

FAME Review: The Blow Monkeys - Feels like a New Morning

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Feels like a New Morning

The Blow Monkeys

Cherry Red Records - CDBRED557

Available from *MVD Entertainment Group*.

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
by **Mark S. Tucker**
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Unlike most critics, I have no problems with neologized pigeonholing, so long as it's appropriate and at least somewhat clever or perceptive. For music like the Blow Monkeys', some wit coined 'sophisti-pop' and that's exactly right. Normally, pop is ooey-goey simplistic material that, when done right correctly (Barnaby Bye's *Touch* perhaps the best all-time example), makes you gleeful in whatever emotion's being embodied: romance, heartbreak, exaltation, despondency, etc. It's like reading Dr. Seuss through your headphones, whereas The Blow Monkeys, Talk Talk, The Buggles, later Roxy Music, and various other ensembles brought forward brainworks to appeal to a metrosexual crowd taking time away from *Mad Men* depredations to remember what it's like to be human.....with a difference.

This 2-CD set is an interesting combo and marvelously wrought, the first disc the true ensemble release, the second CD a matter of *Dr. Robert Plays Acoustic Blow Monkeys*, comprising exactly what it infers: a set of old B-Monkeys singles and cuts re-done for the thirsting fan who has the good sense not to be able to get enough of these smoooooooooth romancers. Dr. Robert is, of course, Robert Howard, who wrote everything in the entire release—except for one co-written slice—and if you think the Blow boys lost anything from their sixteen year layover (1991 - 2007), think again. They're better than ever, and the three discs that led up to this one (2008, 2009, 2011) polished the combo to its finest edge.

Icarus in Flames reveals a folk depth that runs well below the surface when you listen closely enough to the band's whole oeuvre, a factor that generates a lot of those ringing harmonies one hears, the sort of thing Bruce Cockburn and Rain Parade, among others, were so damn good at. The entirety of the first disc in fact showcases a group that could easily open for Belle & Sebastian, Sade, and any number of A-ticket acts while the bonus disc is Howard on his own and sounding quite like what John Sebastian would document were he to solo the old Lovin' Spoonful hits...with a bit of an echo of Mick Hucknall added to the periphery but just Howard, his voice, and an acoustic guitar, from which he manages to wring a number of really good middle-eight leads as well. Thus, for the new inductees or the older vets of the alt movement, *Feels Like a New Morning* is not only a twin-pak exposure to music that will make your day but also is just plain indispensable.

Track List:

DISC ONE

- Oh My
- Feels Like A New Morning
- Cover Me
- Chained
- Said Too Much
- Icarus In Flames
- That's Not Right
- In No Time At All
- Shake It Up
- Hold Everything Dear

DISC TWO

- Digging Your Scene
- Come On Down
- pringtime For The World
- It Doesn't Have To Be This Way
- Man From Russia
- Slaves No More
- Heaven Is A Place
- Choice?
- Limping For A Generation
- It Pays To Belong

All songs written by Robert Howard except *Man from Russia* (Howard / Anker).

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