

If you've followed indie rock or punk music over the last 10 years, you've probably already heard of The Garden. The Orange County duo have churned out six spunky, energetic albums, which are defined by their clear-cut penchant for angular chaos. They've collaborated with iconic musicians like 100 geecs member Dylan Brady, Kero Kero Bonito bassist James Bulled, and indie staple Mac Demarco. Maybe you even saw pictures of them strutting down the runway at a 2017 Saint Laurent fashion show. At the very least, there's a pretty solid chance that they've headlined the coolest spaces in your city more times than you can count on both hands.

Because they're twins, Wyatt and Fletcher Shears had plenty of opportunities to make music with each other growing up. They started jamming together around 2005, playing in a handful of bands around The O.C. In 2011, they decided to focus on a two person creative partnership, and formed The Garden. (On top of their output with The Garden, Wyatt and Fletcher each have successful solo projects. Wyatt makes sunny, yet oblique weirdo punk under the moniker Enjoy, while Fletcher crafts cartoon-y darkwave as Puzzle.) They came up in tandem with the prolific California garage rock revival boom, alongside more retro-leaning acts like Ty Segall and The Aquadolls. "I think over the period of quarantine, I felt myself getting a lot more connected to where I'm from," says Fletcher, speaking on his SoCal upbringing. "I started digging into that a lot more, and going back to my roots."

Wyatt and Fletcher slowly, but surely amassed a devoted fanbase, playing a ton of shows and embarking on scrappy DIY tours across the United States. Their prolific live sets and flashy eye for visuals made them unmistakable and unique, but their propulsive tracks remained gripping and accessible. "It's always just been a really slow process, at least from our point of view, which is good. I think it's helped us to have such a slow progression up to where we are now," Fletcher says. While they certainly had some crazy times in their youth, the twins now relish the comfort of being in a well-established band, and their more recent work embraces this maturity. But, even in this more refined era, The Garden's music still goes remarkably hard.

The Garden's new album, *Horseshit On Route 66*, is one of their most fiery endeavors to date. Recorded at the Downtown Los Angeles space Seahorse Sound Studios, the record pulls from from the legacies of Southern California hardcore, UK punk, and more unexpected influences, like rave-y electronic music. It viscerally melds screamy, yet droning vocals, chunky guitar riffs, and virtuosic, unrestrained drumming. With the longest song clocking in at just two minutes and 58 seconds, the listening experience is a whiplash-inducing ride on a rickety roller coaster.

*Horseshit On Route 66* opens with a sample of a screaming witch on the evil-sounding (and appropriately titled) track "Haunted House on Zillow"—it's one of many supernatural sounds that appears on the project. Meanwhile, "Freight Yard" is carried by an addictive hook and an intricate jungle groove. "Orange County Punk Rock Legend" combines sunny guitars and bit-crushed drums with a snarling vocal performance. "What Else Could I Be but a Jester" is similarly neon-drenched and futuristic, centered on an over-the-top drum machine blastbeat and wubbed out, dubstep-indebted bass swells. On "Squished Face Slick Pig Livin' in a Smokey City," "X In The Dirt," and "Puerta de Limosina," the Shears brothers kick things into absolute hyperdrive, delivering some of their heaviest cuts to date. At its most intense, the record blurs

the lines between the sonic palettes of old school metal and underground electronica. Wyatt and Fletcher cite storied groups like Disorder, Discharge, & Nausea as key influences on this latest record. As a whole, the release is turned up well past 11—a balls to the wall exercise in tasteful hedonism.

The cover features a grainy image of the twins decked out in clown makeup and clad in leather, which looks like it could be ripped straight from the jacket of a '70s Thin Lizzy LP. But it was actually shot by a somewhat confused older gentleman at a studio in Los Angeles's Koreatown neighborhood. In many ways, the weirdness of this shoot seems spiritually in line with The Garden's personality as a band. "Humor is important to us," says Fletcher. "We can be serious, but we're not all around serious people. You might see photos of us looking serious, but we're pretty damn goofy." This lighthearted energy beams through all of their output as a band, but especially on *Horseshit On Route 66*. Because of this, the twins think it might be their favorite album they've made as The Garden yet. Wyatt and Fletcher feel like they're finally doing what they've been trying to accomplish artistically since they started The Garden all those years ago. *Horseshit On Route 66* harkens somewhat of a new beginning for a band that had already established itself as an iconic and singular force. [Ted Davis]