

Brothers Osborne *Skeletons* Album Bio



"I'm good for some, but I'm not for everyone," TJ Osborne sings on *Skeletons*, Brothers Osborne's third studio album. That lyric might as well be the group's mission statement: a proud declaration of uniqueness, delivered by a band of brothers whose boundary-breaking country songs have always mixed the twang of southern music with the groove and guitar-driven swagger of rock & roll. At the same time, it's hard to look at the Osbornes' long list of musical milestones — including six Grammy nominations, four CMA Awards, five ACM trophies, and more than a half-dozen hits — and imagine anyone turning up their noses at a sound that's taken the siblings from the blue-collar beach bars of their Maryland hometown to some of the biggest stages across the world.

Skeletons is a celebration of that sound — a melodic, muscular album that builds upon the hooks of the band's career-launching debut, *Pawn Shop*, as well as the forward-thinking adventurousness of their sophomore release, *Port Saint Joe*. More than anything, it's a sound rooted in the excitement and electricity of Brothers Osborne's concerts, packed with songs that could all serve as crowd-rousing encores. Recorded with multi-platinum producer Jay Joyce during a time of global turbulence, *Skeletons* is a celebratory album for a world in sore need of uplifting music.

"Our concerts are big, loud, rock shows" says John Osborne, whose acclaimed approach to the electric guitar — a unique style that touches upon blues, bluegrass, country, rock, and everything in between — remains one of the band's touchstones. "We wanted to make a record where, no matter which song we cherrypicked from the tracklist, we'd be able to do it during our show."

From the ZZ Top-worthy strut of "All Night" to the classic country storytelling of "Old Man's Boots," *Skeletons* is more than worth the price of admission. The Osbornes aren't shy about wearing their influences on their sleeves — the bar-band bombast of "Back On The Bottle" pays tribute to Merle Haggard, while the barn-burning "Dead Man's Curve" nods to southern rockers like Marshall Tucker and the Allman Brothers Band — but they've never sounded more self-assuredly original than they do here, confidently rolling a diverse range of inspiration into their own singular sound.

"We're not afraid to take risks and just be ourselves," John adds. "If *Pawn Shop* was our introduction, and *Port Saint Joe* was like the first conversation we had with someone over a beer, then *Skeletons* is the moment where you start getting down to the real stuff and showing who you really are. If you really want to get to know us, this is the record to do it."

John and TJ attribute that distinctive sound to their modest upbringing in the small town of Deale, Maryland, tucked into a corner of the Chesapeake Bay. Acoustic jam sessions became a regular occurrence in the Osborne household often lasting well into the night. For TJ and John, those informal gigs were a chance to cut their teeth as musicians, with TJ earning his earliest fans as a deep-voiced singer and John standing out as a first-rate guitar picker. Decades later, the siblings have sharpened that dynamic to a fine point, broadening and boosting their sound with help from a touring band of honorary brothers.

Skeletons marks TJ and John's first time recording an album with their entire road band. The result is a true family affair, filled with inspired performances that shine a light on the chemistry generated by years of nightly shows (including the three sold-out shows featured on the band's 2019 release, *Live at the Ryman*), communal bus rides, and backstage hangs. The boys kick up some serious dust with "Muskrat Greene," a blast of electrified bluegrass that doubles as the band's first full-blown instrumental song, and ride a funky, greasy groove with "Lighten Up." They temporarily remake themselves into a jam band with "Hatin' Somebody," a swampy salute to togetherness, then turn up their guitar amps for the album's big, burly title track. You can't fake this kind of countrified connection. In a town filled with some of the world's best studio musicians, Brothers Osborne have distinguished themselves once again by turning inward, creating an album that showcases not only the songwriting talents of TJ and John, but also the instrumental slash-and-burn of their band's full roster.

While Brothers Osborne holed up in Jay Joyce's recording studio to record the strongest album of their career, though, the world outside turned strange and uncertain. A tornado blew a deadly path through Nashville in March 2020, barely missing Joyce's

studio by several blocks. Days later, as the coronavirus swept across the globe, the city — along with the entire country — closed down. Throughout the process, TJ and John faced their own challenges, too, their physical and mental health worn down by the demands of touring behind a Grammy-nominated album for nearly two years. Those struggles lent a seize-the-day immediacy to *Skeletons*.

"We were working against all odds — a pandemic, illnesses, a tornado — and you can really hear that fight in the record, in all the best ways," John says. "We approached it as though we were making our last record ever."

That said, *Skeletons* certainly won't be the last Brothers Osborne album. The boys have truly hit their stride, finding a sweet spot between the undeniable radio hits of *Pawn Shop* and the mature, career-building charisma of *Port Saint Joe*. They've been building momentum since 2014 — the year *Pawn Shop*'s first single, "Rum," introduced a band of country-rockers who were ready to chase down mainstream success on their own terms — and these new songs find them picking up even more speed. With *Skeletons*, they've never been so full-blooded.

"We want this record to show people that we're here to stay," says TJ. "We are a part of the cloth of this genre. Ultimately, what we love to do most is play live, and *Skeletons* is setting us up to do that even better."