs and not having any money," he says. "The gang was mentality in full force when we started this band. That's why it was successful quickly. It wasn't because we wanted to be warriors. We wanted to produce something that was meaningful."

—Kenneth Partridge

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