

THE THIEVES

The Zodiac

"Hello, we're The Thieves, from Oxford, England," yelps Hal Stokes as he, brother Sam and drummer Jamie Dawson bound onstage for their first hometown gig in nine months. Just in case we'd forgotten, as they ply their rocking trade over in LA, that they're still local boys at heart, still dedicating songs to long-term fans who never fail to give them a heroes' welcome.

The Thieves' new EP, their first since changing their name from Vade Mecum, shows a band becoming even more of a pop proposition, but live they still rock out, cutting axe hero poses with feet on monitors, Hal diving into the crowd, all three of them shaking their shaggy blond manes in unison. A keyboard player though adds a whole new dimension to their sound, much like Charlie Coombes does with Supergrass. Hal and Sam have

been playing together in bands now since they were 13, and it shows – they're so well tuned and choreographed that you can picture them tearing up stadium stages already. And that's not such a far-fetched thought when you consider their talent for writing full-on rock songs with fast-beating atomic pop hearts. Like the new single, 'You Get It Easy', tapping into U2's epic style while borrowing a lick or two from Bowie's 'Heroes'. They can do bumptious rock'n'roll in the style of Free, but just as naturally beat it up with The Stooges, as with 'It Still Goes On'.

The last song, a cover of 'Whole Lotta Rosie', dedicated to Rose down the front sporting a Vade Mecum tattoo, displays their roots in every sense. But as well as roots, The Thieves have got wings too. Just watch them fly.

Ian Chesterton