

Charleston
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Ween Shinola Vol. 1

Ween - the brainchild of Dean and Gene Ween - is unquestionably one of the cleverest, most versatile and proficient (not to mention prolific) groups going - and has been since for two decades. Ever the wiley Chameleons, they can morph into about any style and mood, and pull it off without a hitch. Rather than a new release, Shinola Vol. 1 contains a dozen oddities and cast-offs and, while many of the tracks which have been available on the Internet, they have been noticeably spiffed up for this "official" release. The tunes rummage through a schizophrenic skein of styles beginning with the drum loop, herky-jerky guitar and distorted vocals of "Tastes Good on th' Bun" which leads into the saccharine pop of "Boy's Club" and the dreamy, Beatlesque "I Fell in Love Today." Each song warrants a comment, from the mutant pop of "Big Fat F*ck" to "Gabrielle," which apes former Thin Lizzy bassist Phil Lynott

to a wonderfully perfect "T." The droning, "Did You See Me?" and "How High Can You Fly" are heady and heavy - both retro and futuristic - executed without a sense of parody (as opposed to the wedding band shtick of "Israel"). By contrast "Transitions" is a nugget of easy pop with plenty of hooks and "Monique the Freak" melds a riff-based Prince tune with hypnotic funk of Nile Rodgers' Chic.

(www.ween.com)

- Michael Lipton