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THE NEW TRUST

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Depending on which part of its story you choose to focus on, The New Trust is either extremely straightforward or tantalizingly complex. In one corner, the co-ed band from Santa Rosa—located about 55 miles north of San Francisco—plays unpretentious, fired-up indie-rock songs that bring to mind indie’s mid-’90s heyday, are catchy as all get-out, and rarely reach the three-minute mark. In the other is a European tour the band booked only a year after it formed, lyrics that quote Jermaine Stewart’s “We Don’t Have To Take Our Clothes Off” while dissing religion and championing a DIY lifestyle, and a guitarist who originally thought her six-string would be used to sing her future kids to sleep.

“My goal was someday I would at least be good enough to play ‘Puff The Magic Dragon’ to our children,” says Sara Sanger, who happens to be the wife of singer-bassist Josh Staples, who also handles The Velvet Teen’s low end. To some, their married-and-in-a-band arrangement is another oddity, but it’s hard to get anyone in the band to see it that way—in fact, Sanger would probably still be completely focused on her photography if it wasn’t for Staples’ encouragement. “Josh was so serious, and such an optimist—he doesn’t do anything unless he knows that it’s going to happen. I didn’t realize that for a long time. I just thought, ‘Oh, this is just something he’s doing for his wife to make me feel better.’”

Instead, Sanger is part of the band’s 10-year plan, which began back in 2003 along with drummer Julia Lancer and guitarist Michael Richardson. Simply put, Staples made a promise to himself and his bandmates that they were in it for the long haul, and even though they recently amicably parted ways with Richardson—replaced by Polar Bears’ Matthew Izen—all signs on The New Trust’s first full-length, *Dark Is The Path Which Lies Before Us*, point to the group having the creative energy to make it to the next decade and beyond.

“The ‘dark is the path’ thing is about the fact that we know we’re going to be struggling,” says Sanger. “Yes, Josh wrote a song about zombies, and there’s an ominousness to the record, but we have the perspective that even when you work hard as an artist and you work hard as a musician, there’s still so much work ahead of you. Making a record and making a song, it doesn’t make your life any easier.”

Which brings us to one of the album’s catchiest songs, “When The Dead Start Rising,” which contains lines like “When the dead start rising / we’ll need all the friends that we can get.” Staples is fine with different interpretations—for instance, Sanger took the lyrics literally when she shot the album’s artwork, which features machete-wielding band members with their friends in a haunted mansion—but a point that shouldn’t be missed is the band’s acknowledgment that when you’re working on the ground level, it’s important to keep your friends as close as your enemies.

Dark Is The Path Which Lies Before Us—recorded near the band’s hometown in Rohnert Park with Dan Kelly—finds the band in confidently fine form, bashing out quick slices of goth-tinged, punk-infused rock, with a dash of the dramatic supplied by Staples’ Craig Wedren-esque (Shudder To Think) vocals. The songs may be a smidge longer than they were on the band’s debut EP, *We Are Fast-Moving Motherfuckers. We Are Women And Men Of Action.*, but with 13 songs clocking in under 38 minutes, *The New Trust* is still cutting the fat.

“Our band started in the time when Josh was finishing up writing and recording *Elysium*,” explains Sanger, referring to *The Velvet Teen*’s ambitious second album, which started out as an EP and ended up with a track that was nearly 13 minutes long. “Short songs basically saved his life.”

“On that first *Minor Threat* record, those songs are like a minute long, and that’s such a great, powerful record,” says Staples. “Every song has a cool part that doesn’t happen again—if I want to hear that part again, I have to back the song up or just wait for it to come around again. That’s kind of what I think about when I’m putting a song together.” It all seems so straightforward, right? Sure, but *The New Trust* can’t completely avoid life’s complexities, whether that means scheduling tours around *The Velvet Teen*’s commitments or planning practice around day jobs. All four members recently moved into the same house, which should make things easier for the band. Or not.

“The dynamic, personality-wise, is like mom and dad and two kids,” says Sanger with a laugh. “They’re younger than us—Matthew is the weird computer-nerd kid who’s vegan and straight-edge, and we don’t have a clue what the hell he does with his time. He and Julia are both very different people, but they’re the same age and know each other so well. They’re great about ignoring us—when mom and dad are fighting.”
