



The Toy Dolls
The Album After the Last One (2012)
 King Midas

STAFF

Reviewer Rating:

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Although pop-punk has maintained a significant presence in the U.S. punk scene for over 25 years now, it's flabbergasting that in the states, the Toy Dolls are almost unknowns despite basically inventing the genre.* One of the very first punk bands to eschew anger in lieu of high energy fun, the Toy Dolls blended Chuck Berry licks with often silly, alliterative lyrics. Thirty-three years later, they haven't stray from the framework they created. On *The Album After the Last One* the Toy Dolls, show that man, they frickin' rock.

The Toy Dolls have never been a band to do a back-to-the-basics release because frankly, they never left the basics. But, now, more than ever, the band has shown that the old adage fundamentals-fundamentals-fundamentals really is the key to success. *The Album After the Last One* finds the band tearing through three chord rocker after three chord rocker with such energy and excitement, it sounds like they just started playing this kind of music last week.

Even though he's over 50, lead vocalist/guitarist/ringleader Olga still sounds like the world's snottiest five-year-old. With a high pitched voice that purposefully sings off key and twists words like "money" into "mooniee!" there is a mischievous playfulness to the songs that gives added depth to the lyrics. On "Kevin's Cotton Wool Kids" he describes an *Annie*-type situation about being picked on the bus, while all the while, it seems he's getting the last laugh. "Dirty Doreen" opens with Olga getting a bootie call from an =octogenarian and even more surprisingly, Olga seems to take her up on the offer.

The album shows the circularity of music when on "Gordon Brown Gets Me Down," the band, while still flying along at their Jerry Lee Lewis on PCP tempo, sounds quite a bit like early Green Day...or is it the other way round? By playing their own influences so prominently, the band shows how they've influenced, directly or indirectly, countless other bands.

But, what really ties the album together is its loving devotion rock music—rock music in its original formation. "B.E.E.R.", which is one of the best songs the band ever recorded, takes the tried and true Billy Halley and the Comets' three chorus formula and revs it up so much, and strikes with such swinging precision, that the song is as fresh as anything else out there, and rocks twice as hard.

This is also evident on the acoustic bonus tracks where Olga trades his electric guitar for an acoustic one and runs across three humorous songs about getting ripped off in Cairo, stupid skinheads and other English things that I don't understand. The Toy Dolls have crafted their classic pop-punk attack to such a degree that even without electricity, it sound like they are cutting it up alongside Berry. That's no easy feat. It's equally no easy feat that a band like this could release one of their very best albums some thirty five years after striking their first three chords.

*I know, you're all like, "Nuh uh, John, the Ramones created pop punk." DENIED, junior. The Ramones created punk itself and had some proto-pop-punkish tunes, but weren't a pop-punk band.