



THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2012

Meat Puppets - "Mirage" CD Review (MVD Audio)

DOWNLOAD: Meat Puppets - Live at City Gardens, Trenton, NJ 5/9/87 (Part 1 and Part 2)



In April of 1987, the Meat Puppets released their fifth disc, *Mirage*. This disc was the band's first that sounded intentionally geared toward commercial accessibility and Derrick Bostrom has referred to the disc as the Pups "psychedelic epic". This is a transitional disc for the Pups, which catches them between the blissed-out country-punk of *Up on the Sun* and the pre-grunge alt-rock of *Monsters*. The music on this disc falls somewhere in between these two points and most of it ends up sounding like the country rock of the Grateful Dead.

There are some good cuts on *Mirage* but this is my least favorite of the original seven Meat Puppets albums as it is "too produced". Curt's new Roland guitar synthesizer

and a drum machine feature prominently on a few tracks which, unfortunately, gives these tunes a very dated "80's sound". It seems that these tracks didn't hold up well for the band either as Derrick Bostrom said *"By the end of the [Mirage] tour, however, we pretty much decided that doing this sort of material night after night was a drag. We jettisoned the stuff we didn't enjoy playing, and began woodshedding a set of comparative "barn burners," which became the "Huevos" album. We focused on creating more energy on stage, got looser still, and started breaking our songs open into extended jams and medleys. The party was just beginning."*

I've never noticed this on earlier discs, but the best songs on *Mirage* are where drummer Derrick Bostrom plays fast and loose; these tracks include "Quit It", "Get on Down" and "Beauty". The country rock songs aren't bad and "Confusion Fog" shows Curt's finger-picking prowess but they are missing that off-kilter charm that made *Up on the Sun* so memorable. "Liquified" is a great "guitar hero" song that is a big hairy rock number that showed what was to come on *Monsters*. Skip "Mirage", "The Mighty Zero" and "I Am a Machine" (which sound either dated or like mid-period Paul Westerberg [boring]).

Five instrumental bonus tracks have been added to this reissue along with the promo video for "Get on Down", which seemed to get a lot of play on MTV at the time. This time out, the bonus tracks are an interesting assortment and the early versions of "The Mighty Zero" and "I am a Machine" seems to have more life than the final studio versions. One of the other bonus tracks is an instrumental version of "Rubberneckin", which was made popular by Elvis Presley (but I'm not familiar with the original so...no comment) and a previously unreleased track of Curt working through some riffs entitled "Grand Intro".

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