

cd reviews

DOUG HOEKSTRA - BLOOMING ROSES (WINGDING)



The interesting thing about pretense is that even an effort not to be pretentious can seem pretentious if not handled with genuine carelessness. I guess what I'm trying to say is that sometimes making something seem effortless is not a good thing. The lazy, slightly out of tune vocals on Doug Hoekstra's *Blooming Roses* album can harken remembrances of all those great lo-fi underground records you were too ashamed to tell your metal friends you liked, and to be sure, the introduction track "Acquired Taste" seems to set the stage for something interesting, a-la The Eels or Adam Green, but the comparison soon dies on the operating table as a series of very well produced, but pointless, tracks trudge toward you out of the speakers as if to say, "Don't ask me why the hell I exist. I have no idea."

That is not to say that *Blooming Roses* is without its good points. The lyrics, in large part, seem interesting enough to warrant further exploration and the instrumentation and arrangements are well balanced. Introducing accordions, cellos, mellotrons, lap steels, ukuleles, and toy pianos to any mix is usually sure to help keep your music out of the stale bread line and add some crucial elements of mood, but it's just not enough to keep this bobbing cork afloat. In the end, a couple more takes and a little less laziness in front of the microphone would have done wonders for Doug's final product here.

THE SPARROWS - LOST LOVE: SONGS OF MURDER AND TROUBLE (WWW.CHESTNUTTREERECORDS.COM)



This is the debut album by husband and wife duo and Greene County, IN, natives, The Sparrows. It features a mix of old timey folk murder ballad classics and originals. As can be ascertained from the incorrect plurality of their name, the music has an element of playfulness and genuine spontaneity that separates it from other music that litters the airwaves these days. Of course, most of the music written nowadays has less than half

the depth and staying power of the tracks covered here, which read like a "what's what" of the folk ballad era and would have made Harry Smith proud.

What makes this collection of songs all the more interesting are the lyrical interpretations of the songs. Often, lyrical passages will be added to and removed from folk songs, but once made famous by one artist or another; the lyrics tend to solidify into something more concrete. That is not the case here. Obviously, The Sparrows have listened to multiple interpretations of such old classics as "Banks of the Ohio" and "Willow Garden" and decided to draw a little from each, adding their own touches, in true folk fashion. Bright spots on the album are the heartfelt and simple "All By My Lonesome" and the strange interpretation of "Long Black Veil". The female vocals sound straight off the grooves of an old Decca, and the plain, straightforward autoharp and guitar instrumentation is true to period recordings of these songs. Worth checking out for any alt-country/folk music fanatic. fore you splurge on this entire disc.

MIKE PATTON - A PERFECT PLACE (IPECAC)



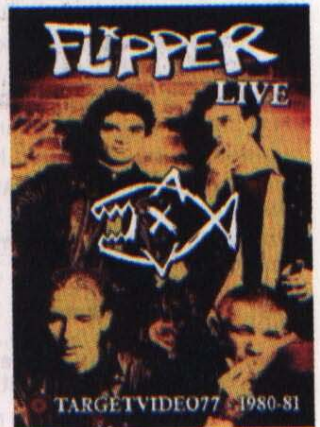
It is often the case that true genius is only recognized upon an artist's death. Not if I have anything to say about it... For those in the know about the living legend of Mike Patton - former frontman of Mr. Bungle and Faith No More, currently of Tomahawk, Lovage, Fantomas, The Dillinger Escape Plan, and Peeping Tom, etc. - the excitement of hearing about a new album should be near overbearing. Though his auditory vision has often been described as so esoteric and genre-bending that only a handful of the most keen-eared of musicians would understand its true significance and place in the ongoing story of modern music, that story is still being written and Patton's place is already well reserved. Call me crazy, but this writer feels that Patton is quite possibly one of the most important composers of this generation, and his influence on the world of music has yet to be fully realized.

His latest work, a CD/DVD combo release on his own Ipecac Recordings and Fantoma Films label entitled *A Perfect Place*. The CD is a 15-track sound odyssey that meanders, in classic Patton fashion, through oft-neglected musical avenues like ragtime, Italian opera, and freeform jazz as effortlessly as a rubber chicken through a stained glass window. The comparison is more accurate than you might think. Try it if you don't believe me.

The DVD part of the release is a 25-minute black and white vignette directed by newcomer Derrick Scocchera, for which Patton provides the musical score. It centers around a couple of poker-playing

losers trying to dispose of a corpse, and while it presents itself as an interesting, albeit student-esque, film project with some laugh-out-loud moments, the real show-stopper here is Patton's score, which comprises the CD part of the release and is actually longer than the film itself by about 10 minutes. To explain this discrepancy Patton says, "I got excited." Interestingly, the credits roll to a song by the recently deceased Lee Hazelwood (1929-2007) called "We All Make the Flowers Grow." Hazelwood is best remembered for his work with Nancy Sinatra in the 1960s, particularly for his song "These Boots Are Made for Walkin'." His final album, released in 2006 shortly before his fatal cancer diagnosis, was named *Cake or Death* after a comedy bit by another living legend, Eddie Izzard. And as we all know, Eddie Izzard is the distant cousin of actor Kevin Bacon. Just kidding. *A Perfect Place* is set to hit stores March 11th.

FLIPPER - LIVE TARGETVIDEO77 1980-81" DVD (MVD VISUAL)



Flipper were an essential anomaly in the early American punk scene. Nihilistic and dirgey, their noise-damaged music anticipated the hardcore scene, predated grunge, and even could be seen as a starting point for (some) industrial rock. This classic video, finally reissued in digital format, presents Flipper in all their sloppy, drunken, and chaotic glory. Taken from a pair of shows, this rough (but more than watchable) document shows both a more spunky side (a headlining gig from Berkeley) as well as a more cathartic and intense side (their 1981 Frisco show opening for Throbbing Gristle). Vocalist/bassist Will Shatter mumbles and grunts his way through fan favorites like 'Sex Bomb' or (my favorite) 'Life', while his band tumbles headfirst into characteristically messy, nearly-tuneless abandon. Flipper took punk and turned it upside down, and in the process inspired too many bands to list. This is the real deal.

-Todd Zachritz

CHRISTOPHER BISSONNETTE - IN BETWEEN WORDS (KRANKY)



Sweeping, cinematic urban ambience from this Canadian composer, 'In Between Words' utilizes field recordings (including bits of orchestral work) and electronic processing to dazzling effect. Initially