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1372 OVERTON PARK

October 6, 2009

By Jason Heller

<http://www.avclub.com/articles/lucero-1372-overton-park,33692/>



Grade: A-

Back when Lucero played warehouses and released scrappy attic recordings on hand-packaged LPs, the Memphis band felt like an epiphany. Granted, Lucero wasn't the first group to smash punk zeal into country-rock tradition, but it was the best at the time, and did so on wholly punk-rock terms. Ten years on, the group has released *1372 Overton Park*, its major-label debut. Not only is it a sonic leap for Lucero, it's another epiphany: Having long outgrown the warehouse, leader Ben Nichols and crew have embraced their legendary Memphis forebears by adding a robust horn section (courtesy of Memphis soul legend Jim Spake) and an epic sweep on par with Lucero's closest cousin, Drive-By Truckers. *Overton's* tracks cover Nichols' typically gravelly domain—anthemic barnburners like “Sounds Of The City” to twang-laden weepers like “Can't Feel A Thing”—but there's also stomping Southern boogie on “The Devil And Maggie Chascarillo,” a raucous homage to Los Bros Hernandez's *Love And Rockets* comics, and a newfound brassy punch that recalls everything from Stax classics to The Replacements' *Pleased To Meet Me*. With young contenders like The Gaslight Anthem hot on their heels, the members of Lucero have shown that they can still stretch, grow, and move forward—even while keeping a reverent eye on the rearview mirror.