



/// BIO THEE SACRED SOULS

“For Thee Sacred Souls, the first time is often the charm. The band’s first club dates led to a record deal with the revered Daptone label; their first singles racked up more than ten million streams in a year and garnered attention from *Billboard*, *Rolling Stone*, and *KCRW*; and their first fans included the likes of Gary Clark Jr., The Black Pumas, Princess Nokia, and Timbaland. Now, the breakout San Diego trio is ready to deliver yet another landmark first with the release of their highly anticipated, self- titled debut.

“Every step of the way has just been so organic,” says drummer Alex Garcia. “Things just seem to happen naturally when the three of us get together.”

Indeed, there’s something inevitable about the sound of *Thee Sacred Souls*, as if these ageless songs of love and loss have somehow always existed, as if Garcia and his bandmates—bassist Sal Samano and singer Josh Lane—have been playing together for a lifetime already. Produced by Bosco Mann (aka Daptone co-founder Gabriel Roth), the record is warm and textured, mixing the easygoing grace of sweet ’60s soul with the grit and groove of early ’70s R&B, and the performances are utterly intoxicating, with Lane’s weightless vocals anchored by the rhythm section’s deep pocket and infectious chemistry. Hints of Chicano, Philly, Chicago, Memphis, and even Panama soul turn up in their music, and while it’s tempting to toss around labels like “retro” and “vintage” with a deliberately analog collection like this, there’s also something distinctly modern about the band that defies easy categorization, a rawness and a sincerity that transcends time and place.

“I think we found the best of both worlds with this band,” says Lane. “We get to be innovative and honest and challenge ourselves as artists, but we also get to dig deep and pay homage to the foundational stuff that helped shape us.”

It was that shared love and respect for the foundations of soul that brought the band together in the first place. Launched in 2019, the group began with Garcia and Samano, who bonded over their similar experiences growing up in southern California and a mutual affinity for record collecting. While Samano didn’t pick up the bass until he’d already graduated from high school, Garcia had spent much of his teenage years obsessing over guitar and drums and teaching himself how to record on an old Tascam tape machine, and the pair’s mix of technical know-how and innate curiosity proved to be an ideal match. All they needed was a singer.

“I remember coming across Josh on Instagram,” says Garcia, “and I thought he could be a good fit even though he was doing something a little different. We invited him to come to a rehearsal with us, and he just came up with these great lyrics and melodies right on the spot. We knew he was the guy after one take.”

Joining a group like Thee Sacred Souls wasn’t an obvious move for Lane, though. A Sacramento native, he’d fallen in love with music through the church and studied classical voice in college, where he sang everything from French arias to Italian opera. When he moved to San Diego in 2017, he planned on becoming a solo artist, and his ambitions skewed more toward dreampop and chillwave than the old school soul sounds Garcia and Samano were cooking up.



"I grew up with a lot of the classic references like Al Green and Marvin Gaye and Curtis Mayfield," Lane recalls, "but I always just thought I'd sprinkle little bits of that

into whatever I ended up doing. When I met these guys, though, they introduced me to deep soul and lowrider stuff like Thee Midnites, and that really opened things up."

Performing live as a seven-piece (the core trio plus guitar, keys, and two backup vocalists), the band generated a local buzz almost immediately, which put them on Mann's radar and led them into his Riverside, CA, studio. At the time, Mann was planning to launch a new Daptone imprint named Penrose Records, and Thee Sacred Souls were an obvious fit for the label's inaugural release.

"They had a sound that caught my ear right away," says Mann. "The combination of Sal and Alex's taste and touch in the rhythm section with Josh's masterful sense of voice and melody was just so fresh. I knew they could make an album that would blow some minds."

The band more than delivers on that promise with *Thee Sacred Souls*, which opens with the mesmerizing lead single "Can I Call You Rose?" With lyrics penned on the spot by Lane during his first rehearsal with the group, the track is a silky slice of pure romance and an ideal entry point into the group's timeless sound. Like much of the album, it's a bittersweet meditation on matters of the heart and the primacy of love, one fueled by lush horns, velvety vocals, and an impossibly smooth rhythm section. The unhurried "Lady Love" tips its cap to the South Side of Chicago as it reckons with forgiveness and second chances, while the doo-wop tinged "It's Overflowing" draws on both classic Chicano soul and Jamaican rocksteady music in its pledges of devotion, and the nakedly sensual "Future Lover" flips the band's lineup on its head as it revels in the highs of infatuation.

"For a lot of songs, Alex writes the instrumental and demos them out at home," says Samano, "but 'Future Lover' actually grew out of an after-practice jam session one day where we all switched instruments. I was on drums, Alex was on guitar, our guitarist was playing bass, and it all just clicked into place as soon as Josh started singing."

The album's vocals—both Lane's beguiling leads and the collection's airy female backups—serve as the glue that often binds these tracks together, imbuing the hypnotic arrangements with an undeniable sense of emotional urgency. The restless "Weak For Your Love" highlights Lane's dazzling falsetto; the charming "Easier Said Than Done" complements his laidback delivery with a wordless counter melody; and the lilting "Trade Of Hearts"—a duet with vocalist Jensine Benitez—even brings Garcia and Samano in for call-and-response lines. But perhaps it's the bittersweet "Sorrow For Tomorrow" that best showcases the breadth of Lane's range as he shifts effortlessly between mellifluous vocal runs and semi-spoken passages all about loss and healing, growth and forgiveness, longing and regret.

"That song is basically permission to cry," says Lane. "It's a reminder that it's okay to be open to pain and not to feel like your emotions are a burden or make you any less of a man."

Ultimately, that's what *Thee Sacred Souls* is all about: not just accepting our emotions, but embracing them as a beautiful and fundamental piece of the human experience. It can be difficult, no doubt about it, but as with everything else they do, Thee Sacred Souls make it look easy.