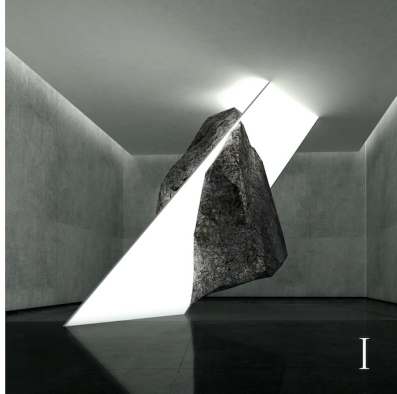




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Son Lux (USA)

Album: *Tomorrows I-III*

Label: City Slang

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Web: <https://sonluxmusic.com>

EPK: irascible.ch/releases/son-lux/tomorrows-i/

Arriving at a time of considerable uncertainty in the world, Son Lux's *Tomorrows*, a long-format album released in three volumes over the course of a year, is ambitious in scope and intent. The anxiety and urgency that define our present moment find parallels on *Tomorrows*, a procession from the external to the internal. Born of an active, intentional approach to shaping sound, the music reminds us of the necessity of questioning assumptions, and of sitting with the tension.

On *Tomorrows*, Ryan Lott, Rafiq Bhatia, and Ian Chang train their sights on volatile principles: imbalance, disruption, collision, redefinition. But for all of its instability, *Tomorrows*' exploration of breaking points and sustained frictional places is ultimately in service of something rewarding and necessary: the act of challenging, tearing down, and actively rebuilding one's own identity. "We're peeling things apart and putting them back together throughout this record," explains Lott. "Emotionally, relationally, and musically."

Whereas prior Son Lux albums have been packed to the brim with ideas, the three-volume format of *Tomorrows* affords the music space to breathe and develop. Each release sees songs spun together with liminal instrumental spaces, resulting in a natural flow while letting sound lead in conveying the complexity of the story. While the first volume of *Tomorrows* sets the tone and palette, the second volume's carefully crafted inversion acclimatizes the ear to tension. As the volumes unfold, the steadily hardening exterior fractures at unlikely moments, revealing a strikingly visceral, emotional core. The iterative process of creating finds lyrical content and music continually adapting and responding to one another and the shifting landscape of the moment. We hear this culminate on the third and final volume of *Tomorrows*, where Son Lux leverages this web of interconnections to reveal new layers of meaning.

Taken as a single body of work, *Tomorrows* represents the widest array yet of mood and color offered by the band. But on the third volume, the spectrum extends beyond the band's own limits to include a family of featured voices, including Kahdja Bonet, Holland Andrews, and Kiah Victoria. This transition signals a move

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from the universal and social to the personal, as Lott's lyrics look deeper into the self while simultaneously surrendering his voice.

As much as confronting sustained instability is part of the album's message, it is also central to the band's creative approach: what becomes a song begins as a very intentional and deliberate process of experimentation where the end result is often entirely unknown. The band eschews genre conventions in favor of cultivating their own personal musical language rooted in balancing opposites. But on *Tomorrows*, they sometimes allow the scales to tip, resulting in a galvanizing internal violence that pushes songs to their limits.

Son Lux's sound is distinctly individual, a result of their reverence for artists who have carved an iconoclastic path forward. The band's fluid approach to genre and structure draws on the groundwork of soul, hip-hop, and experimental improvisation, owing a debt to forebears as wide-ranging as Björk, Alice Coltrane, D'Angelo, Bob Dylan, and J Dilla. While their balancing of raw emotional intimacy and meticulous electronic constructions has earned comparisons to contemporaries like James Blake and Flying Lotus, Son Lux feels that it is the act of distilling their various influences that has most strongly shaped their identity. On *Tomorrows*, they conjure vivid, unexpected worlds of sound, evoking textures as different as those of Timbaland and Terry Riley within the same composition.

Since starting Son Lux as a solo project, founder Ryan Lott has garnered a reputation as "the kind of songwriter who can turn the most intimate moments sweeping and majestic" (*Pitchfork*). But after crafting his first three albums alone, Lott stumbled upon a kinship with two musicians a decade his junior that was too strong to ignore: Ian Chang, whose rhythmic constructions "don't feel so much like beats as sculptures" (*NPR*), and Rafiq Bhatia, who treats musical ingredients "as architectural elements — sound becomes contour; music becomes something to step into rather than merely follow" (*New York Times*). After collaboratively creating, releasing, and touring 2015's *Bones* and 2018's *Brighter Wounds*, Son Lux has solidified into a band, with each member bringing their unique sonic approach to create an otherworldly whole.

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