

THE THIEVES

'The White Line EP'

(Liquor and Poker)

They say absence makes the heart grow fonder, and that would explain why The Thieves new EP is their most British-sounding yet. To bring you up to date: The Thieves are the band formerly known as Vade Mecum. The band, formed by brothers Hal and Sam Stokes, both from south Oxfordshire, have spent the past two years living and working in California, getting themselves a management and record deal. Lately they've been joined by former-Narco drummer Jamie Dawson.

When they originally relocated Stateside, it seemed wholly appropriate, since Vade Mecum

owed so much musically to the hairy glamour of LA. Now, as The Thieves, they still rock out, but it's less Mid West, more Home Counties. Lead track, 'You Get It Easy', is initially introverted, almost like something Wilco might produce, but ends up sounding like Bowie's 'Heroes' reworked by U2 into a soaring stadium rock anthem. 'Everynite', meanwhile has the same eager sense of boisterous fun as Supergrass, complete with lavish vocal harmonies and swirling organ. 'Tales From The White Line' is closest to Sam and Hal's solid rock'n'roll past, but keeps itself sharp and punchy even when spiralling out on some histrionic guitar solo. Better still is the growling 'It Still Goes On' with its Stooges-like dirge and piano stab. Maintaining the balance between commercial sheen and club-level dirt has always been their strong point; maybe it's just a question now of which side of the Atlantic will be first to wake up and take proper notice.

Ian Chesterton

