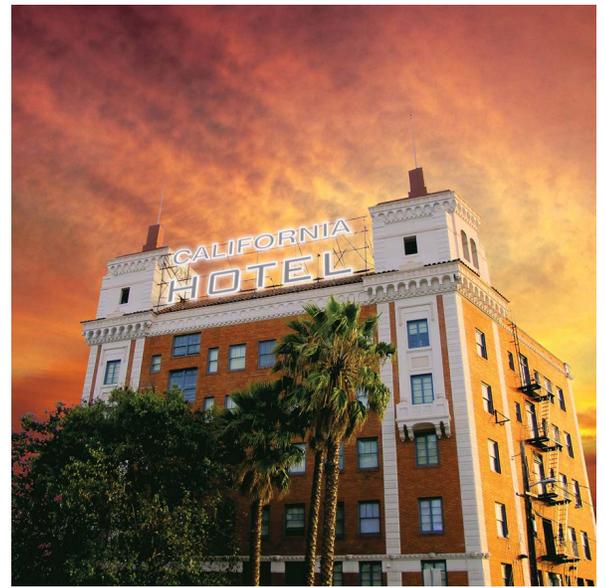


Trans Am *California Hotel*

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Trans Am is a band that has never compromised. Originally from North Bethesda, Maryland, Trans Am is considered fathers of the instrumental post-rock sound of the 1990s. Since then the band - Phil Manley, Sebastian Thomson and Nathan Means - has added vocals and spanned genres from metal to house to progressive rock. They exploited Casio keyboards for cacophonous lo-fi sounds. They played fully electronic sets when most of their contemporaries were sticking exclusively to guitars. They pioneered early millennium fad Electroclash. Today, they continue to set their own course.

On *California Hotel*, Trans Am borrowed ideas from My Bloody Valentine, John Carpenter, DAF, Led Zeppelin, Air, Sade and David Gilmore, among others. The result is an incredibly rich range of sounds that retain a pulsating energy.



California Hotel was constructed in four one-week bursts that took place over two years deep in San Francisco's El Studio. Bits and pieces of songs like "Expansions" and "Alles Verbotten" were recorded during live jams, lost due to unique file management and remerged for inspection and improvement – often multiple times.

El Studio boasts a large live room designed for this type of recording. The space is also stocked with a wide variety of vintage analog synths – from Moog to Micro-Korg to Crumar and beyond - from which Trans Am was able to create a vast palette of Klangfarben.

But the album was also shaped by outside forces. The guitar parts for "Ship of the Imagination" were written in Portland, Oregon at a table overflowing with beer and pizza. "Rules of Engagement" was written in a cramped Brooklyn apartment just a few days before the last session.

At the beginning of the final week-long mixing session for the album in November 2016, it was mostly unfinished. Trans Am used the time pressure to their advantage. The energy from "I Hear Fake Voices," for example, comes in part from the song being composed as it was being tracked. The band tweaked arrangements and parts until the song presented itself. The track was written, recorded and mixed in about five hours.

In an effort to "get back to their roots" some songs were recorded live to analog tape. The basic tracks for most songs were recorded live, in an attempt to capture Trans Am's "X-factor Rock 'n' Roll serpent energy." All musicians were playing in the same room at the same time with a minimum of overdubs. This decision was partly choice and partly necessity due to time constraints.

The album's title pays homage to late Eagles founder, guitarist and vocalist Glenn Frey – the "forgotten death" of 2016, a year in which artists including David Bowie, Lemmy, Prince and George Michael also left us.

Politics:

The 2016 election returns came in on the first night of Trans Am's session. The band watched the initial returns coming while eating burritos in El Studio's living room. Over the rest of the evening, they skipped between the live room and living room keeping track of the election. They were trying to get a take of "Staying Power" but eventually became so distracted that they had to stop. By then, Donald Trump had been elected. They rode home with a driver who was joking about losing his healthcare and being deported.

The next day, Trans Am came back in – still a little shocked – and managed to nail "Staying Power" on the first take. Politically, they had been transported back to their roots: a slightly out-of-place funk-metal band playing 1980's hard core shows in Washington, DC that protested the conservative politics of Reagan and Bush-era America. The band was also witness to the 9-11 attacks on the Pentagon, recording the song "Afternight" the next day at their downtown Washington, DC studio.

The night of the 2016 election, Sebastian sent out an Instagram message that Trans Am had been through this sort of thing before – and they would make it this time as well. Over the next week, they recorded *California Hotel*.

The band has donated a track to the "A Song a Day Keeps the Pain Away" series, the proceeds of which go to The Southern Poverty Law Center.