

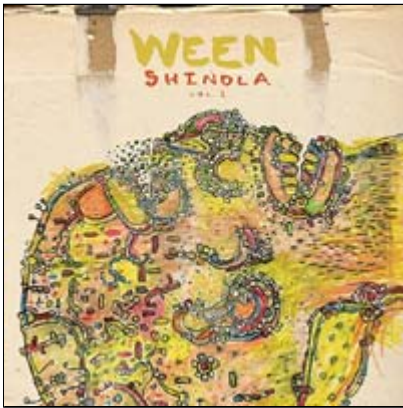
# Modern Pea Pod

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## Ween

### *Shinola, Vol. 1*

(Chocodog)



I love Ween. They're pop music's ultimate chameleons, releasing album after album of pitch-perfect genre songs with their own brand of humor. They're not only the paragon for pop music parody, but superior song makers in their own right: it's always been Ween's irony that their songs are just as good, if not better, than the material they're riffing on. Just consider the fact that they're currently working on their ninth (or is it tenth?) studio album and have yet to release a bad one, no matter what any "purist" fan might tell you. Their latest, *Shinola, Vol. 1*, follows their own ADD-riddled whims of songcraft, and is the best studio album (well, it's only kind of a studio album) they've put out in a while.

*Shinola, Vol. 1* is a twelve-song collection of unissued tracks from the Ween vaults. The origins of these songs are kept mysterious: no information is listed either in the bare-essentials insert or in the press blurb. It is important to note, however, that these aren't B-sides or outtakes; these are songs that Ween has never issued before in any form, although a few of them have surfaced on bootlegs which only the most hardcore fans have probably listened to. This sidesteps that old problem of labels issuing compilations of things most fans already have in one form or another, and since *Shinola* is a



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release from the Ween brothers' own label, you can be assured that this album is freakin' great.

Especially for an odds and ends collection, *Shinola*'s individual tracks are really, really good. And the variety doesn't disappoint, either: in the space of just one album, Ween tackles lover's rock ("I Fell in Love Today"), Prince-funk ("Monique the Freak") and caffeinated classic rock ("Gabrielle" has had its share of Thin Lizzy comparisons), plus more. Indeed, this compilation shows Ween at their best: having fun, being creative and writing spectacular songs.



The album starts with "Tastes Good on th' Bun," a distorted stomp of an angular rock tune with only the title phrase for lyrics. And elsewhere, *Shinola, Vol. 1* rarely disappoints in its rock-convention reclamations: "Did You See Me?" is a spot-on prog rock send-up, and the adult contemporary wank of "The Transition" somehow twists stream of consciousness lyrics with music that wouldn't feel out of place in a corporate office's elevator. The album's not perfect, of course; "Big Fat Fuck" is a pretty funny song, but its burping synth and wandering guitar lines are a low point, as might be "How High Can You Fly"'s lack of solidity (although it does have a great solo).

The general consensus about Ween is that even if they release something below their usual standard, it's about ten times better than anything else on the shelves. *Shinola, Vol. 1* is almost as good as the best Ween albums, and that's saying a lot: hell, it'll probably even give the whiners who keep complaining about "new" Ween something to shut them up for a while. I'm a Ween fan myself, but that's in no way a requirement. Give it a few spins, and it'll be in your head for weeks.

- Jon Cameron

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