

The Killers Inside Me

With their newest
CD, The Killers'

Brandon Flowers

leaves frock-and-roll
behind for no-frills,
straight-up rock.

Live from 60 Thompson,
the Mormon-raised
singer holds forth on
finding new faith
(and musical direction)
in old rock gods.

BY STINSON CARTER





Brandon

Flowers, the 31-year-old lead singer of The Killers, has grown up since his glam-rock days. And so has the sound of his band: the phase of “boyfriends looking like girlfriends” has evolved into a torch bearing of Americana Rock.

So for those of you who think the ‘60s and ‘70s will never be topped musically—or who might’ve been turned off by the American Apparel types who canonized The Killers at the altar of Coachella—it’s time to do some downloading, and give these gentlemen a second listen.

We caught up with Flowers in Liverpool, on tour for the band’s chart-topping summer CD, *Battle Born*. The standout hit, “Miss Atomic Bomb,” has an unmistakable Springsteen sound: substantive lyrics packed tightly into the melody, like The Boss (or even Dylan) on a troubadour rant.

“Springsteen has definitely been added into the pot of influences,” says Flowers. “We started off with a very British sound, and personally, as I got older, I started liking more American Rock—Springsteen, Tom Petty, Bob Seger. And once they’re in there, there’s no going back.”

Their style has changed along with their sound, which means no more guy-liner and pastels. When they started out, Flowers openly concedes that The Killers were trying to be something they weren’t. “We came from no money, and tried to present ourselves as glamorous. But that really wasn’t what we were. Over the years, I’ve found my way,” he says, referencing his more rugged circa-2013 look.

The Killers are still hipster darlings, but on that whole non-movement hipster movement, Flowers is totally Switzerland: “We’ve always distanced ourselves from that,” he says, with an air of slightly barbed diplomacy towards the demographic. Asked how the fans are taking the new sound, the singer responds, “People are more open-minded now, and so bands are taking more chances.”

Taking chances means letting more of the outside-in. And his list of influences has gone even more eclectic with the addition of *Battle Born* to his canon. At this point in his life, if he could perform with anyone living or dead, his dream super group would include Frank Sinatra, George Harrison, “and Jerry Lee Lewis on keys.” He’s listening right now to “A Little Bit of Everything,” quite literally. It’s a song off Dawes’ new album—a band whose sound he passionately brands “classic fucking American music.”

As his band matures, so does a good portion of their audience. “We’re growing up and our band is growing with us, so in that sense it’s also a more mature audience now,” says Flowers. And that audience seems to be fully on board with the idea that Classic American music is what’s cool these days. As for what made his band start playing it, Flowers describes it as a matter of inevitability: “We’re just being true to ourselves...and we’re also getting older.”

That means balancing his tour schedule with his duties as husband and as a father of three boys. “It’s almost impossible to tote three kids

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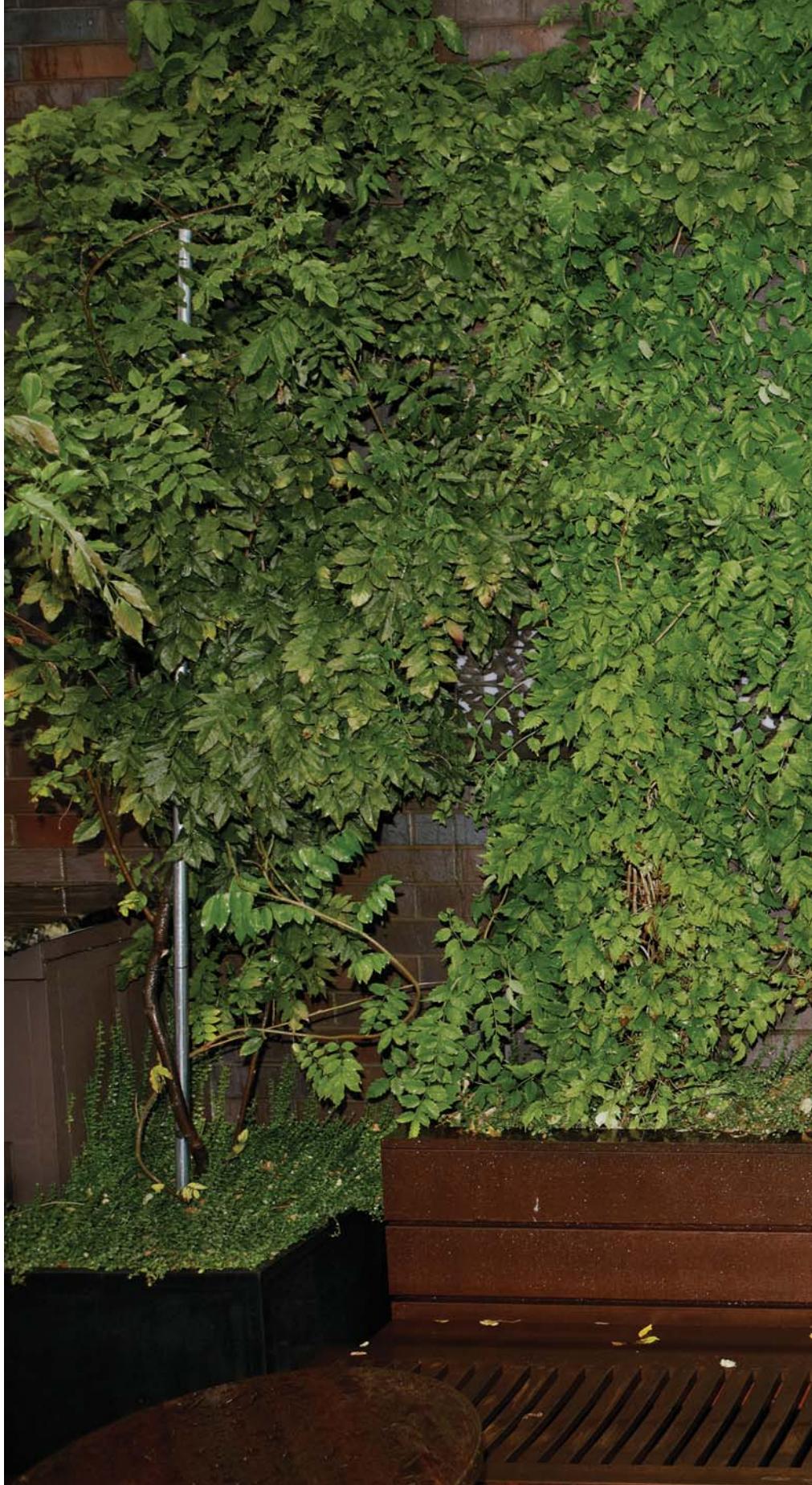
around on tour,” says Flowers. “Luckily, we’re established enough to delegate how many breaks we get. I get to see them again in nine days.”

The boy from Henderson, Nevada, has been all around the world by now, but there’s a few places left on his list: “I’ve always wanted to go to Bali, and I’ve never been to Alaska.” But so far, his favorite time and place to tour is “Australia...in the summertime.”

Flowers calls Las Vegas home, a city he loves for its “buzzing gold-rush mentality. I’ve always fed off of that vibe, that optimism. Even though it usually ends in a depressing form, I’ve always thrived there.”

He grew up outside of Sin City, and lived in Utah—the heart of Mormon Country—for a stint. But he skipped his “Mission,” the rite of passage wherein Mormon youngsters don nametags and blue suits and fan out over the world, armed with free copies of the Book of Mormon. “My brother did his Mission in Chile. When I was 19 and should have gone, I had just bought David Bowie’s *Hunky Dory*, and I had another mission in mind: glam rock.”

Like the Brit-inspired sound they adopted early on, they also lifted their band name from across the pond. “We took it from a New Order







video,” says Flowers. The video was for a song called “Crystal,” and if you watch it closely you’ll see the camera pan to a drum kit bearing the name The Killers.

Many a journalist has pried Flowers to talk intimately about his Mormon faith. No such luck. There was, however, his now-famous lunch with Mitt Romney...and a subsequent request from the Obama constituency for the band’s official support. But Flowers chose to remain publicly neutral in the past election. “Our music is for everyone,” he dismissively offers.

Think what you will about the Mormon Church: it keeps this rock

star at the peak of his career and touring 200 days a year, both sober and happily married. “My foundations, I feel blessed to have them,” Flowers says. “Without them I would be a casualty of rock-and-roll. I don’t know if I would’ve been strong enough.”

When asked about remaining career goals, he says, “I’m really looking forward to playing Wembley Stadium next June. That’s one of the boxes that we’ve always had on the list to check.” For the musician carrying the memories of a 19-year-old kid in Utah—who skipped his Mission for a mission to make British music—playing the venue of his heroes is a pretty full-circle. **WUWU**

