

## Tigers Blood by Waxahatchee

Waxahatchee is akin to everyone's favorite cool indie boy band. The musicians who upload music videos that look like they were filmed on an iPhone 6. The ones who sport shaggy haircuts and untied Converse like it's a fashion statement. Maybe there's a silver ring or two adorning the lead singer's hand as they grip the microphone at a shitty dive bar in your hometown. You know the type. The only thing Waxahatchee is lacking in this comparison is the pretentious fake introspective ego that comes with many of these college-wannabe stars. Instead, the band, which formed in 2010, artfully mixes Folk, Rock, and Country in a way that makes even hardcore Pop fans want to tune in.

While listening to Waxahatchee these fans can't help but picture singer-songwriter Katie Crutchfield sitting by a bonfire in her hometown of Birmingham, Alabama, guitar in hand, long hair draped over her shoulders, tattoos on display. At the same time, you may see flashes of her in a freeingly whimsical Florence Welch style dress, scarf tied to a microphone stand in the likeness of Stevie Nicks, prancing barefoot across a stage, warm-toned lights creating a halo from behind. Or maybe you feel like you're watching her sit on a stool in a smokey tryhard dive bar, that's equal parts grunge and perfectly hip, setting down her glass and picking up a harmonica. In the band's sixth studio album, *Tigers Blood*, the sound is so versatile that all of these images seem equally plausible. The audience emerged into every scene with each listen, each time transported into a world completely of Crutchfield's design.

Regardless of the imagined scenario, Waxahatchee knows exactly how to lure in a listener with tracks that are casual enough to nod your head and tap your foot to; but don't be fooled by this false sense of security. There is nothing comforting about Crutchfield's storytelling. The facade of well-known safety quickly deteriorates when Crutchfield breaks open your ribcage and wraps

her unmanicured hands around your beating heart, causing her masterful lyricism to crush you by the realization that you can't outrun past versions of yourself and how they impact who you are becoming. *Tigers Blood* is for when you're established in womanhood but understand that some of the raw, ill-fated, all-encompassing, chaotic aspects of girlhood are something you cannot outrun. Crutchfield acts as a silent observer of your life, making an album that is uniquely personal and university-applicable. The musical poetry pushes the idea that no matter what track shoes you buy or how often you train you can never escape the fact that all versions of you are forever connected.

The album starts with a gut-punch as Crutchfield opens with the song "3 Sisters," singing "I pick you up inside a hopeless prayer/I see you beholden to nothing;" waiting for no one to be prepared to hear the hauntingly nonlinear truths she has to share about love, sex, messy connection, and growing up while staying young. From there Crutchfield does an emotional 180 quicker than one can process. "3 Sisters," a song about complicated family ties, gives way to "Evil Spawn" with even the names emphasizing their difference. It has more of a rock feel than its predecessor, with a heavier focus on bass and drums acting as the steady heartbeat of the song matching its darker themes. "Evil Spawn" explores inner turmoil and guilt with lines such as "What you thought was enough/now seems insane" and "Your principles ripen into/a fragile tomb, watch it split in two" making one feel as if their values and desires are laid out on an examiners table, Crutchfield's careful fingers picking them apart. The arrangement of the songs continues to feel purposefully disorganized as if to stress the erratic movement of life and its unpredictability. But it isn't until track four that you get to the shining star of the album, "Right Back to it." The song, featuring MJ Lenderman who powerfully and expertly harmonizes with Crutchfield, makes your soul ache with the all too familiar emotion of the confusion found in

comfortability. “Right Back to it” is the theme song of hometown hookups. The relationships where maybe love isn’t enough but at least for those fleeting moments in your childhood bedroom you get to belong to one another. Star-crossed teenage lovers in their mid-twenties. Logic is swept away in the smooth motion of a kiss between two pairs of lips that have known each other for a long time, because as Crutchfield and Lenderman sing hauntingly “I’ve been yours for so long/we come right back to it.”

You can almost feel the chilling breath of the album as it whispers into your ear, urging you to go for a ride with the windows down. Dance barefoot in a dress that the wind gives a rhythm to. Make a decision that will make a sixteen-year-old you smirk and thirty-year-old you shudder. Fuck them. Regret it or don’t. But fuck them. Crutchfield’s music isn’t meant to provide advice, but it will inspire you to be unabashedly human. She is a songbird, flying and free, migrating when her environment no longer sustains her. The music reminds us of the complexities of the human condition; which has been a keystone of Waxahatchee since its beginning as Crutchfield left Alabama yet named her band after a creek in her hometown. A juxtaposition of leaving something behind and forever carrying it with you; in an album that’s full of them, such as exploring loneliness and relationships, there needs to be an ending that fuses the two, and to no surprise, Waxahatchee did not disappoint. The final song, and the album’s namesake, “Tigers Blood,” explores these complexities. Like all parts of the album the song makes you think with lyrics like “And I held it like a penny I found/It might bring me something, it might weigh me down.” Going from the complimentary blend of band members singing, “Tigers Blood” transforms into a chorus of voices, reminiscent of worshipers harmonizing in a church whose foundation is only made sturdy through the faith of the singers. It is the sound of strangers who

were always supposed to meet. Of those who are always connected regardless of their parting.  
Starting with isolation the album ends in a magnificent yet complicated togetherness.