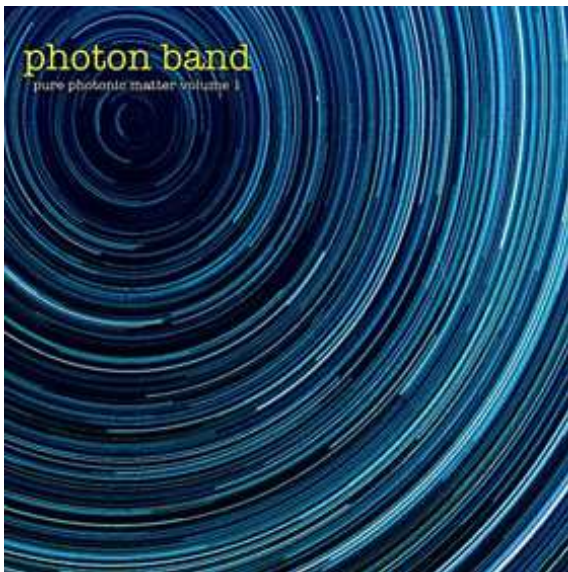


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Album Review: Photon Band — Pure Photonic Matter Volume 1



Sometimes an album's opening track is a red herring. That's the case with "Thought Crimes (Part 1)," the first cut on **Photon Band**'s *Pure Photonic Matter Volume 1*. While a shimmering, minimalistic band plays a simple tune in the background, we hear a lo-fi/treated recording of a little child reciting numbers. It's strange and not all that appealing. But then things shift quickly into a rocking, tuneful style with "What You See." it may as well be a different band; the song sounds like a rockier, less quirky **Robyn Hitchcock**, or a dialed-back **Smithereens**.

That dialed-back vibe may be a result of the fact that Photon Band is essentially one guy (**Art Di Furia**) who plays everything except drums (and he even does that on one track). As the tune unfolds, it heads into a dual lead guitar duel of the sort **Thin Lizzy** used to do. The dry production vibe makes the track feel homespun, but it's otherwise a well-produced catchy tune that begins to recall **The Byrds** in its verses. "From Eternity (to Here)" feels like paisley underground and features some lovely chord changes. It recalls **Beau Brummels** and **Jackie DeShannon** crossed with, say, the fuzzed-out guitar work of **Teenage Fanclub**.

"Posi-vibe" feels like *Loaded*-era **Velvet Underground** or **T. Rex**; its spare arrangement put the focus on the vocals and melody, and as the song unfolds, it too fuzzes out. The guitar solo evokes memories of **Allman Brothers**, of all things. Suffice to say this album's all over the place, but somehow it all makes musical sense.

The instrumental "Went to the (Space Bar)" is a jolly, jaunty little number, the sound of a rock band trying to play c&w and somehow succeeding. It has a late sixties cracked folk-psych vibe, like an unfinished **Moby Grape** outtake might sound. "Found in Space" involves a good bit of what used to be considered studio trickery (backwards tapes etc.) and it's more a brief mood piece than an actual song.

After another brief textural piece, the jangling “Believe in Believin’” kicks side two into gear. Again, the dry production style gives the record a slight feel of demo-itis, but this track’s squalling guitar encourages listeners to overlook that slight drawback. “...But I Wanna Know” comes, then, as a shock, with its gauzy, woozy feel. “Pretty Lies” is almost powerpop, with a good hook and fine melody. It’s marred only by that persistently thin production. As with many of the songs on the record, one comes away with the feel that the demoey feel will hold back the potential success of an otherwise excellent album. Listeners who can listen beyond that will find plenty to like, but doing so does require a bit of work.

“Don’t Feel Bad” (not the **Rain Parade** tune) is another melodic pop number that combines fuzzed-up guitars with a catchy pop melody and a **Beatlesque** outro chord. “Thought Crimes (Part 2)” dispenses with the kid vocals and instead serves up a thumping drum beat and layer upon layer of distorted guitar; it’s a one-chord psych freakout that crosses a **Neil Young/Crazy Horse** style with krautrock. The aptly-named “Repose” wraps things up in a gentle manner, all picking guitars and such. It’s over too soon.

Word is that *Pure Photonic Matter Volume 1* is limited to 500 copies on vinyl. I have one, and I’m keepin’ it.

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