



Tony Smith, Alex Kandel

# SLEEPER AGENT

**Their second effort showcases broader themes and a bigger band**

TO BEAT THE SOPHOMORE SLUMP, THE first step for Sleeper Agent was to retreat. “In the summer of 2012, we spent a week in a cabin in the mountains of Kentucky and recorded,” says guitarist Tony Smith. “We cut ourselves off like Thoreau—no internet, no cellphones. We cooked dinner every night

and just had a great time. Actual recording in the studio started in November, and it took forever. But we finally got it done.”

For their second album, *About Last Night*, the alt-rock band bumped up to the majors, signing with RCA. They also expanded their lineup to a sextet in the studio.

“The first time it was only the drummer, Justin [Wilson], and [singer] Alex [Kandel] and I in the studio, overlaying tracks and just going with our gut,” says Smith. “This time around, we added the other members. It was a full band process instead of just being a couple of people in a room. We gave it to them, and they really expanded it.”

Jay Joyce, who produced Sleeper Agent’s debut album, *Celebrasion*, returned to helm *About Last Night*. Several tracks were also produced by Eric Bass, despite initial reservations following a failed songwriting session. “We went to L.A. and wrote a song with him, and it wasn’t the best thing in the world,” says Smith. “But we wound up developing a good friendship. He’s in a totally different world than we are—he comes from a heavy rock world with Shinedown. Before getting to know him, it was like, ‘How is this going to work?’ But he totally just loves music and is really into indie rock and alternative.”

As the primary songwriter for Sleeper Agent, Smith has learned to make time to write new songs on the go, thanks to a childhood habit and his phone. “I was always notorious as a child to hum all the time and make drumming noises with my mouth,” he says. “With smartphones, you have a personal recorder on you at all times. You find a minute to sing a melody into your phone and save it for later and then work on it.”

Lyricaly, *About Last Night* expands on themes from *Celebrasion*, but ultimately Smith feels the tunes are more reflective. “The first record was about youth and college, having a party, and just being young and wild. The second album’s kind of the morning after.”

—Amanda Farah

