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801 Live Collectors Edition (Expression)

In the early-'70s, a disparate group of British musicians were taking music in an exciting new direction. Mixing equal parts rock, pop, improvisation and psychedelia, it was a time when we would anxiously await each artist's new release. Toward the end of that run was 801, a short-lived group formed by Roxy Music guitarist Phil Manzanera (named after a line in Eno's song "The True Wheel"). Along for the ride were former Roxy songwriter/keyboardist/sound manipulator Brian Eno (who had already released three groundbreaking solo LPs), bassist Bill MacCormick (a vet of Quiet Sun, Matching Mole, Robert Wyatt, and Eno recordings), Francis Monkman (Curved Air, Sky), Simon Phillips (who would later play with the Who and a host of metal acts), and Lloyd Watson (Eno). The group's debut - "801 Live" - was a tour de force that is regarded as one of the best live recordings of the time. This collector's edition adds a second CD to the package, a show recorded the week before the original release. No matter if Manzanera's guitarwork sometimes sounds dated, this remains a great snapshot that stands the test of time - from the trippy, muscular version of the Beatles' "Tomorrow Never Knows" to versions of then-current Eno tracks like "Somber Reptiles" (still one of my faves) and the punky "Third Uncle" and "Baby's On Fire." In addition to the "Miss Shapiro" and the gorgeous "Diamond Head" (both from Manzanera's '75 solo debut), the group blasts through The Kinks' "You Really Got Me." "East of Asteroid" is an example of what "fusion" was like before it was co-opted by jazzbos. Stay tuned for reviews of current 801/Manzanera releases. (www.expressionrecords.com)