

The Golden Age: I'm Sure It'll Be Fine

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by Emerald Butler

Waiting in my bedroom admittedly a bit anxiously, I reach for my vibrating phone with the caller ID displaying Maybe: The Golden Age. As I introduce myself, I am greeted with an apology for a missed call. "I'm sorry," Bryan Simpson began. "I was making a video. I just got lost in what time it was." During this period of quarantine and change of routine, I believe many of us can relate to a loss or confusion of time. "We don't have much of a schedule," Bryan laughed.

Bryan Simpson, along with fellow Cadillac Sky band member, Matt Menefee, have reunited after a touring hiatus to create a new group that they call The Golden Age. Ironically, right before the devastating Nashville tornadoes and the nationwide quarantine began the duo released The Golden Age's first album titled, I'm Sure It'll Be Fine.

As stated in the bands' biography on their website, The Golden Age's self-proclaimed *modus operandi* or to put it more simply, mode of operation, is to "die trying to possess the passion and inspiration towards preservation and rebellion reflected in the truly original voices that have gone before us..." To follow up on that proclamation, I asked how they define their music. Is it Bluegrass, Folk, Americana, etc.?

"We say yes," Bryan answered with a laugh. "I'm not that interested in making that definition for people. Let them define it. They're going to have their own bias already

established...they may look at bluegrass in general as folk music. I don't think there's any need to establish too many confines."

Bryan Simpson and Matt Menefee first met at a benefit concert in 2002. During that time, Bryan was trying to put together a progressive bluegrass group that is now known as Cadillac Sky. The two musicians continued to become close friends and music collaborators throughout the band's existence. After years of extensive touring, Bryan decided that it was time for him to take a break.

"I had come to this place. I became a believer, a Christian, and changed the way I thought about life and everything around it. I was trying to find some balance in my life. We were spending fortunes amount of time just traveling. I started thinking I want to focus on some other stuff like my marriage and reestablishing the way I think about music in general. 'Cause when you're playing music all the time and running around trying to make money at playing music (it) can be complicated. So, I just kind of get it back to that place of genuine joy when I made it, practicing it, playing, and all that stuff. I wanted to make sure there was a rebirth in all these other things as well. I just couldn't figure out how to fit it in Cadillac Sky. Not the guys; I love the guys and I love the music. It was just a matter of traveling and all the things that come along with it. It's one of those things that when the dust cleared, I still felt super inspired by and connected to Matt, and so The Golden Age is the product of our friendship that grew out of that. The end of Cadillac Sky was the beginning of something else. As it is with all things."





The Golden Age uses traditional acoustic instrumentation and modern lyrics and themes to balance preservation and rebellion. "A lot of times bluegrass, I think to its downfall, talks about things that people aren't living. Maybe some are but singing about cabins in the mountains when they live in condos downtown doesn't make sense. That doesn't seem real. We are trying to be as authentic as possible and kind of live with the consequences of that, honestly," Bryan said. Instead of overalls and coal miners' boots, their music mentions gym shorts and flip flops. The music isn't nostalgic ballads longing for the good ole days, but an aware account of today's struggles to find hope. Yet in a song like "If Rifles Shot Roses," The Golden Age captures a sense of nostalgia without wishing for the past, but an idea of something

timeless. Helping the duo create this timeless sound is Grammy Award-winning engineer Eddie Spear. Spear has worked with artists ranging from Willie Nelson and Brandi Carlile to Billie Eilish and Lady Gaga. "This is his first foray into any kind of real bluegrass, folk, string band music," Bryan shared. "It was awesome to have the songs operate through his virginal ear. He doesn't have a huge history with it. That was one thing we wanted to do. There are obviously incredible engineers that engineer bluegrass on a regular basis, but the truth is they're going to operate on some kind of technique that they've already done before. I think that when you involve people that don't have a real huge history with something there's a fresh thing that can happen."



That's the golden age people long for right now. Something fresh. Something timeless. As much as we would like to, we can't go back to the 1950s, or '70s, or 2019 for that matter. I am not going to degrade or delude any amount of loss and pain the world is experiencing at this time, but as I listen to this music and summarize our conversation, I can't help but see a message of hope that is found in moving forward. It might not be easy or comfortable, but that doesn't mean it can't be golden. In a time of uncertainty, I'm Sure It'll Be Fine just might be what we need to hear.



