

## **Ages and Ages Bio for *Something To Ruin***

How do you measure the success of a band whose songs have been appropriated by the likes of President Obama, the Westboro Baptist Church, and a high school choir in Burkina Faso? Certainly not by conventional standards. Perhaps Ages and Ages can find some satisfaction in the way their songs seem to feel like they are ours songs for the taking, permission and copyrights be damned. Three albums in, the band has not lost its underdog status, which seems appropriate considering their records center around themes of isolation and obscurity, suspicion of the popular, rejection of the well-paved path. If their debut album *Alright You Restless* ambitiously declared independence from the cynicism and self-consciousness plaguing a generation, inviting the disillusioned to join them in a “fortress/away from the madness,” and the follow-up *Divisionary* contemplated the inevitability of conflict and loss seeping into our new utopia, ***Something to Ruin*** confronts the debris of our collective failure and concludes that we’re better off letting go and starting over once again. There are still plenty of the infectious and joyful melodies that Ages is known for, but in *Something to Ruin*, with cacophonous artificial sounds and percussion nearing a breaking point disrupting the melodic flow, the stakes are higher: annihilation--physical, spiritual, cultural--must be confronted.

Nearly all of Ages’ members hail from the Pacific Northwest, and in part, *Something to Ruin* explores what it’s like to watch your hometown implode in a frenzy of real estate development and lifestyle branding. Songs like *Kick Me Out* and *I’m Moving* describe the “manufactured wilderness” that former bohemian sanctuaries like Portland have become, natural history museums of sorts where tourists and newcomers arrive to “fetishize some golden age that never was.” The track *My Cold Reflection*, twinning thematically with the first album’s first single *No Nostalgia*, invites us to once again join the disenfranchised, this time “among the ruins.” Given the state of things, Perry seems to wonder if maybe it’s time to wipe the slate clean and start over. “I’m ready to meet you,” he says to the rumbling threat of tectonic cataclysm below the Pacific in *Cascadia Waving Back*. But the threat he acknowledges is not only that of a massive earthquake leveling the Northwest, but the cultural and spiritual disasters of our times as well.

If there is an anthem on *Something to Ruin* comparable to *No Nostalgia* and *Divisionary (Do the Right Thing)*, it resides in *As It Is*, the album’s final track, which contains those trademark exultant vocals Ages has become known for. And, just as with those previous anthems, the song is also a declaration, this time of acceptance rather than action in response to pending

oblivion, assuring us that there is “peace in anonymity.”

*Something to Ruin* was recorded at Ice Cream Party, **Isaac Brock**'s studio, and Brock offers supporting vocals on the record, his unmistakable marbled baritone adding another layer to the harmonies in “So Hazy.” Ghost traces of Modest Mouse can be heard in the discordant guitar and mechanical noise that either interrupts or ends songs like *Enemies* and *So Hazy*. Where the past two albums were fairly organic and documentarian, composers Rob Oberdorfer and Perry embrace synthetic sounds and artificial textures on *Something to Ruin*, enhancing the tension between the humanizing and dehumanizing forces that characterize the album. The record is more groove-driven and laid back compared to their earlier work, with electronic and hip-hop influences pushed to the surface. The richly textured vocals, thanks to Sarah Riddle, Annie Bethancourt and Oberdorfer, are layered to mirror thematic questions on the record around the power of the individual and the need for community.