

Broken Bells: *INTO THE BLUE*

In the late 1990s, James Mercer and Brian Burton were living just about as far apart as possible while both residing in the continental United States—James in Albuquerque NM, Brian in Athens GA.

However, this physical distance was bridged by a unique frequency the two independently tuned into, as each separately discovered the quintessential underground record label of that small window of time, Elephant 6.

For James, discovering the Elephant 6 roster was nothing short of an epiphany: the artists on that label were making music that was the literal antithesis to the alternative music culture in which he'd found himself entrenched — the calculated irony and dispassionate detachment of the lo-fi indie '90s aesthetic (or lack thereof). The bands on the *Elephant 6* label were the exact opposite, shamelessly creating lush, orchestral and unabashedly beautiful melodies in the ambitious pop tradition of The Beatles, Zombies and The Beach Boys — proudly embracing and reflecting the influences of some of James's favorite artists.

What's more, they were making these cinematically sweeping audio epics entirely on their own. No major label backing. No fancy hi-tech studios or big name producers.

It was a revelation for James, who realized, "I can do this too." He could write and record albums in his home. He could spend time making music that sounded exactly as he wanted it to sound. He could tinker with his songs until they were perfect, until they sounded exactly like the ideas and sonic dreams from which they originated. The old model of writing and rehearsing a bunch of songs and hoping that the band could nail that elusive perfect take in the few hours of precious studio time they could barely afford? Over.

So James went out and bought a 4-track recorder and created *Oh, Inverted World* on it. The Shins had been born.

As for Brian, he'd talked his way into a college dream job at the famed Wuxtry Records. It was there he discovered his love for psychedelic rock. He met the guys from Elephant 6 and immersed himself in their world. For young Brian, who had grown up on hip hop and pop music, it was a similar revelation: For the first time he saw people making incredible, inspirational music purely for the love of the craft, with zero consideration for celebrity or riches.

Having no desire to ever be famous or to even perform live on a stage, Brian thought, "I can do this too." He went out and bought his own 4-track recorder and got to work on his first original recordings from his dorm room.

More than a decade later, Brian had assumed the persona of the world-renowned, GRAMMY

Award-winning artist and producer Danger Mouse. An obsessive Shins fan, he invited James to collaborate with him at his studio — and during their first session there, James would find that very same model of 4-track recorder that he'd used to make *Oh, Inverted World*. The unassuming piece of home-recording equipment that changed both their lives individually, and set them on the trajectories that would ultimately intersect to form Broken Bells.

As many recordings that bear the Danger Mouse imprimatur, Brian has never made as much music with any other collaborator. No matter how much success The Shins or Brian's various other endeavors may achieve, these two musical soulmates keep coming back to one another (even when it means James leaving his home and family for weeks at a time to work undisturbed at Brian's studio—something he wouldn't even consider doing for anyone else).

At the foundation of this mutually magnetic, incredibly close friendship is its origin: a shared love of music, and more specifically the many influences the two have in common — the diverse sonic array that makes this album, their 3rd LP, *INTO THE BLUE* is a kaleidoscopic genre and decade spanning ode to those influences — From The Beatles to Pink Floyd, from '60s psychedelia to 70s rock and AM Gold, from '80s New Wave to '90s Trip Hop... and of course the formative Elephant 6 collective. The first Broken Bells album to feature samples in addition to James and Brian's own organic sounds, *INTO THE BLUE* finds Broken Bells in uncharted territory. James and Brian venture into bold new directions while retaining their signature glistening pop perfection with just a hint of the sinister.