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Hangmen, The – East Of Western

by Ian Jane

Published on 05-24-2012 12:22 PM

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Released by: [Acetate Records](#)
Released on: May 8, 2012.
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Los Angeles' The Hangmen (not to be confused with the British rockabilly band of the same name) aren't really an easy band to classify, if you feel the need to classify bands that is. There's sort of a cow punk thing going on, healthy doses of punk rock mixed in, maybe some southern rock too and definitely a bit of

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Hangmen, The – East Of Western

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country twang echoing throughout their discography. For simplicities sake, we'll just go with rock n roll, something that they've always done very well despite the fact that their major label stints with both Capitol and Geffen were fairly short lived.

This latest effort, their sixth album, is probably their best since *In The City*, the album that Social Distortion's Mike Ness produced for them in 2007 and which won them some much deserved exposure. This release sees them bringing onboard former Supersuckers guitar player Ron Heathman, so if some of the guitar playing sounds a bit familiar to fans of that better known group, it's for good reason. Dino Guerrero, who also plays in Charley Horse with former Cramps member Scott 'Chopper' Franklin and Throw Rag vocalist Shawn Wheeler, lays down some slick and consistent drum work while Angelique Congleton keeps the rest of the band in line and on time with some slinky bass playing. The most instantly identifiable sound that the band has in its favor, however, has always been the snotty sounding vocals that come courtesy of frontman Bryan Small. Consistently in fine form here, he's singing style sounds a bit like what you might hear on a Broken Halos disc and maybe there's some Dead Boys creeping in there too along with some early Rolling Stones and mid-era Social Distortion.

The album kicks off with *Homesick Blues* and keeps the pace quick throughout, making exceptions for the tracks *Haunted* and *Had A Girl* (which sounds more like the Stones than anything the Stones have done in years) where the band slows things down a bit though not to the album's detriment. This is a pretty consistent batch of recordings, the playing is slick and tight, the songwriting is catchy and the vocals heartfelt enough to work. Themes of relationships gone bad run throughout the record, while the toils of hard living (something Small knows all too well) occasionally make for thematic diversions here and there. The band's cover of the Modern Lovers' *She Cracked* also stands out just because it's a pretty interesting take on that song from that older band's debut album. *Graverobbers* is noteworthy not only because it's catchy as Hell but also for some interesting pedal steel work that comes courtesy of a guest spot from Jordan Shapiro and which fits right in with the rest of the records' sound.

The album is well produced, though not overproduced, all the way through. The recording captures enough polish that we can appreciate the quality of the playing but offers it up in such a way that the authenticity of the music isn't hurt. The band might not be reinventing the wheel this time around but if it ain't broke why try to fix it? If that weren't enough, the track *Big Red Rooster* is a tribute to the late, great *Lux Interior* of The Cramps, proving if

Rock! Shock! Pop! - Hangmen, The – East Of Western
nothing else that Small's heart is definitely in the
right place. East Of Western is pretty great stuff.

The complete track listing for East Of Western is as
follows:

- 1. Homesick Blues / 2. I'm Your Man / 3. Had A Girl /
- 4. Graverobbers / 5. Drink Smoke / 6. Railroad Man
- / 7. Betrayed / 8. Big Red Rooster / 9. She Cracked
- / 10. Haunted You can check out the video for
Homesick Blues here!

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