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*TELL ME I'M PRETTY*Written by **Mike Duffy** on December 17, 2015

Photo credit: Pooneh Ghana

Three albums into working with producer Jay Joyce, Kentucky alternative-rock band Cage the Elephant has built quite the catalog of smash singles and critical and commercial adulation.

But the guys took a big step with their fourth album, *Tell Me I'm Pretty*, enlisting the Black Keys' Dan Auerbach as producer to add a little something different.

Tell Me I'm Pretty is quite a departure from what we've previously heard from Cage the Elephant, however. Consider this latest effort as the time they "turned blue."

A lot of that could be attributed to Auerbach's measured hand. In addition to his typical duties with the Black Keys, Auerbach has produced the likes of the Growlers, Grace Potter and the Nocturnals, Hanni El Khatib and JEFF the Brotherhood. Throughout each of those, Auerbach's fuzzed-out guitars and bluesy sensibilities are clearly recognizable.

Tell Me I'm Pretty carries that sort of vibe, as well, and it fits in well with the Cage sound.

The raucous call-and-response romp of "Mess Around" has that nervy punk feel that peppered previous Cage the Elephant releases such as 2013's *Melophobia* – which earned a Grammy nomination for Best Alternative Rock Album – and 2011's excellent *Thank You Happy Birthday*.

Still, Auerbach's fingerprints can be found in the album's psychedelic undercurrent. One could even imagine the frenetic tambourines of "Mess Around" fitting well on a Kinks record.

The psychedelia continues with album opener "Cry Baby" and "Cold Cold Cold." The first is a mid-tempo jaunt that calls to mind the outer reaches of Tame Impala. The latter boasts an eerie bassline from bassist Daniel Tichenor running through walkie-talkie static that wouldn't feel out of place in a Vietnam war-protest video.

Cage gets things swinging later in *Tell Me I'm Pretty* with "That's Right" and "Punching Bag," both of which feature hip-shaking beats ready to get a party started.

The album saves its darkest moment for last, closing with "Portuguese Knife Fight," where frontman Matt Shultz slinkily sings "I wanna waste my life with you" over a droning and dirty guitar riff.

Tell Me I'm Pretty tells the tale of a band that is comfortable with their previous influences but also unafraid to move in new directions. It's grimy and alluring and exciting all at the same time.

Cage the Elephant has never lacked swagger – just check out one of their raucous, anything-goes live shows. But it's refreshing to see that swagger grow even when heading in uncharted territory.

Watch Cage the Elephant's video for "Mess Around" below and click [here](#) for more information.





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