



album review (track by track!) – injury reserve / live from the dentist office

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what is there to be said about [Live From the Dentist Office that](#) hasn't [already](#) been [said](#)?

Arizona's very own Injury Reserve is a familiar set of faces, now, here and online— [Ritchie with a T](#), [Stepa J Groggs](#), and [Parker Corey](#); managed by The White Guy On The Cover That Confuses A Lot Of People I Try To Introduce This Group To, aka [Nick Herbert](#). all are part of local creative collective Las Fuegas, providers of art direction. fun stuff!

the three are natural showmen, ridiculously admirable in their commitment to providing a good show. Ritchie is an intense, passionate performer – given to theatrics in the best way possible –

at a recent house show he wound up curled on the floor in the middle of the crowd during “ttktv”; at the Trunk Space show where they first released merch, he charged off stage (during the same song) at the climax and knocked me over (and I didn’t even mind!) – garnering attention with ease – knowing and getting exactly what he wants (I have to smile every time he reminds a very white crowd to not say the n-word, even if it’s annoying that he’s gotta remind the crowd). Groggs provides a sort of balance, delightfully genuine and full of a comforting energy – you can tell when he’s having fun because you’re having fun (and on top of that he rarely *isn’t* having fun) – but you also know just how hard he’s working. it is also nice to note that Parker Corey is not just resigned to sitting in the back with a laptop – he’s actively engaged and *wants* to be, both with the audience and the other two, excellent at figuring out the vibe and going with it, unafraid to experiment with choices live.

LFTDO opens with the aptly-titled “Yo,” an anxiously-building welcome-back at a house party full of people you probably don’t know but probably will like. it’s a careful kind of fun– the kind where I suddenly get self-conscious and make sure that I’m bouncing my knee to the beat– but still fun. memorable is when Groggs delivers a clever reminder of the place-that’s-not-a-place you likely heard it first– online– with a real-life Banepost and then it segues into a rousing “I like the way you move / I like the way you vibe!”, sung by Ritchie in a way that a. makes me less self-conscious and b. leaves me no choice except to sing along.

track two is “**Whatever Dude**“, with a hook that plays in my head whenever I say the phrase, which is often. it’s a good proper introduction, a handshake the Ritchie -Groggs duo extend to you, personally. Ritchie wants to make sure you don’t forget him, Groggs is slightly more personal but not to the point it gets *weird*, it’s just endearing. yet this is an introduction that you are apathetic to *for some reason*– but it’s no matter to them. they’re relentless, determined to make it, and “you can keep on talking, it’s whatever, dude”.

your visit to the dentist's office continues with "**Snowmen**", an ode to not melting away (and into nothing. or obscurity). it's almost taunting, but in a way so playful that you can almost forget that they're pretty serious (and that *by the time you catch up, they'll be long gone*). it's rife with charming boasts— which *are* a constant on the album ("Wow", "Whatever Dude", "Yo", "Everybody Knows")— but also a feature from GLASSPOPCORN (who also produced the track) that sounds like the kind of melting Ritchie & Groggs have so kindly warned you about, but in a good way. it's a pooling, pretty, almost-unintelligible thing, almost surprising to hear but not quite — and if "Yo" hadn't properly pulled you in, then I'm hoping the hypnotic quality of "Snowmen" has.

it should be clear now, at this point, that Injury Reserve is determined to get on top and stay on top — and in this moment, they are — so after revelling in pissing off the whole state & stealing the keys to the city of Phoenix in "**Wow**" (where they question your intentions — "how you niggas going to start when it's written? / and how you niggas going jock on a legend? / like, how you niggas going to run when we're slipping?"), they opt to relax on "**Friday**", featuring Curtis Williams, sing-songing the usual questions a boring Friday night likes to spawn and worming into your head. maybe you're dropped into a car with the four (Parker Corey in the driver's seat) and Ritchie, Groggs, and Curtis are all talking and singing at you both one at a time and all at once; Ritchie making you feel welcome — reminding you that he's still working, even now (and with no competition!), Curtis with a story to tell (and a little plug for himself), Groggs reminding you to make the best of it.

sometimes the gloating gets grating — at times, you wonder *who the fuck are they coming at so viciously* because it can tend to reek of an odd and irrational paranoia (and i get conflicted saying this sometimes, because they're just trying to prove themselves). maybe it's weird to consider anyone *really* underestimating Injury Reserve, because it's clear they're determined to set the bar high enough that only God himself can touch them (and it's clear because they're telling you about it). you might be sick of it, even.

“**Washed Up**” is there for context. (also, my back is in the video.) “Washed Up” is where they’ve Had It; a complaint to the Arizona music gods, Stepa J Groggs starting both a get-me-out-of-here! plea and an attempt to snap you out of the stupor the desert heat’s probably put you in – and the beat begins to mimic it, bringing you in and out of consciousness – until Ritchie assumes the role of dystopian hero and saves you (sacrificing himself in the process) – leaving you with the painful knowledge that Arizona is an awful place and everyone you meet is probably not real and more than likely one of the premade characters in a shitty knockoff of The Sims. I feel it. do you?

hopefully you do – because you’ve caught their eye on “**Whiplash**”, featuring Chuck English of The Cool Kids, Ritchie asking if you can roll with him – if it’s alright with you, of course. how can you resist? – English shooting his shot, music cutting out as Ritchie asks again, humbly, Groggs wanting to know more about *you* (as mama raised a gentleman). it’s nothing less than charming.

this brings us to “**Everybody Knows**”, cheeky beat sounding something like Parker Corey tinkering in a cartoon laboratory, placed well enough that it makes me smile – forgetting how wishy-wishy-wishy-wishy-washed-up Arizona is, even just for a moment. it feels like playground teasing at times; Ritchie starting and then taking back a yo-mama joke, knowing there is *something* that everybody knows, Groggs playing Beowulf / everyone else as Unferth, drunk at the banquet.

it moves well into “**45**”, featuring Demi Hughes, where things are kind of overwhelmingly normal, except maybe when you get home Ritchie with a T, Stepa J. Groggs, Parker Corey, and Demi Hughes are sitting on your couch and eager to just talk at you about *life* or something. (Parker doesn’t say much.) Groggs’ verse on it is a highlight: personal but not heavy-handed with the fatherly advice, but also confiding in you – how quickly his son’s grown up, his worries for his daughter. the track is clever: there’s a lot of fun to be had with the number 45, from Ritchie’s fun

with math (“workin 9 to 5, that’s 45, if you multiply / I’m the coldest guy, if you don’t know why, check my attire / keep it 200, my brother, that’s forty fives”) to my personal favorite part of Groggs’ verse – “outside the store, we kick it like Balotelli / when he played for the fly wearing the four-five”, Demi Hughes imploring you to *play it back that many times*, which they’ve made easy to do.

the backdrop for “**ttktv**” sounds like the paranoia i mentioned (even if you’ve already shrugged it off at this point); building on a sample of [The Hics’ “Lines”](#). something dragging and aimless, Ritchie with a T, all alone, stuck repeating himself for a good long while. there is a familiar kind of anguish in his tone when he’s finished wallowing in *what once was* – “shoulda never let you in, I shoulda never met you / shoulda never stepped a fucking foot up in that venue” makes me think about pieces of Baz Luhrmann’s Romeo + Juliet — Leonardo DiCaprio’s Romeo, brooding eyes meeting Claire Danes’ Juliet’s [across a fish tank](#) and beginning a mawkish, fatal love – “now I regret you” fast-forwarding into Romeo [ending his walk through the church where Juliet lays](#). from there all of Ritchie’s babbling settles into something and doesn’t, words and noises collapsing on themselves, his frustrating anagnorisis.

the last song on the album, “**Falling**”, has Stepa J. Groggs alone as well, but not as alone – the hook sung like a promise to no one in particular & making way for careful introspection, the image of Groggs looking in a mirror and quietly noting things about himself: his blackness, (recalling Trayvon Martin and how he “can’t even enjoy Arizona Tea and a bag of Skittles”), his desire to be his kid’s hero, alcoholism – worries about losing control, which he quickly moves to reassure himself about. and just as quickly & quietly afterward, the verse seems to dissolve – into the hook, droning into something else – that sinks into a deep groan and taking you with it.

I’d give *LFTDO* an 8/10 (and they’re probably used to 8-out-of-10s by now) – it’s an ambitious debut and everybody on it *knows* it is, the release setting a hell of an example for... well, everybody – and Injury Reserve themselves, probably. this is a good thing. it ensures good

things in the future, provided they keep at it. sometimes, though, it drags, and heavily. certain points feel awfully restrained – which can sound good at first, but eventually it just gets a little tiring. you'd think that the three are holding back something *huge* – and every song leads into something wonderful in itself... but all of them together produce an oddly nervous reaction in me, like I've braced myself for a larger impact that never comes. some of that might tie into how it feels a little *too* calculated at times – I get a little bored looking & listening too closely! maybe they can afford a little chaos. maybe I just like being surprised – but at least you can tell they 1. know what they're doing and 2. are having fun with it. I'm excited to see more.

you can get *Live From the Dentist Office* for free if you haven't already at livefromthe.dentist (I'm a big fan of how they've used that .dentist TLD). it's also available on Spotify and Apple Music.