

The Bunny Boy - Santa Dog/Mute 2008



Hi, I'm Mark Brindle. You know, when I'm not directing *North Devon Surf History*, a short documentary of the surf history for the North Devon region of the U.K., I like to 'Hang Ten' with a good Residents album. So go grab your 'Woodie,' because 'Surf's Up' and I've got 'Suntan Lotion On My Nose' because this new Residents CD is no 'Wipe Out'! Also, 'Waves' are c

Hi, I'm Mark Pringle. You know, when I'm not composing music for *David Cronenberg and the Cinema of the Extreme*, a brief BBC documentary that preceded a 1997 broadcast of *Videodrome*, I like to 'Crash' on the couch with a good Residents album. And I don't mean to give you the 'Shivers,' but this album's so great, it'll drive you 'Rabid'! So swat away 'The Fly,' 'Spider' and 'M. Butterfly' resting on your 'Stereo,' because these songs are 'Dead Ringers' for some of the best Residents tracks ever recorded! Also, thank your wife for the 'Naked Lunch' and please accept my apo

Hi, I'm Mark Grindle. You know, when I'm not serving as miscellaneous crew for *The Princess Stallion*, a 1997 British TV movie about an illusory horse, I like to hop in the 'Saddle' with a good Residents album. So 'Gallop' on down to your local record salesman, and 'Whinny' (when he) opens up, 'Hoof' it to the Residents section because this CD is a 'Sugar Cube'! Also, it'll 'Throw You Off Its Back And Trample You To Death,' but I don't mean that to sc

Hi, I'm Mark W. Hindle. You know, when I'm not serving in the camera and electrical department for *Mean Girls*, I like to fantasize about murdering Lindsay Lohan. So 'Strangle' your worries and 'Cover In Gasoline And Throw A Lit Match At' your concerns, because this new Residents album is a 'Hanging Made To Look Like A Suicide'! Also, 'Cauterize Her Eyes Shut' because the bitc

Hi, I'm Mark Prindle. You know, when I'm not dicking around on IMDB.com, I like to write reviews of boisterous new releases. And **The Bunny Boy** is as boisterous as a baby bouncing a ball on his bugle!

The story this time apparently involves a character, the 'Bunny Boy,' who sets out looking for his missing brother and winds up having all types of big adventures. Now I didn't go to any fancy school so I don't know about all that, but I tell you one thing: **The Bunny Boy** is an absolute return-to-form after the dire **Voice Of Midnight**, continuing the

astonishing comeback trail that these men have been on since **Wormwood** hit the stands a full decade ago.

First, let's address one of the band's own comments about the record: "A sonic roller coaster in the style of Duck Stab, The Commercial Album and Demons Dance Alone, the album features 19 fast paced songs." This statement confused the daylights out of me when I first read it because am I nuts a-jigglin' or do the wrong-sounding, off-kilter **Duck Stab** and **The Commercial Album** not sound *EVEN A LITTLE BIT* like the straightforward, sorrowful **Demons Dance Alone**? As it turns out, this description is perfect; **The Bunny Boy**'s songsmanship encompasses both their original weirdo avant-garde sense of anti-melody *and* their newer 'normal but melancholy' approach. And as for '19 fast-paced songs,' these aren't exactly grindcore-speed so I assume what they mean is that the songs are brief. This is indeed true; only two songs exceed 2:40!

The musical elements include King Crimson noise-distorted guitar, drums, synths, keyboards, vibes, violins and pianos -- and it's not always easy to tell which is which. Compounding this delightful problem is the overabundance of synthesizer tones, washes and runs, ranging from gamelan repetition/interplay to corny mid-'80s r'n'b tone to Pete Townshendy futuristic fuzz-bleeping. The song arrangements are surprisingly dynamic, with each track changing and building quite the sizable bit in its limited time on Earth. The lyrics (and often the music) are creepy, odd, crazy, off and insane -- quick little bits of madness *sung* (not simply narrated, for a change) by our favorite Southern-drawled vocalist.

What makes it so good? Honestly, everything. The melodies, arrangements and lyrics work together towards an intelligent and compellingly macabre end. Musically, they tear through an entire lifetime's worth of sounds and styles -- Tom Waits tribal shuffling, cheerful pop jaunts, music boxes, gamelans, industrial clanking, electronic dance beats, heavy metal, classical violin orchestration, corny jazz-pop, random guitar racket and noise, warm relaxed piano melody, cold gothic minimalism, Phillip Glass glissandos, morbid carnival music, church bells, harmony singing and much, many mores. If a song starts happily, it will end disturbingly. If it starts pretty, it will turn ugly. If it starts quietly, it will undergo a 20-fold increase in intensity. If it starts predictably, it will change style and instrumentation 5-10 times before it ends. In short, **The Bunny Boy** may be musically dark, lyrically obtuse and at times unlistenable ugly, but one thing it's *not* is half-assed. The Residents and their musical guests clearly put a lot of thought and effort into making these songs as replayable as possible.

Notably disturbing subject matter includes:

- "Boxes full of Armageddon, boxes full of death"
- A five-year-old girl that only draws pictures of "fear, terror, panic and doom"
- A delirious fever dream about a ping-pong ball
- A young man who proudly sing-songs, "I'd like to be a butcher...Why doesn't *everybody* want to be a butcher?"
- The rabbit motif deteriorating from a cheerful "I love the rabbits and I know the rabbits love me!" to a discomforting "I told him I like bunnies, then he went away" and finally to

a cold, emotionless "There's blood on the bunny."

- A great way to murder one's brother (duct taping a vacuum hose to his mouth and turning it on)

- The ultimate conclusion that "The black is behind *everything*."

A few of the passages are simply too aurally unpleasant to love, and (perversely enough) the title track is a godawful pig trough of negativity and improvisational noise, but those are absolutely the only complaints I can make about this smart, ambitious collection of stories, songs and sickness. Way to go, Residents! Hey George Bush, welcome to our Residents -- notice there's no *P* in them!!!!

Somebody make an editorial cartoon out of that. And have a little guy in the lower corner adding, "Talk about a shallow candidate ool!"

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