

# SLUG MAGAZINE

## **The Hangmen**

### ***East of Western***

Acetate Records

Street: 05.08

The Hangmen = Deer Tick + Jeff Lynne

Roots rock groups these days are rarely able to achieve the Zen-like balance of anthemic and artistic, but The Hangmen handle it easily. *East of Western* holds enough strutting rock to be a bullet on dive bar jukeboxes, but enough pop sensibilities to grant it a lengthy foster life on most record collectors' shelves. Lead singer Bryan Small, has a proto-punk inflection drenched in a country upbringing, perhaps like Iggy Pop scoring a Spaghetti Western film. On tracks like "Had a Girl," the band smooths over their energetic edge down to the intonation of a wistfully laid-back, Tom Petty rarity. The sleazy punk energy of "She Cracked" whips out enough satiation for those who yearn for a good bar-stomp melody. The Hangmen are another contemporary example of going against the grain by neglecting flair and focusing on grit. Everybody wants to be The Beatles, but we honestly need more Rolling Stones. –Gregory Gerulat