



CD REVIEW:

THE BUNNY BOY

The Residents



Review by Michael Jacobson

The Residents have been making their wonderfully weird music for pretty much as long as I've been on the earth, and I've been a fan of theirs for a long time. The anonymous eyeball ones have stayed out of the mainstream and on the cutting edge with their unique avant-garde stylings that have deliberately defied all convention and logic, and have remained pioneers in both music and video for decades.

For me, they're at their best when their strangeness is focused through a clear and tight concept. On *The Commercial Album*, they took their digs at pop singles by releasing an album of 40 tunes, each exactly one minute in length. With *Wormwood*, they built a recording using the most unusual stories from the Bible as their inspiration. *The Gingerbread Man* took a sprite through the lives and thoughts of a multitude of sad and funny characters. And many more examples.

The Bunny Boy is sort of a conceptual piece, but a weak one. It was apparently inspired by a friend's strange video ramblings claiming his brother had vanished from the Greek island of Patmos. Unable to parlay the video footage into anything workable, the foursome from Louisiana turned it to music instead, and the resulting album seems to be a plethora of paranoia and panic about death, fear, and rabbits.

It's interesting, which is about the lowest compliment I could give any Residents recording. The idea behind the album doesn't boast enough strength to really drive and focus the oddity of the music and lyrics, so the overall package seems a bit too loose and unanchored to a real foundation to engage. The 19 songs, most of which are around the two minute mark in length, doesn't break new ground. If you haven't heard The Residents before, you might be taken aback by how far this group manages to circumvent musical normality. But for longtime fans like me, there doesn't seem to be much new here.

Patmos is, of course, the island where St. John had his divine Revelation. That angle doesn't seem strongly at play here, but then, The Residents have done their Bible bit. "Boxes of Armageddon" and "Secret Message" might be the only hints at something truly apocalyptic. Apart from that, "Pictures From a Little Girl" comes across as quite unsettling. Other moments seem almost catchy...or at least as close as these guys can come to what traditional music fans might call a 'hook'.

It's a solid listen, and if there's one thing I can say about The Residents, it's that you can pick this, their newest

album, or any album from their near 40 year career and play them, and you'd have no idea what was their new sound and what was their old. Their niche is unique and solid, and for a band that seems to have no real formula, their sound has remained reliable and distinctive for decades.

The complaint is that for a band that dwells on the cutting edge, *The Bunny Boy* seems to be a safer venture for them. The ideas aren't as inspiring, and the music, while reliably out-of-joint, doesn't seem to challenge fans the way their earlier works have.

But what can you say about a band that's been around as long as they have that has managed to maintain complete anonymity for so long? By keeping themselves out of the spotlight, they've been able to make music and art for themselves and on their own terms, and God bless them for it.

As a fan, I hope their musical careers are far from over, and I hope we'll get even better and stronger statements from them in the future.