

75 word:

Lutalo's highly visceral folk goes electric on *The Academy*, the Vermont multi-instrumentalist, songwriter and producer's debut LP. On *The Academy*, Lutalo embraces a literary approach to self-referential songwriting, turning memories from their adolescence into impressionistic folk and rock compositions that are equal parts searing and vulnerable. With their unique baritone and finesse for lyrical world building, Lutalo cuts to the bone—while only just beginning to reveal the depth of their artistry and vision.

250 word:

Lutalo's highly visceral folk goes electric on *The Academy*, the Vermont multi-instrumentalist, songwriter and producer's debut LP. Recorded in January 2024 at the storied Sonic Ranch and co-produced alongside Jake Aron (Snail Mail, Protomartyr, L'Rain), *The Academy* feels like watching the best underground film you've seen in years; establishing Lutalo as a singular voice of this generation of indie rock. Lutalo describes *The Academy* as their "first chapter" – a time capsule of the lessons they've learned in their 20-something years of life. "This record is exactly that: a 'record' of my early life," they say of their debut album, out via Winspear. "The experiences, thoughts and feelings I was holding at those times and am currently processing. To me, this is the first big stamp of my existence I'm sharing." While Lutalo's 2022 EP *Once Now, Then Again* introduced them as a lo-fi acoustic guitar wunderkind, *The Academy* is bigger and bolder without compromising Lutalo's inviting sense of emotional intimacy, inspired by alt-rock veterans like Thom Yorke and Rob Crow as well as electronic greats like Aphex Twin and Bowery Electric. *The Academy's* grander arrangements are heard in the biting adrenaline rush of "Ocean Swallows Him Whole," or the anti-war jangle of album closer "The Bed." Their lyrics are often deeply intuitive, flowing as a stream of consciousness, albeit with weighty meanings. With their unique baritone and finesse for lyrical world building, Lutalo cuts to the bone—while only just beginning to reveal the depth of their artistry and vision.

500 word:

Vermont-based singer-songwriter Lutalo Jones describes *The Academy* as their "first chapter" – a time capsule of the lessons they've learned in their 20-something years of life. "This record is exactly that: a 'record' of my early life," they say of their debut album, out via Winspear. "The experiences, thoughts and feelings I was holding at those times and am currently processing. To me, this is the first big stamp of my existence I'm sharing." Recorded in January 2024 at the storied Sonic Ranch studio in El Paso, Texas, and co-produced alongside Jake Aron (Snail Mail, Protomartyr, L'Rain), hearing *The Academy* feels like watching the best underground film you've seen in years; through one character's specific story, it's intensely affecting, establishing Lutalo as a singular voice of this generation of indie rock.

Lutalo's breakthrough came in 2022 with their EP *Once Now, Then Again*, which [The Guardian](#) heralded as "eminently comforting." While that project introduced them as a lo-fi acoustic guitar wunderkind, *The Academy* is bigger and bolder without compromising Lutalo's inviting sense of emotional intimacy, inspired by alt-rock veterans like Thom Yorke and Rob Crow as well as electronic greats like Aphex Twin and Bowery Electric. *The Academy's* grander arrangements are heard in the biting adrenaline rush of "Ocean Swallows Him Whole," or the anti-war jangle of

album closer “The Bed.” Their lyrics are often deeply intuitive, flowing as a stream of consciousness, albeit with weighty meanings. Take “Big Brother,” which borrows the namesake character of Orwell’s *1984* to illustrate the 2008 housing crisis that left Lutalo’s family homeless: “Big brother, why you broke me down?/We got two chance and one pair of pants,” they sing, reflecting on their own role as an older sibling, and how their family dynamic shifted amid catastrophic systemic oppression. “We got four eyes, and one will to last.”

The album’s title is a double entendre in itself, referring to the general youth experience as well as Lutalo’s actual school – the very same school F. Scott Fitzgerald also just so happened to briefly attend. On the gorgeous folksy number “Summit Hill,” Lutalo recalls wandering around its namesake neighborhood with their best friend, admiring the mansions, longing for a life just as grand. “We both grew up in low income households, yet both were accepted into one of the most expensive schools in the state on scholarship,” Lutalo explains. “Similarly to *The Great Gatsby*, there was a heavy juxtaposition of lifestyles. Even though we were young, we held these memories of a time where we had less responsibility. Waiting for our time to be comfortable.” *The Academy* zeroes in on the false promise of the American dream and how it can turn those very dreamers into victims: “She’s sent to padded rooms/That’s just how it is, oh well,” they sing on the reverb-heavy rocker “Oh Well,” delineating their childhood in painful memories of their parents’ separation and mental health crises.

The Academy delves deep into Lutalo’s early life, but at the same time, it only just scratches the surface. “We won’t see the full story until I’m dead, realistically,” they say. “As time goes on, and the dots begin to connect as I continue to release, I’m hoping that people can then come back to this record in the future and view it as something special.” Considering how special *The Academy* already feels, that’s a highly plausible dream.