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ROCKWIRE



The lonesome Texans of The New Year are many things, but happy isn't one of them. Led by brothers Matt and Bubba Kadane, The New Year, despite its name—redolent of champagne toasts, Dick Clark, boisterous gatherings and second chances at life—has never trafficked in optimism.

One need go no further than the titles of the band's two records, *Newness Ends* and the just-released *The End Is Near*, both on Touch and Go. Not exactly stuff to get you out of bed in the morning.

The opening track of *The End Is Near*, delves even further into the kingdom of gloom. Titled "The End's Not Near," it initially hints at a relatively cheery outcome. But then comes the first line, sung in a murmur and accompanied by a somber, painstaking piano riff, "The end's not near/it's here." Oh, well, then. Pass the cyanide won't you?

But to the Kadanes, *The End Is Near* wallows in a much different sort of sadness than their previous efforts.

"We had doubts about reusing the imagery of 'end' in a record title," admits Matt. "But this record deals with different kinds of endings than on *Newness Ends*. There the endings mainly had to do with personal relationships. Here they're about something larger."

That "something larger" appears to be in this case, the bodily end we're all destined to meet. Suffused with thoughts on aging and death, an awareness of mortality permeates the album like bacteria on a scraped knee.

"There's one thing that you should know/there's no escaping getting old," laments "18," a song mourning the passing of that majestic age. "Disease," on the other hand, points out the body's inevitable slide into constant vulnerability as time passes.

"We're racing through time and, after having peaked at the end of adolescence, decaying along the way," notes Matt of the record's subject matter.

Not the sort of material usually explored by rock bands, who usually rely on maintaining a semblance of ceaseless youth. The energy of rock music owes itself almost entirely to hormones, to the turmoil and exuberance experienced when a human body turns into a biological time bomb.

But in The New Year's world, we're all just clocks slowly winding down, crystal balls dropping not towards a new beginning, but a final end. Some folks rail loudly against the advent of the Grim Reaper, but The New Year seems to have settled into

a rueful acceptance. The Kadanes have spent years, in their earlier band Bedhead, and now, perfecting their meditative yet melodic style. The volume and abandon of classic Velvets-style rock-as-hymn has been boiled down to its essence—quiet, focused and pure. Delivered in a sleepy, off-handed manner, The New Year's sharp observations carry an authoritative weight, making the grim nature of the subjects they grapple with all the more unsettling. It's not a question of going gently into that good night, because ultimately, no one has any choice in the matter.

Yet *The End Is Near* does manage to pry its gaze away from the inevitable, and that saves its obsessions from becoming tiresome. The opening track, after its bleak first line, explores other reactions to the problems of mortality and time. The song's narrator watches "the millenarians throw a party for a thousand years," adding in a brilliant coda, "If you call me I won't be home/I'm hiding from the kingdom come." It's both deadly serious, oddly funny and eerily touching. But does it indicate that The New Year sees something beyond the shuffling off the mortal coil?

"The song does on some level look at the future as unknown," Matt concedes. "It's like Donald Rumfeld's metaphysical poem about known unknowns. Age and death are the known knowns. The future in the song, or at least one version of the future, is a known unknown."

This sort of open uncertainty does not extend towards an embrace of a religion that would plug the hole of the unknowable, however. Matt and Bubba recently wrote the soundtrack to *Hell House*, director George Ratliff's documentary about a church-run haunted house in Texas that illustrates the wages of a sinful life.

"There's something terrifying about people who think the future has been divinely revealed, thinking they can map out what's to come," Matt says. "But I liked that the movie portrayed the rank and file followers with enough sensitivity for me to get an idea about them as real people."

It's that sort of attitude that explains the appeal of The New Year. No matter how despairing the outlook of a song, there will always be a kernel of deliberate, evocative humanity at the center. And of course, in spite of all the kvetching about getting old, the band retains a spark of rock 'n' roll youth.

"I don't think of The New Year as direct reference to either New Year's Day or New Year's eve. New Year's eve is a night for, as a friend of mine says, amateur drinkers—on the next day they repent and regret. We've always tried to be more professional." ■



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	THE NEW YEAR The End Is Near (TOUCH AND GO) 8
<p>LAIID-BACK ALT ROCK: Bedhead were one of the pioneers of slowcore back in the early 90s. Brothers Matt and Bubba Kadane were members of Bedhead, and they have keep one foot on that path while branching out with their band The New Year. The group's second album, <i>The End Is Near</i> combines alternative and garage rock, and a little bit of country, with the plodding pace and atmosphere of slowcore. It's a very cool sounding album. Matt Kadane's vocals are laid-back while at the same time the music has an urgency and intensity. The songs are very well constructed and produced. There are also plenty of instrumental breaks showing the expertise of guitarists Bubba Kadane and Peter Schmidt, bass player Mike Donofrio, and drummer Chris Brokaw. Josh McKay is listed as "miscellaneous" on the credits, so one can assume he's the man in charge of the string, keyboard, and other percussion sounds that add a lot of depth and atmosphere to the mix. If you're in an introspective and reflective mood, there isn't a better album to listen to than <i>The End Is Near</i>. ~ Chad Bowar</p>	

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MAGNET

R ISIC ALTERNATIVES

NEW YEAR

The End Is Near

Matt and Bubba Kadane are the ultimate proponents of subconscious rock. Since arriving on the scene in the early 1990s as Bedhead and regrouping in '99 as the New Year—with drummer Chris Brokaw (Codeine, Come) and bassist Mike Donofrio (Saturnine)—the Texas-raised brothers have been crafting lush albums that hide their genius until several months later, when you realize the band's interlaced guitar melodies are firmly lodged in your head. The New Year's sophomore album effortlessly picks up the glowing torch of 2001's *Newness Ends*, opening with a slow-moving ripple of piano notes and murmured lyrics and continuing in a hushed muddle of guitar melodies and gently rattling drums. Every note seems to hum with an underlying subsonic force. Matt's vocals tumble out in a stream of monotone syllables, and on "Chinese Handcuffs" and "Start," he mumbles phrases that could've been plucked from a particularly lucid dream. When he repeats the line "The saints that don't want to be found" on "The End's Not Near," you get the feeling it's the New Year that doesn't want to reveal its intentions. The band would prefer to creep in and lurk just out of tangible range. [Touch And Go, www.tgrec.com]

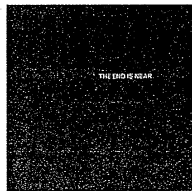
—Tizzy Asher

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File Under

Soothing the apocalypse

R.I.Y.L.

Bedhead, Low, Codeine

THE NEW YEAR

The End Is Near Touch And Go

"The end is not near, it's here..." So opens the latest from the New Year. Such doomed ruminations don't usually lead to a happy resolution, but in this case the vibe is slightly more optimistic than their proclamations let on. Born from the ashes of slowcore artisans Bedhead, the New Year is a quiet, lagging, beautiful entity that, while steeped in drones and whispers, is still a rock band at heart. Moments like the noise-riddled and BPM-impaired guitar freakout at the end of "18" just hint at the technical interplay on their sophomore disc, but the unobtrusive

and subtle arrangements are the real highlight, leaving room for the refreshingly straightforward musings of singer Matt Kadane. It's certainly a somber affair, with songs about uncomfortable parties, illness and generally sullen introspection, but Kadane has a rare melodic delivery that floats atop the shifting undercurrents. Add in the fact that the music is comprised almost completely of traditional rock instrumentation—i.e. none of the theatrical and ambient noise that so many of their peers use to complement and enhance a slow musical burn—and the resulting *The End Is Not Near* pulls off the rare coup of being drearily paced yet fully captivating for its duration. Pay a little bit of attention and you won't be able to tear yourself away from it. >>>PETER D'ANGELO

THE NEW YEAR

The End Is Near

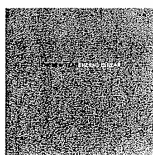
(TOUCH & GO)

Anyone's who's been listening to the brothers Kadane (Matt and Bubba) for the past 13 or so years—either as Bedhead or their subsequent New Year incarnation—knows that these guys have been waiting for “the end” ever since the beginning. (They called their first, Albini-engineered record *Newness Ends*, fer cryin’ out loud). But don't make the mistake of calling them pessimists, misery-obsessed madmen or even mopes. For, against this baneful backdrop—think Godspeed! You Black Emperor or Red House Painters—The New Year reawaken the most tender moments in your life, like kicking around in a pile of warm autumn leaves in grandma's backyard or pulling back your toes from a chilly, bubbling stream and dipping them right back in. Despite the misleadingly bleak backdrops, The New Year unlock the warmest memories in both heart and soul, and spellbind you into a dream state.

KURT ORZECK

RESONANCE

UTOPIAN MUSIC, ARTS & CULTURE ISSUE 42



THE NEW YEAR The End Is Near (Touch & Go)

Anyone who's tried to carry on the party just a little too long will identify with painfully accurate lines like "All these quick friendships can't survive a sinking ship" and "It's not just the hours that seem so wasted / I've wasted more than this / when I used to just look for ways around everything." The New Year's second full-length is rife with musings about growing up, growing old and hanging up the party hat in the process. Both musically and lyrically, the album is more varied and confident than the New Year's debut, and it's no less a pleasure. Through some subtle changes in the musical concoction, they've arrived at a sound that brings to mind elements of American Analog Set and a more technically proficient Pavement (if only due to the Kadana brothers' torpid, Steve Malkmus-esque vocals), with moments of Built To Spill-style sonic abandon bubbling to the surface. If you're ready to let go, let *The End* be the soundtrack to ending the party of your life. GRANT BRISSEY

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L I E R A T I V E S S

THE NEW YEAR

The End Is Near

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**Bedhead brothers
Matt and Bubba
Kadane rise and
shine.**

Though their old band saw universal acclaim in indie circles, Bedhead's sibling singer-songwriters, Matt and Bubba Kadane, often received backhanded compliments for their low-key vocal stylings, with some variation of "singing—if you can call it that" appearing in countless reviews. But such criticism overlooks the fact that these moody mumblers can manage melodies and carry choruses as well as any crystalline crooner. The New Year, the group's wide-awake Bedhead follow-up project, delivers huge hooks, metronomic riffs and driving drumbeats, all of which enhance the Kadanes' amplified whispers on *The End Is Near*. And though their shows of strength are usually subtle, the New Year employ three guitarists whose unbridled interaction propels a striking seven-minute outburst toward the album's end. (**Touch And Go; tgreco.com**) *Andrew Miller*

FREE ACROSS CANADA
JULY 2004



THE NEW YEAR

The End Is Near

Former Bedhead leaders Matt and Bubba Kadane return with their second album as the New Year, an off-kilter art-rock band whose music blends fragile balladry with contemporary post-rock in the tradition of Slint. Much like its predecessor, the thematically connected *The End Is Near* begins quietly with the smugly titled "The End's Not Near" and the lovely "Sinking Ship." While "Chinese Handcuffs" is similarly mellow to start, the arresting bass and drums are soon joined by intricate, interweaving guitars that suddenly and unexpectedly swell to a riotous din. At this point, listeners can expect similar quiet-loud dynamics throughout the record, whose bursting quality is artfully nurtured by Steve Albini. It's a dynamic Albini has supervised many times before, perhaps most notably on influential records by Slint, whom the New Year call upon for inspiration. The comparison is due mostly to the Kadane brothers' tendency to speak-sing with the same sense of dry isolation as Slint vocalist Bryan McMahan, but there are also parallels in the band's musical arrangements. Fans of early Pavement may be drawn to "Plan B" and "18," which stray from the tighter elements of the New Year's music and alt-cool vocals, embracing sloppy guitars and swaggering resignation. *The End Is Near* is a bold and consistently surprising sophomore effort and fans of both Bedhead and *Neu! Ends* will be enthralled. (Touch & Go, www.tgrec.com)

Vish Khanna