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The Hangmen – East Of Western CD (Acetate/MVD Audio)

Imagine a day where you're forced to wake up way too early, stuck in that in-between spot where you're kinda still drunk but you know a vicious hangover is on its way. You take a stiff shot to brace you for the day, but it doesn't really help. Your girlfriend/boyfriend seems to have left you in the middle of the night – or possibly during a blowup last night, who can remember? – leaving the front door wide open. A couple of neighborhood meth-heads are camped out in your living room, destroying what's left of your meager possessions. Your car won't start, so you start walking to work even though you're so late at this point that you

know you're gonna get there only to be told to leave because you've been fired. And this is all before noon. How could it get any worse? More importantly, how could it ever get better? Enter The Hangmen. If you've ever had a day like I've described above, The Hangmen have written a song about you. Maybe more than one. The Hangmen understand, and they are here to make it all better. Frontman Bryan Small (vocals/guitar) has been chronicling the lives of the downtrodden in The Hangmen's lyrics for 25 years now, providing an indisputable influence for generations of LA bands (punk and rock and metal alike), and giving his listeners an understanding that – despite everything – it's all gonna be OK. Small's voice is a wonderfully twisted amalgam of Iggy Pop and Mike Ness, with an injection of the brattiest sleaze rawk attitude out there. The Hangmen are rounded out by the super-tight rhythm section of bassist Angelique Congleton and drummer Dino Guerrero (who has played with Throw Rag and Charley Horse as well) – both of whom have been in the band for damn near forever now – and by former Supersuckers guitarist and all-around bad-ass Ron 'Rontrose' Heathman. Musically, The Hangmen are a perfect blend of Americana punk ala Social Distortion, and high-energy garage rock ala The Stooges and The Cramps, snotty sleaze ala Junkyard or the young and dangerous Guns N' Roses – and the way that this band puts all those sounds together is nothing short of magical. The combination of fast-and-furious sleaze ('Homesick Blues'), Stooges-reborn garage blues ('I'm Your Man', 'She Cracked', 'Big Red Rooster'), and down-tempo alt-country influenced punk ('Graveroobers', 'Railroad Man', 'Betrayed') makes for a diverse yet cohesive album that feels more like an explosive half-hour set in a dingy club – the kind of set that leaves all in attendance wondering what the hell just happened and when it's going to happen again – than a collection of tracks laid down in a studio. 'East Of Western' is solid proof that real rock 'n' roll is alive and well, and it's not going anywhere anytime soon.

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