

Yahowa 13

Sonic Portation

Prophase Music (MVDA4819)

Grade: ★★★★★

"Here we are at the end of the sunrise" says a member of Yahowa 13 at the beginning of "Yod Hey Vau

Hey Tetractys," a primal, hoary chant caught in a the heavy, head-swimming psychedelia of the group's reunion record *Sonic Portation*. Hearing it, it's easy to believe that Yahowa 13 has, indeed, brought you to such a place, no matter how impossible it is to get there.

A strange tale indeed, the history of Yahowa 13 begins in Los Angeles in the early '70s at a health food restaurant owned The Source Family, a religious sect that followed the teachings of spiritual guru and World War II pilot Father Yod.

Without going too much into it, The Source Family sought to live solely in the Eternal Now, without any regard to the past or the future.

This belief system, too complicated to break down further in this space, needed a soundtrack, and the members of Yahowa 13 went above and beyond the call, using their collective enlightened consciousness and improvisational genius to embark on some of the most unique sonic explorations ever mapped out. The trouble was, few outside of The Source Family's ranks ever heard any of it.

And when Father Yod, who played gong and kettle drum in the group, died in a 1975 hang-gliding accident, so, it seemed, did Yahowa 13.

Now, 33 years later, Yahowa 13, from out of nowhere, has experienced a resurrection with *Sonic Portation*, a mind-melting, shape-shifting aural experience that scrambles the senses with wild chanting, tunneling drones, galloping drums and guitars that are bent, distorted and crushing one minute and clean and prismatic the next.

Alien and exotic, *Sonic Portation* stretches the limits of imagination in ways other artists can't even comprehend. The gathering storm of freak-jazz menace that is "Traveling Ohm" and the utterly terrifying, tribal energy of "Big Kundalini" are harrowing adventures, while free-form jams like "E Ah O Shin" and "Raga Nova," a thundering herd of strange rhythms and Middle Eastern influences, seem eternal and wild.

What a wonderful, yet scary, place to be this is.

— Peter Lindblad

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DVD REVIEW

Cat Stevens

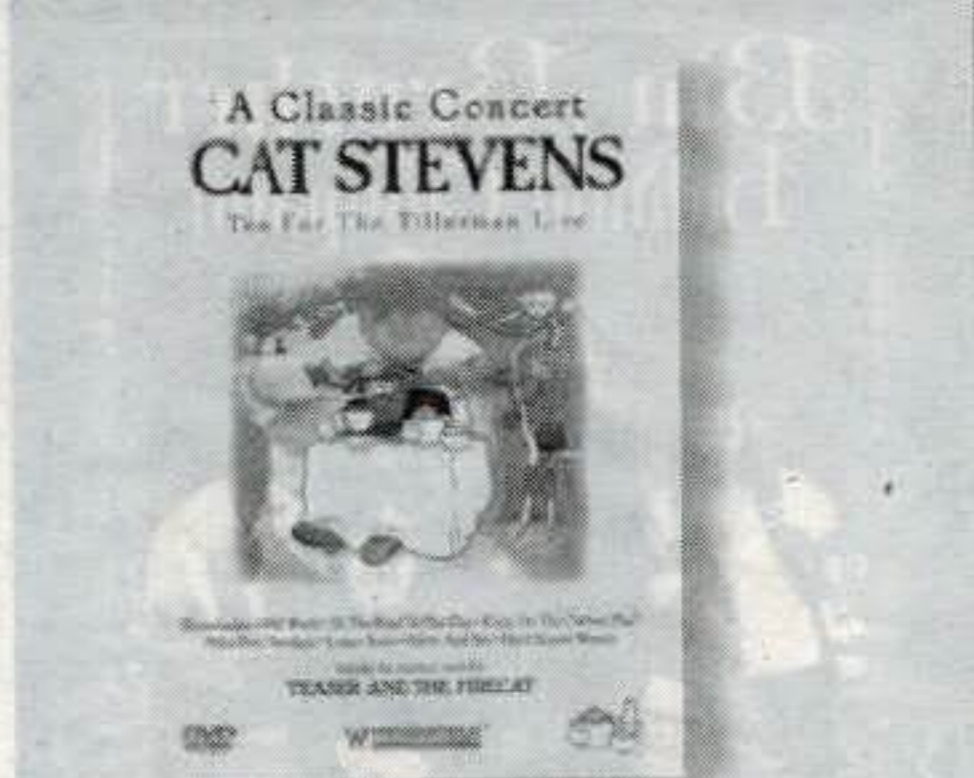
A Classic Concert: Tea For The Tillerman Live

MVD Visual (MVDV4778)

Grade: ★★★★★

In every musical career that achieves any significance, there's generally a point where the artist achieves the first pinnacle, one that assures a lingering legacy on the basis of that accomplishment. For Cat Stevens, it was *Tea for the Tillerman*, an album that both confirmed and coalesced his standing up to that point in his trajectory. While its predecessor, *Mona Bone Jakon*, and several earlier chart-topping singles had assured him some success, *Tea for the Tillerman* put him over the top and established Stevens as one of the preeminent singer/songwriters of the '70s.

With that in mind, this long-lost live showcase, previously available only as an audio bootleg, is something of a revelation, an opportunity to witness Stevens in the intimate surroundings of L.A.'s KCET studios playing some of the album tracks for a small, invited audience. It's an abbreviated set — a mere eight



songs that clock in at less than 45 minutes, including the animated "Teaser and the Firecat" short — but Stevens proffers a superb performance that pares these numbers down, unplugged style, to their acoustic essence. With erstwhile guitarist Alun Davies and bassist Larry Steele providing supple support, songs such as "Moonshadows," "Wild World," "Miles From Nowhere" and the especially moving "Father and Son" resonate with an added emotional imprint.

That said, "Tea For The Tillerman Live" lacks any add-ons, save the "Teaser" cartoon, which recalls "Yellow Submarine" in its childlike whimsy. But, as far as its brevity, no matter. It's the purity of these performances that makes it archival essential.

— Lee Zimmerman

Robert Pollard

Robert Pollard Is Off To Business

Guided By Voices, Inc. (GBV!-2)

Grade: ★★

Robert Pollard's never been the easiest artist to pin down. His former group, Guided By Voices, took a skewed, lo-fi approach that sometimes left even its most ardent fans bewildered and bemused. He broke up the band in 2004, but ironically, its demise actually accelerated Pollard's productivity. In fact, Pollard's proved himself to be something of an overachiever, releasing two solo albums simultaneously (*Gargoyle Decisions* and *Coast to Coast Carpet of Love*) in 2007 and another

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three since then, including this new effort with its no-nonsense banner, *Robert Pollard Is Off To Business*.

Still, quantity doesn't necessarily equate with quality, and Pollard's proficiency notwithstanding, *Business* could be better. It has its moments — the acoustic warble of the cantankerous "Confessions of a Teenage Jerk-Off," the ringing U2-like guitars of "Western Centipede," the assertive drive of "Gratification to Concrete" — but much of the album seems too skittish, too frenetic, too kinetic to aid in its accessibility. Pollard's obvious affection for REM is mined to positive effect on "Weatherman and Skin Goddess," the most buoyant track of the set, but clearly, more melody and less meandering might have helped overall.

Of course, that erratic eccentricity is part of Pollard's charm. At the very least, *Robert Pollard Is Off To Business* illuminates the possibilities of mixing business with pleasure.

www.rockathonrecords.com — Lee Zimmerman