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ALBUM PICK OF THE MONTH: THE NATIONAL'S TROUBLE WILL FIND ME

Written by [fmicadmin](#) on May 13, 2013



If listening to past albums from the National conjure up the image of a swirling storm of emotional and introspective lyrics and layered orchestral arrangements, then the band's sixth LP *Trouble Will Find Me* (May 21) could be considered a hurricane.

Still, not one that hits the listener upside the head.

No, *Trouble Will Find Me* is less bombastic than 2010's *High Violet*, but it seems richer, deeper, a record that peels back layer after layer with each listen. It is fitting, considering the National has spent many years crafting their signature sound.

Since the Brooklyn-based band originally formed in 1999, the quintet has matured beyond their grad-school indie rock peers. No more does one have to squint when looking at a festival poster to see the National listed, largely in part to their ability to hone what has almost become a genre all to themselves.

Trouble Will Find Me really represents the next step in the National's brooding brand of chamber rock with 13 tracks that deserve to be played in a big room, whether it's to a large crowd or a single person looking out the window on a rainy afternoon.

At first run-through, as with any National offering, the first thing that stands out is frontman Matt Berninger's gravelly growl. Is it possible that Berninger is diving into a lower register than he previously had?

Seductive, plaintive, honest... the singer possesses a unique timbre that makes each line that comes out of his mouth sound like an entry from his own journal.

"Don't make me read your mind / You should know me better than that / It takes me too much time / You should know me better than that," he sings on the opening "I Should Live in Salt," before flipping the blame back on himself with the refrain, "I should live in salt for leaving you."

That track is followed up by the album's first two singles "Demons" and "Don't Swallow the Cap," and there must have been a reason those were the first two choices. Both have a heavy soulfulness to them, even though "Don't Swallow the Cap" boasts a more punchy 4/4 beat that verges on krautrock.

Next comes the deeply-melodic "Fireproof," utilizing a plucky guitar riff that is perfectly balanced by the woeful pull of a bow across the strings of a cello.

The National tempest is gnarled further with "Sea of Love," as Berninger's drone provides a calming presence amid drummer Bryan Devendorf's staccato taps on the snare.

"If I stay here, trouble will find me / If I stay here, I'll never leave / If I stay here, trouble will find me / I believe," Berninger laments, checking the album's self-explanatory title.

One might have noticed that the song titles on *Trouble Will Find Me* aren't necessarily the most upbeat, and that is par for the course for the National. Others include the brow-furrowing "I Need My Girl," "Slipped" and "Humiliation."

But through the morose themes, there is a musical beauty to the darkness that the National is mastering.

For example, "Graceless" is truly a stand out, reminiscent of the way Grammy winners Arcade Fire manage to rein in their sprawling array of sounds to create tight indie anthems. All it takes is a key change to push this one into potential set-closing territory.

And the finale "Hard to Find" is almost dainty, with spare piano plunks matched by faint strums of a distant guitar, giving the album a dreamy fade to black.

With this sixth studio album and 14 years under their belt as a band, it appears that the National only get better with age.



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