

= El Camino (The Black Keys album) =

El Camino is the seventh studio album by American rock duo the Black Keys . It was co @-@ produced by Danger Mouse and the group , and was released on Nonesuch Records on December 6 , 2011 . The record was the band 's follow @-@ up to their commercial breakthrough , Brothers (2010) , and was their third collaboration with Danger Mouse . El Camino draws from popular genres of the 1950s to 1970s , such as rock and roll , glam rock , rockabilly , surf rock and soul . Danger Mouse contributed as a co @-@ writer on each of the 11 songs alongside guitarist Dan Auerbach and drummer Patrick Carney .

The album was recorded from March to May 2011 in Nashville , Tennessee , at Easy Eye Sound Studio , which Auerbach opened the year prior . The band approached writing and recording differently than on previous albums , as they entered the studio without having written any material and deliberated longer on how to structure songs . After struggling to translate the slower songs from Brothers to a live setting , the band wrote more uptempo , hook @-@ laden tracks for El Camino . The album 's cover art depicts a minivan similar to one the group toured in early in their career , but in an inside joke , they named the record after the El Camino muscle car . A faux newspaper advertisement and parody car commercial playing on this joke were used to promote the record prior to release .

" Lonely Boy " was released as the lead single in October 2011 and became the group 's highest @-@ charting single in several countries , including the United States , Australia , and Canada . The album received positive reviews from critics and was ranked by many publications as one of the year 's best albums . It debuted at number two on the US Billboard 200 and reached the top five of the album charts in Australia , Canada , Belgium (Flanders) , and New Zealand . The album was certified platinum in France , Ireland , the United Kingdom , and the US , as well as multi @-@ platinum in Australia , Canada , and New Zealand . The Black Keys supported the album with the El Camino Tour , their first headlining arena tour . Four additional singles were released , including " Gold on the Ceiling " and " Little Black Submarines " , which were rock radio successes . Among other accolades , El Camino won the award for Best Rock Album at the 55th Annual Grammy Awards , while " Lonely Boy " received honors for Best Rock Performance and Best Rock Song . The album has sold 1 @. @ 4 million copies in the US .

= = Background = =

From 2001 to 2009 , the Black Keys experienced underground success , but after the release of their critically acclaimed sixth studio album , Brothers , the group achieved a commercial breakthrough . The single " Tighten Up " was a sleeper hit on radio , eventually spending 10 weeks at number one on Billboard 's Alternative Songs chart in the United States and becoming their first song to enter the Billboard Hot 100 . The album debuted at number three on the Billboard 200 chart and sold 1 @. @ 5 million copies worldwide , including 870 @, @ 000 copies in the US . The band also gained additional exposure by continuing to license their songs in popular media , making them Warner Bros. Records ' most @-@ licensed band of the year . At the 53rd Annual Grammy Awards in February 2011 , the band won awards for Best Alternative Music Album (for Brothers) and Best Rock Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal (for " Tighten Up ") .

The band 's sudden success proved overwhelming , as they found themselves booking additional promotional commitments and facing demand for additional touring dates . In January 2011 , the group canceled concerts in Australia , New Zealand , and Europe , citing exhaustion , thus clearing out most of their touring schedule into April . Drummer Patrick Carney said , " We 've been touring long enough to know when we 're about to hit our breaking point . " The desire to record another album soon after Brothers also led to the decision . Carney said , " We could have waited another year or so , and milked the Brothers album and kept touring , but we like bands , and our favourite bands growing up and even today , are bands that put out a lot of music and every album is different from the last . "

= = Recording = =

El Camino was recorded in Nashville , Tennessee , at Easy Eye Sound Studio , which was opened by guitarist / vocalist Dan Auerbach in mid @-@ 2010 after he relocated from the group 's long @-@ time hometown of Akron , Ohio . Carney spoke of how the success of Brothers impacted the follow @-@ up record : " For me , there were physical jitters about everything that was going on . Seeing how big the shows were getting , feeling like people were paying attention , kind of made me anxious , and I think that 's part of the reason [El Camino 's] songs are so fast . I think we wanted to just muscle through it . " Despite the growing expectations of the band , Carney said that the El Camino recording sessions were much more relaxed than those for Brothers , during which he had been dealing with his divorce .

The band hired Danger Mouse to co @-@ produce the record with them , based on their experience with him producing their 2008 album Attack & Release and the single " Tighten Up " . Danger Mouse served as co @-@ writer for all of the songs on El Camino . Speaking of their willingness to involve him in the songwriting process , Carney said , " It took us a long time to be able to trust somebody like that , and not be arrogant little kids about it . " Auerbach said , " It was difficult at times . Some days it worked great . Some days it was just infuriating . You gotta lose any kind of insecurity . It was a totally different way of thinking for me . "

Recording for El Camino began on March 3 , 2011 . In contrast to their previous records , the Black Keys entered the studio for their new album without having developed any new material , with the exception of the lyrics to " Little Black Submarines " , which Auerbach and Danger Mouse had pre @-@ written . Each day , the band began from scratch and in Auerbach 's words , " brainstormed until we had songs and we did a song every two days or so " . The material was then refined over several days , and after arrangements were agreed upon , the group quickly finished recording the songs , often in just one or two takes . Each song was recorded in a live take of guitar and drums before overdubs were added . This was done to give the music what Auerbach called " that human element , that live feel " . Similarly , the group eschewed playing to a click track , despite a tendency to speed up during choruses , to keep a natural feel in the performance . " Dead and Gone " was the first song to be completed .

The band recorded using a Quad @-@ 8 mixing console that was first installed in Nashville 's Creative Workshop studio in 1969 and later bought by Auerbach from a man in North Carolina . During the sessions , the band listened to playback of their progress on a speaker they purchased from Muscle Shoals Sound Studio after the last day of recording Brothers . Guitar and drums tracks were recorded in the studio 's " live room " , while vocals were recorded in the control room . The studio 's bathrooms served as an echo chamber for recording vocals and handclaps .

For the first time , the band deliberated over the musical details of each song . Auerbach said , " we were getting into the nuances of each song by asking ourselves , ' How long should this intro be ? How long should the pre @-@ chorus be ? Should there even be a pre @-@ chorus ? ' We were playing with tempos and BPMs , seeing how a vocal hook does or doesn 't work at a faster speed . And usually , we went with the faster option . " Differing from the band 's lyrics @-@ first approach on Brothers , the lyrics for El Camino were written after the music , often being improvised at the microphone . Explaining their focus on melody , Auerbach said , " the words had to fit in this pre @-@ existing space . It was really confining and totally different from anything I 'd done before . "

The sessions for El Camino lasted through May 26 , 2011 , and overall , the band spent 41 days recording , the longest time spent on any of their albums . Mixing and mastering were completed in mid @-@ June .

= = Composition = =

El Camino follows the Black Keys ' garage rock style but places less emphasis on blues than the group 's previous records . The album instead draws more influence from other popular genres from the 1950s to the 1970s , including rock and roll , glam rock , rockabilly , surf rock and soul . Carney explained the album 's direction , " After the first three or four songs were recorded , it kind of

became apparent that they 're all rooted in this early rock and roll feel . It was around that time that we decided to make a whole album that was built around that . " The band cited several older musical acts as musical influences on the album , including the Clash , the Cramps , T. Rex , Johnny Burnette , Ramones , the Beatles , Sweet , and the Cars . Following the sonic expansion on their previous two albums , Attack & Release and Brothers , for El Camino they sought to strip @-@ down their sound by writing an album of " efficient rock @-@ and @-@ roll songs and minimal instrumentation " .

In contrast to some of the slower , quieter tracks from Brothers , the songs on El Camino are more uptempo and employ more hooks and guitar riffs . During the tour for Brothers , the Black Keys realized that many of that album 's songs were too slow to effectively translate to a live setting , leading them to write more fast @-@ paced material for El Camino . Carney said , " This record stemmed from that , the fact that it 's easier for our songs to come across well live if they are fast . So we were just trying to make a guitar rock album that was more upbeat than anything we 've ever recorded . " Realizing halfway through the recording sessions that all the songs they had written to that point were uptempo , the group decided to maintain the faster pace as a common thread throughout the album .

= = Packaging and title = =

The album was named after the Chevrolet El Camino , a coupé utility car . The inspiration came from the band sighting an El Camino while on tour in Canada in 2010 ; Carney admitted that the title was selected " as a joke " . " El camino " is Spanish for " the road " or " the path " . The band found out the phrase 's meaning after selecting it as an album title , and they joked about the record taking on deeper meaning afterwards . Andy Gill of The Independent said of the title , " it 's a nod to the pilgrimage of dues @-@ paying , the months of one @-@ night @-@ stands in tiny Midwest towns which hone raw talent into rock 'n'roll gold . " Michael Carney , the duo 's art director and Patrick 's brother , was initially hesitant about the title . Patrick recounted the conversation with his brother about selecting the title and artwork :

I told my brother the idea and my brother was like , " You know , if you name the record El Camino , everybody 's going to think of the car the El Camino . " And I was like , " Yeah exactly . That 's the fucking point ! " And he was like , " OK , but why don 't we just put a car on the cover that 's not an El Camino ? " And I said , " OK , what kind of car ? " He says , " Just put the first car you guys ever toured in on the cover . "

The vehicle in the cover image is a Plymouth Grand Voyager similar to the navy blue one that the group toured in for the first year and a half of their career . Commenting on the puzzled reaction the group received to putting an image of a used van on the cover of an album named for a muscle car , Michael said , " That 's the reaction we were going for . It didn 't work in Europe because they don 't know what an El Camino is over there , so it made perfect sense to them . " Patrick compared the appearance of Akron to the cover image , calling his hometown " A busted up parking lot with a busted up car . " The interior sleeve booklet for the album features images of various vans from Akron , Ohio , including those produced under the brands Ford , Chevrolet , Chrysler , and Dodge . Each copy of the album bears a sticker on the exterior that says " Play loud " .

= = Release = =

= = = Promotion = = =

Prior to the release of El Camino , promotional copies were limited to a small pressing of just 50 , given mostly to music labels and the Black Keys ' manager . Preview listens for journalists were strictly controlled to only one @-@ time listens and they were held within the duo 's manager 's office , an uncommon practice within the music industry . The group opted to not put the record on music streaming services , citing financial reasons . Patrick Carney said that streaming services are

not yet " at a point where you 're able to replace royalties from record sales with the royalties from streams . For a band that makes a living selling music , it 's not at a point where it 's feasible for us . " As is common practice for the band , several songs from the album were licensed for use in popular media , including ESPN 's Band of the Month for December , Lifetime 's TV drama Army Wives , and the video game MLB 12 : The Show . The group noted though that they were planning to reduce the amount of licensing in comparison to previous records to avoid overexposure . Carney said , " When no one 's buying your records , it 's easy to justify selling a song . But once you start selling records , you can 't really justify having two songs in Cadillac commercials . It looks greedy . "

According to Michael Carney , the promotional strategy for the album embraces " the spirit of doing it the wrong way " . Warner Bros. Records COO Livia Tortella elaborated that " They 've latched onto that idea at a time when the real spirit of alternative has , in many ways , gone away from our music . The spirit of rock should be that : outside of the norm , not just mainstream and predictable . " The music video originally shot for their lead single " Lonely Boy " employed a big budget and several people , but the band decided instead to release a one @-@ shot video consisting solely of footage of an extra ? actor and part @-@ time security guard Derrick Tuggle ? dancing . The video went viral , garnering more than 400 @,@ 000 views on YouTube in 24 hours . On October 9 , 2011 , the band placed an ad in the Akron Beacon Journal advertising their used tour van as a " 1994 El Camino " for sale . The ad read , " 1994 El Camino : 273 @,@ 000 mi . 200 cubic @-@ in . 3.3L 95hp V @-@ 6 engine , 3 @-@ speed turbo autom shift , sapphire stylus , some ticks / pops , light surface noise . Working AM / FM radio , tan metallflake / woodie panels , some rust . Black vinyl seats . Priced to sell ? Grab the Keys and go ! Contact Pat or Dan at (330) 510 ? 1206 . " The phone number in the ad led to a recorded message of Patrick Carney describing the car and asking for the caller to leave a message . The band launched the promotional website WannaBuyAVan.com with a video parodying a low @-@ budget used car commercial for the same van . Actor / comedian Bob Odenkirk plays the salesman in the video trying to pass off the van as an El Camino .

The album 's release date of December 6 , 2011 , contrasts with the conventional record release strategy within the music industry . Carney said , " There 's a rule you release albums in February ? March , then you tour the summer . Then there 's the September ? October schedule . Our new album is out on December 6 . I asked the label for a list of major rock bands that had released albums in December . In the last 10 years there 's maybe four . But our manager said it 's a shame more bands don 't , ' cos it would force the industry not to shut down . " The group had intended to release El Camino in September but decided to push it until December to allow for a three @-@ month break . Ultimately , they booked this free time up with additional concerts and a promotional tour .

A week prior to the release date , the duo decided to stream five tracks from El Camino on their website after the album leaked online . The Black Keys appeared as the musical guest on Saturday Night Live on December 3 , 2011 , for the second time that year , and they performed " Lonely Boy " and " Gold on the Ceiling " . Two days later , the group held an album release concert at Webster Hall in New York City that was streamed live on MTVHive.com. The group made several appearances on late @-@ night talk shows , including Late Show with David Letterman and The Colbert Report , as well as at the 2011 Spike Video Game Awards . The group was the subject of a cover story in Rolling Stone for their issue dated January 19 , 2012 ; in a widely publicized quote , Carney criticized Canadian rock band Nickelback , saying that " rock and roll is dying because people became OK with Nickelback being the biggest band in the world " .

= = = Singles = = =

" Lonely Boy " was released as the album 's lead single on October 26 , 2011 , and became one of the group 's most successful singles . It topped several rock radio charts , including the Alternative Songs and Rock Songs charts in the US , and the Alternative Rock and Active Rock charts in Canada . On the singles charts , " Lonely Boy " was the group 's highest @-@ charting song in

several countries , peaking at number 64 on the Billboard Hot 100 , number 2 on the Australian Singles Chart , and number 33 on the Canadian Hot 100 . " Lonely Boy " was certified nine @-@ times platinum in Canada , triple @-@ platinum in Australia , platinum in New Zealand , and gold in Denmark . " Gold on the Ceiling " was released as the album 's second single , and like its predecessor , it topped the US Alternative Songs chart and the Canadian Alternative Rock and Active Rock charts . On the singles charts , the song reached number 94 on the Hot 100 , number 34 on the Australian Singles Chart , and number 51 on the Canadian Hot 100 . The song was certified platinum in Australia and Canada . " Dead and Gone " was released as a third single in Europe , while " Run Right Back " was released as a fourth single in the United Kingdom . " Little Black Submarines " was released as the record 's fifth single on October 8 , 2012 , and was a rock radio success ; it peaked at number two on the US Alternative Songs chart and the Canadian Alternative Rock and Active Rock charts , as well as number 54 on the Canadian Hot 100 .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical reaction = = =

El Camino received high praise from music critics . According to review aggregator website Metacritic , the album received an average review score of 84 / 100 based on 37 reviews , indicating " Universal acclaim " . Critics mainly praised the instrumentation of the songs on the album , as well as the album production . Spin gave the record an 8 / 10 rating , calling it " irresistibly gaudy " and " catchier , glitzier , ballsier " . The reviewer said the songs contain " classic cock @-@ rock sonic tchotchkes : handclaps , talk @-@ box guitar breaks , rainbow keyboards . The overall effect is something akin to ZZ Top with glitter in their beards . " Melissa Maerz of Entertainment Weekly gave the record an " A ? " , writing that the group " make a small @-@ room racket that sounds massive enough for a bigger @-@ is @-@ better world " . Maerz said that " El Camino trades the soulful stylings of Brothers for harder @-@ driving , faster @-@ riffing rock & roll " . James Lachno of The Daily Telegraph rated the album four @-@ stars @-@ out @-@ of @-@ five , praising Danger Mouse for " sharpen [ing] up the sweet , melodic choruses that offset the duo 's unholy racket " and give each song a " timeless quality , as suited to a Seventies mid @-@ west saloon as a students ' indie disco " . Despite what Lachno judged to be " tawdry " lyrics , he said that " the Black Keys are here to rock , not talk . On this evidence , few bands right now do it better . " Randall Roberts of the Los Angeles Times assigned the album a maximum four @-@ star rating , calling it " butt @-@ shaking music " and " an album with lyrics that are both unpretentious and un @-@ dumb " . Roberts praised the nostalgic elements of the group 's music and said that the album " scratches an itch you didn 't even know you had " .

Michael Hann of The Guardian gave the record a maximum rating of five stars , writing that it is " dripping with an easy , attractive confidence " . Commenting on the various musical influences on the album , Hann said , " they stride fearlessly into areas that might once have been off @-@ limits " . His review concluded , " They sound like a band who think they 've made the year 's best rock 'n'roll album , probably because that 's exactly what they 've done . " Rob Harvilla of Pitchfork Media scored El Camino a 7 @-@ 4 / 10 and called it " their best and (not coincidentally) goofiest album " . Describing the music , he said , " The riffs are glam @-@ nasty , the lyrics sublimely knuckleheaded , the basslines nimble and bombastic , the mood frivolous and fun and unabashedly corny . " Will Hermes of Rolling Stone rated the album four stars and called it their " grandest pop gesture yet , augmenting dark @-@ hearted fuzz blasts with sleekly sexy choruses and Seventies @-@ glam flair " . AllMusic writer Stephen Thomas Erlewine rated the album four stars and said , " More than any other Black Keys album , El Camino is an outright party , playing like a collection of 11 lost 45 singles , each one having a bigger beat or dirtier hook than the previous side . " Kitty Empire of The Observer was more critical of the album ; in a three @-@ star review , Empire commented that it sounded like Danger Mouse " tightened up the Black Keys ' act rather than loosened it " and that " El Camino may be fast and fun , but it is also somewhat undemanding . "

The reviewer noted that the album had " increased vigour " , but that it came at the expense of " the subtleties that made Brothers such an intriguing ride . "

= = = Commercial performance = = =

In the US , El Camino debuted at number two on the Billboard 200 and sold 206 @, @ 000 copies in its first week on sale . This marks the highest single @-@ week album sales and , to that point , charting position that the group had achieved in the country . In Canada , the album debuted at number three on the Canadian Albums Chart and sold 27 @, @ 000 copies in its first week . In its first two weeks on sale , El Camino sold nearly 293 @, @ 000 copies in the US . The album has been certified : triple @-@ platinum in Canada ; double @-@ platinum in Australia and New Zealand ; platinum in the U.S. , United Kingdom , and Ireland ; and gold in Belgium , the Netherlands , and France . As of April 2014 , the album has sold 1 @. @ 4 million copies in the United States .

= = = Accolades = = =

El Camino appeared on several end @-@ of @-@ year rankings by music publications and critics . The album was ranked by Mojo as the sixth @-@ best album of 2012 , even though it was released in 2011 . American Songwriter ranked it as the ninth @-@ best album of 2011 , while Rolling Stone ranked it as the 12th @-@ best . The album placed 21st on the " Best Albums " list from The Village Voice 's 2011 Pazz & Jop critics ' poll . Paste ranked the record as the 22nd @-@ best of the year before it had been released . Spin placed it at number 36 on its list of the 50 best albums of the year , writing , " Glam @-@ blooze guitar , poppy melodies , and hockey @-@ rink keyboards fit the Keys like vintage denim . " Claire Suddath of Time magazine and Andrew Leahey of The Washington Times both named El Camino one of the Top 10 Albums of 2011 , while the staff of AllMusic selected the album as one of their favorites of the year . In end @-@ of @-@ year polls , writers for Rolling Stone selected " Little Black Submarines " as the 18th @-@ best song of 2011 , while the publication 's readers voted " Lonely Boy " the year 's third @-@ best song .

At the 55th Annual Grammy Awards , The Black Keys won the award for Best Rock Album for El Camino , and Best Rock Performance and Best Rock Song for " Lonely Boy " . Auerbach was honored as Producer of the Year , Non @-@ Classical for co @-@ producing El Camino and producing records by Hacienda and Dr. John . The Black Keys also received nominations for Album of the Year for El Camino and Record of the Year for " Lonely Boy " .

= = Tour = =

In December 2011 , The Black Keys announced a 2012 concert tour , their first playing arenas as a headlining act . The tour opened in Europe on January 23 , 2012 with three weeks of shows , before visiting North America from March to May . The tour made multiple return visits to Europe and North America throughout the year , while also visiting Australasia from October through November . In total , the group played 112 shows in 2012 . Among the support acts that accompanied the band were Band of Skulls , Arctic Monkeys , and Tegan and Sara . After tickets went on sale , The Black Keys ' concert at Madison Square Garden in New York City sold out in 15 minutes , resulting in the addition of a second date at the venue to satisfy demand . The tour grossed \$ 12 @. @ 7 million in 2012 , and after 129 shows , it ended on July 13 , 2013 .

Just as it did on its previous tour , the group added bassist Gus Seyffert and keyboardist / guitarist John Wood as touring musicians in order to perform songs as close to their studio arrangements as possible . Auerbach explained the decision for the expanded live band : " It wasn 't about the size of the venue . It was just that we could afford to do it and our songs deserved it . We wanted to finally present the songs like we 'd written them . " During the middle portion of each concert , Auerbach and Carney played older material as a duo without the backing musicians . Many critics singled these performances out as the shows ' highlights .

The concert stage used a setup with a lighting system and video projections designed by Karl Lemieux . The lighting comprised four banks of on @-@ stage vintage spotlights , along with two disco balls and a lighted sign bearing the band 's name that were lowered for the encores . Lemieux 's video , which was projected onto a white sheet at the stage 's rear , incorporated black @-@ and @-@ white footage of junkyards , deserts , and open highways . Carney explained that the band was aiming for a retro aesthetic , saying , " We kind of wanted to make the whole stage look like an old @-@ school rock ' n ' roll show , as much as possible . We 're referencing bands in the ' 70s , what they were doing when they were playing arenas . " Moreover , the footage was meant to pay homage to the group 's origins . Auerbach said , " We wanted it to represent our music and the Midwest where we 're from , the Rust Belt and open spaces . We find that stuff beautiful and uplifting . "

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Dan Auerbach , Patrick Carney , and Brian " Danger Mouse " Burton .

= = Personnel = =

= = Charts and certifications = =

= = = Single charts = = =

= = Certifications = =