



Bahamas ***Bootcut***

Over 14 years and five albums, Canadian singer/songwriter Afie Jurvanen — a.k.a. Bahamas — has specialized in the sort of tunes that feel as comfortable as your favorite beaten-up pair of jeans: familiar in form, but embedded with a uniquely personal history. His repertoire abounds with the sort of instantly cozy songs — be it folksy ballads, breezy yacht-rock jams, or bluesy shitkickers — that you’d swear you know from decades of listening to oldies radio (or, more likely, Spotify, where signature serenades like 2012’s “Lost in the Light” and 2014’s “All the Time” have moved well beyond the 100-million-stream mark). But on closer inspection, his writing teems with quirks that are entirely his own, as he wields a sly, self-deprecating sense of humor to transform relatable observations on domesticity and aging into absurdist Seinfeldian vignettes. As the title of his sixth album makes clear, if Bahamas was indeed a pair of jeans, they’d surely be *Bootcut*: a modern take on traditional styles, rugged yet refined, tight in execution but loose in vibe. Fittingly, the album was recorded in the spiritual homeland of wholesome, denim-clad songcraft: Nashville.

The idea to cut a record in Music City dates back to 2019, when Jurvanen sat in on a couple of songwriting sessions with some local pros, just to get some behind-the-scenes perspective on how the Nashville hit factory operates. But while that visit didn’t result in Jurvanen penning the next CMT smash for Blake Shelton or Carrie Underwood, it did set him on the path to writing “Half Your Love,” the low-key folksy highlight of Bahamas’ 2020 release *Sad Hunk* (an album that both landed Jurvanen his third Juno Award for Adult Alternative Album of the Year and soundtracked a key locker-room scene in *Ted Lasso*’s third season). And after he spent the pandemic corralling various renowned session players for his *Live to Tape* virtual-supergroup jams on Zoom, he knew he wanted to bring that collaborative, free-spirited energy to an IRL setting once COVID restrictions were lifted. Recorded at Nashville’s Sound Emporium by Grammy-nominated producer Robbie Lackritz (Feist, Jack Johnson, Alvvays, Peach Pit) and Dan Knobler (Allison Russell, Rodney Crowell), *Bootcut* sees Jurvanen flanked by a dream team that includes legendary guitarist (and current Eagle) Vince Gill, pedal-steel maestro Russ Pahl (Kenny Rogers, Sturgill Simpson), bassist Dave Roe, harmonica great Mickey Raphael (Emmylou Harris, Sheryl Crow), mandolin master Sam Bush (Dolly Parton, Linda Ronstadt), keyboardist Jen Gunderman (Willie Nelson, The Jayhawks), and drummer Jon Radford (Brendan Benson, Nikki Lane).

“I love being the weakest link in the room, in terms of being a musician,” Jurvanen says, only half-jokingly. “I mean, I feel quite confident in what I’m able to do in any sort of musical situation, but at the same time, I never want to be the Michael Jordan in the room. I might

be the Steve Kerr. It's just nice to have other players in the room who are just so obviously heavy, and that's what they do. They're not the songwriter, they're the bass player. The guy shows up, and he always nails it and just makes everyone play better. And when you have a room full of people like that, it really just elevates everything."

This all-star assemblage seemingly places *Bootcut* in the lineage of other famed Tennessee pilgrimages like Dylan's *Nashville Skyline*, Neil Young's *Harvest*, or Ween's *12 Golden Country Greats*, but as Jurvanen tells it, he didn't set out to make an explicitly country-styled record. Certainly, the songs on *Bootcut* are rooted in classic Nashville topics like love, death, and automotive vehicles (see: the equally charming and devastating "Sports Car," a rustic revision of an old staple from Jurvanen's pre-Bahamas band, Paso Mino). And sure, tracks like "Just a Song" and "Second Time Around" are adorned with more teary twang and saloon-door-swinging ambience than the typical Bahamas record. But *Bootcut* isn't simply a Bahamas interpretation of country music, it's a country-music interpretation of Bahamas that puts a sepia-toned spin on Jurvanen's signature moves, like the funky finesse he injects into sturdy roots-rock templates ("I'm Still"), the bizarro guitar solos that sound like they're beaming in via shortwave radio ("Working on My Guitar"), and the ever-so-clever storytelling that filters time-honored themes through a distinctly modern lens. You may hear other country songs this year about the one who got away, but probably not one about an ex making bank on OnlyFans ("Gone Girl Gone").

For Jurvanen, *Bootcut* is ultimately less an exercise in rhinestone-cowboy cosplay than an attempt to tap into country music's capacity for emotionally direct, open-hearted storytelling. "I just love the way that you can explore ideas in a real literal way," he enthuses. "And I'm not saying you can't do that in rock music, but sometimes if you're too on the nose, it's just cheesy. Whereas country music sort of welcomes that — it's like, 'tell me the whole story!' So it was nice to be allowed to do that as a writer."

Bootcut. It's more than a mere trouser variant, it's a state of mind. *Bootcut* is the confidence to be casual. *Bootcut* is the zen state of being on-trend and timeless at the same time. *Bootcut* is the cumulative wisdom that makes personal statements feel like universal truths. Truly, in this or any other year, you will find a no more pleasing and potent combination of off-the-cuff rock 'n' roll, last-call ballads, social commentary, and dad jokes. *Bootcut* is a slow-burning stack of denim-ite, a truly pant-astic piece of work, and, dare we say, a pure stroke of "jean-ius."

**For press information about Bahamas, please contact
Jim Flammia jim@alleyesmedia.com or Kayla Sprindis kayla@alleyesmedia.com
at All Eyes Media (615) 227-2770**