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**Soul Asylum Bio (ENG)**

Since the ’80s, Soul Asylum have been a group known for their raucous and emphatic combination of punk energy, guitar-fueled firepower, and songs that range from aggressive to heartfelt. All of these things are present in spades on the Minneapolis band’s gloriously, joyously loose 13th studio album, *Slowly But Shirley.*

For *Slowly But Shirley*, it also helped that Soul Asylum—which also includes drummer Michael Bland (Prince / Paul Westerberg), lead guitarist Ryan Smith and bassist Jeremy Tappero—turned to a familiar name for production: Steve Jordan, who had also produced the band’s 1990 effort *And the Horse They Rode In On*. Back when they first worked together, the members of Soul Asylum were still figuring out how best to capture their sound in the studio—and Jordan’s approach of having the band play live together in one room was ideal. “He taught us a language of players playing music in the studio,” Pirner says. “Which we were not at the time. We still didn’t really understand what you were supposed to do in what order.”

Decades later, both parties are in different places. Jordan is currently the drummer for the Rolling Stones, and Soul Asylum remains one of the most inspiring and hardworking bands in the rock scene, having broken through commercially with the double-platinum 1992 album *Grave Dancers Union,*which contained the Grammy-winning*Billboard* Hot 100 Top 5 hit “Runaway Train” and No. 1 Modern Rock smash “Somebody to Shove.”

But for *Slowly But Shirley,*they nodded to their previous collaboration and recorded live at the Terrarium in Minneapolis, with vocal overdubs in legendary New York City studios Electric Lady and The Hit Factory. For good measure, Jordan also added overdubbed drums and tambourine. “I’ve learned a lot since then, and so has Steve,” Pirner says. “But we knew each other’s language. And we went back to, ‘Let’s just record the band live,’ so the record has a feeling that you can’t get if you’re just cutting up things digitally.”

Before recording even started, the songwriter sent Jordan two batches of songs, and from these dozens of options the producer picked the ones he wanted Soul Asylum to record. “I probably wouldn’t trust anyone else to do that but him,” Pirner says. “That’s the beauty of having a producer who’s not overbearing, and not trying to force the album into being something it’s not.” In a nod to Jordan’s insightful choices, Pirner says Soul Asylum nailed each song they recorded in just a few takes.

Opening track “The Only Thing I’m Missing” sets the tone for the release. Driven by a scorching guitar line and a buoyant tempo, the ragged rocker is dominated by lyrics that offer up desperate romantic laments that exude sadness, regret, and self-flagellation. Other tunes encompass chiming psychedelic pop (the delicate “You Don’t Know Me”), grungy power pop (“Freeloader”), groovy funk rock (“Tryin’ Man”), and ’80s college rock throwbacks (“Makin’ Plans”). Ivan Neville contributes keyboards here and there, adding texture and depth.

As always, Pirner’s songs are a mix of real-life personal insights and lyrics about fictional situations. “Some of the songs were written as I sat down and wrote them,” he says. “And with some of the songs, I spent years working on it.” *Slowly But Shirley*’s first single, “High Road” was one that took Pirner “forever” to get right because he kept tinkering with the arrangement and moving around different parts. “It was this Frankenstein kind of situation that hopefully finally makes sense.” Mission accomplished: It’s the kind of gloriously ramshackle rocker that Soul Asylum does so well, complete with a melodic chorus hook.

“You come into the studio with everything you’ve learned from previous record-making experiences,” says frontman Dave Pirner. “That can’t help but guide you and make it a better, more efficient process.”

The easygoing jangle-rocker “Freak Accident,” meanwhile, is a fan-favorite that Pirner finally decided to record after playing it live for some time. “It’s built from experience and pain and shame,” he says dryly. “The joke’s always on me, let’s just put it that way. Everyone makes mistakes.”

Despite the pun-driven name, *Slowly But Shirley* has a rather touching (and serious) backstory. The album cover and title honor Shirley “Cha Cha” Muldowney, a legend in the drag racing community whom Pirner idolized while growing up. “When I was a kid, I loved drag racing,” he says. “And she was the first woman of drag race. It meant a lot to me that she was willing to stand up against all these men in racing. My manager called her up, and she gave us her blessing, which means a whole lot to me because she was a childhood hero.”

Initially known as Loud Fast Rules, Soul Asylum formed when Pirner was still in high school, and quickly became part of the celebrated Minneapolis music scene along with peers like The Replacements and Hüsker Dü. After leaping to mainstream success with *Grave Dancers Union*, the band kept up the momentum with 1995’s platinum-certified *Let Your Dim Light Shine*, which featured the international hit “Misery,” and appearances on the soundtracks of the Kevin Smith cult classics *Chasing Amy*and *Clerks*.

In recent years, Soul Asylum has continued to add to a catalog that illustrates Pirner’s enduring gift for insightful songwriting that digs into our deepest, most vulnerable emotions. For example, they recorded 2020’s *Hurry Up and Wait*with long-time studio collaborator John Fields, which placed the band back on the *Billboard* charts. Soul Asylum have also reissued several earlier releases, including expanded and remastered editions of their first four original albums and their legendary 1993 *MTV Unplugged* performance, which arrived on vinyl for the first time ever as a 2023 Record Store Day exclusive.

At the end of the day, however, Pirner isn’t necessarily one for nostalgia. The band regularly book festival dates and tours (including in 2024 with the Juliana Hatfield Three), while Pirner and Smith also continue to do stripped-down acoustic shows.

More than 40 years after Soul Asylum coalesced as a band, his prolific songwriting, combined with an energetic and unparalleled live show, ensures that the band isn’t stopping anytime soon.

“There’s a part of me that’s never gonna fit in, but I love being around people who love music, and I’m very loyal to the idea of whatever Soul Asylum is,” Pirner says. “The future is bright, everything is good, and if there’s something in the music that can make people feel like things are gonna be OK, then it’s mission accomplished.”