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The Slip: Across The Great Divide

By Aaron Kayce

"It kind of feels like we've been trying to build this bridge" says Brad Barr, singer/guitarist for The Slip, "and it's nice to finally meet someone who is on the other side saying, 'Okay, let's go. Come on across.'"

My Morning Jacket's Jim James stands at the epicenter of hip, intelligent, emotional American rock; a place the Slip has been creeping towards for years. Yet, where past studio efforts were flawed and incapable of carrying the Slip off its jam-oriented island, its 2006 Bar/None debut, *Eisenhower*, is the airtight vessel it needs to reach the shore.

When asked how the group was finally able to blend its progressive vision with equal parts Built To Spill, Wilco, Secret Machines and Broken Social Scene, Barr says, "We have one guy to thank. His name is Matthew Ellard [producer]. He took such care with us in getting those sounds correct, and getting those sounds to really feel huge and intimate at the same time. We needed to let something go; something needed to change. And at the time, I really thought we were making our last record."

Fearing the end was near, the Slip decided to dump all its cash into a great studio (Q Division) with a top-notch producer (Ellard had previously worked with Elliott Smith, Billy Bragg and Wilco) and document its massive growth since 2002's *Angels Come on Time*. The result is a warm mix of experimental rock, massive hooks, weird sounds, big fuzzy guitars and rootsy, timeless songs with a pop sensibility.

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More than just welcoming the Slip to the other side of the tracks, Jim James played a significant role in saving the life of the Boston-based rock trio. After almost 1,000 shows and ten-plus years of struggling across the country in a van, the Slip—Marc Friedman (bass), along with brothers Brad (guitar/vocals) and Andrew Barr (drums)—was running on empty.

“Things had gotten unsustainable. Our personal lives were suffering for doing these tours where nothing was really happening,” says Barr.

Something finally happened: Jim James saw them perform. James was so impressed by what he called these “creative and weird” guys, he injected new life into the band by raving about them to both The New York Times and Rolling Stone. James then took it one step further by helping the Slip land a highly coveted opening slot for My Morning Jacket’s November-December tour.

As Barr reflects on his new album and the fact that his band is finally breaking into the contemporary rock world, he smiles and says, “At first I was sort of fascinated with it and running towards it. Now I feel like we’re running with it.”

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