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## MUSIC: FEATURE

### Les Savy Fav



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Hey! Don't poke me with that: Les Savy Fav proves the band that sleeps together ...

### Something from nothing

By [Omar Perez](#)

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Les Savy Fav bassist Syd Butler isn't just the president of his company, he's also a client. Concern for his band's welfare (rather than his hairline) prompted him to open the Frenchkiss label that LSF and seven other acts call home. "I have to go to label-guy personality when I talk to my bandmates sometimes," Butler says. "It's frustrating to be *that* guy."

While Butler may take the helm in the office, vocalist Tim Harrington becomes *some* guy on stage. His thick, bushy red beard makes him look like he's straight out of a bluegrass group rather than an indie-rock band. He is smeared with the grease that has oiled the better indie bands, crawling on top of speakers and pouncing around like a cat that didn't just smell catnip, but lit the shit and smoked it.

While LSF's live show presents a visual zaniness, the band's three full-length efforts embody an equally mad musical method that strays from any normalcy. They opt for a *mélange* of angular guitars and time changes that are inspired in equal parts by art-punk rockism and lo-fi graininess. Les Savy Fav -- pronounced *lay sah vee fahv*, a name that means nothing, even in French -- doesn't cop to the Resurgence of Rock tag that is bestowed on seemingly every N.Y.C. act.

In fact, the band (Butler, Harrington, guitarist Seth Jabour and drummer Harrison Haynes) got its start in Providence, R.I. The then-quintet (two filmmakers, a sculptor, a printmaker and an illustrator) attended a local arts college, but a repressed job market forced the band to relocate to the Big Apple, where they released their 1997 debut, *3/5*, on the Selfstarter label. (Subsequent albums, minus a string of singles, were released on Frenchkiss.) After the sophomore release, "The Cat and the Cobra," second guitarist Gibb Slife began having canvas withdrawals and left LSF to return to painting. The newly slimmed-down version of LSF released 2000's "Emor (Rome Upside Down)," an album that pulled away from the more unrefined feel of its predecessor.

"I think "Rome" was a big bridge -- a crossroads -- for us. I think we learned a lot from it," Butler says. Their last effort, 2001's "Go Forth," furthered the band's sonics with more polish, getting a makeover from producer Phil Ek (Modest Mouse, *Built to Spill*). This also marked the point when the band began to increase the frequency of its live shows. "We started to see that a lot of other bands were selling more records and becoming more popular because they were on the road more often," Butler says.

LSF plans to release its next full-length effort by year's end, culling tracks from a series of nine 7-inches the band has released post-"Go Forth" (all of which fit in a puzzle -- a la Topps cards -- when combined). "Tim is an avid 7-inch collector, and it's more out of respect for the people who still appreciate them, since a lot of folks don't even have record players anymore" Butler says. Writing new material while on the road, the upcoming tracks -- as Butler describes them -- will sit somewhere between "Rome" and "Go Forth."

"When we go into the studio, we shoot straight from the hip," he says of their work ethic. "I think we pool our resources and create something that's new and refreshing. To create something out of nothing is a great feeling."

