

MODERN SKIRTS



For Athens, GA-based power-pop quartet Modern Skirts, there are many keys to musical success. 88 of them, in fact - each found on the old \$75 upright piano the band found at a local Salvation Army thrift store. Previously, Jay Gulley (vocals/guitar), JoJo Glidewell (piano/vocals/bass), Philip Brantley (bass/vocals/guitar), and John Swint (drums) had only performed a handful of shows together as a more typical combo of guitar/bass/drums. Glidewell, a gifted pianist, showed great interest in purchasing the piano. His interest, however, was met with some discussion. "I'll never forget this," says Gulley, "but I thought it was a waste of money."

As fate would have it, though, the band ultimately decided to dip into its slim resources and purchase the piano. Almost instantly, songs began to reveal themselves. The boys began putting in late hours at the home of Glidewell and Gulley, all of their gear stretching throughout the various rooms, rehearsing sight unseen. The old upright had firmly sparked the band's motivation. "Once everybody started getting more involved in the band and were really able to express what they did best, I think that's when we started writing our best material." Says Brantley, "Things just steam-rolled from there."

The band had found a new musical direction and a new name - Modern Skirts. In the two years since, they have gone from young pop upstarts to battle-tested veterans, amassing a dedicated following based on their ironclad live performances (which often find the band members trading instruments throughout) and the simple inescapability of their sticky-sweet harmonies and bulletproof song structure. Drawing inspiration from the art-rock of New York in the 70's a la Talking Heads to the Brit-pop of the Kinks to the sun-drenched melodies of the Beach Boys, Modern Skirts creates infectious and timeless pop that gives a nod to these influences without photocopying them. And people have taken notice.

Within months of their infamous trip to the Salvation Army thrift store, the Skirts took home "Best Pop Act" and "Best Up & Coming Band" at the 2004 Flagpole Music Awards, performed on the main stage at AthFest (Athens, GA), were selected for the Best Buy/99X Locals Only stage at Music Midtown (Atlanta), and showcased at the Atlantis Music Conference (Atlanta). While 2004's EP, *This is Winning and Thinking*, hinted at future success, Modern Skirts came into their own in 2005 with their self-funded debut LP *Catalogue of Generous Men*. Produced by Geoff Melkonian (Josh Joplin Band, Five-Eight, the Whigs) during a six-week stint at Go To Your Room studios in Atlanta, and mixed by the legendary John Keane (REM, Indigo Girls, Widespread Panic), *Catalogue* has received an overwhelming response from fans and press alike since its August 2005 release, finding its way onto "Best of 2005" lists from *PASTE* and *Flagpole* Magazines and selling over 1000 copies independently. The strength of the record combined with committed regional touring has catapulted the band to performing regularly sold-out 700-person shows at the legendary 40 Watt Club, showcasing at SXSW during *PASTE* Magazine's party, and most recently, receiving four Flagpole Music Awards (Band of the Year, Album of the Year, Best Pop Band, and Best Album Art) before headlining the main stage at AthFest 2006.

And while Modern Skirts seem poised to become Athens' latest breakout band, don't look for the band to sell out to cheeky stage fashion/behavior or chase popular trends. "It's all about the song, not about trying to sound cool or show off on your instrument," says Gulley. "It's trying to get stuck in people's heads." If the past two years are any indication, the only problem will be trying to get Modern Skirts *out* of your head.

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