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Sidewalk Chalk to Release Fourth Album *An Orchid is Born*
on Ropeadope Records, June 2



"Sidewalk Chalk has mastered an artistry naturally expressed through passionate instrumentation, meaningful lyricism and full-bodied tracks." *Hip Hop Speakeasy*

Ropeadope Records is proud to announce the June 2nd release of *An Orchid is Born*, the fourth full-length album from cross-genre hip-hop/jazz/soul collective **Sidewalk Chalk**. Overseen by Grammy award-winning producer **Robert "Sput" Searight**, *An Orchid is Born* is self-described as the album Sidewalk Chalk has always wanted to make -- a speeding bullet ripe with heat and rhythm that speaks to mankind's need to cheer in the darkest of

moments and to choose love over inhumanity in all things. This vibrant collection of transformative moments is a benchmark release for Sidewalk Chalk that marks the arrival of a powerhouse and proves that the Chicago sound machine is a phoenix rising.

An Orchid is Born is the product of a particularly trying time for the group. After two original members left the group, new drummer Jerrel Johnson was in a devastating car accident that left him in critical condition. Despite his life-threatening injuries, Johnson reached out to the rest of the band a month later and shared his excitement to get back behind the drum set. "All of us were shocked," said Sidewalk Chalk founder Charlie Coffeen, adding, "We didn't even know if he was talking yet or if he could even breathe on his own. But that's the type of spirit he has and that embodies how we function as a family." In a demonstration of true resilience, Sidewalk Chalk came back together again to create *An Orchid is Born*.



Split into three movements - *The Hope*, *The Loss*, and *The Birth* - *An Orchid Is Born* shows the band's remarkable capacity for growth. They see that we cannot be reborn until we lose what we have, first treading in the well of despair that is a loss preceded by hope. In these three movements, Sidewalk Chalk has realized the best version of their band and, in the process, created their most important body of work. Terrified by the prospect of dissolution and being referred to exclusively in the past tense, the band members galvanized around the idea of creating a transformative body of work representative of their respective personalities and talents, their collective journey and infinite possibility. The birth of *An Orchid*... began in the woods of Southern Alabama,

where band members **Charlie Coffeen**, **Rico Sisney**, **Maggie Vagle**, **David Ben-Porat**, **Sam Trump**, and **Josh Rosen** locked in to write most of the music that would comprise the compositions on the 16-track release. Sprouted from a painful period of dormancy, the material only took on a greater life and beauty in the capable hands of "Sput" Searight and engineer **Rick Carson** of Omaha's [Make Believe Studios](#).

Heralded by Sidewalk Chalk as a "true producer" and a "genius," Searight lends a fresh ear to each composition as a multilingual musical translator adamant about pulling the potential from each rough track and contributing player. Charged with everything from singing horn parts, tweaking arrangements, to helping perfect the mix, Searight's presence in the studio was only bested by his work as band whisperer -- a job that found him challenging Sidewalk Chalk to ditch their expectations for the record and step well outside the box. The result is a record that boasts their most fearless material to date and features appearances from **Chris Turner**, whose distinctive vocal talent has found him clocking hours alongside **Esperanza Spalding** and **Bilal**, and **Madison McFerrin**.

Recorded during a week of intensive production in Nebraska, the album marks the maturation of the signature funk first cemented with the 2012 arrival of the band's debut project, [Corner Store](#). The production was funded by a [Kickstarter campaign](#) that afforded Sidewalk Chalk the ability to record away from the distractions of home in a familial environment that reinforced their professional dynamic and provided space for the seamless exploration of ideas and tracking of instruments at a moment's notice. Buoyed by the generosity of peers and community, the band decided to forego the corporate behemoth in an act of financial resistance to invest their recording budget in a black-owned South Side Chicago bank before hunkering down with Sput to create *An Orchid Is Born*.

The first studio album since *Leaves*, *An Orchid Is Born* is a clinic in surviving seasonal change that stands as solid proof that what doesn't kill you can only make you stronger -- a message that resonates across compositions

brimming with candid lyricism indicative of the band's renewed strength and sheer will to survive. The anthemic "Alright" bundles the journey from loss to acceptance with a nod to the **Isley Brothers**. What began as a metaphorical exploration of criminalization on "Will We?" would later take on a more literal meaning with the rise of political tensions in the U.S. during the 2016 presidential election and subsequent efforts to deport and persecute historically marginalized people. Sidewalk Chalk speaks to the streets with "A Suite For Black Lives" -- a visceral protest chant that makes plain the very real trauma behind demonstrations against extrajudicial killings in the United States; the song is punctuated by a gut wrenching performance from Sisney, who stepped into the booth after viewing footage of the murder of **Alton Sterling** for the very first time, to let loose over a weeping refrain scored by Coffeen's impassioned piano -- a stampede of fraught chords he played while listening to **Jesse Williams'** acceptance speech at the 2016 BET Awards.

The hard fought project encapsulates the latest chapter of the band's growth as a unit -- a period somehow beautified by a series of deep wounds that might have derailed a less focused collective. Little more than two years since the debut of their live album *Shoulder Season*, a seismic shift rocked the foundations of Sidewalk Chalk, refined their aesthetic and inspired a body of work that is as cathartic as it is the catapult necessary to push the rarefied groove at the foundation of their sound past its Chicago stomping grounds to points across the globe.

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