

Search



ABOUT | SUBMISSIONS | ADVERTISING | STAFF



FEATURES ▾ COLUMNS ▾ BLOGS ▾ MUSIC ▾ FILM ▾ TELEVISION ▾ DVDS ▾ BOOKS ▾ COMICS ▾ MULTIMEDIA ▾ EVENTS ▾ NEWS

Music

Home > Music > Reviews > He's My Brother She's My Sister



He's My Brother She's My Sister: Nobody Dances in This Town

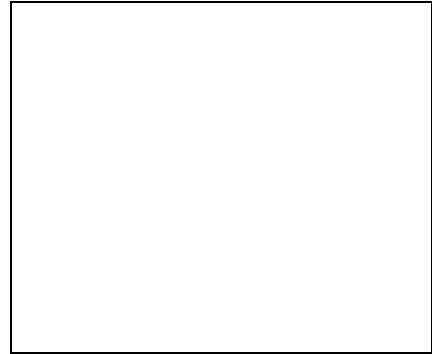
By **Zachary Houle** 28 January 2013
PopMatters Associate Music Editor

Sibling Non-Rivalry

The history of rock 'n' roll isn't exactly littered with brother and sister combos, but there's been a few worthy of note. First of all, there was the magic of Karen and Richard Carpenter during the bulk of the '70s and early '80s. Then there's Matthew and Eleanor Friedberger of the Fiery Furnaces. And there was Meg and Jack White of the White Stripes. Uh, wait a minute. Maybe not that last one, but there's been a few sibling duos of note in pop music. Well, you can now add to that list brother and sister combo Robert and Rachel Kolar of the Los Angeles-based and not terribly imaginatively named He's My Brother She's My Sister, which is actually a five-piece outfit. And what can you say about them? Um, they're kind of cute. On the cover of their debut album, *Nobody Dances in This Town*, the members of the band can be seen brushing their teeth. That's cute, you know, in that they're so interested in maintaining their dental hygiene. And the inside of the CD digipack features childish drawings of human creatures (the band members?) crossed with the wings of bats and tails of slithery creatures, which is kind of cute in a twee sort of way. However, the music of He's My Brother She's My Sister is anything but twee. It's actually quite ramshackle: a hybrid of '60s garage rock, blues, folk and a little bit of vaudeville. You know that this is a band that's reaching for some level of artistic merit when you learn that percussionist Lauren Brown actually tap dances on at least one of the songs (the not so imaginatively-titled "Clackin' Heels").

So *Nobody Dances in This Town* (well, except maybe for Brown) is a bit of an intriguing hodge-podge of various and different sounds. The thing is, it holds together remarkably well. What's more, the long player actually gets better on repeated listens, as all the genre styles bubble up into your consciousness, so, yes, *Nobody Dances in This Town* is categorically what we call a "grower". And the band is certainly hard working, clocking in more than 150 live shows in the past year. The band also has the corporate seal of approval: Starbucks is featuring the band and single "Touch the Lightning" in its stores. So what's not to love about He's My Brother She's My Sister? Well, there's actually not a lot to dislike about these guys, unless, of course, you feel that associating yourself with a particular brand of a cup of joe is a sellout move, but, hey, if you're in a young band, you gotta make your money and be heard somehow. And, truth be told, you're not going to see these guys on MTV or hear them on the radio (perhaps campus radio or NPR or some such thing, but I think that's about the extent of it). Still, *Nobody Dances in This Town* is a worthy addition to the rock 'n' roll canon, particularly if you like bluesy workouts and a little bit of grit and muscle in your folksy music.

The opening three songs are nice enough, but the record really catches fire with the fourth track,



NOW ON POPMATTERS

Today • Popular

Features

- Mirth, Music and Mayhem: The Tom Scharpling Interview
- The SteelDrivers - 'Hammer Down' (Album Premiere)

Columns

- OUT OF POCKET: What Is the Stereotypical 'Real American'?

Blogs

- STATUESQUE: Best Picture Box Office: Who's Ahead and Why It Matters
- MOVING PIXELS: 'Deponia' is no 'Monkey Island'
- MIXED MEDIA: Kat Candler's 'Black Metal' Is a Perfectly Timed Release
- SOUND AFFECTS: 20 Questions: Missy Mazzoli
- SHORT ENDS AND LEADER: 10 Movies You Need to See in 2013

More



He's My Brother She's My Sister

Nobody Dances in This Town
(Park the Van; US: 22 Jan 2013; UK: Import)

Amazon
iTunes

Like 2

Tweet 1

PRINT

EMAIL

0 COMMENTS

SHARE

Text: A A A

the Stones-y "The Same Old Ground", which, yes, does cover some old territory, but it's the first real rave-up to be heard on the album. So let's start there. There's some tasty lap steel and a riff that seems ripped right out of either "Tumbling Dice" or that period where the Rolling Stones were experimenting with country music. "The Same Old Ground" is a real fist-pumper, a song to get the blood moving, and singer Robert Kolar bring a certain dirty "oomph" to the track in his gravelly vocals. It's actually quite astonishing to hear, and you almost wish the band opened the record with it. But this is an LP that is all about the slow burn and building things up to the breaking point. Follow-up track "Slow It Down" is just as catchy, and it is certain to earn the group some comparisons to Big Brother and the Holding Company. It really is a slice of kozmic blues, and is a throwback to the psychedelic sounds of the '60s acid rock scene of San Francisco. That's not to say that all of *Nobody Dances in This Town* is entirely successful. The aforementioned "Clackin' Heels" feels more like a gimmick than a compelling song. And, as mentioned, the opening three tracks are among the weaker ones on the record, which isn't a great way to build momentum or enthusiasm for your project. The song are actually not bad, but perhaps a little creative reshuffling of the record's running order might have made the slight valley at the album's beginning a little less pronounced.

All that said, *Nobody Dances in This Town* is certainly one thing: eclectic. I don't think you'll hear music quite like this in all of its retro-infusion again until He's My Brother She's My Sister releases another album of homespun gems. By the time you get to the final song, "Can't See the Stars", you almost feel sorry that this musical ride, this musical adventure, is almost over. But then again, all you have to do is hit repeat and be enthralled all over again. *Nobody Dances in This Town* is a splendid bit of folksy tales and well-crafted bluesy numbers. When this band is firing on all cylinders, they're really something to be in awe of. While the Kolar siblings might have a little ways to go before they can be mentioned in the same breath as the Carpenters or the Friedbergers (or the Whites, for that matter, if you want to throw them into the mix, and let's), *Nobody Dances in This Town* puts them well on the way to being a cultural force of some renown. The Kolars are doing things a little bit differently, pushing out sounds that haven't been really heard in some time in a number of tracks here, and you have to applaud their dedication to their craft. When they're rocking out, they're really on fire, and that's all the more reason to appreciate the fact that nobody quite dances like they do. And, well, if I may say so myself, I think they're kinda cute in a grimy kind of way, too.

Rating: 

- ["Electric Love" Soundcloud](#)
- ["Can't See the Stars" Soundcloud](#)
- ["Let's Go \(Live\)" Soundcloud](#)
- ["Touch the Lightning \(Live\)" Soundcloud](#)
- [Tease EP Soundcloud](#)
- [Multiple songs Bandcamp](#)
- [Multiple songs MySpace](#)



Zachary Houle is a writer living in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. He has been a Pushcart Prize nominee for his short fiction, and the recipient of a writing arts grant from the City of Ottawa. He has had journalism published in SPIN magazine, The National Post (Canada), Canadian Business, and more.

Like 0 Tweet 1 1  

MEDIA



Like Share

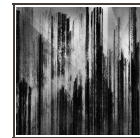
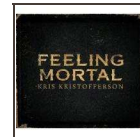
Big Hassle Media
He's My Brother She's My Sister - Can't Se...



3.24

4331 | 12

PM PICKS



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call for Feature Essays About Any Aspect of Popular Culture, Present or Past
Call for Music Critics and Music Bloggers

[More](#) 