



## Bargain Music

*American Born*

Cornerstone RAS

[www.cornerstoneras.com](http://www.cornerstoneras.com)



To a rock and roller's ears, it's often difficult to discern the difference between an earnest effort from a singer/songwriter and parody or mockery. In perhaps the same way that fans of pap-pop might have screened *This is Spinal Tap* and come away nonplussed, saying, "I don't know. They aren't a very good band," this reviewer wasn't sure what to make of *American Born*, the latest from Bargain Music. So a bit of Googling was in order.

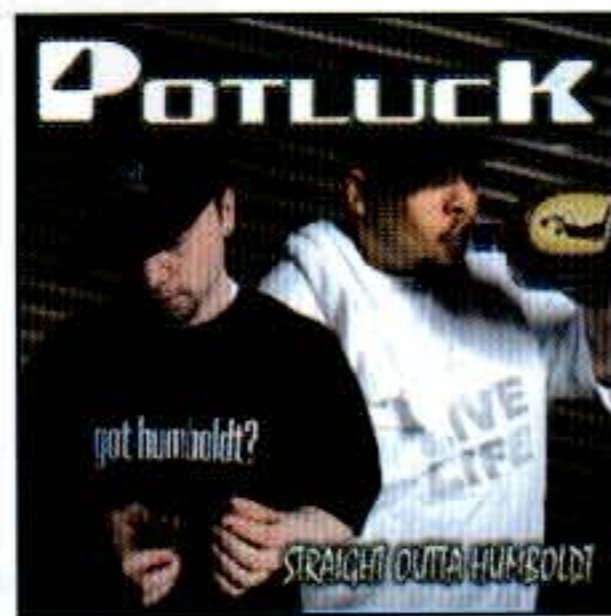
Said search revealed that Bargain Music is "quirky and eccentric." Oh? Well, Captain Sensible this is not. One suspects this material could have worked in a live setting: a café full of in-the-know scenesters, obligingly chuckling at every inside joke... that would have helped the uninitiated listener.

For a band-credited release, *American Born* sounds curiously like a solo effort. But within the disc's high concept (acoustic guitar and lone vocal) there simply isn't anything for Josh Fischel's bandmates to do. One hopes they spent the session time doing something worthwhile, like hanging outside the studio doing Jay and Silent Bob impressions.

As much as it pains to say so, eclecticism does not always equal cleverness. Covering The Who, Peter Tosh and Tears for Fears might look like a good idea on paper; on disc the songs are mostly stripped of whatever made them wonderful.

Certainly not awful in any way, *American Born* might hold appeal for fans of camp-fire singalongs, or for followers of Bargain Music. For the rest of us it falls flat.

- Bill Kopp



## Potluck

*Straight Outta Humboldt*

Suburban Noize Records

[www.myspace.com/potluck](http://www.myspace.com/potluck)



The hip-hop duo collectively known as Potluck hails from Humboldt County, California—infamous for its marijuana strain. Fortright in lyrical angle, their storytelling is indeed as potent as a field of chiba. That said however, this record is packed tight with more substance than a mere puff of smoke.

Now signed on Suburban Noize records, they've joined the ranks of similar freedom fighters like the Kottonmouth Kings in a quest for fun and social reform. Equipped with a hybrid blend of old school rap, classic house music and contemporary hip-hop, Potluck harvests some of the slickest beats and melodic rhythms this side of the underground.

Their use of sampling is careful and invigorating, never overdone. A host of guest appearances, Chali 2NA of Jurassic 5 and Twiztid for example, add some additional flavor to a stew already quite tasty. But at the core are the complimentary shared vocals. 1 Ton commands attention with a deep slow burn style, while Underrated belts out words with rapid-fire skills second only to the pace of a Gatling gun.

Further setting this album apart is the deliberate avoidance of bling banter, made clear on "Doing Alright," while soberly addressing the evils of greed as in "Money Makes the World Go Round." Truly the bulk of *Straight Outta Humboldt* stems from the aromatic wafts of their favorite vice, both personally and politically, but by and large, Potluck demonstrates how well music can be when unbound and outside the fluff of mainstream commercialism.

- Christian Cipollini



## Metal's Darkside

*The Hard & Furious*

Vol. 1

Music Video Distribution

[www.mvd2b.com](http://www.mvd2b.com)



The *Metal's Darkside* website explains that "Jasmin St. Claire, the ever personable metal head, has taken on a new monster, the darkest metal realm. With her new metal DVD series, she engages the best metal bands that agree to submit to her irreverent line of questioning." On this first volume, *The Hard and the Furious*, her unrelenting interrogation includes interview questions such as "what inspires the lyrics you write?" and "where is your favorite place to play?"

St. Claire is not afraid to speak her mind, either—if she thinks the lead singer of Nevermore has a wicked mullet, she's going to fucking say so. If the dude sitting next to her on the hood of a car mentions Hello Kitty, you bet your ass there will be some "Sanrio Rules!!" up in here.

You might wonder why bands such as Cannibal Corpse, Death Angel, and Satyricon would subject themselves to such unpredictable scrutiny, but when your interviewer holds the world pornography gang bang record (300 guys over the course of a few hours in 1996's *World's Biggest Gang Bang 2*), your options for refusal are limited.

But ultimately, *Metal's Darkside: The Hard & The Furious* is a collection of interviews with death metal bands conducted by a pro-wrestling model and former porn star on a budget of approximately \$200, \$150 of which probably went to beer and/or condoms. The interviews are so inane that even the kitsch value is minimal, so unless you are a hardcore fan of Damage Plan eager to see one of their last interviews together, rent yourself a copy of *Glitter* to meet your so-bad-it's-great needs.

- Evie Nagy