



Pere Ubu 20 Years in a Montana Missile Silo

[Cherry Red]

My faith in Pere Ubu as an ongoing entity was rebooted by their June 2016 EARL show. Touring behind a pair of box sets spanning their fertile 1975-82 period, the motley fivesome (Ubu Roi David Thomas being the only remaining founding member) delivered something verging on a theater piece, retaining the heart of the originals while leaving them plenty of room to breathe.

When that same touring band entered the studio – with the addition of a *third* guitarist – there seemed reason to hope they'd harness that same spirit, fire up the pistons in the Avant Garage, and release the first Pere Ubu record I could give a shit about since 1995's *Ray Gun Suitcase*.

Is that what happened on *20 Years in a Montana Missile Silo*? The short answer: Yes, but don't get too greedy.

Thomas revisits an old trick on "Funk 49," appropriating the title of a chestnut to which his own track bears little or no

resemblance (remember the James Gang, before Joe Walsh opted for the soft life with Eagles?) Riding an arrangement that feels like an updating of "Humor Me" from Ubu's classic debut, Thomas pontificates over two minutes of fractured agitpop, including some ingenious vocal editing. I can't think of a better Ubu track since at least 1991.

"Toe To Toe," which essentially serves as the title track, is a hard-charging workout that delivers on the garage promise, while two other standouts – "Prison of the Senses" and "I Can Still See" – follow *Dub Housing's* winningly woozy template.

Fifteen minutes of high quality is all we should reasonably expect from Pere Ubu at this point, though – and that's all we get. Opener "Monkey Bizness" serves as a garage rock statement of intent, but lacks a decent hook to sell it. And a title like "Howl" is a pretty clear indicator of the abyss Thomas is about to enter. *Missile Silo* has a few of those plodding dead ends, but not nearly as many as recent outings.

Pere Ubu recently got a welcome bump when three of its tunes were featured in *American Horror Story* episodes. Thomas once claimed the most he ever made from one of his songs came when it appeared on the inane '80s sitcom *Alf*, so it's good to see that indignity addressed. It's also hard to imagine playing *20 Years in a Montana Missile Silo* start-to-finish very often, but it'll sure be nice to update a Best of Pere Ubu playlist that doesn't stop cold in the mid '90s.

—Glen Savvady

Spit or Swallow?

R.L. Boyce – Roll and Tumble [Waxploitation]: Boyce and the boys excel at that whole method of hypnotic country blues where the band lays into a repetitious shuffling groove that they play around with and beat into submission for upwards of six-to-ten minutes until everyone peters out, while old man Boyce grunts 'n' mutters 'n' moans a bunch of fucked up toothless nonsense like he's thirty sheets to the wind. And you know what? It's the best fucking blues album I've heard since Fat Possum was a factor. **SWALLOW!** (Jeff Clark)

Stray From The Path – Only Death is Real [Sumerian]: The hicks thinking Stray From The Path are so brave for taking on the Alt-Right (a made up commie code term) couldn't be any more incorrect. Within the hardcore community these dorks are taking the path of least resistance, because this is more like skipping down Sesame Street. A sloppy, ultra-goofy Rage Against The Machine ripoff 20 years too late, sung by a honky with a bad \$10 Great Clips haircut. Nice stolen Dead Kennedys lyrics in your single, btw. **SPIT!** (Lee Satterfield)

Trevor and the Joneses – Take You to Stay [self-released]: Anyone reading this who's into psychedelic rock and/or the whole shoegaze thing yet unaware of these Vegas face melters, you need to gobble that blotter and get ahold of this record ASAP. They embrace the compact directness of pre-San Fran '60s garage-psych, in other words they respect rock 'n' roll songcraft and variety and they avoid meandering. They sometimes get compared to the Brian Jonestown Massacre, well this is better than anything BJM's released in 15 years. **SWALLOW!** (Jeff Clark)

PVRIS – All We Know Of Heaven, All We Need Of Hell [Rise]: Shopping mall purgatory where dreadfully mediocre songs are played at full blast over and over through some trendy boutique's sound system, and you're just there 'cause some hot chick dragged you there, but that's beside the point – you can never leave, or at least

that's what it feels like. **SPIT!** (Lee Satterfield)

Rolling Blackouts Coastal Fever – Talk Tight [Sub Pop]: Another new EP from these Melbourne pups? Actually, it's an American issue of their debut from 2016, and it's essential. There's such an infectious momentum and dopey enthusiasm at play I dare ya to resist getting swept up in it. Every clanging song sounds like a workers' anthem for the lonely and lovestruck and makes me grin from ear to eternity. Full LP due next year. Get ready. **SWALLOW!** (Jeff Clark)

Counterparts – You're Not You Anymore [Pure Noise]: In neo-hardcore music there's not much new ground to cover and Counterparts certainly don't cover any on their latest. This band is probably one of the most talented, best-of-breed of its ilk, but this recording hides their flaws. The drums are fake and at times buried in the mix. The guitars are stacked/layered on so many multiple channels that the band's hardcore D.I.Y. aesthetic becomes laughable. And the vocals are so high in the mix that it's just a guy screaming at you for 30 minutes straight. It's a headache. **SPIT!** (Lee Satterfield)

Dead Leaf Echo – Beyond Desire [PaperCup Music]: Traditional shoegaze psych-rock here, nothing out of the ordinary but these devoted Brooklyn dudes nail the style and sound so ardently I can't help but partake. They used MBV's engineer and a 4AD alumnus for the cover art, so you know they mean business, bub! **SWALLOW!** (Jeff Clark)

The Haxans – Party Monsters [Century Media]: Goth-pop duo The Haxans are predominantly style, very little substance. The biggest selling point for the band is they have Ash Costello of New Years Day fame on vocals. The music is all campy and lame on purpose. It's supposed to be fun, it's supposed to be like a Halloween party for any day of the year, the problem is it sounds like the demo button on a Casio keyboard or a really bad karaoke CD. Maybe they'll be fun live? **SPIT!** (Lee Satterfield)