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## As Tall As Lions *You Can't Take It With You* (Triple Crown)

By [Angela Shawn-Chi Lu](#)  
 Published: August 20th, 2009 | 7:00am



Slow can be powerful. Tremendously powerful.  
 Heart-achingly powerful.

Few understood this better than Shirley Horn, one of the greatest jazz vocalists of all time, who, with her trademark style — a “glacial tempo” and the hushed timbre of her maternal voice — transformed ballads into poignant experiences unmatched in their sincerity. When her comforting whisper savored each lyric as if it were her last in “It’s Easy to Remember,” you could feel heartbreak as if it had happened yesterday. Doing most things in life slowly and carefully, it turns out, leaves room for soul, genuineness, and anticipation.

It is for this very same reason that the crowning moments of As Tall As Lions’ new album are also its slowest. They aren’t just waltz-like slow, but shockingly slow. You’ll notice dust floating pass your eyelids, catch yourself entirely frozen in time, but completely entranced by this sumptuous sound. Time will sit still and wait patiently in the corner, sipping tea while you are transported into another dimension.

It is called “Duermete,” a haunting yet elegant lullaby. Like most transformative experiences, the moment comes to you when you least expect it: on a solid, rousing rock record from an up-and-coming indie band. Quietly, there slowly fades in three components: pristine, clean guitar chords that rise and fall like the ebb and flow of a placid river, an ambient synth as smooth as silk, cushioning your brain delicately, and a honeyed, distant trumpet, soothing and sophisticated. This molasses-slow and introspective backdrop sets the perfect mood for bassist and singer Julio Tavarez’s earnest story about soul-searching, which he presents in his Al Green-meets-Smokey Robinson falsetto.

His tortured lyrics are abstract enough and expressed so gently, as if

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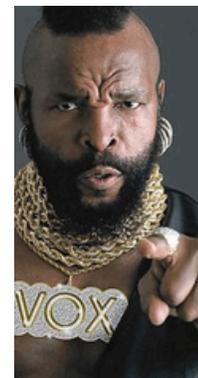


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whispered into your ear, that they can be felt and related to, the same way Shirley Horn's ballads could be felt. The first time his voice quivers with the line *"On fire tonight,"* during the chorus, you'll want to curse because there's so much soul and passion in it.

A guitar fill joins in next, also with elongated notes tugging at each other, the result of which is again a lonely and longing feeling, the sentiment carried in Nigro's lyrics (*"Lately I've been wandering around / Lookin' for my up and down"*). The most enchanting part of the track, however, occurs when the entire band joins in, performing unhurriedly but at explosive, full volume for the song's climax, which symbolizes the overcoming of Nigro's personal demons. A solo on electric guitar is played with tremolo effect above drums and bass, while Nigro yells, now fiercely determined, *"And I know that better days will come."* Amid such a mighty and fierce sound, you'll believe this optimism to be true.

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