



**JD McPherson**  
***Nite Owls***  
**Biography**

Over the course of 12 years, four studio albums and two EPs, JD McPherson has blazed a singular musical trail, one steeped in a deep affinity for foundational rock ‘n’ roll, rockabilly and r&b (among other mid-century American-made sounds), and filtered through a unique and alluringly idiosyncratic songwriting sensibility. While the Broken Arrow, Oklahoma native testifies that he “really loves those classic styles, and the driving force of those old songs,” he also affirms that he doesn’t approach his music like a museum piece. Rather, McPherson says, “I think about it like, ‘Why not throw some of those rhythms and sounds into a blender and see what comes out?’ ”

Why not, indeed. And to be sure, what has emerged from JD’s musical blender this time out is something unlike anything in his catalog. The new *Nite Owls*, his fifth studio full-length, shows McPherson further sharpening his songcraft in the service of ten tight, dynamic and hard-hitting rock ‘n’ roll tunes. At the same time, he also reached deeper into his stylistic toolbox to incorporate elements of glam, new wave, post-punk, surf rock and other sounds into the mix. “To me, the thread between Duane Eddy and Depeche Mode is that single-note, reverb-y guitar style,” McPherson says about connecting some of these sonic dots. “So it felt natural to blend that kind of big-string guitar thing with the classic stuff and a dash of surf. It made sense.”

He laughs. “Although I have sent this record out to some friends, and a couple of ‘em were like, ‘What are you *doing?*’ ”

We’re here to say: relax, friends. JD’s got it handled. *Nite Owls* kicks off with one of McPherson’s most infectious tracks to date – “Sunshine Getaway,” a blast of beaming, T. Rex-y glam rock that, despite its title and, yes, sunny musical demeanor, has a darker sentiment at its core. “I wrote it with my good friends Jack and Page from the Cactus Blossoms,” JD recounts. “They’re from Minneapolis, and we were talking about how the cold is really a problem there. I remember Jack saying, ‘If you drink too much and you come home and you can’t find your keys, you can die on your porch in the wintertime.’ That’s *serious*. But then that conversation turned into a song about being kind of stuck

in place and dreaming about beautiful sunny skies.”

Musically, “Sunshine Getaway” is “a real ‘stroller,’ ” JD continues. “And I couldn’t believe how huge it sounded when we got it back from the mixing sessions – it blew my head off. Everybody was like, ‘This has to be the first single!’ ”

From there, we move into “I Can’t Go Anywhere With You,” a tightly wound r&b rave-up in which McPherson chronicles the fabricated plights of Tony Mandatori and Eddie Rockefeller, “a filthy type o’ fella” (“it’s very Leiber-and-Stoller, tongue-in-cheek humor,” he explains), before landing on the gorgeous “Just Like Summer,” a slice of melancholic, new-wave-tinged dream-pop that finds JD reminiscing about the type of long-lost love that can “burn you like the bright, blue summer” (“a little high-school story”), as dew-drop guitar notes and gently warped chords fill in the sonic space around him.

Elsewhere, McPherson conjures a vivid, detailed story-scene in the evocative title track (“it sort of makes me laugh because of how wordy it is,” he says); invokes a Beach Boys-esque vibe, replete with chiming bells and exquisite vocal harmonies, on “That’s What a Love Song Does to You,” and teams up with Ryan Lindsay, of Oklahoma indie rockers Broncho (“one of my favorite bands, ever”), on the breezy love – or is it lust? – song, “Shining Like Gold.”

Throughout *Nite Owls* there are also a handful of tracks that longtime McPherson fans may recognize as more characteristically JD – the twangy “The Rock and Roll Girls,” for one; the garage-rock groover “Baby Blues,” for another; the Shadows-like instrumental barnburner, “The Phantom Lover of New Rochelle,” for a definite third. But, really, it’s all of a piece. “There’s no saxophones this time, there’s no r&b piano, but it’s a rock ‘n’ roll record,” JD says of *Nite Owls*. “To me, it’s the next logical step from my last one, *Undivided Heart & Soul*.”

That album, it’s worth noting, was released back in 2017. And while McPherson did issue one more record of original material, 2018’s *SOCKS*, that one was comprised of holiday-themed songs, making *Undivided Heart & Soul* “the last non-seasonally-sensitive record I’ve made,” he says with a laugh. “And that was now seven years ago.”

Which is not to say he hasn’t been busy. In 2023 JD released the *Warm Covers 2* EP, featuring his interpretations of songs by five artists, spanning from Oklahoma r&b and country legend Big Al Downing to Iggy Pop to the Pixies. And he has also spent the last few years on the road with two other American roots music enthusiasts, Robert Plant and Alison Krauss, serving as the support act on the duo’s ongoing joint tour – and also, incredibly, as a guitarist in their backing band. “The first year, I was holding on for dear

life, just trying to keep up with Robert and Alison and the band,” JD admits. “But once I got over that, I learned so much. And I am continuing to learn so much from playing with those folks.”

These experiences, JD says, helped him through a particularly difficult period in his personal and professional life – one that also coincided with the Covid lockdown. “I actually recorded a version of *Nite Owls* several years ago in L.A., but the environment within my band just wasn’t working at all,” JD reveals. “It was a painful time. And then the pandemic hit, and I went pretty dark. I thought it was all over for me in the music world – my band was gone, I wasn’t playing shows... it took me a long time to get back into enjoying it.”

What changed? “Joining the Plant-Krauss band was a big part of it,” he says. “And then meeting some other musicians and going in and doing the *Warm Covers* project was a hugely important thing, because that was pure fun. These were steps towards healing a little bit. And now we have this record.”

To make the version of *Nite Owls* that we have before us, McPherson retreated to familiar environs, Reliable Recorders in Chicago, with a core group of musicians that have been in his orbit for years – guitarist and “auxiliary” player Douglas Corcoran, bassist and “good friend” Beau Sample, and drummer (and Reliable proprietor) Alex Hall. “I went back to where I made my first record, and it was a wonderful experience,” JD says. “We pretty much did everything in-house, and we recorded the thing quick and fast and live.”

That electricity and immediacy is baked into every groove of *Nite Owls*. “I’m just trying to share an infectious enthusiasm,” JD says about his musical intentions. “That’s something that’s missing in a lot of bands. Like, everybody’s so sullen and serious! But me, I want to enjoy myself and make the music I want to make, and I’m so full of gratitude that I get to make it for a living.” He pauses. “I guess you could say I’m kind of a professional enthusiast, you know?”