

Album Talk: 'Awake and I' x

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ALBUM TALK:
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THE SAINT
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ALBUM TALK: 'AWAKE AND DREAM' BY MINOS THE SAINT

April 6, 2016

Disclosure: This article features a band that includes a member of the Jive Flamingo managing staff. It was proposed and written by an outside contributor who is not involved with the overall creative vision of Jive Flamingo.

In a recent interview with The Advocate, [Minos the Saint](#)'s Peter Simon described Baton Rouge's music scene as "not branded". He continued by saying "no one expects any one thing in particular". It's a sentiment that is as true and empowering as it is daunting and disheartening. Because the Red Stick is surrounded by the cultural powerhouses of Lafayette and New Orleans, it's easy for Baton Rouge to be overlooked because of its lack of definition.

Simon certainly is on to something. Baton Rouge's blues rock heyday has come and gone and now, people don't know what or where to turn to for a "Baton Rouge sound." Luckily though, [Minos the Saint](#) doesn't fret because it seems an extension of their "brandless" definition of Baton Rouge is, "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em". The band shows that by incorporating, reinterpreting, and expanding upon the music of their South Louisiana neighbors, they create something that goes beyond the branding of "Baton Rouge music" and becomes "Louisiana music."

Awake and Dream is the 12-track debut album from Minos the Saint and it's an effort that has been well worth the wait. Though the four-piece of Peter Simon, Ben Herrington, Micah Blouin and Joel Wilson released an EP in 2013, their sound has wisened up from then to now. With years of live performances full of improvisation and extended jams under their belt along with the addition of new members, their material has been fine-tuned to an incredibly tight package full of stellar performances, full arrangements and, most importantly, good songs.

Take for instance "Let Me Sleep", a track that was initially released on the EP and re-recorded for *Awake and Dream*. The song's haunting "oh"s that happen at about the quarter mark evolved from a simple voice and violin idea on their first release into a near show-stopping ensemble

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event thanks to a lush horn accompaniment and some extra percussion. The addition of Arisia Gilmore and Jessica Ottaviano on French horn and trombone respectively add a masterful level of precision to the intricate and powerful brass arrangements written by the band's keyboardist/trombonist wunderkind Ben Herrington. These new ideas and players flesh out their old material in such a way that the new cuts exponentially transcend the level of detail of their prior release.

Their new songs have also benefited from this heightened level of songwriting and arrangement maturity. The instrumental accompaniment for "Let The Music Play", which contains the apprehensive and anxiety-laced lyric "I have something to say / but it can wait," is feather light and effortlessly creates the feeling of a Louisiana Saturday night with both its uptempo solo sections reminiscent of Cajun music and its slower second line outro that nods toward New Orleans.

But the band isn't afraid to explore areas outside of the typical Louisiana faire. "Small Town Drag Queen" sounds like Serge Gainsbourg dabbling within the realm of ominous funk and traditional R&B. The lyrics describe the titular character's secret life as both a cop and cross dresser in the Louisiana town of Ponchatoula. With swelling horns and sharp piano stabs, the band creates an aural tension to supplement the lyrics' strange tale.

The album's centerpiece, the two-part "3:59 AM" and "4:00 AM," sounds as woozy and hazy as 4 am feels. As Simon sings, "My four post bed / holds me like a dead man / in the public square / for another man's crime," the band slowly transforms the song from a somber and stately processional into a powerful proclamation of redemption. The song's final moments will solidify that this isn't just another Louisiana-good-time band. These are artists who also know how to make you feel something.

Without a brand to label them and years of performance experience, Minos the Saint has channeled their wide range of Louisiana and world influences into a thorough delivery of stunning songs, performances and wholeheartedness. Baton Rouge's flagship band has made a statement with this release showing that not only is music living and thriving in their city, but it has a voice of its own.

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ABOUT US

Jive Flamingo is a volunteer-run local music project and blog. We are Baton Rouge's self-proclaimed local music cheerleader. We are here to encourage and support the music and arts community in Baton Rouge and encourage you, lovely Baton Rougeans, to get out and #listenlocalBR

James West is a Baton Rouge-born journalist and musician who performs in the acts **Slomile Swift** and **Alabaster Stag**. You can follow him on Twitter [@_James_West_](#) or email him at jameseswest@gmail.com

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