

the Latebirds

RADIO INSOMNIA

Finnish rockers The Latebirds are back with a new album. RADIO INSOMNIA continues where the critically acclaimed Fortune Cookies left off – from stadium rockers to country twang, from catchy power pop to leftfield punk, from loud guitars to piano ballads – The Latebirds' music stands for dynamic presentation and 110% deliverance.

Most of the new album's twelve tracks were initially born in the USA. The Latebirds singer/guitarist/songsmith **Markus Nordenstreng** has spent a lot of time in Los Angeles during the last couple of years, enjoying the California sun while the rest of the band members have been forced to cope with sub-zero temperatures of their hometown in Helsinki, Finland. Occasionally, however, Markus would be joined in America by the rest of the band – drummer **Janne Haavisto**, bass player **Mikko Mäkelä**, organ player **Matti Pitsinki** and guitarist **Jussi Jaakonaho** – to play dates at SXSW, CMJ, Toronto's International Film Festival, as well as tours in California and on the East Coast.

After one such tour, The Latebirds members found themselves recording new tracks in a studio just outside of Woodstock, NY. Seven new tracks were cut in less than five days, with producers **Ken Coomer** (Wilco) and **Charlie Brocco** (Fleetwood Mac, Jeff Lynne, George Harrison) sitting behind the control room's old Neve console. The rest of the songs were recorded in various studios back home in Finland with the band's old friend, producer **Lasse Kurki** (Lemonator) turning the knobs. The album was eventually mixed in Nashville by Charlie Brocco, and mastered in NYC by **Scott Hull**.

The Latebirds frequent travels around the new continent provided ideas for new songs as well as firm friendships their peers. So, it's no big surprise that Radio Insomnia is filled with these co-conspirators: **Benmont Tench** (Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers), **Wayne Kramer** (MC5), **Ken Stringfellow** (Posies, REM), **Pat Sansone** and **John Stirratt** (Wilco, Autumn Defense).

Markus explains: "We all grew up listening to American music – from Johnny Cash to Elvis and Chuck Berry, from Bob Dylan and The Band to The Byrds and Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, from Stax soul to Big Star, Motown to MC5, from the Ramones to the Replacements, REM and so on. You can't really escape American culture, even when growing up in a place as remote as Finland. It can be a drag to meet your heroes sometimes, but when you get to work with the very people you literally grew up listening to, it's a big deal. Even after you've turned 27! And it certainly makes you wanna give it your best."

Radio Insomnia begins with **SET FREE THE RADIO** – a classic 70s stadium rock anthem with hints of the early Attractions sound. It's quite fitting that none other than Wayne Kramer introduces the band in the beginning of the song, and towards the end you can hear Little Steven's voice announcing: "you are listening to the coolest station in town, baby!"

The first single from the album, **DREAM DREAM**, was inspired by Rumours era Fleetwood Mac and a book written by Anthony De Mello.

GOT A MESSAGE, on the other hand, utilizes Nokia ring tones, which is quite fitting since there are still more cell phones per capita in Finland than anywhere else in the world.

LOST may remind you of 70s Stones records until the band launches its hippie sounding bridge section which has a strong Beach Boys flavour. Matti Pitsinki plays his 60s Farfisa organ.

BEAT THE TIME was written shortly after Elliott Smith died, and his influence is evident, as well as the Beatles and the Band. Ken Stringfellow sang backup and Markus played a very out-of-tune Mellotron.

FALLING BY THE WAYSIDE could've been on Paul Westerberg's last album, had he written it himself. The lead vocal was cut live.

WILL TO FALL deals with longing and distance – two themes that you'll run into more often than not on this record. Benmont Tench is responsible for the Chamberlin strings – the same lovely guy played the same lovely keyboard on Roy Orbison's She's A Mystery To Me.

BLUE HORSES is another troubled love song written by the Latebirds troubled vocalist. A great guitar solo by Jussi Jaakonaho, Finland's answer to Neil Young.

FILL ME IN is a more tender love song that was inspired by Woody Guthrie while See You Tonight was written in the midst of a messy triangle drama.

INSOMNIA captures the Latebirds rhythm section, Janne and Mikko in top form. It recalls old Sticky Fingers era Stones, with hints of Captain Beefheart in the background. Notice the beautiful harmonies by Wilco's John Stirratt and Pat Sansone.

Radio Insomnia ends with a haunting ballad about Johnny Cash and his life – **WITHOUT JUNE**. When Charlie Brocco played the track to Cash's son **John Carter Cash**, he was moved to tears.

"Making this album was like living in a Paul Auster novel at times," laughs Markus. "You would find yourself in a strange studio in a strange town in a strange land, while recording strange songs, with strange guys watching behind your back. Yet you would feel totally at ease with all this strangeness around you, and then create something that could never be created again. And when you've listened to the whole record from start to finish, all the little details and twists in the story start hopefully making sense, including its title Radio Insomnia."

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