On October 18 Japandroids will release *Fate & Alcohol*, their fourth and final full-length. Written in part while the duo—drummer-vocalist David Prowse and guitarist-vocalist Brian King—were touring behind their 2017 ANTI- debut, *Near to the Wild Heart of Life*, the album is at once a return to form and a thrilling step forward, a monument to the chemistry they’ve honed over nearly two decades side-by-side.

Prowse and King met in the early 2000s as students at The University of Victoria in British Columbia. They quickly bonded over a shared love of Wolf Parade and Constantines, bands whose earnest, heart-on-sleeve indie rock would become a blueprint for Japandroids, which they’d eventually form in 2006 as the two found themselves both living and working in Vancouver. “From the moment we started playing,” Prowse says, “there was something that felt special to both of us.”

Over the next 18 years they would make records and play shows like each one might be their last. While their scrappy 2009 debut LP, *Post Nothing*, brought them renown and critical acclaim outside of Vancouver, its thunderous 2012 follow-up, *Celebration Rock*, was a breakthrough on every level—a beloved, career-defining triumph that is still widely considered one of the best rock albums of the 21st century. Its success made Japandroids a fixture at festivals and on late-night TV and inspired an equally passionate response from new fans around the world, one that was wilder and more wondrous than anything they could have imagined. Fast forward a few years and they were headlining Toronto’s Massey Hall, a Canadian landmark and national treasure. By remaining true to the joys of their first jam sessions, they’ve become a great and life-affirming rock band on their own terms, in their own way.

Recorded in Vancouver with longtime collaborator Jesse Gander, *Fate & Alcohol* finds them pursuing new ways to bottle that same rush - to write songs with the vitality and dynamic interaction of their early material, without sacrificing any of the nuance or ambition that marked *Near to the Wild Heart of Life*. Nowhere is that more deeply felt than lead single “Chicago,” a song whose sheer momentum feels inevitable—from the romance of its opening chords to the snare-led explosions that see it through.

"On *Near to the Wild Heart of Life* we wanted to broaden the definition of a Japandroids song,” King says, “so we purposely left our demos quite open and malleable in order to give us more flexibility to experiment in the studio. At the time, this approach was new and exciting, and inspired us to be bolder, to take more chances. We were aiming for a more cinematic take on our signature sound. However, on *Fate & Alcohol*, we went back to basics and made certain that every song ripped in our jam space before we set foot in the studio. If you listen to our first demo of "Chicago," it's obviously much rougher than what you hear on record, but it's all there. Even on a blown-out iPhone recording, the energy was obvious and the feeling cut through loud and clear."

But it goes deeper than that. If *Near to the Wild Heart of Life*found the duo pushing themselves to write music that didn’t rely on (or simply recreate) the raw power and easy pleasures of *Celebration Rock, Fate & Alcohol* is meant to merge what they loved about both. “As a band, you always want to feel like you’re progressing while simultaneously preserving what's unique about you,” King says. “This record combines the energy and abandon of the first two with the storytelling of *Near to the Wild Heart of Life*—*­*youthful exuberance but tempered with a point of view, of life lived.”

You can hear those ideas collide on “D&T,” a song whose natural effervescence is shot through with glimpses of the morning after. On “Fugitive Summer,” King and Prowse come together for a coda that’s all cause and effect, a few seconds of catharsis in the name of coming clean. The sound is familiar but the feeling’s different—heavier, wearier, light years away from the cyclonic naïveté of 2009’s “Wet Hair” or the preemptive nostalgia of 2012’s “Younger Us," early highlights that could only be written by someone surfing one moment to the next. “These songs are a little more self-aware,” King says. “It's no longer just the night, but the next day too, which is something you think more and more about as you get older. Hangovers hit differently, as do the consequences of your actions.”

Listen to “Positively 34th Street,” and you’ll hear that growth. It’s a story of yearning and regret, of second chances. It’s a feat in restraint, a perfect song—all honeyed guitars and understated rhythms, gang vocals and timeless melody. It is also bittersweet, a lasting highlight from two people who were clearly meant to make music together. “I think it’s a lot like love,” Prowse says of their chemistry. “Not everybody gets to fall in love and not everybody gets to have a musical connection with somebody that is as intuitive and as exciting as the one I got to have with Brian. How would I even be able to begin to explain all of this to 23-year-old Dave, who’s just started jamming with his friend at a shitty little jam space or getting ready to play some dive bar in Vancouver to four people. How would I begin to explain to him? Just wait, man. You have no fucking idea what's going to happen.”

When asked to reflect on their career and all they’ve accomplished, both Prowse and King are hesitant to think in terms of legacy. They consider *Fate & Alcohol*a parting gift to fans, because Japandroids have approached every recording as fans themselves, from influences and ethics to artwork and merch. “I don't think we're the most technically proficient band in the world,” Prowse says. “And we're not the most original-sounding or challenging band in the world. But we've always put a lot of passion into what we do, and I think that's resonated with a lot of people. And I'm really grateful that we could be that band for people, in the same way that so many bands were for us.”

Look back on their body of work and you’ll find songs that feel like they were written for this moment, for an ending. Songs of celebration and adventure and tomorrows deferred, but also, at their heart, songs about the fleeting nature of everything. If Japandroids wrote and played like this—a dream from the start—might end at any second, it’s because they knew it could. All great things do.