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## East Bay Ray and the Killer Smiles – East Bay Ray and the Killer Smiles

September 19th, 2011

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### Smile for the Camera!

Aesop once told a fable about a man, a boy and their donkey on their way to town. Walking on either side of the donkey, they passed a person who commented that they were fools for not riding the donkey. The man put his son on the donkey’s back, but as they advanced further, someone else chided the boy for making his poor old dad walk. Switching positions, someone else further up the road called the father a savage for making his poor son walk while he rode. They both get on, until they are again chastised for straining the back of the poor old donkey. Finally, exasperated, they carry the donkey on their backs the last leg into town. The point: trying to appeal to everyone gets you nowhere. Alas, I don’t think East Bay Ray and the Killer Smiles have heard this one.

Oddly enough, one of the more ineffable elements to make punk work has always been a lack of concern for the audience. In pop, you have to write songs that play in Peoria, but in solid punk rock, the feeling is usually, “If you don’t like it, then screw you, buddy!” While that attitude has, undoubtedly, led to some truly bad albums, it frees the musician up to create their own sound without

thought for outside influence. By not having your ear to the ground, you can hear yourself more clearly.

Unfortunately, the eponymous debut from East Bay Ray and the Killer Smiles is a case of the opposite: trying to make “punk rock” with a pop mindset. While it’s nice to see that East Bay Ray hasn’t lost his touch (and has actually become a much better guitarist), there’s little else redeemable about this album. Gone is the sly sarcasm of older Dead Kennedy’s songs, replaced only by a pottage of clichés delivered by singer Skip McSkipster, who vacillates between a vocal caricature of Thom Yorke and Morrissey.

Finally, in keeping with the trend of covering at least one “old union song,” the album comes to a close with a seriously regrettable and uninspired cover of “16 Tons,” which sounds less like a union rally song than some 16-year-old whining about their job at the Gap.

Perhaps East Bay Ray and the Killer Smiles will get it together and write something really original. For now though, if you want to hear twelve tracks of songs you’ve already heard in some other form already, then pick this one up.

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By [Nathan Leff](#) Posted in [Reviews](#) [East Bay Ray and the Killer Smiles](#)

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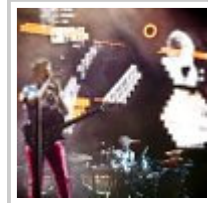
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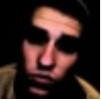


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