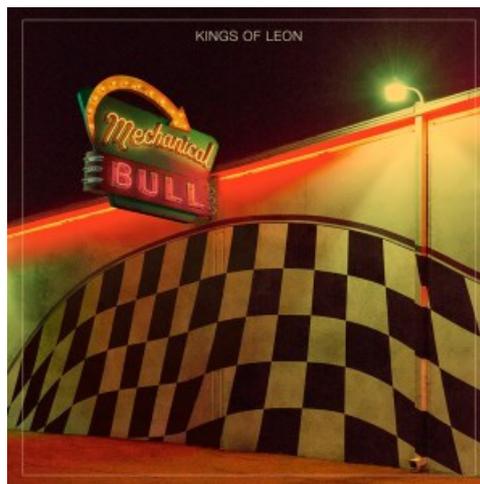


Album Review: Kings of Leon – Mechanical Bull

Blunt and repetitive – [Katrina Northern](#) reviews Kings of Leon’s newest studio offering

Tuesday 1 October 2013



Label: RCA

Released: 23/09/13

Mechanical Bull, Kings of Leon’s sixth studio album, is an album of recovery, of getting back on track after the storm. It’s far from perfect but is perhaps a necessary phase in their journey after the events following *Come Around Sundown* (2010), when their tour had to be cancelled due to alcohol problems, pigeon droppings and general in-band tensions. Following a three year hiatus, Caleb claims he has learnt to control his drinking and three of the band are now married with families. Their days of reckless hedonism are behind them. Maybe.

The quick momentum of opener ‘Supersoaker’ is a positive start to the album. With its frantic guitar, regular changes in pace and the grizzly tones of Caleb Followill, at their best, it’s one of their most infectious Southern rock tracks. It slips into the languorous guitar tones of ‘Rock City’ with softly wailing string bends and blunted distortion. Lyrically, ‘Rock City’ evokes Caleb’s own struggles (“I’ve been several miles and plenty more / and I found myself face-first on the floor / searching for something”).

‘Beautiful War’ is a steady rock ballad, which builds slowly from a sparse beginning but doesn’t exactly arrive anywhere. One of the band’s weaknesses is their comfort in repetition, playing it safe rather than searching for the right lyrics. This is partly a by-product of Caleb’s penchant from improvising verses as he goes, which can result in cathartic, repressed honesty or moderately vacuous repetition. Too often it’s the latter. ‘Wait For Me’ feels more personal. As Caleb achingly sings “gonna open my heart / right at the scars... wait for me, wait for me / it’s all better now”, it’s hard to see it as anything other than a letter of reassurance to his band-mates.

There are some weaker tracks, the retro- funky ‘Family Tree’ gets tiresome quickly and sounds ripe for sitcom theme-tune, while ‘Temple’ is the kind of song that might thrive in a buzzing arena but doesn’t

have much to say and is frustratingly forgettable.

The band want this to be their 'Comeback Story'; it may be the beginning of it, but there is still a long way to go.



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