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NRBQ & THE WHOLE WHEAT HORNS: DERBYTOWN LIVE 1982

by Phil Hall
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2006, Un-rated, 45 minutes, MVD Visual



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The joyful noise of NRBQ is on cheery display in this 1982 concert video, taped in Louisville, Kentucky. Just where in Louisville it was taped and by whom is a mystery (there are no credits to go with this 45 minute offering), but so what? This offering provides a unique chance to experience NRBQ in its prime.

For the uninitiated, NRBQ spans a multitude of musical genres without breaking a sweat. Rock, jazz, country, rockabilly and blues are part of their line-up – there's even a Latin beat with their rollicking "Mambo Jambo." No matter which genre they are occupying, NRBQ laces their music with a happy, up-tempo beat that inevitably gets to the toes tapping and the smiles widening. If you are not moved by their music, you're dead.

In this go-round, NRBQ is supported by a duet called Whole Wheat Horns. They're great when doing trombone and tenor sax solos, but lethal when they get a chance to vocalize (they literally sink the old Johnny Horton tune "Sink the Bismark" with flat crooning and a surprisingly awkward arrangement – not to mention a big goof-up in the lyrics).

But beyond that tinny interlude, NRBQ is in full-throttle power here. Highlights include the high-octane "12-Bar Blues," the instrumental inventiveness of "New Lang Syne," and the encore sign-off "Hit the Hay" (a wonderful oxymoron, since the song is so lively that it the ultimate antithesis of calling it a day). NRBQ fans have reason to rejoice here and newcomers to the band can enjoy a wonderful introduction to their brilliant iconoclasm.

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