

Originally from **Birmingham, AL**, **Banditos** is a group - more like a gang, actually - of six 20-somethings, nowadays operating out of **Nashville**, close to, and simultaneously very far away from, the gleaming towers and industry hustle of Lower Broad and Music Row.

With the rugged power of a flashy Super Chief locomotive, the Banditos' self-titled debut album bodaciously appropriates elements of '60s blues-fused acid rock, **ZZ Top**'s jangly boogie, garage punk scuzz a la **Burger Records**, the **Drive-By Truckers**' yawp, the populist choogle of **CCR**, **Slim Harpo**'s hip shake baby groove, gut bucket **Fat Possum** hill country mojo and the **Georgia** Motherf**king **Satellites**. From backwoods bluegrass, to slinky nods to **Muscle Shoals** soul and unexpected bits of doo-wop sweetness, the Banditos recall many, but sound like no one but themselves.

The members of the band first met playing in various punk and rock 'n' roll projects around Birmingham at D.I.Y., all-ages venues. In 2010, singer/guitarist Corey Parsons and singer/banjo player Stephen Pierce began busking around town and were soon asked to perform at their favorite local bar. Without a full band they invited friends Randy Wade (drums), Jeffrey Salter (guitar), and Mary Beth Richardson (vocals) to join them.

Salter and Wade studied together at music school learning classical/jazz techniques, while Richardson's background was mostly singing in church choirs. After some apprehensions from Richardson about taking the stage with an unrehearsed band, a last-minute trip to **New Orleans** with the group (which resulted in a stolen hotel Bible inscribed with the band's lyrics) seemed to cure a case of the cold feet. The ensuing performance was raw and electric, and an ecstatic crowd response further cemented the members' convictions to become a full band. The addition of bassist Danny Vines made the group complete.

The members soon moved into a house together in Birmingham, and after repeated tours through Nashville, decided to move the band there instead, where the music scene was bigger and more diverse. The sextet has since developed their unique and airtight sound, culminated through several years of enduring friendships and a roaddog touring schedule that has, at their count, numbered over 600 shows in three years.

Back in March 2014 we found ourselves at one of those fly-by-night, hole-in-the-wall bars that sprout like skunkweed on Sixth Street in Austin, TX during the height of SXSW crazy. The only other patrons were Bud Light-swilling bros watching a blowout college basketball game; the sound system at this place was a painful mix of all treble and reverb; and the noises oozing out of the PA during another band's set were not unlike the distorted echoes of the soundtrack to *Suspiria* (and not in a good way). We wish we were kidding.

Then the six-piece Banditos took the stage, and even though they themselves were a little intimidating - all hair, denim, and stoic determination - the sounds they managed to conjure from two overworked speakers were fresh, raw, and spectacular. We were instantly blown away and immediately started concocting ways to lure them into our fold...